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THIRD COMMITTEE  
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Monday, 17 October 1977  
at 3 p.m.  
New York

## SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 20th MEETING

Chairman: Mrs. MAIR (Jamaica)

### CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 85: UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR WOMEN: EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE:  
REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

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

AGENDA ITEM 85: UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR WOMEN: EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/32/3, chap. VI, sect. B, A/32/174, A/32/175, A/32/211, A/32/216, A/32/218)

1. Miss RICHTER (Argentina) said that her country was prepared to support the draft Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (A/32/218, annex IV), even though the text before the Committee contained a number of provisions already embodied in various international instruments, many of which had been ratified by Argentina. She hoped that a universally acceptable text could be adopted at the current session and would do everything she could to ensure that it was not too limited in scope, since that would be a backward step in the efforts of the international community to eliminate all forms of discrimination, including discrimination on the grounds of sex and civil status. Since the comments on articles 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 15 of the draft Convention which the Argentine Government had submitted to the Secretary-General had not yet been published, she would like to inform the Committee of some of them. With regard to article 6, all provisions of national law - and not simply of penal codes - which constituted discrimination against women should be repealed. Argentina had proposed a mandatory form of words for article 7, concerning exploitation of prostitution of women, bearing in mind the need to eliminate that abominable practice and the fact that the General Assembly, in its resolution 317 (IV), had recommended the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others. Article 9, paragraph 3, should be deleted. The provisions of article 12 should cover the most disadvantaged groups, whether in rural or urban areas.

2. With regard to the Programme for the United Nations Decade for Women, she would like all the regional commissions and specialized agencies to inform the Committee of the actions they had taken to implement Assembly resolution 3520 (XXX).

3. Argentina, which had supported Economic and Social Council resolution 2062 (LXII) concerning preparatory work for the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, 1980, attached prime importance to regional contributions both to the Decade and to the Conference. Accordingly, in 1976 it had served as host country for the first regional seminar to be held during the Decade. It was the seat of the multinational OAS Women's Centre and had established an applied laboratory of technical education for women in Buenos Aires with the aim of bringing about the full participation of women in the national development process. It would be desirable for both those institutions to maintain close collaboration with the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, which it was hoped would become operational shortly.

4. Mr. AMIRASINGHE (Sri Lanka) said that he would like to begin with a few words on social development in general. As the Assistant Secretary-General for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs had pointed out at the 2nd meeting of the Committee, the ultimate aim of the international development effort was the

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(Mr. Amerasinghe, Sri Lanka)

well-being of individuals, and individuals and groups of individuals must be the main factors in the formulation of projections, policies and programmes (A/C.3/32/SR.2). Care must also be taken not to fragment the various issues which made up the well-being of the individual, since that made it difficult to co-ordinate efforts at the international level and see human beings as individuals with all their needs but also with a tremendous potential for action. Social development had now become part of national policy in all the developing countries. Since gaining independence, Sri Lanka had given high priority to problems of crime, the elderly, the youth and community development. He gave a number of examples of achievements in those fields, which had been made possible by the assistance his Government had received in many ways from the United Nations system, and he strongly supported co-ordinated policies and programmes of social development in the United Nations.

5. Turning to the question of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, he said that a convention on the elimination of discrimination against women was long overdue. The Committee should therefore give very high priority, in its consideration of item 85, to the draft Convention now before it (A/32/218, annex IV), thus complying with the wishes expressed by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2058 (LXII). He therefore suggested that, in the two or three days allotted to item 85 during the current month, the Committee should confine its discussions, as much as possible, to the draft Convention with a view to adopting it at the present session. The draft Convention was a very progressive measure, which had the support of Sri Lanka.

6. The women of Sri Lanka had been enjoying political, social, economic and civil rights for many years. As far back as 1931, women had been given equal opportunities to participate with men in the political life of the country. Since that time, they had been using their vote in parliamentary and local elections, and women had been elected to Parliament and to local government bodies. Measures had been taken to give women equal employment opportunities with men in the State service and in the private sector. The proportion of women among doctors and lawyers was very high. They had the right to equal pay with men for equal work and had the same pension and provident fund benefits as men.

7. The rights that the women of Sri Lanka now enjoyed had not been given by legislation alone; education had been an important factor. Since 1946, education for both sexes had been free from kindergarten to university. There was a high proportion of women in the universities. Higher education among women was resulting in later marriages, which was making a significant impact in lowering the population growth rate.

8. Sri Lanka was glad to note that international agencies, notably the World Bank, were changing their personnel policies to make more room for women. If Governments were striving to establish equal opportunities for women, the same opportunities should surely be afforded to them in international agencies.

9. Before the Pledging Conference on the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women was convened on 8 November, an opportunity should be provided for

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(Mr. Amerasinghe, Sri Lanka)

the members of the Third Committee to discuss whatever decisions the Consultative Committee on the Voluntary Fund (A/32/174) found it feasible to make on appropriate regional projects which would benefit rural women, poor women in urban areas and other marginal groups of women, especially the disadvantaged, and which were to be submitted to the Consultative Committee by each of the four regional economic commissions. The Consultative Committee was expected to meet during the current month. Since the resources of the Voluntary Fund were limited and the projects now being identified would be the first to be financed from the Fund, care must be taken to ensure that the resources of the Fund were utilized for the most deserving projects with a satisfactory geographical distribution. Such a discussion in the Third Committee would provide some useful guidelines for the selection and formulation of projects by the regional commissions, and would give a broad indication of the funds that would be needed for projects during the Decade.

10. Mrs. LORANGER (Canada) expressed the hope that the draft Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women could be adopted at the current session; for, despite the efforts made to improve the condition of women, a great deal remained to be done. It was true that some women were attending the Third Committee, but how many were involved in the decision-making process, either at the United Nations or in their own countries? How many were really participating in the process of development? However, international instruments would not change the rights of women unless States were willing to avoid perpetuating situations which had become unacceptable. States could and should act now; they need not wait for the coming into force of the Convention in order to correct imbalances with respect to women.

11. Canada would have preferred a text whose basic objective would have been to promote equality between the sexes rather than to accord special benefits to women, but that would not prevent it from supporting it. On the other hand, it hoped that the proposed working group would be constituted shortly and would be able to improve the text from a legal as well as a drafting perspective. Some articles were so ambiguous that they could hardly be acceptable; for example, article 16 suggested that States might decide that their legislation was more favourable to women, so that the Convention could be disregarded. Too many laws or conventions which had been meant to grant benefits to women had done no more than perpetuate discriminatory practices and lower the status of women. Canada would therefore wish to see that article modified or deleted. It also hoped that article 9 could be made less compulsory, since it considered that the granting of privileges to the alien spouses of nationals constituted discrimination on the basis of marital or civil status, which should be specifically mentioned in the preamble. That form of discrimination affected women more often than men. An example was in the extending of credit, where married women faced considerably greater barriers than did single women.

12. Canada had recently taken some initiatives which were consistent with the spirit of the draft Convention and which might be of interest to other States. In the field of legislation, the federal Government had passed the Human Rights Act - and she stressed the word "Human" - which prohibited discrimination on the grounds,

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(Mrs. Loranger, Canada)

inter alia, of sex and marital status and provided for equal pay for work of equal value. The Human Rights Commission, which was charged with enforcing that legislation by hearing personal complaints, was studying how the latter principle could best be translated into practice. In the administrative field, the machinery at the federal level which dealt with status of women questions had recently been strengthened. At a time when most of the recommendations of the Royal Commission of Enquiry on the Status of Women had been implemented, a new blueprint for national action in that field was being developed. There had been major changes in citizenship legislation, in that men and women were now treated equally with respect to both the acquisition of citizenship and the transmittal of citizenship to their children.

13. Canada was fully involved in the implementation of the Programme for the Decade for Women and would participate in all international activities organized in that context.

14. Ms. HÖRLEN (Sweden) said that although women's work was as necessary as that of men, it was not yet fully appreciated by society; women were often exploited and relegated to a subordinate role. The oppression of women obviously took different forms according to the economic, cultural and social conditions in which they lived, and there were no general measures applicable everywhere; nevertheless, economic, social and sometimes even legal, discrimination against women was a phenomenon that existed everywhere in the world. Reforms in various fields, such as employment, education and the law, were therefore necessary. But formal equality was not enough and could not by itself solve all problems; that equality must be translated into everyday reality.

15. International Women's Year had spotlighted the injustices suffered by women and had aroused high hopes. If those hopes were not to be crushed, all States must redouble their efforts to implement the plan of the United Nations Decade for Women. Sweden, for its part, had taken steps in that direction by proceeding to draw up a national plan of action.

16. The promotion of equality for women was inseparably linked with the struggle for economic and social development and justice between countries, but it must be recognized that economic and social development was not enough to improve the situation of women and guarantee them increased justice and equality. Modern economic growth and the process of industrialization might deprive women of their traditional productive roles and relegate them to a marginal and dependent existence. Therefore economic and social justice for women must go hand in hand with over-all economic progress. That made it necessary to undertake measures and adopt programmes to help women participate actively in the development process by guaranteeing them, inter alia, equal access to education and vocational training.

17. Furthermore, certain traditions and customs, such as female circumcision, which had been condemned in principle by the world community but were rarely referred to in public, were contributing to discrimination based on sex. Increased efforts must now be made, therefore, to put an end to that particularly cruel form of sex discrimination.

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(Ms. Hörlén, Sweden)

18. Referring to the draft Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, now before the Committee, she recalled that as a member of the Commission on the Status of Women, Sweden had actively participated in the preparation of that document, which was based on the World Plan of Action adopted at the World Conference of International Women's Year and on the ILO Declaration and Plan of Action on Equality of Opportunities and Treatment for Women Workers. The essence of those documents was that equality between men and women could not be secured by measures aimed at women only and that sex discrimination was a crime against human dignity and a violation of the freedom and self-determination of the individual. All forms of discrimination based on sex had to be eliminated, no matter where they materialized or against whom they were directed. Sweden would therefore have preferred a draft convention on the elimination of sex discrimination, and it wished to reaffirm the principle of the equality of men and women. In its view, regulations adopted specifically to protect women were inappropriate; instead, protective regulations should apply equally to men and to women. To be sure, special provisions were needed to protect women against dismissal by reason of pregnancy and to guarantee their right to pregnancy and maternity leave; however, men as well as women should be given an opportunity to reconcile their employment and parenthood responsibilities. That principle was reflected in the World Plan of Action and should also be expressed in the draft Convention.

19. Moreover, the implementation of the Convention would depend largely on the effectiveness of review and follow-up mechanisms, which in their present form were not forceful enough. It would be preferable to make them similar to the mechanisms provided for in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

20. Mr. MERKEL (Federal Republic of Germany) said that the draft Convention before the Committee (A/32/218) represented a balanced compromise which should make it possible to adopt the Convention quickly and open it for signature. The draft further developed existing United Nations instruments and made them more precise; it reflected the advances made in the national legislation of various countries and the growing interest in equal rights for men and women. It also took into account social and economic developments which had changed the situation of women and which now necessitated changes in their legal status. The draft contained some provisions relating to private law, particularly family law, in matters such as women's property rights and their right to transmit their nationality to their children. Moreover, in accordance with paragraph 13 of the Proclamation of Teheran adopted on 13 May 1968, the draft emphasized economic, social and cultural rights in order to meet the urgent need for improving the conditions of life for women.

21. The objective was to ensure that the States Parties committed themselves to taking appropriate measures, including legislative measures, to eliminate discrimination against women. For that reason, even those States which had practical and legal difficulties to overcome in that field should be able to adopt the Convention. Moreover, the ad hoc Group provided for in article 19, paragraph 3, seemed to be an appropriate body for examining and evaluating the reports to be

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(Mr. Merkel, Federal Republic  
of Germany)

submitted by States Parties on the implementation of the Convention. The mixed composition of the Group represented an important improvement and deserved the Committee's support. Accordingly, the Federal Republic of Germany appealed to all States for speedy adoption of the draft Convention.

22. The rights enunciated in the draft Convention were already effectively recognized in the Federal Republic of Germany, where legislation guaranteed women rights equal to those of men; however, in order to make that principle still more a reality in practice, his Government was seeking to promulgate laws which would take due account of the particular circumstances of women and to amend laws based on the principle of the traditional division of roles between the sexes, with a view to enabling men and women to participate on a fully equal basis in all activities of family life, employment and public life: education and information campaigns had been initiated for that purpose. A commission, consisting of both parliamentarians and experts, had been established by the Federal Parliament to strengthen the role of women and had already submitted its first interim report.

23. The Programme for the United Nations Decade for Women deserved support, with the exception of some references to earlier resolutions concerning which the Federal Republic of Germany maintained its reservations. That Programme would make it possible to promote the equality of men and women in all countries, and it might be desirable if the bulletin published by the United Nations on the occasion of International Women's Year were reissued from time to time to inform the public concerning its implementation. In order to improve the effectiveness of the studies proposed in the Programme, they should be supplemented by practical testing accompanied by scientific research.

24. At the bilateral level, his Government had co-operated with non-governmental organizations in the developing countries and had committed or paid in 1976 appropriations amounting to DM 40 million in order to help those organizations carry out more than 100 projects relevant to women. A notable example was a project to improve the water supply in Kenya's Kandara district, for which his Government had contributed DM 7 million. At the multilateral level, the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany had, inter alia, made special-purpose contributions amounting to DM 250,000 for a training and advanced-training programme for rural women. It had also been host to a conference of UNESCO experts which had drawn up a programme for the exchange of information between women of developing and industrial countries. In addition, it had participated in the elaboration and adoption of various documents and legal instruments designed to eliminate discrimination against women in training and employment.

25. The Federal Republic of Germany attached great importance to the World Conference on the United Nations Decade for Women and would like to participate in its preparation.

26. It welcomed the establishment of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women in Teheran.

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(Mr. Merkel, Federal Republic  
of Germany)

27. In view of the work accomplished by the Commission on the Status of Women, the existence of that body seemed justified so long as the equality of women had not been completely achieved all over the world. The Federal Republic of Germany therefore regretted that the Economic and Social Council at its sixty-second session had failed to adopt resolution X proposed by the Commission.

28. Mrs. MAIJ-WEGGEN (Netherlands) said that she would confine herself to a few general observations, since in her delegation's view a discussion of the draft Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women should be carried out by a working group, as recommended by the Economic and Social Council at its sixty-second session; moreover, the Netherlands had submitted detailed comments on the question, which were contained in the Secretary-General's report (A/32/218). The draft Convention was the result of extensive deliberations and consultations, and an attempt had been made to prepare a text which would do justice to the legitimate aspirations of women living in countries with highly diverse cultures and traditions. The draft was therefore necessarily a compromise, but a positive and constructive compromise. It was a balanced and inspiring document that would be of great help to those countries that wished to endeavour sincerely to eliminate discriminatory laws and socio-cultural rules in their society and to establish programmes aimed at changing and advancing the role of women, enabling them to exercise all their rights, fulfil their appropriate social role and participate actively in national development.

29. The purpose of the draft Convention was to improve the status of women, an essential step towards recognition of the equal dignity of men and women. In her delegation's view an examination of the status of men, and in particular the traditional division of labour between men and women in the family and in society, would be a decisive stage in the emancipation process. For that reason, instead of referring in the draft Convention only to the equality of woman with man, it would be better to speak of the equal dignity of man and woman.

30. Furthermore, the draft seemed to have some weak spots with regard to procedures for its implementation. The Netherlands would therefore support any initiative that could make the draft more effective in that area. Women's organizations should be called upon for help, since they could make a useful contribution to the effective implementation of the Convention. In spite of those reservations, she hoped that the draft Convention would be adopted by the General Assembly at its current session, for it would help to improve the well-being of all mankind.

31. Miss CAO-PINNA (Italy) said that her Government had recently proposed to Parliament the adoption of comprehensive legislative measures to ensure full equality of men and women in the field of labour, including the establishment of administrative sanctions in case of violation. The bill, which had been presented by the Minister of Labour, the first woman to be a member of the Government, and the new family legislation enacted in 1975 were a clear expression of the growing importance that the elimination of de facto or de jure discrimination against women had gained in Italy. The adoption of an international instrument in that field



(Miss Cao-Pinna, Italy)

would make it possible to attain that goal more rapidly. Indeed, the enactment of national legislation on discrimination, of whatever type, was not enough in itself to eliminate deep-rooted prejudices.

32. Italy supported the draft Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (A/32/218). It had some reservations on a few articles concerning questions of nationality but hoped that it would be possible to find more flexible formulas which could be accepted by all. The compromise solution proposed for the implementation of the Convention was more acceptable to the majority of delegations than a system of international control similar to that in force for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Her delegation hoped that the fact that only a very limited number of countries had submitted comments to the Secretary-General in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2058 (LXII) would not prevent the proposed working group, and then the Committee, from considering the text of the draft Convention as rapidly as possible.

32. Two conclusions could be drawn from the reports of the Secretary-General (A/32/174 and A/32/175) which were before the Committee. The first conclusion concerned the biennial review and appraisal of the implementation of the World Plan of Action, which was envisaged as an input to the review and appraisal of the International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade. Paragraphs 12 and 13 of document A/32/175 indicated that the bodies entrusted with that review, namely, the Committee on Development Planning and the Committee on Review and Appraisal, had not drawn any benefit from the information provided to them by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs on the subject of the main trends and policies regarding the status of women, particularly the integration of women into the development process. Her delegation felt concerned about the lack of communication among Secretariat bodies and hoped that it was due merely to the fact that the first two years of the Decade for Women had been used at all levels for preparatory work only.

34. The second conclusion concerned the variety and frequency of requests addressed to Member States by the Secretary-General for information on progress in improving the status of women. The detailed questionnaire prepared by the Secretariat and recently circulated to Governments in implementation of Economic and Social Council resolution 2060 (LXII) was designed to facilitate the work of Member States and enable the Commission to make effective use of the information received, but it was rather long and complicated, and the Commission on the Status of Women was unlikely to have very many replies for the comprehensive review it was to undertake at the beginning of 1978. It would therefore be advisable for the review and appraisal of the World Plan of Action to be made at the middle of the Decade for Women, taking into account the Conference to be held in 1980, since social phenomena did not evolve so rapidly as to allow a sound assessment of progress made in two years at the national level.

35. Her delegation wished to commend the Consultative Committee on the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women for the way in which it had conducted

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(Miss Cao-Pinna, Italy)

the work of its first session. It supported the establishment of the International Research and Training Institute for the Promotion of Women and believed that the Pledging Conference to be held on 8 November would indicate how soon that project could be realized.

36. Mrs. NORTHEN (Denmark) said that despite all that had been done over the course of a decade to promote the cause of women and their participation in the over-all development process, in many spheres nothing had changed. In public life, at the United Nations for example - with the exception of the Third Committee, where there were nearly as many women as men - the composition of the various committees and bodies showed clearly that the objectives of the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had not yet been attained. Throughout the world, access to decision-making posts was still easier for men. That was also true in Denmark, where - contrary to popular belief about the privileged position of Nordic women - according to a survey published in 1976 by the Danish Council on Equality, the average proportion of women in the executive bodies of the administration was only 8.6 per cent. It was hoped that as a result of the recommendations of that Council, women would be employed more frequently in future, but the results achieved thus far, for example, in the United Nations, were not very encouraging.

37. One of the reports before the Fifth Committee (A/32/146) stated that in 1976 there had been an increase of 58 per cent in the number of women candidates for Secretariat or technical co-operation posts, compared with an increase of 5 per cent in the number of men candidates. It should, however, be pointed out that those percentages were based on a total of 350 women candidates compared with over 5,000 men candidates. Furthermore, of the 387 candidates recommended by Member States for Professional posts in the Secretariat only 41 were women, and most applications from women were for jobs in the social-science and information sectors. In addition, as earlier reports had shown, women did not remain in their jobs as long as men: that was, in fact, true of the labour market as a whole.

38. According to a recent ILO report, 7 million women in a score of Western countries had lost their jobs during the economic crisis of recent years. The percentage of unemployed women was disproportionately high in comparison with the number of women in the total labour force. It would be useful to analyse the basic reasons for that phenomenon, which could vary from one country to another, in order to help Governments in formulating their employment policies. According to ILO, women not only were the first to lose their jobs in cases of economic recession but also had greater difficulty than men in finding new jobs when the situation improved, since the industries in which they generally found employment were the first to be hit by a crisis. It was also common for women to be employed in jobs abandoned by men in sectors which had become less well paid, while men tended to supplant women in sectors which acquired prestige.

39. She believed that in order to remedy that state of affairs, women must first of all be given the same educational and professional training opportunities as men, including opportunities for retraining so that they would be able to return to work after a few years' absence. Furthermore, working women should be relieved of their

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(Mrs. Northen, Denmark)

domestic and family tasks, since crèche and nursery services, despite their usefulness, were not sufficient. Men and women should share domestic tasks, and that necessitated a change in attitudes towards sex roles. Moreover, since the women with the lowest levels of education were always those who were worst hit by unemployment, girls should be able to devote as many years as boys to their studies and should be encouraged to choose so-called "male" professions. That required an educational system that did not perpetuate stereotypes based on sex. To that end, her Government had recently appointed a commission of 10 members, including seven women, to make proposals aimed at changing those practices in the system which accounted for the existing differences between the sexes in respect of choice of education and career patterns.

40. Thus, her Government attached great importance to item 85, and particularly to the draft Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which, while not perfect, contained the essential elements of a progressive policy to benefit women. It therefore hoped that there would not be too many amendments to the initial text. Her delegation, which would participate in that spirit in the discussions of the working group to be established, would, however, prefer the expression "equal status of women and men" to the expression "discrimination against women" and suggested making a change in the title of the Convention to that effect.

41. Miss VER ELST (Belgium) stated that the principal achievement of 1977 within the framework of the United Nations Decade for Women, should be the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Her delegation hoped that the open-ended working group, which the Economic and Social Council had recommended should be set up to enable all countries wishing to do so to contribute to the final text of the draft, would begin its work without delay, if possible on Friday 21 October. Belgium, which had taken an active part in the formulation of the draft Convention in the Commission on the Status of Women, approved of the text as a whole, although it keenly regretted that no provision was made for machinery to deal with complaints - either from individuals or from States - concerning discrimination against women. However, her delegation would not raise those questions again at the current session, so as not to hinder the adoption of the draft Convention, but it reserved the right to revert to the point later by requesting revision of the Convention, as provided for in draft article 18.

42. In order to eliminate the last remaining legal inequalities between men and women, in accordance with the objectives of International Women's Year and the Decade for Women, Belgium had adopted legislation establishing the equality of father and mother in the matter of responsibility over the persons and property of their minor children, whether the parents were living together or apart (Act of 1 July 1974) abolishing the remaining discrimination between father and mother with regard to the custody of their children (Act of 10 March 1975) and making both father and mother liable for damage caused by their minor children (Act of 6 July 1977). Administrative measures of no less importance had also been adopted.

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(Miss Ver Elst, Belgium)

43. Belgium attached the greatest importance to the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, 1980, and would be a candidate for membership in the Preparatory Committee to be established in 1978.

44. The five members of the Consultative Committee on the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women should be commended for having determined that 85 per cent of the resources already available would be allocated to development assistance projects affecting women. At its third session, the Consultative Committee would have to take decisions on the proposals from the regional economic commissions concerning the specific projects to which they wished to apply the funds allocated to them. As a token of its confidence in the Consultative Committee, the Belgian Government had already decided to make a large contribution to the Fund, the amount of which would be officially announced at the Pledging Conference to be held on 8 November 1977.

45. Mrs. MISHRA (Nepal) said she would like to thank all concerned, throughout the world, for their efforts in implementing the resolutions adopted by the United Nations to raise the status of women. Nepal, like many other countries, had observed International Women's Year with enthusiasm. During the Year important measures had been taken and, in particular, legislation designed to improve the status of women had been promulgated. Under Nepalese law, no discrimination could now be made between men and women.

46. Nepal had realized in 1975 that the activities initiated for International Women's Year should be institutionalized by incorporating them into the very process of development. The aim had been not merely to highlight the need to recognize women's rights and awaken women to their opportunities and responsibilities, but also to bring about their participation in the development effort, so that men would realize that women had a real role to play in society and women themselves would begin to fulfil that role. The results had been very encouraging.

47. In connexion with the United Nations Decade for Women, a women's services co-ordination sub-committee had been formed in 1977 as part of the Social Services Co-ordination Committee, which functioned under the chairmanship of Her Majesty Queen Aishwarya. Similarly, the Nepalese Constitution provided for a Women's Organization whose duty it was to involve women in the development of the country and to assist the local political units in mobilizing the general public. The National Planning Commission had also started to give due attention to the improvement of women's status in Nepal. All those offices had been conducting various activities in order to contribute to the progress of women and their greater participation in development activities in accordance with the World Plan of Action. The Nepalese Government, with the help of USAID, was currently conducting an in-depth study on the status of women in the socio-economic development of Nepal. The purpose of the project was to collect information on the legal, social and economic position of women in traditional and modern Nepalese society and to assess their contribution to the national economy, not only in their roles as mothers and home-makers, but also as an important component

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(Mrs. Mishra, Nepal)

of the active labour force. The survey planned to complete its report within two years. A seminar had also been held in Nepal in 1977 to discuss an integrated programme for women in connexion with the Decade for Women.

48. A national plan of action would be formulated in connexion with the Decade for Women, and Nepal anticipated full co-operation from the United Nations and its various agencies and services in that regard. It should also be noted that the Regional (Asia-Pacific) Seminar on the Participation of Women in Political, Economic and Social Development had been held in February 1977. Nepal hoped that all concerned nations would give due attention to the successful implementation of the recommendations adopted by the Seminar.

49. However, legal provisions and programmes of action were inadequate to achieve the objectives of International Women's Year and the United Nations Decade for Women. As Her Majesty Queen Aishwarya had noted on the occasion of International Women's Year, education was a vital factor for enabling women to gain equality with men and contribute effectively to development. Nepal was accordingly encouraging women to improve their education, by such measures as providing scholarships. Women's training centres and mothers' clubs had been established and would be gradually expanded. Projects for training young girls from remote villages to become primary-school teachers were sponsored jointly by UNICEF and UNESCO. Three hundred women teachers had been trained under that programme. UNICEF was also giving considerable assistance to the strengthening of a community-development-oriented training project launched by the Nepalese Government for rural women, in which emphasis was placed on nutrition and child care.

50. In view of the problems, such as inadequate supply of drinking-water and the absence of electricity, which prevented women in rural areas from acquiring the additional knowledge and skills they needed, the development projects sponsored by UNDP, UNICEF and specialized agencies like UNESCO, WHO, ILO and FAO should be co-ordinated and operated in a specific area that would mitigate some of the most persistent problems of daily life, thereby contributing to meeting the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women. In addition, more concrete and effective results could be achieved if national development programmes were formulated and implemented in that spirit. Since it was only through comprehensive research work and intensive studies that suitable methods could be devised for bringing about women's development or development in any other field, Nepal welcomed the establishment in February 1977 of the Asia and Pacific Centre for Women and Development, which was expected to contribute a great deal to women's development.

51. Mr. LUHAT (Malaysia) said that equality and the upgrading of women's status did not mean a reversal of roles between men and women but rather a greater sharing of responsibilities, both in the home and in society. Women formed half the total population of Malaysia, and unequal opportunities for them would result in a huge wastage of human potential for the country's economic and social development. Despite a residue of unspoken traditional bias against women, there was also growing recognition of their importance as a force for development. Malaysia was still very much an agricultural country, and rural development therefore occupied a key position in its national five-year development plans and

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(Mr. Luhut, Malaysia)

programmes and the involvement of women in economic and social changes in rural areas was crucial.

52. Women had successfully gained footholds in many areas previously closed to them. For instance, they had the same political rights as men. There existed a considerable degree of political consciousness among the active women members of Malaysian political parties. Both in the cabinet and in Parliament there were women members who shouldered responsibilities on an equal footing with their male counterparts. In the economic field, the fundamental right of women to equal pay had been implemented in 1969. The right to education was recognized for all, because it was a basic requirement for the active and meaningful participation of women in society. In 1976, in accordance with the recommendations of the World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year, Malaysia had established a National Advisory Council on the Integration of Women in Development, responsible directly to the Prime Minister. The functions of the Council included advising the Government on the formulation of legislation affecting women and examining programmes which related to women's interests.

53. Malaysia was in favour of the adoption of the draft Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which would be an important step forward in the protection of human rights.

54. Mr. BAROODY (Saudi Arabia) said that he was concerned about item 85. In taking the major initiative with regard to the United Nations Decade for Women, the Western Powers had sought to impose their views about women and their social role on other cultures which did not necessarily want to follow the example of countries where the industrial revolution had caused social upheaval and, in particular, had destroyed the family in the broadest sense of the term. Especially in African and Asian countries, the family was the corner-stone of society.

55. In traditional societies, the main stress was on a woman's family responsibilities. Women were biologically made to be mothers. Work was difficult for them during pregnancy. They also had the task of teaching children a sense of social values. That was why they occupied a privileged, respected position in traditional societies, a fact not realized by the women's liberation movements, which demanded quantitative rather than qualitative equality. He denounced the pernicious role played by those movements, which led women to neglect their children, who felt abandoned and might turn to homosexuality. Moreover, sexual liberation was advocated so widely that pornography was rife.

56. The case of unmarried women was different, naturally, they should have the same rights as men, equal pay for equal work and the same employment opportunities.

57. Nor did he believe that women's right of expression was limited in any way in the artistic and intellectual field. In any event, society had not been made in a day and it would take much longer than a decade or any arbitrarily set time to create a new social order.

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## ORGANIZATION OF WORK

58. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the wish expressed by the Human Rights Committee in paragraph 185 of its report (A/32/44), which the Third Committee had before it in connexion with item 81, that its Chairman should be invited to present the annual report of the Human Rights Committee to the General Assembly.

59. Mr. MOMPOINT (Secretary of the Committee) said that, if the Committee decided to invite the Chairman of the Human Rights Committee to present its report, there would be financial implications amounting to \$2,000 for his travel expenses and per diem. However, it would not be necessary to request an additional appropriation, since those costs could be absorbed under the budget for the biennium 1976-1977.

60. Mr. SHERIFIS (Cyprus) supported the idea of inviting the Chairman of the Human Rights Committee to present its report.

61. Mrs. WARZAZI (Morocco) pointed out that the Committee already had before it the report of the Human Rights Committee, and asked whether there was any pressing reason for inviting the Chairman of that Committee, which might create a precedent.

62. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Director of the Division of Human Rights should be asked to explain in greater detail why the Human Rights Committee had expressed the wish that its Chairman should be invited to present its report.

63. Mr. SMIRNOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) supported that suggestion and requested that the Committee should not take an immediate decision, in order to give delegations time to consider the matter.

64. Mrs. LORANGER (Canada) asked what the officers of the Committee planned to do about the establishment of the working group to study the draft Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

65. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should postpone its decision on whether or not to invite the Chairman of the Human Rights Committee until it had more detailed information from the Secretariat. As to the establishment of the working group, the officers would submit their proposals to the Committee on Wednesday, 19 November, so that the group could begin its work by the end of the week.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.