

2170th meeting

Wednesday, 26 November 1975, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Ladislav ŠMÍD (Czechoslovakia).

A/C.3/SR.2170

In the absence of the Chairman, Mrs. Shahani (Philippines), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

AGENDA ITEMS 75 AND 76

International Women's Year, including the proposals and recommendations of the World Conference of the International Women's Year

Status and role of women in society, with special reference to the need for achieving equal rights for women and to women's contribution to the attainment of the goals of the Second United Nations Development Decade, to the struggle against colonialism, racism and racial discrimination and to the strengthening of international peace and co-operation between States (A/10003, chap. III, sect. F; E/5725 and Add.1, A/10042, A/10045, A/10049 and Corr.1, A/10056, A/10057, A/10066, A/10070, A/10071, A/10073, A/10075, A/10076, A/10088, A/10089, A/10099, A/10107, A/10111, A/10138, A/10140, A/10160, A/10210, A/10263, A/10264, A/10340, A/C.3/643, A/C.3/644)

1. Mrs. SIPILÁ (Assistant Secretary-General for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs and Secretary-General of the International Women's Year and of the World Conference of the International Women's Year) said that ever since the proclamation of an International Women's Year had been recommended four years before by the Commission on the Status of Women, doubts had been voiced about the merits of having such a Year. Now that the Year was almost over, it could safely be said that its impact was unquestionable and that no similar event had ever been better known. The Year had mobilized men and women from all over the world, and Governments and non-governmental organizations from the metropolitan areas to the remotest villages. Its importance had been realized by those who wished to accelerate the process towards the equality of men and women and the elimination of discrimination, as well as by those who understood its potential for the solution of world-wide problems, including its positive impact on development. That had been emphasized in the Declaration signed by Heads of States and Governments which Princess Ashraf Pahlavi had presented to the Secretary-General on 10 December 1974.

2. For women, it had been a year of consciousness-raising and solidarity and of recognition of their potential. But the Year had not concerned women only. Because its aim had been to solve the problems of half of humanity, it had become the year of the human person.

3. A global review of the status of women had singled out the similarities and differences among women themselves, depending on their situation within each country and on whether they lived in developed or developing countries. It

had been seen that the gap between those two groups of countries was clearly reflected in the condition of women. Studies concerning the impact of the condition of women, in their special role as mothers, on the child and the family and on society in general had brought out the fact that the status of women was one of the key factors in many of the problems that beset the world, including problems of population, unemployment, mass poverty and the slow progress of economic and social development. More information than ever before about women and human life in general had been brought together. On the other hand, the lack of adequate and comparable data had shown how very little was known about the situation of women and about the interrelationship between that situation and the issues just mentioned.

4. The problems concerning women dealt with at the World Conference of the International Women's Year, held at Mexico City from 19 June to 2 July 1975, had fallen into three main categories: equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities of men and women; the need to improve the condition of women in situations of under-development, which imposed upon women a double burden of exploitation; and involvement of women in the strengthening of international co-operation and world peace. The first of those topics had most often been the key issue in the statements of countries in which basic needs were already being met but in which inequality between the sexes, in law and in fact, still existed. Different problems required different measures. Inequality in fact was primarily due to attitudes, traditions and customs and was maintained by early education at home and at school. A change in those attitudes required equal access to education and equal treatment in employment, and perhaps legal reforms, the provision of social services and better sharing of responsibilities within the family and the community. It also required women's increasing participation in decision-making, from planning to implementation.

5. But the majority of women would have no say unless measures were taken to improve their condition, and the special problems of that majority could not be solved solely by the measures she had enumerated, for those problems were closely interwoven with the under-development of society as a whole. Of the 4 billion people living on the planet, about half lived in rural areas, mostly in the developing countries. Of that half, 1 billion were women, making up a quarter of the world population. Those women lacked decision-making power, even in matters which deeply affected their own lives. They had been ignored in the development effort and often left out of statistics. They were responsible for continuous child-bearing, as their only social security and their only means of obtaining assistance with their housekeeping and food production chores. Three out of ten of those women did not have enough to eat, and that was the major cause of high infant mortality. In some

continents, women constituted 60 to 80 per cent of all agricultural workers and were also responsible for food preservation and for settling the standards of nutrition and hygiene of the family. They received little or no education for those tasks. Although over 500 million of them were illiterate and a much larger number had only some primary education, women were the first teachers of their children, who, as a result, were likely to remain unskilled labourers. The situation of rural women became worse when men migrated into towns and left women wholly responsible for care of the family; but if women followed, they were not likely to find jobs.

6. In light of that situation, one must seriously raise the question of the right to life and health of those children, who were born only to suffer and die, and of the human rights of hundreds of millions of women, who were condemned to drudgery and who lacked even a choice as to the number and spacing of their children.

7. The population of many developing countries would double before the end of the century. Immediate, integrated and world-wide action was therefore needed to improve the situation; nation-wide measures would not be sufficient. A radical change was needed, beginning with the recognition of the problems related to the status of women and their influence on society. At its seventh special session, as part of the measures aimed at increasing the capacity of the developing countries, the General Assembly in its resolution 3362 (S-VII) had requested the competent organs of the United Nations system to give priority to the prevention of malnutrition and to provide primary health services to communities, including maternal and child health, as a prerequisite for the efforts to improve the quality of life in general. For its part, the World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year (E/5725, chap. II, sect. A), adopted by the World Conference, was a blueprint for action in a multidisciplinary and multisectional context. It provided a variety of suggestions for national planners and policy-makers and suggested means for international co-operation at the regional and global level. It also emphasized the need for continuous data collection and research. It was no doubt necessary to take into account the specific needs and priorities of each country. But, where the real problem was under-development, assistance in the implementation of national development plans and programmes was absolutely essential.

8. Turning to the measures needed to continue and strengthen the momentum generated by the Year, she said that if the General Assembly proclaimed a decade for that action and tied it to the total International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade (General Assembly resolution 2626 (XXV)) it would end the isolation in which questions concerning women had been dealt with until that time. That would give added impetus to national and international action to achieve the objectives of the Year and would ensure a process of integrated development that would take into account the special needs of women. Noteworthy in that connexion was the new approach represented by the special attention which the organizations of the United Nations system were paying to the role of women in relation to every programme. Regional co-operation would contribute

to co-ordinating the implementation of those measures with other activities in the economic and social fields; at the inter-agency level a joint programme of the organizations of the United Nations would help co-ordinate their assistance in various fields. A second world conference on the subject would provide an opportunity for reviewing the progress achieved and further intensifying international co-operation.

9. The increasing contribution of women to the development of friendly relations among States and the strengthening of peace could not be achieved unless more women were involved in foreign policy and economic affairs, not only in the developing countries but also in the industrialized ones and in international organizations. The large international gatherings held at Mexico City, at Berlin—where a World Congress for the International Women's Year had been held in October 1975—and elsewhere had increased awareness of the need for solidarity. Equality was not sufficient; efforts must be made for greater social justice and to provide better living conditions for all.

10. As Secretary-General of the International Women's Year and of the World Conference, she thanked all the Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations which had helped make a success of the Year, and particularly the Government and people of Mexico for their contribution to the Conference. She also thanked the Governments and non-governmental circles which had made financial contributions to the IWY Trust Fund. The Year had been the first time that Governments all over the world had seriously addressed themselves to the condition of women and grasped the fact that world problems could not be solved until the status of women was transformed and women could become part of the mainstream of political, economic and social life. That change required a self-generating process. The International Women's Year had laid the foundations: obstacles had been identified and programmes to overcome them had been set in motion. The process would differ from nation to nation, but, from the global point of view, only concerted international action could bring about the results that had been accepted as goals.

11. Mrs. BRUCE (Deputy Secretary-General of the International Women's Year and of the World Conference on the International Women's Year) listed the documents before the Committee on the matters under discussion. *Inter alia*, she mentioned the letter from the representative of the German Democratic Republic in document A/C.3/644 concerning the World Congress held at Berlin in October 1975 by the International Democratic Federation of Women and other non-governmental organizations, the report of the Secretary-General on the measures and activities undertaken in connexion with the International Women's Year (A/10263), summarizing what had been done in the first half of the Year, and the report of the World Conference (E/5725 and Add.1), which gave background information on the International Year.

12. According to the report of the Secretary-General, 91 Member States and two non-member States had appointed liaison officers to co-ordinate their efforts in the matter; national committees had been established in 80 countries, and it was hoped that bodies of that kind would spread and

become consolidated if the proposed decade was approved. Mention should also be made of the new legislation adopted in many countries, referred to in paragraph 21 to 25 of the report and the effect which the proclamation of the Year had had on the organizations of the United Nations system, particularly in the attention given to problems of women in under-developed areas. Paragraphs 49 to 69 referred to public information activities, and in that connexion she mentioned that all the information centres had reported that the Year had been more successful than any other similar year declared by the United Nations. Paragraphs 70 to 74 dealt with the repercussions of the International Year on the system of recruitment of the organizations of the United Nations system and with what had been done in the various bodies to promote women's participation in the policy-making organs. As to the work of the regional commissions, the efforts of the Economic Commission for Africa and of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific to integrate programmes relating to women in their development programmes were outstanding. Also of great interest was the proposed establishment of a research and training institute for the advancement of women (see A/10340) in order to make up for the serious shortage of statistical data on women and their integration in development.

13. Mr. HOVEYDA (Iran), reading out a statement by Princess Ashraf Pahlavi, absent because of illness, warmly commended Mrs. Sipilä, Secretary-General of the International Women's Year, and her co-workers in the Secretariat for their untiring efforts to establish favourable conditions for the success of the Year and the Mexico City Conference, which had been the most outstanding event of the Year. He also thanked the Government and people of Mexico, which had been hosts to the World Conference.

14. During the Year, much had been said about the status of women at the international, regional and national levels. In addition to the major conference at Mexico City, various other conferences, assemblies and seminars had been devoted to the question. The movement had not been limited to a select élite but, with the impetus provided by national programmes for the observance of the International Women's Year, had reached universities and other centres of higher education, salons and street corners and had even begun to infiltrate the home. There was a question, however, as to the real scope of the movement.

15. It could not be denied that women in the rural areas or poor sections of cities had barely been affected by the movement, that working women were too exhausted at the end of the day to question themselves and acquaint themselves with world events, and that women of leisure either did not know or refused to admit that their doll's houses were mere prisons. Making all those women aware of their situation would require time and effort. Moreover, it was ironic to speak of awareness when the vast majority of those women, particularly in the developing countries, were still illiterate and undernourished and lacked adequate care and housing. Even in poverty, however, women did not enjoy equality with men, since they bore a heavier burden and suffered deeper frustration.

16. Needless to say, a real improvement in the status of women in poor regions would be impossible without a

general improvement in the standard of living and without the accelerated development of their countries. Yet, essential as it was, that process of general development would be inadequate to free women from the traditional oppression which had exiled them to the fringe of society, despite their worth, their courage, their efforts and, perhaps their excessive self-abnegation towards men. Women in the developing countries should be wary of the miracles of economic progress; their more privileged sisters were there to demonstrate that development *per se* would guarantee neither their total human dignity nor their real participation and integration in society on equal terms. They would always remain in a dependent situation even after being freed from the burden of hunger and ignorance, if they did not struggle against the mentality of colonization ingrained in them.

17. The very development of peoples required that women should be liberated from their frustrating dependent status. It was becoming increasingly evident that the advancement of societies was being hindered by the exclusion of women. That was partly because half of the active population was playing only a very secondary role in the national development effort and partly because, owing to the education and culture which they had received within the limitations of the traditional role to which they had been deliberately confined, women often defended a reactionary traditionalism that was proof against any sort of progress. Paradoxically, therefore, women were both victims and accomplices in their own exploitation.

18. Agriculture could not be modernized if one disregarded the need to provide women from the rural areas with education and technical training, since they were the ones responsible for most of the agricultural work. Similarly, it was impossible to implement health, food and family planning programmes without the participation of women. It was imperative, therefore, to integrate women into the development process, and that integration would be impossible if they were denied opportunities, responsibilities and equal rights in all spheres.

19. The International Women's Year and the Mexico City Conference marked the start of a new era, in that the concept of equality, which had been regarded as something theoretical and abstract and, moreover, unrelated to major contemporary issues, had been broadened and viewed as a problem of society as a whole. The Declaration of Mexico (E/5725, chap. I), reflecting that new integrated approach to the problems of women, therefore assumed crucial importance. Nevertheless, the Declaration had prompted some unjust criticism. The link between the status of women and the need to establish a new international economic order had not always been acknowledged. Yet the link was obvious: as long as unjust international economic relations impeded the advancement of the developing countries, the women in those countries would scarcely be able to obtain what was being denied to their brothers. Some critics had also reproached the Mexico City Conference, and the Declaration in particular, for politicizing the question of women. However, it had to be recognized that women did not live in isolation from the rest of the world and that they suffered the scourge of colonialism and racism to the same extent as their brothers, or even more. At a time when the process of political

decolonization was coming to an end and, with the sixth and seventh sessions of the General Assembly, that of economic decolonization was starting, the moment had come to begin the decolonization of women.

20. There was no need for detailed comment on the World Plan of Action adopted at the Mexico City Conference, since careful reading was sufficient to make its contents clear. Although it could have been improved, it was a document of outstanding quality which would serve as a basis for the actions of Governments during the next decade. The amendments made at the Conference to the original text had given greater balance and precision to its basic provisions. Governments would find therein valuable guidelines for their policies and requirements. It was clear that, although the position of women throughout the world was basically one of inequality, that inequality took different forms depending on the economic, social and cultural make-up of each country. Each Government must, therefore, determine the most appropriate strategies. In order to achieve the objectives which had led to its formulation, the Plan of Action had to be carefully considered in all governmental, regional and international spheres. At the national level, it was essential that those responsible for planning should take due account of its directives when formulating the economic, social and cultural programmes of their countries.

21. The World Plan of Action defined in paragraph 46 what were the objectives in the short term, until 1980. Chapter VI, on appraisal, provided for biennial reviews from 1978 of the progress made and for selective monitoring of trends and policies affecting women. However, such reviews would not suffice for global consideration of the problems. The World Plan of Action, as adopted, would certainly require some changes and amendments; the results of the research carried out over the following five years on social indicators relating to women and the interrelationship between the situation of women and development would point to reorientation of action and the preparation of more effective programmes and policies. The prospect of a world conference was widely recognized as a stimulus inducing Governments and regional and international bodies to take prompt action which otherwise would be postponed indefinitely. For those reasons, the Iranian delegation had had the honour of proposing at Mexico City the convening of a second world conference on women in 1980.

22. He also drew attention to chapter III of the World Plan of Action, which dealt with research, data collection and analysis. It indicated that a major difficulty in assessing the economic contribution of women was the incompleteness or total lack of data and indicators to measure the interaction between their situation and the process of development.

23. That was why the Iranian delegation at the Conference had proposed the establishment of an international research and training institute for the advancement of women. Such an institute would be established under the auspices of the United Nations and would work in collaboration with appropriate national, regional and international economic and social research institutes, as well as with the specialized agencies. On the one hand, it would be a centre for

collection, co-ordinating and disseminating all kinds of information, statistics, research and studies on the situation of women in the world and would undertake the studies and research needed as a basis for the formulation of programmes and policies for the effective participation of women in all fields of social and economic life. On the other hand, the institute could develop, approve and supply training programmes which would enable women, particularly women in the developing countries, to undertake national research, to assume leadership roles within their own societies and to increase their earning possibilities. The institute would be financed by voluntary contributions from Governments. Aware of the vital importance of such a centre in the preparation and implementation of programmes and policies to advance the situation of women, Princess Ashraf Pahlavi had announced at Mexico City and wished to reaffirm in the Third Committee that she was willing to contribute \$1 million to finance it.

24. Commenting on the question of financing, it was regrettable that States had made only disappointingly meagre contributions to the International Women's Year Trust Fund, in spite of all the resolutions and appeals on the subject. The existence of the Trust Fund was essential to the organization of the projects envisaged at the international level, particularly technical assistance to the less developed countries in implementing their national programmes relating to the situation of women. The United Nations budget prepared the previous year allocated a ridiculously small amount for matters relating to women, and it should be revised in the light of the decisions and recommendations made at the Conference.

25. There was no need to speak in particular on the situation of women in Iran, since it was well-known and the measures taken in that country to mark the International Women's Year had been described clearly in document A/10263.

26. There was no doubt that, in general, much remained to be done and many problems were still pending; accordingly, it was essential not to rest on one's laurels but to tackle the problems with energy and determination. The differing customs and traditions of each country must be taken into consideration, and every Government must determine, on the basis of the principles approved at Mexico City, its own urgent needs and priorities, according to its possibilities and the social and cultural context in which it was dealing with the question of women. Sometimes it was painful to have to pull up the deep cultural roots which dominated all aspects of daily life. But those roots, in so far as they affected the situation of women, often turned into weeds which spoiled the whole harvest. The ground should therefore be cleared as soon as possible.

27. Miss GONZALEZ MARTINEZ (Mexico) said that her country had been honoured to host the World Conference for the International Women's Year, the first world forum to consider all aspects of the situation of women and an event marking a change in the approach to the problems of women. The results of the Conference gave reason to hope that the study of the situation was being completed and that the first stage of a new reality was about to be concluded.

28. International efforts to change the structures which kept women on the sidelines should take account of the three basic objectives reflected in General Assembly resolution 3010 (XXVII): equality, development and peace. It was quite clear that women had been suffering from a twofold discrimination: discrimination against the social group to which they belonged and discrimination based on sex within the group. Access to all levels of education, health and nutrition and full enjoyment of political rights were tangible forms of equality. However, it was impossible to talk about real and full equality unless there was an acceptable minimum for the living conditions of mankind as a whole, in other words, unless three quarters of the world population of men and women gained better and more just living conditions in relation to the one quarter which had access to everything. Her delegation had indicated on previous occasions that, in a worldwide understanding of development, the situation of women could not be isolated from the process of development.

29. Mexico was committed to the search for social democracy, i.e. full democracy in which not only political and legal aspects had priority but social and individual rights would also be fully respected. It was also committed to the struggle for establishing a more just and equitable new international economic order, and was endeavouring to end the system of keeping the women of the third world on the fringes of their respective societies. In that context, peace meant not only the absence of military conflict but also the parallel enjoyment of opportunity. It was unacceptable that women should have equality with men where suffering was concerned but not when it came to making condemnations. They must therefore condemn the arms race and its attendant nuclear threat.

30. Her Government reaffirmed the commitments it had made at the Conference and proclaimed its adherence to the principles set out in the Declaration of Mexico of 1975, which gave expression to the concepts that governed and should govern the status of women throughout the world; it also declared its fidelity to the objectives of the World Plan of Action and the resolutions aimed at giving women full equality and thus bringing about their integration into the development process as well as recognition of the scope and importance to mankind and of the co-operation that women could offer if they had equal opportunities with men. The introduction and chapter I of the World Plan of Action outlined the broad trends and concerns which had emerged at the Conference, whether they were problems of development and education, problems affecting women who lived in rural areas, the specific problems of women workers, the linking of international problems with the status of women or other more specific matters.

31. Women's participation in political, economic and cultural life was not the same in all countries, nor could it be said that equal participation by men and women had been fully achieved. That made it all the more necessary to fight for women's full integration into the life of the community. It was essential for all Governments, United Nations bodies, individuals and groups to take all appropriate action to ensure that the decisions of the Conference were carried out in everyday life. That commitment must include the objective of improving the living conditions of women in rural areas and of low-income groups. Changes

must take place simultaneously; unjust international structures must be modified, but every trace of discrimination must also be eliminated.

32. It was only through international co-operation that those problems could be solved, and in that connexion her delegation reaffirmed its belief in co-operation rather than confrontation. However, co-operation did not in any sense mean the abandonment of principles; as the President of Mexico had said at the 2377th plenary meeting of the General Assembly on 7 October 1975, the ideal could not be sacrificed to consensus. The achievement of full equality of men and women at all levels could not be made to depend on special considerations. The freedom of men and women to decide their future and the right to fair treatment could not be subject to considerations of power.

33. Recognition must be given to the major contribution which women had made to the historical process in various countries. In order to appreciate the true role of women at all levels, changes must be made in the analytical approaches employed and in the data on which they were based. There must be understanding of the true causes of the inequality, real or imaginary, which existed between the two sexes. With that end in view, plans had been made to establish regional and international centres which would promote and set up information, research and training systems designed to bring about the complete integration of women into the over-all development effort of society. Her delegation welcomed the initiative which had been taken in setting up those institutions, since it felt that they would help to correct existing short-comings. It was also essential to recognize the social function of motherhood, to establish or improve appropriate services and to give women access to employment without discrimination on maternity grounds or on the mere basis of their sex. It was everyone's responsibility to take measures to guarantee full equality of men and women.

34. The true significance of the World Conference of the International Women's Year was not yet clear. The resolutions of the Conference must not be simply material for study and research. It was the duty of the General Assembly and of the Governments represented in it to take specific action to implement the decisions and recommendations of the Conference with a view to achieving the full integration of women in development on the same basis as men. All women must also take part in that endeavour and free themselves from backward attitudes which prevented them from participating in the analysis of questions affecting the modern world. There must be no return to the habit of treating the status of women as if the latter represented a separate part of the human race. The equality that was sought, the full development to which women were entitled and the genuine peace for which the world yearned would never be achieved unless it was possible to build a society which could live in freedom, dignity and justice.

35. The CHAIRMAN noted that the representative of Mexico had been the Mexican Government's liaison officer for the Conference and that her skill and dedication had greatly contributed to the success of the Conference.

36. Mr. LOURIDO (Uruguay) said that his Government had voted for the Declaration of Mexico because it

endorsed the basic principles set out in the Declaration, which took a comprehensive view of women as human beings and active members of the development process in the national community to which they belonged and at the same time affirmed the equality of men and women. Long before the establishment of the United Nations, his country's legal order had given effect to the principles set out in the Declaration of Mexico, not only recognizing the equality of men and women before the law but also granting protection to motherhood and women workers. Women had been granted the vote as early as 1932, and a law providing for the civil equality of men and women had been enacted in 1946. The Uruguayan legal system, which was supported by an extensive body of judicial decisions, recognized the equality and active participation of women in the political, social, economic and cultural spheres.

37. Nevertheless, certain points needed to be clarified. The concept of equality must not be understood to mean that men and women were fitted to perform the same social function in the same manner, since that would mean denying the very nature of women. Although women had equality with men as subjects of rights and obligations, the distinction between them was reflected most significantly in the role of women in the family. It was therefore essential to establish a clear order of precedence between the duties of women as such, which had to do with the family, and their duties in relation to the society to which they belonged, which derived from their condition as human beings. Article 40 of the Uruguayan Constitution provided that the family was the basis of society, for Uruguay believed that if the family unit was attacked or undermined the whole of society was attacked and undermined. As to the role of women as an instrument for peace, his Government did not believe that in order to achieve peace it was necessary to bring women into the agonizing conflicts which were today convulsing the world.

38. His delegation was concerned at the fact that there had been very little discussion at the Mexico Conference of the question of the degradation suffered by women in some highly developed societies as an instrument of economic interests in advertising, literature, films and television. Such exploitation, which undeniably served to discredit women, also tended to weaken the institution of the family and thus to undermine society itself. There was also a brief, passing reference to the problem in paragraph 28 of the Declaration and in resolution No. 19 (E/5725, chap. III), and his delegation felt that that aspect of the question should be brought to the attention of the Committee.

39. His delegation also wished to reiterate its reservations regarding the unfortunate inclusion of the term "zionism" in the document; it felt that that term, which was unrelated to the item, ambiguous and had a different meaning for everyone who used it, should under no circumstances have appeared in the Declaration.

40. Miss RICHTER (Argentina) said that a serious effort was at last being made on behalf of the full integration of women into the economic, social and cultural development of their communities and the protection of the family. Argentina had always sought to promote the status of women so that they could fully assume their family, civic and political responsibilities and the rights inherent in those responsibilities, which were guaranteed by law.

41. At the same time that it was concerned with equality in employment and in the family, Argentina, in exercise of its sovereign right to determine its own population policies and in an awareness of its social responsibility for the health of the female population, had provided, by a decree issued in 1974, that oral contraceptives could be obtained only with a medical prescription so that women who wished to use them would be under proper medical supervision. It should be noted in that connexion that some development aid programmes had involved the distribution of contraceptives, which meant that the developing countries which had received such assistance for family planning programmes had, in effect, been used as testing grounds. Her delegation hoped that the resolutions adopted at the World Population Conference, held at Bucharest in August 1974, and at the World Conference at Mexico City, concerning the need for research in contraceptive methods would prevent the continuation of such practices.

42. The Argentine Government had ratified the Convention on the Political Rights of Women and had acceded to the Convention on the Nationality of Married Women and to the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages (General Assembly resolutions 640 (VII), 1040 (XI) and 1763 A (XVII)). Furthermore, within the framework of the International Women's Year, Argentina had offered the city of Buenos Aires as the site for a regional seminar on the subject "The participation of women in economic and social development: obstacles opposing their integration". Argentina had also been chosen as the host country for a centre, sponsored by the Inter-American Commission of Women, which was to co-operate with the United Nations bodies on questions concerning the status of women. Similarly, the secretariat of the Organization of American States was to establish in Argentina, probably in the middle of 1976, a workshop for the technical education of women, to which the Argentine Government attached special importance.

43. Her Government was honoured to have been a sponsor of the Declaration of Mexico but wished to point out that certain ideas in paragraph 12 of that text could serve in practice to infringe certain human rights and might be used to prejudice the development policies of third world countries.

44. With regard to the World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year, she wished to repeat the statement already made (see E/5725, chap. II, sect. A, appendix II) concerning chapter II, section G on the subject of population. She noted with concern that there was a tendency to forget that when the level of economic well-being was below that necessary for human dignity, few couples could decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children. For that reason, she reiterated her support for the World Plan of Action on Population adopted by the World Population Conference;¹ according to that Plan, the main objective of social, economic and cultural rights, of which political objectives in the field of population formed an integral part, was to improve the level and quality of life of individuals, since population and development were inter-related.

¹ E/CONF.60/19 (United Nations publication. Sales No. E.75.XIII.3), chap. I.

45. Finally, her delegation stressed that equality between men and women would not be much use if there was little for them to share. For that reason, the full incorporation of women in the development effort must ensure that the liberation of each individual, which was possible only to the extent that the people to which he or she belonged were liberated, signified the struggle for well-being and dignified living conditions. Consequently, the social responsibility of women should be upheld within an international system whose reorganization in terms of equity and justice was becoming more and more urgent and required the co-ordination of national and international efforts to ensure the full development of women as rational and free human beings.

46. Mr. CARTAS (Romania) recalled the statement made by the President of Romania to the effect that women, representing more than half of the world's population, were playing a more prominent part in economic, political and social life, in the acceleration of the material and spiritual progress of peoples, and in the entire process of renewing society.

47. Although great national and social revolutionary transformations were taking place on a world scale and although profound changes in the relationship between forces were occurring in favour of social progress, many problems remained to be solved: the process of détente was hardly at its beginning; there still existed areas of tension which could lead to military conflicts; and imperialist and reactionary forces continued to oppose the advanced streams and trends in international life. In view of those realities, Romania considered it an urgent need to achieve the closer unification of the advanced forces of the world, including women, so as to bring about the final exclusion from international life of the imperialist policy of inequity and oppression and the establishment of a new policy based on full equality of rights, respect for national independence and sovereignty, non-interference in domestic affairs and renunciation of the use or threat of force in international relations. Essentially, it was a question of setting up a new international economic and political order, which was becoming increasingly urgent for the masses of women all over the world, since the great social and political inequities generated by imperialist, colonialist and neo-colonialist policies had the heaviest impact on women.

48. The improvement of the status of women represented one of the major concerns of the international community at the present time. Although in many countries changes in the social and economic structure of society had brought about the social and political liberation of women, in others women were still subject to a régime of inequality and inequity and their basic rights were still being infringed. The elimination of all discrimination against women and the improvement of their legal and social status was not conceivable unless the general action towards finding a solution for the great economic and social problems of mankind was intensified.

49. The experience of Romania in the last 30 years was proof of that fact. The new social system in Romania had made it possible to solve all the problems connected with women's full emancipation. The Romanian people, becoming the masters of their own destiny and of the products of

their work, had succeeded in a short space of time in overcoming their economic backwardness, in industrializing the country and achieving considerable improvements in the standard of living. From the very beginning Romania had fixed as the objectives of development the full enjoyment of political, economic and social rights by all citizens, equal remuneration for equal work for the working woman, and full equality between men and women in all fields of activity. The economic progress of Romania, the development of the educational system and the access provided to professional training had brought about the increasing participation of women in society. Currently, women accounted for 45 per cent of the employed population—35.5 per cent in industry, more than 65 per cent in education and more than 72 per cent in health care and social assistance. Women accounted for more than one fifth of the engineers, about one third of the university teaching staff and more than 40 per cent of scientific personnel. At the same time, many women had been elected as members of the Great National Assembly and the Popular Councils or had been promoted to managerial positions in industrial enterprises, agricultural production co-operatives, or other organizations. At the Eleventh Congress of the Romanian Communist Party, Romania had adopted plans for economic and social development which included a special programme for encouraging women's role in society. That programme envisaged the professional orientation and training of women and their employment in jobs in keeping with the requirements of the national economy and their specific psycho-physiological aptitudes. Of the 1 million jobs to be created up to 1980, 60 per cent would be taken up by women.

50. The women's movement in Romania was actively supporting the foreign policy of the State, had developed links of friendship and co-operation with women's organizations in the socialist countries and had strengthened permanently the ties of solidarity with the liberation movements, with women's organizations in the developing countries and with women from countries all over the world. He firmly believed that, over and above all differences, there existed a common vital link between women in the fight for the strengthening of peace and co-operation in the world and for the achievement of prosperity and happiness for succeeding generations.

51. He wished to stress once again the complete success of the World Conference of the International Women's Year which had resulted in the Declaration of Mexico, the World Plan of Action and 34 resolutions adopted on various subjects concerning the status and role of women and their participation in economic and social development and in the fight for peace and international security. With regard to the World Plan of Action, his delegation considered that the programmes oriented towards the activities and needs of women in the developing countries and particularly of women living in the rural and low-income urban areas should be given special priority. Finally, as was stated in the Declaration of Mexico, the aims put forward could be achieved only in a world where the relationships between States were based on the principles of sovereign equality, the free self-determination of peoples, the abstention from the threat or use of force, territorial integrity and non-interference in the domestic affairs of other States. Similarly, relationships between people should be based on the

supreme principle of the equality of rights between men and women.

Statements in exercise of the right of reply

52. Mr. ZAHAWIE (Iraq) said he wished to make a correction to press release GA/SHC/2009 of the Office of Public Information, of 25 November 1975. The press release reported that he had referred at the 2169th meeting to the "VIP treatment" given to Kurds in Israel. In fact, he had referred to Kurds who had returned to Iraq and it was there that they had received the treatment in question, according to a report published in the British weekly *The Observer* of 19 June 1975. However, he would like to repeat, as he had stated at the 2169th meeting, that he

would like to see the day when Israel gave the same treatment to Palestinians returning to their homeland.

53. Secondly, he was unaware of the source of the report quoted by the representative of Israel at the 2169th meeting according to which 81 Iraqis had been recently executed by the Iraqi Government for political reasons.

54. Mrs. PALTI (Israel) said that the source of the information was the Syrian Arab Agency and that she could give the Iraqi representative the appropriate clipping if he so desired.

55. Mr. ZAHAWIE (Iraq) said that the Syrian Arab News Agency was not infallible and that he rejected such an accusation as unfounded and slanderous.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.

2171st meeting

Wednesday, 26 November 1975, at 3.40 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Ladislav ŠMÍD (Czechoslovakia).

A/C.3/SR.2171

AGENDA ITEM 73

Alternative approaches and ways and means within the United Nations system for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms: report of the Secretary-General (*continued*)* (A/10235, A/C.3/645, A/C.3/L.2188, A/C.3/L.2189 and Corr.1, A/C.3/L.2191)

1. The CHAIRMAN said that in accordance with the decision taken at its previous meeting, the Committee would complete its consideration of item 73 and take decisions on the draft resolutions submitted under that item.

2. Mr. ALI (International Labour Organisation) said that the information that the ILO had prepared in accordance with General Assembly resolution 3221 (XXIX) had unfortunately been submitted too late to be included in the Secretary-General's report (A/10235). However, the ILO had some 56 years of experience in formulating and adopting international conventions and in supervising their implementation. International labour conventions were formulated and adopted in accordance with established procedure based on dealing with questions item by item. Thus, an international labour code, which currently consisted of 143 conventions and 151 recommendations, had been established. Many of the international labour conventions expanded on provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the International Covenants on Human Rights and dealt, for example, with the right to work and to free choice of employment, the right to just and favourable conditions of work, trade union rights and the enjoyment of economic and social rights without

discrimination. If the United Nations was going to consider defining civil and political rights in more detail, some of the experience of the ILO could be relevant and the procedure of dealing with questions item by item could be followed. In view of the increasing activity in all international organizations in adopting international standards it was important to ensure co-ordination and an appropriate division of work. Thus the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) had discussed the question in 1974 and adopted conclusions which stressed *inter alia* that duplication should be prevented in the standards set by different organizations, that any conflict between the obligations undertaken by States under different conventions should be avoided and that supervision by the organizations with greatest competence should be ensured.

3. The ILO had developed special methods for supervising human rights standards, investigating allegations of human rights violations and helping Governments and authorities to eliminate conflicts in the application of standards. It had comprehensive procedures for the application of standards which were applicable to all types of conventions and which envisaged the submission of conventions to national parliaments or ratifying authorities, reporting by Governments on ratifications or non-ratification of conventions, supervision of the compliance of Member States by an international committee, a procedure for direct contacts between the ILO and Governments and a procedure for complaints and inquiries. There were also certain special procedures which had some common features: they all had safeguards to ensure objectivity and used quasi-judicial methods; States had every opportunity to reply to allegations; organizations of employers and workers were associated with the process; and the quasi-judicial and political stages were kept separate although they formed a whole. The ILO was also concerned with assisting States in

*Resumed from the 2169th meeting.