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Twenty-sixth Session

SUMMARY RECORD (PARTIAL)* / OF THE 633rd MEETING

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 14 September 1976, at 3.25 p.m.

Chairman: Mrs. GONZALEZ de CUADROS (Colombia)

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* / No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

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(7 p.)

The discussion covered in the summary record began at 3.45 p.m.

THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR WOMEN: EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE, 1976-1985 (agenda item 4):

- (a) EVALUATION OF ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN DURING THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR (E/CN.6/593)
- (b) THE PROGRAMME FOR THE DECADE AND RELATED QUESTIONS INCLUDING TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION ACTIVITIES (E/CN.6/594 and Corr.1 (English only), 595, 596, 597, 603 and 604)
- (c) REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF PROGRESS MADE UNDER THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR THE SECOND UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT DECADE AND IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORLD PLAN OF ACTION (E/CN.6/598, 599)
- (d) PREPARATORY WORK FOR THE 1980 CONFERENCE (E/CN.6/600; E/CN.6/NGO/258)

1. Mrs. BRUCE (Assistant Director, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs), introducing agenda item 4 (b), drew the attention of the Commission to documents E/CN.6/594 and 595. Document E/CN.6/594 provided background information on the proclamation of 1976-1985 as the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace. Section I of the document described the decisions adopted by the World Conference of the International Women's Year, held in Mexico in 1975, and by the General Assembly at its thirtieth session. Specifically, paragraph 8 of the document referred to General Assembly resolution 3520(XXX), in which the General Assembly had proclaimed the Decade for Women and had endorsed the action proposals emanating from the World Conference.

2. Section II of the document described the action taken to date to implement the recommendations of the Conference and the General Assembly. Since mid-December 1975, action had been concentrated mainly on the elaboration of a joint interagency programme for the integration of women in development; the establishment of the International Research Training and Institute for the Advancement of Women; the organization, in co-operation with the regional commissions, of regional seminars, conferences and similar meetings and the development of regional programmes; and the initiation of procedures for a system-wide review and appraisal of the implementation of the World Plan of Action. Particular attention had also been given to the elaboration of a programme for the use of the resources of the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women. The Voluntary Fund had been established by Economic and Social Council resolution 1850 (LVI) and, at its thirtieth session (2441st plenary meeting), the General Assembly had decided that it should be extended to cover the period of the Decade for Women. The General Assembly had also requested the Secretary-General to report to the Council at its sixtieth session, giving an accounting report of the Fund and submitting proposals for its future management and the criteria to be applied for future disbursements. In that connexion, she drew attention to document E/CN.6/594/Corr.1, which amended the English text of paragraph 49 of the document under consideration.

3. With regard to the resources of the regular budget, she noted that the Secretary-General had prepared the medium-term plan for the period 1978-1981, taking into account the recommendations of the World Conference and the decisions of the General Assembly. Those proposals had been endorsed by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination at its sixteenth session from 10 May to 11 June 1976. The Committee had been in general agreement with the three sub-programmes dealing with questions relating to women and had recommended that sub-programmes 4 and 5 concerning the integration of women in development and international instruments relating to the status of women, respectively, should have a higher-than-average rate of real growth for the period 1978-1979.

4. Referring specifically to the joint interagency programme for the integration of women in development, she said that an ad hoc interagency meeting had been convened from 9 to 13 February 1976 to agree on the conceptual framework for a joint interagency programme and to consider proposals for practical action during the period 1976-1981. That meeting had suggested a preliminary framework for the joint programme and had agreed on a plan for its further elaboration. Another ad hoc interagency meeting had taken place at Geneva from 1 to 8 September 1976 to discuss the plan for the joint programme. The results of those consultations would be submitted for approval by the Preparatory Committee and the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination in October 1976, and a report would be submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its sixty-second session in April 1977.

5. The main objectives of the joint interagency programme were to increase the participation of women in political, cultural and economic life, to accelerate the equality of the sexes in education and training of all types and at all levels, to promote the attainment of social well-being for women and their access to health and social services, to improve conditions of family life, to improve the quality of life of girls and women in rural areas, and to promote the inclusion in national development plans and programmes of measures designed to ensure the full integration of women in the areas indicated above.

6. In paragraphs 9 and 10 of General Assembly resolution 3520 (XXX), it had been decided to establish an International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, which would be financed through voluntary contributions and would collaborate with appropriate national, regional and international economic and social research institutes. The recommendations of the Group of Experts appointed by the Secretary-General to draw up the terms of reference and structural organization of the Institute had been embodied in a report of the Secretary-General (E/5772) and had been submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its sixtieth session. In resolution 1998 (LX), the Economic and Social Council had decided to establish not later than 1977 an International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, which should work in close collaboration with the relevant organizations of the United Nations system and national and regional centres having similar objectives. That resolution also requested the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its thirty-first session in 1976 on the progress achieved in establishing the Institute.

7. With regard to the organization of regional seminars, conferences and similar meetings and the development of regional programmes, she said that the first seminar of the Decade had been held in Argentina in March 1976, under the regular programme of technical co-operation, on the "participation of women in economic, social and political development and obstacles to their integration". In the Asian region, a regional follow-up seminar was scheduled to be held in Nepal in February 1977 on the participation of women in political, economic and social development. A regional conference was being planned, tentatively for November 1976, by the Economic Commission for Africa, with support from the Voluntary Fund for the Decade. In Europe, a seminar was to be held in the Netherlands in April 1977 on the changing roles of men and women in modern society, their functions, rights and responsibilities.
8. Section III of the document gave an outline of the programme for the United Nations Decade for Women, under the three main headings of equality, development and peace. Discussions on the theme of equality would deal with international standards to eliminate discrimination on grounds of sex, on that of development, with the integration of women in development, and on that of peace, with the involvement of women in international co-operation and the maintenance of peace. The programme would be carried out through a variety of means, including the United Nations regular budget, the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women, other international and bilateral assistance agencies and non-governmental organizations.
9. The report of the Secretary-General contained in document E/CN.6/595 outlined the activities relating to women undertaken under the regular programme of technical co-operation established under General Assembly resolution 926 (X), entitled "Advisory services in the field of human rights". It also referred to other relevant technical co-operation projects for which the United Nations had been primarily responsible. Section I of the report described relevant technical co-operation activities relating to women from 1974 to mid-1976, and future activities which were being planned. Such activities included the organization of seminars and training courses and the award of fellowships. Section II of the report described activities involving the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs and activities undertaken by organizations of the United Nations system. Paragraphs 22 to 31 of the report referred to the planned activities of all the organizations of the United Nations system. In general, it could be said that the report had been prepared primarily for the information of the Commission and as a background paper for recommendations to be made in connexion with the Decade for Women.
10. She noted that documents E/CN.6/596, 597, 603 and 604, which also related to agenda item 4 (b), would be introduced at subsequent meetings.
11. Mrs. NIKOLAEVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) pointed out that, as the Commission had to take stock of activities undertaken during the International Women's Year, it would be logical for the discussion to begin with agenda item 4 (a).
12. The CHAIRMAN said she agreed with the representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and therefore requested the Assistant Director of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs to introduce that sub-item.

13. Mrs. BRUCE (Assistant Director, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs), introducing agenda item 4 (a), drew the attention of the Commission to document E/CN.6/533, which related to activities undertaken during the International Women's Year and the evaluation of their impact. That report had been prepared in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 1849 (LVI) and described and evaluated activities undertaken during the Year by Governments, United Nations bodies, specialized agencies, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations. The information contained in the report was based on the replies received from 91 Member States and 3 non-member States to the report prepared for the thirtieth session of the General Assembly (A/1023) and on further replies received from 32 Member States by 21 July 1976.

14. Mrs. NIKOLAEVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), describing the activities undertaken in connexion with the International Women's Year in the Soviet Union, said that the General Assembly's proclamation of the Year had been welcomed as implying recognition of the important role of women in society. The Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR had established commissions in various regions of the country to organize activities relating to the Year, to focus attention on the problems of women, and to take appropriate action on them. Attention had been concentrated mainly on means of ensuring a further improvement in women's working conditions and health and social benefits, and on two occasions in 1975 legislation had been introduced to improve their working conditions. Women would henceforth continue to receive full pay during maternity leave, regardless how long they had been working; moreover, the amount of leave they could take to look after sick children had been increased; and special children's allowances had been introduced for families with low incomes. Many thousands of women had been released from unskilled work in order to receive training. In addition, 60 million roubles had been spent on the organization of rest rooms and similar facilities for working women, particular attention having been devoted to the improvement of facilities for women workers at holiday resorts. Facilities for pre-school children had also been improved, particularly in rural areas. Since the International Women's Year, women had become more active in social and professional work, and many working women had over-fulfilled their norms. In 1975, 90,000 Soviet women had received awards and much had been done throughout the country to strengthen the role of women in society. The Academy of Sciences of the USSR, for example, had studied questions relating to female labour; many press and radio reports had been devoted to International Women's Year, libraries had issued books on the subject and exhibitions had been arranged.

15. The Year had been marked by an intensification of the solidarity between the Soviet people and freedom fighters throughout the world, including those in the Arab countries who were combating aggression by Israel. Women had participated in protests against the fascist junta in Chile and in meetings between the freedom-loving peoples of the Soviet Union and Laos, and they had welcomed the end of the fascist régimes in Greece and Portugal. International assistance had been extended to women and children in many countries, including Viet Nam, Cyprus, Rhodesia, Angola, the Congo, Kenya, Sierra Leone and Mauritania. The International Women's Year had contributed to the development of relations between Soviet women and the people of Asia. An international meeting at which 27 countries from the third world had been represented had been organized at Minsk to commemorate the Soviet people's triumph over fascism, and an international meeting of young women had been held in Moscow in support of women's rights and social progress.

16. Soviet women had taken an active part in the World Conference of the International Women's Year in Mexico City and the World Congress for the International Women's Year in Berlin, at which 141 countries had been represented. The decisions reached at those conferences constituted an excellent basis for further co-operation and the promotion of efforts to combat discrimination against women, to eliminate colonialism and racism, and to ensure the social progress of all peoples of the world.

17. Miss TYABJI (India) said that, in view of the large number of activities that had been organized during the International Women's Year, she was of the opinion that, during the debate on agenda item 4, delegations should highlight the most important ones which had taken place in their countries.

18. Ms. SANDLUND (Sweden) agreed, and noted that many delegations would be unable to participate in the debate since they had only just received document E/CN.6/593.

19. Mr. EHSASSI (Iran) suggested that the Commission should hold a general debate on item 4 as a whole; detailed statements could be made when the Commission discussed individual sub-items.

20. Mrs. SALYO (Indonesia) considered that the Commission should discuss the impact of the International Women's Year rather than activities already undertaken so that it could prepare a programme for the United Nations Decade for Women.

21. Ms. HENDSCH (United States) agreed that the important point was to consider the programme for the Decade, and felt that there would be too little time to hear statements on activities by each country.

22. Mrs. GUEYE (Senegal) recalled that there had been unanimous agreement at the World Conference of the International Women's Year on the need for practical action. It would therefore be appropriate for the Commission first to study sub-items 4 (a) and (b) simultaneously and then to proceed to sub-items 4 (c) and (d). If representatives wished to describe national achievements, they could submit documents on the subject.

23. Ms. LAMINA (Madagascar) agreed that accounts of national activities should be submitted in the form of documents.

24. Begum Tazee FARIDI (Pakistan) suggested that the Commission should review the activities described in the documents relating to sub-items 4 (a) to (d); it would also be useful to hear an account of the activities which had developed as a result of the International Women's Year and to assess their impact.

25. Mrs. DEVAUD (France) took the view that any statements concerning national activities should be as brief as possible and that attention should be concentrated on a plan of action for the period 1976-1985.

26. Mrs. SIPILA (Assistant Secretary-General, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs) said the important point was that the Commission, as an expert body, should express its views on sub-items 4 (b), (c) and (d) so that a well-planned programme for the future could be drawn up.

27. Begum Tazee FARIDI (Pakistan) emphasized that, in planning future activities, the Commission must ascertain how current activities had begun, especially those which covered new ground.

28. Mrs. TALLAWY (Egypt) suggested that the Commission should hold a brief general discussion on item 4 and then consider each of the four sub-items separately. However, as many delegations were not yet prepared for a general discussion, it could be deferred to a later meeting.

29. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.