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REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF PROGRESS ACHIEVED
IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORLD PLAN OF
ACTION: POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, INTERNATIONAL
CO-OPERATION AND THE STRENGTHENING OF
INTERNATIONAL PEACE

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Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

The present report reviews and evaluates efforts undertaken at the national level to implement the minimum objectives set forth in paragraph 46 of the World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year. The report contains an analysis of progress made and obstacles encountered in the fields of political participation, international co-operation and the strengthening of international peace.

CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraphs</u>	<u>Page</u>
INTRODUCTION	1 - 13	3
I. THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICAL LIFE . .	14 - 45	5
II. INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION AND THE STRENGTHENING OF INTERNATIONAL PEACE	46 - 72	10
A. Promotion of international co-operation and the strengthening of international peace . .	46 - 57	10
B. Measures taken to encourage greater partici- pation of women in international co-operation and the strengthening of international peace	58 - 72	12
III. OBSTACLES TO CONTINUED PROGRESS IN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION AND THE STRENGTHENING OF INTERNATIONAL PEACE	73 - 105	16
A. Obstacles to political participation	76 - 99	16
B. Obstacles to international co-operation and the strengthening of international peace . .	100 - 105	20
IV. PRIORITIES AND TARGETS FOR 1979-1985	106 - 119	21

INTRODUCTION

1. The review and appraisal of the participation of women in political life, international co-operation and the strengthening of international peace at the national level was prepared in the light of the recommendations made in the Declaration of Mexico on the Equality of Women and their Contribution to Development and Peace, 1975, the World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year and other resolutions and decisions adopted by the World Conference of the International Women's Year. ^{1/} The present report is based primarily on the replies of 86 Governments, the specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations to the questionnaire prepared and circulated by the Advancement of Women Branch of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Secretariat.
2. The outcome of the International Women's Year (observed under the objectives equality, development and peace) which included the Declaration of Mexico, the World Plan of Action and the documents of many other meetings that took place during the first half of the United Nations Decade for Women, stressed that the achievement of women's equality was inseparable from their active participation in political life and was essential to the strengthening of peace and the achievement of a new economic and social order. It was emphasized that the attainment of women's ultimate goals was closely linked to social progress and to ensuring a favourable international situation, the improvement of relations between States and the development of friendship and co-operation among them.
3. The participation of women in political life, international co-operation and the strengthening of international peace is integral to the whole problem of the advancement of women. It is also closely linked to and dependent on other issues that concern women, such as employment, health, education and access to supportive institutions and services.
4. Without the active and continuous participation of women in the political process, there can be no equality. Political rights have been realized in most countries and data on utilization of the right to vote indicates considerable interest among women in political participation.
5. The assumption that lies behind the concept of political participation, international co-operation and the strengthening of international peace is that those who contribute to decision-making processes derive benefits from the final decisions made and the programmes that are ultimately put into action. Further, society as a whole benefits from the full participation of its people.

^{1/} See Report of the World Conference of the International Women's Year (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.76.IV.1), Part One: in particular paras. 46 (g) and 50-66.

6. However, women's effectiveness in influencing political decisions and in drawing attention to specific varied needs of different groups of women remains extremely limited. In many instances, the representation of women is so small that their role can be viewed as little more than tokenism. The generally low participation of women in these processes in many countries would indicate that women's share of the benefits is extremely low and their contribution to this sphere could be more significant.

7. There are many obstacles that hinder women's greater involvement in political life, international co-operation and the strengthening of international peace. The factors that create this situation are more complex and relate to socio-economic conditions, reinforced by traditional discriminatory attitudes, which place women's role within the home and family, and men's within a political framework. It is these socio-economic conditions that determine the extent to which women participate in political life, in international co-operation and the strengthening of international peace. As long as such factors circumscribe their role within society, women will be unable to break into the political arena in any fundamental way. Those attitudes that denigrate women and view their contribution as less substantial must be changed in society as a whole.

8. However, in many countries, there are ways in which women participate politically that cannot be measured simply in terms of the number of women represented in a particular political body or acting as representatives of their Governments in the international arena. While the inclusion of women in decision-making bodies should be promoted as policy and seen as an important step towards full equality, this quantitative measure in itself cannot be taken as an adequate indicator of women's contribution to such processes. It is possible for women to be represented in decision-making bodies but for their influence to be minimized owing to prevailing attitudes that regard their contribution as of less value.

9. The political participation of women can also be aptly measured in many countries by the extent to which they participate in grass-roots women's organizations. The role of women's organizations increased during the first half of the Decade and the impact of such organizational activity on decision-making processes at both local and government levels has been substantial.

10. The success of such activities, however, is closely linked to the level of support that women's organizations receive from local and national organs of power. With positive government encouragement this form of participation can lead to many changes in diverse areas of women's lives.

11. None the less, this form of political participation cannot supplant the urgent need for a fuller political role to be played by women. However successful such grass-roots activities might be in realizing certain benefits for some women or for some communities, women will remain on the periphery of the political arena until they themselves participate on an equal basis in all levels of decision-making.

12. Over the first five years of the Decade, there have been certain gains, as well as some losses, demonstrating that complete equality for most women in the world has yet to be achieved. There is an urgent need to accelerate the measures that have already been taken to create the necessary socio-economic and cultural conditions as well as to eradicate traditional attitudes which establish stereotypical images of women, in order to achieve the goals of the Decade.

13. Such measures will enable women not only to free themselves from the constraints that restrict their full and rightful participation in political life, but also to contribute to the goal of world peace and international co-operation as equal partners with men.

I. THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICAL LIFE

14. It was reported that women enjoyed equal voting rights with men in all countries of independent Africa except South Africa, where discrimination was based on race, not sex. Egypt, however, indicated a "minor difference" in its voting laws, namely, that voting was "obligatory for men and optional for women".

15. While most countries permitted women to hold public office, in practice, the number of women holding such office was very small.

16. Some countries indicated that legal equality notwithstanding, women were barred from exercising that equality in practice. Egypt, for example, stated that although there was legal equality "women have in practice been barred until now from such offices as the judiciary, army posts or the post of head of state".

17. The replies to the question on the number of women voters were limited by the fact that not all countries had held elections since 1975 or they did not break down voting statistics by sex. Among those replying, some showed an increase. Kenya, for instance, showed an increase from 40 per cent to 60 per cent in local elections, and 50 per cent to 55 per cent in national elections.

18. Despite the reported high turn-out of women voters, women tended to be noticeably absent from all levels of Government. Some countries, for example Sierra Leone and Kenya, referred to the nominating powers of the president as the major mechanism for increasing the number of women in political life. Egypt was one of the few countries that had recently initiated a quota system of parliamentary representation under which 30 seats were allotted to women. A few countries had made special efforts to include women at the local level. In Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde at least two women served on all five member councils at the local and regional levels.

19. Several countries indicated that the percentage participation of women at the local level was nearly double that at the national level. In Kenya, 20 per cent of those elected to local office were women. Other countries, however, reported a smaller percentage (Madagascar and Mauritius).

20. The five countries - Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and Sao Tome and Principe - that attained independence in 1975 or shortly before, have had to totally restructure their Governments and, in the case of three, recover from the effects of long and devastating wars of national liberation. Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique in particular stood out in their commitment to the need for women to play an equal political role in the new States and to the importance of the political education of both men and women.

21. A woman minister in Government is not an uncommon phenomenon in Africa, although few countries have more than one. Among the countries that have women ministers are Guinea, Kenya, Mozambique, Senegal, the Sudan, the United Republic of Cameroon, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. The Vice-President of the People's National Assembly in Guinea-Bissau is a woman, as is the President of one of the eight regions of that country; in Sierra Leone, two members of Parliament are women. While this is a far from exhaustive list, it does indicate a trend to increase the number of women in high office, although most of those positions are in areas which have traditionally been designated as "women's responsibilities", namely, social affairs, health and education.

22. In addition to the measures indicated above, the following were reported. For example, Kenya had appointed a number of assistant ministers from among women members of Parliament, and a number of countries reported that education campaigns had been conducted to stress the need for women to play a fuller role in political life.

23. With the exception of Switzerland, all States members of ECF had full voting rights for women. In the case of Switzerland, all but two of its cantons had full voting rights. Some countries were unable to provide the percentage of women voters since voting cards did not specify sex. Those that gave figures placed the percentage of total voting population at approximately 50 per cent.

24. The supreme organ of State power in the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic indicated that there were 159 women deputies, representing 37 per cent of the total number of deputies. The percentage of women holding public office at the local level increased from 46.7 in 1975 to 47.9 in 1977. In the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, in 1978, 49 per cent of the deputies to the local soviets, and 35.4 per cent of the deputies to the Supreme Soviet were women (see document E/CONF/611). Other countries with relatively high percentages of women in office at local and national levels were the German Democratic Republic (32.28 per cent in 1970 at the local level, increasing to 35.95 per cent in 1977) and Romania, with local representation increasing from 30 per cent to 33 per cent, but showing a lower percentage at the national level - 15.5 per cent.

25. Finland, Denmark and Sweden reported lower figures. Finland's Parliament had a percentage of 26.5 women, an increase from 23 per cent during the specified period; at the local level the percentage of women holding office was 18. Denmark reported an increase from 12.1 per cent to 17.7 per cent at the local level, and 16 per cent to 17.1 per cent at the national level. Sweden reported an increase at the local level from 17 per cent to 23 per cent.

26. The Netherlands reported an increase in women holding office at the local level from 3 per cent to 13 per cent since 1975, an increase in the first house of Parliament from 5 per cent to 13 per cent and a decrease in the second house from 13 per cent to 12 per cent for the same period. The only other country from the European region reporting a decrease was the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. This drop in percentage occurred concurrently with the election of the first woman head of State in Europe. Other countries which reported figures showed that women's participation was considerably below 10 per cent. At the national level, for example, Iceland and the United States of America remained static, while the Federal Republic of Germany increased. At a local level, Iceland and the United States showed an increase. In Ireland, no women were elected to office although some were appointed at the local level. These figures indicate a considerable gap in the level of participation between the planned economies of Europe and the developed market economies.

27. All the reported measures to increase women's political participation were extragovernmental, with the exception of Norway which took steps through a 1973 government decree to ensure a greater representation of women on public committees, executive boards and councils: after that measure, women's representation in newly appointed committees had shown a tendency to increase. In addition, the Equal Status Council had made a number of recommendations to the Government in order to ensure fuller participation by women.

28. Denmark, Finland, Sweden and the United States of America, for instance, reported activities undertaken by non-governmental women's organizations and political parties aimed at increasing the number of women delegates and candidates. The reply from the United States gave a detailed outline of changes that were taking place:

"A cultural revolution is under way in the United States which is altering women's concept of their place in society ... More women are expected to seek political office with the same skills and experience as men. In addition, more women plan to combine family and work responsibilities and expect their husbands to share family duties ... In the past, women worked actively for male candidates and for a political party. Increasingly, women expect to be the candidates."

29. All the countries of the Latin American region that responded to the questions relating to political participation of women indicated that their citizens, both men and women, enjoyed full voting rights guaranteed by their constitutions.

30. Most countries pointed out that the right to vote and hold office was a well established legal principle with deep historical roots. No country pointed to the discrepancy between the legal right to vote and the limited number of women holding public or elective office which emerged from questions relating to that right.

31. The countries that responded indicated high levels of voter participation for women. Some countries, however, experienced special problems regarding the exercise of the right to vote. The Dominican Republic indicated that the legal

provisions for equality had been abused by previous dictatorial Governments in order to create a broader social base for their acceptance. Incompetent women had been placed in positions of apparent political power, which had damaged the women's cause in current efforts to achieve equality.

32. A number of countries indicated decreases in women's participation in voting, in local office and national office during the evaluation period. The Dominican Republic explained the low level of women's participation by indicating that statistics did not reflect the actual situation because of the way in which the previous Government had made use of elections and patronage.

33. The countries responding to the questions on women holding office in the executive, legislative or judicial branch of national Governments indicated some modest increase. Colombia, for instance, was the only country to report that there had been a woman candidate for presidency within the past few years.

34. Few countries reported on measures and legislation taken during 1975-1978 to improve the participation of women in political life. Of those that did, Cuba was the only country to mention measures taken that, among others, were initiated by the Government and listed a series of activities including the discussion of proposed laws by the people themselves, participation in major executive legislative and judicial bodies, more active participation in international forums, special courses for women workers at the university and work with mass organizations.

35. Paraguay and the Dominican Republic reported that all that was required in this connexion was to increase information programmes to ensure fuller participation by women. Bolivia and Peru reported that there had been little government action, but women had formed groups within the political parties and taken action to increase their participation.

36. Five countries of the Western Asian region answered the questionnaire, namely, Lebanon, Kuwait, Bahrain, Iraq and Yemen. Of these, only three answered the question relating to the political participation of women. Therefore, it is not possible to show trends for the region; the answers, however, are indicative of the prevailing situation.

37. All three countries replied that women had been given the right to vote and that they enjoyed all other political rights. Lebanon reported that 10 per cent of those elected to public office for 1975 were women, at both local and national levels. No figures were provided for later years. Iraq indicated that detailed statistics were not available for the percentage of voters or the percentages of office-holders who were women. In Yemen, measures had been taken, in particular through the mass communication media, to educate people about the necessity of including women in political life.

38. The countries of the Asian and Pacific region that responded to this section affirmed that women enjoyed equal political rights. Australia indicated a differential voting practice by race and not by sex, whereby voting was not compulsory for aboriginals, but was for the rest of the population. Two countries

noted that, since 1975, there had been a general increase in the number of women exercising their voting rights since 1975 (India and Philippines). Comparative data were not available for other countries. The lack of data was explained by New Zealand, for example, as due to elections being operated by secret ballot.

39. The number of women holding positions in public office varied between the different countries of the region.

40. New Zealand distinguished between the percentage of women holding local office at the urban level and at the rural level. In urban areas, the percentage had increased from 11.9 per cent to 16.4 per cent; rural areas showed a far smaller percentage of female participation: an increase from 1.7 per cent to 3.6 per cent in 1977.

41. In China, the increase in the number of women deputies to the highest organ of State power, the National People's Congress (NPC), between 1954 and 1978 was quite substantial, from 11.9 per cent to 21.2 per cent. No indication, however, was given of the increase over the past five years. The Standing Committee of the NPC comprised 39 women members, representing 19.5 per cent of the whole.

42. In Japan, a slightly higher percentage of women than men voted in 1976, the latest figures available, and elected seven women to the House of Representatives. (In 1946, 39 women were elected, dropping a year later to 15.) India was one of the countries that showed an over-all decline in the number of women holding high office at the national level for the period in question: the percentage dropped from 4.05 in 1975 to 3.51 in 1977; at the local level it dropped from 4.93 to 2.7.

43. Sri Lanka reported that 11 per cent of the positions in the executive branch were held by women. Singapore replied that no women were elected to public office at the national or local levels and stated that there had been a decline in women's political participation in that country despite the fact that there were no "legislative constraints on women's right to vote or to stand for election".

44. New Zealand and Australia were the only two countries to respond in detail about the numbers and percentages of women holding office in trade unions. New Zealand pointed out that: "Women represent about 30 per cent of the total membership of registered Trade Unions, and 20 per cent of those unions have a majority of women members. Women's participation at the level of higher office is not, however, proportionate to their membership." By 1979 only 4.6 per cent of the unions (i.e., 15 leaders in 323 unions), had women holding high office, a slight increase over the 1977 figure of 3.2 per cent. Australia indicated that "no more than two women are fully paid senior Trade Union executives".

45. A number of Governments detailed some of the measures taken to increase the participation of women. A few countries reported on the work undertaken by both governmental and non-governmental women's organizations. In Australia, the establishment of the National Women's Advisory Council in 1978 was seen by the Government as a major step towards increasing women's political participation at the federal level. In New Zealand, the Women's Electoral Lobby, a non-governmental organization, was established in 1976 with the goal of increasing women's awareness of and involvement in election processes. Other women's organizations had undertaken a variety of actions directed towards promoting the role of women in political life. In Pakistan, women's wings had been established by all political parties. /...

II. INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION AND THE STRENGTHENING OF
INTERNATIONAL PEACE

A. Promotion of international co-operation and the strengthening
of international peace

46. During the period under review, efforts continued to be undertaken at the national level to promote international co-operation and the strengthening of international peace. The activities undertaken included international, regional and national meetings, conferences and seminars; mass campaigns of solidarity; collection of signatures and petitions; enlightenment of the public through a variety of informational and educational activities; multilateral and bilateral contacts between women's groups and organizations; and material and financial assistance.

47. It was emphasized that both the World Conference of the International Women's Year and the World Congress for the International Women's Year (Berlin, 1975) had greatly influenced the further involvement of women in the strengthening of peace and mutual understanding among people.

48. Most Governments indicated in broad terms a general commitment to the need for increasing women's participation in international co-operation and the strengthening of international peace. Sometimes such a commitment was linked to the over-all goal of achieving equality between women and men and integrating women in the development process. In some instances concrete activities were described, directed towards the promotion of international co-operation and the strengthening of international peace. For example, the participation of women in international, regional and national meetings. Austria reported that it had participated actively in the special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament and, in addition, had performed its functions as a member of the Ad Hoc Committee for the World Disarmament Conference. Iraq stated that the President of the Iraqi Federation for Women had been appointed head of the Iraqi delegation to the Conference of Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries on the Role of Women in Development, held at Baghdad in May 1979.

49. In some countries the participation of women in the struggle for the strengthening of international peace and security and against colonialism, racism, racial discrimination, foreign aggression and occupation and all forms of foreign domination enjoyed the full support of their Governments and public organizations, for such participation was in harmony with the principles of their countries' foreign policy. In this respect, it is important to note that three Member States have in their Constitutions a special article which bans war propaganda (Byelorussian SSR, Ukrainian SSR and the USSR).

50. Considerable attention continued to be given to the participation of women in the struggle for peace and disarmament and promotion of mutual understanding among peoples. The need was expressed for halting the arms race and bringing

about disarmament, averting the threat of a nuclear world war, prohibiting production of the neutron bomb and deepening the process of détente. Thus, the German Democratic Republic reported that the delegates to the Ninth Congress of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED), including 684 women, had fully subscribed to the belief that ending the arms race and achieving disarmament, above all in the nuclear field, and eliminating the danger of a world war were the most important and pressing tasks of our time. Resolute action in the field of disarmament and arms limitation was called for. With a view to ensuring lasting peace and the security of peoples, the delegates came out in support of strengthening détente by ending the arms race and advocating turning the resources thus released to the pursuit of socio-economic goals. The 1.3 million-strong Women's Democratic League of Germany (DFD) endorsed the Stockholm Appeal of the World Peace Council and sent a delegation to the World Conference for Ending the Arms Race, for Disarmament and Détente, held at Helsinki in 1976. The participants in the International Meeting for the Continuation of the Work of the World Congress for the International Women's Year (Berlin, 1977), at which the DFD acted as host, stressed the urgent need for taking joint action to end the arms race, achieve disarmament and convene a world disarmament conference.

51. Solidarity with women of southern Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia struggling for national independence and against apartheid and racism was expressed (Byelorussian SSR, Cuba, German Democratic Republic, Mali, Mauritania, Ukrainian SSR and USSR). Material assistance to women's organizations of the region was reported (USSR) (see document A/34/471). The Organization of Angolan Women stated that women of Angola had been equal partners with men in their common struggle against imperialism, colonialism, racism and apartheid. Through their national organization, Angolan women were engaged in the process of the emancipation of all African women and actively supported the liberation struggle in southern Africa (see documents A/34/113 and A/34/391). Austria reported that it had continually and strongly condemned the apartheid policy and generally censured any policy of discrimination for political, racial, ethnic and other reasons. Mauritania reported that the women of Mauritania had always been concerned with the problems of strengthening peace in the world and that they had given their support to women of Palestine and Zimbabwe.

52. Among other activities the following were reported: participation in international campaigns of solidarity with the struggle of the Arab peoples for national independence, for a comprehensive peaceful settlement to the problems in the Middle East (Byelorussian SSR, Mali, Ukrainian SSR and USSR); campaigns of solidarity with the Vietnamese people (Byelorussian SSR, Cuba, Ukrainian SSR and USSR). In some instances, it was noted that moral and political support was combined with material assistance (USSR).

53. Support for the struggle to eliminate fascism and promote democracy and social progress as well as acts of solidarity with the struggle of the peoples of Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay and Nicaragua for freedom and independence were noted (Byelorussian SSR, Ukrainian SSR and USSR). In the Byelorussian SSR, women took part in the preparation for and work of the Eighth Congress of the International Federation of Resistance Movements, held at Minsk in May 1978.

The Congress focused its attention on such questions as the struggle for peace, détente and disarmament, and the struggle against neo-fascism and neo-nazism.

54. It was reported that an increasing amount of international information had been exchanged and experience gained in the framework of seminars and other meetings in which women representatives actively participated as well as through the exchange of delegations and tourist groups (Austria, Cuba, Byelorussian SSR, Ukrainian SSR and USSR).

55. Special attention was paid to familiarizing women with the issues of international affairs and to organizing educational programmes directed towards making women more knowledgeable about international issues. Such activities were often undertaken by national women's organizations and at government level. Thus, the United States reported that "the Department of State conducts briefings and conferences for the American public on various aspects of American foreign policy. ... One such meeting earlier this year, which involved women specifically, was on the SALT II Agreement."

56. The promotion of the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women, has found its expression in the activities of national women's organizations. For instance, Australia, Mali and the USSR described manifold activities carried out by their national women's organizations in the field.

57. Cuba described many areas in which women both participated in and generated activities directed towards the greater involvement of women in the spheres under discussion. Within the Federation of Cuban Women there was a Secretariat for Solidarity, which was responsible for promoting activities aimed at developing a broad movement of solidarity, providing an outlet for the internationalist sentiments of women and helping to increase their knowledge of the history and situation of the peoples making up the international community. Those activities were organized by solidarity teams, consisting of members at the local level, to study the history of the people's struggle, and by friendship brigades, also at the local level, which were responsible for developing documentation and cultural events in connexion with the country studied. The Federation also carried out interchanges with national women's organizations from different countries and international women's organizations. Evidence of the important work carried out by the Federation was the recent granting of the International Lenin Prize "For the Consolidation of Peace among the Peoples" to Vilma Espin Guilloys, member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba and of the State Council, and President of the Cuban Federation of Women.

B. Measures taken to encourage greater participation of women in international co-operation and the strengthening of international peace

58. According to the responses of Governments to the questions on international co-operation and the strengthening of international peace, the level of participation by women in this area has generally increased. During the

evaluation period, countries for which data were available experienced a general increase in the participation of women of approximately 2 per cent. Some countries, however, experienced a decline. Actual rates of participation in 1978 ranged from no participation to a maximum of 31 per cent.

59. Fifteen Governments indicated that the percentage of women officials in departments of foreign affairs had increased during the evaluation period (Austria, Belgium, Botswana, Egypt, Greece, Finland, Denmark, Germany, Federal Republic of, Jamaica, Kenya, Mauritius, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland and United States). Four countries showed a decline (Cuba, Ireland, Netherlands and Philippines); some countries showed no change (Israel, Mali, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Swaziland and Uruguay); three indicated that there were no women in departments of foreign affairs (Iceland, Papua New Guinea and Singapore). The over-all increase in women's participation for countries reporting data for the period 1975-1978 was approximately 2 per cent and varied from a decline of 4.2 per cent (Philippines), to an increase of 15 per cent (Jamaica). Actual rates of participation for 1978 varied from no participation to a maximum of 31 per cent.

60. With respect to the number of women officials in diplomatic service, 20 Governments showed an increase (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Cuba, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, Greece, Iceland, Iraq, Ireland, Jamaica, Kenya, Norway, Pakistan, Philippines, Sweden, Switzerland and United States); two Governments showed a decline (New Zealand and Uruguay); five Governments reported no change (Botswana, Israel, Mali, Singapore and Sri Lanka); and four advised that there were no women officials in diplomatic service (Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Swaziland and Togo). The over-all increase in the participation of women in diplomatic service during the evaluation period was approximately 1 per cent. Actual participation rates for 1978 varied from no participation to a maximum of 28 per cent.

61. Statistical information furnished by most countries showed that there was a general increase in women's participation in meetings of regional organizations as well as in regional and interregional meetings aimed at the strengthening of international peace. Many countries, however, reported no change in either field. For countries reporting information concerning women as delegates to meetings of regional organizations, an approximate increase of 2 per cent was shown during the evaluation period. Actual rates of participation for 1978 varied from no participation to 30 per cent. Actual rates of participation of women as delegates to meetings aimed at strengthening international peace and co-operation varied from no participation to 71 per cent.

62. Some countries indicated that they had experienced difficulty in presenting the requested data. For instance, Australia reported that it did not maintain records of the attendance of women officers at international meetings, although women regularly attended such meetings. Women constituted 28 per cent of the professional conference staff at Australia's major international conference posts in New York and at Geneva.

63. With respect to training women for a diplomatic career, Argentina pointed out that in recent years the percentage of women in the training institution for the diplomatic service had increased from 20.6 to 35.5. The programme of preparation for a diplomatic career of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belgium admitted women on equal terms. Senegal indicated that diplomatic careers would be opened to women starting with the 1979/1980 academic year.

64. In those countries in which women were well represented in higher bodies of state power, women participated in the elaboration and adoption of decisions concerning their States' foreign policy. For instance, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics reported that:

"Soviet women, who constitute over one third of the total number of deputies in the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and in the Supreme Soviets of the Union Republics, take an active part in the preparation and adoption of decisions on the basic issues of the Soviet Union's foreign policy."

65. Some countries reported affirmative actions to encourage the involvement of women. Yugoslavia referred to the Assembly resolution, adopted in 1978, on the basic socio-economic position and the role of women in the socialist self-management society, which emphasized the importance of ensuring the adequate participation of women in international activities as a whole, in diplomatic, consular and other offices, as well as international relations organs of the republics and autonomous provinces. Jamaica's Five-Year Plan for Women, and the Women's Bureau's educational programme were geared towards educating women for decision-making positions at a high level. Romania indicated that appropriate political and civic preparation had made it possible for women to participate in the discussion of problems of international affairs concerning the development of international co-operation and strengthening of world peace and security.

66. Many countries indicated that there was no differentiation by sex in recruitment of women to diplomatic service and that the opportunities for promotion of women in that field were not discriminatory. Most countries indicated that there were no barriers to the participation of women in the diplomatic service.

67. The information received in reply to the questionnaire indicates that there is an increasing awareness of the participation of women, or of their lack of participation, in foreign affairs. In this connexion, the Ivory Coast noted that the low number of women did not "require this to be given as a percentage, but the essential thing was that the presence of women in delegations should be recognized".

68. It was observed that the upward trend in the recruitment figures for women reflected both a gradual change in community attitudes as well as a general increase in the proportion of women seeking professional employment.

69. From the replies to the questionnaire, it appears that during recent years, a number of measures have been undertaken to attract more qualified women

to the administration of international affairs. For example, the establishment of education and training opportunities for women (Belgium, Botswana, Jamaica and Senegal); special incentives, such as deliberate departmental policies for increased recruitment and increased upward mobility within the civil service, and wider publicity of vacancies (Belgium, Jamaica and Norway). Iraq indicated that all the above-mentioned measures including quotas were effective in increasing the participation of women. Jamaica reported that the participation of women in international co-operation and the strengthening of international peace had increased noticeably over the past five years owing to wide publicity of vacancies and encouragement given to women within the civil service generally and the foreign service specifically.

70. The participation of women in international meetings was noted as an important factor (Egypt, Netherlands and United States). In an attempt to include more women in such delegations, the Netherlands was in the process of elaborating a set of guidelines for the composition of delegations with a view to including more women experts and advisers and to providing for representation of various non-governmental women's organizations in delegations. The Secretary of State of the United States of America emphasized in a memorandum that a special effort was to be made to see that qualified women and members of minority groups were sought out for membership in delegations. The Netherlands reported that the Government had subsidized several women's organizations that were striving for international co-operation and the strengthening of international peace.

71. The importance of national women's organizations, which could be further strengthened and expanded in order to stimulate local networks of women to achieve their economic, social and political needs, was acknowledged. In Egypt, for instance, measures had been taken to establish closer links between women's voluntary organizations and international non-governmental organizations. In Sri Lanka, with the establishment of the Women's Bureau, greater impetus was being given to non-governmental organizations.

72. A number of actions were reported, initiated by women themselves, which had affected the policy of a number of Governments concerning the status of women. For instance, the United States indicated that the actions taken by women to improve career opportunities and eliminate sex discrimination in foreign affairs agencies, had resulted in "more enlightened management policies and reforms to advance and enhance the status of women over the decade of the seventies". Some of the measures described by the United States were those undertaken within the Department of State by the Agency Directorate for International Women's Programmes: "The Directorate gathers and co-ordinates information on women's issues; assesses the implications of this information for United States foreign policy; serves as a link between the United States Government and other institutions, both national and international."

III. OBSTACLES TO CONTINUED PROGRESS IN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION,
INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION AND THE STRENGTHENING OF
INTERNATIONAL PEACE

73. During the first half of the Decade, as women moved at a slightly increasing rate towards fuller participation in political life, international co-operation and the strengthening of international peace, they were confronted by a complex intermesh of obstacles. On the one hand, those obstacles had been generated by the traditional social and cultural attitudes prevalent in the society of which they were a part and prevented women from entering the political arena. On the other hand, those women who tried to overcome such obstacles and move towards equal participation with men, encountered difficulties which arose out of the structure of male-oriented political life.

74. In general, while there were no formal or legal obstacles in the way of fuller participation of women in the two areas under discussion, a variety of other obstacles were identified by numerous countries. Although there was some overlapping between the obstacles pertaining to the two areas, most can be viewed as more relevant to one or the other.

75. Regardless of the obstacles present, there was general concurrence that, because of women's still minimal presence in relation to men, there was a critical need to increase the participation of women in political life, particularly at a national level, and within the sphere of international co-operation and the strengthening of peace.

A. Obstacles to political participation

1. Traditional attitudes

76. The obstacle most consistently singled out was traditional socio-cultural values.

77. There was some difference in the emphasis placed on the responsibility for the attitudes placing women in a subordinate position. In the African region, for instance, there was a tendency towards seeing that as a result of the attitudes of women themselves (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Kenya, for example).

78. Some countries did imply that such attitudes were harboured by both men and women, but indicated that the onus for correcting the imbalance was on women, rather than on society as a whole.

79. There were, however, a few notable exceptions to the tendency of countries in the African region to emphasize women's perceptions alone. Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique were among the few countries that placed considerable emphasis on the need for attitudinal changes in both men and women, while stressing the need for social transformational processes that would bring about changes in such attitudes.

80. The ECE countries as well as a number of ESCAP countries clearly stated that such attitudes were harboured by both men and women, and had the effect of assigning the domain of politics at both the national and international levels to men, women's work being carried out in the home and within the family.

81. In a report presented to the ESCAP regional meeting, ^{2/} the representative of Iran referred in detail to the dual contribution towards women's inferior status in the society and indicated ways in which these attitudes were manifested in both women and men: the first obstacle to be overcome was defined as the prejudices of women. For example, a woman was:

"... led to believe that she was less than a man ... a second-class citizen with fewer responsibilities ... and ... conditioned not to seek exalted values in herself ... The second obstacle faced by Muslim women ... is the prejudice of men who consciously or subconsciously consider themselves as a superior race. They humiliate women, identify them by the term 'weaker sex' and, ironically, praise them for those weaknesses and love them for possessing them."

2. Double workload

82. A practical effect of such traditional attitudes was described by a number of countries. This emerged from what Denmark termed "the existing uneven distribution of responsibilities and tasks in the home, seen in relation to the heavy pressure of work which participation in political life normally involves". As a result, as Sweden pointed out that "when women take up employment, engage in political activities or assume public office, they usually carry a double burden. This in turn, means restriction of the time and strength they can devote to activities outside the home."

83. A number of countries saw the lack of support services, such as child care centres, which would help alleviate this double burden, as an obstacle (Canada, Iceland, New Zealand and Netherlands).

3. Lack of education

84. A number of countries pointed out the importance of education as a means of changing the attitudes that discriminate against women. Turkey reported that a lack of education affected women's involvement. In a similar vein, but more specifically referring to political education, Egypt cited as an obstacle the "lack of systematic civil and political education programmes for women".

85. As Sweden pointed out, in the kind of education provided, problems could arise out of prevailing attitudes which "cause girls and boys to choose different lines at school and seek different types of jobs". Sri Lanka phrased the problem as "sexism in school curricula" which needed immediate attention.

^{2/} Statement by the delegation of Iran to the ESCAP Regional Preparatory Meeting for the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, New Delhi, November 1979.

86. The importance of educating the public on these issues was looked at in some detail by the Philippines:

"It has been observed that Filipino women actively participate in political meetings especially at village level. In spite of this, women opt to elect men as their leaders ... The Filipino women have never attempted to form a united front on any political issue or to rally behind a particular candidate. There is a need for information campaigns to make the women realize the power they can wield through the ballot."

87. Botswana gave lack of funds as the reason for the absence of political education. In contrast, Guinea-Bissau, one of the most economically deprived African countries pursued that form of political education actively.

88. In a detailed reply, Singapore referred to a number of the obstacles indicated above as well as to the problem of a lack of leadership.

4. Eligibility for public office

89. A number of countries analysed in some detail the obstacles that hampered the progress of women in running for elected office. It was reported that many of those obstacles had arisen as a result of women's need to break into what until recently had been the almost exclusive domain of men, and subtle blocking mechanisms were being used, both consciously and unconsciously, in order to maintain that condition. Although progress could be measured, as indicated earlier, it had been slow, and an identification of the way in which the obstacles operated could assist in alleviating the difficulties.

90. Several countries referred to the absence of independent incomes, as a major difficulty confronting women. This was exacerbated by the rising cost of campaigns and the fact that women's incomes were lower than men's (India, New Zealand, Turkey and United States).

91. Another obstacle cited by a number of countries was the lack of experience or education to adequately prepare women to hold public office. Because they had emerged into political life from traditional roles, they could not be regarded as sufficiently experienced (New Zealand). The United States reported that as a result, "women lack the contacts and support systems that help in seeking and retaining public office".

92. Other countries pointed out that the image of women as politicians was not promoted because of traditional attitudes which, as Egypt pointed out, viewed "politics as still largely a male preserve" and considered that "politics require aggressiveness considered unfeminine and women fear jeopardizing their good name". Jamaica also referred to the question of image: "Women are active participants at low levels in political structures, but they lack the confidence in themselves to face the kind of negative abuse that politicians at high level, particularly women, are exposed to."

93. Some replies indicated that such attitudes were reinforced by the press. For instance, Australia pointed out that: "Women candidates tend to be treated by members of the press in a manner which does not always enhance their political standing." India described additional problems linked to women's image, such as "threats of violence, and character assassination".
94. A number of countries indicated different ways in which the political parties themselves had failed to serve the interests of women candidates and hence had limited their chances for participating more fully.
95. First, there was a lack of general encouragement. As Jamaica pointed out:
- "Men do not encourage women to compete with them in political activities misunderstanding, as they do, the role of women in the developmental process. Further, those women who fully participate in public life have to be better than the norm in order to gain full acceptance by the society."
96. On the other hand, Kenya saw the problem as emanating from women rather than men: "Absence of interest among leading potential and active women politicians in canvassing for unified political pressure groups made up of women".
97. In many countries there is a variety of difficulties that are part of the way in which the system of selecting candidates operates. A number of the obstacles described by Australia, referred to this:
- "Women tend not to be incorporated into the informal networks men utilize, which are important in pre-selection procedure for political parties. These networks frequently have their origins in secondary and tertiary educational institutions (e.g., single-sex schools) to which women are denied entry.
- "Women are often disadvantaged in their entry into politics because older male politicians are reluctant to act for a female in the role of political 'mentor' or 'patron', a role which has so often been useful to emerging male candidates.
- "The common misconception that women are reluctant to vote for other women has been used by parties as an excuse not to encourage the candidature of women."
98. In addition, both Canada and New Zealand pointed out that parties seldom placed their women candidates in winnable seats, although, as the latter stated: "Women candidates have in several cases shown themselves to be hard working and appealing to the electorate, sometimes altering or reversing voting trends against their party as a whole." Despite this, women are generally discouraged from taking on leadership roles. As Australia indicated, "Although some changes have occurred, women still play auxiliary roles in political parties, such as fund-raising and distributing leaflets, and are not always encouraged to move away from supportive to leading roles." This can be connected to a woman's double workload if she takes on a career outside the home.

99. Canada articulated a view implicit in a number of replies: "Such community and voluntary activities are less of a problem because of more flexibility in time and being closer to home, i.e., women can combine their responsibilities."

B. Obstacles to international co-operation and the strengthening of international peace

100. Several countries stated that there were no major obstacles to such participation of women; others specified that there were no formal/legal or direct obstacles. In Cuba, there were no obstacles to the participation of Cuban women in international co-operation and the strengthening of peace since the Government had promoted all those efforts among the people and was supporting the development of activities of international solidarity in favour of peace. However, most Governments emphasized that the major obstacles which hampered women's advancement in all fields of society also applied to that area.

101. In this connexion, the following obstacles were identified: social, cultural and traditional values which prevented women's participation in public life and international co-operation (Colombia, Mali, Senegal, Singapore, Spain, Sri Lanka and Togo); traditional attitudes due to which women bore the main family responsibilities (Austria, Canada, Honduras, Iceland, India, Mali, Togo, Singapore and Sweden); lack of facilities, such as child care and maternity leave, which forced women to withdraw at an early stage from a demanding career in international affairs (Iceland and Netherlands); stereotypical view of women (United States); lack of funds for travelling abroad to attend international meetings dealing with the issues of international co-operation and peace was cited as a specific obstacle to the greater participation of women (Botswana and Kenya).

102. The link between the participation of women in international co-operation and the strengthening of international peace and the level of their representation in various sectors of the national economy was recognized. For instance, Nepal stated that the role of women of Nepal in international co-operation and peace was:

"... hardly satisfactory. This is due to their low level of representation in the various sectors of national economy. This is largely due to the backward state of women, education and appropriate training opportunities which is responsible for low-level employment. But, since IWY 1975, some of the positive steps have been taken in this direction so that an increasing number of women may get opportunities to educate and train themselves."

103. In some instances, Governments reported a general lack of education and appropriate training opportunities for women (Honduras, Kenya, Mali, Nepal and Togo); the one-sidedness in the educational systems which enhanced rather than eliminated stereotyped roles for women and men (Netherlands); the lack of experience in the field and the lack of international outlook among the youth in international affairs especially in rural areas, as well as language barriers (Egypt); and a very small percentage of women in tertiary education (Ireland).

104. It was noted that issues relating to international co-operation and peace had been traditionally the exclusive preserve of men (Honduras and Paraguay), and that women suffered from prejudices in that field (Senegal and Togo). It was pointed out in two replies that the traditions of the countries were those of equality, but that as far as diplomatic representation in other countries was concerned, it was sometimes deemed inappropriate or difficult to utilize women as diplomatic representatives (Belgium and Uruguay).

105. The lack of courage and ambition which deterred women from applying for posts related to international affairs was mentioned in one instance (Netherlands) and, in another, the lack of and thus the need for greater communication among women and men, and between women across national boundaries and in professional and other organizations (United States).

IV. PRIORITIES AND TARGETS FOR 1979-1985

106. The most commonly cited priority was the need for increasing the education of women, a priority which took a number of forms. For instance, the Philippines specifically addressed itself to the problem of detrimental attitudes in its plans to remove sexism from the school curriculum. The reduction of illiteracy and the education of women in their political rights were seen as important by a number of countries. Nepal stated that since education and training constituted two main ingredients for the advancement of women, its new Education Plan was giving priority to the education and training of women.

107. In addition, various education campaigns directed towards raising awareness of the need for women to play a fuller role were highlighted by a number of countries (Canada, Germany, Federal Republic of, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Paraguay).

108. Cuba, for instance, planned to continue its efforts directed towards increasing the level of education of women and to conduct intensive education and information campaigns to eliminate prejudice. In addition, ideological efforts were being carried out by the Government, the party and mass organizations for the education of children and youth, making use of the mass communication media.

109. With regard to international co-operation and peace, specific areas were defined. For instance, plans were identified to create a greater awareness of the value of international co-operation and peace for human development and progress, to train children and youth to develop an international outlook and to grasp the value of international co-operation and peace (Cuba and Egypt). In addition, the need was expressed for opening up more channels of communication with the outside world and for making use of the mass communication media with a view to continuing the education of women in the principles of international solidarity and the struggle for peace (Cuba and Egypt). An increase in the plans for interchange with national organizations of different countries in favour of international co-operation and the struggle for peace was also foreseen.

110. Only a few countries reported the need for specific training to equip women with the necessary skills to enable them to enter political life at both national and international levels. Canada, for example, stressed the need for more appropriate technology resources and more training for skills that would enable women to earn income.
111. Some countries emphasized the need to train and employ more women for a career in the foreign service (Netherlands, Norway, Paraguay and Philippines).
112. While not detailing specific training programmes, a number of countries reported generally on the need for campaigns to be conducted towards increasing the number of women holding public office. For instance, Sierra Leone planned "more effective campaigns to send more women to Parliament and to hold higher positions in the Civil Service, Judiciary, National Commission, Boards and Corporations".
113. A number of Governments emphasized the need to ensure greater opportunities for women in the political field, both national and international, and the need for encouraging women to participate in greater numbers.
114. Several countries considered it important to ensure that more women were able to hold positions within both the Government and the diplomatic service. The Philippines, for instance, expressed the view that it was necessary to "ensure objectivity in recruitment and promotion of deserving women officers and employees; assign competent women employees to responsible and sensitive positions". Cuba reported that it would be continuing current efforts to obtain more positions for women at all levels of Government. The Netherlands gave priority to the increased employment of women by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Development Co-operation as well as increased participation of women in international meetings. (This would include enabling women from developing countries to attend such international meetings.)
115. A number of countries stressed the importance of women's greater participation in policy-making decisions.
116. In delineating long-term goals, the importance of ongoing study and research into those questions was stressed by several Governments. For example, studies of possibilities for removing the obstacles which hinder women from participating in top government jobs (Netherlands). In addition, the Netherlands Government recognized the need to stimulate research on women's participation in international co-operation. Egypt reported that study and research had been taken up by the National Commission for Women which had "identified the area of women's political participation ... as a priority for such attention".
117. A number of countries recognized the importance of the role of national women's organizations in promoting women's participation in national and international political life.
118. Towards that end, Sierra Leone planned to establish both a women's bureau and a national commission for women before the end of the Decade. Under a new

party system in Egypt, each party had a special section for women which was "expected to accelerate women's training in the democratic political process". Kenya anticipated that government support "for women's organizations will speed up the awakening of women to their political needs during the latter part of the Decade". The Philippines also planned to encourage organized women's groups "to participate actively in referenda, plebiscites, elections (local and national) to ensure women's participation in government processes". New Zealand also viewed the role of women's organizations as important and expressed the hope that women's equal participation could be achieved at least by the end of the Decade.

119. Iraq was one of the few countries to state that the political participation of women could only be increased as part of an over-all change in the structure of the society and therefore linked its priorities to that total process. "Increasing women's participation in Iraq cannot come as a result of a single measure or group of measures. It comes over time through the active and serious participation of the political leadership which aims at creating radical and revolutionary progressive changes in all spheres of social life." .
