



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 51st MEETING

Chairman: Mr. O'DONOVAN (Ireland)

later: Mrs. MASMOUDI (Tunisia)

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the Committee.

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/36/490, A/36/620; A/C.3/36/L.50, L.51, L.53)

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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/Add.1; A/C.3/36/L.54)

1. Mr. AL-MULLA HUSSAIN (Iraq) said that the problems affecting women were of great concern to his country because of the essential role women played in the development and progress of society. In the context of the Programme of Action for the first half of the United Nations Decade for Women, Iraq's development plan for the period 1976-1980 had confirmed the role played by women in economic and social development, and his Government had adopted decisions aimed at enabling women to help meet the goals of development. In efforts to ensure the effective participation of women in development, emphasis had been placed on the areas of legislation, education, health and employment, which were considered to be strategic areas for the implementation of Programme of Action.
2. With regard to legislation, he pointed out that the Constitution of Iraq stipulated that women had the same rights as men in all areas. Under political legislation, they enjoyed the same right to vote and to be elected, for example to the National Council, 6 per cent of which currently consisted of women. Under economic legislation, women enjoyed the same right to work as men. Under administrative legislation, women could be members of the civil service, where they benefited from six months of maternity leave. The income earned by women was also exempt from income tax. Legislation in the field of education stipulated that schooling was mandatory for both boys and girls between the ages of 6 and 10. In the field of social legislation, an amendment to the law governing the relationship between husbands and wives had been adopted to protect the rights of wives. For example, no marriage was valid unless a civil ceremony had been performed, marriage without the consent of both parties was prohibited, wives could seek a divorce and were entitled to retain custody of the children. In addition, daughters enjoyed the same inheritance rights as sons. All those measures reflected his Government's concern to integrate women into economic and social change.

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(Mr. Al-Mulla Hussain, Iraq)

3. In the field of education, the political report of the Eighth Conference of the Arab Socialist Baath Party had confirmed that the education of women was one of the Party's short-term goals. He pointed out that 73 per cent of those benefiting from the literacy campaign and the mandatory education programme were women, whereas women made up 52.3 per cent of the total population. The number of women attending schools had increased greatly, and as a result, many more women were working. For example, the percentage of women in the working population had risen from 17 per cent in 1976 to 19 per cent in 1980 and was expected to total 28 per cent by 1985. The 1974-1979 programme of action to improve the condition of women had focused on increasing the number of working women, because the role of women was also a political question. The programme of action was aimed in general at ensuring the participation of both men and women in the attainment of national goals. To that end, State authorities and organizations had adopted measures to end obsolete systems that had prevented women from working, and today institutions were obliged to employ women at all levels.

4. In the field of health, the State's efforts were focused on providing health services, free or for a nominal fee, for all citizens, but particularly for women and children in rural areas.

5. All those activities clearly reflected the efforts Iraq had undertaken in the context of the first half of the Decade. As the President of Iraq had said at the Baghdad Conference in May 1979, those efforts proved Iraq's loyalty to the commitments it had assumed in connexion with the Decade.

6. As to the second half of the Decade, he said that Iraq had adopted its own national programme of action and legislative, economic and social measures directed towards ensuring that the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the Decade would be effective.

7. In conclusion, he pointed out that the Final Document adopted by the Meeting of High-level Experts of Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries Concerned with the Role of Women in Development (A/36/490) called upon the non-aligned countries to provide special assistance for the women in southern Africa in their struggle to obtain freedom and self-determination and for Palestinian women in their struggle to free themselves from all forms of oppression and to obtain self-determination (A/36/490, annex, p. 14). A similar resolution had been adopted at the Copenhagen Conference, and it was clear that the problem of the Palestinian people represented a grave threat to mankind. He therefore stressed the need to support the struggle of the Palestinian women and of the women in southern Africa and the need to condemn zionism, apartheid and all other forms of racial discrimination. The many resolutions adopted in that connexion had been supported by an overwhelming majority of Member States, and world public opinion was well aware of those problems. It was therefore necessary to ensure compliance with those decisions, to implement the Copenhagen Programme of Action, to assist the women throughout the world who were struggling for the freedom of their peoples and to end all violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

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8. Miss GUEVARA ACHAVAL (Argentina) said that her country's legislation made no distinction between people on the basis of sex, and women had always played a very active role in all areas of national life. Nevertheless, there were some sectors in every country, however advanced, in which sexual distinctions persisted - as was apparent from the formation of feminist movements throughout the world - and therefore efforts to achieve equality of the sexes should be further strengthened. The practice followed by her country and the positive results obtained thus far clearly reflected its determination to continue to pursue that objective.

9. At the international level, Argentina attached great importance to the international community's efforts to heighten awareness of the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women. However, declarations were not sufficient, and what was essential was to put into practice the specific activities contained in the Copenhagen Programme of Action. In that way, women would receive the international community's support with a view to their complete integration in the development process, both as participants and as beneficiaries.

10. Her delegation fully supported all such activities but, since the available resources were severely limited, they must be used as effectively as possible. In that connexion, it was important to bear in mind the need for the United Nations to co-ordinate its activities with regional organizations so as to avoid any duplication of effort. She drew attention to section C of annex I to the report of the Secretary-General on the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women (A/36/646), which referred to projects for Latin America. The objectives of some of those projects coincided with or were very similar to projects already undertaken at the regional level, for example by the Inter-American Commission for Women, the Multinational Centre for Research and Training for Women or regional seminars.

11. She pointed out that the Multinational Centre, headquartered at Córdoba, Argentina, had already completed a study of Latin American legislation on the subject of women, which coincided with item 54 of section C of annex I to document A/36/646. Moreover, a regional seminar held at Montevideo on the subject of "Women in Development" had focused on questions of education, employment and health and thus coincided with item 53. The results already obtained from projects conducted under the auspices of the Organization of American States could be of use to the United Nations and could help it to avoid duplication of work already carried out. Lastly, she observed that other regions might also be carrying out projects similar to those listed in annex I.

12. Argentina supported the activities planned by the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, and she expressed the hope that the Institute would begin operations at its headquarters at Santo Domingo as soon as possible. In that connexion, she endorsed the comments made by the representative of the Dominican Republic to the effect that the Institute should co-ordinate its activities with organizations in the United Nations system as well as with regional organizations. The appropriate use of resources and effective co-operation between States and between international agencies should produce practical benefits for the over-all advancement of women.

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(Miss Guevara Achaval, Argentina)

13. Her country was contributing financially to the attainment of that goal. For example, in addition to the technical assistance and materials it had provided to the Multinational Centre at Córdoba, it had also provided \$70,000 for the Centre's operations. As to the International Institute at Santo Domingo, she repeated her country's offer to provide scholarships and to send experts in that field, in accordance with its national plan governing technical co-operation between developing countries.

14. In her delegation's opinion, relocation of the Voluntary Fund to Vienna would, in principle, be consistent with the need for greater efficiency and co-ordination with the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs and would comply with the relevant General Assembly resolutions. However, her delegation felt that that was primarily an administrative question, not a question of substance, and it hoped that the matter could be resolved, without affecting the Committee's substantive work.

15. Argentina also hoped that, in preparing for the World Conference to be held at the end of the Decade in 1985, the Commission on the Status of Women would taken into account the need to strengthen those activities in which the least progress had been achieved.

16. In conclusion, she said that her delegation welcomed the entry into force of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; Argentina had signed the Convention and was studying the possibility of ratifying it.

17. Mr. ODOCH-JATO (Uganda) drew attention to the controversy surrounding the objectives of the Decade, at the centre of which was the question of whether the task of achieving equality for women and enabling them to participate in promoting development and peace should be approached solely within a narrow context isolated from the contemporary world's problems. During the Committee's current debate, some had even expressed the view that in the adoption of the Copenhagen Programme of Action, concern for substantive women's issues had been replaced by political polemics.

18. His delegation wished to stress its support for the Programme of Action and for its implementation in the wider context. Since women had clearly remained an underprivileged segment of society since time immemorial, it would be futile to search for equality, development and peace unless those goals were related to over-all global trends.

19. In addition to being the victims of sexual discrimination, women suffered from other forms of discrimination as well. Accordingly, the struggle to achieve the equality of women had rightly been extended to include the struggle against racism, racial discrimination and apartheid. He pointed out that sexual equality for the women of South Africa and Namibia, living under the brutal yoke of apartheid and occupation, would be but a partial achievement until their dignity and rights as human beings had been fully realized.

20. After suffering the anguish of two world wars, women were currently observing a vicious, intensified arms race aimed inevitably at preparations for nuclear

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(Mr. Odoch-Jato, Uganda)

warfare, which would threaten the very existence of mankind. In areas of major conflict, such as southern Africa and the Middle East, women were continually reliving the experience of death and destruction. One could wonder what value any programme for women would have if it was divorced from the over-all objective of resolving and preventing international conflicts.

21. In his delegation's opinion, the participation of women in the search for international peace and security could not be pursued in isolation from the current world situation, and it was unfortunate that pronouncements to that effect had been referred to as political polemics. By the same token, the integration and participation of women in development depended on whether the struggle for development was successful. That objective must therefore be viewed in the light of the new international economic order, and women must be enabled to play an active role in establishing that order.

22. With regard to the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women, he expressed appreciation for the report of the Secretary-General, contained in document A/36/485, and for the emphasis placed on the speedy implementation of the Programme of Action at the international, regional and national levels. In particular, his delegation commended the Special Committee against Apartheid and the United Nations Council for Namibia for their efforts to mobilize world public opinion in support of women and children struggling against apartheid and on the assistance they provided in the field of education and training to South African and Namibian students. In addition, his delegation welcomed all the assistance provided to Palestinian women during the current year, and he expressed the hope that non-governmental organizations concerned with the objectives of Decade would undertake similar activities.

23. His delegation noted with satisfaction the results of the Meeting of High-Level Experts of Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries Concerned with the Role of Women in Development (A/36/490). The Programme of Action adopted at that Meeting should enable the Governments of developing countries to pursue the objectives of the Decade, with emphasis on technical co-operation among developing countries as a facet of the new international economic order.

24. His delegation welcomed the fact that the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women had already started to carry out its mandate, focusing on projects for the least-developed, land-locked and island countries, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 31/133. Uganda shared the grave concern expressed in connexion with the shortage of resources for the financing of activities in the developing countries, and it therefore joined in the appeal to donor countries to contribute generously to the Fund.

25. Describing Uganda's experience in connexion with the equality of women and their participation in development, he pointed out that, in 1978, his country had established the National Council of Women of Uganda to co-ordinate women's activities throughout the country in accordance with the World Plan of Action. The Council sought to promote the objectives of the Decade among both urban and

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(Mr. Odoch-Jato, Uganda)

rural women. His Government's special interest in the rights and activities of women was reflected in the continued subsidies it provided to the National Council and in the assistance it provided through the competent ministries, in such fields as women's co-operatives, adult literacy and small-scale industries. Since the burden of caring for the estimated 1.5 million orphans left by eight years of a genocidal régime fell largely to widowed mothers, the Government provided free education for orphans and had instituted District Widows' Associations to harness both State and voluntary contributions for their benefit.

26. In Uganda's integrated approach to reconstruction and development under the 1981-1990 development plan, women were called upon to make their full contribution and, to that end, were given equal opportunities to obtain education and employment. The Government was currently identifying priority sectors for the implementation of programmes for the advancement of women, and assistance for those programmes might be requested from the competent United Nations organizations.

27. His delegation 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, because of the importance of ensuring the active participation of women in global issues, particularly those involving peace, security and development. In that connexion, it was encouraging that the World Congress of Women held at Prague in October 1981 had initiated the women's campaign for international peace and security by adopting a declaration calling for an end to the arms race and to world tension. His delegation did not think that the draft Declaration represented any duplication of existing international instruments on the subject of human rights, or that it contradicted those instruments. On the contrary, it rightly sought to emphasize the deep concern felt by the women of the world in connexion with the problems it addressed, and he therefore expressed the hope that the draft Declaration would be adopted by consensus.

28. In conclusion, he said that Uganda had signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1980, after which it had been duly submitted to the constitutional authorities for their consideration.

29. Mrs. CARMENATE (Cuba) said that the Programme of Action adopted at Copenhagen in July 1980 was the keystone of the second stage of the work for the United Nations Decade for Women. Member States must take effective measures to follow the guidelines laid down in that Programme with a view to promoting the advancement of women throughout the world. Her delegation believed that in the implementation of that programme the establishment of a just and lasting peace and of the new international economic order was an essential element. As many delegations had said, in times of economic crisis, women were the first to lose their jobs, after being the last to obtain them. That was not a problem in Cuba, because of the nature of its social system, but Cuba was aware of the problem that existed in many parts of the world. It was urgent to establish the new international

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(Mrs. Carmenate, Cuba)

economic order because it was always the women in the poor developing countries who suffered most from economic recession.

30. She reaffirmed her delegation's support for the Final Document adopted by the Meeting of High Level Experts of Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries Concerned with the Role of Women in Development, held at Havana in May 1981, which was contained in document A/36/490. The Copenhagen Programme dealt in detail with cause and effect in the problems of women and proposed objective solutions.

31. Her delegation welcomed the conclusion of the headquarters agreement for the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and the start of the Institute's operations, which would play a useful part in promoting the participation of women in development. Her Government's willingness to support the Institute was demonstrated by its contribution in grants and training.

32. The Cuban Government attached great importance to the status of women and their role in the economic, social, political and cultural life of the country. Article 43 of the Cuban Constitution ensured the full economic, political, social and family equality of women, and the same principle was reflected in Cuba's legislation. One measure that promoted the equality of women in Cuba was the National Assembly's establishment of the Office for the Care of Mothers and Children. Useful work in behalf of women was carried out by the Federation of Cuban Women, which counted as members over 2 million women, more than 80 per cent of the female population over 14 years of age.

33. One indication of the advances made in the integration of women into the socialist society in all fields was the recruitment of 141,500 women into new jobs, as well as their long terms of employment in existing jobs and the wide variety of work they did. Over 32 per cent of the total labour force consisted of women, and their training for technical employment had increased in the past five years. Their representation in senior posts had also risen in the national Government, in political organizations, in people's organizations, and in other social bodies. Women had contributed notably to cultural improvement and constituted over 39 per cent of those workers who were continuing their studies.

34. Turning to the question of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, she said that Cuba, as the first to sign that Convention, welcomed its entry into force and urged those States that had not yet ratified it to do so. She also said that her country was a sponsor of the draft resolution relating to the Convention A/C.3/36/L.54.

35. Her delegation strongly supported the draft declaration on the participation of women in the struggle for the strengthening of peace (A/C.3/36/L.48), which had been considered at the preceding session. In the light of existing international tensions, the struggle for peace was of paramount importance, and women, who made up half the population of the world, had a vital role to play in the development

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(Mrs. Carmenate, Cuba)

of the world's peoples, which was essential to peace. For over two decades Cuba had worked for a just and universal peace, for national liberation, and against every kind of aggression and domination. The draft declaration would undoubtedly help to achieve the aims of the United Nations Decade for Women: equality, development and peace, and a better world in which human dignity, justice and social progress would prevail.

36. Miss Gwaradzimba (Zimbabwe) said that although her Government was encouraged by the progress achieved in improving the status of women since the 1975 Mexico City Conference, it realized that a great deal still remained to be done, particularly in the areas of development and peace. So long as oppression, poverty and ignorance afflicted the majority of women in the developing countries, their equality would remain an elusive ideal. Zimbabwe therefore pledged its firm support for the goals of the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the Decade and hoped that development and peace would be given even greater attention in that context.

37. In Zimbabwe, the integration of women into the national development and reconstruction process had priority among the Government's tasks. For the women emerging from the degradation and hardship of racial and colonial oppression, the march towards freedom and equality with men was especially difficult. In view of that fact and in accordance with the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women, her Government had created a Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs, which was specifically responsible for dealing with the needs of women. The Ministry was currently studying the institutional or legal shortcomings which delayed the advancement of women, as well as the means to facilitate their equal participation in national development. A bill would be introduced shortly to rectify the disadvantages women had suffered under customary law. Her Government's commitment to the equality of women had already produced results: women currently held three cabinet posts, and several women were members of Parliament; significant number of women also held responsible posts in the civil service, where they received the same pay as men and benefited from special maternity leave.

38. However, thousands of poor, illiterate rural women were still ill-equipped to participate effectively in national development, and they had been given priority in over-all national development plans. Women's co-operatives and organizations were also engaged in upgrading the status of rural women and helped to identify priority areas for Government efforts.

39. Zimbabwe was deeply concerned about the plight of all women under racial oppression, particularly those in Namibia, South Africa and Palestine. Her Government hoped that during the second half of the Decade the United Nations would increase its assistance to women living under apartheid and racial or foreign oppression, for only after peace had been attained could those women effectively claim their freedom and equality.

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(Miss Gwaradzimba, Zimbabwe)

40. Her Government also supported the goals of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for the Decade for Women and had accordingly pledged \$5,000 during the 1981 Pledging Conference. In addition, her Government would support any proposal directed towards extending the Fund's activities beyond the end of the Decade.

40a. Mrs. Masmoudi (Tunisia) took the Chair.

41. Mr. MAKKI (Oman) said that the goal his country had set itself was to make up for lost time and to develop society and achieve social progress, making use of the experience of other countries while protecting the values and heritage of its own religion and history. During the past 10 years, State bodies had made vigorous efforts to attain that goal and had devoted much attention to women, who constituted the basis of the family, which, in turn, was the nucleus of society. Women in his country were expanding their activities beyond the limits of the home, for history had shown that they had a wider role to play. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour was responsible for assessing action taken in behalf of women, monitoring the social development plan and correcting it if necessary.

42. The creation of the Women's Association, a non-governmental organization established in 1970, showed that Omani women wished to render voluntary service to society, and its activities in all areas of the country confirmed their role in national life. The Association was working on pilot projects for the development of local groups in co-operation with UNICEF, UNDP and ECWA. Those projects had three main aims: to search for the best methods of achieving interaction between individuals and society and between society and public institutions; to train national staff who would be capable of managing the development process at all levels; and to extend services to all local communities.

43. Women had played an important role in education, both as students and as instructors. The new era which had begun in July 1970 had brought with it a new interest in providing education for women, especially at the primary level, which was the basis for all education. Significant progress had been achieved since then, with a spectacular increase in the number of people participating in the educational sector. Male and female students receiving higher education in European, American and Arab universities were given financial assistance by the State. A teacher training college had been established to enable young girls to work effectively in the educational sector. There were also publicly funded centres for adult education and orientation centres for women, organized through the Ministry of Education, to provide introductory courses for young women in the fields of health, the family, home economics and religion and social culture. One priority project was the establishment of a centre aimed at enabling young girls to help increase the capacity of village dwellers to look after the welfare of children and putting an end to the traditional custom of giving preference to boys.

44. Women had a very important role to play in health services. They had a proven competence in nursing and provided services in hospitals, medical centres and schools. A nursing school had been established to ensure a supply of qualified

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nurses. Medical services were also provided in villages through a system of health centres which used every available means to disseminate information on health and child welfare. Other activities carried out through the Women's Association included instruction in first aid and care of the sick.

45. Among the radical changes which had taken place since 1970 was the recognition of women's rights and their role in society. National legislation had enabled women to find a new confidence in themselves and to play a productive role in all sectors, thus fully participating in the process of development. Besides their work in education and health, women worked in the police force and held key positions in public and private institutions. A law aimed at protecting women in employment had been enacted, providing them with the right to work, to equal pay and to equal opportunities for promotion.

46. His country had spared no effort to promote the goals of the Decade and would continue that work, looking at the experience of other countries and adapting it to its own society. It was convinced that women must participate fully in development for peace.

47. Mr. SMYK (Poland) said that his country attached great importance to the total elimination of discrimination against women. The role of women in the social, political and economic life of Poland was fully recognized, and numerous efforts were undertaken to facilitate the over-all advancement of women and their complete social emancipation. The creation of better conditions for women in all spheres was and would continue to be fundamental for his country and was a primary goal of Poland's society, Government, political and civic organizations and trade unions.

48. The legal status of Polish women was fully equal to that of men, and activities for the advancement of women in his country were aimed mainly at further strengthening their professional and social status. The Polish Constitution stated that Poland should consolidate the position of women in society, especially that of gainfully employed mothers and women. Various forms of assistance were being planned and initiated, and the process of socialist renewal under way in Poland created new and increased possibilities in that area. Several proposals for improving the conditions of work and life of women had recently been put forward. While their full implementation would take some time, the positive stand of the Polish Government with respect to them was yet another positive manifestation of its intentions.

49. The establishment of a smoothly functioning economy was also of prime importance in improving the position of Polish women; it determined the priorities for his Government's activity and was a basic factor for the development not merely formal but real social privileges for Polish women. In his country, universal respect for the vital part played by women in the family and society derived from the best tradition of its culture. It was also universally acknowledged that further social progress could be achieved through the full integration of women in all spheres of economic, social, cultural and political life.

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(Mr. Smyk, Poland)

50. Poland fully supported the emancipation of women and the three main goals of the Decade. As the problem of equality for women could not be limited to conditions within each country, his Government fully supported all activities aimed at increasing women's role at the international level 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. The problems of equality for women could not be solved unless the complex social, economic and political problems of the modern world were settled. There was an obligation to create in all countries conditions that would enable women to participate in the process of building universal peace and development. His Government therefore appreciated the international efforts being made for that purpose, among the most important of which were those undertaken as part of the United Nations Decade for Women; it believed that the full implementation of the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the Decade would constitute a major step forward.

51. Mr. AL-SAYAGHI (Yemen Arab Republic) said that the emancipation of women could not be divorced from the principle of cultural, political and economic freedom, which provided a secure guarantee of human dignity and must govern all social relationships. That principle must be applied equally to men and women, and the countries of the third world must make strenuous efforts to make it a reality throughout their societies. In his country, women had been given an opportunity to play a role in society and were protected by law, since his Government was convinced that that was an essential element of the over-all development process. The base for women's education had been expanded, and free education was available at all levels. There had been an expansion of training centres designed to enable women to work in the public sector, and moral and financial support was given to women's associations. Women played an important role in literacy campaigns, in the home, and in family and child welfare. Family planning helped to improve the standard of living of women and families as a whole.

52. The fight of women for national independence, peace and security and against racial discrimination and other social ills was growing in scope, as could be seen from the importance of the contribution made by Palestinian women in the struggle to regain their occupied land and to put an end to all the discrimination and violations of human rights which they suffered. The international community should give all necessary assistance to Palestinian women, who were victims of massacres, imprisonment, deportation and terrorism on the part of the Zionist régime planted in the Palestinian Arab world.

53. In conclusion, he said that all women, particularly those of the third world, should play their part in eliminating underdevelopment, ignorance and the present gap between developed and developing countries.

54. Miss FRANCO (Portugal) said that the aim of full equality for women still remained to be achieved, at the national and international levels, and in both developed and developing countries. The lack of equality for women would not be

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(Miss Franco, Portugal)

remedied merely by development, since economic development improved the living conditions of all members of the population. Development could not be achieved without the participation of women, but that participation was hindered by strong cultural factors, which were among the causes of the discrimination against women that still existed in the world. Portugal fully appreciated the valuable contribution of women to society, and her Government, through its Commission on the Status of Women was therefore carrying out an education project to develop attitudes of equality between the sexes. A pilot project now in progress was designed to inform primary-school teachers about the mechanisms that led to sex-role stereotyping. Portugal's legislation already provided for full equality of treatment for men and women, and thus Portugal had been one of the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; her delegation was pleased to note the entry into force of that instrument. However, experience in Portugal had shown that changes in legislation, important though they may be, were not enough.

55. The position of her Government was based on the fundamental principle that women were equal to men and should have the same rights, duties and opportunities. Accordingly, Portugal had voted for the Programme adopted at Copenhagen. Despite the inclusion of elements completely extraneous to the subject, that Programme contained practical proposals of direct relevance to women. Her delegation supported its general recommendations, which should guide the actions of the United Nations and Member States in pursuing the goals of the United Nations Decade for Women. The proposals contained in the Programme were taken into account by the Portuguese Government in considering its policies on women's issues.

56. Her Government's views on the earlier version of the draft declaration contained in document A/C.3/36/L.48 had been stated in document A/36/476/Add.1. In principle, there was no need for such a declaration. The participation of women in the struggle for the strengthening of international peace and security and against colonialism, racism, racial discrimination, foreign aggression, occupation and all forms of foreign domination should, in her Government's view, be seen in the context of a more general struggle to defend human rights and fundamental freedoms. That main concept should therefore shape the declaration, which could also include other aspects of the struggle for the promotion of human rights. The present text required extensive negotiation in order to accommodate the viewpoints of different Member States if it was to gain the general consensus which was the only proper basis for any such draft declaration.

57. Miss KASSIMOU (Comoros) said, referring to agenda item 88, that her delegation welcomed the increasing importance that the international community attached to the advancement of women; it hoped that more Member States would accede to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The campaign to improve the status of women in all fields was a long-term task requiring the efforts of the whole international community. The Comoros had striven to ensure equality for women at all levels. Despite the inevitable difficulties of a newly independent country, it was making every effort to ensure that all its citizens, without distinction as to sex, could contribute fully to the building of the nation.

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(Miss Kassimou, Comoros)

That aim was reflected in its Constitution, which endowed all citizens with the same rights and duties. All had the same right to education and employment. Although relatively few women occupied senior posts in the Comoros at present, that did not in any way reflect Government policy. As soon as the Comoros had become independent, her Government had begun to implement far-reaching plans to associate all citizens in the country's development, and Comorian women were becoming increasingly aware of their national responsibilities, in addition to their responsibilities as wives and mothers. In the health field, women in both urban and rural areas were helping to improve primary health care through their contributions in midwifery, nursing and child care, with a view to achieving the target of health for all by the year 2000. A national health school to train both boys and girls had been established in order to provide urban and rural dispensaries and maternity homes with the necessary staff.

58. The Union of Comorian women, to which both urban and rural women belonged, had drawn up an ambitious project aimed at ensuring the support of the Union for national and international bodies concerned with the health sector, in particular with mother and child welfare, and close collaboration with those bodies in the establishment of nutritional treatment centres. Through their many human contacts, women represented an important means of introducing at the village level activities designed to improve primary health care as part of rural development.

59. All Comorian boys and girls were given the same educational opportunities and had the same chance of financial support in undertaking higher studies. Girls had been able to receive training in the fields of health, education, and the administration of justice. Much still remained to be done, but every effort was being made to improve the situation.

60. Discrimination against women was largely a reflection of the traditions and attitudes of various societies and of the level of development. Thus while some women were striving for such goals as better employment conditions and a better education for their children, another group of women were vainly striving to rise above the hunger level and to obtain rudimentary care for themselves and their children. The campaign for full equality for women must therefore go hand in hand with the struggle to eliminate as quickly as possible the social and material inequalities that still divided not only the women of different societies but even women within a single society. The Meeting of High-Level Experts of Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries Concerned with the Role of Women in Development, held at Havana in May 1981, had stated that there could be no peace without development and no development without peace, so that the struggle for peace was part of the struggle for development and part of the struggle against inequalities of all kinds throughout the world.

61. The existing crisis in the world economic system reflected a basic imbalance and a persistent inequality. The idea of equality was closely linked to the idea of development, and thus to the idea of peace; consequently, equality of women, their participation in development and the improvement of their status

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(Miss Kassimou, Comoros)

required a change in the present unjust system of international relations and the establishment of conditions of international peace and security. It was therefore logical that the establishment of peace should be the central aim of the United Nations Decade for Women. Women had had to watch an acceleration of the arms race and the rise of many centres of tension which threatened them and their children. Since they were the main victims of colonialism, racism, apartheid and foreign domination, the strengthening of international peace and security were essential for an improvement in the status of women. The whole international community should unite to combat all those scourges of mankind. Only a world free from the nuclear threat and the threat of war could ensure the safeguarding of women's rights and their full development.

62. In order to achieve the aims adopted at the Copenhagen Conference, her Government was drawing up national policies and programmes to ensure a greater participation by women in decision-making, planning, and the management and execution of national development plans. A true development policy required a political will that was the democratic expression of the interests of the people and also required the ending of all forms of exploitation of and discrimination against women. That was the only path that could lead to development and peace.

63. Mr. BOUYOUCHEF (Algeria) said that in the six years that had elapsed since the Mexico City Conference great progress had been made, particularly in the participation of women in development, but more was required at both the national and the international levels. His delegation had noted with satisfaction the Secretary-General's report (A/36/564) outlining the steps taken by United Nations bodies for the advancement of women. Algeria welcomed the appointment of Mrs. Dunja Pastizzi-Ferencic as Director of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of WOMEN (INSTRAW). His delegation attached special importance to that Institute and hoped that it would begin to function very shortly, in accordance with the guidelines laid down at the Mexico City and Copenhagen Conferences. Close co-operation between the Institute and the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs would help to achieve the aims of the United Nations Decade for Women.

64. He also welcomed the appointment of Mrs. Shefika Sellami-Meslem, a fellow Algerian, as the Director of the Centre's Branch for the Advancement of Women.

65. His Government gave high priority to improving the status of women and increasing their participation in development because women represented over 50 per cent of Algeria's population. In addition to women's activities as wives and mothers, which were an important contribution to development, many Algerian women were contributing to the country's development in other ways. Women in Algeria had been active during the revolution, when they had borne arms courageously for national liberation. Since independence in 1962, the National Union of Algerian Women had been working for women's equality. Women were already participating in politics, within the party, in the National Popular Assembly, in the people's organizations or in local government.

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(Mr. Bouyoucef, Algeria)

66. The promotion of the rights of Algerian women was part of Algeria's general development strategy, whose main goal was the radical transformation of all the social and economic structures inherited from the colonial period through the elimination of all forms of exploitation, the development of productive forces, and the restoration of work as the main source of social progress, with a view to the building of an independent economy. The mobilization of human resources and the work of nation-building were the main aims of the political bodies in Algeria and were reflected in the various political texts adopted. The National Charter, which was the source of all guidelines and decisions, recognized as a fundamental right the advancement of women and their full participation in the life of the nation; it regarded the advancement of women as an imperative of justice and equity, a requirement dictated by the dialectic of progress, democracy, and the harmonious building of the nation, and an inherent element in the status of women as citizens. In the light of those principles, the Constitution of 22 November 1976 had provided in article 39 that all citizens had the same rights and duties and that any discrimination based on sex, race, or occupation was prohibited. Likewise, in article 42, it was laid down that all political, economic, social and cultural rights of Algerian women were guaranteed by the Constitution. Article 84 provided for the participation of women in economic activity and declared that Algerian women should participate fully in the building of socialism and in social development. In fact, there were no legal obstacles to the advancement of Algerian women and their participation in public life, and the existing difficulties were gradually being overcome. Algeria's status as a developing country was a major obstacle to the full mobilization of all its human resources. Every developing country faced a multitude of problems that arose from the unjust international economic system. For that reason, the developing countries were calling for a new international economic order, which would contribute greatly to the participation of women in political, economic, cultural and social life in all the developing countries.

67. His delegation believed that the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women, which had been intended to play a key role in all the activities of the Programme of Action adopted at Mexico City, could not do so unless it was closely linked to the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. While the Centre and the Branch for the Advancement of Women had both been based in New York, the problem had never arisen. However, it must be remembered that in carrying out operational activities with the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labour Office at Geneva or the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Rome, the execution of the projects decided on was the responsibility of those organizations. The Fund, which ought to be the dynamo of the Branch, should be closely attached to the organization that was promoting activities relating to women. The important point was that the Fund should make it possible, through its additional resources, to carry out projects which were not normally included in national programming. The Secretary-General's proposal in that connexion should be studied carefully.

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68. Ms. WELLS (Australia) said that the Australian Government was committed to equality of opportunity, freedom from discrimination and equal status for women everywhere and believed that the United Nations could play an important role in helping Governments to focus on the real obstacles to women's progress. In addition, the role of non-governmental organizations had been tremendously important in advancing the cause of women, and their participation in the evolution of the Decade had been an inspiration to all.

69. Her delegation was aware that an effort was being made to call the Programme of Action to the attention of various organizations within the United Nations system. However, it was clear from the Secretary-General's report (A/36/564) that greater emphasis had to be given to women's issues if they were to be regarded as part of the mainstream of United Nations considerations. Her delegation noted with approval that an Expert Group Meeting on Women and the International Development Strategy would be held in December 1981. She hoped that the results of such meetings would be taken into account in the preparation of the interdisciplinary and multisectoral world survey on the role of women in over-all development which was referred to in paragraph 30 of the report.

70. Australia actively supported the activities of the Voluntary Fund, particularly in the ESCAP region. Her delegation hoped that a regular budget post for ESCAP's women's programme could be made available in the very near future. There seemed to be two basic questions related to the Committee's discussion of the Voluntary Fund, namely, the duration of the activities supported by the Fund and its administrative location. Australia believed that the distinctive role of the Fund should be retained at the end of the Decade but that it should be located as a special fund within UNDP. Until that time, the administration of the Fund should remain in New York. About 70 per cent of the Fund's money was already handled through UNDP offices, and her delegation was satisfied with the effectiveness and efficiency of that system of operation. Administration by UNDP would enable the Fund to take advantage of the existing UNDP representative offices while retaining its separate identity and method of project selection.

71. Australia had signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and her Government was working actively towards its ratification, in consultation with Australian State Governments. While Australia regarded the Convention as a serious instrument with important practical implications, the same could not be said for the draft Declaration on the Participation of Women in the Struggle for the Strengthening of International Peace and Security. The obvious propaganda preoccupations of the sponsors of that text had little relevance to the real concerns of women and might, in fact, serve to distract attention from the need for constructive measures to promote the status of women in all societies. Her delegation appealed to the sponsors not to insist on a vote at the current session, since a consensus was clearly not possible.

72. Australia was interested in the early establishment of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and believed that, given adequate material support, the Institute could make a very valuable contribution to the efforts being undertaken throughout the United Nations system to promote the advancement of women in the context of over-all development.

73. Mrs. WARZAZI (Morocco) said her delegation was aware that the achievement of equality for women would require time, patience and, above all, wisdom. Women should not be dictated to but should be given every opportunity to decide their own fate. Her delegation greatly regretted that at international meetings, both at the level of experts and at that of official representatives, the status of women was once again being exploited for strictly political purposes. Morocco did not believe that meetings whose purpose was the solution of development problems but which devoted three quarters of their discussions to strictly political questions served the cause of women.

74. It had often happened that women who reached posts of great responsibility at the national level ceased to show much interest in the problems of their less fortunate sisters. Her delegation believed that accession to a high international post should be regarded by the recipient as an effective means of promoting a cause, in other words, it should be an opportunity for militancy, not for resting on one's laurels. Those criteria should be considered in the appointment of women to posts of leadership, so that they could make a solid contribution to the advancement of the cause of women. In that connexion, her delegation supported the studies on the attitudes of women with respect to political and public life which would be carried out by UNESCO as preliminary activities to the convening of a committee of experts to study the means of increasing the participation of women in the social life of the community, including their participation in activities for the strengthening of peace. In the case of women, certain priorities should be taken into consideration. The first was to provide every means for women to prepare themselves for all the difficulties they would face in life. One such means was undoubtedly a good education. To speak today of women's contribution to disarmament and the maintenance of peace was as utopian as sending a soldier into battle without teaching him how to use arms and to defend himself. Her delegation welcomed the realism displayed by UNITAR, which recognized that the establishment of a new international economic order was unlikely as long as there was inequality between men and women. Consequently, it was certainly premature to call upon women throughout the world to make a contribution to the establishment of a new international economic order.

75. Her delegation hoped that the Expert Group Meeting on Women and the International Development Strategy to be held later in November 1981 would not waste time and effort on unrelated matters, as other meetings had done. While her delegation was in favour of regional or international seminars and meetings which were apolitical and fruitful, it could not hide its astonishment, and indeed its indignation, at the fact that UNESCO would organize a symposium on the status of women in Islamic countries. Her delegation had never heard it said that the evaluation of the role of women in development should be carried out in terms of religions or religious cultures. She wondered whether that meant the beginning of a new era of successive studies on Protestant women, Catholic women, Jewish women, Buddhist women, and so on, or whether the intention was to insinuate that the situation of women in Islamic countries necessitated a special seminar, thereby making a distinction between Islamic women and others. If the latter was true, then it would be desirable, if not essential, that the

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(Mrs. Warzazi, Morocco)

organizers of that seminar should first devote a number of hours to the study of Islam. The Koran laid down the principle of equality between men and women and endowed women with rights which, so far as she knew, women in mediaeval Europe or elsewhere at the time of the creation of Islam had not enjoyed.

76. The international community would probably have to wait until 1982 to evaluate and comment on the progress achieved by Governments in implementing the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the Decade. At the international level, the strengthening and promotion of the role of the regional commissions was essential, and they should be kept informed of all measures taken at the international level by the United Nations system. It should not be forgotten, for example, that the Voluntary Fund had acquired its operational impetus through the co-operation of the regional commissions. Her delegation noted with satisfaction that the activities of the Fund had financed 220 projects with contributions from 70 Member States. She hoped that special attention would be given to women in the least advanced countries in order to enable them to make their contribution to the solution of problems in their countries. Extension of the Fund beyond the Decade could be justified in so far as the Fund was successful in promoting the purposes for which it had been established. Her delegation did not regard the question of the location of the Fund as a matter of rivalry between the cities of Vienna and New York or the continents of Europe and America. Its sole concern was that the Fund should be afforded the maximum facilities to serve the most needy women throughout the world.

77. It had been announced that the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs would devote more resources to the study of the role which women could play in the promotion of peace. Her delegation felt that that initiative, while laudable, was idealistic, while the current situation of the vast majority of women demanded much more realism and pragmatism. Morocco would prefer the preparation of a comparative compendium of national laws for the promotion of equality between the sexes which would enable women to work on an equal footing with men in solving the problems of war and peace.

78. Her delegation was glad to see that the basic role of the mother had not been forgotten in document A/36/564, which mentioned the elaboration of the convention on the rights of the child. Similarly, it welcomed the initiative by the United Nations University to explore the possibility of establishing an institute for mother and child, with special emphasis on the problems of developing countries.

79. Mr. O'Donovan (Ireland) resumed the Chair.

80. Miss MANGAZA (Zaire) said that since gaining independence, the Republic of Zaire had subscribed to the principle of equality of rights and fundamental freedoms for all human beings set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That policy was enshrined in the Manifesto of the national party, the Popular Movement of the Revolution, which recognized that all citizens of Zaire, men and women, should enjoy and exercise all rights, in particular, access to political, economic and social responsibilities.

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(Miss Mangaza, Zaire)

81. In order to ensure the integration of women into development and to respond to the appeal made to Governments by the recommendations in the Mexico City Plan of Action concerning the establishment of international machinery to promote equality of opportunity for women, with a view to their integration and participation in development, the President of the Republic of Zaire had established in February 1980 the General Secretariat on the Status of Women. The General Secretariat had participated in a national seminar organized at Kinshasa in February 1981 by the Department of Social Affairs and aimed at reorienting the social policy of Zaire along the lines of the objectives of the new International Development Strategy. The General Secretariat was engaged in co-ordinating all problems linked to women's activities, with a view to achieving the objectives of the Social Year 1981, proclaimed by the President of the Republic. As the President had stated, the improvement of the status of women and the strengthening of their role in the development process constituted an integral part of world action for the establishment of a new international economic order based on equity, equality in sovereignty, interdependence, community of interests and advantageous co-operation for all States.

82. Her delegation was pleased to note that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women had entered into force on 3 September 1981. While Zaire had signed the Convention, it had not yet ratified or acceded to it because the competent national organs were currently studying the process of ratification.

83. Zaire had participated actively in the Meeting of High-Level Experts of Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries Concerned with the Role of Women in Development, held at Havana in May 1981.

84. Her delegation had expressed reservations concerning paragraphs 14, 15 and 16 of the introductory part of the Copenhagen Programme of Action, which had raised much discussion because of the political elements introduced therein. On the other hand, it had joined in the consensus which had emerged with respect to the recommendations formulated in the Programme of Action on the priorities, strategies and actions proposed to Governments for the well-being of women. Her delegation was pleased to note that the various bodies of the United Nations system were making great efforts to implement the Programme of Action adopted at Copenhagen. As was stated in paragraph 26 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/36/564), the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs was the focal point of the United Nations Decade for Women, and her delegation appreciated the activities undertaken concerning the co-ordination within the United Nations system and the strengthening of the Commission on the Status of Women, including monitoring and implementation of the Programme of Action.

85. The CHAIRMAN announced that the Committee had now concluded its general debate on agenda items 88 and 89.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.