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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 23rd MEETING

Chairman:

Ms. COOMBS
(Vice-Chairman)

(New Zealand)

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In the absence of the Chairman, Ms. Coombs (New Zealand),
Vice-Chairman, took the Chair

The meeting was called to order at 6.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 101: ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
(continued) (A/45/3, chap. V, sect. B, A/45/38, A/45/426, A/45/202, A/45/222,
A/45/225, A/45/230, A/45/254, A/45/264, A/45/265, A/45/269, A/45/270; A/C.3/45/5)

AGENDA ITEM 102: FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN TO THE
YEAR 2000 (continued) (A/45/3, chap. V, sect. B, A/45/347, A/45/489, A/45/548;
A/C.3/45/5)

1. Ms. ZABOLAI-CSEKME (International Labour Organisation) said that the magnitude of the problem of female heads of households was underrated. Research showed that roughly one third of the world's families were de facto headed by a woman. Most of those families belonged to the most disadvantaged segments of society because many societies were guided by outdated perceptions of reality, according to which women did not have to earn an income, or if they did, theirs was a secondary income. Consequently, those societies failed to prepare women for the world of work; the result was that one third of the world's children, male and female, were likely to be doomed to deprivation. As a result of the socio-economic context in which they lived, those children might drop out of school and, as young adults, experience early pregnancies, turn to drugs or commit criminal acts.

2. ILO was convinced that the advancement of women was a matter of human rights and also of sound economic and social policies. The elimination of discrimination against women should be an important part of policies for eradicating poverty and fostering equitable socio-economic development. Recognizing that, ILO had, in recent years, changed both major spheres of its activities, i.e., the development and application of international labour standards and the design and implementation of technical co-operation activities.

3. With regard to international labour standards, it had shifted the emphasis from the protection of women to the promotion of equality. By fostering protection of male and female workers in a context of equal opportunity and treatment, it was responding more to the various inter-related needs of women workers. In that context, she drew attention to the ILO Convention on night work, adopted in June 1990. Instead of prohibiting night work for women, and thereby excluding them from employment opportunities, the Convention promoted equality of opportunity together with specific rights of protection. By furthering the application of international labour standards, ILO was making an important contribution to promoting the principles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

4. ILO had also changed its perception of operational activities concerning women. While women's specific projects were still being implemented, its long-range objective was to design mainstream development projects so as to guarantee the advancement of women by means of equal opportunity and treatment in

(Ms. Zabolai-Csekme, ILO)

training and employment. ILO had noted with concern that, while the number of women workers was constantly increasing, most of them were still employed in low-skill, low-pay, low-status occupations with little job security and many occupational hazards. It had also noted that, in many countries, unemployment was much higher among women than among men. As for self-employment, women were again disadvantaged owing to their limited access to skills, credit and technologies. Consequently, many women were channelled into informal-sector activities, usually characterized by a minimum input and a minimum income. ILO's activities were concentrated, therefore, on promoting employment for women, mainly in rural areas. With regard to training, the emphasis was laid on women in small enterprise development and management, the acquiring by women of skills of labour-market value and the training of women engaged in the informal sector or rural activities. ILO also carried out activities concerning women in workers' and employers' organizations.

5. ILO was contributing to implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, and collaborating closely with the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

6. Mrs. WARZAZI (Morocco) said that the international community had been addressing the problems of women since the beginning of the century but its progress had been very modest. So far as decision-making in political and parliamentary life was concerned, although women constituted one half of the world's population, they accounted for only 13 per cent of the membership in parliamentary bodies. Because of the existing inequalities in political life, women were not allowed to make their necessary contribution to the establishment of democratic structures. In the employment market, when women became wage-earners, they did not receive equal treatment; moreover, the failure to upgrade them in the social and occupational hierarchy was attributed to their family duties.

7. Discrimination against women must be attacked at the source. Studies showed that the preference given to male children in traditional - and even in modern - societies, perpetuated discrimination against girls throughout their lifetime and in every area of activity. Unfortunately, most women encouraged that discrimination, partly because of the belief that only boys carried on the family name and tradition and provided economic security for their parents in old age. Education and training were essential for preparing girls for an active life that would allow them a degree of economic independence and in which society would grant them recognition and respect. While proper education could eliminate the prejudices that began in childhood, it was a luxury in many countries. That fact only served to widen the gulf between women in the third world and women in economically prosperous countries. Women throughout the world suffered discrimination, but the priorities that concerned them depended on the stage of development attained by their countries. The environment was a case in point. While women in the industrialized world were involved in environmental protection, their sisters in the third world earned their living from the bounty of nature. The forthcoming United Nations Conference on Environment and Development would no

(Mrs. Warzazi, Morocco)

doubt demonstrate the impact of underdevelopment on the environment and the involuntary participation of women in its deterioration.

8. She congratulated UNIFEM on the projects it was carrying out in developing countries, including Africa, and urged the Fund to continue its policy of supporting development projects which directly involved women and could serve as models. The fact that Governments were resorting to the Fund was encouraging and she hoped that the experience of the Fund would be of use to the international financial agencies, as well as to the specialized agencies concerned, and that the Fund would receive technical co-operation from as many countries and agencies as possible.

9. Another issue receiving a great deal of attention was physical and mental violence; the problem seemed minor, however, as compared with female circumcision, a traditional practice which affected the physical and sometimes the psychological health of nearly 75 million women in developing countries. Every year, that practice affected millions of young girls from the age of six onwards, because of the lack of information, education and training. Sometimes there seemed to be no willingness to implement sound policies for ending such practices.

10. The issue of equal pay and equal access to employment made little sense to women who could not find work or who, in the rural areas, laboured continuously for 18 to 20 hours every day just to survive. In one survey carried out in India, peasant women had been asked to define good health; they had responded: "To finish the day without feeling exhausted". That was an unattainable goal, for example, for women in some of the arid regions of the third world who had to walk for several miles every day to find water which they carried in vessels weighing over 20 kilos.

11. With regard to the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat, the 30 per cent target established by the General Assembly had not been reached because of the failure of States to submit female candidatures. While there had been considerable improvement in the situation of equality under the law, in most countries that progress had not been followed up with concrete action.

12. She noted with satisfaction that the enlargement of the Commission on the Status of Women had not affected its work or its consensus on the major problems affecting women. The presence of representatives of developing countries on the Commission would enable it to determine the priorities that really needed attention and to study the underlying causes of many problems, such as those affecting young women, elderly women and disabled women. The situation of migrant women and women heads of family must also be improved, and recommendations should be drawn up for the attention of Governments.

13. She welcomed the work being done by the Division for the Advancement of Women, particularly the seminar of September 1990 which had offered an opportunity for experts from many different countries to discuss the current situation and to exchange information on their own countries' experiences. Once again, it had become evident that statistics and data collection were inadequate and some States

(Mrs. Warzazi, Morocco)

Parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women were not reporting on the obstacles to its implementation.

14. Women's issues must be viewed in the broader perspective of human rights. In the developing countries, the economic, social and cultural advancement of women was vital to their full enjoyment of political rights. That question should be discussed at the forthcoming conference on women to be held in 1995. That conference should be held in a country where women were particularly vulnerable to economic, social and cultural discrimination. As the last three conferences had been held in Europe, in Latin America and Africa, it was only fair that the next one should be held in Asia. She had been surprised to note that the Secretariat had violated the usual procedure, based on prior consultation with the States Parties which were the only ones having the authority to decide on the site of an international conference. The Secretariat's argument that the conference should be held at the Vienna headquarters was not valid, nor had it been valid in the past in the case of the other conferences. If the Secretariat decided to treat States as inferiors or to bring up arguments of a financial, economic and material nature, it would only be confirming the prejudice which the international community had been trying to combat for nearly 90 years.

15. Mr. ALLAFI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that successful social and economic development required the full participation of women and hence legal recognition of their equality with men. Putting that recognition into practice was a problem in most of the developing and developed countries. Women should participate actively in decision-making regarding their problems. In the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, vigorous efforts had been made to inform women of their rights and role in society. Material and moral incentives and constant encouragement from the leadership of the Revolution to participate in critical decision-making had helped Libyan women to overcome all obstacles and succeed in all cultural, social and economic fields.

16. The ambitious programmes of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women aimed at achieving the goals of the United Nations Decade for Women, "Equality, Development and Peace", had met with numerous obstacles. The international community should take steps to revive the Strategies in order to achieve the desired goals by the end of the century. The proposed 1995 world conference on women would be an excellent opportunity to assess what had been achieved and to decide on additional measures. His country supported the principle of geographical alternation for the venue of such a conference, while welcoming the invitation of Austria.

17. The Commission on the Status of Women was the most appropriate body for co-ordinating preparations for the conference. He supported the priority themes to be considered by the Commission at its thirty-fifth session in 1991, but hoped that the Commission would also consider the hitherto ignored category of women labouring under occupation and racism, and in particular, the case of women in occupied Palestine and in South Africa. He appealed to the conscience of women across the world to respond to the call for justice and solidarity with the oppressed women in

(Mr. Allafi, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

Palestine and South Africa in their struggle to defend their usurped human dignity and basic rights. They had been prevented from participating in international efforts to achieve "equality, development and peace". The international community should assume its responsibilities to protect those women and take the necessary steps to eliminate all causes of their suffering, such as occupation, settlements and racism.

18. Mr. KHOSHROO (Iran), welcomed the invitation of the Government of Austria to host the world conference on women in 1995.

19. The approach towards women and their standing in society should be changed in order to strengthen family ties and lay the foundation for enabling women to participate in establishing a new and sound society. One of the indisputable rights of women was to enjoy a healthy family atmosphere in childhood, appropriate health care, training during adolescence and an enduring family relationship. Elderly women must be cared for and not deprived of a warm family environment. The breaking up of the family, high divorce statistics and the resulting ethical and psychological effects were not conducive to the participation of women in society. The manipulation of women in their youth and the neglect of middle-aged and elderly women had deprived them of their inalienable rights. Today's mass media often disgraced women by presenting them as sellers of commodities or for sexual pleasure.

20. In Iran, the family was the focal point for the growth and promotion of human beings, and it was the duty of the Government to promote establishment of that fundamental unit. The Iranian Constitution emphasized the equality of rights of men and women, and stipulated that every citizen should enjoy equal protection under the law and was entitled to all human, political, economic, social and cultural rights, in accordance with Islamic precepts. The Government guaranteed women's rights according to Islamic criteria and created the conditions for forming the character of women and restoring their material and spiritual rights; for the support of mothers (in particular during pregnancy), child care, and the protection of children who had no guardians; for establishing a competent family court; and for introducing insurance for widows and elderly and needy women.

21. Women had played an important part in the Revolution. Their role in determining the type of Government had been unprecedented and their participation in elections and social, political and cultural activities was further proof of their status in society. Their perseverance in encouraging their husbands and sons to defend the territorial integrity of the country was a source of pride for all Iranians. Women were serving as members of parliament and in many other administrative and executive functions, including teaching in universities and schools. They were also active in the research, industrial, medical and agricultural fields. In the economic sectors, they played an important role in handicraft and light industries; for instance, their contribution was much greater than men's in carpet manufacturing, the second most important export industry.

22. More international co-operation was needed to maintain the characteristics and grace of women and their increasing participation in the cultural, economic and political fields. His delegation was ready to co-operate in every effort towards achieving those objectives.

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23. Mrs. MONACO (Italy) remarked that implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies had slowed down in many countries. That was true for Italy, where women had already achieved a large measure of equality in legislative positions, and it was they who must work to eliminate inequalities and discrimination.

24. Italy was promoting numerous mechanisms for women's participation, the most recent being the Commission for Equality between Men and Women, established under an act of Parliament which stated that the mechanisms for promoting the rights of women should have sufficient financial resources for carrying out their task. Among other achievements the Commission had organized a meeting between its officers and the heads of all national political parties and had obtained a commitment to include more women in the electoral lists and ensure that more women were elected. A number of regional, provincial and local committees had been set up under the governmental Commission and most ministries had set up committees to promote equality for women in all fields of public life, including education, employment and career opportunities. Counsellors on equality for women had been appointed at national, regional and provincial levels to supervise application of the principle of non-discrimination. A Bureau for Women had recently been established in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, to co-ordinate, organize and promote projects for women in the developing countries.

25. Italy's efforts were directed towards achieving de jure and especially de facto equality. Her Government was endeavouring to create a permanent link between women's organizations and Italian women and, to that end, had launched an extensive national and regional information and awareness campaign through the mass media.

26. Mr. AL-BADI (Oman) said that women were the backbone of the family and as such their participation and the upgrading of their educational, health and social level was essential for development. Numerous programmes concerned with welfare, education, health and legislation involved Omani women actively in development. With regard to welfare, women were encouraged to take training in rehabilitation and child care centres in order to cope with household problems. A non-governmental Omani women's association had been established for women's social and cultural improvement, charity schemes and family planning guidance. It also promoted hygiene and helped to publicize hygiene among the bedouin. Branches of the association had been opened in most parts of the country.

27. Education was a basic right of all citizens without distinction. Omani women had equal opportunities with men in the institutions of higher education; before 1970 there had not been a single girls' school in Oman.

28. As for health services, Omani women received preventive medicine and treatment, and maternity and child-care services were provided by clinics throughout the Sultanate; those clinics also helped to spread health awareness.

29. Omani legislation ensured equal employment opportunities for women and granted them maternity and child-care leave. Omani women enjoyed joint ownership rights in

(Mr. Al-Badi, Oman)

accordance with Islamic Shariah law. Oman had participated actively in numerous international activities and conferences on women, and had hosted the Fourth Regional Conference on Women in the Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula. Thanks to the radical changes which had taken place under the leadership of Sultan Qaboos, Omani women had progressed to work as nurses, doctors, teachers, police officers, diplomats and politicians with full rights and as influential members of society.

30. Mr. OSNATCH (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) welcomed the fact that the Commission on the Status of Women had adopted a long-range programme making it possible to consider women's problems as a global humanitarian problem, while keeping in mind the unity of the three main purposes of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies: equality, development, and peace. In recent years the work of the Commission had become more practical, with special focus on the formerly controversial question of peace. The way was thus open for broader participation by women in the adoption of political and economic decisions at various levels.

31. The report in document A/45/489 revealed that substantial contributions had been made to the Strategies by a number of United Nations bodies, indicating that the status of women had become a priority for the international community. At the same time, the Commission had concluded that, although some progress was being made, a combination of economic and political obstacles had delayed progress to such an extent that achievement of the objectives agreed upon at Nairobi was at risk. Ways must be found to overcome the obstacles impeding implementation of the Strategies, strengthen national machinery, and establish relevant special programmes.

32. His delegation shared the Commission's concern regarding the status of women. One useful measure that might be taken to develop co-operation would be to disseminate positive national and international experience, especially with regard to the establishment of relevant international standards.

33. The principle of equality of men and women had been proclaimed in one of the first legislative instruments of the Ukrainian SSR. Consequently, for many years the people had taken it for granted that the question of women's status had been resolved once and for all. While the intention had been to ensure equal rights for men and women, in practice the rights had not always been exercised. That situation had slowed down the process of solving problems which were further aggravated by social and political upheavals also affecting the status of women. While constitutional provisions and more than 40 laws existed to protect women's rights and interests, women in the Ukrainian SSR were inadequately protected at the social level. In the Ukrainian SSR 92 per cent of women worked or studied; yet at the same time they had considerable household chores because an equitable division of labour within the family was not yet the norm. The social infrastructure was weak. Health protection for women and children was inadequate, as was the participation of women in the preparation and taking of political decisions.

34. Perestroika had made it necessary to interest the people more keenly in serious qualitative changes affecting the status of women; but it had also been necessary to inculcate new political and economic thinking in the women

(Mr. Osnatch, Ukrainian SSR)

themselves. That had involved both a thorough review of the legislation on the social protection of women and the formulation of new policies.

35. Major measures to protect the health of women and children in regions affected by the Chernobyl accident had included the reallocation of whole families and pregnant women, full compensation and provision of proper housing in the new areas. Other welfare measures for women and children had cost 1.25 billion roubles in the period 1990-1992. Hundreds of thousands of women and children had not been fully safeguarded from health hazards and his delegation was grateful for the assistance provided, and appealed for further help.

36. At the first session of the Ukrainian Parliament a special committee on women's affairs and protection of the family, motherhood and children had been set up to formulate a long-range programme reflecting the principles of the Convention and of the Forward-looking Strategies.

37. Those and other matters regarding the social, economic and political situation of women in the Ukrainian SSR had been described by his country's representatives at the very productive ninth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The Convention had become one of the main international instruments in the field of human rights. His delegation supported its articles and trusted that they would become universally recognized. It looked forward to continued co-operation with the Committee, as was confirmed by the withdrawal of his country's reservation regarding article 29, paragraph 1, of the Convention.

38. One important contribution to popularization of the Convention had been made by the Kiev seminar. His Government and social and women's organizations had striven to ensure the success of the seminar, and had provided highly constructive inputs. Implementation of the recommendations of the seminar would help to strengthen national, regional and international mechanisms for improving the status of women.

39. His delegation attached the highest importance to implementation of the proposal to convene an international conference on women's problems in 1995, and was convinced that that conference would ensure that the necessary priority was assigned to implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. It also supported the proposal to include women's problems in the International Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade.

40. Mrs. MULINDWA-MATOVU (Uganda) said that the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies (A/45/489) gave due attention to the plight of vulnerable groups of women, such as the disabled, the elderly, the young and migrant women, as well as female heads of households, who faced additional hardship and prejudice. In developing countries, such as Uganda, those difficulties were aggravated by stiffer competition than elsewhere, because of deep-rooted attitudes. Worse still, sub-Saharan Africa accounted for almost 4 million, or nearly one third of the world's officially recognized refugees, and

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(Mrs. Mulindwa-Matovu, Uganda)

12 million displaced persons, a large percentage of all those being women and children. Uganda commended the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) on their efforts, but all vulnerable categories still needed further attention.

41. It was unfortunate that, despite progress in the legislative field - 104 States were now parties to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and many States had enacted their own laws and regulations in line with the Convention - implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies was encountering obstacles. In many parts of the world, economic stagnation made it difficult to maintain the educational system, and education was the prerequisite for the advancement of women. With the approach of the year 2000 positive action to implement the Forward-looking Strategies must be intensified and her delegation supported the recommendations contained in Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/15.

42. Improvement of the status of women was a priority for the Government of Uganda. The Ministry of Women in Development had been established to encourage women's access to policy formulation and programme planning and implementation. The Ugandan Ministry of Planning and Economic Development had supported the integration of women's needs and concerns in development planning by instructing planning units in other ministries to give greater attention to women in project formulation, and by allowing the Ministry of Women in Development to review projects from other ministries regarding the adequacy of women's participation. An analysis undertaken by UNIFEM in 1988, at the request of the Ugandan Government, had identified project concepts including the promotion of food security, the improvement of the co-ordinating and revenue capacity of the National Council for Women, and the credit scheme for productive activities for women. The Fund had also financed a number of useful studies, and a follow-up mission had resulted in an agreement between the Fund and the relevant institutions to design a project for assisting and strengthening the National Council of Women, defining a credit finance project and conducting a survey on opportunities for women in food technologies. The Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) had already signed an agreement to reinforce existing credit schemes and to provide development funds to cover women's credit needs and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) had indicated its interest in food processing technologies. Uganda was grateful for all the financial and other support it had received, but the achievement of equal status for women would ultimately depend on the unwavering collective commitment of women themselves.

43. Mr. LOHIA (Papua New Guinea) said that the nature of the problems encountered by women were dictated by the social, economic, cultural and political systems in different societies, and some of the problems were found in both developed and developing countries. Despite efforts by Governments to develop policies to improve the status of women, the problems persisted.

44. In Papua New Guinea, 80 per cent of the population lived in rural areas, so that women continued to be involved in subsistence food production as well as

(Mr. Lohia, Papua New Guinea)

raising children. While his country appreciated the importance of customs and traditional values, it was equally important to establish an effective mechanism for implementing national government policies in education, health, child care, sex education and family planning to improve the quality and level of women's participation throughout the world.

45. His Government recognizing the disadvantaged position of women and their role in national development, had called for a rapid increase in equal and active participation by women in all forms of economic, social, political and cultural activities. The Government's national development strategy had been introduced in 1976 and the Constitution had a clear provision for equal participation by women in all aspects of society. Women and men received equal pay for equal work and women were entitled to claim head-of-household status where a husband had a lower salary or was unemployed or if the woman was a single parent. Bottle-feeding was discouraged and legislation had been enacted to encourage breast-feeding, for which mothers were entitled to time off at work. Married women could now contribute to and claim retirement benefits.

46. The need for a clear policy on women had been recognized in 1978 and the Government had developed a policy for creating an environment conducive to integrating women both as beneficiaries and as participants in development. It placed responsibilities on a number of key Government departments to review and plan policies and programmes so that the impact on women was considered before such activities were implemented.

47. His country continued to support UNIFEM, whose programme had served as a catalyst in facilitating women's programmes in various regions. Its modest Asia/Pacific programme had been useful to Governments and non-governmental organizations in making their national plans and programmes more gender-responsive. A recent feasibility study on credit schemes for women showed his Government's commitment to improving women's access to resources and development project assistance. His Government had also established a national communications network to improve national and provincial offices, mobilize women in policy-making areas and encourage co-operation at the local level.

48. Miss GANE-BANG (Chad) said that in many regions of the world, women, the silent majority, suffered hunger, fear and violence day after day, but identifying the trouble would not cure it. Chad was resolutely pursuing a policy for the effective advancement of women and had set itself a number of objectives, including the promotion of women's access to decision-making bodies by ensuring equality of opportunity in education and employment, and providing social and health education and maternal and child care for all. That policy was provided for in articles 36 and 37 of the Constitution of 10 December 1989. The will to allow women to participate actively in national life had been reaffirmed in a declaration by the President of the Republic. In the elections of 8 July 1990 five seats had been reserved for women and there were seven women in the National Assembly.

(Miss Gane-Bang, Chad)

49. Activities for the advancement of women over the past few years included National Women's Week which had become an annual event. In April 1990, a seminar on the integration of women in the trade-union movement had made a number of recommendations to national authorities and international organizations on subjects including ratification of international charters and conventions on women; providing an up-to-date family code; increasing the number of women in trade-union decision-making organs; organizing campaigns to change backward attitudes that hampered the advancement of women; and organizing national, regional and international meetings and seminars.

50. Chad appreciated the support given by organizations in the United Nations system, in particular UNICEF and UNIFEM. However, for a country where the majority - who were women - lived in rural areas, illiterate and untrained, much remained to be done. Her Government therefore proposed to organize a round table on the status of women in 1991, in co-operation with UNIFEM, UNDP and the World Bank. Sectoral talks on health and social affairs would be held in 1991 under the auspices of the African Development Bank and the World Health Organization.

51. The adoption of legal instruments for the advancement of women would not have any impact unless they were backed up by action and political will. Action was urgent but ultimately it was the women themselves who must show the will to achieve equality. Development seemed further away because of the economic crisis in the developing countries, which was aggravated by the austerity imposed by structural adjustment whose main victims were women. In the light of those factors, efforts to improve the quality of life for women seemed illusory.

52. Ms. VALLE (Cuba), referring to the three priority fields of the United Nations Decade for Women, said that, while some progress had been made in equality, in much of the world the day-to-day situation of women was far from satisfactory. Women continued to be discriminated against at work, in the family, and in society as a whole. Obvious inequalities persisted in areas such as pay and work conditions, and the political decisions necessary to rectify the situation had not been taken. With regard to development, it was clear that the economic crisis, the external debt, socio-economic imbalances and the deterioration in the terms of trade all militated against the advancement of women. With regard to peace, while armed conflicts, foreign intervention and the threat of aggression persisted, women would continue to suffer.

53. Her delegation welcomed the fact that 104 States had now ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Nevertheless, discrimination against women remained an important and persistent problem, in dealing with which Governments and the United Nations must take account of the economic, social, cultural and other factors.

54. Her delegation concurred with the views, expressed in the Secretary-General's report (A/45/489), that there had been some progress, but that the effects of various economic, political and social factors had hampered women's advancement, and that the objectives of the Strategies were seriously threatened. To counter

(Ms. Valle, Cuba)

that trend, efforts must be made to guarantee the best possible opportunities for education, training and equal participation by women in economic and political life. The international community must work towards implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies over the next five years. UNIFEM was making important contributions in various regions of the world, promoting substantial technical assistance projects in the developing countries.

55. Her delegation reiterated its support for the recommendation to hold a world conference in 1995 for reviewing progress in implementation of the Nairobi Strategies.

56. Early in 1990, Cuba had hosted the ministerial meeting of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries on the role of women in development which had continued the work begun by other conferences and meetings of the Non-Aligned Countries in that area.

57. The revolutionary process in Cuba had made a significant contribution to the development of women's full human potential. For the first time in the country's history, women had become, not only beneficiaries of great social changes, but also protagonists in the process of transforming society. Thousands of Cuban women contributed their professional skills to the nation's progress. Women represented 38.7 per cent of the total workforce, and 58.3 per cent of skilled workers.

58. The revolution had sought to ensure that Cuban mothers participated fully in working and educational life. As early as 1961, creches had been set up to enable women to work and provide a full educational programme for children from earliest infancy. Sixty-one per cent of pre-university students were female, and women accounted for 55 per cent of university enrolment. In political life, women occupied 26.5 per cent of leading political posts, and were increasingly represented in the most important political organs and institutions.

59. Mrs. BUTIKO (United Republic of Tanzania) said that the success of development programmes and the implementation of policies depended on the extent to which women were free to make decisions affecting their lives. Five years after the adoption of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, it was inexcusable that women, who constituted half the world's population and put in two thirds of working hours, were unequally rewarded in comparison with their male counterparts. Women grew half the food supply in many countries but received one tenth of the wages. Their activities were related mainly to farming, domestic chores and reproduction, but they were the first to starve in times of crisis. They had two jobs: in the home and outside the home, but hitherto much of their work had been unrecognized. As a result, their health and their work suffered, their children suffered and development was retarded. In most countries, women owned only 1 per cent of property.

60. One of the most important imperatives was to ensure literacy and schooling for girls and women. Tanzania had achieved universal primary education for school-age children of both sexes but, while enrolment figures were equal, not all girls

(Mrs. Butiko, Tanzania)

completed primary school. In secondary education fewer girls were enrolled than boys, which was attributed to shortcomings in the educational system inherited with independence. In advanced secondary schools and colleges, and in training institutions and universities, enrolment of girls was much lower than that of boys.

61. The Government realized the importance of education, training, information, literacy and extension services as a means of enabling women to participate fully and effectively in development and help to change attitudes towards equality, but the planning and implementation of such programmes were subject to constraints, such as the traditional planning system which was not gender-sensitive, cultural and customary attitudes, and limited resources. Thus women, especially those in rural areas, were still disadvantaged. Enhancement of the autonomy and economic status of women called for multiple strategies to remove legal barriers to credit, land and other means of production, as well as the reform of marriage, divorce, employment, inheritance and other laws.

62. The Government had embarked on measures to redress the situation. The Tanzanian Law Reform Commission was updating laws on land tenure and affiliation proceedings in order to give women equal status. The courts had been championing the cause of women, especially in respect of inheritance of clan land, and High Court decisions had reasserted women's right to inherit land belonging to their parents for their own as well as their children's use.

63. In encouraging women to attain self-sufficiency, the Government, assisted by United Nations volunteers, UNIFEM and UNICEF, were working with women in rural areas to help their communities achieve self-sufficiency in food production and improve the social and economic well-being of women. On behalf of the Government and people of Tanzania, and especially of the women, she thanked UNIFEM and UNICEF for their inputs in such projects. In addition, with the technical support of ILO, the Tanzania Workers Union and Tanzania Sisal Growers, Spinners and Marketing Association were implementing a project for strengthening the self-help capacity of women in the sisal industry.

64. In future action, priority should be given to activities that would enhance women's participation and equality in politics and decision-making. The international community should also pay attention to the improvement of the situation of women at times of armed conflict. The five-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies could provide reliable indicators of progress made, point out any obstacles that might exist, help to highlight any neglected areas of operation and check any tendencies to be either over-ambitious or too slack.

65. The silent voices of women and children should not be forgotten. Women in apartheid South Africa and in the occupied Palestinian territories deserved and had the right to be heard. In South Africa, women were in triple jeopardy by virtue of race, sex and class under the system of apartheid. Palestinian women had for four decades been subjected to a life of deprivation and hardship, a situation aggravated since the beginning of the intifada in December 1987. Although all

(Mrs. Butiko, Tanzania)

Palestinians in the occupied territories were suffering, the particular difficulties and responsibilities of Palestinian women were often not taken into account. As for the situation in South Africa, black women would continue to suffer until the apartheid system was abolished. Her delegation therefore appealed to the international community to increase its assistance to black women in South Africa and to step up its support for the struggle for the total eradication of apartheid.

66. Among the obstacles to implementing the Forward-looking Strategies and improving the status of women, the economic and social problems that many developing countries were experiencing were the most serious. So long as the economic situation remained unchanged, the aims and aspirations of women in the developing world could not materialize. The structural adjustment programmes imposed on many of the countries, far from improving the welfare of women, had had the opposite effect of exacerbating social problems and the situation of women in particular.

67. She reiterated Tanzania's determination to promote fulfilment of the objectives of the Forward-looking Strategies.

68. Ms. GASPAR (Angola) said that, since important changes were under way in Angolan society, the promotion and equality of women must be added to the list of national priorities. Two main obstacles stood in the way of full equality for women in Angola, the first being the absence of peace. The war had driven women from their lands, thereby preventing them from playing their twofold role of supporting their families and contributing to the agricultural economy. Especially in rural areas, they had been reduced to the status of virtual beggars.

69. Underdevelopment was the second major obstacle. High rates of illiteracy and child mortality, inadequate water and food supplies, hunger and poverty were symptoms that afflicted men and women alike. Women's participation was essential to the success of development policies, and efforts were being made to use their creative potential by integrating them fully into every aspect of economic life. Those efforts to promote and educate women should be seen as a productive investment, given the important role they played in educating future generations. Women were a component of all programmes and actions aimed at national reconstruction and further development of Angola, such as the Economic Reconstruction Plan, and particularly the Programme for the Reconstruction of the South of Angola.

70. Having regard to the conditions prevailing in her country, priority was being assigned, *inter alia*, to education, information and professional training, and in particular to the preparation of specific programmes for women in rural areas; to agriculture and food production; and to employment and support to entrepreneurial activity, particularly in training and credit. An action plan was being prepared, establishing goals to be attained and actions to be undertaken for increasing women's participation in the decision-making process.

(Ms. Gaspar, Angola)

71. The protracted war was undoubtedly the main obstacle to the normal and harmonious development of women and the family. Angolan women supported the important initiatives taken by the Government in its search for peace. Her delegation thus welcomed the adoption of the Solar Amendment by the United States Congress, suspending United States aid to UNITA for three months. With or without peace, with or without UNITA, the process of phasing in a multi-party system and the market economy was already irreversible. The social, political and economic reforms under way bore witness to the Angolan people's longing for peace. In conclusion, she appealed to the international community to heed the plight of the Angolan people, particularly in the areas most affected by the war. A call must be made for an end to the massacres, maimings, and senseless destruction of goods and infrastructures, and to other acts of terrorism committed by UNITA against defenceless populations.

The meeting rose at 8.40 p.m.