

United Nations
GENERAL
ASSEMBLY

FORTY-SECOND SESSION

Official Records*



THIRD COMMITTEE
36th meeting
held on
Wednesday, 28 October 1987
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 26th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. RITTER (Panama)

later: Mr. DIRAR (Sudan)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 95: ELIMINATION OF ALL **FORMS** OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
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AGENDA ITEM **97**: INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING INSTITUTE **FOR** THE ADVANCEMENT
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1. Mrs. BLOUIN (Canada) said that her country had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against **Women**, an international legal instrument which focused on domestic policy issues, in **December 1981**. Social justice and economic equality for **men** and women appeared as clear commitments in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, because if a **woman** was unable to develop her potential to the full, not only she **but** Canadian society as a whole would lose. Her Government was therefore striving to end discrimination against women. In November 1986, the annual Conference of Canada's First Ministers had endorsed a work plan for the forthcoming two years, with the aim of **promoting** equality nationally as well as internationally. The **governmental** department responsible for **the status** of women had produced a report **on** sexual stereotypes in internal communications within the Federal Government. In **that** connection, she was surprised that **the** United Nations did not refer in French 'to "droits de la personne" rather than "droits de l'homme". To promote the participation of women in economic life, the Government had since October 1986 made it a strict requirement **that** any **company** bidding for contracts should apply the principle of employment equity. **In** the long term, such steps would have a substantial impact on the economic and social relationship **between men and women**, and would change the very fabric of society.

(Mrs. Rlounin, Canada)

2. Her delegation had often wondered why inadequate resources were devoted to promoting and protecting the rights of women. It was surprised that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which was supposed to supervise the implementation of the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of half the world's population, was allocated less resources than other bodies with lesser responsibilities. Her country therefore hoped that the General Assembly would, as an exception, permit the Committee to hold more meetings in 1988-1989.

3. Mr. ABRAHAM (Hungary) said that his country attached particular importance to the Forward-looking Strategies, which provided a realistic analysis of political, economic and social trends and factors which would have a bearing on status of women until the end of the century, and whose objectives were entirely in line with his Government's own efforts. He stressed the interest of the Secretary-General's report (A/42/528), highlighting activities within the United Nations system to implement the Strategies, and the value of the focal points established to put the necessary measures into effect. In its view, the Commission on the Status of Women should continue to play a central role in that endeavour. To promote women's rights to the maximum, the Strategies emphasized international peace and security, which presupposed not only the absence of war but justice, social equality and respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

4. In his country there existed all the requisite conditions for the practical enjoyment of equality between men and women. The country's socialist system had made all the necessary legal, economic, cultural and health provisions for women to benefit from social progress and economic expansion and to engage in gainful activity without forsaking motherhood. The National Council of Hungarian Women, in collaboration with other social organizations, worked on such topics as the social aspects of the situation of women, making analyses, formulating proposals, expressing opinions and, when necessary, ensuring that legislation was passed to guarantee women equality in the workplace, in public life and within the family.

5. Being aware of the difficulties women confronted in meeting their many obligations as mothers, wives and employees, sometimes in the face of traditional and prejudices, his delegation felt that public awareness of their problems should be stimulated still further, since the advancement of women in all areas depended on long-term plans for the whole of society.

6. His country had taken an active part in the elaboration of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and had been among the first to become a party to it. It strove to comply with the Convention, and in some instances even went beyond it. It had established an open and fruitful dialogue with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the situation of women in Hungary.

7. It was unfortunate that the Convention, as a fundamental international legal instrument, had not yet been universally adopted and applied, but he was convinced that efforts to make it so would ultimately be crowned with success.

8. Mr. GALAL (Egypt) considered that the problems covered by agenda items 95, 96 and 97 concerned almost half the human population and a great many organizations were trying to deal with them, at the risk of frittering away their resources and efforts. It would be better to entrust them all to a single strong and effective body. The United Nations was ideally placed to centralize activities for the advancement of women.

9. His delegation did not believe it proper for certain countries to call on others to withdraw reservations they had entered to some articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It was the sovereign right of every State to accede to any convention and, when necessary, make reservations and no other State should presume to pass judgement on the wisdom of such decisions.

10. Islam emphasized the equality of human beings, irrespective of their colour, race, sex or religion. Equality as an economic, social and cultural concept occupied an important place in Islamic religion. Muslim women had always participated in war and had access to education and individual property on an equal footing with men.

11. On the other hand, the all-female membership of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was surprising. Were not the topics which that Committee discussed just as important to men? Furthermore, the deliberations of that so-called expert committee, as revealed in document A/42/38, showed a lack of knowledge about the history, culture and the economies of the countries concerned. The questions raised and the comments made were simplistic or went beyond the Committee's mandate. He cited paragraphs 20, 24, 26 and 37 as examples.

12. Regarding the status of women in his country, the Egyptian system offered them equal opportunities in education and employment. Egyptian women worked in the army and the police as well as the civil service. There were many in the diplomatic service and, for the first time, a woman had been appointed to head the Egyptian diplomatic mission in Vienna.

13. In his country's view, the advancement of women was not merely a woman's cause but a cause for the whole of society. Women and men must work hand in hand for its attainment, because the two sexes were complementary. That was in accordance with the dictates of Islam, which was based on equality, tolerance and justice.

14. Ma. GUO Yuanhui (China) emphasized the amount of work that needed to be done to improve the status of women and welcomed the efforts made by the Commission on the Status of Women in 1987 to implement the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. The Commission's proposal regarding priority themes to be considered during the next five years (which the Economic and Social Council had adopted by consensus) merited attention.

15. Many countries did in fact have practices and regulations which discriminated against women in education, employment, politics and decision-making. Millions of

(Ms. Guo Yueshen, China)

rural women around the world engaged in strenuous physical labour in addition to their household chores, yet their role went unrecognized and the results of their labour were not reflected in GNP statistics. The role of women intellectuals was likewise overlooked. Customs and traditions that had prevailed for thousands of years had led to unquestioning acceptance of such inequitable practices and systems.

16. Under those circumstances, her delegation believed it was essential and of the utmost importance that national machineries involving an adequate number of women from various circles should be established to monitor and improve women's status. Efforts must therefore be made to ensure equality in political participation and decision-making and to eliminate de jure and de facto discrimination against women.

17. Women who were victims of such unfair treatment were in the best position to understand that situation, and were thus the very ones who ought to mobilize at the national level to rectify it, not out of self-interest, but for the sake of a common, just cause and future generations of women and because women's progress meant progress for all.

18. She praised the accomplishments of the previous 10 years of the United Nations Development Fund for Women. Through the several hundred projects it had carried out in more than 100 Asian, African and Latin American countries, the Fund had played a unique role in encouraging women to participate fully in development. The garment factories set up by the Fund in China had not only provided jobs for more than 400 young women and enjoyed significant economic success, but had also considerably improved the status of those women in their families and in society. It was to be hoped that contributions to the Fund, which were currently insufficient, would be increased to enable more of the world's women to benefit from its activities. For its part, the Chinese Government would contribute \$30,000 to the Fund for 1988.

19. In view of the increasing number of reports to be considered by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, her delegation believed that the Committee was justified in requesting eight additional meetings in 1988. With regard to the reservations made by some countries to articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women upon acceding to that instrument, she supported the Committee's recommendation that the question should be considered at the 1988 meeting of States parties.

20. Despite limited human and financial resources, the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) had made a positive contribution to the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies, starting with research, training and data collection. In view of its increasing importance and the growing demands placed upon it, the Institute needed more support from the international community and all Member States. Her Government, which continued to support the work of INSTRAW, would contribute \$10,000 to the Institute for 1988.

21. Mrs NNIKOLIC (Yugoslavia) said that her delegation attached great importance to the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000 and had taken note of the Secretary-General's report (A/42/520) with great interest. She hoped that the activities undertaken by United Nations bodies to advance women would be intensified in the context of efforts to develop and implement the system-wide medium-term plan for 1990-1995.

22. Her delegation welcomed the new spirit prevailing in the Commission on the Status of Women and hoped that the Commission would take fully into account the achievements of various United Nations bodies as well as international, regional, and national trends.

23. The Yugoslav Government had supported the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) since its inception to the best of its ability because it recognized the role the Fund could play in integrating women's needs in mainstream technical co-operation activities) that role would be further strengthened by the Fund's association with UNDP.

24. Research, training and information led to a better understanding of the way in which different development activities were linked. The work of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) was exemplary in that regard, particularly in so far as policy design was concerned. Her delegation had noted with interest the Institute's publication entitled Women and the World Economy. She commended the Institute's contribution to efforts to integrate women in all aspects of co-operation among developing countries. Yugoslavia would continue to co-operate with Zimbabwe in the preparation of studies on women and development. She believed that INSTRAW could contribute to the search for a methodology for monitoring and evaluating activities and programmes relating to women and development. Her country supported the Institute's method of working through networks (which Yugoslavia intended to follow in order to improve its own statistics on women) and had established a focal point for increasing co-operation with INSTRAW.

25. The Yugoslav Government had strengthened its interministerial group responsible for reviewing the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies at the federal level. That group had completed a comparative study on the role of and results achieved by national machineries in implementing the Strategies in different parts of the world.

26. A world survey on women and development might contribute to the implementation of adjustment policies) it would be desirable for the Second Committee, too, to consider that issue in order to link the economic to the social aspects of development. Her delegation supported the proposal to elaborate a United Nations study on debt and the status of women in developing countries.

27. In 1987, Yugoslavia had convened the twelfth international seminar on women and socio-economic development under the auspices of the Conference for Social Activities of Yugoslav Women. The International Centre for Public Enterprises, an intergovernmental organization of developing countries, was headquartered in

(Mrs. Nikolač, Yugoslavia)

Yugoslavia. The Centre was working with UNIDO and INSTRAW to train women for managerial positions in industry.

28. Her delegation was pleased to note that a growing number of States had ratified or acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It supported the recommendation of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women that additional meetings should be held on an exceptional basis and its recommendation to States Parties that education and public information programmes should be adopted to help eliminate prejudices and practices that hindered social equality. Like other delegations, her delegation believed that the Committee should continue to be made up of independent experts and uphold the integrity of the Convention. The reservations made in connection with some important articles of the Convention might undermine the very principle of women's equality. That sensitive issue ought to be given thorough consideration by the States parties at their next meeting in 1988. It would be desirable for those States parties that had made reservations to withdraw them as soon as possible in order to preserve and promote the spirit and aims of the Convention.

29. Mr. CMARA (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), speaking under agenda item 96, said that there had been a continuing effort within the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to promote the integration of women in agriculture and rural development policy, programmes and projects. In particular, his organization was endeavouring to translate into concrete programmes at country and regional levels the Declaration of Principles and Programme of Action adopted in 1979 by the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development.

30. The principal unit addressing women's concerns within FAO was the Women in Agricultural Production and Rural Development Service. Its activities included policy formulation, the development and backstopping of technical field projects and the identification and promotion of women beneficiaries in all FAO programmes. An essential task of the unit was to provide technical secretariat support for the Inter-Divisional Working Group on Women in Development, whose main purpose was to encourage all FAO departments and divisions to integrate women's concerns into their mainstream development activities.

31. FAO co-operated with other relevant organizations of the United Nations and with Member States in collective efforts to support the full participation of women in the development process and in the development and use of mechanisms to co-ordinate follow-up to the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women.

32. FAO had contributed towards the formulation of the Forward-looking Strategies in respect of food, water and agriculture-related development objectives and had participated in the post-Nairobi donors' meeting on women and development.

33. FAO had been requested to draft a chapter for the planned update of the survey on the role of women in food systems and agriculture to be presented to the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session.

(Mr. Camara, FAO)

34. FAO had contributed to the formulation of the subprogramme dealing with food and agriculture in the system-wide medium-term plan for women and development and had major responsibility for seven other sub-programmes.

35. FAO had also contributed three papers on, respectively, rural women and food security, rural women and agricultural technology, and rural women and energy for the Secretary-General's report to the 1988 session of the Commission on the Status of Women. It had also prepared a paper for the international seminar on national machinery for monitoring and improving the status of women organised by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. The second report on progress in the implementation of the programme of action of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development contained a chapter on the role of women in rural development. The report was based on 50 country progress reports and on other national and international sources. The FAO Conference would also have before it a document on women in agriculture and rural development illustrating FAO's programme directives in that field and outlining their implications with a view to providing the Conference with a basis for a more structured programme of action over the medium term.

36. In order that development assistance should have real benefit to women, it was necessary that the relative sequence and timing of inputs should be carefully orchestrated, national institutions strengthened and appropriate human resources made available at field level. Some problems with regard to the choice of priorities were being encountered in that connection.

37. Mr. KITTIKHOUNE (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that despite the world community's commitment to the cause of women's rights, a great deal still remained to be done in that field. In South Africa and Namibia, black women were still subject to oppression by the racist minority régime of Pretoria supported by its imperialist allies, who seemed indifferent to the women's sufferings. In the Middle East, Palestinian women continued to be denied their fundamental national rights.

38. The contribution of the United Nations system to the efforts of various countries in implementing the Forward-looking Strategies was significant and should be enhanced. All appropriate bodies of the United Nations, including the regional commissions and the specialized agencies, should adopt comprehensive policies for the participation of women in promoting international peace and co-operation and incorporate them in their medium-term objectives, programmes and policies. The Commission on the Status of Women should also stress the relationship between women and peace when discussing the priority themes of the Forward-looking Strategies.

39. The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic had freed women from their status of slaves under the former neo-colonialist régime and had created favourable conditions for gradually ensuring the enjoyment of their rights in the new socialist society. Special attention was being given to education and vocational training for women. Lao women were also encouraged to participate in the defence and reconstruction of their country.

(Mr. Kittikhoun, Lao People's
Democratic Republic)

40. As emphasized in the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women, the strengthening of world peace and international security, the curbing of the arms race, the achievement of détente and the establishment of the New International Economic Order were decisive factors in improving the status of women. The Forward-looking Strategies also underlined the importance of the participation of women in promoting international peace and co-operation. The international community should spare no effort to ensure the implementation of those noble ideas.

41. Mr. Dirar (Sudan) took the Chair.

42. Ms. PUKHOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that women in the Soviet Union played an active role in all spheres of social life. Her country was a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and scrupulously observed its provisions. Equality between men and women was guaranteed not only in law but also in practice.

43. Soviet social policy enabled women to reconcile participation in social life with their children's upbringing. Women were employed in all branches of the national economy, but were particularly strongly represented in the fields of health, education and culture. Sixty per cent of diploma-holding specialists in higher and special secondary education were women. Soviet women were unacquainted with unemployment and found in their work the possibility of developing their creative potential.

44. Women in the Soviet Union enjoyed very extensive social protection. Particular attention was devoted to mothers, who received numerous benefits in the form of maternity leave, creches and kindergartens, and special leave if a child fell sick. The normal retiring age for women was 55.

45. Some problems, however, still remained, in particular that of inadequate qualifications of working women, which could affect their wages. The Government was making efforts to improve women's vocational training. Another problem was that many women were still exercising dangerous or physically strenuous professions. A decision to take all possible steps to change that situation had been taken at the latest congress of Soviet trade unions.

46. The participation of women in public affairs was extremely important. They were very well represented in the Supreme Soviet of the USSR (one third of its deputy), in the parliaments of the federated and autonomous republics (around 40 per cent), in the Soviets of Working People's Deputies, and in local bodies (approximately one half). Similarly, the number of women was steadily increasing in the supreme bodies of the State.

47. The Soviet Union was going through an extremely important period in its development, characterized by a revolutionary restructuring of all aspects of social life by means of democratization and glasnost. Women were playing an active

(Ms. Pukhova, USSR)

role therein through membership in public non-governmental organizations which were steadily growing.

48. The status of women was a global issue. It could not be improved without constructive international co-operation; it was the responsibility of United Nations organizations and, in particular, the Third Committee, to promote that co-operation. United Nations activities for implementing the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies and the provisions of international and regional instruments regarding women should be stepped up.

49. The role played in that connection by the Commission on the Status of Women should be strengthened: it had been successful in harmonizing divergent viewpoints, thus opening new approaches in United Nations activities for improving the status of women on the basis of the Nairobi Strategies. The Commission's recommendations, adopted by the Economic and Social Council, were proof of the desire of various countries to press on with the advancement of women, and to develop co-operation within the framework of the United Nations, taking into consideration the interdependence of the three priority themes - equality, development, peace - held by the Nairobi Conference to be the core of international, regional and national activity in that field. Of particular importance were recommendations for settling as soon as possible the matter of initiating preparatory work for the next United Nations world conference on women.

50. The useful work being done by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was also welcome. That Committee's objective study of the reports of the States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women made it easier to understand the specific problems facing women and facilitated the search for solutions to those problems. It also helped to enhance the authority of that body. However, in order to avoid difficulties, it was important that the Committee should not deviate in any way from its mandate.

51. As had been emphasized at the World Congress of Women, held in Moscow in the summer of 1967, organizations of the United Nations system should promote the exchange of national experiences on matters concerning women, which implied that world conferences would be organized on a regular basis and that the activity of those organizations would be improved. The World Congress of Women, which had gathered together 2,800 participants from the four corners of the world and from 154 different countries, had been an important event for women the world over. The major concerns at that Congress had been peace and disarmament, issues of particular concern to women, since it was their task to preserve and perpetuate the human race.

52. Mrs. MIPANDA (Chile) said that the tone of the Secretary-General's report (A/42/528) gave rise to optimism. Despite financial constraints, organizations of the United Nations system had made progress in implementing the Nairobi Strategies, even if there was still a need for them to increase the resources and authority of the focal points, above all at the regional level. The proposed new reporting

(Mrs. Miranda, Chile)

system should make it easier to monitor implementation of the Strategies. There was still much to be done in the area of recruitment and advancement of women in the United Nations system to attain the goal of 30 per cent set by the General Assembly and WHO. It was gratifying that the Commission on the Status of Women would henceforth meet on an annual basis; it would be necessary to increase its membership in order to make that body more representative. It was to be hoped that the Department of Public Information, once reorganized, would be better able to disseminate the content of the Strategies more widely in simple and concrete terms, which had not yet been done.

53. Chile had signed, in 1980, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Chilean Parliament was in the process of considering, for the first time in 30 years, legislative reform instituting, in particular, the equality of rights and responsibilities of marriage partners. When adopted, that legislation would enable Chile to ratify the Convention and to join, probably as early as 1988, those countries which had already done so. Since the Chilean Constitution guaranteed the equality of men and women in terms of political rights and access to work, education and health services, there remained only the Civil Code which still contained egalitarian provisions. Chilean society was largely indebted for those changes to the tireless efforts of Mrs. Navas, a Chilean lawyer and current chairperson of the Inter-American Committee on Women of OAS.

54. Mrs. REFUVEILLE (France) said that, by adopting the Forward-looking Strategies, the General Assembly had recognized the inequalities and discrimination which still characterized the status of women and had demonstrated the desire of the international community to overcome the obstacles which prevented women from bearing responsibility, on an equal footing with men, for the development of the society in which they lived.

55. France believed that the Branch for the Advancement of Women would have a growing role to play both as substantive secretariat for the Commission on the Status of Women and as a documentation and publication centre. Furthermore, because of its role in the dissemination of ideas and information, the Department of Public Information should devote a greater part of its programmes to issues relating to women. She was gratified that, despite financial constraints, the organizations of the United Nations system had made significant progress in implementing the Nairobi Strategies and in determining and attaining the targets for the employment of women in the United Nations system.

56. France favoured a simpler reporting system for monitoring implementation of the Strategies, submitted by United Nations bodies to the Commission on the Status of Women. The Commission must assert itself more strongly as a body for spurring on and co-ordinating programmes, and it was gratifying that it had set priority objectives during its special session. On the other hand, she regretted that the Seminar on national mechanisms for the advancement of women, recently held at Vienna, had not been organized in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Organization and in the balanced manner befitting the United Nations.

(Mrs. Refuveille, France)

57. The International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women had wisely strengthened its programmes in basic statistics and indicators relevant to women, for example, in the area of women's contribution to the informal economy in developing countries. The research that it planned to undertake on possibilities open to women for filling traditional and new technical posts in industry and on policies for facilitating the access of women in developing countries to finance and credit and for giving women greater individual and collective autonomy in their productive activities was in keeping with the recommendations of the Nairobi Strategies and in line with the Institute's orientation.

58. France attached great importance to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which it had signed in 1979 and ratified in 1983. It was imperative that the greatest possible number of States should ratify the Convention and agree, as a matter of national self-respect, to amend their legislation and adapt it to the provisions of the Convention. In the interest of fairness for half the world's population, recognition of the equality of men and women would enable the latter to develop their skills and talents fully for the benefit of the community.

59. In keeping with its commitments made before the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, France had disseminated information, through its regional status of women delegations and information centres for women in order to publicize the text of the Convention. A publisher of school-books was devoting to the Convention a chapter in its new civic education manual for secondary schools.

60. Equality of rights between men and women was guaranteed in French law. Now it must be guaranteed as part of Everyday living. To that end French official policy was designed to diversify pre-employment training with greater emphasis on science and technology for young women, to improve opportunities for women in employment and training, to gear planning to achieving professional equality between men and women in energy, food and agriculture, mechanics' electrical equipment, electronics, aeronautics, armaments, editing, banking and other enterprises and encouraging women to go into business. It was also designed to enhance the role of mothers. Numerous laws and regulations had been adopted and an inventory had been prepared of civil law, tax law, social and labour regulations concerning maternity and parenthood in order to develop "a statute governing mothers and the family". The French Government was continuing to diversify child-care facilities and the 1986 law on the family had created a child-care-at-home allowance and enabled mothers to enrol in training courses with a view to resuming professional activity or qualifying for jobs.

61. Liberty, equality or dignity were not acquired rights valid for ever. They called for a continuous battle by all members of the society. Governments must therefore pursue voluntary policies for the advancement of women in the interests of equity and in a spirit of receptivity to social change. International Co-operation facilitated the exchange of experience and information which were useful in developing the most effective response to women's expectations.

62. Mrs. KAUL (India) welcomed the fact that the advancement of women was one of the two priorities in the budget for 1988-1989 and that the United Nations organs, in particular UNDP, had strengthened their focal points. India urged that United Nations organs should redouble their efforts to implement the Strategies and that the specialized agencies should strengthen their focal points and appoint more women to high-level, decision-making posts.

63. Most of the substantive work had to be done at the national level, where constitutional and legal guarantees were not always effective in countering the effects of custom and convention. The Indian Constitution, adopted when the country won independence 40 years ago, guaranteed equality of rights for women. The social situation and the legal status of Indian women today owed much to the part they had played in the struggle for independence, which had earned them the respect of their compatriots, and to the determination of Mahatma Gandhi and other personalities to accord them their due place in society and in leadership roles. In the same spirit the Constituent Assembly, at the time of independence, had unhesitatingly granted women the right to vote. Since then there had been substantial progress in the emancipation of Indian women. They were no longer confined to hearth and home but were actively participating in the social, cultural, political and economic life of the country.

64. In India, as in many developing countries, creating new opportunities for women was a complex task, since women were not a homogeneous group, nor were their roles identical in different strata of society. One of the most important steps in making a woman a respected and contributing member both of the family and of society was to enable her to become an independent wage-earner. The Government was therefore giving priority to promoting employment and education for women so as to enable them to take part in decision-making, and to mobilizing public opinion against prejudice.

65. India had consistently supported the United Nations Development Fund for Women. It had contributed \$20,000 in 1987 and would continue its support. As a member of the Consultative Committee on the Fund, India took pride in having helped to shape the Fund's policy. It had encouraged the Fund to take more initiative in the Asia-Pacific region. It was the only fund of its kind that was mandated to serve the needs specifically of women and it was the duty of all to ensure its continued growth both in terms of resources and in its areas of activity. India commended the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women on its work and would continue to support it. It had supported Economic and Social Council resolutions 1987/3 and 1987/21.

66. India was conscious of the fact that there was a long way to go before women could be integrated fully into the development process and it was determined to implement the Nairobi Strategies. In some parts of the world women had had to fight for their rights, or were still fighting, but in India, women's position had been clearly established by the founders of the Indian Republic. They had the means to set right past injustices in a spirit of comradeship rather than confrontation.

67. Mrs. ITO (Japan) said that, for women, who made up half the world population, the United Nations Decade for Women had provided a great impetus to their efforts to improve their status, but the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies had shown how much had still to be done.

68. In 1986 the Japanese Government had increased the membership of the Headquarters for the Planning and Promotion of Policies relating to Women in order to improve co-ordination and promote more effective implementation of the Strategies. In May 1987 the Headquarters had announced the New National Plan of Action to the Year 2000, designed to restructure society on the basis of joint participation by men and women and, inter alia, to change the stereotype of the role of the two sexes in society, to recondition social attitudes to enable women to choose their career freely, to ensure social welfare for women, in particular in old age, and to strengthen international co-operation and the contribution to peace. That approach seemed most likely to put the legally established principle of equality between the sexes into practice.

69. Japan was pleased at the trend in the United Nations system towards more practical and systematic action to integrate women into overall economic and social development programmes and commended the efforts mentioned in the Secretary-General's report (A/42/528). While recognizing the importance of integrating women's issues in the future activities of the United Nations system, her delegation was aware of the growing danger of duplication and discord. Women's needs must therefore be precisely identified at the earliest stage of planning and women's programmes must be carried out in a rational and well co-ordinated manner in line with the mandates and the human and budgetary resources of the various organs of the United Nations system.

70. The Japanese delegation strongly supported the efforts to pursue system-wide co-ordination of administrative, operational and programme activities relating to the integration of women in economic development, as shown in the report of the Secretary-General (A/42/273 and A/42/232), particularly the holding of inter-agency meetings. It might be possible to consider the advisability of joint planning and programming by different organizations concerned with women and development. Her delegation had greatly appreciated the substantive and intensive discussions at the January session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

71. It supported Economic and Social Council resolution 1987/24, since the inclusion of priority themes and the convening of preparatory seminars would be instrumental in increasing productivity.

72. Japan's economic and, especially, technical co-operation with developing countries, taking into account local needs relating to health, technical training and industrialization, had helped in the training of men and women as leaders in the development of rural areas and the advancement of women. The Government of Japan appreciated the work done by the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and had decided to contribute \$340,000 and \$80,000 respectively for the fiscal year 1987.

(Mrs. Ito, Japan)

73. In order to have a clear idea of the situation of women, correct and timely information must be gathered and disseminated at the national, regional and international levels. That was why her Government had co-operated in the project of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) to establish an information network on women's issues at the regional level. The regional seminar on that subject, which ESCAP had held in Japan in December 1996, had been useful.

74. In 1985, Japan had ratified, without reservations, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and hoped that many other countries would do the same in order to ensure the universal application of the Convention.

75. At its first regular session of 1987, the Economic and Social Council had recommended that the General Assembly should consider the request of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for additional meetings, on an exceptional basis. His delegation was concerned at the backlog of States parties' reports awaiting examination, and believed that the efficiency of the Committee's deliberations could be increased by improving the reporting system and the methodology for examining country reports. That would surely contribute to the general efforts to reform the administrative and financial structure of the United Nations system as a whole.

76. Mr. NAWAZ (Pakistan) said that the effective implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies required vigorous action at the national level supported and supplemented by international co-operation in a variety of areas, and that progress could be achieved only if the socio-economic conditions were conducive. It was unrealistic to expect that a fundamental transformation in attitudes, practices and values could be brought about without changing the socio-economic environment. The socio-economic inequities which had tended to perpetuate underdevelopment must be redressed at the national and international levels.

77. His delegation hoped that the Commission on the Status of Women would give due attention to the problems faced by the developing countries in their efforts to improve the status of women.

78. Pakistan commended the work of the Branch for the Advancement of Women of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, and hoped that its activities would be further strengthened. It also hoped that the agencies of the United Nations system would take appropriate action to increase the proportion of women employed in their secretariats.

79. His delegation was pleased with the accomplishments of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) during its first decade of existence, and hoped that the resources of the Fund would continue to increase. Pakistan had continued to contribute 125,000 rupees to the Fund. The United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) must focus more closely on programmes of special interest to developing countries, and his

(Mr. Nawaz, Pakistan)

delegation looked forward to its study on improving the financial resources available to women in those countries.

80. His delegation protested against the arbitrary and unwarranted remarks regarding Islamic societies contained in the report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (A/42/38) as well as the discriminatory proposal to carry out a study on the status of women in Islamic societies. Those observations exhibited not only a total ignorance of the principles, values and customs of Islam, but also complete indifference to the socio-economic conditions prevailing in developing countries. Any attempt to use the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women as an instrument of pressure or coercion against developing countries in general and Islamic countries in particular was inadmissible. Islam clearly established the rights of women in all spheres, particularly with regard to inheritance, property and maintenance.

81. The Constitution of Pakistan declared that all citizens were equal before the law and were entitled to equal protection of law. No Pakistani citizen could be refused employment on the grounds of sex, race, religion, caste, residence or place of birth. In particular, women enjoyed employment opportunities and also held important positions in the executive and judicial branches of the Government, as well as in industry and the public and private sectors. Women participated in the decision-making process at the highest level - in Parliament, the provincial assemblies and even the federal Cabinet. At the federal level, the Women's Division had been established to formulate policies and programmes to further increase the participation of women in the national development process. During the sixth five-year plan for the period 1983-1988, 800 million rupees had been earmarked for specific programmes in that Division.

82. Miss CHENG Phobol (Democratic Kampuchea) said that the will of the international community to implement the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies was being reflected in a series of basic strategies designed to offer increased opportunities for women and to strengthen their technical skills in order to enable them to participate in the development effort. At the international and regional levels, the United Nations bore the responsibility for integrating the needs and concerns of women at the planning, programming and budgetary stages. Her delegation supported the system-wide medium-term plan for women and development and system-wide co-ordination of the implementation of the Strategies, which had been endorsed by the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session of 1987. Democratic Kampuchea commended the efforts made by the system to increase the participation of women in the efforts mentioned by the Secretary-General in his report (A/42/528). Those activities should set a positive example for effective action.

83. Democratic Kampuchea also supported the work of the Commission on the Status of Women and was satisfied with the 15 priority themes for the next five years. The annualization of the Commission's meetings would enable it to carry out its broadened functions and improve its preparatory work for the world conference to be held towards the end of the century. Her delegation expressed its appreciation to

(Minister Cheng Phohol,
Democratic Kampuchea)

UNIFEM for its work and the assistance it had given in the past 10 years to projects in favour of women in developing countries.

R4. At the national level, it was heartening to note that 90 per cent of the Member States had bureaux or ministries dedicated to the advancement of women. Efforts must be redoubled in order to eliminate the remaining obstacles and the discrimination which still persisted.

85. In Kampuchea, where women played an important role in the resistance aimed at regaining national independence and self-determination, the promotion of their rights had assumed added importance. Kampuchean women wished to benefit from the Strategies and to contribute to their implementation. However, that was impossible as long as the war of aggression continued, with all its suffering, indignities and inhuman treatment, as long as the occupation troops were not withdrawn, and as long as independence and peace were not restored in Kampuchea. Incapable of dealing with all the hardships of foreign occupation, hundreds of thousands of women had swelled the ranks of the world's refugee population. Aware that only by participating in the struggle would they be able to gain the experience needed for decision-making and assuming positions of responsibility, many women had gone over to the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea. Many had sacrificed their lives. Thanks to their ingenuity and determination, women were managing to wage the struggle and, at the same time, to ensure their daily survival. The Coalition Government provided wide-ranging assistance by setting up centres for distributing food and providing medical treatment, centres for widows and orphans, facilities for the war-disabled, and art and cultural centres. Moreover, it had stepped up its action to prevent diseases caused by the chemical and bacteriological warfare waged by the Vietnamese.

86. Kampuchean women wanted peace, and their struggle was only a means of bringing about a negotiated settlement of the Kampuchean problem on the basis of United Nations resolutions and the eight-point peace proposal. Her delegation supported General Assembly resolution 37/63 containing the Declaration on the Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Co-operation, and paid tribute to the women of Namibia, South Africa, Palestine and Afghanistan for their role in the search for peace.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.