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at 3 p.m.  
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 24th MEETING

Chairman: Mrs. MAIR (Jamaica)

later: Mrs. IDER (Mongolia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

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

1. Mrs. HUANG Kuo (China) said that her delegation had always regarded the question of women as extremely important since women constituted half the world's population and no great social transformation could have been possible without their participation. The long heroic struggle of oppressed women for their emancipation had given new impetus to the struggle against imperialism, colonialism and hegemonism. Women had thus become a great revolutionary force and their revolutionary consciousness grew daily. Nevertheless, in many countries, they were still deprived of their rights or were subjected to various forms of oppression, exploitation and discrimination, while the law provided for equal rights.
2. Although women, of course, had their own unique problems, their emancipation was not an isolated issue, but a component part of the revolutionary movement. The true recognition of the rights of women depended first and foremost on the victory of peoples in their struggle for national independence and social liberation against colonialism, racism, Zionism, imperialism, monopolies and hegemony. Consequently, it was by joining in that struggle that women would win their case. To be convinced of that, one had only to consider their situation in the regions yet to gain independence, in the countries of the third world, or even in the so-called developed countries. By liberating the nation and the society, women themselves would also be liberated.
3. Consequently, in drafting the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, it was necessary to provide for the mobilization of the masses of women to join the common struggle; otherwise, the rights of women would at best be only partially guaranteed. Her delegation approved of some of the principles proclaimed in the preamble of the draft before the Committee, namely those calling for the elimination of colonialism and racism in all their forms, including apartheid, and the elimination of the gap between developing and developed countries. However, the text was not entirely consistent with her delegation's position of principle. Furthermore, it still retained the stuff foisted on the text by one super-Power to the effect that total and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control was a pre-condition for the achievement of the fundamental rights of women. However, that so-called disarmament was nothing but a sham designed to create a false sense of security so as to weaken the revolutionary resolve of the masses in their struggle against imperialism, colonialism and hegemonism. The two super-Powers were still just as frantically involved in their arms race. Clearly, their aim was to lead the women's movement astray.
4. Her delegation had always been firmly opposed to such manoeuvres and would therefore not participate in the vote on the draft Convention.

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5. Mr. YEPES (Ecuador) said that the status of women reflected the general situation and economic and social structure of a society as a whole. It was therefore by modifying the structures of the society that the essential conditions could be created for an improvement of the status of women. The great progress achieved in Ecuador in the field of economics, standards of living and cultural achievements had had repercussions on the status of Ecuador women. The action called for in the World Plan of Action adopted by the Mexico Conference had therefore been incorporated into the Government's national development efforts. The constitutional provisions in force and the drafts relating to a new political constitution provided equal opportunities and rights for both men and women, and the Labour Code governing relations between employers and employees prohibited any discrimination based on sex. The interests of women were protected by a number of legal instruments and by the ILO Conventions, including Convention No. 100 concerning equal pay remuneration and 111 concerning discrimination in respect of employment and occupation, which had been ratified by the Ecuadorian Government. Equal pay was guaranteed by article 78 of the Labour Code, and article 80 left the employer free to determine wages and salaries, which must not be below the legal minimum, without discrimination on the basis of sex. Ecuadorian legislation was also of an egalitarian nature with regard to social benefits. However, special provisions had been drawn up for the benefit of women, taking into account their role as mothers and their more limited physical strength. A law existed authorizing women to retire after 25 years of work without any reduction in the retirement benefits paid to them; measures were currently being taken to implement that legislation. Women were entitled to two weeks' paid leave prior to confinement and six weeks afterwards, and the dismissal of pregnant women was prohibited. Arrangements were also envisaged for nursing mothers.

6. The percentage of women who worked had declined between 1962 and 1974, although, in absolute terms, their number had increased, a fact which was explained by certain changes in the country's production structure since 1970 and by a considerable increase in the number of female students enrolled in educational institutions. With regard to the major occupational categories, it was in the category of personal and related services - where qualifications were not needed - that the percentage of women was highest. Next came the category of liberal professions, experts and related occupations which demonstrated clearly that, once women had achieved an adequate standard of education and vocational specialization, they were easily integrated into the labour market. The proportion of women in administrative and managerial positions was much lower.

7. For a number of years, the Government had been engaged in improving health services and extending them to areas which they had not previously reached. Newly qualified doctors were obliged to provide their services for one year to rural communities, under a programme drawn up and financed by the Ministry of Public Health, which was also responsible for a department of family welfare that gave priority to mothers, whether married or not, and in particular to those from marginal or underprivileged areas. A nutritional assistance programme for mothers and children, aimed at the poorest areas, was being carried out at the provincial level.

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(Mr. Yepes, Ecuador)

8. Referring to the draft Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, he said that, in view of the extremely short time allowed under Economic and Social Council resolution 2058 (LXII), a large number of countries, including Ecuador, had been unable to submit their comments on the matter. He had a number of reservations, three of which he considered important. The title of the draft Convention itself seemed unsatisfactory since it incorrectly gave the impression that the provisions it contained could solve all the serious problems faced by women in all fields and throughout the world. He therefore welcomed the establishment of the Working Group which was open to all and intended to participate actively in its work. He reserved the right to revert to the question if he considered it necessary.

9. Lady GAITSKELL (United Kingdom) said that her Government, which had taken an active part in the elaboration of the draft Convention in the Commission on the Status of Women, considered its provisions to be broadly acceptable, but had a few problems of detail and consequently welcomed the opportunity of making some improvements in the Working Group. She wished to raise a number of points of concern to her Government, whose written observations had not arrived in time to be included in the Secretary-General's report (A/32/218). In some respects, for example in the preamble, the document resembled a long General Assembly resolution rather than a permanent legal instrument. Furthermore, her delegation did not consider that the speedy achievement of co-education would help to eliminate the stereotyped concept of masculine and feminine roles, as stated in article 10 (c). Consideration should be given to excluding the armed forces from the application of the convention. Further thought should also be given to the provisions dealing with special measures to accelerate the equality of men and women and the special protection to be given to women in their employment, if those provisions were to achieve the effect intended.

10. The United Kingdom had adopted three pieces of legislation to improve the status of women. The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 prohibited any discrimination on those grounds in employment, training and the provision of housing, goods and services. It also gave individuals the right to bring their complaints in that respect before civil courts and industrial tribunals, and established a commission for promoting equality of opportunity between men and women. In addition, the Equal Pay Act had come into force in December 1975, and the Employment Protection Act 1975 prohibited dismissal because of pregnancy.

11. In 1969 the Women's National Commission had been set up as an advisory committee and endeavoured continually to achieve the objectives of the World Plan of Action and to increase the participation of women in political and economic life. Numerous non-governmental organizations also played an important role in the promotion of women's rights.

12. However, legal measures alone could not change the customs and attitudes of society towards women, and employers could get round the law. With regard to employment and class position, women were not always on equal footing with men, or even among themselves, since some obtained better jobs while working class women carried out only subordinate activities which, in many cases, were simply an extension of housework. It would be better to raise the status of work done in the home than to evaluate the economic worth of that work as a number of women's organizations in the United Kingdom were doing.

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(Lady Gaitskell, United Kingdom)

13. The United Kingdom was currently the largest contributor to the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women, providing 10 per cent of the target of \$10 million. It was a member of the Consultative Committee set up to advise the Secretariat on the use of the Fund, on which it had informally represented the group of Western European and other States. It was her delegation's strong belief that as many resources as possible should be allocated to practical schemes which could benefit women's development activities in the poorest areas of the world. Some of the projects already submitted by the Economic Commission for Africa were excellent from that point of view. However, the United Kingdom would not contribute to the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women.

14. In conclusion, she said that a complete reassessment of the traditional roles allotted to men and women within the family and the community was necessary for the achievement of equal rights for women.

15. Mr. WINTER (Chile) said that the fact that the question of the advancement of women had become topical over the past few years, at both the national and international level was to be welcomed, because it was unthinkable that it should thus far have been overlooked, a situation which had led to shameful discrimination. Fortunately, measures adopted nationally had preceded and opened the way for international action. Since then, the United Nations had played a decisive role by originating many conventions and resolutions, the most important of which were mentioned in document A/32/216, proclaiming International Women's Year and organizing the Conference in connexion with it, within the framework of the "United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace".

16. His Government attached the greatest importance to the World Plan of Action for the Decade; only a comparison between its provisions and the measures adopted by Governments would make it possible to assess progress in implementing it. Chile had regularly adopted measures designed to make equality between men and women, which were enshrined in its Constitution, a reality. His delegation intended to submit a detailed document on the matter, prepared by the National Secretariat for Women, analysing the different measures adopted in order to implement the World Plan of Action. That would show that important results had been achieved; however, there was still much to be done, and the Chilean Government was working at it, taking into account the degree of development, the cultural level, the traditions and the special characteristics of the country.

17. It was currently endeavouring, in particular, to develop women's potential through lectures, conferences and appropriate information activities. To that end it encouraged the establishment of women's organizations and had made executive posts in local authorities and Government open to women. Chilean women were widely represented in the teaching profession, the proportion being 65.6 per cent at the elementary level and 60.5 per cent at the intermediate level; over the past five years, 46.2 per cent of university graduates had been women.

18. Moreover, with regard to employment, the Labour Code and the legislation contained provisions designed to ensure genuine equality of opportunity for women.

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(Mr. Winter, Chile)

All firms employing at least 20 women were required to put a crèche at their disposal. Working women had the right to long maternity leave during which they received allowances equivalent to their full wages. Mothers had also the right to special leave when a young child was ill. Dismissing women during pregnancy and for one year after the termination of their maternity leave was forbidden by law. The law also guaranteed women equal pay for equal work. The Chilean Government was working to obtain recognition for the economic value of women's work in the home. The National Secretariat for Women was currently drafting a bill on that subject.

19. Chilean women, who were at the same time idealists and realists, also contributed to the social, economic and cultural development of the country on a voluntary basis. Women at home were encouraged to produce hand-made articles, which were marketed at Christmas each year by a specially established committee. In that way, the country benefited from the voluntary work of over 9,000 women. His Government considered the World Conference to be held in 1980 extremely important. It also welcomed the establishment of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and hoped that contributions would flow into the Voluntary Fund and make it possible to finance important activities in those fields.

20. He was completely in favour of the adoption of the draft Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the provisions of which were in general accordance with current Chilean legislation, and in line with national policy, the aim of which was to enable Chilean women to play an increasingly active part in the life of the country. He thought, however, that a working group should study the comments made by different Governments on the text, in order that its wording should be flexible enough to enable all countries to accede to the Convention without reservation. Care should also be taken that none of its provisions conflicted with other instruments in force in the United Nations. Every effort should be made to ensure that a document, the importance of which had rightly been emphasized, was not the subject of reservations which would make it lose all value, thereby in no way serving a cause which deserved strong support, because women were the trustees of mankind's most noble principles and constituted a moral reserve which would enable them to promote peace, love and tranquillity.

21. Mrs. Ider (Mongolia) took the Chair.

22. Mrs. MANGANARA (Greece) said that, since the United Nations and most Governments had declared their intention to abolish discrimination against women, efforts should be made to ensure that education and the mass media served that cause because they could play a decisive role in changing stereotypes concerning the roles of men and women. The proclamation of International Women's Year had aroused awareness in many women of their possibilities in realizing themselves as human beings and the multiple options available to them, and had created a spirit of solidarity among women, who were often subjected to discriminatory attitudes.

23. Her delegation attached great importance to the United Nations Decade for Women and to the World Plan of Action, which should make it possible to inform women who lived in ignorance of their rights and sustain the efforts and aspirations of those who were aware of their situation. The Decade coincided with the quest

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(Mrs. Manganara, Greece)

for a new international economic order, the establishment of which entailed the integration of women in development; it was extremely important, therefore, that a link had been established - unfortunately without success - between the review and appraisal of the International Development Strategy and the evaluation of the results achieved under the World Plan of Action. The 1980 World Conference would provide another opportunity for a review and appraisal of the means of attaining the objectives of integrating women in development, and the possibility of holding regional seminars or meetings on the themes of the Conference before that date was of the utmost importance.

24. The Consultative Committee on the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women had carried out its work with a great sense of responsibility. It was to be hoped that its next session would be convened as soon as possible.

25. The Commission on the Status of Women must continue to work for equality between men and women. The draft Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women which it had drafted and which complemented the Mexico Declaration and the conventions adopted by the specialized agencies, had great political value and represented a balanced compromise, its ratification by States would imply global commitment to the cause of women. In particular, Greece welcomed the provisions concerning the full guarantee of the economic and social rights of women on equal terms with men and the inclusion of provisions related to private law and family law.

26. Article 4 of the Greek Constitution of 1975 provided for equality between men and women, and article 28 for equal pay for work of equal value. Furthermore, the Greek Government had ratified Convention No. 100 of the ILO and on 26 February 1975, had signed a collective agreement providing for gradual implementation, within three years of the principle of equal pay. A special committee of lawyers - including women - had been established to look into the amendments to be made to civil law - for example relations between members of the family - to make it conform to article 4 of the Constitution. Another special committee had been set up to study the citizenship of married women. The Economic Plan for the period 1976-1980 envisaged that 21 per cent of women would be working by 1980 and focused its attention on women in order to facilitate their participation in the work force and to alleviate their family burdens. Those measures provided for increasing child care facilities, extending allowances and benefits for pregnancy and maternity to the private sector, the cost being borne by the State, and greater protection for unmarried mothers.

27. In order to increase participation of women in public and professional life and to integrate them in the development process, the Government and women's organizations organized seminars, gave wide publicity to the Decade and instituted studies on problems affecting women in urban and rural areas, as well as specific projects.

28. Additional criteria should be used in the selection of members of the ad hoc group to be set up to monitor the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and competent persons from the States Parties should be chosen, taking into consideration the principle of equitable geographical distribution.

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29. Mrs. HOUNGAVOU (Benin) said that, in pre-colonial Beninese society, women had played a very important role as individuals with obligations towards the whole nation. The first armed resistance column to meet the French colonial invasion had been composed solely of women, recruited without any discrimination from all strata of society. Similarly, women had exercised political and social responsibilities: the first counsellor of the King of Abomey, on the eve of the colonial invasion, had been a woman. In other words, there had been a non-violent struggle in traditional Beninese society to establish equality between men and women at all levels.

30. After the colonial invasion Benin, subjugated and enslaved, had assimilated Western bourgeois and retrograde ideas about women and swept aside its African concepts. The same could be said for all colonized African countries. Since the great revolutionary movement of 26 October 1972, the People's Republic of Benin, drawing particularly on the experience of the democratic and progressive countries, had taken positive steps to re-establish equality between men and women. On the theoretical and legal level, a woman was the equal of a man in all areas of national life. The Constitution guaranteed her the right to education, including the right to enter all branches of the teaching profession, the right to professional and technical training, to work, to equal pay with men and to paid maternity leave. She was free to choose her own career, and there were many women doctors, teachers, magistrates etc. She had the right to vote and to be elected. In practice, steps had been taken to ensure that those provisions were implemented, and both men and women had been invested with high administrative responsibilities.

31. For Benin, as for most developing countries, the problem of the improvement of the status of women was closely linked to economic and social development: women had to struggle shoulder to shoulder with men for the speedy establishment of a new world economic order and to assure women throughout the world of a decent life. Thus, freed from crude material concerns, they could contribute to a better future for humanity which would be achieved by the eradication of the blemishes of society, especially colonialism and racial discrimination, the elimination of tensions in various regions and the establishment of a lasting peace in the world.

32. Her delegation supported the draft Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Programme for the United Nations Decade for Women, the creation of the Voluntary Fund for the Decade for Women and the criteria established by the General Assembly for the use of the Fund's resources, as well as the creation of an International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women.

33. Mrs. Mair (Jamaica) resumed the Chair.

34. Mr. JANKOWITSCH (Austria) said that his country had supported the efforts undertaken in accordance with the decisions and recommendations of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly in order to promote the three aims of the United Nations Decade for Women: equality, development and peace, to which it attached the greatest importance. In consequence, and convinced that efforts to promote equality of men and women would be further strengthened by the adoption



(Mr. Jankowitsch, Austria)

and implementation of an international legally binding instrument, Austria had introduced resolution 2508 (LXII), unanimously adopted by the Economic and Social Council, by which the draft Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had been transmitted to the General Assembly. Austria was in agreement with the basic aims and provisions of the draft, although it saw room for drafting improvements. It had been one of the first countries to present its comments (A/32/218) and would participate actively in the Working Group set up to finalize the text, in the hope that the General Assembly could adopt it during the current session.

35. In support of the efforts undertaken within the framework of the Decade for Women, and subject to parliamentary approval, Austria would contribute to the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women and to the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women; the amount would be announced at the appropriate time.

36. He drew the attention of the Committee to the recommendations - the text of which would be published shortly - of the UNITAR Colloquium on Women and Decision-Making held near Vienna in July 1977. In that regard, if the United Nations reflected world society, the position of women in the United Nations was symbolic of the place they had won for themselves in world society. While a few outstanding women had gained access to positions previously reserved for men, that unfortunately did not mean that women had taken their rightful place in all spheres of political, economic and social life.

37. Austrian men and women had long been making efforts to achieve the goals set forth in the Declaration and in the draft Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Co-education had been achieved through an amendment of existing legislation on the organization of schools in 1975. Legislation enacted in July 1976 entitled employees to paid leave of one week per year of employment in order to provide care for sick relatives living in their households. It had also become possible to purchase insurance time, which was in particular a benefit for women who temporarily left the workforce owing to family obligations. The Unemployment Insurance Act had been reformed in 1976 to extend maternity leave pay to cover foster and adoptive mothers as well. A new law enacted in 1976 provided for the advance payment of alimony by the State to mothers of minors in the event of default by the person responsible for such payments.

38. However, discrimination against women could not be eliminated solely through legal measures but would require constant efforts, particularly in the area of information and education. International Women's Year had served in Austria as a great impetus to increase awareness, particularly among women, of their situation and needs. Much, however, remained to be done.

39. Mr. SAIGNAVONGS (Lao People's Democratic Republic) felt that the establishment of equality between men and women did not depend solely on the fact that a State enacted laws or signed international instruments, but also and especially on the will of the parties concerned to accept that equality. In most countries, the majority of married women were content with their position as mothers of families, and considered themselves above all housekeepers responsible for their homes,

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

their children and their husbands; and, conversely, most men conceived the role of women in the same way.

40. The task of Governments, particularly in developing countries, was therefore to set up vast teaching and information programmes to change the attitude of men and women towards their respective roles in society. It was not enough for women to have the same theoretical rights as men, they must also know how to put them to good use, for their own good and for the good of society.

41. That had been the policy followed by the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic for 10 years, and it corresponded to that advocated in the Declaration and the draft Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. During the long struggle for national liberation, Lao women had fought heroically beside men, and since that time had enjoyed the same civil, political, economic and social rights as men. They represented half the population, and a still greater force for the economic and social development of the country. In the development programme, therefore, the education, training and well-being of women was given high priority. The Association of Patriotic Lao Women assisted the Government at all levels of the administration, and the results achieved were encouraging. He drew special attention to the Rehabilitation Centre, where people contaminated by the social ills of the old régime (prostitutes, drug addicts, female card players and delinquent minors) were treated. As well as therapy - for prostitutes and drug addicts - they received a political education and professional training which would allow them to re-enter society. More than 500 women had been cured and rehabilitated. The percentage of illiterates - mainly women from rural regions - had decreased and the Government was determined to eliminate illiteracy throughout the country by 1980.

42. It was no easy task to get rid of centuries-old deep-rooted beliefs and prejudices, but Lao women were still among the privileged; they firmly supported their sisters in Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Palestine in their struggle to regain independence, liberty, equality and social progress.

43. Mr. PUNG (Singapore) said that women were a potentially important workforce for developing countries like his, where they represented almost 50 per cent of the population. If given education, they could contribute as much as, if not more than, men to the family and the nation. Education and the creation of jobs must go hand-in-hand in order to allow women to combine their role as homemakers with their contributions to the economic development of the country.

44. Singapore provided equal opportunities for boys and girls in primary, secondary and higher education, whether in instruction received or in the examinations held at the institutional and national levels. Every effort was made to inculcate into schoolboys and schoolgirls a respect for the Asian heritage, culture and values of their country, the better to equip them for the responsibilities they would have to shoulder in society. Education policy took account of the employment needs of citizens and the requirements of the economy. It was imperative to provide jobs for school leavers, both boys and girls. In the Public Service, women constituted 45.1 per cent of the total number of government employees. For equal work, they received equal pay.

(Mr. Pung, Singapore)

45. Many articles in the draft Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women contributed to the protection of women and their rights. Article 7 in particular called on all States Parties to take all appropriate measures to combat all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women, and article 11 ensured equal rights for women in the field of economic and social life. The nature of the "provisions" referred to in article 9, paragraph 2, should be made clearer.

46. Miss MAYA (Colombia) said that her country had begun to combat discrimination against women well before the United Nations had adopted the Declaration proclaiming the equality of men and women. Measures had been taken to give effect to equality, limit the rights of the husband, grant women the right to administer their own property, recognize their civil and political rights, give them access to public and private managerial positions and establish centres for pre-school children so that women could occupy their rightful place in society. In its development plan, her Government had reaffirmed the equality of rights and duties of men and women in educational, cultural, social, economic and political affairs, giving particular emphasis to education and training, which would make possible a true integration of women into the development process. There were also plans to set up a women's bureau under the Ministry of Labour and to include in the Constitution a specific reference to the principle of the equality of rights and duties of men and women. Private institutions, for their part, were co-operating in the implementation of the World Plan of Action, and both governmental and non-governmental organizations were actively promoting its objectives. Colombian women possessed the necessary legal instruments and educational opportunities to enable them to exercise their rights, assume their responsibilities in their communities and participate in national and international decision-making. Consequently, fulfilment of the objectives set for the Decade now depended on them.

47. Her Government supported the draft Convention and would propose a few changes in it in due course. It emphasized the need to increase the level of contributions to the voluntary contribution fund for the Decade, so that the tasks undertaken would be wholly effective.

48. She hoped that activities in connexion with the Decade would lead not only to legislation but also to concrete results and mandatory practices and that the problem of discrimination against women would be eliminated once and for all.

49. Mrs. ALLAGHI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the year 1975 - the beginning of the United Nations Decade for Women - had inaugurated a new era for millions of women all over the world by launching a struggle against discrimination based on sex in order to secure true equality between men and women in economic, political and social affairs. Although that equality could take different forms because of the diversity of cultures, religious convictions and levels of economic development, it meant freeing women everywhere from the prejudices which restricted their freedom, giving them equal opportunity and enabling them to assume their responsibilities in the society to which they belonged. It was regrettable that the concepts of freedom and equality for women gave rise to so many misinterpretations and were identified, among other things, with hostility towards men, the destruction of the family and the rejection of social values and traditions. As a result, references to the liberation of Arab women automatically conjured up in some minds the negative aspects of the emancipation of Western women and it was forgotten that two very different civilizations were involved.

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(Mrs. Allaghi, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

50. In its early days, Islamic civilization had had a revolutionary character in that it had made no distinction between men and women, viewing them as full-fledged human beings and differentiating only their intrinsic value. Islam had accorded women their dignity and permitted them to take their rightful place in society. Unfortunately, with the passage of time, the original beliefs had been distorted by the practices with which the religion had become encumbered and women had fallen back into their original subjection, which was further aggravated, in the modern Arab world, by the constraints of under-development, of which men were victims as well. The path of emancipation for Arab women, as for all women, therefore lay through development, a process in which it was imperative for them to be involved at both the national and the international level. The new international economic order could not be established without the full participation of women.

51. Her delegation commended the efforts of the United Nations and of Governments to improve the status of women, eliminate any and all discrimination and find appropriate solutions to the many problems of humanity. However, those efforts would not bear fruit unless they were accompanied by a heightened awareness and concerted action on the part of men and women all over the world. Similarly, legislative measures and the many resolutions of the United Nations would remain a dead letter so long as the will to implement them was not truly present.

52. Her Government was firmly resolved to apply the resolutions adopted at the Mexico City Conference, in particular regarding the need for women to be involved in international conferences and meetings. Her delegation to the present session of the General Assembly included three women. In January 1977, her country had been elected a member of the Commission on the Status of Women, in which it would do all in its power to represent Arab women in an appropriate manner and to promote the welfare of women and men throughout the world.

53. Her Government attached great importance to stimulating awareness and promoting literacy among rural women, and it had given effect at the national level to the relevant recommendations of the World Plan of Action by establishing 18 development centres for rural women in different parts of the country. Women's associations, especially the Union of Libyan Arab Women, had received from the Libyan authorities substantial material and moral support which had enabled them to work for improvements in the status of women in all sectors of modern Libyan society. The Union would participate in all national and international meetings concerning women and was actively preparing for the 1980 World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women.

54. Her delegation hoped that the draft Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/32/218), to which she would refer again at a later stage, would soon be completed.

55. She paid a tribute to the women who were struggling in Arab Palestine and in South Africa against all forms of racial discrimination and against zionism and imperialism, which posed a very grave threat to international peace and security.

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56. Ms. PALA (Kenya) said that the improvement of the social and economic position of women was a major concern of her Government. Although there had been attempts by the colonial Government as early as 1945 to develop programmes for women in Kenya, they had amounted to mere tokenism, for colonialism by its very nature negated on principle the enjoyment of human rights by subjugated peoples. Such attempts had therefore centred essentially on fostering embroidery and needlework, which were designed to make "housewives" out of African women.

57. Upon the attainment of independence in 1963, her Government had addressed itself to the central problem of increasing the economic self-sufficiency of families, and of women in particular, and had created the National Council of Women of Kenya to co-ordinate women's organizations and activities throughout the country. International Women's Year in 1975 had lent impetus to the activities of the Council. A number of seminars had been organized at the local and national levels with the aim of informing the Kenyan public of the objectives of International Women's Year. A major seminar, held in August 1975 to discuss the collection of data on women's activities, had given particular attention to the legal position of women, to women in rural development, to women in the labour force and to women in education.

58. Recognizing the need for national machinery to co-ordinate action, her Government had decided at the end of 1975 to set up a unit of the Ministry of Housing and Social Services which would be called the Women's Bureau and would provide a nucleus for implementation of the national plan of action for the advancement of women. The Bureau had been granted financial and material support by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and its Research and Training Institute for Women. Since Kenya was an agricultural country and 80 to 90 per cent of its population lived in rural areas, the main emphasis of the Bureau's programmes was on rural women. It had embarked upon a systematic recording of the financial and material needs of women belonging to 5,000 groups comprising approximately 500,000 people and was taking stock of the development potential which they represented. Those groups were encouraged to apply, through their district development committees, for self-help and rural development funds. That was an important step for the women's groups, which had not previously been eligible for such funds. The programme had benefited from UNICEF financial aid.

59. The Bureau had also set up a Research Steering Committee composed of representatives of research units in other Ministries, of certain institutes and of the National Council of Women of Kenya and had prepared extensive documentation. It had commissioned an annotated bibliography of existing sources of information on women in Kenyan society. That study, which was being financed jointly by the United Nations/ECA, should be published before the end of 1977. Another study, dealing with the legal status of Kenyan women would provide the basis for changes in those areas of the law where there were still discriminatory practices against women. The Bureau was also taking part in the regional activities being conducted under the United Nations/ECA technical co-operation programme. It had, inter alia, sent a delegation to the Regional Conference on the Implementation of National, Regional and World Plans of Action for the Integration of Women in Development, held recently at Nouakchott. Her Government was also currently considering proposals for the establishment of a National Commission on Women and Development.

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(Ms. Pala, Kenya)

60. While Kenya recognized the need for sustained action by the international community to eliminate the constraints placed on women, it nevertheless felt that the condition of women could not be improved by women's programmes alone. Since women formed 50 per cent of the world's population, they had an enormous potential for contributing to the development of humanity. It was therefore important to attack the problem of the advancement of women at the broader societal base. Men and women must work together to transform the world into a more equitable and humane place. Only then would both have the full enjoyment of their rights.

61. Kenya strongly favoured the adoption of the draft Convention before the Committee, since it was an instrument which would promote the cause of women. She drew attention, however, to articles 10, 11, 12 and 13, relating to economic and social rights, in part III of the draft Convention. In her delegation's view, that part was important enough to merit re-examination, for in its present form it appeared to put disproportionate emphasis on women in paid employment, which presupposed essentially women in an advanced industrial society. In that respect, the draft Convention was not consonant with the socio-economic situation of the developing countries, in which rural development would continue to be the predominant concern for some decades to come. Perhaps that imbalance could be corrected by further elaboration of article 12 and a corresponding rearrangement of articles 10 and 11. Her delegation further believed that the Convention might state more clearly that in the developing countries discrimination against women was linked to the inequitable distribution of the world's resources, which would prevent those countries from fully realizing the provisions of the Convention. In her delegation's view, it might be useful in that connexion to establish a working group to study the draft more thoroughly, and Kenya would be interested in being a member of that group.

62. While welcoming the establishment of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, she regretted that the Institute's programmes had been slowed down by lack of funds. She hoped that appropriations would later be made under the regular United Nations budget for financing some of the major work of the Institute. In connexion with that work, she wished to draw the international community's attention to the fact that while discrimination against women was a problem both in developed and in developing countries, there was a very clear difference in the perception of the problem in the two groups of countries and priority areas of action could not be the same for both groups. It was of paramount importance that the views and values of women from developing countries should be reflected in the work of the Institute. Care must therefore be taken to ensure that the Institute was fully capable of meeting their needs, particularly in the matter of personnel; thus far, the United Nations system had shown a tendency to recruit personnel from developed countries.

63. Her delegation favoured the convening of the proposed World Conference in 1980 and hoped that it would serve as an occasion for an evaluation of the results

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(Ms. Pala, Kenya)

achieved during the first half of the Decade and of the obstacles that had to be overcome. Kenya wished to reaffirm its full support of the objectives of the Decade; all the organs of the United Nations development system should contribute to the attainment of those objectives, in order that the world community might accomplish the task it had undertaken, on which the future of the world depended.

64. Mr. KEILAU (German Democratic Republic) said that the General Assembly's decision at its thirtieth session to proclaim a United Nations Decade for Women, dedicated to regional, national and international action for equality, development and peace, was certainly one of the Organization's most important actions in the social field. The results achieved since International Women's Year showed that women in many parts of the world still had to contend with numerous difficulties. The efforts being made were aimed not only at improving the living conditions of women or guaranteeing them certain rights but also at creating such socio-economic conditions as would enable them to be fully integrated into the process of development of their society. It was necessary to adopt plans and programmes that could promote equality and advancement for women and at the same time contribute to the strengthening of peace and peaceful co-operation among States and peoples. That task was of particular importance for the 1980 World Conference, which would require active participation by all Member States, not only to review and evaluate the progress made but also to define the new tasks to be tackled.

65. If the advancement of women in the political, economic, social and cultural fields at the national and international levels was to be ensured, attention must be given to the correlation between the three objectives set for the Decade. The strengthening of peace and of the process of détente, disarmament, the elimination of colonialism, apartheid, racism and foreign domination, and the establishment of a new and democratic international order had a direct impact on the process of emancipation and advancement of women. That was what had motivated the German Democratic Republic to become a sponsor of General Assembly resolution 3519 (XXX). His delegation welcomed the fact that the interdependence of those three objectives was duly reflected in the Secretary-General's report (A/32/211) submitted in pursuance of that resolution, and it believed that that aspect of the Decade should be developed further.

66. It was evident that neither the proclamations of the principle that all men were created equal nor the many pious words on human rights and the dignity of the human person had in any way furthered the political, economic and social advancement of women, who were still deprived of their fundamental rights in many capitalist countries. It had taken the Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917 to enable the women of the socialist countries finally to achieve full emancipation and free development. In the German Democratic Republic the equality and advancement of women were an essential part of governmental policy. Thus, there was a social welfare programme aimed at improving the living and working conditions of working mothers, unmarried mothers and pregnant women. Those measures had made it possible to strengthen the social status of women, as evidenced by the information submitted by his Government in a number of documents, including report A/32/216.

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(Mr. Keilau, German Democratic Republic)

67. In connexion with the Secretary-General's report on the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women (A/32/174), the German Democratic Republic, as a member of the Consultative Committee on the Fund had endeavoured, together with the other members, to work out suitable guiding principles for the management of the Fund, and it hoped that the work done so far would be approved by the General Assembly. Referring in particular to paragraphs 18 (b) and 23 of the report, he expressed the view that the Fund should make special efforts to assist women in territories under colonial, racist or foreign domination, to which the United Nations Decade for Women accorded high priority. For example, it should place its resources at the disposal of the national liberation movements, which were the legitimate representatives of the oppressed peoples, in order to relieve the burden of the women who were still victims of those scourges.

68. The draft Convention in document A/32/218 constituted a useful contribution to the elimination of discrimination against women and would help to expand the scope of the Declaration adopted in 1967 by translating the political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights of women into binding international law. However, the Convention should be worded in such a way as to meet the social need for eliminating discrimination against women and should not fall short of other relevant instruments. It was therefore to be hoped that the proposed working group would endeavor to make genuine improvements in the draft Convention, and his delegation stood ready to co-operate in that task, so as to enable the General Assembly to open the Convention for signature and ratification as soon as possible.

69. Ms. ZILLIACUS (Finland) said that the problems relating to the status of women did not lend themselves easily to a comprehensive analysis or to universally applicable solutions. The status of women depended both on the traditions and values of the society to which they belonged and on the level of its development. Finland shared with the other Nordic countries a long tradition of freedom, solidarity and justice, and the equality of men and women was recognized in Finnish legislation. Although some minor inequalities in law still existed, they were at present under review.

70. Consequently, what was needed now was full equality in such fields as employment and education, where the attitudes of men and women had an important role to play. Her Government's policy was therefore to bring about an adjustment in those attitudes, to make changes in the status of women and consequent changes in the status of men, and to create the necessary economic conditions; full equality was, in fact, synonymous with the absence of all discrimination or preference based on sex, with the exception of the special protection of women for the periods of pregnancy and maternity.

71. At the national level, the measures adopted should be an integral part of over-all economic and social planning and would thus depend on the specific circumstances in each society. At the international level it was necessary first to tackle the problems of those who were most deprived and to take care of their basic needs. Thus, the status of women and their participation should be given particular attention by the world community when it attacked mass poverty and when

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(Mrs. Zilliacus, Finland)

it undertook the necessary structural changes that would lead to a new international economic order.

72. With regard to the draft Convention before the Committee, her delegation hoped that the proposed working group - of which it would be a member - would be able to agree on a text that could be adopted by consensus at the current session of the General Assembly. She drew attention to article 1 of the draft Convention, which contained a definition of discrimination against women. That definition should be amended to include the concept of preference; the Nordic countries believed that the purpose of the Convention was to eliminate all forms of discrimination based on sex.

73. Finland continued to give its full support to the United Nations Decade for Women, which was an excellent framework for national and international action. Document A/32/175 seemed to give a satisfactory description of the implementation of the World Plan of Action and the Programme for the Decade. However, chapter III gave only a rather general description of the development related to the interorganizational programme for the Decade, although that was a central element in the attainment of the proposed objectives. It would therefore be useful to circulate that programme to the members of the Committee. Finland also attached great importance to the measures envisaged in the fields of employment and education and would be interested to know what functions ILO and UNESCO would play in that connexion.

74. Lastly, referring to the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women, she said that effective governmental supervision of special funds would certainly be the best way of obtaining additional resources from Governments. In that respect, the work of the Consultative Committee on the Voluntary Fund was encouraging. She welcomed the fact that the Consultative Committee had interpreted its mandate in a wide sense, but in the future that mandate should also include a follow-up of the use of resources by United Nations organs, regional commissions and other recipients. In that context, Finland would make a pledge to the Voluntary Fund at the forthcoming Pledging Conference.

75. Mrs. BROMLEY (Honduras) said that her country had participated in the preparation of the draft Convention before the Committee, just as it had in the preparation of the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Attitudes had changed enormously in recent decades and the complete elimination of discrimination against women was only a matter of time. It was to be hoped that progress towards that goal would be as rapid as possible so that the Decade could attain its objectives of equality, development and peace. There could be no question that the adoption of the draft Convention and its implementation would give great impetus to the World Plan of Action and the Programme for the Decade. Honduras was glad that the working group was about to begin its deliberations; for its own part, it had no major objection to the draft Convention and it hoped that other delegations would be moved by a spirit of co-operation and that the draft could be adopted by consensus.

76. Discrimination against women existed in all countries in one form or another.

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(Mrs. Bromley, Honduras)

It was interesting in that connexion to compare such discrimination with other forms of discrimination: the advocates of colonialism claimed that certain countries were not ready to govern themselves and, similarly, there were those who claimed that if women won the same rights as men, that would have adverse consequences for the family. Honduras felt that redressing an injustice or eliminating discrimination could not have a negative effect, that the problems with which the family had to contend should be tackled as a whole and that traditions must therefore be challenged. All persons should be free to organize their lives as they saw fit and no law should limit the development of their personalities.

77. In Honduras the status of women had greatly improved. The first women's organization had been established in 1924. Political rights had been granted to women in 1955 and they had voted for the first time in 1956. In 1957 three women had been elected to Parliament and the first woman judge had been appointed. The first woman ambassador had been appointed in 1958 and in that same year the Association of University Women had acquired legal personality. Honduras had acceded in 1951 to ILO Convention No. 100 concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value. A woman had received a doctorate for the first time in pharmacy in 1946, in medicine in 1947 and in engineering in 1950. Women now constituted one-third of the student body. No profession was closed to them and they held high posts in politics and business. Unfortunately, however, those advances had benefited only a small section of the population. Poverty and illiteracy were widespread and had worse effects on women than on men. Social justice was inseparable from development, education and improved levels of living. Accordingly it was essential to achieve the full equality of all before the law even if not everyone was able to benefit immediately from the advantages to which he or she was entitled.

78. Mrs. WARZAZI (Morocco) drew the attention of the Secretariat to the fact that Morocco, which had acceded to the Convention on the Political Rights of Women on 29 November 1976, was not included in the list of States parties to that Convention (A/32/216).

AGENDA ITEM 81: INTERNATIONAL COVENANTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS (continued)

(a) REPORT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE (A/32/44)

79. The CHAIRMAN reminded members that at the twentieth meeting certain representatives had asked for clarifications concerning a request of the Human Rights Committee (A/C.3/32/SR.20).

80. Mr. van BOVEN (Director, Division of Human Rights) explained that the Human Rights Committee had expressed the wish that its Chairman should attend the meetings of the Third Committee when the latter examined the first report of the Human Rights Committee because it would like to establish direct contacts from the outset with the General Assembly in view of the role which it was called upon to play in the promotion and protection of human rights. The Chairman of the Human Rights Committee would thus be able to reply to any questions which

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might be put to him and provide any necessary clarifications concerning the work of the Committee. The Human Rights Committee had felt that the presence of the Chairman of the International Law Commission at meetings of the Sixth Committee during the examination of the Commission's report constituted an adequate precedent. The Third Committee should now decide whether to grant the request of the Human Rights Committee, having regard to the financial implications which had been stated by the Secretary of the Third Committee at its twentieth meeting.

81. Mrs. IDER (Mongolia) said that in accordance with established practice in the United Nations the reports of committees, and particularly committees of experts, were presented not by their Chairmen but by the Secretariat. Moreover, there were committees and commissions just as important as the Human Rights Committee whose reports were submitted by the Secretariat. She felt that that practice should be respected and that the Third Committee should not grant the request of the Human Rights Committee.

82. Mrs. WARZAZI (Morocco) recalled that the Human Rights Committee had been established pursuant to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and that it was composed of experts chosen not by the General Assembly but by the States parties to the Covenant. The Chairmen's presenting a report which, under the Covenant, should be addressed to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council might be prejudicial to the Chairman himself, who should speak not on his own behalf but on behalf of the Committee as a whole. It would accordingly be difficult for the Chairman to reply to questions without prior consultation with the members of the Committee. Therefore, it would be in the interest of the Human Rights Committee and of the progress of its work that it should remain an independent body having no obligation to the General Assembly, since it had obligations only to the States parties.

83. Mrs. KONGSHEM (Norway) said that she fully supported the request of the Human Rights Committee, for the presence of its Chairman during the consideration of its report would be very useful.

84. Mr. OSMAN (Uganda) said he thought that the person who had presented the report to the Economic and Social Council should also be responsible for presenting it to the Third Committee.

85. Mrs. LEFORT (France) said that the idea of inviting the Chairman of the Human Rights Committee to present the conclusions of that Committee was an interesting one. However, it should not constitute a new precedent which would give rise to additional expenditure. Moreover, as the representative of Morocco had noted, that Committee was not a statutory organ established by the Charter but was a body established by an international instrument and was responsible only to the States parties to that instrument. In addition, the Chairman should retain the necessary independence for the accomplishment of his task, which might be seriously compromised if he participated in discussions in which he might be asked to answer questions raised by States which were not yet parties to the Covenant. That difficulty seemed to her sufficiently important to preclude granting the Committee's request.

86. Mr. KEILAU (German Democratic Republic) said that in his view it was not necessary to invite the Chairman of the Human Rights Committee to present the Committee's annual report. The Human Rights Committee was an independent body whose members had been chosen by the States parties to the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. He therefore proposed that the Third Committee should not continue to consider the proposal, on which there seemed to be no consensus, but should follow the custom which had prevailed for several years with respect to consideration of the annual reports of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

87. The CHAIRMAN noted that the members of the Committee agreed that there did not seem to be sufficient precedent to justify the sending of an invitation to the Chairman of the Human Rights Committee. The Secretariat should therefore inform the Human Rights Committee that it could not grant its request.

88. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.