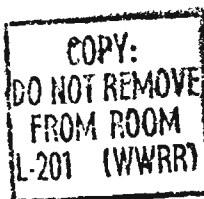




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THIRD COMMITTEE  
28th meeting  
held on  
Friday, 1 November 1985  
at 3 p.m.  
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 28th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. ZADOR (Hungary)

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ORGANIZATION OF WORK

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 92: UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR WOMEN: EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE (continued) (A/40/3, 188, 239, and Add.1, 365, 703 and Corr.1, 727; A/CONF.116/28 and Corr.1)

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- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (continued)
- (b) STATUS OF THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

1. Mrs. CAMARA (Guinea) said that, in her country, progress had been made during the Decade for Women in several areas. A national department for the integration of women into development had been established. At the local level it assisted in setting up and running agricultural and craft co-operatives, and also helped women who worked on their own. It provided training in income-generating activities for women who had had little or no education, and prepared young women for their future role as mothers. Centres provided health care for expectant mothers and their babies and child-care centres relieved the pressure on working mothers.

2. Women in Guinea enjoyed the same rights as men, attended the same educational establishments, and had access to the same jobs. The principle of equal pay for equal work was strictly applied. They participated in every aspect of development and played an important role in food production.

3. However, in many developing countries there were still too many obstacles to total equality between men and women and to the full participation of women in development. More women than men were illiterate and untrained, and the lack of

(Mrs. Camara, Guinea)

scientific and technological development made women's tasks burdensome and left them little time for self-improvement. For African women in general, much remained to be done in order to achieve the objectives of the Decade.

4. The assistance of Governments and the international community was required for the improvement of women's educational level, particularly in rural areas; for women to have access to financing for their various projects; and for the introduction of improved technology to lighten women's work, particularly in rural areas. The current international situation did not favour the fulfilment of those legitimate aspirations. The position of millions of vulnerable women and children in Africa was being made worse by political situations, the global economic recession, natural disasters, deteriorating terms of trade and mounting foreign debt, while the arms race was swallowing up billions of dollars which could improve the lot of the poorest peoples.

5. For those reasons, her delegation, while grateful for what had been done to make the Decade a success, appealed to the international community for solidarity to achieve an end to the arms race, respect for human rights, the establishment of a new international economic order and increased international assistance to the least developed countries.

6. Mrs. COLL (Ireland) said that her delegation was gratified that the Nairobi World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women, the report of which was contained in document A/CONF.116/28, and Corr.1-3, had been such a success. The achievement of consensus on the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women during the next 15 years was truly remarkable.

7. Her Government had already begun to disseminate information on the Strategies. Its pamphlet entitled Nairobi Report highlighted some of the recommendations contained in the Strategies in the area of employment. A broad national agenda for action in the area of women's affairs and family law reform, published in Ireland just before the Conference, would serve as a catalyst for the preparation of further specific proposals in which her Government would also draw on the Strategies. Ireland was determined that its aid programmes in developing countries should take account of their potential impact on women and should reflect the need for women's participation in all phases of policy and programme formulation.

8. At the international level, steps must be taken to ensure that the outcome of the Conference made an impact throughout the United Nations system. The Commission on the Status of Women, must be given directives concerning the place which the Strategies should occupy in its future programme of work. By virtue of their adoption by consensus, the Strategies might permit the Commission to conduct its future work on the basis of broad agreement. Adjustments in its agenda, composition or pattern of meetings might be necessary if the Commission was to fulfil its task of monitoring implementation of the Strategies. Her delegation therefore felt the Commission should be invited to reflect thoroughly at its next

(Mrs. Coll, Ireland)

session on the modalities for reviewing action taken, resources allocated and progress achieved at the regional, subregional and national levels, and to make recommendations to the General Assembly.

9. Mrs. GADIOUX (France) said that the Nairobi Conference had been a brilliant illustration of women's desire to take their destiny in their own hands. It had made considerably more progress than the previous conferences, in that the final document containing the Forward-looking Strategies had met with consensus - a remarkable achievement. Women from very different political, social, economic and cultural backgrounds had found a common will to overcome difficulties. One result of the Conference had been that it had revealed the essential role of women in the economic, social and cultural life of the developing countries. However, she considered that delegations should have kept the main objective of advancing the cause of women strictly in mind, rather than addressing international political problems, which had wasted time and for which the proper place was other bodies. It was also a pity that, despite the efforts of many countries, consensus on the Strategies had been difficult to achieve because of the inclusion of excessive formulas which certain delegations had found it hard to accept.

10. Her delegation had several proposals concerning follow-up. The Conference documents and recommendations should be given the widest possible dissemination among governmental, non-governmental and women's organizations in every country. There should be reciprocal provision of information and co-ordination of activities among the United Nations bodies concerned with women's questions. The Commission on the Status of Women should also be given new life and, at its next session, it should consider the organization of its future work, and the possibility of meeting more frequently and of submitting specific proposals to the Economic and Social Council with regard to the most rational and effective way for Governments to evaluate and monitor the implementation of the Strategies. Her delegation would like to see the Commission renamed the "Commission for the Advancement of Women"; the existing title in French was pejorative. Moreover, the question of expanding United Nations strategies and that of organizing regional or international meetings should be considered in the light of any proposals that the Commission might make on the subject. France, for its part, would also like to see at least one more conference organized before the year 2000, as recommended in the Strategies.

11. Her Government was endeavouring to transform the Strategies into reality. In the coming months, particular attention would be paid to the diversification of career choices for girls to direct them more towards the traditionally non-feminine sectors; the elimination of sexist stereotyping; and access to employment for women - a priority objective. In addition, it would relentlessly continue its action to prevent violence against women, in particular through a public awareness campaign. Lastly, early in 1986 the Government would be in a position to offer scholarships for women in the developing countries.

12. Turning to item 99, she said that her delegation was convinced of the usefulness of research and of obtaining more reliable data on the place and role of women in society and in development, as recommended in the report of the International Institute for Research and Training for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) (A/40/707).

(Mrs. Gadioux, France)

13. She hoped that the Institute would be careful when initiating such studies to avoid duplicating the research already being undertaken by other bodies. More emphasis should be given to training, on which the report had little to say.
14. With regard to the newly renamed United Nations Development Fund for Women, her delegation was pleased to note that the action reported in document A/40/727 accorded with the objectives assigned to the Fund by the General Assembly in its resolution 39/125.
15. Ms. CLARK (New Zealand) said that the Decade for Women had created the momentum for tremendous social change throughout the world, and had led to the establishment of INSTRAW and the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the entry into force of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, paralleled by the adoption of national anti-discrimination legislation by many Member States.
16. The Strategies adopted at the Nairobi Conference provided detailed suggestions as to how the goals of the Decade might be realized. Women in developing countries faced very different problems from those encountered by women in the industrialized world, first and foremost among them being the issue of sheer survival. The Strategies rightly focused on development issues, and it was to be hoped that Governments would continue to support the valuable work done by the United Nations Development Fund for Women.
17. Chapter I of the Strategies, dealing with equality, was of major interest to her delegation. The Strategies rightly stressed that equality was both a goal in itself and a means whereby individuals could participate in development and benefit from its results. It was important, however, to place equal emphasis on all the themes of the Decade - equality, development and peace.
18. All too often, women bore the double burden of domestic tasks and work outside the home. As indicated in the Strategies, more even sharing of domestic responsibilities would lead to a far greater advancement of women than anything achieved to date. It was regrettable, however, that the Strategies made no reference to sexual discrimination based on cultural and social attitudes. As with racial discrimination, the elimination of inequality in the law would not automatically lead to justice.
19. The Commission on the Status of Women should bear the major responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the Strategies. The other United Nations bodies concerned with women's issues would play more specialized roles. At the national level, her Government had created a Ministry of Women's Affairs which would work to implement the equal rights legislation which had been adopted. A special unit would address the problems of indigenous women.
20. Mrs. ESCOBAR (Spain) noted that not all expectations for the Decade for Women had been realized, and the Nairobi Conference marked the start of future action rather than the end of the decade.

(Mrs. Escobar, Spain)

21. The existing wide inequality between the sexes, had been intensified by the economic crisis, especially in developing countries. Constitutional provisions were not enough: there must be legislative machinery to put them into practice and women must be given the opportunity to take part in decision-making at all levels.

22. Her country had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which it considered of fundamental importance, and called on all States which had not yet done so to consider becoming a party to it.

23. The work of non-governmental women's organizations was crucial in representing women's interests in the adoption of new legislation, in providing a means for giving expression to their concerns, and in defending their interests.

24. The Strategies adopted at the Nairobi Conference indicated how integration of women in development could be achieved. Deeply rooted social expectations, however, assigned women traditional roles in socio-economic life. Social change would have to begin in the family and sometimes in the attitudes of women themselves. Public authorities should wage a campaign to eliminate such expectations while providing opportunities for women to participate in all aspects of development.

25. Women and children were most vulnerable in times of armed conflict. The participation of women in political decision-making was therefore essential. Peace, the basis for the existence of the United Nations, was also important at various levels of society, including the family, where women were often subjected to violence.

26. National activity had to be complemented by international co-operation. The Subdivision for the Advancement of Women, of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs could play a fundamental role in co-ordinating and assessing the activities of other relevant United Nations bodies. In particular, the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, the Commission on the Status of Women, INSTRAW and the United Nations Development Fund for Women should work in close co-operation.

27. The Decade was reaching its end, but an instrument adopted by consensus, in the form of the Strategies, was available to continue the pursuit of the objectives of the Decade. In that regard, the establishment of a system of periodic evaluation by the international community of results obtained would be very useful. Her delegation was confident that the spirit of consensus of Nairobi would continue and would inspire the work of the Committee.

28. Miss AL-ZAYANI (Bahrain) said that the Strategies set forth in the report of the Nairobi Conference (A/CONF.116/28), would provide guidance on women's problems beyond the year 2000. They covered many topics of vital importance to women's lives, taking into account the different circumstances and social ambitions of various groups. The Strategies also made reference to the situation of Palestinian women in the occupied Arab territories, Syrian women in the occupied Golan Heights and Lebanese women in southern Lebanon, who were subjected to Zionist control, foreign occupation and oppression.

(Miss Al-Zayani, Bahrain)

29. Many non-governmental organizations had participated in the Nairobi Conference and the concurrent Workshops in order to draw world attention to women's issues, and the event had been given full-scale coverage by the national and international press.
30. Her delegation, in its statement at the Conference, had described the social and financial assistance given to women in her country, including the provision of social centres and old peoples' homes. Legislation had been adopted to provide for equal pay and equal promotion for women and men. The percentage of women in the labour force had risen considerably. Women had gained access to many professional jobs, but as yet, despite their equal educational opportunities, they were rarely involved in decision-making.
31. As stated at the Conference, Bahrain had set up a committee to draw up social welfare and development projects affecting women. Five such projects were under way, in collaboration with United Nations agencies. Although considerable progress has been made, much remained to be done if women were to benefit fully from their work in society.
32. She noted that section IV B of the Secretary-General's report on the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women (A/40/727) described a ceremony held during the Conference in which projects typical of the Fund's work had been singled out for a tribute. One of those projects, on the identification of priority service for development planning for women, had been carried out in Bahrain.
33. Mrs. HUMPHREY (Barbados) said that her Government was committed to the full integration of women in the country's development. In 1976 it had appointed a national commission to report on the status of women in Barbados and had established a bureau of women's affairs. It was convinced of the need to participate, as far as the country's means allowed, in regional and international programmes; Barbados had played its part in the preparation of the Latin American and Caribbean plans of action.
34. The knowledge and experience gained during the Decade had helped to create the mental attitude needed for the further advancement of women. The results of the Decade had been achieved despite the world recession, but it should be realized that financial considerations would often determine success or failure, particularly in developing countries.
35. The adoption by consensus of the Nairobi Strategies had been an achievement in itself. It was now time to transform them into detailed projects at all levels in order to remove legal barriers preventing the advancement of women and tackle problems of education, health and employment. Education, in particular, was the key to success; her delegation commended the work of INSTRAW, which it hoped would raise the funds needed to implement its promising work programme.
36. A methodical and selective approach was essential if enthusiasm and resources were not to be spread too thinly. Although Governments and non-governmental

(Mrs. Humphrey, Barbados)

organizations deserved all due assistance with their specific problems, the task of the international organizations was to find which women most urgently needed help and to take steps to provide it. In order to make the best use of resources, her delegation felt that a comprehensive report on the implementation of the Strategies might be prepared every five years and considered during a session of the General Assembly; thus the next world conference need not be held until the year 2000.

37. Ms. YOUNG (United Kingdom) said that the adoption of the Strategies in Nairobi by consensus was particularly welcome. Her Government therefore shared the concern that implementation of the Strategies should be effective. It felt that most effective implementation would take place at the national level.

38. Her delegation considered it premature for the Third Committee or the plenary to seek to take final decisions for implementation of the Strategies at the international level. Member States also required time to assess the implications of the Strategies at the national level. The Commission on the Status of Women was the right forum for detailed consideration of that question, which it should take up as a matter of priority. It was best placed to formulate recommendations for follow-up action for subsequent consideration by the Assembly. The Commission was also foreseen in the Strategies as the body to undertake monitoring and evaluation of their implementation.

39. Decisions alone could not meet the aspirations of women. At the national level, the law must protect women against attempts to limit their rights. In that regard, much progress had been made in many countries over the past 10 years. Her country had already celebrated the tenth anniversary of its Sex Discrimination Act and of the implementation of the Equal Pay Act; effective enforcement mechanisms were also in place.

40. Her delegation had noted with interest the statements made by several representatives on the importance of increasing the number of women diplomats. In that regard, the United Kingdom Government was committed to providing equal opportunities for women throughout the public service, and more than half of the recruits to the Diplomatic Service during the current year were women.

41. Sexual discrimination, deeply rooted in social and cultural history, continued to exist all around the world. In her country, considerable progress had been made, but women remained greatly under-represented in Parliament, at the senior levels of government, and in certain other areas. That was not the result of a formal bar: reasons lay in stereotyped attitudes shared by men and women. Non-governmental organizations had an important role to play in the changing of the status of women. Some had already expressed an interest in participating in implementation at the national level in her country.

42. The focus of attention for the future should be the taking of practical measures rather than the pursuit of abstract policies. Her country had supported many development projects of direct benefit to women in recipient countries, such as the provision of drinking water and the development of stoves which used less



(Ms. Young, United Kingdom)

fuel. The formulation of women's programmes in isolation from general development programmes would, however, only serve to marginalize their position. That was one of the reasons for her country's consistent support for the United Nations Development Fund for Women, which supported practical and sensible projects to help the poorest women of the world.

43. Mrs. MIGNOTT (Jamaica) said that perhaps it was not a coincidence that the question of women had received prominence in the United Nations over the past 10 years, side by side with other pressing issues such as self-determination, racial discrimination, apartheid, social progress, peace and disarmament. At the root of it all, in both developing and developed countries was the recognition of the need for a higher regard for the individual within the context of rapidly changing social systems.

44. The Strategies adopted by the Nairobi Conference accented the complex nature of the problems which remained, and pointed to the critical role of women in development.

45. Her country placed strong emphasis on the question of equality within the themes of the Decade. Women would not be recognized as agents of development and peace until traditional concepts and discriminatory practices were eliminated. In that regard, legislative and actual practice were at variance.

46. Radical shifts in the economic activities of women had taken place over the past 10 years. Women were asserting their independence as entrepreneurs, and there was an awareness of the need to involve women in government planning. Women were also conscious of the need to participate in decisions concerning their health, education, family planning, housing and employment.

47. The role of the United Nations Development Fund for Women, in providing development assistance to the poorest women in developing countries, had been invaluable in promoting attainment of the goals of the Decade. INSTRAW had also contributed, by providing important data on which development programmes could be prepared.

48. The next task consisted of the implementation of the plans drawn up. The responsibility for solving problems of inequality, the economic crisis and the arms race, all cited as major obstacles to women's progress, rested with the Member States. At the same time, national bureaux, women's interest groups, regional commissions and international bodies would all have important roles to play in co-ordinating, monitoring and supporting implementation activities. Her delegation supported proposals to strengthen the co-ordination among those bodies and to request other bodies of the United Nations system involved in development to include women's issues as an integral part of their programmes.

49. Finally, her delegation wished to record its recognition of the contribution made by non-governmental organizations to United Nations initiatives on women.

50. Ms. BROŠŇÁKOVÁ (Czechoslovakia) said that although the deliberations of the Nairobi Conference had been dramatic, it had met the expectations of millions of women. Its conclusions had unambiguously confirmed, despite opposition from certain delegations, the relationship between the equality of women and social progress in the world, and particularly the struggle for a lasting peace.

51. The Nairobi Strategies showed how to proceed at both the national and international levels so that equality of women by the year 2000 was not just an objective but a part of practical efforts by all Governments. The attainment of full equality for women was one of the many dimensions of world-wide endeavours for peace, disarmament and the free development of sovereign States, particularly those suffering from neo-colonialist exploitation.

52. In Czechoslovakia, women were not only protected by society but were also active participants in the steady process of emancipation. Only in those States that had striven to eliminate social injustice could the necessary prerequisites for attaining the equality of women arise. The family was the fundamental unit of Czechoslovak society and received from the State considerable support in the economic, social and moral spheres.

53. Czechoslovak women played an active role in public affairs, including participation in the supreme bodies of State power at the highest level. Czechoslovak women understood that attainment of the equality of women depended on solving the basic problems of mankind, especially that of safeguarding the fundamental human right - the right to life. They expressed their solidarity with the Palestinian women living in the territories occupied by Israel and with women suffering under the yoke of colonialism and apartheid. They supported the demands of the developing countries that the elimination of colonialism should be extended to the economic sphere.

54. Mrs. GUO Yuanhui (China) said that the themes of the United Nations Decade for Women reflected the urgent wishes of women the world over. Her delegation was pleased to see that admirable results had been achieved during the Decade thanks to the concerted efforts of the international community. It was especially worthy of note that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had been ratified or acceded to by 80 countries in a mere five years. That fully demonstrated the deep concern of Member States for women's issues.

55. The Nairobi Conference, despite divergences, had been able to adopt the Strategies by consensus, thanks to the concerted efforts of various parties, in particular the host country, Kenya, and other third world countries. Implementation of the Strategies would enable a new stage to be reached in efforts to advance the status of women.

56. However, that would entail long and arduous tasks. The unstable world situation, the old international economic order, the severe economic difficulties of developing countries, the traditional prejudice towards women, racism, aggression and occupation by foreign forces all hampered realization of the goals in the Strategies. Only through concerted efforts would it be possible to achieve a further advance in the status of women.

(Mrs. Guo Yuanhui, China)

57. The Chinese Government had consistently paid attention to the important role of women, and its legislation and national policy fully ensured equality for women. However, discrimination against women still occurred occasionally and all must make greater efforts to overcome it.
58. China appreciated the work done by the United Nations Development Fund for Women, to which it had decided to make a contribution of \$30,000 for 1986, and the work of INSTRAW, to which it would contribute \$10,000 for that same year.
59. Mr. AMED (Afghanistan) said that the success of the Nairobi Conference in adopting the Strategies was a vivid manifestation of the common effort to improve the social status of women the world over.
60. The Democratic Women's Organization of Afghanistan had been founded in 1965, after centuries of feudal and tribal discrimination, and had begun the struggle for the emancipation of women. Women were now involved in the social and political life of the nation and had achieved tremendous gains in the past seven years.
61. Although Afghanistan was unable to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, because that instrument did not fully accord with the sacred religion of Islam, most of its provisions had been incorporated into national law. The Government was convinced that the participation of women in all aspects of development would further expedite social evolution and enable them to lend valuable service to society.
62. The State gave particular consideration to the health of the mother and child in Afghanistan. Steps were also being taken to provide free nation-wide education, which had now become a right. That even extended to the children of those who had been deceived into joining enemy ranks. The Government encouraged all progressive forces, including women, to participate in efforts for the development of society. Women's clubs sought to raise the educational and cultural level of women, enlighten them in social and political matters, and eradicate illiteracy.
63. Peace was an essential condition for social progress and economic development. Afghanistan called upon all women and all those who cherished peace to pool their efforts in the struggle to end the arms race, bring about disarmament and thwart the plans of the militarists to stockpile more weapons of mass destruction.
64. Afghanistan fully supported INSTRAW and would spare no effort to promote the ideals embodied in the resolutions of the Nairobi Conference.

#### ORGANIZATION OF WORK

65. The CHAIRMAN said he wished to recall the established practice of inviting special rapporteurs of the Commission on Human Rights to participate in the work of the Third Committee whenever their respective reports were being considered. At

(The Chairman)

the current session, the Committee would be seized of five reports under resolutions of the Commission endorsed by the Economic and Social Council. The financial implications as set forth in the report of the Commission amounted to \$13,200. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to invite the five Special Rapporteurs to introduce their respective reports to the Committee and to participate in the Committee's deliberations thereon.

66. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.