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HELD UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE UNITED  
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by

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SUMMARY

The present paper seeks to assess the ways in which issues concerning women during the development process have been approached and analysed in 12 world conferences in the light of the Plan of Action emanating from the 1975 World Conference of the International Women's Year held in Mexico City.

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\* The views expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations Secretariat.

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I. APPROACHES TO WOMEN'S ISSUES IN THE  
WORLD CONFERENCES, 1974 TO 1979

1. The present paper seeks to assess the ways in which issues concerning women during the development process have been approached and analysed in 12 World Conferences in the light of the Plans of Action emanating from the 1975 World Conference of the International Women's Year in Mexico. 1/ The Conferences are taken in chronological order. Two of the conferences, the United Nations World Population Conference, held at Bucharest from 19 to 30 August 1974, and the World Food Conference, held at Rome from 5 to 16 November 1974 therefore preceded the Mexico Conference. They are included because of their significance to the subject studied here, but are treated in a manner which recognizes their timing and are accordingly dealt with first of all. In addition to these major Conferences a small Conference called by UNIDO on the Role of Women in Industrialization in Developing Countries which might be termed a large international workshop, is placed in an annex. The pertinence of this workshop is in its example and follow up specifically on women's issues (in this case, to the previous conference of UNIDO in Lima) and of some of the difficulties that can arise in integrating a comparatively new subject in the mainstream of an agency's work. But first of all, what did the Mexico Plans of Action call upon the international community to undertake?

A. Declaration and Plans of Action adopted at the  
World Conference of the International Women's  
Year, Mexico, 19 June-2 July 1975

2. The purpose of the Plans of Action resulting from the World Conference of the International Women's Year was to strengthen the implementation of the instruments and programmes affecting the status of women and to stimulate national and international action to solve the problems of underdevelopment and of the socio-economic structure which place women in an inferior position. 2/ The recommendations were too diverse to be described here, but those of greatest relevance to other world conferences are summarized in order to indicate what might have been expected of them by the authors of the Plans of Action.

3. The principles enunciated in the Plans 3/ can be summarized as the equality of women and men in rights, opportunities and responsibilities, both in the family and society, the elimination of obstacles standing in the path of achieving that equality and the responsibility of the State to facilitate women's integration in society by making available the necessary resources. Because existing international economic relations obstruct the efficient utilization of human and material potential for development, a new international economic order was essential. At

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1/ For the report of the Conference, see E/CONF.66/34 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.76.IV.1).

2/ Ibid., para. 15.

3/ Ibid., chap. II.

the same time it was recognized that the full integration of women in development requires measures against all forms of discrimination against them in addition to the full and permanent sovereignty of the State over its natural resources.

4. National plans of action involve the elaboration of measures which take into account women's interests and needs so that they can both contribute more to and benefit more from the development process. In the field of education and training efforts should be made to eliminate the difference between boys and girls in educational enrolment and literacy and to develop integrated or special training programmes for girls and women in rural areas in the use of equipment and modern methods of agriculture, in co-operative work, in entrepreneurship and commerce and in health, nutrition and family planning. In employment, equality of opportunity and treatment of women workers and their integration in the labour force should be promoted through policies and action programmes, including special efforts to foster positive attitudes to the employment of women. The Plans pointed out that although it was commonly assumed that where jobs are scarce priority should be given to men, this overlooks the percentage of households that are headed by women as well as women's basic right to equality of opportunity. Improved access to health, nutrition and other social services should be integrated into over-all development programmes to make them more effective in reaching women. Special health services are required for women in the areas of pre-natal and post-natal care, in gynaecological and family planning services. Because women are providers, as well as users of health care, steps should be taken to incorporate them in health planning at all levels. Improved and easily accessible safe water supplies and sewage disposal are of special importance to women because of their burden in carrying water and caring for the sick. Opportunities should be created for women to contribute more efficiently to the production of proper foods through vegetable gardening and the provision of better inputs to food production of this kind.

5. On the issue of population, the Plans of Action placed great stress on the link between the status of women (in employment, in education and in the family) on the one hand and the development process and demographic determinants on the other. The exercise of a woman's right to decide on the number and spacing of her children was seen to be inextricably bound up with her rights in the economy and society. Because of this, Governments were urged to improve the general position of women and to remove all legal, social or financial obstacles to the dissemination of family planning knowledge, means and services. Policies on housing were also seen to be of special importance to women: they should avoid safety hazards to women and children, be easy to maintain and to keep hygienic. Policies on the surrounding habitat should provide for services and utilities and neighbourhood facilities, as well as reduce the burden of fetching water, food and fuel. Under technical co-operation, Governments and specialized agencies were urged to give high priority to providing skills and opportunities to women and to scrutinize all existing plans and projects with a view to extending their sphere of activities to women. The exchange of information and experience at the international level was seen as an effective means to eliminate discrimination against women and encourage their wider participation.

6. There is something for all the world conferences to have pondered in the above, but one thing stands out from a more thorough reading of the Mexico Plans of

Action: that the status of women depends on a number of interlocking aspects of their lives, and that "Given the scope and diversity of the world-wide system of assistance agencies, action can be initiated in a large number of areas without delay once the needs are understood and diffused throughout the United Nations system". 4/ The regional commissions of the United Nations were singled out as a special vehicle for identifying needed action and to develop policies, strategies and programmes to strengthen women's roles, 5/ but the agencies were also called upon to incorporate in their development plans, programmes and sector analyses, an impact statement of how their proposals will affect women as participants and beneficiaries. 6/ Given the role of the United Nations System in focusing attention on critical issues no better single means of undertaking the diffusion requested at Mexico exists than the world Conferences in the last five years.

B. United Nations World Population Conference,  
Bucharest, 19-30 August 1974

7. The report of the World Population Conference amply covered the relation between population issues and general development policies and the necessity of viewing the former not as a substitute for the latter, but as an integral part of solutions to unbalanced and irrational development. 7/

8. The most notable omission in the report lay in the failure to demarcate women's and men's rights to determine freely and responsibly the number and spacing of children. Women's personal right to choose, called for a year later at Mexico, was not mentioned anywhere. While discrimination against women in employment, education, training and social and political participation was to be eliminated, and women's special role in bearing and rearing children was recognized, when it came to decisions on family planning, the irreducible unit of decision-making was effectively the "parents" or the "couple". The report of the Conference begins (para. 6) by announcing the rights of couples to choose the number of children (while admitting most are unable to exercise this right), but goes on to talk of individual reproductive behaviour (to be reconciled with needs and aspirations of society) (para. 7). Elsewhere, the individual family is mentioned. A little later, it is stated that "All couples and individuals have the basic right to decide freely and responsibly ... and to have the ... means to do so" (para. 14 (f)). There is no explanation in the Conference report why the term "individual women" was not specifically included.

9. The same fudging of the issue occurs in the resolutions and recommendations. On the status of women (resolution IV), countries are urged to eliminate discrimination against women in employment and public life. But, on population

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4/ Ibid., p. 49.

5/ Ibid., p. 52.

6/ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.76.IV.I, chap. III, resolution 27, pp. 104-5.

7/ Report of the United Nations World Population Conference, Bucharest, 19-31 August, 1974 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.75.XIII.3), chap. I, para. 2.

and the status of women (resolution XII), where an explicit call for women's right to choose would come, if anywhere, it is stated that: "Recognizing that the exercise of the right of parents to decide freely and responsibly ...".

10. In the accompanying Conference background papers, 8/ the Secretary-General of the Conference writes along the same theme: of parents' rights in fertility choice and the rights of women in employment etc. This is in contrast to two other papers: "The impact of fertility on human rights", by F. X. Murphy, and "Women's rights and fertility" by the United Nations Secretariat. 9/ The first paper pointed out that it was the responsibility of both parents to care for a child's well-being, but that obligation to do so evolves, in practice, more on the mother, since she bears the child and cares for its immediate wants in infancy and childhood. The father's involvement is contributory. What is required, the paper contributed, is according women the right to decide the number and spacing of their children and to develop awareness of themselves and their environment to bring them to a real choice. The second paper mentioned that there was legal, economic, social and cultural factors constraining women from exercising their rights to plan births, yet, when they can exercise this right, the impact on their status may be dramatic.

11. The importance for the status of women and their effective participation in gainful employment and in public life of encouraging women to see themselves as the principal decision-maker in fertility decision-making was not dealt with in the Conference report, which mechanistically lists women's rights in every other field except the one which would help them to exercise those allowable rights.

12. There is nothing which indicates women's specific interests in the report's call for patterns of production and technology should be adapted to each country's human resource endowment (para. 69) or for the revitalization of the countryside to reduce migration (para. 9), in spite of the impact which production and technology choices could have on the status of women, on demographic behaviour and on sex-specific migration. Resolution I on rural development sought appropriate agrarian reform, but failed to mention women's rights without which their low status as unpaid family labour and continued son-preference could intensify patriarchy and pro-natal policies. Nor did this resolution accept that for the female 50 per cent of the rural population, it was not more work that was required, but less and on better remunerative and technological conditions. Resolution VII on food production did not note women's important existing role and the need to direct improved inputs to them which the Mexico Plans of Action called for. However, resolution XIII on the rural family assumed the responsibility of a number of other resolution headings when it stated that it was necessary to orient programmes to liberate the peasant family from some of its tasks as a labour unit, to introduce facilities to ease the burden of women and assist in the equitable (between the sexes?) marketing of agricultural produce. The understanding of the impact of development processes on women implied in this resolution was not incorporated in others.

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8/ "Population and the family", The Population Debates, vol. I, (Population Study No. 57, vol. I (United Nations publication, Sales No. E/F/S 75.XIII.4)) pp. 142, 152.

9/ The Population Debates, vol. II, (Population Study No. 57, vol. II (United Nations publication, Sales No. E/F/S 75.XIII.5)).



13. One of the background papers to the Conference, "Nutrition, mother's health, and fertility" by S. H. Wishik and S. Van der Vynkt, drew a stark picture of the particular effect of malnutrition on women and infants and on the reproductive cycle of women. The need for special feeding of adolescent mothers, for spacing births, and for the termination of births after a certain age, have implications not only for the design of family planning and nutrition programmes, but possibly for intervention on the second phase of the demographic transition (the transitional phase) by shortening it. Yet there was no special resolution on maternal nutrition policies.

14. While reiterating the need to raise the status of women, the Conference tended to handle the women's issue by providing check lists of women's rights of access to employment, public services and public life, but there was a notable absence of mention of the interrelationship of these goals or how one could be a pre-condition for the exercise of the others. In particular, the inability to grasp the issue of women's personal right of access to the means of fertility planning undermined the value of other good intentions. A number of the background papers to the Conference provided the basis for incorporating this idea in the resolutions, but they were not utilized.

15. Another lost opportunity relates to the debate on the demographic transition set forth in detail in two background papers by the Secretary-General of the Conference. 10/ It was clear that the Conference accepted the unavoidability of the transitional phase of continued high fertility and declining mortality rates. But while virtually all of the resolutions contributed in some measure to hastening the peak of the transition period and shortening its over-all length by reducing families' sense of insecurity of livelihood, they failed signally to pronounce clearly how, in so many ways, intervention in the conditions of the life of women, much more than those of men, could do the same for the transitional phase. One example of this kind of intervention is sufficient. We are told 11/ that, in the first phase, the proportion of marriages failing to produce a male heir is 44 per cent, in the transitional phase, 21 per cent and, in the third phase, 32 per cent. But the significance of that particular statistic to families can be weakened when, for instance, inheritance laws are changed to make the survival of one daughter as significant as the survival of one son. A heavier concentration on women's issues today could advance the decline in fertility rates ahead of the stage in the demographic transition at which it has been observed historically to commence.

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10/ "Population change and economic and social development" and "Population and the family", in The Population Debate, vol. I.

11/ N. B. Ryder, "Reproductive Behaviour and the Family Life Cycle", The Population Debate, vol. II.



C. World Food Conference, Rome, 5-16 November 1974

16. Although the Conference was convened as a response to the prevailing food crisis and many delegates called for urgent short-term action, it was agreed that the main objective should be to obtain a commitment to longer-term action to prevent a recurrence of this crisis. To that end, the discussion turned on international and national restructuring of food systems to establish food security. Agrarian reform, integrated rural development, the advancement of food production technology and the linking of agricultural and nutritional policies were among the main issues discussed under which the role of women might have been pointedly raised.

17. The first of the resolutions, 12/ on strategies of food production, referred to "producers and their families" in measures for agrarian reform. Resolution II, on priorities for agricultural and rural development, was similar in content, but recognized the need to mobilize people through their organization. It also recognized the important role of women in production, processing and marketing, in family nutrition, in decisions on family size etc., and the need to involve them fully in the process of rural development and extension services. But, in all its calls on Governments for commitment to agrarian reform, eliminating exploitive forms of land tenure, provision of technical and credit services, the separate needs of women were forgotten. Research, extension and training were the subject of resolution IV, which mentioned women once by way of "farmers training, including programmes for women and children". Resolution V on improving nutrition called for the agencies and Governments to develop intersectoral food and nutrition plans, and recommended that Governments consider the key role of women and take steps to improve their nutrition, their educational levels and their working conditions. A special resolution (VIII) on women and food, recognized that rural women account for at least 50 per cent of food production and played a major role in the procurement and preparation of food. It called on Governments to involve women fully in the decision-making machinery for food production and nutrition and to provide women equal access with men to education and training in agricultural technology, marketing and distribution techniques - a classification of resolution II. It also called on Governments "to promote equal rights and responsibilities for men and women in order that the energy, talent and ability of women can be fully utilized in partnership with men in the battle against world hunger".

18. The only item which the World Conference on the International Women's Year, held in Mexico a year later, would find missing is the question of women's rights in land reform. Taken together, this set of resolutions is remarkable for its sensitivity to women's issues.

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12/ Report of the World Food Conference, Rome, 5-16 November 1974,  
E/CONF.65/20 (United Nations publication, Sales No. 75.II.H.3), chap. II.

D. Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements,  
Vancouver, 31 May-11 June 1976

19. The report of Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements 13/ covers recommendations on settlement policies, strategies and planning methods, and the two subjects of "Shelter, infrastructure and services" and "Land". There is also a section on "Public participation".

20. The basic principle outlined is that "(human settlement) policies must be an essential component of an over-all development strategy, linking and harmonizing them with policies on industrialization, agriculture, social welfare, and environmental and cultural preservation so that each supports the other in a progressive improvement in well-being of all mankind". 13/ Generations of sectoral thinking are to end through harmonization of resource allocation. There is also emphasis on the satisfaction of the basic needs of food, shelter, clean water, education, health and transportation. Unquestionably there is enormous potential in this for specifying services to women and women's participation.

21. Under policies, strategies and planning there follow numerous generalized sentiments, requirements of top-level planning methods, and checklists of what should be available to communities. But women's special interests seem to be overlooked, although, under neighbourhood planning it is stated that "the special interests of children and their parents, the elderly and the handicapped, come into focus at the neighbourhood level" (recommendation B.12). Again, under strategies, there is a subheading, more equitable distribution, under which is found "Measures to improve the quality of life of vulnerable groups which have special needs - such as children, the elderly, the handicapped and the disabled" (recommendation A.4). But there is no mention of the resources specifically needed by women, who customarily care for the young, the old and the handicapped. To subsume mothers' interests under fathers' in neighbourhood planning is a serious mistake. It follows, initially perhaps, from the sentence in the Declaration of Principles that "... relief of urban man from intolerable psychological tensions due to overcrowding and chaos ..." (chap. I, sect. 3, para. 23). Of course, we all know what was meant, but a more commanding declaration would specify women's tensions at crowded communal water taps, at washing points on polluted canals and also having to work while monitoring the activities of their children in a dangerous environment. The problems of habitat at the neighbourhood level concern women much more than men, but inexplicably, the report fails to bring this out.

22. A generalized recognition of women's special problems was made under strategies of human settlements and development - "Take into account the changing roles and responsibilities of women and the impact of developments and programmes on women, both as participants and beneficiaries" (chap. II, recommendation A.2, p. 13). The problem is that women's roles and responsibilities usually do not change even when it becomes more arduous for them to fulfil them.

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13/ A/CONF.70/15 and Corr.1 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.76.IV.7 and Corr.1), chap. I, sect. III, para. 2.

23. Under shelter, infrastructure and services, there is nothing more specific than that designs and technologies should be sensitive to the requirements of the family (chap. II, recommendation C.4). Energy is to be used efficiently and conserved, because human settlements are consuming more and more energy (recommendation C.5). But it was not pointed out that women's hard work in carrying fuel and water and their labour-intensive cooking and washing methods, are already major sources of "energy" conservation. If intersectoral development is to be harmonious and all resources (including women's time and energy) allocated efficiently, a sophisticated design and allocation of energy points is required. The report admits something like this when, under the same heading, it calls for appropriate water supplies and rural electrification, but this is at odds with other aspects of its energy recommendation. Nothing is said of day-care centres for children, another crucial issue of neighbourhood planning for women.

24. Under land: patterns of ownership (chap. II, recommendation D.5), a redefinition of legal ownership including the (equal?) rights of women and disadvantaged groups is mentioned. Another document tabled at the Conference <sup>14/</sup> explains why the sex ratio of migration from rural areas differs between regions but neither this fact nor the implications for habitat recommendations is raised in the report of the Conference.

25. Although the preamble to the recommendations on public participation (chap. II, sect. E) calls for citizen participation in deciding parallel and competing sectoral interests, and states that this cannot be achieved "by fiat" and that "seeking the participation of women in the conception of shelter, infrastructure and services" will achieve their participation, there is no mention of how the very real problem of involving women is to be overcome (recommendation E.2). There are no specific recommendations for training women in shelter and infrastructure construction.

26. The Conference was probably held too soon after the Mexico Conference to incorporate the spirit and the letter of the latter's resolutions. However, the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs attempted to have specific recommendations on technical training of women and household infrastructural facilities inserted at the preparatory stage, but without success. A reading of the Conference report suggests that no serious attempt was made by the organizers at the preparatory stage to seek help in inserting a women's component. It is fair to say that the references to women that were made were largely platitudinous and failed to appreciate women's priorities.

E. Tripartite World Conference on Employment, Income  
Distribution, Social Progress and the International  
Division of Labour, Geneva, June 1976

27. The Conference was the culmination of several years of research and analysis undertaken by the World Employment Programme in the ILO. Of special significance

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<sup>14/</sup> "Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, policies and planning and institutions" (A/CONF.70/29).

were the comprehensive employment missions to a number of developing countries spanning almost a decade. Their findings helped to develop progressively the idea that the problem of poverty was not so much outright unemployment, but of inadequate employment, that is, poorly remunerated work. Elsewhere in ILO publications, under-employment is divided into visible underemployment (when a person involuntarily works part-time or for shorter than usual period of work) and invisible underemployment (when a person's working time is not abnormally low, but where productivity or earnings are abnormally low and inadequate). The employment missions also developed the notion of the informal sector (in which most inadequate employment was found) and pointed the way to the case for a basic needs approach to development. The mission report on Sri Lanka had produced statistics on education levels and employment, which showed extremely high unemployment levels among the young educated female group. The last employment mission (to Kenya) paid special attention to women-headed households: in rural areas, where they managed the family farm, and in urban areas, where their rates of unemployment and underemployment were much higher than those of men. Following the Mexico Conference by a year, it could have been expected that with this background, issues of women's prominent position in inadequate employment, women-headed households, women in the informal sector and women's traditional food production, as well as the special needs of women for appropriate technology and for measures to incorporate their participation in a basic needs approach, would have received fulsome attention at this Conference.

28. The World Conference of the International Women's Year at Mexico had specifically called for measures against all forms of discrimination against women and for equal treatment in employment, for methods of agriculture (especially in women's food agriculture), for efforts to eliminate the gap between women's and men's education and for vocational training and special attention to women-headed households.

29. Under the Declaration of Principles and Objectives (pp. 1-3), there was no mention of women, their overwork, their disproportionate share of productive underemployment and their unpaid family productive labour. Under the Programme of Action, nothing on equal pay was written into wages policy (p. 5), no mention of women's equal rights in land reform was mentioned under rural policy (p. 6), and participation was discussed in general terms (p. 6). However, a special heading on women (p. 6) recommended the abolition of every kind of discrimination in work, pay and training, more favourable conditions of work for women, and that the work burden and drudgery of women be relieved by improving their work and living conditions.

30. Under international economic co-operation, the lack of access of women to education and training was singled out for mention (p. 7) but no recommendation on action was given. The recommendation that came closest to mentioning women was the one on surveying policies concerning the poor with a view to defining and implementing a basic needs strategy (p. 8).

31. Recommendations for productive employment were made in general terms: to develop appropriate and optional technology, to create greater employment, and to

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eliminate poverty (p. 11). Although a great deal of attention was paid to transnational corporations nothing was said of the prominence of their female labour forces in many countries or of their particular exploitation of women working under a contracting-out basis. Indeed there was even a call to promote measures to increase local subcontracting (admittedly unspecified) to create more employment (p. 18). Finally, the Declaration of Workers' Members did not include a reference to maternity leave (although it did urge action on conventions for paid education leave) or to eliminating discrimination against women and of the need to unionize more women.

32. Some of the background papers <sup>15/</sup> carried likely titles for raising women's issues but were generally very disappointing. "Growth, Redistribution and Resource Use" could have raised a host of ideas on household labour allocation, appropriate technology for women and employment strategies, but it was mainly an aggregative and quantitative analysis of different income groups. "Basic Needs and National Strategies in Developing Countries" did not mention women's rights or problems of women-headed households under agrarian reform; and although general inequality was raised under education, sex-specific inequality was not.

33. "The urban informal sector" did not refer to the sex ratio found in its different components. Therefore, when it stated that services directed at the urban rich can be expected to fall in importance, but that cheap transport services, food shops and repair work could expand, the implications for changes in women's respective employment were not commented on. There were recommendations to give a "second-chance" education to adults, to up-grade skills and offer financial and managerial assistance to the informal sector. There have been a number of criticisms of the term "informal sector" in other places, but the main criticism of suggested remedial policies for typical women's employment (domestic services, secretarial work, private backstreet manufacturing for private contractors) is that very little is of a self-employment status and maximum skills required have already been obtained. The main problem of women employees in this sector, which the paper did not bring out, is that they are unorganized and non-unionized. The granting of land titles and reducing urban-rural wage disparities were referred to under migration, but (perhaps since sex-specific migration was not mentioned) titles for women and the problem of unpaid female labour in rural areas was not discussed.

34. There were two papers on appropriate technology. The first paper, entitled "Appropriate technology at the national level: a survey", was concerned largely with modern industrial employment, although there was a reference to China's agricultural strategy. However, women's needs for appropriate technology in domestic production and female-specific agricultural tasks which are not directly remunerated were not mentioned. The second paper, entitled "International action for appropriate technology", included a section on "Obstacles to promotion of appropriate technology". But this was written with only wage employment in mind and therefore failed to touch on the frequently asserted need to reduce women's drudgery.

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<sup>15/</sup> Tripartite World Conference on Employment, Income Distribution and Social Progress and the International Division of Labour, Background Papers, vols. I and II, Geneva, June 1976.



35. The ideas of the ILO on adequate employment, the informal sector and the basic needs strategy were developed in "Employment, growth and basic needs", and it was in this document that the ILO made its major contribution in women's issues (pp. 60-61).

36. Women's productive labour and domestic work were recognized and a basic needs strategy was seen as a means of helping them to contribute more effectively as well as increasing their benefits. It was noted that rural women, especially, are overworked rather than unemployed and can be helped by appropriate technology, accessible water points, rural electrification and improved methods of food-processing and preparation.

37. Basic needs are said to fall into two groups: food, shelter and clothing (provided by the household), and drinking water, sanitation, public transport, health and education (provided by the community).

38. There are several criticisms which can be made of the presentation of the basic-needs approach as it affects women, but there was no mention whatever of redistribution of resources between the sexes, which could contribute to a more rational sexual division of labour and enhance women's access to appropriate technology and income. Moreover, some of the basic needs allegedly satisfied, or to be satisfied by the community, are usually provided free of charge by women: water, sanitation, energy and part or most of the health services. The question can reasonably be asked, "At what stage or under what social impetus, are these demands on women's time and energy to be transferred to the community by public investment?". The answer, according to the basic-needs strategy, is when public participation in planning etc., has been developed. But, and this was a criticism of the Habitat Conference too, how can these disproportionate women's interests be adequately represented in public participation when women have little or no free time and have a poor resource base from which to represent their claims on communal effort? Nowhere is the suggestion made that planners should hold a brief for these women's concerns, yet, without this, public participation could mean, for women, a reinforced local patriarchy. In the whole of the document on "Employment, growth and basic needs", nothing is said of women's organizations or of strategies to mobilize women.

39. While the document recognizes that men and women, especially in rural areas, approach the labour market from opposite ends - from under-utilization and overwork, respectively - its emphasis on providing adequately remunerated employment does not explain how women are to move to higher productivity wage employment or to obtain relief from drudgery through appropriate technology when much of their work does not produce a marketable commodity. Unpaid female family labour does produce a marketed commodity, but its returns are normally under the control of men. Therefore the strategy does not explain how women are to gain its prescribed benefits.

40. The document is optimistic that the urban informal sector could be a source of growth through measures of upgrading skills, more contracting out to it etc. (pp. 63-64). But the nature of much of female-typed work in this sector does not lend itself to such improvements for reasons already mentioned. And finally, there

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were no pronouncements or policy recommendations on the plight of women-headed households.

41. An additional input to the Conference was made through several brief submissions. Mrs. Sipilä pointed out that the important role of women in satisfying basic needs meant that it would be difficult to achieve the purpose of the Conference unless special attention were paid to the role of women, and that their poverty might occur from either low productivity or from their lack of access to resources. Suggested changes would not necessarily improve the situation of women unless responsibility for the family's basic needs were shared equally between the sexes. Technology policies on wage employment, formulated mainly from the man's point of view, may only worsen the situation of women. This very pertinent speech was not reflected in any of the official documents. Ms. Muriuki of the International Planned Parenthood Federation commented, among other things, that there was an urgent need for both researchers and development planners to monitor the effect of development on women since there was evidence that modernization did not automatically increase women's status in society. Although the Conference documents did not raise this issue, the ILO secretariat is now trying to implement it as far as its own projects are concerned. Ms. Seth of the Women's International Democratic Federation raised the problems of women with family responsibilities who faced dismissal or discrimination through marriage, pregnancy or motherhood. One would have expected the workers' members, at least, to have taken this up.

42. The ILO is more conscious of women's issues now and has advocated that its training programmes for women be directed to more modern training rather than to traditional domestic training. Its World Employment Programme is undertaking research on women in rural areas and appropriate technology; women's participation in domestic production, in the subsistence sector and family-based agricultural production, and rural women's participation in wage labour. It is also planning regional seminars with a view to sensitizing planners and policy-makers to identify the actual conditions of rural women and provide guidelines for action. The great contribution of this Conference was its analysis and appraisal of basic needs delivery systems. In spite of the criticisms levelled at it, it remains the single most important umbrella under which women's special interests and the conflict between social and economic investments has been raised by the international community.

F. Conference on Economic Co-operation among Developing Countries, Mexico, 13-22 September 1976

43. The purpose of this Conference was to promote collective self-reliance among developing countries and to explore ways and means of sharing resources and exchanging information and research over a wide range of subjects incorporating the services of the United Nations agencies. It was an open question whether this hastily convened Conference would develop such detail as to reach the subject of women's issues. In the event, the decisions of the Conference were phased in general terms, 16/ centring on exchanges between Governments and did not touch on

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16/ For the report of the Conference, see A/C.2/31/7 of 18 October 1976.



national policies of income and asset distribution within countries. The principal areas of proposed economic co-operation which could eventually affect women as a result of new policies would be food security, agricultural intensification, institutional infrastructure, industrialization, technology and tourism. But a great deal of the Conference's suggestions centred on how to pass financial and information resources between countries and what collaboration with international agencies should consist of.

44. The United Nations Regional Commissions Programme of Action on Economic Co-operation among Developing Countries 17/ committed the Commissions to work for intensified regional co-operation on similarly phrased sectoral programmes, but they were no more illuminating in detail. A follow-up document, requested of the Secretary-General by the General Assembly, discussed the effective mobilization of women in development in relation to international economic co-operation. 18/ Describing women's existing integral role in production, it stated that their low returns to labour were owing to both international and national market structures. It pointed out that low female wages helped to maintain low male wages and that agricultural productivity will continue to suffer while women's working conditions remain poor. Its recommendations were for (a) policy-oriented studies that interrelate commodity price and wage policies in agriculture; (b) policies that include a woman's component within national and international efforts aimed at strengthening the capacity of developing countries to achieve a more rapid development; and (c) policies that ensure better job opportunities, technical skills and higher productivity for rural women. Women should also be given more opportunities in industrial employment and the decline of women in this sector should be arrested. The paper looked forward to other world conferences, including the one on technical co-operation among developing countries, to enhance women's participation in the development process.

45. The implications for economic co-operation among developing countries according to the 1975 Mexico Plans of Action are that policies on technology, training, employment, land reform and co-operatives should be scrutinized by Governments and agencies for their likely effects on women. But this does not appear to have been included in any of this Conference's documents. Good as the paper on the mobilization of women was, it was difficult to relate its detail to the high level, rather abstract, Conference report. The problem lay in imagining that the usual channels of communications amongst Governments and between Governments and international agencies and United Nations regional commissions were ready to allocate some of their attention to women. What was missing in both papers was that similar groups of people in different countries (and in this case women's organizations) should be encouraged to undertake their own economic co-operation, exchanging information and experience to enable them to bring influence to bear at Government and agency level.

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17/ Le Programme d'Action Pour la Cooperation Economique Entre Pays en Developpement: Communications des Commissions Regionales des Nations Unies sur la Cooperation Economique Entre Pays en Developpement, Mexico, 1976.

18/ "Effective mobilization of women in development" (A/33/238 and Corr.1, 26 October 1978).

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G. United Nations Water Conference, Mar del Plata,  
14-25 March 1977

46. This Conference discussed two principal issues of water: water use in agriculture and domestic water supplies.

47. The years preceding this Conference had been a period of rising anxiety about food supplies and the dependence of agricultural intensification on new systems of irrigation, some of which were wasteful of water reserves and damaging to soils. But the Conference report 19/ did not make a clear demarcation between food agriculture for local consumption and food agriculture for export. It was because of this, perhaps, that it did not address itself to the issue of the failure of agricultural programmes to support traditional self-provisioning food production, largely worked and managed by women. There has been a reluctance to invest in this non-marketed, or partly marketed, food sector, but until the question of "social" versus "economic" returns to irrigation investment is tackled, plans of action on water cannot adequately be integrated with food and nutrition policies. It is fair comment to opine that had women's largely invisible role in food agriculture been properly assessed in the past by relevant agencies, this Conference would have produced more rigorous analysis and recommendations concerning (a) social versus economic costs and benefits of water investment, and (b) economic and nutritional trade-offs between different forms of irrigated land use. In particular, under drought (and flood) loss management, chap. I, sect. E, the whole question of risks to nutrition versus risks to cash income, as seen by the farming households, was not incorporated in the checklist demands for resistant plant species, redistribution of scarce water supplies, etc., again one suspects largely because marketed produce managed by men was uppermost in the minds of Conference participants. Under Education and Training, training in the practice of irrigated agriculture was generalized by referring to "farmers".

48. The absence of rigour occurred in spite of two background papers which gave substance to the need to look at women's roles. 20/ "Water for Agriculture", a very sobering document prepared by the Food and Agriculture Organization, while not describing women's roles, argued for priority investment in already cultivated land and included a recommendation for improving and extending rainfed agriculture (in which lies most household self-provisioning food production). "Water, Women and Development" showed clearly how women are involved in diversified agriculture and the relation between water and their employment.

49. The Conference spelled out the relationship between domestic water supplies and health but said nothing on integrating women in planning water to avoid health hazards and the burden of carrying water (illustrated well in "Water, Women and Development"). Although the importance of public participation is mentioned

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19/ Report of the United Nations Water Conference, E/CONF.70/29 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.77.II.A.12).

20/ "Water for agriculture" (E/CONF.70/11), and "Women and development" (E/CONF.70/A.19).

several times the lengthy checklists of what must be done in planning water, make it quite clear that top-level planners will effectively decide the allocation of resources. Their right of pricing different uses of water could, alone, undermine the value of any amount of public participation. Women are particularly affected by competition over water between commercial and social (non-marketed production) use. As another background paper 21/ phrased it, "While it may be viable for a water supply undertaking to augment the supplies of those who can afford to pay, it is absolutely essential to provide the basic minimum services in this sector to those who cannot afford to pay". But the tone of technical and economic discussion in the Conference report would not persuade planners of this.

50. The high quality of some of the background papers was not incorporated anywhere in the Conference report. It is to be hoped that in the follow-up to the Conference, the Regional Economic Commissions, ECOSOC, and the Committee on National Resources, will refer to these useful papers in formulating their programmes of action.

H. United Nations Conference on Desertification,  
Nairobi, 29 August-9 September 1977

51. The Conference was mainly about the relationship between desertification and food production and nutrition. The tone of the report of the Conference 22/ was one of great urgency, bordering on panic in some places. Perhaps as a result of this an enormous number of recommendations was produced, but with only one reference to women:

"Ensure that women, who in countries affected by desertification are largely responsible for the collection and consumption of wood for fuel in their families, are consulted on the acceptability of any new devices introduced, trained in their management and encouraged to find alternative, productive uses for any time freed by their introduction".

But this reference fails to represent women's main integral role in the survival of a threatened livelihood.

52. Essentially the subject is about how modernizing influences (especially increasing market incorporation) can erode the ecological basis to nutrition and to, what is almost always, a diversified means of livelihood. If one part of the livelihood portfolio is diminished, the whole may no longer be tenable and so the population moves. It may well be that it is the activities of one sex (notably men's livestock-raising) that is threatening the environment. If, as the recommendations state, new compositions of diversified livelihoods are to be the

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21/ WHO, Report on community water supplies (E/CONF.70/14), p. 14.

22/ Report of the United Nations Conference on Desertification, Nairobi, 29 August-9 September 1977 (A/CONF.74/36), chap. I, sect. IV, recommendation 19, para. 78 (e).

prime corrective policy for threatened areas, it is important to know which sex will be most affected and whether it is feasible for the other sex to contribute to a new venture with its labour, without forfeiting its other existing economic activities. It may well be that an appreciation of the sexual division of economic contributions was considered as an essential detail for follow-up consideration in the unrecorded parts of the debate, but a great many of the recommendations made by this Conference need to be scrutinized with this subject in mind.

I. World Conference to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, Geneva, 14-25 August 1978

53. This Conference was held as part of the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination commencing in 1973. The General Assembly, in its resolution 3057 (XXVIII) of 2 November 1973, called for a world conference which

"Should have as its main theme the adoption of effective ways and means and concrete measures for securing the full and universal implementation of United Nations decisions and resolutions on racism, racial discrimination, apartheid, decolonization ...".

54. That women are deeply affected by racism and apartheid is indisputable. For instance, discrimination against migrant workers' families on the basis of race bring particular problems for women as do some of the arbitrary effects of changes in their marital status. As the Conference Declaration stated: "whenever there is racial discrimination, women are often doubly discriminated against; consequently, special efforts are called for to eliminate the effects of racial discrimination on the status of women ...". <sup>23/</sup> As a result of this awareness, the Conference resolutions included a recommendation that the United Nations, the specialized agencies and, in particular, the Commission on the Status of Women should produce research studies and educational material on the situation of women living under racist régimes in southern Africa, especially under apartheid, and on that of women in the occupied Arab and other territories. The Conference also called on Governments to redress the social imbalance between the sexes caused by colonialism or racist régimes and to grant scholarships to young people of both sexes in affected areas. <sup>24/</sup>

55. In so far as these resolutions were concerned with the effect of racism and discrimination on women, they went beyond the Mexico Plans of Action which, while taking into account that women meet with human suffering and violation from colonialism, foreign domination, apartheid and racial discrimination, requested the Economic and Social Council to invite the Commission on the Status of Women to prepare a report on the participation of women in the elimination of apartheid, racism, racial discrimination and colonialism. <sup>25/</sup> By seeking to inform people about conditions of women in affected areas this Conference has added a complementary resolution to the Mexico Plans of Action.

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<sup>23/</sup> Report of the World Conference to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, Geneva, 14-25 August 1978 (A/CONF.92/40), p. 14.

<sup>24/</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>25/</sup> E/CONF.66/34 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.76.IV.1), chap. III, resolution 29.

J. United Nations Conference on Technical Co-operation  
among Developing Countries, Buenos Aires,  
30 August-12 September 1978

56. From its conception, the Conference on Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries was seen as an instrument for advancing a new international economic order. It is not a new form of technical co-operation but one which was regarded from 1975 onwards as increasingly important in promoting sound and relevant development policies as well as collective self-reliance amongst developing countries. Technical co-operation among developing countries is essentially co-operation between developing countries through an exchange of technical personnel, the sharing of experiences in identifying and analysing problems of development, and the promotion of complementary capacities. The role of the United Nations system is seen as facilitating and enabling the channelling of technical assistance from one developing country to another as well as by acting as a catalyst in bringing developing countries with a similar problem together.

57. Although there has been debate as to whether technical co-operation among developing countries is a component of economic co-operation among developing countries or *vice versa*, technical co-operation among developing countries centres on the exchange of skills and expertise and is basically project-oriented, whereas economic co-operation among developing countries concentrates on the exchange of over-all approaches and strategies to development.

58. While the term "technical" includes technological knowledge it is not limited to it. As a paper written for one of the Preparatory Committees phrased it, "It also encompasses knowledge that pertains to the social or natural sciences, administrative or organizational knowledge, political and cultural values and knowledge that is both disciplinary and interdisciplinary".

59. Technical co-operation among developing countries is of obvious importance to women. It has been recognized at a number of fora that women have been at least as badly affected as men, and frequently more, by the colonial legacy, by present global inequalities and by imported ideas on development. And, as the United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development pointed out, imported technology has affected women and men differently. The modernization of agriculture has in many cases weakened women's relative economic and social status while industrialization policies, in failing to contain using urban unemployment, have forced women into the worst of inadequately remunerated jobs or has obliged them to withdraw from the labour market in contrast to their traditional economically active status. The potential of devising indigenously appropriate projects and programmes could have even greater benefit for women than men; moreover, given the new international economic order's interest in food security, primary export price stabilization and transnational companies' practices, the concerns of technical co-operation among developing countries must often be addressed specifically to women's issues.



60. In effect, the Conference recommendations 26/ covered the following: (a) calls on Governments to: identify their potential for technical co-operation; evaluate their experiences in relevant sectors; mobilize their experts, consultants, research fellows and other specialist services; strengthen capacities for gathering other specialist services, processing and disseminating information and experience; improve the collaboration amongst national organizations, expand their mutual contacts; (b) calls on Governments and United Nations agencies to: strengthen links; analyse technical co-operation needs; expand and utilize more the informational referral system of UNDP; strengthen links with the national organizations working to resolve development problems; exchange development experience and improve information flows.

61. Essentially all the recommendations concerned the creation, mobilization and strengthening of channels of widely defined technological, economic and social information. The subject matter on which these arrangements were to apply investigating skills was not specified in the recommendations themselves but was mentioned in a brief preamble. The "integration of women in development" was included in a long list as was "employment and development of human resources". Given the nature of the recommendations and the fact that this Conference was the first of its kind and concerned with seeking channels of technical co-operation amongst developing countries, it could not be expected that women's issues should figure in them any more than other subjects did. However, the report also included a nineteen page summary of the general debate which did cover topics for technical co-operation application. There was a paragraph in the summary stating that a number of representatives stressed that special attention should be paid to women's important, but hitherto not fully appreciated, role and one (woman) representative commented that women formed a majority of the vulnerable segments of the population in regard to illiteracy, undernourishment, low wages, social justice or political participation. 27/ It was not difficult to identify the latter representative as one of the representatives of Mozambique and it is of interest to note what else she said which was left out of the report.

62. "During the days in which member delegations have worked together ... our delegation of two (of which 50 per cent is female) has felt a growing sense of urgency to treat a development problem which affects developed and developing nations alike and which should accompany any discussion of technical co-operation amongst developing countries ... Surprisingly enough, in the two background documents prepared for this Conference, out of the 250 paragraphs only 4 paragraphs devote themselves to the development of women. And if the distinguished delegates will look around this hall the paucity of women is indeed a notable phenomenon. Of 600 delegates ... less than 7 per cent are women ... In these halls, like a mirror of the world's reflection on the problems of the developing countries,

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26/ A/CONF.79/13/Rev.1 and Corr. 1 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.78.II.A.11 and Corr.1), chap. I, sect. III.

27/ Ibid., para. 115.

we have nearly forgotten to analyse the place of women in the development process. But it is a fact that the hard core of the development problem is constituted by women. Women are the most unequal of unequals ... The whole of mankind will be free when woman gains her proper place in the new international economic order<sup>28/</sup>. 28/

63. A comparison of the recommendations in the Plan of Action adopted by the Conference 29/ and in the Draft Plan of Action 30/ indicates that the Conference elected to (a) eliminate mention of the subject areas in which technical co-operation amongst developing countries might be active; (b) eliminate mention of voluntary organizations and (c) reduce the emphasis on exchanging ideas on development policies. For instance, recommendations 1, 9, 18 and 23, in the Draft Plan of Action had specified areas such as control over natural resources, manpower planning and training, establishment of viable research and extension institutions, development of appropriate technology, employment, education, health, housing and human settlements, rural development, social welfare, the integration of women and youth in development, agricultural production and food security, development of human resources and low cost maternity and child health care. The Draft Plan had also mentioned the use of voluntary organizations, along with professional and technical associations, as centres of co-operation. But all of this was missing in the adopted Plan of Action, and the whole of the draft recommendation 13, covering joint surveys, studies of feasibility of ventures, joint assessment of population dynamics, rationalized food production schemes and other items, was eliminated by the Conference.

64. In view of the need to pool all sources of creativity in devising more appropriate policies and projects these deletions were surprising. It is unlikely that initiative on investigating areas of interest will come from the agencies, which have the expertise to raise questions concerning women. A report of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Technical Co-operation Among Developing Countries made it plain that their Plan of Action "could not contain a list of priority areas or activities by social and economic sectors and subsectors as their selection was the prerogative of Governments". 31/ One United Nations body, however, is likely to initiate proposals on studying the effects of the transfer of technology on women. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has been in the forefront of examining issues of a new international economic order and has already done more than any United Nations office in examining sectoral implications of technology transfers. Recommendation 105 of the fifth session of UNCTAD, held at Manila from 7 May to 3 June 1979, 32/ urged that investment and technical assistance should be directed to accelerating food production, to improving nutrition, to strengthening world food security and to adopting appropriate schemes to diversify

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28/ Statement by the representative of Mozambique in the general debate.

29/ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.78.II.A.11 and Corr.1, chap. I; and A/CONF.79/5.

30/ A/CONF.79/5.

31/ A/CONF.79/PC.20, p.3.

32/ TD/263, p.39.



food production - issues closely involving women. Now UNCTAD has initiated a study on the role of women in technological transformation to be submitted to the Committee on the Transfer of Technology at its third session in 1980, and has officially stated its intention to promote the integration of women in development through its international programmes of training.

65. But the elimination of mention of voluntary organizations is possibly more serious for women. If the view of the delegation of Mozambique of women is correct, research on women's issues and the evaluation of the impact of past projects on them requires highly qualified, technical co-operation personnel to overcome the ignorance, unawareness and disbelief on this subject. Male professionals and experts may not be interested in this subject and even if they are, their sex might bar them from sensitive interviewing of women. But female professionals and experts are scarce, in some countries extremely so. Yet voluntary organizations frequently concentrate on working with women and indeed are often composed of women at the local level. Their personnel are sometimes the best qualified to talk about women's problems. Utilizing their knowledge and understanding, helping them to exchange ideas and experiences with similarly placed people in other countries through seminars and joint surveys, and putting them in touch with professionals (for mutual benefit) could, in some countries, be the principal means and channel of communications of technical co-operation amongst developing countries on raising women's issues. The report of the Conference and indeed the several reports of the preparatory committees are loaded towards experts and consultants and reversing the "brain drain" of those who have studied abroad. It is very difficult to visualize a network of information sharing concerning women in all this.

66. It is fair to ask how, in a document written three years after the Women's Conference in Mexico, the phrase "the integration of women and youth in development" came to be included. A quantity of solid documentation was available to the last meeting of the Preparatory Committee, held in May 1978. This included papers on "women and TCDC" 33/ detailing the relevance of technical co-operation amongst developing countries to women. There was also an excellent paper on the subject of women from the African Training and Research Centre for Women, 34/ which described their existing technical co-operation among developing countries work. Finally, the FAO, WHO, ILO, UNDP and UNFPA submissions on technical co-operation among developing countries also made reference to women.

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33/ Report: TCDC and women; Technical co-operation among developing countries and women's role in development in the ECWA region (United Nations, ECWA); Ingrid Palmer, TCDC and Women - all papers from the International Workshop on Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries and Women, Asian and Pacific Centre for Women and Development, Teheran, Iran, 24-26 April 1978.

34/ "Technical co-operation among developing countries and human resource development: the experience of the African Training and Research Centre for Women of the Economic Commission for Africa," United Nations Conference on Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries.

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67. In spite of the weaknesses of the Conference, there has been some follow up to women and technical co-operation among developing countries. For example, the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade on Women in launching project evaluation research on women in Burma (a primary health scheme), in Malaysia (agricultural development projects) and in Sri Lanka (unspecified to date). The Association of South-East Asian Nations, in conjunction with UNFPA, is to undertake evaluative research on rural electrification in the Philippines (with a woman's component) and on the effect of agricultural projects on women in Malaysia. Those two organizations are also in the process of planning further research, specifically on "women and development".

68. The Mexico Plans of Action called for an improved data base, cross-cultural studies, research towards specific country and regional problems, scrutinization of all projects and plans, exchange of information and experience and meetings and seminars - concerning women. All these are component parts of technical co-operation among developing countries. The World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women would render a service to the present TCDC secretariat if it detailed the problems of South-South channels of communication on women's issues and advanced proposals for overcoming them.

K. Primary Health Care Conference, Alma-Ata, September 1978

69. Primary health care (PHC) has been defined as much more than the provision of medical services. It includes, among other things: 35/

(a) Promotive, preventive, curative and rehabilitative services;

(b) Education in methods of preventing and controlling health problems, promoting food supply and proper nutrition, safe water and sanitation facilities, maternal and child health care, family planning and immunization;

(c) Co-ordination of all sectors related to health, in particular, agriculture, husbandry, food industry, education, housing, public works;

(d) Promotion of community and individual self-reliance and participation in the planning, organization, operation and control of PHC;

(e) Reliance on assorted health workers: physicians, nurses, midwives, auxiliaries, community workers and traditional practitioners. Elsewhere, 36/ it is stressed that primary health care is an integral part of the over-all social and economic development of the community, including increases in production and employment, a more equitable distribution of income etc. It thus incorporates much of the results of Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements and the basic needs approach. It can reasonably be expected that this Conference would develop issues of women's special contributions and benefits further than the other

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35/ Primary Health Care, Alma-Ata, 1978, Report of the International Conference on Primary Health Care, WHO-UNICEF, Geneva, 1978, pp. 4-5.

36/ Ibid., pp. 16-17.

conferences because of women's roles as household nutritionists, nurses and often growers of directly consumed foods, as well as the reproducers of the population from their own bodies. The new emphasis on preventive, rather than curative, health measures opens the way to full recognition of women's integral position in health matters. Few could doubt that any serious attempt at promotion of PMC must require special interventionary policies to redress past neglect of women's role in basic food agriculture, to raise the productivity of women's labour in general and to ensure that women enjoy a prominent role in the planning and implementation of health services, health education and appropriate health technology. Unless, of course, there is to be a sudden and dramatic change in gender-typing of tasks.

70. The joint report of the Director-General of WHO and the Executive Director of UNICEF recognized the necessity of special attention to women's role in food agriculture, to appropriate technology for women, to nutritional education for women and to plentiful supplies of clean water, which also makes for an easier life for women. 37/ However, the report, while mentioning the importance of land tenure in ensuring that food reaches those who produce it, did not specify women's share in equitable tenurial arrangements. 38/ Nor did it touch on means of bringing fully-occupied women into community participation and in the proposed dialogue with health personnel, 39/ but it did mention the importance of women's organizations in discussing questions of nutrition, child care, sanitation and family planning. 40/ Also welcome was its statement that: "It is important to encourage men, too, to take a greater interest in health and to help them realize that they can contribute by shaping the community health system, as well as by taking part in practical undertakings".

71. Given all this, it is amazing that the Conference managed to pass 22 recommendations without mentioning women, except to comment that "high priority be given to the special needs of women, children, working populations at high risk, and the under-privileged segments of society". 41/ On the subjects of public participation, food production, proper nutrition, water, sanitation, training and appropriate health technology, the Conference managed to pass recommendations without mentioning women. Units of decision-making appeared to be the "community" or the "family".

72. It is difficult to find an explanation for the failure of this Conference, above all others, to address itself to women's issues in its recommendations. Its delegations could hardly plead ignorance or lack of awareness. It could be surmised

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37/ "Joint report of the Director-General of the World Health Organization and the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (Primary health care and development)" in Report of the International Conference on Primary Health Care, Alma-Ata, 1978, pp. 46-47.

38/ Ibid., p. 46.

39/ Ibid., pp. 50, 51, 56, 57.

40/ Ibid., p. 64.

41/ Ibid., "Recommendations", p. 26.

that there was a well-intentioned deliberate purpose in not distinguishing between women's and men's roles in PMC in order to simulate an advanced social situation in which both sexes shared the burden of health care. If this was the case it was dangerously mistaken for it omitted to spell out the strategy for moving from the present state of unequally shared responsibility to that happy future state. There can be no doubt that there is a problem of potential contradiction between emphasizing women's role in health care and expecting men to share responsibility for health care. But until there is greater awareness on the part of men, the case for increasing women's access to resources such as education, technology, employment, land and other agricultural inputs, as well as to planning community resources, remains overwhelming. Finally, the recommendations did not take up the specific demands of the Mexico Plans of Action for (a) training programmes for girls and women in health, nutrition and family planning, (b) special health services in pre- and post-natal care, and gynaecological and family planning services and (c) incorporation of women in planning at all levels.

73. A background document for the Conference on "Community involvement in primary health care" discusses at length the question of participation, but failed to note possible differences in women's and men's priorities. <sup>42/</sup> This document included a number of country case studies. Botswana, for instance, reports that groups of mothers have, with the help of the YWCA, raised money to start day-care centres. In Indonesia, the family welfare association, a unit of the village social institute, run by women, is concerned with improving the status of women and children. <sup>43/</sup> Yet the Conference recommendations included nothing on mobilizing women's organizations which could act as a "women's caucus" in the community planning of primary health care. Elsewhere in the country studies, nutrition-related illnesses figured prominently and in at least one study nutrition was seen as the most important factor in primary health care. Yet these studies did not bring out the reasons why food agriculture was failing to meet family nutrition needs. Attaching kitchen-gardens to nurseries and day-care centres (Viet Nam and Sri Lanka) does not attack the root causes of misallocation of resources to help to improve the mother's own nutritional status. And it is certainly not what the Mexico Plans of Action had in mind in securing a better base to general nutrition. What the International Conference on Primary Health Care achieved was to establish that health care was not only a matter of appropriate technology and delivery of health services, but a reorganization of development strategies to reduce health hazards and, therefore, the demands on those services. In doing so, it widened the scope for discussing women's and men's differentiated roles and benefits as well as the development of finer policy instruments. But the Conference failed to take advantage of these opportunities because of its apparently studied refusal to recognize sex-differentiated issues.

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<sup>42/</sup> Community Involvement in Primary Health Care: A Study of the Process of Community Motivation and Continued Participation, Report for the 1977 UNICEF-WHO Joint Committee on Health Policy, WHO, Geneva (JC21/UNICEF-WHO/77.2 Rev.1), pp. 8-15.

<sup>43/</sup> Ibid., pp. 19 and 23.

L. World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (FAO), Rome, 12-20 July 1979

74. A great deal of early substantive preparation on women's questions was undertaken for this Conference by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat through the submission of papers and responses to requests by the Conference secretariat for written comments. In addition, the FAO commissioned regional papers on women's issues in agrarian reform and rural development from consultants. The combined efforts of the United Nations Secretariat, the Interdepartmental Task Force on rural development and the FAO Task Force on women, led to a special agenda item on women, which was discussed by the Conference under four subitems: equality of legal status; women's access to rural services; women's organizations and participation; education and employment opportunities.

75. The result of these efforts was that this Conference lifted the equality of debate on women's questions well above anything else achieved, except by the World Conference of the International Women's Year. The process of preparation was an example to all other agencies of what could be achieved and showed clearly that ignorance or the difficulty of handling women's issues can no longer be used as an excuse for not incorporating women's interests.

76. Two Conference documents in particular can be singled out for their very fulsome treatment of women's questions. The document entitled "Review of United Nations, FAO and World Conference resolutions concerning agrarian reform and rural development" 44/ offered preambles covering women's equal status in the family and society and in access to resources and services, including equal rights in land reform and resettlement schemes. Under employment, it stated that policies should be formulated to give women equality of opportunity, treatment and remuneration, and under food security, Governments were urged to create opportunities for women to contribute more effectively to food production (pp. 11-12). The items concerning land reform and women's role in food production represent quantum leaps in fleshing out what other conferences have platitudinously referred to as "the integration of women". They also satisfy important demands of the Mexico Plan of Action. "Agrarian reform and rural development: national and international issues for discussions" 45/ was also highly satisfactory in detailing what any modernized integration of women must involve. It also included the need for "equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land settlement schemes" (p. 9). But it added the comment that "landless women are becoming redundant to the economy with fewer work opportunities, while landed women are increasingly working for male heads of households with diminishing influence over household produce and income, a state of affairs which is accentuating dualism between classes of women and between sexes" (p. 10).

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44/ WCARRD/INF.1, p. 19.

45/ "Agrarian reform and rural development: national and international issues for discussions, agenda item III. 4 (WCARRD/3), pp. 9-11.



77. But the full expression of the latest thinking on women in rural development came in nine pages (out of a total of 128) in the document entitled "Review and analysis of agrarian reform and rural development in the developing countries since the mid-1960s". 46/ It covers subjects such as roles of women relating to agriculture and food, population, women and rural development, data indicators on women's integration, access to agricultural production resources and their control (including money, credit, information, technology, employment and income-producing opportunities, education and training, means of good health and nutrition and policy-making).

78. Under access to land, this document calls unambiguously for equal rights to land title or control in land reforms. The significance of this landmark can scarcely be overestimated for it marks the end of a long period when the literature and discussion on agrarian reform was dominated by what amounted to reforms between classes of men. Not only does this new departure recognize that the old style of land reform can have a deleterious impact on the working conditions of the wives of men who have received land titles, but it opens the way to the application of more subtle policy instruments on food security, appropriate technology and technical co-operation among developing countries. As it was phrased in this document:

"A key to the impact of rural development and agrarian reform on women in primarily agricultural economies may be found in changes in their access to, and control of, the allocation of production resources, a matter usually given little attention by planners as far as women are concerned ... Under new land allocations, titles given to males only may drastically alter the roles of women, or reinforce existing inequalities" (p. 89).

79. In spite of all this, the Draft Programme of Action 47/ did not explicitly state in its resolutions that women should have equal rights in land reform. Instead there was "Promote joint ownership rights for women, co-ownership of land in entirety, to effectively give women producers with absentee husbands the legal right to take decisions on the land they manage", and "adopt measures to ensure women equitable access to land, livestock and other productive assets". The Conference 48/ itself accepted these diluted demands. It is worth recording more of the recommendations concerning women to illustrate the importance of this Conference.

80. Under equality of legal status, it called for the repeal of laws which discriminate against women in respect of rights of inheritance, ownership and

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46/ "Review and analysis of agrarian reform and rural development in the developing countries since the mid-1960s" (WCARRD/INF.3), pp. 87-95.

47/ Revised Draft Declaration of Principles and Programme of Action (WCARRD/4/Rev.1).

48/ Report of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, Rome, 12-20 July 1979, WCARRD/REP, resolution IV, pp. 10-11. The report was circulated to members of the General Assembly under the symbol A/34/485.

control of property, and of laws and regulations which inhibit effective participation by women in economic transactions and in the planning, implementation and evaluation of rural development programmes. It also called for ensuring women full membership and equal voting rights in people's organizations such as tenants' associations, labour unions, co-operatives, credit unions and organizations of the beneficiaries of land reform and other rural development programmes.

81. Under women's access to rural services, it called for providing women with agricultural inputs and social and economic services through non-discriminatory access to existing delivery systems, and a broadening of the range of agricultural training and extension programmes to support women's roles in agricultural activities and the establishment of special recruitment and training schemes to increase the number of women in the training and extension programmes of agencies at all levels.

82. Under women's organization and participation, it called for the promotion of collective action and organization by rural women to facilitate their participation in the full range of public services on an equal footing with men. The establishment of systems, with the involvement of women's organizations, to identify and evaluate obstacles to women's participation and to monitor progress and co-ordinate action; and the promotion of research and exchange of information to facilitate and ease the burden of women's household work in order to permit them greater participation in economic, educational and political activities.

83. Under educational and employment opportunities, it called for measures to ensure educational opportunities of similar quality and content for both sexes, to promote income-generating opportunities for women and guarantee equal wage rates for men and women for work of equal value, to establish and strengthen non-formal educational opportunities for rural women, and to evaluate and take steps to minimize the possible negative effects on women's employment and income arising from changes in traditional economic patterns and the introduction of new technology.

84. However, there is evidence that the FAO secretariat and task forces in other United Nations departments set standards for handling women's questions which were higher than the delegations would have reached on their own. The report of the Preparatory Committee held in March 1979 <sup>49/</sup> stated that, while agreeing with the basic structure of the Conference agenda as presented by the secretariat, several delegations made suggestions for giving emphasis to selected topics. There followed a list of no less than 18 topics in which women did not appear, although "role of youth" did.

85. The FAO regional conferences, <sup>50/</sup> held as part of the Conference preparations, also appear to have been left behind by the standards set at headquarters in Rome.

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<sup>49/</sup> "Report of the Preparatory Committee", Rome, 12-16 March 1979, (WCARRD/5), p. 7.

<sup>50/</sup> Recommendations made by the FAO regional conferences held in 1978 on agrarian reform and rural development, FAO (WCARRD/INF.4/Rev.1), January 1979.



The Latin American and African Conferences made the brief comment that "Rural development requires the mobilization of all resources available, particularly the work of the women, which can be reached through the promotion of the participation of the rural women in the development process", and some countries of the Near East that "the grouping of beneficiaries in production organizations would promote the participation of the rural women in development activities" (p. 5). Their one combined recommendation was "to promote and support more effective participation by the rural population, including particularly women and the young" (p. 9).

86. Although the Conference recommendations were not as fulsome as might have been hoped from a reading of the background papers, they do provide a legitimate basis for proceeding on women's employment creation and access to education, training and extension services as well as to agricultural inputs and credit. The public participation of women and the use of their own organizations and non-governmental organizations in advancing their position can be written into all future programmes. Technical co-operation among developing countries on appropriate technology and data collection and research on women should be more easily accepted now by planning bodies. In research, technical co-operation among developing countries, with the FAO and other international organizations taking an active part, evaluations of the impact on women of projects should be able to take into account the terms on which they have access to land and highlight salient points on land ownership and control. But the regional FAO commissions may require some specific briefing from Rome. In particular, the regional centres for training and technical development which are to be set up deserve close attention so that they establish an appropriate methodological basis for their women's component and apply adequate resources to it.

M. United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development, Vienna, 20-31 August 1979

87. At the base of this Conference was acceptance that international market forces had not proved adequate to the transference of the kind of technology which could create an endogenous dynamic in developing economies, but rather one which caused distortion and under-utilization of other resources (especially labour) and which reinforced inequalities and dependency. To correct the present situation it was necessary to root research and development of technology in a framework of the objective requirements of developing countries.

88. The priority areas for concern were: food and agriculture; natural resources (including energy); health, human settlement and the environment; transport and communications and industrialization. Different conference documents pointed to the legacy of colonialism in the present pattern of technology transfer or the particular deleterious effects of colonialism on the status of women, providing an opportunity to expose the special impact of past technology on women. Others pointed out that appropriate technology was needed for women or that (separately) appropriate technology could include highly sophisticated technology, so raising the curtain on a debate on what technology would be appropriate for closing the gap between women's and men's labour productivity.

89. Thus, as with other conferences, the subject of this Conference afforded opportunities for raising numerous women's issues, but being the first round of discussion on new transfers of technology, it was concerned with bargaining for research and development resources at the international level. Nevertheless, to promote a future debate on women's issues it is pertinent to record how the Conference dealt with them and the background efforts that went into their inclusion.

90. In the general debate, 51/ many representatives of both developing and developed countries recognized the importance of the role that could be played by women in planning and implementing the application of science and technology to development. The role of women was seen to be often radically altered by the utilization of modern agricultural technologies. There was, therefore, a need to give women and men equal influence on decisions relating to the introduction of new technologies and the use of new scientific methods. Resolution 2, entitled Women, Science and Technology, 52/ was proposed by 14 countries. 53/ The Conference invited Member States to facilitate the equal

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51/ Report of the United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development, Vienna, 20-31 August 1979, A/CONF.81/16 and Corr.1 and 2 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.79.I.21 and Corr.1 and 2), para. 81.

52/ See ibid., chap. VI.

53/ These were: Australia, Denmark, Ethiopia, Finland, Hungary, Jamaica, Mongolia, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Somalia, Sweden, Thailand, United States of America and Viet Nam.

distribution of the benefits of science and technology between men and women, the participation of women in planning and setting priorities for science and technology and the equal access for women and men in training and professional careers. The Conference recommended that the United Nations system should continually review the impact of their programmes and activities on women, and promote the full participation of women in the planning and implementation of their programmes. The Conference invited the proposed Intergovernmental Committee on Science and Technology for Development to give due regard to the perspectives and interests of women in all its recommendations and activities and to include in its annual reports a review on the progress achieved by this resolution. Finally, the Conference recommended to the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women to give due consideration to the relationships between women, science and technology and development.

91. It was only as a result of intensive lobbying and the submission of a number of papers on women that this resolution was passed. The second meeting of the Preparatory Committee, held in December 1978, did not present an auspicious start. The report of that session 54/ made no mention of women, although it passed a long resolution on the sectoral subject areas, and on science and technology policies, many of which, such as nutrition and health, concern women especially. A note by the Secretary-General on the draft outline of the Programme of Action 55/ made no mention of women, but did refer to "intensive efforts to arouse social and cultural awareness in all sectors of the population, particularly the young". This, in spite of the fact that the Non-Governmental Organization Task Force, on 28 November 1978, had circulated to 151 Member States an urgent memorandum drawing their attention to statements made by the United States of America, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, desiring that the integration of women should be included in the Conference proceedings. 56/

92. The third session of the Preparatory Committee was held in January 1979. Papers were submitted by the regional commissions, and ESCAP gave considerable attention to women's questions. 57/ It dealt with the effects of agricultural technology on women, women's importance in a new food agriculture policy, the crucial role of women in family planning campaigns, and, under the separate heading of the status of women, pointed to women's marginalization through technology. However, the ESCAP representative at the Conference did not refer to a roundtable on women and science and technology held in July 1979, under the auspices of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Women and Development, at which country papers were submitted. Nor did it mention the meeting's recommendation that Asian delegations should include women. (In any event, there were no women

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54/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-third Session, Supplement No. 43 (A/33/43), vol. I, pp. 22-23.

55/ A/33/303/Add.2, p. 7.

56/ See Pamela M. D'Onofrio, The Implication of UNCSTD's "Ascending Process" for the Exploitation of Women and Other Marginalized Social Groups, Science and Technology Working Papers Series, No. 7, UNITAR, New York, 1979, p. 20.

57/ "Regional paper prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific", third session of the Preparatory Committee (A/CONF.81/PC.15/Add.1, 28 November 1978), pp. 12, 14, 17, 19 and 20.

in any of the Asian country delegations to the Conference.) The Economic Commission for Latin America 58/ did not even comment on women's questions for science and technology in spite of that region's unusual dominance of men in modern formal industry, but women's dominant position in the multinational "off-shore" enterprises. The same thing applies to the submission for Africa which did, however, comment that science and technology "greatly amplifies men's effort, increases the efficiency of his exertions, refines the results of his labour, removes drudgery from work ...". 59/

93. At the same time, there was an improvement in the draft outline of the programme of action. By January 1979, the role of women in development was an item of improved training and for institutional infrastructure, as was the impact of technology on women (along with small farmers and craftsmen). And more women should be encouraged to pursue careers in science and technology. 60/ The Non-Governmental Organization Task Force had been active again for the third session of the Preparatory Committee. 61/ It presented a 10-page compilation of statements, entitled "Rights of women for United Nations conferences for science and technology" and provided a long list of proposals for action. But the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee, held from 23 April to 4 May 1979, showed less interest in women's questions. The preliminary Draft Programme of Action, 62/ submitted by the Secretary-General of the Conference, merely referred, under development of human resources, to "make special provision to increase the productivity of low-income groups and enable people who have been prevented from exploiting their full potential, particularly women, to play their full role in society". However, the report of the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee did carry, as an annex, a long statement by Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, which included the following moderate statement: "These (social and human) values must concern the satisfaction of human and social needs through social and economic development from the village level up, the participation of all groups in the development process, men and women alike ...". 63/

94. The fifth session of the Preparatory Committee, held in June 1979, failed to

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58/ "Regional paper for Latin America, science and technology in Latin America: regional diagnosis and action programme", third session of the Preparatory Committee (A/CONF.81/PC.16/Add.1, 29 January 1979).

59/ "Regional paper for Africa", third session of the Preparatory Committee (A/CONF.81/PC.17/Add.1, 24 January 1979), p. 14.

60/ "Draft Outline of the Programme of Action: Note by the Secretary-General" (A/33/303/Rev.1, 5 January 1979), pp. 5, 7 and 11.

61/ See Pamela M. D'Onofrio, op. cit., pp. 20-22.

62/ A/CONF.81/PC.28, p. 13.

63/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 43 (A/34/43), vol. II, p. 25.

muster any interest in women's questions. 64/ Under science and technology and integrated rural development, women were dropped from Norway's national contribution 65/ as a special-interest group, although small landowners and artisans managed to stay in and, in a reference to the industrialization experience of Western countries, it was stated that youth and the aged were marginalized (but apparently not women). 66/ There was no reference to women.

95. A pattern emerges from the different stages of preparing for the Conference such that some substantive issues concerning women were raised at early meetings, only to be dropped later on. Several documents, written in 1977, support this impression. The Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs set out the justification for special attention to women and technology in a document entitled "Appropriate technology for developing countries and the needs of rural women". 67/ Another paper written by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs for the Advisory Committee, entitled "Women in food production - a critical discussion for the advancement of science and technology for development", was used for the first draft of the Plan of Action of the United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development, but was later abandoned. And at the first round of the regional meeting of African experts, held in the United Republic of Tanzania in October 1977, the role of women in the utilization of science and technology was one of five papers commissioned for the preparation of the Conference. 68/

96. It was made very clear in the report of the fifth session of the Preparatory Committee 69/ that the main issue at the Conference, which constituted the first round of deliberations on science and technology for development, would concern bargaining between developing and developed countries over the establishment and financing of new channels of research and development at, at least, the national level. As a Latin American delegate told the chief lobbyist of the non-governmental organizations on women's questions,

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64/ "Preparations for the United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development, Consolidated paper related to the discussions of items 4, 5 and 6 of the provisional agenda for the Conference" (A/CONF.81/PC/42), pp. 29 and 30.

65/ Summaries of National and Regional Papers, vol. I (A/CONF.81/6, vol. 1), p. 66.

66/ "Preparations for the United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development: Science and technology and the future" (A/CONF.81/PC/41), p. 14.

67/ Written by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs for the meeting of the Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology to Development, held at Vienna, from 16 to 20 May 1977 (ESA/S and T/AC.7/CRP.3/Add.3, 5 May 1977).

68/ "Meetings contributing to the preparation of the United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development" (A/CONF.81/INF.3/Rev.1, 27 March 1979), p. 57.

69/ Report of the Preparatory Committee, vol. II, op. cit., p. 18.

"The Committee of 77 ... did not want to talk about population, energy, environment or women, but rather about how everything is related. Their common interest is in the establishment of a new international economic order where they are not in a state of dependency, but in a state of equity." 70/

The Group of 77 is also quoted by two writers as objecting to a separate agenda subitem on women because, it "would be opening up the agenda to other extraneous items" and "it would be like opening up a Pandora's box". 71/

97. Nevertheless, the record of the way other international conferences have handled women's issues provides ground for concern that when the dialogue on sectoral and intra-national group interests is developed at a later date, women's issues will be poorly incorporated unless strong representation is made on their behalf at a very early stage. Moreover, this Conference (and the United Nations Conference on Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries) being concerned with altering the direction of male-dominated educated research and development resources at very high levels is in danger of losing sight of the female half of its ultimate constituency, whose present channels of expressing its priorities lie largely in women's and voluntary organizations. Yet several papers on science and technology 72/ would indicate that the inequities of present international transfers of technology, particularly those through transnational companies, fall more on women than men in developing countries, since women are the most marginalized of the marginalized.

98. The dearth of women in national delegations to this Conference did nothing to arrest suspicions that science and technology for development would merely devolve on a realignment of an international male technocratic elite. It is true that a new international economic order could offer to women at least as many benefits as men, and probably more, but there are many ways in which transfer of technology might evolve and therefore women's involvement in it.

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70/ Mildred Robbins Leet, the Roles of Women in Science and Technology for Development - The Politics of Consciousness. Twentieth Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, Toronto, Canada, 21 March 1979.

71/ Ibid., p. 6, and d'Onofrio, op. cit., p. 23.

72/ See the following in Science and Technology Working Papers Series, issued by UNITAR:

Zenebwerke Tadesse, Women and Technological Development in Agriculture, No. 9, 1979;

Mangalam Srinivasan, The Impact of Science and Technology and the Role of Women in Science in Mexico, No. 10, 1979; and

Maria Bergom-Larsson, Women and Technology in the Industrialized Countries, No. 8, 1979.



99. The resolution that was adopted on women, science and technology, in spite of that history, was a welcome step forward and the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women needs to pay close attention to developing it into programmes of action for UNCTAD, UNIDO, FAO, the ILO and UNDP. It should also bear in mind that, in the preamble to the Vienna Programme of Action, it was stated that "Men and women in all groups of society can contribute positively to enhance the impact of science and technology ...", and that, because technological developments "may have a negative impact on the conditions of women ... steps should be taken to ensure that all members of society be given real and equal access to and influence upon the choice of technology". 73/ This could be interpreted to mean that whenever "human resources" are mentioned in other resolutions on science and technology, the inclusion of women is mandatory.

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73/ A/CONF.81/16 and Corr.1 and 2 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.79.I.21), chap. VII, preamble, para. 5.



## II. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

100. The present paper has discussed the approach of 12 Conferences towards the incorporation of women's issues in their subject-matter. On the whole, much less attention was given these issues than might have been expected on the basis of the calls of the World Conference of the International Women's Year. If there has been a discernible trend since 1974, it is that less note is being taken of women's issues now than earlier. The two preceding conferences of 1974 (concerning population and food) referred to women many times, although the first was unable to grasp the significance of women's personal status in affording opportunities to intervene in the demographic transition (and many of the general recommendations were likely to have a pro-natal effect), while the latter was obliged to look more closely at women's roles because of the imperative of meeting food crises. But it was only with the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development in 1979 that a measure of satisfaction could be felt again.

101. Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, while interspersing its general comments on improvement with references to women's right of access to resources and participation, failed to state clearly how the environment had a special impact on women's domestic work and that improvements therein were a pre-condition for women's effective use of access to other economic and social opportunities. Its reference to the special problems of the young, the aged and the handicapped highlighted this omission, since women currently serve as the last refuge for these vulnerable groups. The Tripartite World Employment Conference was able to point to a few salient features of the basic needs approach which particularly affected women. The call to reduce women's drudgery and recognition that women were overworked rather than underemployed were welcome. But the issue of how to raise the productivity of women's unremunerated domestic and agricultural work was ignored, and the means of upgrading informal sector employment do not seem relevant to the typical occupations of women in this sector. The Water Conference could have made a powerful argument to the effect that past water policies had neglected women's domestic and agricultural productive roles. As it was, it tended to concentrate on the misallocation of water in conservationist terms without mentioning that women's low-productivity, labour-intensive work constituted the main source of water conservation to the point of misallocating their labour. The United Nations Conference on Desertification, urgent as its tone was and correct as it was in pointing out that affected households customarily have diversified income portfolios, failed to take note of the implications of the sexual division of labour in its corrective proposals.

102. The Primary Health Care Conference was extraordinary in that it ignored the very substantial sex-differentiated interests in preventive health measures. This Conference above all others should have been aware of the dangers of assuming or anticipating a state of women's and men's equal responsibilities in nutrition, hygiene, child care and nursing the sick, let alone a state when women have no special nutritional and health problems of their own.

103. The conferences on economic co-operation among developing countries, technical co-operation among developing countries and science and technology were unusual in

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that they constituted the first formal round of negotiations among States on seeking a reallocation of resources at the international level and of demonstrating politically the decision to seek more appropriate paths to development. Yet in that they briefly touched on sectoral and group issues and discussed at length new channels of training, research, and exchange of experience and expertise, the special impact of past policies on women obliged them to put women's issues high on the agenda of detailed discussions. In general they failed to do this, apparently in the mistaken belief that this would weaken their arguments. However, the exercise of consciousness on women's issues, undertaken by the non-governmental organizations and a few delegations did produce a strong resolution on "Women, science and technology". But the focus of the Conference on Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries on exchanges at high levels remains a source of concern, as few women are found there. The Conference to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination nicely complemented the call of the World Conference on the International Women's Year to report on women's participation in struggles by inviting the United Nations to inform the public on the particular problems suffered by women through racial discrimination and apartheid.

104. Finally, the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development can be seen as a model for future conferences, whereas the other conferences tended to refer to women in a manner by using the catch-all phrase of "the integration of women in development" and mechanistically providing checklists of women's rights of access. That Conference showed sensitivity and understanding in specifying what was required for women to be able to take advantage of those rights. Virtually all the conferences lauded the principle of public participation in decision-making, but the Conference in Rome was able to see that certain pre-conditions had to be met before women could participate effectively. By calling for women's personal rights in land reform, it clearly declared an interest in relations of exchange and distribution within the household, and thereby added an important dimension to the usual class analysis.

105. Those conferences which did go beyond "the integration of women" etc. had a background of intensive activity by a comparatively small lobby of concerned groups (including government delegations) working on the preparatory committees. But an examination of the successive preparatory committees of some conferences revealed that early acceptance of some women's issues gave way to later modification or elimination of this material, even when it was acknowledged to have merit. Thus, preparatory activity of workshops, round-tables and submissions are no guarantee of the successful insertion of women's issues at the actual conference. It is possible that a mixture of lack of curiosity, of embarrassment and hostility still meets the subject in what the Mozambican delegate to the Conference on Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries pointed out were overwhelmingly male enclaves. There is also an evident intellectual inability to cope with women's issues, probably arising from a training in development problems free of all specifically women's issues and ignorance of the new literature on women and development. But, until the constraints on women's more effective contribution to and direct benefits from the economy and society percolate through all sectoral analyses, there is a danger that planners will continue to view women's issues as a welfare item and therefore as consumption competing for funds with investment in productive capacity.

106. Some of the regional commissions' submissions were well above the average documentation in usefulness, but most lagged deplorably behind the input of agency headquarters. This in spite of the fact that the Plans of Action adopted at Mexico City in 1975 singled out the regional commissions as special vehicles for identifying action needed to develop policies and that they are in a superior locational position to reach local research and training centres.

107. Since the interests of the world's female constituency are not being adequately presented at international conferences, in spite of the Mexico Conference of 1975, it is vital to raise the question of new channels of communication. The failure of so many conferences to cope with women's issues was partly the fault of government delegations and partly the fault of the United Nations system, but there is no reason to believe that this will be rectified without strong affirmative action. A minimum requirement for government delegations is that each include at least one woman. But, because government representation at preparatory committees is so much smaller and because these committees determine so extensively what happens at the conference, it needs to be made mandatory that Governments call national (or subregional in the style of technical co-operation among developing countries) workshops to develop an item on women's issues in their own submissions. The delegations to the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women might also consider institutionalized ways and means of generating a continual flow of demands for technical co-operation among developing countries on women's issues which, among other functions, can service national conference delegations at relevant points in time. In almost all countries, there are women's bureaux or organizations, non-governmental organizations and qualified individual women who are capable of initiating demands. But they need information and financial assistance to reach each other at the national, subregional and regional levels. A dependence on the channels of communication as outlined at the United Nations Conference on Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries will bypass these groups. At the same time, representation of the female constituency at conferences can only be secured through technical co-operation among developing countries. The Mexico Conference of 1975 did not see the necessity of emphasizing this problem. It therefore falls to the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women to raise it in no uncertain terms and to make corresponding demands to Governments and the secretariat of the Special Unit for Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries.

108. The United Nations system can take some obvious steps to improve their preparatory inputs on women's issues. Commissioning papers on relevant topics is one step. Sending qualified personnel as resource persons to preparatory committees is another. But linking up with national, subregional women's groups concerned with technical co-operation among developing countries by facilitating preparatory workshops is possibly the most important. The UNIDO Workshop on the Role of Women in Industrialization in Developing Countries (see annex) is an example of this, which could be improved upon by sending agency experts in the capacity of resource persons. All these measures can be seen as a means of guaranteeing that women's issues stay on the agenda through all the preparatory committees.

109. Many of the conferences made recommendations on follow-up action, such as research on women's topics. But, inevitably, these must compete for financial and

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personnel resources with other follow-up activities. There is, therefore, a need for a unit in an officially accepted central position which will assist and monitor all follow-up activities.

110. Finally, it should be clear that the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women will not be reviewing a situation in the international development community markedly different from the one existing in 1975. If the close of the United Nations Decade for Women in 1985 is to be a time for greater satisfaction, this Conference must spell out in some detail what should be the future work of conference secretariats, regardless of the fact that they defaulted on women's issues in their resolutions.

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ANNEX

UNIDO Workshop on the Role of Women in Industrialization in  
Developing Countries

(Vienna, 6 to 10 November 1978)

1. The Workshop was called to discuss the role of women in developing countries with reference to the Lima Declaration and Plan of Action, a/ which reiterated the need to create conditions for the full utilization of available human resources and mentioned the importance of the full integration of women in social and economic activities to that end. The Lima Conference also called for the establishment of permanent structures for specialized, rapid, large-scale and high-quality training of national labour at all levels without discrimination with regard to sex, and supporting facilities for basic, rural, small, medium-scale and labour-intensive industries. Thirty-two people participated at the Vienna Workshop and representatives from UNIDO, FAO, UNDP, UNESCO, ECA, CSDHA, ESCAP, APCWD and the World Bank attended as experts. Thirty-two papers were submitted, including one from the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, b/ whose contents, which reflected the main points of discussion, can be summarized as follows:

(a) Women's traditional industrial employment has been eliminated, but there has been little new employment creation for women;

(b) Women have been prominent in the low-paid, poor prospects, labour force of transnational corporations off-shore, labour-intensive enterprises;

(c) More research is required cross-culturally, on TNC's hiring and wage policies and on technological choices on the role of women in industry.

2. The Workshop's discussions and recommendations stressed that care had to be taken over the terms on which women entered industrial employment, in particular:

(a) Discrimination with respect to recruitment, training, wages and promotion must end;

(b) Efforts should be made to break down prejudices and attitudinal barriers to women's employment in industry;

(c) Practices of transnational corporations needed to be closely examined for their effect on easily-exploited women;

(d) Women's role in contracted out piece-work should be researched;

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a/ "Lima Declaration and Plan of Action on Industrial Development and Co-operation", Second General Conference of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, Lima, Peru, 12-26 March 1975 (A/10112).

b/ "Note for the Preparatory Meeting on the Role of Women in Industrialization in Developing Countries" (ID/WG.283/6).

(e) Governments should review basic education systems as they affect the acquisition of skills by women;

(f) Priority should be given to establishing industry in rural areas and to promoting women's co-operatives in small and medium-sized enterprises;

(g) The United Nations Industrial Development Organization itself should promote workshops, fellowships and training programmes for women, undertake studies on relevant industries such as textiles, electronics, pharmaceuticals, food processing, as women's working conditions are affected, and establish an interagency task force on Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries and industrialization as they might affect women;

(h) Greater efforts should be made to unionize women.

3. This was the first agency meeting of such size and significance devoted to women's questions and its procedural problem carries a lesson for such events in the future. The women participants, selected for their knowledge on particular industries, were unfamiliar with the work and relevant reports of UNIDO. The agency participants showed some reluctance to get involved in substantive discussions and therefore did not provide as much information and technical assistance to synthesize different experiences as they might have. Until women participants gain experience in agency conferences and agency personnel become versed in women's questions, there is bound to be some awkwardness and delay in progress. Improvements could come with pre-workshop briefing of all participants and the use of agency personnel as resource persons in separate study groups of such a workshop.

4. The organization is now undertaking case studies on successful rural industrialization and women's role therein. Since the priority programme areas of UNIDO include electronics, farm industry and processing, there is a good chance that, under some follow-up pressure, it will incorporate a closer look at women's roles in them. The recommendation of an interdivisional task force in UNIDO to advance technical co-operation among developing countries for women, among other things, might require special follow-up pressure in order that its training and fellowship programmes include women's needs.

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