

UN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION  
FOR WESTERN ASIA

2 JAN 1995

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Distr.  
LIMITED  
E/ESCWA/SD/1994/WG.3-WOM/3  
23 October 1994  
ENGLISH  
ORIGINAL: ARABIC

ARAB REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING  
FOR THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE  
ON WOMEN, BEIJING 1995  
PEACE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF ARAB WOMEN  
Amman, Jordan, 6-10 November 1994



الاجتماع العربي الاقليمي التحضيري  
للمؤتمر العالمي الرابع للمرأة، بيجينغ ١٩٩٥  
السلام للنهوض بالمرأة العربية  
عمان، الأردن، ٦-١٠ تشرين الثاني/نوفمبر ١٩٩٤

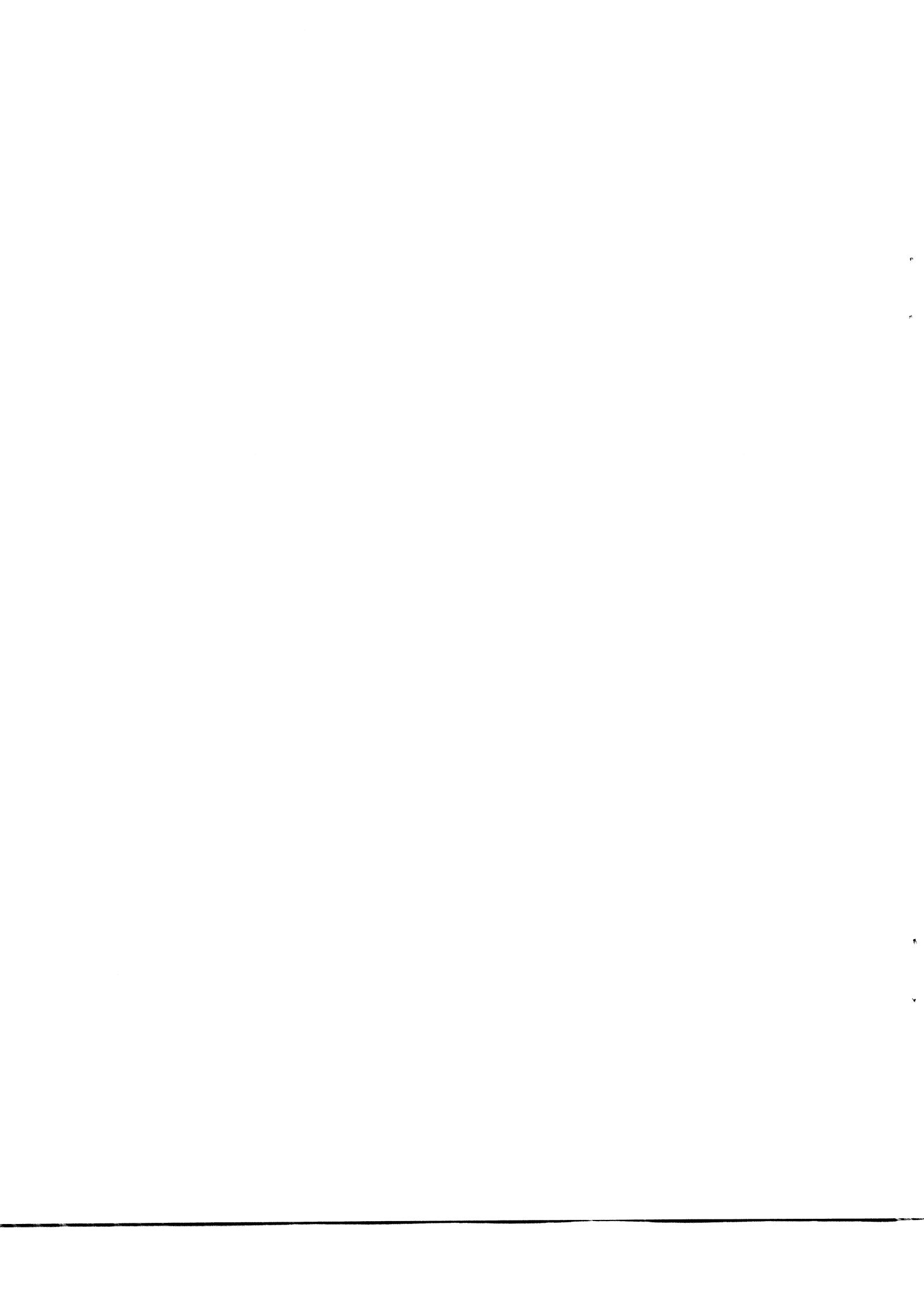
## REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRESS ACHIEVED FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF ARAB WOMEN IN THE LIGHT OF THE NAIROBI FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIES

Draft

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## *Background*

1. Pursuant to Commission on the Status of Women resolution 37/7 on the preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, to be held in Beijing, and Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) resolution 188 (XVI) of 2 September 1992 whereby the secretariat of ESCWA was assigned the task of convening during 1994 a regional preparatory meeting for the Fourth World Conference on Women, and in accordance with the programme of work for the biennium 1994-1995, the Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Fourth World Conference on Women was held in Amman from 6 to 10 November 1994. The Meeting consisted of two successive parts: the Expert Group Meeting on the Regional Plan of Action for Arab Women, and the High-level Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Peace for the Advancement of Arab Women to adopt the Regional Plan of Action.
2. ESCWA invited the secretariat of the League of Arab States to participate in the convening of this preparatory meeting so as to ensure that all Arab States participated in its deliberations. The meeting was held under the patronage of Her Royal Highness Basma Bint Talal, President of the Jordanian National Committee for Women. The Arab Women Center for Training and Research (CAWTAR) also took part in the preparations for this meeting. The main purpose of inviting all the member States of the League of Arab States, including non-ESCWA member states, was to provide them with an opportunity to discuss women's issues in the Arab region as Arab women have common characteristics and concerns even though each country has its own peculiarities, and to reconcile points of view in order to take a common stand during the deliberations of the World Conference.
3. In preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women, ESCWA conducted, with the support of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), visits to all but one of its member States with the aim of assisting the countries which had not already done so to establish joint national committees, made up of official bodies and non-governmental organizations. ESCWA also provided them with information on the required format and content of the country reports which evaluate the status of Arab women in the member States in the light of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000 so as to ensure that the country reports of the member States were consistent with the general design adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women. ESCWA also provided technical advice to member States in finalizing their national plans, taking into account the conclusions reached in the country reports.
4. This report is a part of the tasks required for the Beijing Conference and was drafted on the basis of the country reports of ESCWA member States, as the General Assembly has officially entrusted the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) with the preparation of the regional report of Africa, which includes African Arab countries which are members of ECA. Souheil Lotfi Ali, an adviser at the National Center for Social and Criminological Research, prepared the preliminary draft of the report, which the ESCWA secretariat then finalized. This report will be discussed during the first part of the Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting, that is, during the expert group meeting, and amendments will be introduced following the preparatory meeting. The report includes as much information from the country reports as the conditions of work and the size of the report permit. It should be mentioned that national meetings and workshops were still being held at the end of September 1994, leaving insufficient time to prepare the document. Therefore, it was agreed that the report should be presented as a draft to be amended in the light of the remarks which will be made during the discussion of the document.
5. Mention should also be made of the serious and intensive work undertaken by national committees to prepare the country reports. The process of compiling information according to the indicators adopted by the United Nations Centre for Women was arduous and required intensive efforts by those preparing the different parts of the reports. The reports contain good information as far as quantity and quality are concerned. In this respect, the following observations can be made:

(a) Most country reports were submitted late because of the vast amount of work which national committees had to perform in a short period of time, especially in view of the fact that some national committees were established only a few months before;

(b) Many reports did not contain adequate answers to the questions posed, and some questions were even left unanswered, which created gaps in the information provided;

(c) Most reports were descriptive and did not include an analysis of the information compiled, which can be used in the regional document and through which one can become acquainted with the official point of view;

(d) Most reports were characterized by a tendency to put forward mechanisms in the form of speculative recommendations unrelated to the reality of women on the local and national levels;

(e) Many reports did not indicate clearly the policies, programmes and projects being implemented, nor did they indicate the human, financial and material resources available. They also neglected to mention the social category and needs of the beneficiaries and their number, as well as the role of the media;

(f) The terms used in many reports were not defined, which rendered comparisons between the countries of the region difficult;

(g) Many reports contained inconsistent figures and statistical gaps which made it difficult to analyse the information and draw conclusions.

## INTRODUCTION

6. This report is intended to help enhance a common understanding of Arab women's issues, taking into consideration the general framework of the premises of national committees and the programme of work of the organizers of this preparatory meeting, which can be summarized as follows:

(a) The issue under consideration is, in essence, a social issue: national and Arab development and the participation of one half of society in the development process;

(b) Women's issues usually highlight political, social and economic changes that Arab societies have undergone, as various events have had a clear impact on the status of Arab women, who have their own peculiarities within the general framework of Arab society with its accumulated historical connotations;

(c) At this stage, Arab societies are governed by a combination of values, including the concepts of the extended and the nuclear family as well as the concept of family, tribal and clan relations in addition to the notions of citizenship, civil society and the modern State. All of this leads to transient disorder and confusion in values and relationships;

(d) Issues concerning Arab women should be presented in terms of the value system of Arab society according to which women and men are brothers and sisters. The existing problem cannot be reduced to a conflict between men and women; it is, rather, a problem of sharing responsibilities between men and women, especially under the harsh economic conditions which compel women to be both productive and reproductive;

(e) The needs of Arab women extend beyond the recommendations adopted by international conventions which deal with the satisfaction of women's essential needs;

(f) Arab countries are facing at this stage the birth of a new economic and cultural world order which has a considerable effect on their economies and, more importantly, promotes new cultural and social values consistent with its economic ambitions on the international level. The international nature of the economy will inevitably lead to the internationalization of values, which will facilitate the process of cultural and economic penetration;

(g) Currently, there are some basic assumptions in the world, the most important of which is the need to focus on the role of women within the framework of the concepts of equality, development and peace. The present world trend is to focus on the evaluation of the status of women and on the legislation and social action which address the role of women and their social status. The current period is also characterized by efforts to integrate women's programmes into sustainable development plans, including human development. The most important of those assumptions include the following:

- (i) Women are a social product: they are the result of material and social inputs on the one hand, and material and social outputs on the other. Therefore, quantitative and qualitative differences in the status of women on the national and regional level should be taken into account, and it should be stressed that the geographical framework of the report is the macro level and not the national one;
- (ii) Arab societies are poor in general in spite of the wealth enjoyed by some of them as a result of their oil reserves; they are also still traditional in spite of the rapid changes which they have undergone;

- (iii) A balance is needed between the two ways of viewing women: as productive persons and as human beings. Women should be viewed as individuals in themselves and as part of society as well;
  - (iv) The status of Arab women is affected by Islamic legislation and its varied interpretations;
  - (v) The differences between men and women are not restricted to the biological dimension as there are also social and cultural dimensions; social conditions and convictions derived from society's need for women are the main determinants of trends with respect to the importance and priorities of women;
- (h) Efforts are needed to resist and abandon the negative stereotypes of Arab women as an oppressed, weak and helpless group;
- (i) It is necessary to understand the importance of determining the priorities related to Arab women in the context of development activities and commitment to implement the work programme;
- (j) Social development programmes must be coordinated in the Arab region in general, especially those relating to the advancement of Arab women, in the light of the conditions, cultural setting and social texture of each country.



# I. REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT ON THE NATIONAL LEVEL

## A. THE SITUATION IN THE EARLY 1980S

7. Women's issues in general reflect the political, cultural and social changes in Arab society. These changes should be viewed within the context of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000, paragraph 53 of which calls for encouraging social and economic changes that allow women to participate in all sectors of activity. The changes should also be viewed in the context of the changes in the form and content of the special status of Arab women within the overall historical context of Arab society. This status varies from one Arab country to another, from rural to urban to Bedouin areas.

8. Most Arab Governments and decision makers have made efforts to improve the situation of Arab women. Governments have sought to achieve that goal by enacting social legislation which would support the role and the position of women as described below.

9. With respect to supporting women's participation in politics, the President of the **Arab Republic of Egypt** issued several legislative decrees, the most important of which were Law No. 21 of 1979 which reserved 30 seats for women in the People's Assembly (this number may increase according to election results) and Law No. 43 of 1979 on reserving seats for women in all People's Assemblies and city and village councils, the seats thus reserved representing 10 to 20 per cent of the total number of seats in those bodies. The laws issued in 1979 relating to the participation of women in representative and local councils were abrogated by decisions of the People's Assembly in 1984 on the grounds that reserving seats for women violated the principle of equality on the basis of sex.

10. In the **Syrian Arab Republic**, the constitution and the constitution of the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party called for legislation which would support the participation of Syrian women in politics. From the start of the social revolution to the beginning of the 1980s. Syrian women have made political in the People's Assembly and local councils and Executive Offices.

11. The Constitution of the (former) People's Democratic Republic of Yemen<sup>1</sup> granted women in 1978 the same rights and duties as men, which allowed participation of women in the southern districts in: (a) elections for representative councils and the Higher People's Assembly; (b) the ruling party (in the first Congress of the party held in 1978, six women were elected); (c) local councils established in 1983 (23 women out of 322 members); (d) the Youth Federation, where the total number of female members at the highest level was 8 out of 65. In accordance with the National Charter, which gave women the right to vote, run for office and have access to the highest political body, the Permanent Committee, women reached the People's Congress through their participation in political parties.

12. In general, it can be said that the participation of Arab women in decision-making at the beginning of the 1980s was very limited because of the reluctance of Governments to challenge traditions and customs or because women were not aware of the rights granted to them in addition to their lack of practice in exercising those rights. As a result, women were not mature enough politically to participate in politics or occupy leading political posts. Involvement of women in political activity was more for show than actual involvement as women often withdrew from the political field once they became engaged or married.

13. With respect to personal status laws, some Arab countries have striven to amend personal status laws. In **Egypt**, Law No. 44 of 1979 was promulgated to amend some provisions in personal status laws, and it

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<sup>1</sup> The two parts of Yemen were unified in 1990 into the Republic of Yemen.

gave women new guarantees, especially with respect to polygamy, divorce, custody of children and support. However, the high constitutional court abrogated that law in May 1985 on the grounds that the decision taken in 1979 was unconstitutional. However, the State presented the law again to the People's Assembly for adoption that same year, and thus the new decision became constitutional and remains in force. In **Yemen**, the family law was promulgated in 1974 in the southern districts in favour of women. Likewise, Law No. 23 was promulgated in the northern districts and is not different from the personal status code which was promulgated by a Presidential decree after the unification of the two parts of Yemen in 1990.

14. As far as economic activity is concerned, although statistical indicators did not give an accurate picture of the contribution of women to the various activities, it can be said that women's participation at the beginning of the 1980s was limited in comparison with men's participation. In **Egypt**, (a) the number of women working in the civil service represented only 5.7 per cent of the total workforce in that field. The proportion of women holding executive posts was about 12 per cent; (b) the proportion of women employers owning business firms was 5.5 per cent; (c) in the formal sector, the rate of women's participation in economic activity in 1980 reached 6.8 per cent; (d) the unemployment rate among women in 1984 was 17.7 per cent; (e) the share of women in professional training was about 49.2 per cent of the total number of trainees at the beginning of the 1980s. In the **Syrian Arab Republic**, the proportion of women working in the civil service in 1982 was about 19.6 per cent of the total number of civil servants. The rate of participation of women (over 15 years of age) in economic activity in the **United Arab Emirates** was 5.1 per cent in 1980 and almost doubled in 1985, reaching 9.6 per cent of the economically active population. The number of women working in the civil service was higher than those working in the private sector as women represented about 9.3 per cent of the total number of civil servants in 1980 and 11.8 per cent in 1985. In **Kuwait**, censuses revealed that the total number of women in the workforce was about 18 per cent and that the majority of women were in scientific and technical professions representing 51.7 per cent of the total number of women, the proportion of women in some clerical professions reached 27 per cent. Statistical data for 1980 also point to a significant decrease in the number of Kuwaiti women in business management. In **Qatar**, statistical data reveal that the number of working women rose from 7 per cent in 1982 to 11 per cent in 1986. However, in spite of these positive changes, the rate of participation of women nationals of Qatar in the workforce is still modest. In **Oman** and **Yemen**, it turned out that despite the presence of women in numerous governmental fields and in the private sector, women were still occupying medium-level posts while men were occupying the highest administrative posts.

15. The changes which have occurred in the participation of women in economic activity since the beginning of the 1980s were quantitative only and did not include quality. The problem of Arab women is that the social changes which have affected their role and social status have not led to their being considered as full-fledged citizens with rights and duties, as it was considered that the main purpose of women's work was solely to secure additional income to raise the family's living standard. The other goal of women's work as mature persons whose position in society requires them to participate in the various fields of activity and gives them rights as citizens was neglected. The **United Arab Emirates** report illustrates this point clearly by pointing out that the increase in the number of women entering the labour market was not commensurate with the rapid economic development of the country or with the substantial school enrolment for females.

16. In the field of education, statistics on **Egypt** indicate high illiteracy rates among women during the second half of the 1970s, as 72.5 per cent of all Egyptian women were illiterate in 1976. However, the statistics for 1980 show that female enrolment rates at the primary level did not exceed 57.5 per cent in 1980. The proportion of female graduates from scientific colleges was about 26 per cent.

17. In the **Syrian Arab Republic**, statistics indicate that female enrolment rates in primary schools at the beginning of the 1980s were 42 per cent at the primary level, 39 per cent at the preparatory level, 30 per cent at the secondary level and 63 per cent at the secondary level. At the university level, women represented

about 26.12 per cent of all university students. Illiteracy rates were around 38 per cent of which 55 per cent were women.

18. In **Kuwait**, statistical data from the 1980 census indicate that illiteracy rates among women reached 38.4 per cent; this increase was due to the increase in illiteracy rates among those over 40 as educational opportunities were not provided for women before 1957, the year that Kuwait became independent. But with the beginning of the progress in education which began in 1957, a plan to eradicate illiteracy among both males and females was drawn up, and its implementation began in 1958. With respect to women's education, the statistics of 1980 point out that the proportion of females who obtained primary and secondary education certificates represented 37 per cent of the total number in those over 10. The proportion of girls who had obtained a secondary education certificate was 7.7 per cent, while the proportion of females who had obtained certificates higher than the secondary was 2.5 per cent and the proportion of university graduates was 2.7 per cent. Although the rates of education among women are low in comparison with those of men, the progress in the educational level of women is considered a significant achievement in the light of the pressures of customs and traditions.

19. In the **United Arab Emirates**, illiteracy and adult education were considered the most important issues and received particular attention. Statistics show that illiteracy rates among women at the beginning of the 1980s declined from 37.3 per cent to 27.5 per cent while the number of women in illiteracy classes was higher than that of men, which shows the interest of illiterate women in joining literacy centres. Moreover, the number of female students in the academic year 1984-1985 increased by 56.9 per cent as compared with the academic year 1980-1981, while the number of girls' schools increased by 38.3 per cent. The rate of increase in the number of students was higher among females than among males at all levels, especially the secondary level. The proportion of females in the total number of pupils enrolled in the academic year 1984-1985 was about 47 per cent. The number of female university students increased by about 208.3 per cent from the academic year 1980-1981 to the academic year 1984-1985.

20. In **Qatar**, according to the 1986 population census, the rate of illiteracy among those over 10 years of age was 22.3 per cent, and women represented 29.1 per cent of the total number of illiterates. The proportion of literate women was 23.9 per cent, and the proportion of female students who had obtained primary, preparatory and secondary education certificates represented 41 per cent of all women. The proportion of women who had managed to continue their education (whether undergraduate or post-graduate studies) was 5.9 per cent. A comparison of the percentage of educated females with that of their male counterparts shows that the educational situation of women approximates that of men, as the proportion of students who had obtained a certificate after completing four years of secondary school was about 13 per cent for both sexes, and the proportion of students who had obtained the certificate of secondary education was about 9 per cent for both sexes as well. The proportion of females who pursued post-graduate studies after completing their secondary education was 6 per cent as compared with 7.6 per cent.

21. In **Oman**, the economic and social changes which accompanied development led to the expansion of education as a whole. Education policies are based on the principle of equal opportunity for males and females in all fields and levels of education and training on both official and non-official levels. As the basis of education is expanding, all female students now complete their education and are also following undergraduate studies in various disciplines.

22. In **Yemen**, illiteracy rates among women are high in spite of the efforts by the Government to provide educational opportunities in all provinces of the country. The southern provinces were favoured during the period 1980-1984, with a comprehensive programme for adult education and the eradication of illiteracy. During the 1980s, schools and technical institutes were built in all districts of the country in both urban and rural areas, women enrolled in institutes for training, business, secretarial skills and fine arts. After the

opening of Aden and Sana'a universities in 1970, women enrolled for university education in the various colleges of those two universities.

23. The country reports presented health care indicators in different ways. **Egypt** used life expectancy at birth for women, which was 52 years in 1980. The **Syrian Arab Republic** stated that child mortality rates were 63.38 per cent for males and 50.76 per cent for females, and that the number of health centres had reached 355 in 1980. It pointed out that expansionist Israeli settlement projects prevented the implementation of further health projects, especially for women. **Kuwait** indicated that intensified efforts had been made during the 1960s and 1970s to provide preventive and curative health care and that that had been facilitated by the abundance of oil revenues which enabled citizens, both men and women, to enjoy general and specialized health services free of charge. In **Oman**, the health ministry built mother and child health care centres at the beginning of the 1980s in all regions of the country to launch vaccination campaigns against contagious diseases and provide treatment and check-up services for pregnant women. The number of women who benefited from those services increased by about 120 per cent during the period 1980-1984. The **United Arab Emirates** mentioned several indicators of women's share of health care during the period 1980-1985, the most important of which were the decline in infant mortality rates from 80 per 1000 to 32 per 1000 during that period and the decline in mortality rates of children under five years of age from 65 per 1000 to 35 per 1000 during the same period. Moreover, life expectancy for women increased from 67.5 years to 72.5 years during the same period. The number of mother and child health care centres increased from 41 in 1980 to 58 in 1985, and the average annual increase in the number of mothers visiting those centres was about 29.7 per cent. The proportion of beds reserved for women increased during the same period from 16 per cent to 20.8 per cent of the total number of hospital beds. In spite of all this, there is inadequate awareness of preventive health, lack of coordination between the media and health education bodies, absence of home visits to pregnant women by health workers and lack of comprehensive vaccination against diseases for male and female children. In **Yemen**, life expectancy for women was 40 years in 1980, and the country report indicated that the State should devote more attention to health services.

## B. THE CHANGES SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE 1980S

### 1. *Participation in politics and decision-making on all levels*

24. In the light of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000, especially with respect to participation in decision making as expressed in paragraphs 55 and 86-91, and considering participation as depending on respect for the social rights of citizens and their right to express their opinions in the relevant institutions in society by participating directly and indirectly in the decision-making and policy-making process of society, the following may be observed concerning the status of women in some Arab countries:

(a) There is disparity in women's participation in legislative bodies and fluctuation in their participation as a result of: (i) amendments introduced into certain pieces of legislation; or (ii) the method of appointing women in parliament to ensure their political participation;

(b) The impact of the political role of women in some States is limited for objective reasons related to the type and special nature of the political challenges and problems in those States;

(c) There is a lack of funding sources to support women's electoral campaigns;

(d) Women lack political experience and depend on men in political decision making;

(e) The character of women's participation is symbolic and formal;

(f) In some Arab countries women cannot exercise their political rights.

25. In this context, it can be mentioned that despite the fact that the constitutions and legislation of some Arab countries recognize the political rights of women and forbid discrimination between women and men in rights and duties, the degree of women's participation in positions of power and decision making in accordance with United Nations indicators differs from one country to another as described below.

(a) *Participation of women in parliaments and assemblies*

26. In **Egypt**, equality in political rights for women was achieved in 1956. Their participation in Parliament (the People's Assembly and the *Shura* [Consultative] Council) has varied since the 1980s. Law No. 38 of 1972, as amended by Law No. 21 of 1979, reserved 30 seats for women in the People's Assembly, with the possibility of increasing that number according to election results. Consequently, the rate of female participation in the People's Assembly increased during the first half of the 1980s. In 1984, however, decision No. 293 was taken according to Article 24, cancelling all seats previously reserved for women and requiring them to be candidates for election without having seats secured for them. This led to a decrease in the rate of participation of women in the People's Assembly from 9 per cent in 1979 to 2.2 per cent in 1991. On the other hand, the representation of women in the Shura Council rose from 3.3 per cent in 1980 to 4.7 per cent in 1992. However, all the women participating in the Shura Council had been designated by the Government and were not elected members of the Council.

27. In the **Syrian Arab Republic**, women have made political achievements since the beginning of the social revolution, representing 6.6 per cent of all members in the People's Assembly during the third legislative term. That rate increased to 8.2 per cent during the fourth legislative term and to 8.6 per cent during the fifth legislative term in 1990.

28. In **Lebanon**, since the 1972 elections the Parliament remained unchanged for several legislative terms until 1991 and included no women. By 1991, the Parliament had lost many of its members, mainly because of death, and two replacements had been designated, including one woman who took her husband's seat, bringing the rate of representation of women in Parliament to 1 per cent.

29. As for **Jordan**, despite the determination of the Government to grant women their political rights according to the law of 1974 which amended the law governing election to Parliament which had given women the right to vote and run for office, their effect in the spheres of authority and decision-making remained limited. The underlying cause might be the political situation in the region. Indeed, only partial elections were held in 1984, and women were not encouraged to take part in them owing to their lack of electoral experience. Prior to parliamentary elections in 1979, the 75-member National Advisory Council (NAC) was established pursuant to Law No. 17 of 1978 in order to assist the Government in legislative matters. Three women were nominated to the NAC during the first term (1978-1980) and four in the second (1980-1982) and third (1982-1984) terms. In the 1989 elections, 12 women were candidates for Parliament, but none was successful because (a) the society would hardly accept to see women assume political jobs, (b) lack of funds for election campaigns as well as (c) lack of experience of women in the political field and (d) their tendency to be influenced by the man's decision in choosing their candidates. Furthermore, there were no organized women's institutions capable of sponsoring or supporting female candidates. In the 1993 elections, the number of female candidates dropped to three, one of whom succeeded in becoming one of the 80 members in Parliament. In the Council of Notables (the Upper House), which comprises 40 members, only one woman was nominated in 1989 and two women in 1993.

30. The information contained in the country reports showed that some Gulf countries made no mention of the participation of women in political life. The report of **Kuwait** only indicated that the constitution of the State of Kuwait did not differ from other constitutions in emphasizing the principle of equality of rights and duties between men and women. In its article 29 it stated that "all are equal before the law in their duties and their right to live in human without discrimination based on sex, race, language or religion." According to the report of the **United Arab Emirates**, no women had ever worked in politics, while the report of **Oman** stated that the country had no parliamentary system but rather a Shura council comprising members of both sexes.

31. In **Iraq**, the National Council Law No. 55 of 1980 guarantees equality in candidature and election. The rate of representation of women was around 13.2 per cent in 1985 and then dropped to 10.8 per cent in 1990. As for the autonomous region of Kurdistan, the proportion of women in the Legislative Council membership was 4 per cent.

32. In the **Republic of Yemen**, the participation of women was limited to the southern provinces in their first People's Assembly, and in the elected People's Assemblies of 1978 and 1986. It is worth noting that the women elected were on the sole electoral list of the ruling party. In the northern provinces, women were prevented from being candidates in the People's Assembly elections in 1978 and were only allowed to vote. According to statistical data published by the High Election Committee of 1993, only 16 per cent of all the women who had the right to vote cast their ballots, and two women were elected to the 300-member assembly. In general, the participation of women in Parliament was a symbolic one, whether before or after unification.

33. As for **Palestine**, women have participated in political life since the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as members of the Palestinian National Council (PNC), which acts as a parliament for the Palestinian people, although their proportion was minimal (not exceeding 2 per cent). In 1980, during the 15th term of the PNC, women managed to take 25 seats in the PNC and the General Federation of Palestinian Women started choosing its representatives, who occupied more than half of the seats reserved for women. The rest of the seats were filled by representatives of other institutions, agencies and departments. Thus, the proportion of women reached 9 per cent of the approximately 280 members of the PNC in 1980. The number of female members in the PNC increased to 45 in 1986 and 43 in 1992, bringing the ratio of female members to male members to 1:10.

34. In the **Sudan**, the progress in the political participation of women could be seen in their representation in Parliament, where they increased from 11 to 25 women against 300 men during the period 1992-1994. In **Somalia**, there was one woman against 76 men.

(b) *Participation in Government*

35. The country reports indicated the following:

(a) A relatively low representation of women in high leadership posts and their absence at that level in some Arab countries;

(b) A limited effect by women on high-level decision-making;

(c) The highest proportion of women in leadership posts was concentrated in the areas of education, culture and social affairs;

(d) The access of some women in certain Arab countries to the levels of Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Deputy Minister through promotion, but only for financial benefits with no involvement in the decision-making process;

(e) Difficulties in receiving accurate statistical data on the situation of women in high-level posts owing to the lack of a clear standard definition for high-level posts in the countries concerned.

36. The following is a review of the participation of Arab women in Government.

37. In **Egypt**, large numbers of women worked in the public sector, which provided greater opportunities for equal rights and duties than the private sector. The first female minister was appointed in 1960, and two women were appointed in the latest cabinet reshuffle in 1993. Thus, women working in the government sector represented 14.4 per cent of total government staff in 1980, rising to 30 per cent in 1992. Despite this relative increase, however, the representation of women in high-level and leadership posts was low since it did not exceed 5.7 per cent in 1980, though it doubled in 1992 to reach 11.8 per cent of the total staff in high-level posts such as First Under-Secretary, Under-Secretary and Director-General. The rate of participation of women in government leadership positions was much higher than in the public sector as a whole, with only 7.8 per cent of the total staff at those positions in 1992.

38. In the **Syrian Arab Republic**, the first female minister was appointed in 1976 as Minister of Culture. Another woman was appointed as Minister of Higher Education in 1992, in addition to the presence of a woman Assistant to the Minister of Health. The country report indicated that only a small number of women worked as directors of state departments, although their proportion was higher as senior directors in the areas of education, culture and social affairs. That proportion decreased partly because the higher strata among women preferred to work in the private sector, because of higher economic gains and better opportunities for quick promotion, or in other fields, to accommodate family concerns.

39. In **Lebanon**, women were totally absent from executive authority and therefore had no role in political decision-making. No woman had ever been appointed Minister or President of the Republic or Prime Minister in Lebanon's history. Although the number of ministers ranged between 10 in 1954 and 30 in later years, no woman had ever been designated at that position. Only one woman was appointed Director-General in the Ministry of Social Affairs for the first time in 1993.

40. **Jordan** saw its first female minister in 1979. She was Minister of Social Development and was among 23 ministers. In 1984 another woman became Minister of Information out of 25 ministers. During the period 1985-1992, no woman had been appointed minister in the six consecutive cabinets, and in 1993 a woman was appointed as Minister of Industry and Trade out of 29 ministers. Despite the fact that the Constitution granted women the right to assume public office based on their competence and qualifications, the majority of those offices were not of a leadership nature. Indeed, in 1992, only 8.5 per cent were directors and 10 per cent were chiefs of section, making the participation of women and their contribution in decision-making very limited and mostly confined to some ministries in the social sector. The ratio of female directors to male directors at the level of General Secretary in public institutions was 1:64 in 1992. Since 1993, two women had been appointed for the first time at the level of General Secretary.

41. The country report of **Kuwait** contained an analytical description of the status of women within the workforce and the efforts of the Government to integrate women into the development process. However, the report gave no details on the situation of women in high-level government positions. It only mentioned that the progressive introduction of women into the leadership and authority spheres went according to the nature of the Kuwaiti society itself and the progression of the role of women and their participation in the

development of their communities. The status of women improved, allowing them to accede to all positions and levels including those of Under-Secretary and Director-General in 1994.

42. In the **United Arab Emirates**, the country report stated that during the period 1971-1993, women had managed to occupy around 27.1 per cent of high-level administrative posts.

43. The country report of the **Sultanate of Oman** indicated that in 1990 one woman was appointed Under-Secretary in the Ministry of Development and Statistics Affairs. The number of women at the level of Director rose from 22 in 1980-1985 to 266 in 1990.

44. In **Iraq**, the country report contained contradictory figures on the percentage of women in the highest administrative posts in Government, probably because of the lack of a standard definition for those posts. In any case, statistics showed that the proportion of women occupying the higher positions in Government was close to 10 per cent in 1992. The highest level of participation by women in leadership and supervisory posts was achieved at the Ministry of Industry and Mining with 38 per cent of the total posts, followed by the Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction with approximately 25 per cent of the total posts.

45. As for the **Republic of Yemen**, a woman assumed the position of Deputy Minister of Culture and Information in 1983 in the southern governorates. The same woman became member of the Presidium in 1990. After unification, only one woman had been Assistant Under-Secretary since 1991. Many women had been promoted to the rank of Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Under-Secretary, but only for financial benefits without participation in decision-making. Two women were appointed in 1992 as advisors to the chairman of the Presidium and to the President of the Council of Ministers, respectively.

46. In **Palestine**, women had been striving to defend their right to have a share in decision-making positions and to accede to the Executive Committee of the PLO, which acted as a Palestinian Cabinet. That objective had not yet been achieved, although there were female candidates to the PNC more than once. The country report stated that one woman had been appointed Director of the Social Affairs Institution, a post equivalent to the level of Under-Secretary. Following the Declaration of Principles, another women was appointed Minister of Social Affairs.

*(c) Participation in foreign affairs and international relations*

47. The participation of women in diplomatic activity could be described as follows: women made their way into the diplomatic corps in Arab States that had experienced the development process, such as **Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine**. The rate of female participation in diplomacy increased, leading to the appointment of women in some of those countries as ambassadors and in other diplomatic functions.

48. In the Gulf States neither the country reports nor the statistics refer to the appointment of women to diplomatic positions, except for the country report of **Kuwait** which mentioned the appointment of a Kuwaiti woman as ambassador. About six women from **Bahrain, Oman and Saudi Arabia** worked as professional staff in the United Nations according to their countries' quotas.

49. Available information showed that some of the women who assumed diplomatic functions were qualified for the job. However, the fact that they were already with their families in the country was the main reason for their selection. In other words, the social conditions of women and the place of residence of their families often constituted obstacles to their reaching such positions. On the other hand, if the husband was a diplomat, then it became easier to appoint the wife in the same embassy.



50. In **Egypt**, women have been in the diplomatic corps since the 1960s and reached the rank of ambassador through promotion. Until 1993, women diplomats constituted around 14 per cent of the total number of diplomats.

51. In **Lebanon**, the proportion of women in the diplomatic corps increased to about 10 per cent in recent years. Because diplomacy was considered a distinctive field, candidates were submitted to a special and difficult competition. There were also special conditions imposed on women in this field, such as the exclusion of married women from the competition. Moreover, if a woman married while working in the diplomatic corps, she was returned to the Central Administration in her country, except for a few cases (if the husband happened to be working in the country where she occupied a diplomatic post for her country).

52. **Jordan's** law contained no obstacles for equal opportunities of women to work as ambassadors. However, women had not benefited from this right since 1970 when there was only one woman in such a position.

53. In **Iraq**, women occupied leadership positions in the diplomatic corps. Official statistics showed that the number of women working as Counsellor, First Secretary, Second Secretary, Third Secretary, Attaché and Director was 29 in 1980, rising in 1985 to 30 women, one of whom occupied the position of Plenipotentiary Minister. The number rose to 54 women in 1993.

54. In **Palestine**, no women participated in diplomatic activity until 1980, when four women were nominated at the rank of Deputy Director of PLO offices which acted as embassies in the countries where the PLO had diplomatic representation or information offices. Though these women were qualified for the posts, it was rather the fact that they were living with their families in the country that helped in their selection. In fact, family circumstances and place of residence often constituted obstacles for women to be candidates for such posts. Palestinian women working in the field of international relations were members of political delegations of the PLO and played a role in numerous political decisions that served the cause of the Palestinian people. In 1992, women acceded to the level of ambassador within the PLO, with the appointment of two women at that position, in addition to five women at the level of Deputy Director of a PLO Office and six women as department chiefs.

55. According to statistical data, the rate of female representation in Sudanese official diplomacy was low, although women did occupy leadership positions at all decision-making levels.

(d) *Participation in local government*

56. According to the country reports, the main indicators for the participation of women in local government were as follows:

(a) No Arab woman had yet assumed the position of Governor;

(b) The participation of women in some Arab societies was variable, either because of the elimination of articles supporting participation of women in some countries, or because women did not take advantage of the rights to which they were entitled;

(c) Decreasing participation in village councils, especially in recent years;

(d) Some States used the appointment of women in local government in order to guarantee their participation in the administration of local affairs.

57. In addition, the country reports indicated the following:

(a) The confusion in some Governments of the meaning of participation and their tendency to mix participation in local affairs with party activity (be it the ruling party or an opposition party);

(b) The propensity of some Governments to provide complete information on the work of women in local administration and the tendency of others to omit such information;

(c) The significance of the specificity of Palestinian society regarding local administration and the presence of a military and political content in matter of local administration.

58. In **Egypt**, although women had not yet managed to accede to judicial positions, the presidency of the legislative committee of the People's Assembly was entrusted to a woman. Furthermore, while the Egyptian woman had never assumed the functions of Governor or Mayor, she participated in local councils of governorates, districts, cities, villages and neighbourhoods. The participation of women in local councils varied a great deal during the 1980s, probably because of the cancellation in 1984 of Local Administration Law No. 43 of 1979, which allocated seats for women in popular and local councils at the city, neighbourhood and village levels. Their proportion ranged from 10 to 20 per cent of the total membership. At a later stage, the participation of women in these councils dropped from 11.2 per cent in 1979 to 1.2 per cent in 1992. This drop, however, was most noticeable in the village councils where participation of women went from 6.2 per cent in 1979 to a mere 0.5 per cent in 1992.

59. In **Lebanon**, women in municipal councils represented 0.93 per cent of total membership in 1984. That proportion fell to 0.38 per cent in 1994 because of the death of some of the members and because no municipal elections or appointments of *mukhtars*<sup>2</sup> had taken place since the 1960s. In the *mukhtar* councils, there were no women among the 5,400 members.

60. **Jordanian** Municipal Law No. 59 of 1982 granted women the right to vote and to be candidates for membership in municipal councils. Two women were candidates for the presidency of municipal councils but were not successful. In 1980, one woman was appointed a member of the Municipal Council of Amman, then reappointed a member of the Municipal Council of Greater Amman in 1986, among a total of 50 members. As for participation in local government, no woman had ever been appointed as Governor or District Chief. However, three women were appointed among a total of 180 members in the Executive Councils of the Governorates and in 1990 nine women were appointed out of a total of 240 members. In 1993, eight women were appointed as members of local consultative councils out of a total of 120 members.

61. As for **Palestine**, until 1980, no woman had ever been elected mayor outside the occupied land owing to the lack of such systems in the structure of the Palestinian resistance. Regional committees or the PLO offices acted in lieu of municipalities in addition to their diplomatic functions. As regards political organizations, there was one female member in 4 out of 40 regional committees ranging from 9 to 15 members each. This proportion was very low, and it was uncommon for a woman to assume such a position except in districts where family circumstances allowed her to accommodate both tasks. In 1985, the number of women increased to five, the fifth being a political and military official for Palestinian affairs in Lebanon. The same situation applies to the occupied territories, where until 1980 no woman had held the position of mayor, although one woman was an unsuccessful candidate for mayor of Nablus in 1976. In addition, no woman has ever occupied an important administrative post such as president of a department or chairman of a committee.

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<sup>2</sup> A *mukhtar* is a type of neighbourhood chief.

62. In the **Republic of Yemen**, participation in local administration was equivalent to participation in political parties.

(e) *Leading businesswomen*

63. Some of the country reports covered this point as described below.

64. The country report of the **Syrian Arab Republic** pointed to the lack of information concerning leading businesspersons (those investing their own capital) according to gender. However, based on the results of a study on the number of women registered at the Chamber of Industry and Commerce in Damascus and Aleppo, the report showed that 985 women were registered, representing no more than 2.37 per cent of all registered businesspersons.

65. Despite the non-availability of general information on this field in **Iraq**, statistical data from the Iraqi Federation of Chambers of Commerce concerning the number of businessmen of both sexes holding the ID card of the Chamber of Commerce, showed the actual participation of women in trade activities. Thus, in 1980, the number of women in this category constituted 22.3 per cent of all businesswomen, rising to 27.5 per cent in 1985 before dropping back to 16.5 per cent. The report indicated the continuing reduction in the proportion of women in this category in 1992 for reasons related to the economic embargo imposed on Iraq.

66. In **Palestine**, the fact that the Palestinian people were scattered outside their national land did not allow monitoring of this type of data, although there were a number of women working as businesswomen or participating with their private capital in projects in Arab countries. Inside Palestine, statistical data from the chambers of commerce in major cities showed, for example, that the proportion of women investing their private capital in 1993 was 1.28 per cent of the total membership of the Chamber of Commerce of Nablus. In Jerusalem, women accounted for 65 per cent of total shareholders of Al-Quds Pharmaceutical Company.

67. In the Gulf region, according to the country report of the **United Arab Emirates**, for example, self-employed women were women who invested their private capital. Data showed that these women represented 0.4 per cent of all self-employed persons in 1980, dropping to 0.3 per cent in 1985 and to 0.2 per cent in 1990. In **Qatar**, statistics indicated that only one woman from Qatar was self-employed against 499 men in the same category. The report also pointed to the presence of women of other nationalities in Qatar, nine of whom were self-employed against 1,422 men of the same category. According to the statistics of the **Sultanate of Oman**, leading self-employed women with their own capital constituted 27 per cent of businessmen in the Sultanate.

(f) *Leading women in the field of administration*

68. Country reports indicated the lack of detailed information on the situation of Arab women in the category of leading staff in the field of administration. However, it could be concluded that few women worked in this field in general, that Gulf women were totally absent from this field and that it was difficult to obtain accurate data on Palestinian women owing to their specific conditions.

69. Despite the lack of detailed information on leading staff in the field of Administration in **Egypt**, available statistics on the category of Directors showed a slight increase in the participation of women from 11 per cent in 1976 to around 12 per cent in 1986, 13.7 per cent in 1984 and 19.9 per cent in 1988.

70. The country report of the **Syrian Arab Republic** indicated the low number of women among the leading staff in the field of administration in the private as well the public, mixed and cooperative sectors. A 1991 sample study showed, for example, that out of 5,053 directors, only one was a woman.

71. The country report of **Kuwait** indicated that, according to 1980 statistics, the number of women occupying high-level administrative posts did not exceed 67, increasing fourfold in 1993. This was viewed as an indicator of the increase in the rate of women's participation in leadership positions. The proportion of women in administrative leadership posts rose from 3.2 per cent of total staff in those positions in 1980 to 7.6 in 1993.

72. In **Iraq**, despite differing statistics on high-level posts, an estimate could be made on the basis of official data for 1992 concerning the women occupying those posts. According to these, women constituted almost 10 per cent of the total staff in leadership positions. The highest level of participation by women in leadership and supervisory positions was in the Ministry of Industry and Mining, where it reached 38 per cent of all posts. In the Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction it neared 25 per cent.

73. During the period 1980-1982, women in **Palestine** acceded to high administrative positions in PLO institutions and departments, among which the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, the Palestine Martyrs Works Society (Samed) and the Research Centre-Palestine Liberation Organization. This progress was interrupted owing to the move of the PLO headquarters to Tunis, which caused its departments and personnel to be scattered in more than one Arab country. More than that, it led to a reversal of the trend because of the inability of women to leave their families and join their offices in other countries.

74. Inside the occupied territories, all surveys of administrative agencies, the numbers of directors of both sexes at universities, hospitals, UNRWA offices and major companies in big cities such as Nablus, Ramallah, Bir Zeit, Jerusalem and Gaza, failed to produce information for the years 1980-1985. In 1993 there was some information indicating that women constituted one third of the total staff.

(g) *Employers and business owners*

75. The following conclusions may be drawn from the country reports:

(a) The lack of a clear definition of "employers and business owners". Some of the reports gave a general view of this category in the economic sectors. Some others tended to elaborate on the subject and to present figures concerning women in the industrial, agricultural and service sectors. Other reports considered marginal work such as "peddling" as self-employment. A fourth group preferred not to deal with conditions of women in this respect;

(b) The rate of participation of women depended on the economic policy of the country. In **Egypt**, for example, the high proportion of self-employed women came as a result of the application of open economic policies and economic reforms;

(c) The relation between the nationality of female employers and the social structure and the prevailing pattern of values. Thus, in **Qatar**, the great majority of female employers, despite their small number, are of other nationalities;

(d) The specific features of the people of **Palestine** made it difficult to identify the conditions of the Palestinian female employer living in Arab countries and led to insufficient statistical data on the conditions of Palestinian women in the occupied territories.

76. **Egypt**, official statistics show a noticeable rise in the percentage of women who own large and small enterprises and who hire employees. This proportion, relative to the total number of employers, rose from 2.1 per cent in 1982 to 5.5 per cent in 1984, and then to 17.1 per cent in 1986.

77. In the **Syrian Arab Republic**, the distribution of the economically active population by economic activity, employment status and sex, shows that female employers in the agricultural sector account for about 3.86 per cent. In the industrial sector, the corresponding proportion is 0.63 per cent. Women owning enterprises in the service sector comprised 0.84 per cent of the total employers in that sector.

78. Statistics contained in the report of **Kuwait** indicate that the number of female employers in 1993 had increased two and one half times over the figures for 1980. This reflects the increasing trend of encouraging women to take charge of their own businesses, although the number of women who do so is low compared with the corresponding numbers for men. This may be due to the customs and traditions of Kuwaiti society, which consider the head of the household as the only person responsible for taking care of family affairs, while allowing the woman to have her own finances and bank accounts in accordance with Islamic Law (Shariah).

79. In the **United Arab Emirates** there are women employers; their numbers are few, but increasing. However, although the absolute numbers of these women are on the rise, their proportion relative to the total number of employers remained the same in 1980 and 1985, namely 0.4 per cent. This proportion fell to 0.3 per cent in 1990. It is expected that the further development of Kuwait's economic activity and the expansion of the various economic sectors will bring more women into this field.

80. For **Qatar**, the official statistical data for 1986 contained in the report of Qatar indicated that there were 11 women employers of various nationalities residing in Qatar, against 1,614 male employers of various nationalities residing in Qatar. Data indicated also that only 1 female national of Qatar was an employer, against 859 male nationals of Qatar. The remaining employers were of other Arab nationalities—8 Arab women against 249 Arab men—and employers of various other nationalities, 2 women compared with 506 men.

81. For **Palestine**, the country paper did not provide information about the numbers of women employers because of the dispersion of the Palestinian people and the difficulty of conducting surveys targeting Palestinian women. Likewise, it was virtually impossible to gain access to records in the occupied territories, as data is not recorded in a natural, organized fashion. The conditions under which the Palestinian people live, and the fact that the political leadership is outside the homeland and under occupation played a role in preventing women from taking advantage of the progress they had achieved in terms of participation in political action and in social and economic training to attain positions of decision making. Discrimination against women also contributed to this situation.

## *2. Mechanisms and programmes designed to promote the progress of women*

82. In the context of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, and the indicators included in this item, the following conclusions, derived from the country reports, can be made:

(a) Most of the country reports reviewed the role that the Government could play in strengthening the mechanisms that promote the progress of women, either by emphasizing the mechanisms established by the ministries concerned with women or by emphasizing the role that the Government could play in supporting women's federations and associations. It was indicated that government support for women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs) helped activate the women's federation as one of the mechanisms for

promoting the progress of women within top political organizations, in which the role of women is predetermined. Nevertheless, this may lead to tokenism and to propositions that challenge the prevailing Arab social structure and value system;

(b) Most of the country reports presented the mechanisms as “musts” confined to the realm of theory and progressive ideas divorced from the realities of Arab women. Moreover, no clear mention was made of the following: programmes and projects; policies adopted; financial and human resources; the types, social strata, needs and numbers of the target women; the disregarding role of information and environmental mechanisms; and shortcomings in the mechanisms and programmes;

(c) A clearly defined high-level coordinated policy to strengthen mechanisms for the advancement of women was lacking, as was coordination of the mechanisms used. In addition, these mechanisms were used to support the role and status of an elite group of women rather than the majority of women in the society;

(d) Institutions of civil society and non-governmental women’s NGOs are employed as a legal alternate mechanism for political and union activity, which means that their work sometimes focuses on political action at the expense of the social issues of women, or on women’s welfare activities at the expense of political participation;

(e) In recent years, some NGOs have recognized the ineffectiveness of the social welfare approach in addressing the challenges that face women; subsequently, these organizations engaged in efforts to duplicate the approach that emphasizes improving and promoting the status of women as a basic tool in implementing their programmes;

(f) The uniqueness of the status of Palestinian women is reflected in their dual role, with the Israeli occupation resulting in the women’s mechanisms being used politically and militarily for the benefit of the Palestinian cause.

83. The country reports provided other information on the mechanisms for promoting the advancement of women.

84. In **Egypt**, mechanisms and programmes whose basic tasks involve promoting the advancement of women have recently been established. These mechanisms ranged from councils, committees and a ministry specialized in women’s affairs, to committees, departments and projects belonging to a ministry concerned with women’s and children’s affairs, in addition to the mechanisms of the private charities working in this field. In the official sector, these are: the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood; the National Women’s Committee; the Ministry of Population and Family; women’s departments in the ministries of social affairs, agriculture and health; and the Central Agency for Republic Mobilization and Statistics.

85. The country report for **Egypt** did not mention the number of NGOs involved in issues related to women, except to say that there were 14,000 associations working in the different areas of development and social welfare including the fields of family and women’s welfare. The country report commended the role played by the new women’s associations which emerged after the 1980s and whose approach was based on improving and supporting the conditions of women, in contrast to the social welfare philosophy. The role assigned to these associations was to defend the legal and other rights of women; to conduct research concerning women; to document information and data; to follow up developments related to the advancement of women; to establish networks for exchanging information among women’s NGOs at the local, regional and international levels; to follow up the application of the international conventions on women; and to publish women’s magazines and periodicals.

86. In the **Syrian Arab Republic**, the mechanisms for promoting the advancement of women are concentrated primarily in the General Union of Women and in the Department of Rural Women's Affairs in the Ministry of Agriculture.

87. In **Lebanon**, an analysis of the country's administrative and political structures indicates that there is a lack of mechanisms and programmes devoted to the advancement of women. Information gathered from both the public and private sectors showed that no special budgets or programmes for promoting the advancement of women were allocated in the public sector. The private sector engaged in actions aimed specifically at promoting the advancement of women; however, the majority of private-sector activity had general objectives, with women representing only part of, and not all, the main concern. In this context, three important conclusions can be drawn:

(a) The absence of official mechanisms and programmes for the advancement of women in the 1980s was due to the war situation that continued for several years and to the absence of special budgets for women's programmes. Programmes for women began to be formulated in the 1990s with the establishment of a new department in the Ministry of Social Affairs related to women's affairs;

(b) There is an almost complete lack of programmes and strategies for women in connection with the work of women's and other NGOs;

(c) Indications are that a trend of cooperation will emerge in the 1990s between NGOs and governmental departments in the development of mechanisms and programmes for women and the allocation of budgets for this purpose. The establishment of the National Committee for Participation in the Women's Conference to be held in Beijing may be the first of such indications. This represents a qualitative change in the interaction between the governmental and non-governmental sectors. Expectations are high that this would give impetus to the process of setting up mechanisms and programmes and allocating budgets for women at the governmental level in order to bring about genuine social change, to give women more equality and to enable them to participate more fully in development and peace-making.

88. In **Jordan**, there is a noticeable lack of breadth in the programmes benefiting women and in the mechanisms available to implement the programmes of action designed to improve the status of women. This is due to the limited resources, especially financial resources, available for this purpose. At the national level, there exists in Jordan an institutional framework for promoting the status of women and supporting their participation in the development process, either through actions taken by the authorities or through the important role played by voluntary agencies in Jordan. The reason for this situation is that the resources available, especially financial resources, are limited.

89. Official and non-official agencies provide services to citizens in general, both male and female. Yet, there are many institutions in which programmes aimed at advancing the status of women represent a substantial part of the activities in the fields of, *inter alia*, education, vocational training, employment, education and awareness programmes, health services and information. In order to identify these services, a special questionnaire was distributed to the governmental and non-governmental agencies whose activities include programmes of action for the advancement of women and for promoting their status. These agencies include governmental agencies such as the Ministry of Education and non-governmental agencies such as the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development, the Noor Al-Hussein Foundation, the General Union of Jordanian Women, the Jordan Federation of Business and Professional Women, the General Union of Voluntary Societies and the Union of Jordanian Women.

90. The mechanisms for promoting the status of women in **Jordan** include the following:

(a) Establishing cooperation between governmental and non-governmental agencies and the international organizations, and agencies specializing in conducting studies and providing information concerning the true situation of women in Jordan and in the development of programmes to improve that situation and to empower women to participate effectively in the process of economic and social development. These joint programmes of action also include holding conferences, panels and workshops to activate the role of women's organizations for the benefit of women's causes and supporting the role of women in society. This also includes the participation of these agencies in regional and international conferences and meetings concerning women;

(b) The establishment of the Jordanian National Committee for Women's Affairs, among whose members would be the ministries and non-governmental agencies concerned mainly with activating the role of women and improving their economic and social conditions. The committee operates by holding regional meetings with the effective participation of the various women's organizations at the district level followed by the national level for the final preparation and adoption of the national strategy for women;

(c) In the context of the attention that the Government pays to the national strategy for women and to the advancement of the status of women, a woman adviser was appointed in 1993 in the Council of Ministers to handle the issues concerning Jordanian women and to follow up the activities of the different governmental agencies involved in advancing the status of women in society;

(d) The General Union of Jordanian Women, which represents popular women's organizations in Jordan, and its branches in the various governorates play a fundamental role in advancing the status of women;

(e) A special inspection unit should be established in the Ministry of Labour in accordance with the labour law. It is to carry out labour inspections, on sites where there are mostly women workers in the various industrial, commercial and service sectors, the purpose being to enhance women's employment and improve their working conditions and ensure that they are employed in accordance with the provisions of the labour law.

91. In **Kuwait**, the voluntary work, with its various programmes, is considered the basic mechanism for promoting the advancement of women. Kuwait has 55 non-governmental associations. These associations receive material and technical support from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour and have five subsidiary women's associations that highlight the role of women in the family and society. These associations shoulder the responsibility for developing the programmes that benefit the family in general and raise the cultural level of women in all fields by holding discussion panels, organizing lectures and poetry readings, raising public awareness regarding national causes, and advocating the causes of women and children. These women's associations target their social programmes at strengthening social ties and coordinating social cooperation, in order to raise the social standard of women.

92. As regards religion, these associations aim at spreading Islamic culture and contributing to the revival of Islamic heritage and disseminating the facts regarding Islam and its virtues. To serve women and encourage them to discharge their functional role in society, the majority of these women's associations have opened model nurseries to care for the children of working women. These associations also encourage women to perform voluntary work to serve their society to the best of their cultural, social, educational and professional abilities, especially women who are full-time homemakers and who have enough time to do voluntary work. Kuwaiti women, apart from participating in voluntary work through women's associations, participate in other non-governmental associations, whether cultural, social or professional, especially since some of these associations have women's committees in addition to their other committees, such as, for example, the Social Reform Association and the Red Crescent Association.



93. In **Bahrain**, the Ministry of Social Affairs joined the non-governmental agencies in strengthening the mechanisms established to promote the advancement of women. These mechanisms were five social centres established during the period 1982-1987 and followed by two other centres. These centres aim at: (a) carrying their welfare and development services to locations as close as possible to the target population in all regions of Bahrain; (b) to achieve complementarity of social services and other services at the local level to address their basic needs; (c) to ensure effective participation by the local leadership and the citizenry; and (d) to help the individual and the family learn a gainful trade.

94. The policy of the Government of the **United Arab Emirates** is based on commitment to, and responsibility for, the advancement of women. This commitment is dictated by the conditions of the population as women constitute one half of society. The State's commitment and responsibility regarding the advancement of women takes the form of programmes and support for the institutions and agencies that tend to the concerns of women. These institutions and agencies are developed through the main governmental and private institutions.

95. **Qatar** has given special attention to its women, with the objective of providing the means of stability for the family, which is considered the foundation of society, and to support the efforts made by NGOs and voluntary organizations and to raise the awareness level of women regarding sound practices for socialization and children's upbringing and welfare. To achieve these objectives, the State resorted to the following actions: (a) providing the means for protecting and supporting the family by enacting social legislation; (b) conducting detailed social studies that address the elements which ensure family coherence; and (c) strengthening and developing the centres involved in training and rehabilitating women. There is no special mechanism at the official level for promoting the advancement of women.

96. In the **Sultanate of Oman**, the mechanisms for promoting the advancement of women are concentrated in the departments and centres of the Ministry of Social Affairs and in the activities undertaken by the Omani Women's Association in the capital and the governorates.

97. The Government of **Iraq** has given special attention to the cause of women and to their role in society since the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party came to power in 1968. The Government has lent support to the underpinnings of the advancement of women and to the achievement of equality *vis-à-vis* men in the various fields in a manner that would not conflict with their special situation. The governmental and non-governmental institutions have adopted international plans relating to the advancement of women, particularly the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies adopted in 1985, by adopting and implementing, national plans.

98. The interest of the Government of the **Republic of Yemen** in developing mechanisms and programmes that would lead to the advancement of women began in the 1980s, although earlier efforts by the Government in that direction have contributed to the development of these mechanisms. Yet, the government policies that support these mechanisms still lack more effective actions and measures needed to make those strategies part of the comprehensive development policies which have received limited support from the decision-makers and which continued required attention. Conferences, panels, seminars and workshops have been organized to address women's issues. This interest culminated with the holding in 1989 of the First National Conference for Women and Development, which had as its objective an assessment of the achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women at the national level. Moreover, the National Conference for Population Policies, was held in 1991 and resulted in the formulated of the national population strategy/plan of action, including a national strategy and plan of action for women and development to the year 2000. These conferences highlighted the problems associated with the ways to support and strengthen the mechanisms and programmes related to women at the formal and informal levels.

99. In **Palestine**, the same difficulty exists as regards monitoring of mechanisms and programmes that promote the advancement of Palestinian women. The difficulty emerges upon examination of the aspects of the lives of Palestinians, namely their dispersion between the occupied territories and neighbouring Arab States. As the Palestine Liberation Organization emerged and developed into an organization encompassing all independent Palestinian forces and political organizations and as its organs and popular institutions developed, the PLO assumed its status as a political leadership representing the objectives and the aspirations of the Palestinian people. The uniqueness of the role of women is reflected in the proliferation of Palestinian institutions, as Palestinian women have played a vital role in the development of the PLO, and especially of institutions such as the Social Affairs Institution and the "Samed" Economic Institution, which was started by the efforts of women to provide social welfare to the families of martyrs and detainees, open professional training centres and sewing, embroidery and handcraft workshops. Palestinian women also provided the first services in the field of education when the Palestinian Women's Association established a boarding school for the children of the martyrs. That school developed into a comprehensive educational institution which came, among other several institutes, under the supervision of the Education Department of the PLO. The same applies to literacy programmes, nurseries and kindergartens, all of which also came under the responsibility of the Department of Education.

### 3. *Awareness of nationally and internationally recognized women's rights*

100. The country reports contained surveys of legislation and basic measures adopted by Arab States in recent years to promote awareness among women and many of women's rights. On the basis of these surveys, detailed indicators are presented below.

#### (a) *Legislation*

101. Most Arab constitutions provide for equality in rights and duties between men and women. They also ensure equal opportunities for both sexes. The fundamental legislation that governs general rights and social, financial and personal relations is based on absolute equality in rights and duties, bearing in mind the uniqueness of the role of women. Legislation has therefore conferred on women special rights aimed at protecting mother and child, to help women reconcile their duty towards their families with their work in the society and to ensure equality with men in the political economic, social and cultural domains.

102. In spite of the fact that Arab women enjoy many social rights granted to them by constitutions and laws, especially in the exercise of their political and economic rights and their financial independence, and also in spite of the fact that some changes have been introduced in laws and procedures adopted in connection with family issues, Arab women still suffer as a result of the following:

(a) Legal exceptions to basic constitutional rules, especially as regards stripping a woman and her children of their nationality in case of marriage to a foreigner and requiring the husband's approval for a wife to travel abroad, as well as the inadequacy of legislative provisions with respect to alimony and child custody to address the problems of divorced women;

(b) Inadequate legislative provisions in general and their shortcomings in application, as represented by the fact that in most Arab countries no woman has been appointed to a judicial post or to a leadership position in the localities, such as governor or mayor.

103. Exceptions to legislative provisions concerning women and the gap between the legal text and its application are reflected in the position taken by most Arab States with respect to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discriminations Against Women and by the fact that some of these States did

not ratify the conventions and others ratified its with reservations regarding certain items related to family issues because they conflict with the principles of Islamic law (Shariah).

104. The situation of women in **Palestine** is unique owing to their suffering from subjection to legislation enacted by Arab or foreign States or Israel, apart from their suffering from the problem of nationality, as Palestinian women, like Palestinian men, still bear travel documents from or the nationality of the country which received them as refugees.

(b) *Fundamental measures and legislation*

105. The country reports indicate that most Arab countries suffer from inadequacy of measures implemented to counter the lack of awareness of women's rights. This may be due to the absence of a transparent Arab or national policy to address the needs of women as a social and economic power. It was urban women, especially middle class women, who have benefited from these measures and not rural women or women belonging other social classes which represent the majority in the Arab world. The reason for this may be that the legislation and measures designed to address the conditions from which the majority of Arab women suffer are neither complete nor complementary. It should be emphasized that it is difficult to exercise the political rights granted by top-level decisions in the context of the village culture, which is governed by traditions and norms which control the relations between and the roles of individuals and which determine that women are dependent on men.

106. In **Egypt**, the constitution provides for equality among all citizens. Article 40 of the constitution represents a comprehensive rule stating that "all citizens are equal before the law. They are equal in rights and duties without discrimination because of sex, origin, language, religion or faith". Article 8 stipulates that the State shall ensure equal opportunities for all citizens. Article 10 stipulates that the state protects mothers and children. Article 11 provides that the State shall guarantee that women reconcile their duty towards the family with their work within the society and that they shall be equal with men in the political, social, cultural and economic aspects of life. In 1981 Egypt ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; yet, it expressed reservations regarding some articles of that Convention, including article 9, item 2 on granting children the nationality of the mother, and article 16 as contradicting the provisions of Egyptian family law. The fundamental legislation that regulates general rights and social, financial and personal relations in Egypt is based on the principle of absolute equality in rights and duties.

(i) *Political rights*

107. Law No. 73 of 1956, which regulates the exercise of political rights, provides for equality between men and women in electoral matters and candidacy. Law No. 38 of 1972 regarding the rules of membership and the legal organization of the People's Council provides for equality between female and male members. The same equality is provided by Law No. 120 for the year 1980 relating to the "Shura" Council.

(ii) *Civil law*

108. Civil law is based on the principle of complete equality. Women are entitled to be a party to all types of contracts: sales, rentals, proxy, endowment, mortgages and others. The woman is considered legally competent on equal footing with men and at the same age. The woman bears, as the man, both kinds of civil liability.

(iii) *Commercial law*

109. The provisions of commercial and related laws apply to both men and women equally. Women can act as a merchant under the same conditions. She is eligible to form companies and be a partner therein, and to trade in stock exchanges, issue stocks and bonds and accept them and endorse them. She can declare bankruptcy and be reinstated in the same way as men.

(iv) *Penal code*

110. The penal code of **Egypt** is based on identifying offenses and the corresponding penalty, leaving discretionary authority to the judge in passing sentence. No distinction is made in this respect between men and women.

(v) *Nationality law*

111. In the nationality law, there is discrimination on the basis of sex. Egyptian nationality is granted to the children of an Egyptian father irrespective of the nationality of the mother. The children of an Egyptian mother do not enjoy the same right if the father is non-Egyptian.

(vi) *Labour law*

112. The labour law is based on absolute equality between men and women in rights and duties. Yet, the State granted women special rights in government and in the public sector to help them reconcile their duty towards the family with their work responsibilities in accordance with the provisions of Law No. 47 of 1978 relating to civil servants, Law No. 48 of 1978 relating to public sector employers, together with the law No. 137 of 1981 relating to the private sector. This law devoted a separate chapter to the provisions governing the employment of women.

(vii) *Family law*

113. Family Law No. 100 of 1985 was passed to amend the laws issued in 1925 and 1929. The new law included some new articles aimed at protecting the woman against having their rights abused by men. These articles include the following:

(a) The wife has the right—in case her husband marries another woman—to request a divorce if she sustains material or moral damage as a result. If the marriage contract includes a clause that the husband should not marry another woman, the wife would not need to prove that damage was sustained in order to obtain a divorce;

(b) The divorcing husband is obliged to document the divorce with the *maathun*<sup>3</sup> within 30 days of the date of the divorce, and the certifying officer should officially inform the wife in person about the divorce and present to her or her agent a copy of the divorce document to ensure that she is well aware of the divorce. The divorce has no material implications for the wife until the date she is notified;

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<sup>3</sup> A *maathun* is a Muslim official authorized to perform marriages.

(c) The divorced woman is entitled to one year's *iddat*<sup>4</sup> payment. The court having jurisdiction issues an urgent ruling to determine a temporary *iddat* amount. The ruling may be implemented through the Nasser Social Bank which collects the entitlement from the husband. This exceptional procedure was instituted to protect the woman and the family and to avoid slow judicial procedures as well as the difficulties encountered in implementation;

(d) The divorced woman is entitled to *mut'a*<sup>5</sup> for no less than two years, depending on the financial and social status of the husband, the circumstances of the divorce and the duration of marriage;

(e) The right to the deferred dowry stipulated in the marriage contract and payable upon divorce or the death of husband, whichever occurs first;

(f) The divorced woman is entitled to have custody of a male child until the child reaches age 10, and of a female child until the child reaches age 12. The judge may rule that the child should stay in the custody of the mother until age 15 for the boy and until marriage for the girl. Each parent has visitation rights at the other's residence during the custody period;

(g) The divorcing husband should provide a residence for his divorced wife and for his children from their marriage, or else the divorced wife may stay with her children in the residence which she occupied during the marriage until the end of the custody period;

(h) The wife has the right to request a divorce in the following cases:

(i) If the husband is absent for more than one year without an acceptable reason, if the wife sustains damage owing to his absence, even if the husband has enough money to support the wife;

(ii) If the husband is imprisoned for three years or more, the wife is entitled to request a divorce after one year;

(iii) If the husband ceases to support the wife;

(iv) Incurable diseases;

(v) Sexual defects and infertility on the part of the husband.

114. As an exception to the general rule of equality in the Egyptian constitution and law, passport regulations do not allow a married Egyptian woman to obtain a passport except with the approval of her husband.

115. The permanent Constitution of the **Syrian Arab Republic** ratified on 13 March 1973 makes no distinction whatsoever between the two sexes and establishes equal rights for men and women. All citizens have equal rights and duties before the law. The State guarantees the principle of equal opportunities for all citizens (article 20). Article 45 of the constitution affirms that the State guarantees women all opportunities that would help them contribute effectively and completely to political, social, cultural and economic life. The State endeavours to remove obstacles to the women's development and participation in the building of society. Most prominent among the political rights that women in the Syrian Arab Republic have gained are:

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<sup>4</sup> A legally prescribed period of waiting during which a woman may not remarry after being widowed or divorced.

<sup>5</sup> Compensation paid to a divorced woman.

(a) the right to hold high-level positions and public posts; (b) the right to vote and to run for office in parliamentary and elected bodies; and (c) the right to education, including enrolment in all kinds and levels of educational institutions. The constitution of the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party stipulates in article 12 that women shall enjoy all the rights of citizenship and that the Party would fight to help women attain these rights.

116. Social legislation and laws regulating public rights seek to reinforce equality in rights and duties between men and women, especially in the fields of education and labour.

117. In connection with basic measures, it should be noted that the General Women's Union played a vital role in raising the awareness of society with respect to women's rights. This was reflected in the organization's public information activities (the family programme on television and radio). Thirty minutes of television and radio time are devoted weekly to a family programme. The programme emphasizes the role of women in the family and society and explains the dimension of their role in the building process, taking into account the fact that their participation in the development process is not only reflected in their numbers but in the quality of their contribution to development. The issuance of a family magazine and its distribution to the public played an important role in raising the awareness of women, and therefore the whole society, with respect to women's rights and duties. It should be noted that the **Syrian Arab Republic** has made substantial efforts to develop the educational curricula in order to include texts related to human rights, population awareness and the environment. The establishment of the Working Women's Committee and the General Association of Trade Unions played a substantial role in raising the awareness of women with respect to their employment rights and to the removal of obstacles to women's advancement and liberation. This is proof that fundamental measures have been taken to raise the awareness of women and men with respect to women's rights.

118. Women in **Lebanon** have complete eligibility, except in certain cases that are provided for in the commercial law and the law of obligations, contracts and real estate. In connection with the personal status in Lebanon, there is a high degree of discrimination between men and women because of Lebanon's legal recognition of the existence on its territory of 15 religious sects, each with its own personal status system and rules that are binding to (on) members. These various personal-status systems include discrimination between men and women in the same sect. Recognition of multiple personal-status systems has, in turn, created discrimination between men and men and between women and women who move from one sect to another. It should be noted that the Lebanese law recognizes civil marriage if it was contracted abroad and in accordance with the laws of the country where the marriage was contracted. Yet, the law does not permit civil marriage in Lebanon.

119. There is also some discrimination in the penal code with respect to adultery and crimes of honour. The law also provides for penalties relating to abortion and the use of contraceptives. As for legislation relating to nationality, a Lebanese woman who marries a foreigner loses her Lebanese nationality when she requests that her name be removed from the census records. Citizenship is transferred paternally, which means that the children acquire the nationality of their father and not of their mother, except in two cases: an illegitimate child as long as the father is unknown and the minor son of a Lebanese woman who was married to a foreigner after the death of the father. A Lebanese woman who keeps her nationality after being married to a foreigner or who regained her nationality after losing it because of her marriage to a foreigner, is not entitled to transfer her nationality to her children.

120. In the **Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan**, the Constitution and the National charter provided for the principle of equality between women and men. Article six stipulates that "all Jordanians are equal before the law without any discrimination with respect to rights and duties, even if they were different with respect to race, language or religion". All laws conform to the Constitution and emphasize the principle of equality.

To support women and protect their rights, most laws include special provisions related specifically to women.

121. **Jordanian** Labour Law No. 21 of 1960 upheld the principle of equality between employees, without discrimination on the basis of sex, with respect to rights and duties. Taking into consideration the special situation of working women, the law included provisions related specifically to women in order to protect the rights of working women and provide them with the support they need, taking into account the social conditions under which they live.

122. Family Law No. 61 of 1976 guarantees the rights of women in many cases, including: breaking off of an engagement, protection against being forced to marry an older man against her will, and respect for her right to impose on her husband a condition which guarantees her legitimate interest and the right to separate from her husband in cases of: (a) husband's insanity; (b) absence and damage; (c) inability to pay the dowry; and (d) inability to support the wife.

123. The civil service system guarantees that women shall have equal rights with men in salary, promotion and advancement and all kinds of leave. Women and their husbands have the right to leave without pay or raises in those cases specified by the law.

124. The retirement law includes provisions specifically related to women. Article 7 stipulates that a woman employee may retire after completing 15 years of eligible service. The law also includes a special provision permitting the woman employee who resigns to claim the pension contributions that had been deducted from her salary. This does not apply to the male employee who resigns. The medical insurance, social security and military retirement laws are no different from other laws in terms of ensuring equality between women and men with respect to all privileges, and accounting for the nature of women and the social conditions under which they live. However, some provisions in the retirement law favour men with respect to retirement benefits, such as in determining which heirs will benefit from the pension.

125. Law No. 32 of 1986 regarding elections to the council of representatives guarantees women the right to election and candidacy. Women were given this right for the first time in 1974, and the municipalities law of 1983 assured it.

126. The conditions for granting the Jordanian nationality were established without any discrimination. Article 4(a) of Law No. 2 for the year 1969 relating to passports, guarantees the right to leave and the right to return to the country without discrimination between men and women. Both men and women have the right to leave and to return provided that they carry a legal passport issued according to the law.

127. Although legislation in the **Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan** is favourable to women, some of its provisions run contrary to the principle of equality; however, action is being taken to amend those provisions.

128. Pressure to introduce such amendments is undoubtedly growing. There are encouraging signs that these amendments will be made soon, especially since the Jordanian National Committee on Women will, according to the national strategy for women, pursue work for these amendments with a view to protecting the rights of women and their dignity.

129. International agreements ratified or acceded to by Jordan have the force of law and take precedence over domestic law except for the Constitution. This is emphasized by decision 32/83 of 6 February 1982 made by the Court of Appeals, stating that international covenants and treaties take precedence over domestic laws. National courts give the same precedence to international agreements.

130. In actual fact, Jordanian public opinion subscribes to the principle of equality, though with some reservations in certain respects. There are still those who are not aware of women's rights in legislation. Hence the significance of legal education and awareness. Public and private agencies have deemed it necessary to make these rights known and to take measures to protect and apply these rights. For this purpose, these agencies use intensive programmes in such mass media as television, radio, newspapers, magazines and other publications. For the same purpose, they hold seminars, lectures, and workshops. Similar action is taken regarding curricula, textbooks, and counselling services for women including legal aid for women. In addition, a law was recently enacted providing for the establishment of a centre for studies on democracy and human rights; one of its provisions recommends that human rights be taught as a subject at Jordanian universities.

131. Although the national report of the **Republic of Iraq** details most of the social and legal provisions and legislation that enhance the status of women, it does not include particulars of the Iraqi position on international agreements concerning women. Actually Iraq ratified by Law No. 66 (1986) the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The report also fails to address the basic measures to raise awareness among women.

132. Article 19 of the Constitution of Iraq provides for equality among men and women in both rights and duties, thus setting the first foundation for eliminating discrimination and establishing equality in society. There are laws aimed at ensuring rights and equal opportunity for women. They include:

(a) The Law of Agrarian Reform (the second Law of Agrarian Reform No. 117 of 1970): this law laid the foundations for economic equality between men and women, giving women who farmed land the right to exploit land and to enter into contracts with agrarian reform authorities. The amended Law of Farming Cooperatives No. 43 of 1977 stated that women have the same right as men to full membership in of all rights and obligations.

(b) Labour Law No. 151 of 1970 and its amendments regulate women's work and recognize the need to take into consideration the biological make-up and circumstances of women during the term of pregnancy and delivery in order to enhance their productive role, encourage them to work and, at the same time, protect their status as mothers and educators. The New Labour Law No. 71 of 1987 guarantees for women the right to work on an equal footing with men. The Amended Pension and Social Security Law No. 39 of 1972 gives women many rights. Furthermore, there is the Revolutionary Command Council decision granting working women one-year maternity leaves.

(c) The Personal Status Law No. 188 of 1959 and its amendments provide for the following:

- (i) Custody. The mother shall have the right to have custody over, and to raise, minors under all circumstances unless deemed detrimental to the minor;
- (ii) The age of custody shall be raised from 7 to 10 years of age and may be raised to completion of the fifteenth year of age;
- (iii) Custody may not be transferred to the father unless the mother lacks one of the conditions for custody;
- (iv) The Marriage Contract. The law stipulates the need to conclude the marriage contracts in court, with violators being subject to penalties, in order to protect women's rights by making known both marriage and alimony and to preserve the lineage of the woman's children and her own legal rights;



- (v) Divorce. The wife may ask for divorce if empowered by the marriage contract to do so and has the right to ask for legal separation if her husband harms her and refuses to divorce her for one reason or another;
  - (vi) Inheritance. Females are entitled to inheritance after both parents and the husband have taken their share of it. If they are not living, the woman is entitled to the whole inheritance;
  - (vii) Polygamy is prohibited unless authorized by court;
- (d) The Care for Minors Law No. 78 of 1980 gives priority to mothers to act as guardians of their children;
- (e) Social Welfare Law No. 126 of 1980 establishes equality between men and women as heads of families. It guarantees the entitlement of a mother or wife to social welfare pay if she is widowed, divorced, or has under-age children living with her;
- (f) Penal Law No. 111 of 1969, as amended, imposes punishment for encouraging depravity, lewdness, rape and sodomy;
- (g) Under the General Federation of Iraqi Women Law No. 139 of 1970, Iraqi women have the right to membership in political parties as well as in trade unions, scientific societies, and mass organizations;
- (h) Law No. 131 of 1977 on Military Service for Women in the Iraqi Army. This law confers a military rank on women volunteering to serve in the Army as doctors, nurses or other medical specialists; it also guarantees women with other specialties admission into the Army as volunteers. Prior to this law, the Regional Command of the Party recognized, in 1976, the principle of allowing women to serve in the ranks of the People's Army.

133. The national report of the **Republic of Yemen** addresses constitutional provisions preceding, and subsequent to, unification. It then addresses laws and legislation supporting women's rights. The permanent Constitution was promulgated in the northern provinces in 1970, establishing the principle of equality. Article 22 states that all Yemenis are equal in terms of rights and duties. Article 34 stipulates that women are fully equal to men in rights and obligations in accordance with the generous Islamic Shariah and other laws. Moreover, Article 26 of the 1978 Constitution in the southern provinces stipulated that the State would guarantee equal rights for men and women in all fields of political, economic, social and cultural life. The State shall also create conditions and circumstances that enable women to exercise their rights effectively. In the southern provinces, women obtained, in 1978, the right to be candidates and members of the Supreme People's Council and other elected local councils. In the northern provinces, women did not have this full right; they were rather denied the right to be candidates for the Shura Council of 1988. Women had only the right to vote, though they had the right to vote and to be candidates in the 1982 election for the People's Congress and for local councils in 1983. Women failed to gain membership in those councils as a result of the conservative outlook of society. Consequently, the political leadership appointed two women in such councils, one in Sana'a and the other in Ta'iz.

134. The Constitution of the unified State issued on 22 May 1991 guaranteed equality for men and women and did not discriminate between them. Article 27 stipulated that "all citizens are equal before the law, having equal rights and obligations. There shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex." This provision recognizes the right of women to assume any position or post and to practise any profession on an equal footing with men. Being male is not considered, either implicitly or explicitly, a precondition for election to the presidency. The Constitution therefore encompasses women and does not single them out for separate

provisions, nor does it provide for laws limiting their freedoms and rights. Suffice it to note here that the personal status law, promulgated by presidential decision No. 20 of 1992, was enacted after unification to supersede the previous two laws.

135. Numerous actions and measures have been taken by the Government to overcome the difficulties and obstacles in this area. Efforts continue in the field of education to change the traditional image of women and to introduce women's issues and rights into school curricula. There is continuing supervision of the implementation of laws. The Government is ensuring measures and actions aimed at the following:

(a) The further training of women cadres to prepare them for participation in the legal and legislative fields, and ensuring that working women are promoted in the administrative and political fields on the basis of competence;

(b) Furthering efforts to enhance the role of women in the legal and administrative fields and seeking to establish an agency with female participation to supervise closely the degree of application of legislation relating to women;

(c) Organizing legally-oriented symposia, seminars, and panel discussions and conducting studies relating to population laws and policies to determine their impact on women in all fields;

(d) The identification of articles and sections of law that hinder the development of women with a view to amending such laws in such a way as to remove inconsistencies among them, in keeping with Islamic Shariah;

(e) The implementation of the National Population Strategy, 1990-2000, and the Population Plan of Action adopted in 1992 and endorsed by the Council of Ministers for the purpose of establishing the foundations of a balanced comprehensive development consistent with the genuine values of the people of Yemen;

(f) The creation in 1993 of a Department for Women's Development as part of the Secretariat General of the National Population Council to be in charge of women's issues, statistics and data;

(g) The incorporation into school curricula of topics and courses on the role of women in the family and society in general. Women-related topics as currently taught leave much to be desired.

136. Discussion of the rights of Palestinian women, as recognized nationally and internationally, should take a special form as it is difficult to go by the form proposed for ordinary States. For the Palestinian situation is unique; it is determined by the Israeli settler occupation of Palestine, and the dispersion of Palestinian people, men and women, who live either under occupation or in exile. Even the PLO, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people inside and outside their homeland, has until recently been outside the land. As a result, it was unable to enact legislation to govern its people. Below are the most important basic actions and measures pertaining to Palestine and the Palestinian people.

137. The Palestinian National Charter: the constitution of the PLO, does not, in its provisions pertaining to the Palestinian people, make any discrimination among individuals on the basis of race, religion, colour, or sex. In article 10, it calls for the mobilization of all the potentialities of the Palestinian people in all its groups for participation in the national struggle and for national solidarity. The Declaration of Independence states: "The Palestinians shall enjoy full equality in terms of their rights under a democratic parliamentary system based on free opinion, social justice, equality and non-discrimination in public rights as to race,

religion, colour, or sex. This shall be in accordance with a constitution that shall guarantee the rule of law and independence for the judiciary.”

138. Article 83 of the Palestinian draft constitution states that all people are equal before the law and have the right to be protected by the law without any discrimination on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political opinion, origin, or the like. Other legislations and laws are still under preparation and study.

#### *The legal status of Palestinian women under occupation*

139. During the 1980s, legal conditions for Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territories did not change since such conditions were governed by laws and actions determined by the occupation authorities, notwithstanding the obligation of the occupying Power, under international agreements, to abide by the rules of public international law. Such rules oblige occupying Powers to apply international conventions relating to occupation, war, and the protection of civilians such as The Hague Regulations of 1907, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the Geneva Conventions of 1949, and the resolutions and decisions of the United Nations. This means that citizens, including women, should be subject to legislation, including the legislation relating to labour, personal status, and education, of the State governing the Palestinian territories before the Israeli occupation. However, the Israeli occupation army command in the West Bank issued Proclamation No. 2 of 7 June 1967 stating that “The Israeli occupying forces shall assume the powers of legislation, appointment, and administration.” This proclamation constituted an obstacle to the application of existing laws and to the functioning of the Shariah courts. When the Government of Jordan decided in 1988 on disengagement between the West Bank and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, all Jordanian laws there became invalid and were not replaced by Palestinian laws.

140. In the early 1990s, there was an increase in the activities, programmes, workshops and conferences concerned with the development of the legal status of women. Some centres for studies and counselling on women and legal issues were established. The role women played in the *intifadah* and the ensuing positive developments in its early years, the declaration of independence, and the possibility of creating an independent national entity, raised hopes for women. Consequently, the women’s movement intensified its efforts to safeguard the achievements made by women in the various stages of the national struggle for liberation, and independence; this movement also endeavoured to have advanced legislation that guarantee justice, freedom and peace. In addition, the women’s movement urged the new Palestinian National Authority to enact a more advanced form of the personal status law.

141. The national reports of the Gulf States have addressed this topic in a clear manner. The national report of the State of **Kuwait** points out that the Constitution of Kuwait does not differ from other constitutions in its stress on the principle of equality between men and women in rights and duties. Article 9 states that “people are equal in human dignity, before the law and in rights and duties; there shall be no discrimination among them on the basis of race, origin, language, or religion.”

142. Following are the main points:

(a) On maternal care, article 9 of the Constitution states that “the family is the foundation of society; its is based on religion, morality, and patriotism; the law shall preserve its entity, strengthen its bonds, and protect mothers and children within the fold.”

(b) On women’s rights in the field of education, article 40 of the Constitution states that: “Education is a right for Kuwaitis guaranteed by the State in accordance with public order and mores. Compulsory education is free in the early stages in accordance with the law.”

(c) On women's right to work, article 41 of the Constitution states that "every Kuwaiti has the right to work and to choose his work." Therefore, a woman may not be barred from a job if she has the educational qualifications for it;

(d) Other constitutional provisions contain legal guarantees for women to exercise their right to education and work. It is left for local legislation to regulate the exercise of that right in accordance with the circumstances and conditions prevailing in society and in a manner not inconsistent with the fundamental objectives of the Constitution (see annex to the national report of Kuwait for the text of the Constitution and laws relating to women);

(e) The National Document on Reform and Development issued by the Higher Council of Planning (1992), which amounts to a plan of action for the transitional period 1992/1993-1994/1995, underlines the need "to take appropriate action to encourage Kuwaiti women to play a larger role in the field of work and in building society."

143. Although Kuwait ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, adopted by the General Assembly on 18 December 1979, Kuwait expressed reservations on articles (a), 9 (2), and 16 (f) and declared non-compliance with article 29 (1) of the Convention. Kuwait also ratified several international conventions that guarantee protection for working women, including the conventions on night work for women, non-discrimination, and forced labour.

144. The national report of the State of **Bahrain** is limited to legislative instruments relating to personal status. In its description of the changes in legislation and application, it combines legislative instruments and measures. The national report points out the most important achievements in the areas of legislation and application which promote the social status of women. Following are some of those achievements:

(a) The rules governing family relations are derived from jurisprudential opinions of Islamic Shariah of all four schools—Hanafi, Malki, Hanbali and Shafi—in Sunni courts and from the Jaafari school in Jaafari courts;

(b) Until 1986 there was no law to regulate the procedures of adjudication before Shariah courts, including notification, presence and absence. Cases brought by wives against their absent husbands had to wait for the husbands' presence even if they were abroad and had no known place of residence. Cases used to be postponed for as many years as eight in some instances;

(c) The State ratified conventions and agreements consistent with its national and regional political and social conditions. Since 1975, the State of Bahrain has consistently voted for most resolutions relating to the advancement of women. For example, Bahrain voted for: the resolution proclaiming the period 1976-1985 the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace; the resolution on the Second World Conference on Women of 1980; and the draft resolution on developing the status of women in the United Nations Secretariat. It supported the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. It also approved the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, but it expressed reservations on a limited number of points for fear that they might conflict with Islamic Shariah.

145. The national report of the **United Arab Emirates** indicates that the State is most interested in establishing equality between men and women as demonstrated by its Constitution, legislation and practice. Women enjoy guarantees by Islamic Shariah and the laws in force in the country provided there is harmony and no conflict between the two. Women also enjoy special privileges in the employment law which gives men and women equal pay for equal work; in addition, women are granted several privileges because of the special circumstances facing them in their private and public life.

146. The State of the United Arab Emirates, by virtue of its Constitution, legislation and practices, seeks to ensure equality between men and women in treatment. In this respect, it acts in accordance with the international Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. However, the Convention is currently under study with a view to avoiding conflict with the provisions of Islamic Shariah on personal status and with the law of citizenship in force. For example, there is a conflict between the provisions of the Convention relating to citizenship and the applicable law of citizenship in the United Arab Emirates, where there is heavy demand for naturalization. Special scrutiny is required in this regard. However, conflict with Islamic Shariah is very limited. It is in the interest of women to be subject to the provisions of the Shariah. In general, women in the United Arab Emirates enjoy the guarantees of the Convention, Islamic Shariah and applicable laws of the country provided there is harmony and no conflict among the provisions of the three sources.

#### 4. Poverty

147. According to the World Health Organization, the most vulnerable groups are women, children and the working population who live under critical conditions and face high risks.<sup>6</sup> The World Bank stated, in its report on development for 1990, that the Arab world, as part of the Middle East and North Africa, had witnessed an increase in poverty in the second half of the 1980s.<sup>7</sup> It added that poverty affected women more than others as a large percentage of poor families were headed by women. In poor families, women were often many times worse off than men because of the qualitative discrimination in the distribution of food and other benefits within the family.<sup>8</sup>

148. Following are some indicators of poverty among women in the Arab region.

(a) *Women with dependent families*

149. National reports show the following:

(a) Although there are no statistics on the situation of women with dependent families, some serious research attempts have been made to identify that group of women;

(b) The qualitatively and quantitatively limited research and studies have indicated the existence of a relatively high percentage of families headed by women in urban areas;

(c) Average family income is low compared with that of families headed by men; at the same time, families headed by women have shown higher rates of economic activity by the women and children of these families. Such rates are low for families headed by men;

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<sup>6</sup> Karima Kurayim, *Impact of the Policies of Economic Reform on Limited Income Families and Children in Egypt*, UNICEF, 1982.

<sup>7</sup> Najib Issa, "Poverty in the Arab World", Documents of the Arab Preparatory Meeting of Experts on the Arab Declaration on Social Development, Amman, September 1994.

<sup>8</sup> UNDP, *Report on Human Development, 1990*.

(d) Widowhood is considered the main cause for family dependence on women in most of the Arab States that suffer from poverty. In Lebanon, for example, most women with dependent families are widows; this remained constant between 1984 and 1992 showing a percentage of 72 and 73 respectively. For Somalia, research concluded that widowhood resulting from war was among the most significant causes of poverty among women. This research disclosed that 71 per cent of families in rural areas depend on women because of the death of husbands in the Somali war. There are other causes such as emigration by the husband for work in labour-importing Arab countries;

(e) The Gulf States are characterized by conditions that have led to their description as societies of plenty and welfare. The State in these societies plays a significant role in reversing the trend towards the phenomenon of women being responsible for families; the State provides financial care for such group of women;

(f) Palestine constitutes a special case because of demographic changes, continuing war, migration and exodus which make women support their families; there are also the widows of martyrs and the wives of detainees and deportees;

(g) Somalia constitutes a special case, too. Some studies have shown that women below the poverty line in desert areas represent about 49 per cent of the total; in rural areas about 47 per cent; in urban areas about 42 per cent of the total urban population. The main cause of poverty is war and its aftermath, namely famine, migration and violence.

150. In most Arab States, there is an absence of statistical data with time series regarding women with dependent families. However, national reports indicate the following research results:

(a) Relatively high number of families headed by women: In **Egypt**, a research on employment based on sampling and undertaken in 1988 showed that families headed by women constituted 18.3 per cent of the total number of families, reaching 18.3 per cent in urban areas and 17 per cent in rural areas. In the **Syrian Arab Republic**, Social and economic surveys conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform in 1992-1993, on the basis of samples taken from poor and middle-income groups in rural areas, have shown that, on average, families headed by women in those groups represent 4.1 per cent of the total number of families covered by the study. In **Jordan**, a 1991 survey of employment, unemployment, returnees and poverty has shown that families headed by women represent about 6.4 per cent of the total;

(b) Most families headed by women are poor: In **Egypt**, the income of families headed by women is nearly 37 per cent less than the average income of families headed by men. In **Jordan**, families headed by women belong to the lowest income groups, as 45.2 per cent of such families belong to the group with income below JD 100 compared with 19.3 per cent for all families in this income category;

(c) Despite the low average income of the Egyptian family headed by a woman, the rate of economic activity for females in those families reached 34 per cent, compared with 30 per cent for families dependent on men; for children these rates are 11 per cent and 9 per cent respectively;

(d) Widowhood is the main cause of family dependence on women. In **Egypt**, this applies to 60 per cent of total families headed by women. In the **Syrian Arab Republic**, there are three types of families dependent on women. Widowhood accounts for 8.9 per cent of those families;

(e) The absence of husbands due to emigration is considered one of the most important causes for the dependence of the family on women in **Egypt**, especially in rural areas where this phenomenon accounts for 71 per cent of families dependent on women, compared with 44 per cent of total for urban areas.

151. The Gulf States have their own special character. The national report of the **United Arab Emirates** shows that the average per capita GDP reached \$17,600 in 1993. Statistics show that the percentage of women with dependent families increased from 1.6 per cent of total families in 1980 to 2.6 per cent in 1985. The State provides such families with the financial assistance necessary to make their standard of living consistent with the social conditions of the State.

152. The State of **Kuwait** plays a significant role in preventing the rise of the phenomenon of families dependent on women. Kuwaiti women do not suffer from this problem thanks to the provisions of Public Assistance Law No. 19 of 1962.

153. In the **Sultanate of Oman**, although there was a slight increase in the percentage of women with dependent families out of the total of needy families—from 25 per cent in 1980, to 28 per cent in 1985, to 42 per cent in 1993—the State raised social security allocations for such families within the amount earmarked for social security. Allocations to these women increased from 12 per cent in 1980, to 38 per cent in 1985, to 62 per cent in 1993.

154. **Palestine** represents a special case in view of, *inter alia*, demographic changes, constant war, continuing migration and exodus. This compels women, widows of martyrs and the wives of prisoners and deportees to support their families. The following table for 1989 shows a breakdown of heads of families by gender:

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Jordan	Lebanon	Syrian Arab Republic	Total
Males	58 728	84 932	102 145	52 755	4 461	943 179
Females	32 291	17 796	22 731	14 846	12 987	100 651
Total	91 019	102 728	125 476	67 601	57 606	1 043 830
Female %	36.2	17.3	18.2	22.0	22.5	22.9

(b) *Unemployment<sup>9</sup>*

155. National reports point out the following issues:

(a) Unemployment among women correlates with poverty and illiteracy;

(b) The unemployment rate is low for the Gulf States in general; this may be attributed to the attempts by those States to provide a job for every citizen. In addition foreign workers are not allowed into the State unless they have an actual work contract;

(c) The unemployment rate increased in some Arab States such as Jordan and Yemen in the wake of the Gulf war as a result of the flow of returnees;

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<sup>9</sup> Unemployment refers to individuals seeking work but who have not found it.

(d) Occupation in Palestine, the events of Lebanon, and the Gulf war have all led to an decrease in the employment rate of Palestinian women.

156. It has already been indicated that during economic crises the unemployment rate for women exceeds that of men. The general tendency under conditions of increasing unemployment is to prefer hiring men to women. This is borne out by statistics.

157. In **Egypt**, according to the statistical data in the following table, the unemployment rate for women in cities was three times that of men in 1984 and 1988.

URBAN UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

Year	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total (%)
1984	6.2	17.7	8.4
1986	11.7	22.7	13.7
1988	8.7	25.8	13.0

158. In the **Syrian Arab Republic**, unemployed women represented 48 per cent of total unemployment in 1983 and then increased to 60 per cent in 1991. The rate for unemployed men dropped from 84 per cent of total unemployment in 1983 to 63 per cent in 1991.

159. In **Jordan**, the unemployment rate for women increased from 27 per cent in 1987 to 34.4 per cent in 1991, compared with an increase in male unemployment from 12.3 per cent to 14.5 per cent. Unemployment in cities correlates with poverty. The unemployment rate for poor women in Jordan neared 58.8 per cent of all unemployed women in 1991.

160. Data contained in the report of the State of **Kuwait** show a low unemployment rate in general. From 1980 to 1993, the unemployment rate dropped from 1.4 per cent in 1980 to 0.8 per cent in 1993.

161. In the **United Arab Emirates**, statistical data show a low unemployment rate in general.

162. In the **Sultanate of Oman**, the 1993 population census shows no unemployment problem. The State continues to employ foreign workers. The Ministry of Civil Service and the local employment offices of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour are constantly providing job opportunities to those wishing to work.

163. The report of the **Republic of Iraq** shows that unemployment rates for women increased from 11 per cent to 19 per cent during the period 1977-1990.

164. The situation in **Yemen** is different. Official statistics from 1987 to 1988 show that unemployed women constitute 20 per cent of the unemployed and those looking for jobs for the first time. The rate of unemployment for men, especially in the wake of the Gulf war, increased to nearly 36 per cent. This rate is contrary to projections and may be attributed to technical/statistical causes or to the return home from the Gulf of large numbers of workers.

165. Statistics contained in the national report of the State of **Palestine** indicate that the conditions of occupation and the linking of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with the Israeli economy caused increasing



unemployment rates. Since women are the weakest part of the market, the volume of their working force fell during the period from 1980 to 1990. The events in Lebanon led to a decrease in the Palestinian female workforce. In the wake of the Gulf war and of its economic impact on the Palestinians, the unemployment rate in Lebanon reached 38 per cent in 1992, leading to a sharp drop in Palestinian standards of living. UNRWA figures show that 11.8 per cent of the population of the refugee camps were living under very severe hardships, the highest percentage in the areas of operation of UNRWA. In the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, unemployment in 1990, during the *intifadah*, reached 19.8 per cent in the West Bank and 3.9 per cent in the Gaza Strip, the total being 22.3 per cent. In 1991, the unemployment rate, including underemployment and the returnees, reached 42.7 per cent.

(c) *Public day-care centres for children*

166. Country reports show that:

(a) Although the number of public day-care centres for children has increased noticeably during recent years, statistics indicate that the proportion of children enrolled in such centres is very modest in relation to the numbers of youngsters in this age group who are in need of such centres. This shows that the number of nurseries and kindergartens is low. In addition, some research results indicate that the role played by these centres in relieving the burdens borne by working mothers is marginal and ineffective;

(b) Most Gulf States provide this kind of centre and have recently shown interest in increasing the number of nursery and kindergarten classes;

(c) In some other Arab States the number of these centres has decreased during recent years.

167. The enrolment in nurseries in **Egypt** increased from 165,328 children in 1982/1983 to 382,000 children in 1990/1991. In the Syrian Arab Republic, enrolment increased from 32,539 children in 1980 to 87,006 children in 1990. These increases were accompanied by a corresponding increase in the number of nurseries and kindergartens in both countries. In Egypt, the number of nurseries was 2,355 in 1982/1983, increasing to 4,400 in 1990/1991. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the number of kindergartens increased from 352 in 1980 to 982 in 1990. Irrespective of the increase in the number of these centres, the statistics relating to Egypt indicate that the proportion of children enrolled in nurseries did not exceed 3.8 per cent of the total number of children in the relevant age group. This clearly indicates that the number of nurseries is low and that their role in relieving working mothers in Egypt is marginal and ineffective.

168. The Gulf States provide day-care centres. Official statistics indicate that the number of these centres is on the rise. In **Kuwait**, the number of kindergartens increased from 94 in 1985/1986 to 121 in 1992/1993. During the period 1980/1981 to 1991/1992 in the **United Arab Emirates**, the number of children covered by day-care increased 7.53 times, and the number of classes increased 8.65 times.

169. In **Iraq**, the public child-care centres are unable to address the needs of motherhood and childhood. Data shows that the number of nurseries fell from 235 in 1985 to 212 in 1990 and to 201 in 1993. The number of kindergartens, however, increased from 584 in 1985/1986 to 646 in 1990/1991, and then fell to 578 in 1993/1994. This is due to the economic crisis that has faced Iraq since 1982.

170. Although the statistical data of the country report of **Palestine** show that the number of kindergartens and kindergarten enrolment have recently increased, the capacity of these centres is still not enough to address the needs of working women. In 1990 there were 221 kindergartens in the West Bank, including Jerusalem, and 78 in Gaza Strip. The corresponding numbers in 1993 were 251 and 105, respectively. The latest

UNICEF statistics for Lebanon indicate that in 1992 there were 82 child-care centres, of which 76 per cent were kindergartens, 11 per cent were nurseries and 13 per cent were care centres in private homes.

(d) Vocational training

171. The national reports indicate the following:

(a) Vocational training is one of the most important methods for raising the level of skills required in the labour market;

(b) The Arab States differ in the indicators they use to discuss vocational training. Some States, such as Egypt, used indicators of formal vocational and technical education to describe vocational training. Others, like Jordan and Palestine, described the role of official and non-official training institutions in this regard;

(c) It was found that despite the increase in the number of female trainees during recent years, this number is still small in comparison with their male counterparts;

(d) Attention given to training in the Gulf States increased after the 1990 war in response to the policy of replacing foreign labour with national labour.

172. Given that the enrolment in technical and commercial institutes and schools in **Egypt** is huge and that the enrolment in industrial technical schools and institutes is modest, the status of Egyptian girls in this context should be indicated. A detailed analysis of the distribution of graduates of technical secondary schools and of male and female teachers institutes indicates that females are concentrated in commercial secondary schools and teachers institutes. There are far fewer females in agricultural and industrial education, although there is a noticeable increase in the proportion of females graduating from industrial schools (from 12 per cent in 1982/1983 to 20 per cent in 1989/1990) and from agricultural schools (from 14 per cent in 1982/1983 to 23 per cent in 1989/1990). These data indicate that the training of females follows the traditional pattern, with female graduates being concentrated in the fields of sales services and clerical work, and in teaching, particularly primary education. It is noted also that the proportion of females is low in the higher-level industrial technical institutes established by the Ministry of Higher Education and relatively high in the technical commercial institutes. The proportion of female students in industrial technical institutes was only 5 per cent in 1982/1983 but increased to 20 per cent in 1989/1990, whereas the corresponding proportion for commercial technical institutes reached 38 per cent in 1982/1983 and 41 per cent in 1989/1990.

173. The country report of **Jordan** indicates that training opportunities available to women have increased, but are still concentrated in the urban areas. The proportion of females benefiting from short-term and medium-term vocational training in 1992 reached about 24 per cent of total trainees. The report also indicated that the distribution, by sex, of training opportunities provided by the departments of the Ministry of Social Development was in favour of females in proportions much higher than those of males (for example, 93 per cent of training services were directed towards females in 1992). All trainees who benefited from short courses organized by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) were females.

174. The reports of **Kuwait** and **Oman** indicate that both States support vocational training for women. Statistics for 1992/1993 show that a quarter of those who graduated from the centres and institutes of the General Authority for Applied Education in Kuwait and who attended courses organized by that authority are females. That proportion was only 11 per cent in 1985/1986. Statistics of Oman showed that 150 women took part in training courses for women at the level of all provinces and regions of the country.

175. In **Iraq**, the State provided equal opportunities for the training of women in the different training centres and institutes. Data indicated that in spite of the variation in the numbers of training units, their number increased from 111 to 169 between 1985 and 1990. Health training units represent the largest proportion at 79.9 per cent. The proportion of vocational units reached 12.4 per cent. During the period 1990 to 1992, 40,000 training opportunities were provided for women in 4,583 training courses. It is noted that women represent about half the participants in all training and human resources development courses. Female participants accounted for 45.6 per cent of total training course enrollees in 1986, and 30 per cent in 1991. The corresponding percentage for women who participated in human resources development courses were 44 per cent in 1986 and 48.7 per cent in 1991.

176. In **Palestine**, although the parties involved in vocational training give attention to the training of Palestinian women, these parties were able, in cooperation with Arab and international bodies, to develop numerous training programmes in the development fields both inside and outside the homeland. However, there are not enough training opportunities, and providing work opportunities for all women trainees is not an easy task.

##### *5. The participation of women in shaping the economic structure*

177. In this context, it can be pointed out that accurate quantitative indicators related to this aspect are difficult to come by given the lack of detailed statistics about distribution by sex of ownership, loans and accounts. However, the following conclusions can be reached within the limits of available information:

(a) The loans granted to women are limited. In the Syrian Arab Republic, for example, the results of some field studies conducted in 1993 revealed that loans granted to women accounted for no more than 4.6 per cent of total loans granted. In Jordan, according to 1993 statistics, the ratio was almost 12.9 per cent. It should be noted that most of the loans granted to women in Jordan are concentrated in industrial, engineering and agricultural enterprises, which together accounted for 95.2 per cent of the total loans granted;

(b) The limited participation of women in high-level economic policy formulation is related to their weak participation in financial accounts and the loans granted;

(c) Although the accounts of women and the loans granted to them are limited in comparison to those of men, these accounts and loans are relatively high in comparison with other indicators—the review of the conditions of Arab women referred to above. This may be due to the lack of self-confidence or of social and economic security on the part of women. In other words, the state of anxiety in which women live induces them to save money or to apply for loans in their names for investment;

(d) Ownership of agricultural land is connected with the objective conditions in force in the Arab region, especially in regard to the cultural dimensions of the rural areas which revere the dominance of males in the context of a philosophy of social responsibility and in the light of prevailing patterns of family life. This has limited women's ownership of the means of production. Although Islamic law (Shariah) regulates the inheritance of women and permits her being financially independent, and although some laws, such as agricultural reform law, emphasize non-discrimination, especially if the woman supports her family, in actual practice it usually happens that the woman forgoes her inheritance for the benefit of the brother or the husband as the family head responsible for the family or because the family seeks to avoid fragmentation of holdings of agricultural land. Sometimes, the women are reimbursed in kind or in cash for foregoing their inheritance. Whatever influence the traditional culture may have on women's ownership of agricultural land, it can be said that the rapid social changes taking place in Arab society have led in some Arab countries to a rise in the proportion of women who become landowners through inheritance. Statistical data for 1993,

in Jordan, for example, indicated that the number of women who own agricultural land or property was about 28.6 per cent of total owners, and that their ownership was through inheritance in accordance with Shariah.

178. It should be pointed out that the indicators of land ownership, size of loans granted and bank-account holdings are no indication of the effectiveness of the economic role played by women or of their participation in shaping the economic structure. Rather, social and family relationships and legal practices make these indicators what they are. There is, therefore, a need to study the social and cultural factors that govern women's ownership of land, as well as the loans or bank accounts that they hold.

#### 6. *Empowering women in the fields of education, health and labour*

179. This part of the report deals with the basic approaches adopted in the study of the issues related to education, health services and labour, which can be summarized as follows:

(a) The major challenge that faces the empowerment of women in the fields of education, health and labour is the high rate of population growth in some Arab countries, which is higher than that of the rest of the developing countries. The relatively high fertility rate is the main reason behind the high population growth rate. This means that the proportion of population in the younger age groups is high, limiting to some extent the physical capabilities for providing health, education and labour services;

(b) The 1960s, 1970s and 1980s was a period which witnessed the most important factors of change for women. The most important of these changes were the laws which changed and defined the framework and context of Arab society during these decades, which were characterized by an increase in the education rate, a commitment on the part of most Arab States to provide health care and social care to their citizens as well as their commitment to provide work opportunities to men and women alike, and the adoption of a great deal of legislation designed to increase the participation of women in the field of labour and to achieve equality between women and men in rights and duties;

(c) Although social legislation has been developed, in practice it does not provide the opportunity to utilize all the capabilities and capacities of women. The Arab woman faces traditions that undermine the philosophy on which the laws are based in a context of fast-paced activity and change. This induces some Arab societies to enact special laws for women with the express purpose of supporting women and helping them exercise their rights;

(d) It does not seem feasible to rely solely on statistics relating to Arab women, because data are sometimes contradictory and differ both within one country and among the various Arab countries with respect to results, terminology, concepts, and methodology. Often, statistics vary depending on the attitudes of each individual country, especially with respect to sensitive issues such as education, health services and labour. Moreover there is a lack of statistics that would allow gender comparisons between the situation of women and men.

#### (a) *Illiteracy*

180. The country reports indicated the following:

(a) Arab countries are most interested in implemented programmes designed to eradicate illiteracy among men and women;

(b) Despite the relative decrease in the illiteracy rate among men and women, Arab society still suffers from the problem of illiteracy, particularly among women;

(c) The rates of illiteracy among women vary from country to country. In **Yemen**, the illiteracy rate among women is 85 per cent, followed by: **Somalia**, 79 per cent; **Egypt**, 59.2 per cent (1990 statistics); **Kuwait**, 38.4 per cent (1990 figure); the **Syrian Arab Republic**, 31.6 per cent (1992); **Iraq**, 25.2 per cent (1987); **Jordan**, 25 per cent (1992); and **Palestine**, 21.2 per cent (1990, according to UNESCO statistics). The persistently high rates of illiteracy in the Arab countries is due to the following:

- (i) Traditions, especially in the rural and desert areas;
- (ii) The high illiteracy rate among women, which can be partly explained by the high illiteracy rate among the age group above 40 years, who did not have a chance to receive an education;
- (iii) Lack of commitment to the policy of compulsory education;
- (iv) High population density in some countries;
- (v) Inadequate material and human resources in some Arab countries;

(d) Some Gulf countries have developed programmes for eradicating illiteracy, and have relatively low illiteracy rates. This may be explained by these countries' financial capabilities and the small size of their populations;

(e) NGOs play a positive and effective role in implementing literacy programmes, and the cooperation established between NGOs and Governments in this respect has been effective;

(f) Some literacy programmes do not achieve the desired results. They provide the women students with simple courses on the rules of reading and writing in general, but with the end of the courses, the students gradually lose what they learned because of lack of follow-up.

181. In **Egypt**, there are advanced efforts and activities to eradicate Egyptian women's illiteracy, yet the illiteracy rate is still high for those aged 15 years and more, and their illiteracy rates are higher than those for men. The female illiteracy rate was 59.2 per cent in 1990, against 35.5 per cent for men in the same year. Statistical data for 1986 showed that the female illiteracy rate was about 45.6 per cent in the age group 15-24 years, against 28 per cent for men in the same age group. The female illiteracy rate was about 46.7 per cent for the age group 25-44 years, against 29 per cent for men in this age group. The wide gap persisted between the two sexes in the age group 45 years plus, with a female illiteracy rate of about 85.3 per cent for women, against 59 per cent for men. Data from 1986 also showed that the illiteracy rate for women in the rural areas was higher than that for women in urban areas, about 76 per cent as opposed to 54 per cent. Illiteracy rates have decreased faster for women than for men. While the illiteracy rate for urban men remained more or less constant during the period 1976 to 1986, the rate for women decreased by about 9.5 per cent. In the rural areas, the female illiteracy rate decreased by about 12 per cent, whereas that for men decreased by only about 8.6 per cent.

182. In the **Syrian Arab Republic**, the illiteracy rate among women decreased during the period 1981 to 1992. While that rate was 55.2 per cent in 1981 for women in general, it was 41 per cent for the age group 15-24 years and 67.7 per cent for the age group 25-44. The rate decreased for the former age group to 12.4 per cent thanks to the intensive efforts made by the Ministry of Culture and grass-roots organizations, especially the General Federation for Women, and for the latter group to 37.5 per cent in 1992. For women in general the rate decreased to 31.6 per cent thanks to the serious application of the compulsory education law. A decree to grant illiterate workers and employees (male and female) two hours a day out of their

regular work hours to attend literacy classes in their plants and factories, and to freeze the appointment of any worker until they attain literacy, gave impetus to the illiteracy eradication process.

183. Statistical data in **Jordan** indicate that the illiteracy rate for women is higher than for men in all age groups. The efforts made to provide universal, compulsory education and literacy and adult education programmes resulted in a decline in the female illiteracy rate from 49.5 per cent in 1979 to 33.4 per cent in 1987 and to 25 per cent in 1992. However, illiteracy is much lower in the 15-34 age group.

184. Data from the 1980 census of **Kuwait** indicate that the female illiteracy rate is about 38.4 per cent. High illiteracy in the age groups above 40 years pulls this rate up and results from the lack of education opportunities for women before 1957, that is before the independence of Kuwait.

185. The **United Arab Emirates** seeks to eradicate illiteracy by the year 2000 in accordance with a plan being implemented through literacy and adult education centres. Statistics indicate that the illiteracy rate in the Emirates is relatively low compared to the rate in other Arab countries. Data showed that the illiteracy rate for the country as a whole is about 21.5 per cent and that illiteracy is highest among the older age groups, while the rate in the younger age group (10-14) will shortly vanish completely as it was only 1.3 per cent for males and 2.1 per cent for females.

186. The illiteracy rate in **Qatar** fell from 66 per cent in the early 1970s to 29 per cent in 1986 and to 22 per cent in 1990. Statistics indicate that women's illiteracy is relatively higher than men's illiteracy. The data for 1986 revealed that the illiteracy rate was 29.1 per cent among women and did not exceed 15.4 per cent for men.

187. **Bahrain** is among the leading Arab countries in eradicating illiteracy and in adult education, with the private sector playing a part in illiteracy eradication. In 1962, the first literacy and adult education classes were opened, in the headquarters of various women's associations. The curricula of these classes were developed to include health awareness and the family. These were complemented with programmes that qualify women who finished literacy courses to complete their secondary-school education. To enable mothers to continue their studies, free evening kindergartens were opened in 1984 at some literacy centres. Although the illiteracy rate among women in Bahrain fell between 1981 and 1991, it is still high in comparison with the male illiteracy rate. Whereas the female illiteracy rate was 29.8 per cent in 1981, the male illiteracy rate fell to 9.1 per cent. In 1991, the illiteracy rate was 10.5 per cent among women and fell to 2.6 per cent among men. Illiteracy rates in general in Bahrain, particularly among women, are relatively low in comparison with other Arab countries.

188. In **Iraq**, a national campaign to eradicate illiteracy targeted the 15-45 age group. The illiteracy rate is still high, although it fell substantially between 1977 and 1987, from 62.4 per cent to 25.2 per cent for women and from 24.4 per cent to 13 per cent for men in this period.

189. In **Yemen**, data indicate that the illiteracy rate in Yemeni society is high, between 65 per cent and 70 per cent of the total population. Data show also that illiteracy is more prevalent among women than among men at the country level and in both rural and urban areas. It was found that the illiteracy rate was about 85 per cent among females, compared with 55 per cent among males and that the illiteracy rate among females is high in the rural areas, ranging between 93 per cent and 96 per cent, against 49 per cent for males. In the urban areas, the illiteracy rate among females ranged between 67 per cent and 70 per cent, against only 38 per cent for males.

190. The national institutions and women's committees and organizations of **Palestine** pay a great deal of attention to the issue of literacy in a fashion that is commensurate with the limited material resources

available. Israeli statistics show that the illiteracy rate among Palestinian women (15 years old and older) in the West Bank and Gaza Strip was 32 per cent in the early 1990s. According to UNESCO statistics, the illiteracy rate among females for the age group 15-45 years was 20.2 per cent.

(b) *Education*

191. Education indicators for the Arab countries as a whole can be summarized as follows:

(a) All constitutions and laws of the Arab countries provide for the right of women to education and to equal opportunities with men in this right;

(b) During the past two decades the Arab countries have achieved noticeable progress in the field of education, particularly women's education. In all education levels the number of females registered increased in comparison with previous decades. In many Arab countries, the female education rates equalled those of males at all education levels. In most Arab countries, the proportion of female graduates for each education level is equal to the proportion of their enrolment in the given level;

(c) Enrolment rates for females differ according to geographical area, being lower in rural and remote areas than in urban areas;

(d) Although compulsory education is recent in the Gulf countries, the education rates for females are high, sometimes higher than those for males. This may be due to the fact that Gulf women consider that education is a source of social mobility and their involvement in society;

(e) Irrespective of figures, it can be concluded that education, as a social system, adjusts along with the traditional culture of society, which implies that a complete job of assessing the variable of education cannot be done using only quantitative indicators. The higher educational attainment of Arab females over males, for example, though it can be considered a positive indicator showing that females excel over males, may indicate that equal opportunities are not yet provided in society. The many opportunities and activities available to boys induce them to divide their capabilities and energies among the different opportunities available to them, weakening their concentration on educational attainment. On the other hand, girls, who have no similar opportunities, have no choice other than concentrating on their education;

(f) Lack of equality is also evidenced by the fact that in spite of the high proportion of females who graduate from secondary schools, the majority of them enrol in theoretical colleges and only a few in colleges of science and technology (if the education regulations so allow);

(g) The case of **Palestine** is exceptional in terms of how the educational process is handled, especially during the *intifadah* and the present transitional period. In this context Palestinian women, in common with their Arab sisters, do not enjoy complete access to equal education opportunities for the reasons given above.

192. For **Egypt**, the following can be indicated:

(a) The female enrolment ratio in primary education varies according to geographical distribution. These percentages are high in large cities like Cairo, where in 1988 they were as high as 95 per cent of females who were at school-entry age. The percentages are lowest in the villages of Upper Egypt, reaching 57 per cent;

(b) The female enrolment ratio for primary education in large cities such as Cairo is close to the corresponding ratio for males, reaching 95 per cent and 98 per cent, respectively, in 1988;

(c) The female enrolment ratio for preparatory education also increased during the period 1980/1981 to 1992/1993, from 37.5 per cent to 43.5 per cent. The female enrolment ratio for secondary education increased also, from 36.7 per cent to 45 per cent during the same period;

(d) The female preparatory enrolment ratio is low in comparison with the corresponding ratio for males, being 37.5 per cent only for females and 62 per cent for males in 1980/1981. The situation was not much different in 1992/1993, but the gap between the females and males registered in 1992/1993 narrowed, with ratios of 43.5 per cent and 56.5 per cent, respectively;

(e) The rates of completion of study are the same for males and females in all education levels in Egypt, indicating that education opportunities provided for females in Egypt are equal to those provided for males;

(f) Although the proportion of female secondary school graduates increased from 32 per cent in 1982/1983 to about 40 per cent in 1989/1990, the distribution of female graduates in the general secondary streams (science, mathematics, and literary) shows a concentration of females in the literary stream (44 per cent) and the sciences stream (43.7 per cent) in 1989/1990, with the percentage for the mathematics stream being as low as 16.6 per cent in the same year. This affects the proportion of females who enrol in colleges that qualify them to work in non-traditional fields, like engineering, technology, electronics, oil and mining, or in the industrial technical institutes of the Ministry of Higher Education;

(g) The percentage of female participation in the teaching profession increased from 48.8 per cent in 1980/1981 to 53.6 per cent in 1992/1993;

(h) It should be mentioned here that despite the positive contribution on the part of women in the teaching profession, this is nevertheless an indication of the traditional division of work by sex, since the teaching profession is seen as an extension of the female's traditional role as care-giver.

193. In **Lebanon** it was very difficult to collect accurate information about the status of females in the education sector, for several reasons, the most important of which was that Lebanon has been in a period of turmoil that made it impossible to collect quantitative information about this activity. The work done by the concerned governmental departments was poor and almost non-existent at some points when hostilities escalated. The data available about intermediate-level education indicate that the percentage of girls registered in that level was about 50.98 in 1981/1982, 51.68 per cent in 1988/1989, 52.56 per cent in 1991/1992, and 52.95 per cent in 1992/1993. The following may be deduced: the increase in the percentage of girls in this level, relative to their percentage in the primary level and to the percentage of boys in the intermediate level shows that the drop-out rate is higher for boys than for girls, for social, economic, psychological behavioural reasons; and the increase in this percentage may be due to the fact that boys opt more at this stage for vocational and technical education.

(a) In vocational and technical sectors of education, the percentage of females was 38.98 per cent in the year 1980/1981, 40.40 per cent in the year 1981/1982, 46.44 per cent in the year 1991/1992 and 46 per cent in 1992/1993, a relative increase over 10 years;

(b) At the general secondary level, the percentage of females was 52.16 per cent in the year 1981/1982. This figure increased to 54.07 per cent during 1991/1992 and to 53.67 per cent during 1992/1993. This percentage is slightly higher than the proportion of females in the total population. It shows indirectly that drop-out rates are higher among male students; this is confirmed by registration rates in the intermediate level. This proportion also shows that female students pursue their studies with zeal and are able to persist and succeed when given the opportunity;



(c) The period 1980/1981 to 1990/1993 witnessed substantial development in the number of female students in universities and institutes of higher learning in **Lebanon**. The proportion of female students increased from 35.94 per cent in the year 1980/1981 to 44.28 per cent in the year 1992/1993. This indicator shows a gradual change in the prevailing mentality, as well as in the opportunities available for girls, including the opening of branches of various universities in different areas and governorates.

194. The country report of **Jordan** shows that:

(a) The kindergarten level includes children 4-6 years of age, with females accounting for 44.4 per cent of the total number of children enrolled in the school year 1980/1981. This figure increased to 45.0 per cent in 1984/1985 and to 46.0 per cent in the year 1992/1993. The female enrolment ratio at the kindergarten level was 13.2 per cent in 1980/1981 and increased to 18.6 per cent in 1984/1985, and to 20.0 per cent of the total number of females in the age group 4-6 year in 1991/1992;

(b) Females at the compulsory/basic level accounted for 47.1 per cent of the total number of pupils in 1980/1981. They accounted for 47.4 per cent in 1984/1985 and for 49.1 per cent in 1992/1993. The female enrolment ratio for compulsory education changed from 89.8 per cent in 1980/1981 to 89.1 per cent in 1984/1985, then to 81.7 per cent in 1991/1992, when the tenth grade was added to the compulsory level (so that basic education comprised the first to the tenth grades). Statistics show that the female enrolment ratio for the compulsory/basic level is approximately equal to the male enrolment ratio at the same level;

(c) At the secondary-education level, females made up 45.3 per cent of total enrolment in 1980/1981, 47.3 per cent in 1984/1985 and 49.1 per cent in 1992/1993. Statistics show that the female enrolment ratio for secondary education was 67.5 per cent in 1980/1981 and 69.5 per cent in 1984/1985. It declined to 38.3 per cent in 1991/1992 when the secondary education level was modified to include only the eleventh and twelfth grades as opposed to grades 10 through 12. Statistics show also that the female enrolment ratio at this level is higher than that of males. However, the percentage of females at the secondary level varies between academic education and vocational education. While female students accounted for 53.8 per cent of all secondary academic-education students in 1992/1993, they made up only 35.2 per cent of total students in secondary vocational education for the same year, which shows that female students are more inclined to continue their secondary education than male students, some of whom enter the labour market after the basic-education level. It also shows that females at the secondary level prefer to pursue an academic education rather than a vocational education. In addition, their enrolment in the various branches of vocational education concentrates mainly on nursing, commerce (administration and finance), and applied education (tailoring and cosmetology); the percentage of females in industrial, hotel, agricultural and vocational apprenticeship streams is low;

(d) The percentage of female students at the higher-education level, that is at the level of community colleges (intermediate institutes), varied from 42.7 per cent of the total number of students in 1980/1981, to 47.2 per cent in 1984/1985 and to 55.1 per cent in 1991/1992. The net percentage of female enrolment at the higher-education level at community colleges varied from 18.2 per cent in 1980/1981 to 21.0 per cent in 1984/1985. This is an indication that female students have an increased tendency to join community colleges and to continue their higher education. However, they concentrate on certain programmes, namely academic, paramedical and business administration and finance;

(e) Female students as a percentage of total students enrolled in bachelor's programmes at Jordanian universities increased from 35.9 per cent in 1985/1986 to 49.5 per cent in 1991/1992. Their percentage at the diploma, master's and doctor levels also increased, from 21.8 per cent in 1985/1986 to 22.9 per cent in 1991/1992.

195. The report of the **United Arab Emirates** revealed the following:

(a) Rates of increase among females were always higher than those among males. While the average rate of increase among males was 17.6 per cent during the first period under consideration, the average rate of increase among females was 21.2 per cent. However, during the second period under consideration, i.e. 1985/1986 to 1991/1992, the annual rate of increase was 10.0 per cent for both sexes; the rate of increase for male students was 9.8 per cent, while for female students the rate was 10.4 per cent;

(b) The primary enrolment ratio, that is the number of male and female students enrolled in primary education as a percentage of the total population in the age group 6-11 years, is presently 98.8 per cent for male nationals and 99.4 per cent for female nationals. It is 95.9 per cent among non-national males and around 87.2 per cent for non-national females;

(c) The enrolment ratio at the preparatory level, that is students enrolled at the preparatory level as a percentage of total population in the age group 12-14 years increased considerably, when the preparatory level was made compulsory, from 39.4 per cent to 94.4 per cent over the past 10 years among nationals; and from 44 per cent to 79.1 per cent among non-nationals;

(d) At the secondary level, the enrolment ratio, that is students registered at the secondary education level as a percentage of population in the age group 15-18 years, has also increased considerably over the past ten years, from 14.2 per cent to 65.6 per cent among nationals, and from 22.6 per cent to 83.5 per cent of the total number of non-national students;

(e) Statistics show that opportunities for females to acquire a university education are available and that the number of females registered in the various faculties of universities is greater than the number of male students. Females accounted for 50 per cent of total university enrolment in the year 1980/1981, and increased to 73.6 per cent of the total number of students in the scholastic year 1990/1991;

(f) Women occupy a high position in the field of educational services and in the teaching profession, holding more than 56 per cent of such posts during the academic year 1991/1992.

196. The educational status of females in **Qatar** is reflected in the excellent educational services provided by the State. Statistics from 1986 show that 41 per cent of females had earned primary, preparatory or secondary certificates, as against 46 per cent of males. About 5.9 per cent of females had managed to continue their studies at the post-secondary, university or post-graduate level, as opposed to 7.7 per cent of males.

(a) Female citizens of Qatar are still new to technical education, there being no technical (commercial or industrial) secondary schools for girls. However, the opening of the Faculty of Technology at the University of Qatar in academic year 1990/1991 will open the door to females to avail themselves of this type of education;

(b) Most females in Qatar study the social sciences, the humanities or education. During the seven-year period between the academic years 1985/1986 and 1991/1992, most females studied in the Faculty of Education or the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. There is no separate faculty of engineering for women, although the opening of the Faculty of Technology in 1990/1991 gave Qatari females the opportunity to acquire a technical education. Females accounted for 31.9 per cent of total student enrolment in the academic year 1990/1991 and for 48.7 per cent in 1991/1992;

(c) As a result of the level of education attained by women in Qatar, they have begun to work in sectors that are in harmony with the values, customs and traditions of society, the most important of these being education. Female teachers working in the Ministry of Education at the primary, preparatory and secondary levels in 1992 accounted for 92 per cent of teachers in Qatar. There were 238 male teachers out of a total of 3,042 teachers.

197. The country report of **Oman** indicated the following:

(a) Statistics showed a substantial rise in the number of females enrolled in the various levels of education. The number of girls registered at the primary level increased from 31,362 against 60,290 male pupils in 1980 to 77,504 female pupils against 97,948 male pupils in 1985, and to 135,065 female pupils against 148,769 male pupils during the period 1990 to 1993. This quantitative increase represents a relative increase in girls registered in this level as a proportion of all enrollees, from 34 per cent to 48 per cent during the period 1980 to 1993;

(b) The number of females enrolled in secondary education increased from 3,445 (as opposed to 10,284 boys) in 1980, to 11,060 girls (against 31,668 boys) in 1985, and to 44,340 girls (against 52,023) during the period 1990 to 1993;

(c) There has been a clear increase in the number of females completing the first and second levels of studies—from 34,807 in 1980 to 88,564 in 1985 and to 179,405 during the period 1990 to 1993;

(d) There were 1,840 female university students as opposed to 1,664 male students during the period 1990 to 1993;

(e) The number of male teachers exceeded that of female teachers during the 1980s. In 1980, there were 3,869 male teachers against 1,794 female teachers. In 1985 there were 6,840 male teachers as opposed to 4,328 female teachers, and for the period 1990 to 1993, there were 11,165 male teachers against 9,468 female teachers.

198. The country report of **Iraq** indicated the following:

(a) The enrolment ratio for primary-school-age girls rose from 82.25 per cent during the school year 1985/1986 to 89.83 per cent during 1989/1990;

(b) For intermediate education, there is still a considerable gap between the enrolment ratios for girls and boys, although it has improved. Since the educational system does not put any obstacles that would hinder the enrolment of girls, there is legitimate room for questioning the reasons for this gap; there is as well an urgent need for the Ministry of Education to encourage field studies that would uncover the reasons for the lagging female enrolment ratio for intermediate education. This is all the more pressing considering that all global trends are calling for intermediate education to be included in the compulsory education cycle;

(c) In spite of its fluctuations, the enrolment ratio in the other educational levels is considered high, if the competition from the labour market against the school system for people in this age group is taken into account. The female enrolment ratio at the university level is somewhat high, indicating that there is demand for higher education among graduates of secondary schools.

199. The country report for **Yemen** indicated the following:

(a) Statistics showed an enrolment ratio of almost 30 per cent for girls of compulsory-cycle age; for boys in this age group the ratio was 83 per cent;

(b) Girls account for about 27.5 per cent of total enrolment at the compulsory-cycle level. For secondary education, girls make up no more than 17 per cent of total enrolment. Females make up 16 per cent of total university enrolment;

(c) A breakdown of enrolment by area shows a clear disparity between urban and rural areas. In some urban areas, such as Sana'a, Ta'iz and Aden, the female enrolment ratio is as high as 10 per cent; this ratio is lower in the rural areas;

(d) Technical and vocational education is limited to males, with the exception of some types of institutes for teachers and intermediate commercial institutes. The situation differs to a certain extent in the southern governorates, with 13 per cent of the enrolment in industrial education comprised of females in 1990/1991 and 7.5 per cent of enrolment in education in agriculture and fisheries for the year 1990/1991 comprised of females. The opening of applied agricultural and industrial colleges (within the universities at Aden and Sana'a) has provided females with the chance to pursue this type of education;

(e) In commercial education, females accounted for 20.5 per cent of total student enrolment in the academic year 1980/1981. This proportion rose to 21.5 per cent in 1984/1985 and to 23.4 per cent in 1991/1992. This positive trend in female education is the result of the commercial activity that is being experienced in the capitals of various governorates and in the urban areas;

(f) Statistics show that female teachers made up almost 26 per cent of all primary-level teachers in 1990/1991, with most of them concentrated in the main cities. At the preparatory level, almost 25 per cent of teachers were female during the same academic year, and 29 per cent of secondary-school teachers were women.

200. The country report for **Palestine** indicated the following:

(a) Traditions and social conditions presented a barrier to women's education. However, the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967 led to a number of economic and social changes in the framework of Palestinian society, as did the subsequent annexation of the Palestinian economy to the Israeli economy and the encouragement of Palestinian labour to enter Israeli markets, besides the emigration of thousands of Palestinian men to the Gulf countries to work. Among these changes were the entrance of women into the field of education in a broader fashion than had previously been the case. However, it cannot be said that Palestinian women managed to gain admission into the various fields of education without meeting obstacles and discrimination. Indeed the country report indicates that discrimination still exists and that there are many problems standing in the way of the development of female education in Palestinian society, especially considering the lack of a national authority able to implement and protect basic education;

(b) The educational sector in the areas under occupation suffers from a misconceptualization of compulsory education on the part of families, who consider that compulsory education means providing free tuition and books; it does not mean forcing a guardian to send the girls under his care to school under the threat of material or other types of punitive measures. In such conditions, the decision on whether to send a girl to school is left up to the guardian and with it the progress of the educational process. Providing the necessary conditions and prerequisites for moving the educational process along is essential in limiting illiteracy, and the experience of the occupation has amply demonstrated that the occupation authorities were not concerned with developing education; they ignored education in the rural areas and were unconcerned with constructing enough suitable school buildings, let alone laboratories, libraries or playing fields. In such

a situation, the guardians of school-children, especially girls, tended to interfere in a negative way, discouraging the children for whom they were responsible from continuing their compulsory education;

(c) The lack of accurate statistics on compulsory education in the West Bank and Gaza Strip was due to the status of the population, with the West Bank under Jordanian administration before 1967 and the Gaza Strip under Egyptian administration, meaning that two different educational systems were in use. Under such circumstances, the task of obtaining accurate, general information on indicators of education was far from easy;

(d) Before 1967, higher education for females was restricted to teachers colleges as there were no universities at that time and parents did not allow their daughters to travel abroad. Once universities, private institutes and colleges were established in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the 1970s, girls started enrolling in them. A national report on the subject referred to the decrease in the percentage of female students in higher education as evidence of the negative effects that the living conditions of the Palestinian people during the preceding few years had had on education in general and on girls education in particular. The raiding and closing of universities, the cutting-off of areas and the denial of freedom of movement to students, as well as the lack of employment opportunities for graduates, combined to obstruct the education process. It has been noted that most of the disciplines chosen by female university students were traditional and were not useful in getting jobs after graduation, which is proof of a lack of planning to make education meet the requirements of the labour market in all the Arab countries under review.

(c) *Health*

201. Although the level of general health in Arab countries has improved significantly, the level of general health varies from one Arab country to another. Most Arab countries are still suffering from: (a) relatively low levels of life expectancy at birth in comparison with some developing countries and all developed countries; (b) high mortality rates of mothers during pregnancy and delivery; (c) high infant mortality rates; (d) high fertility rates and large families, which reduce the amount of care the mother and the family can devote to each child; (e) deterioration of the health situation of Arab women as a result of repeated pregnancies and deliveries in difficult social and economic circumstances; (f) deterioration of the nutritional level with a high percentage of children suffering from anaemia. In addition to these common features, Arab countries differ in their health trends and policies and the implementation of family planning and birth control.

202. While the **Gulf States** provide health services to their citizens free of charge, which ranks them among developed countries according to human development indicators, the remaining Arab countries suffer from low health levels as a result of economic, military and political crises.

203. From a review of the national report of **Egypt**, it can be seen that the steady improvement in health levels in Egypt is due to the health services which the Ministry of Health provides free of charge in public hospitals and health units in all rural areas and which are specifically geared to mother and child health. The following can also be noted:

(a) Life expectancy at birth was higher for females than for males during the period 1981-1992. Moreover, life expectancy at birth for females rose from about 52 years in 1981 to about 66 years in 1992, which represents an increase of 127 per cent;

(b) With respect to maternal mortality rates during pregnancy and delivery, a national comprehensive survey which was carried out in 1992 estimated maternal mortality rates at 184 per 100,000 live births, which is high in comparison with the level of health services which are now available. The increase in maternal

mortality rates was accompanied by an increase in infant mortality rates (one year and above) which reached 40 per 1,000 in 1981 and 38 per 1,000 in 1990;

(c) The data concerning infants are underestimated because of a lack of accuracy in registering data, as parents fail to report infant deaths and especially female infant deaths: however, a careful study of the data covering the 1980s shows a clear decrease, by 50 per cent, which accelerated in the second half of the 1980s. The mortality rates of children aged one to four years decreased from about 11 per 1,000 in 1980 to about 6 per 1,000 in 1989. No detailed information was available on infant and child mortality rates by sex, although female infant mortality rates were 53 per 1,000, which is a bit lower than the rate for male infants (58 per 1,000). However, infant mortality rates during the first year of life are higher among females (28 per 1,000) than among males (24 per 1,000), which is perhaps due to discrimination in child health care during this fragile stage of life;

(d) High maternal mortality rates during pregnancy and delivery, as well as child and especially infant mortality rates, are closely related to high fertility rates, repeated pregnancies and deliveries, and a large number of children, which reduces the amount of care each child receives from his/her mother and family. The Egyptian Government has long been working on family planning so as to reduce fertility rates and thus lower the high population growth rates. Those efforts have started bearing fruit as overall fertility rates in Egypt declined from 5.28 per cent in 1980 to 3.93 per cent in 1992 while the percentage of women in the age group (15-49 years) who use contraceptives increased from 24.2 per cent in 1980 to 47.1 per cent in 1992;

(e) The rates of contraceptive use by women ranged between 59 per cent in urban areas and 24 per cent in rural areas in Upper Egypt in 1992;

(f) The health situation of women in Egypt is affected by high rates of multiple pregnancies and deliveries and low living standards, especially in rural areas, which affects the nutritional level of women of reproductive age (15-49 years) in particular. Although detailed data on this matter are scarce, the National Institute for Nutrition carried out a survey in 1978 which revealed that about 22.4 per cent of women of reproductive age were suffering from anaemia as the result of a lack of iron;

(g) Malnutrition was prevalent among children and nutrition levels deteriorated from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s; the percentage of children suffering from anaemia rose from 48 per cent in 1978 to 51.6 per cent in 1986;

(h) The data provided by the Ministry of Health indicate that the percentage of children between 12 and 23 months of age who suffer from malnutrition was 75.2 per cent in 1980, and 67.4 per cent in 1984. The percentage of children under five years of age who suffer from moderate malnutrition was estimated at 52.4 per cent in 1980 and 47.4 per cent in 1984. The percentage of children under five years of age who suffer from severe malnutrition did not exceed 1.6 per cent in 1980, but rose to 2.2 per cent in 1984;

(i) Some recent surveys provide data on vaccination by sex for children between 12 and 23 months of age. According to these surveys, the vaccination rates for children between 12 and 23 months of age approximate each other, which indicates that there is no discrimination in this field;

(j) The Ministry of Health continued its efforts aimed at vaccinating all pregnant women against tetanus. The percentage of pregnant women vaccinated against tetanus was estimated at 57 per cent, with vaccination coverage increasing fivefold in comparison with 1988. Even though health services are available in hospitals, the majority of women prefer to deliver their children at home with the assistance of midwives. However, there has also been an increasing tendency among women in the last few years to deliver with the

help of trained staff (specialized doctors or nurses). In this respect, the Ministry of Health has started training midwives; 12,000 midwives registered for the training course, 8,000 of whom were taught techniques for saving children's lives and were provided by the Ministry of Health and UNICEF with the necessary equipment to carry out deliveries under hygienic conditions.

204. The provision of health services free of charge in all regions of the **United Arab Emirates** led to an improvement in health levels, and the country ranks with the developed countries according to human development indicators.

(a) The data show that the number of mother and child clinics and units was 9 centres and 56 units in 1986; this number rose to 10 centres and 66 units in 1991. The number of women who visited mother and child centres was 37,294 in 1980 and rose to 65,907 in 1986 and 91,839 in 1991;

(b) The number of births in 1986 was 45,877 of which 97.8 per cent took place in hospitals or under medical supervision, while the remaining 2.2 per cent took place at home. In 1991 the number of deliveries was 49,678, 99 per cent of which took place in hospitals under medical supervision, proof of the United Arab Emirates' interest in mother and child health and the efforts the country makes to provide pregnant women with prenatal and postnatal health care;

(c) Vaccination coverage increases year after year as a result of the efforts made by the Government in this field. For instance, the coverage of the first-dose vaccination against polio increased from 85.1 per cent to 90.3 per cent. Likewise, the coverage of the second dose increased from 71.2 per cent to 84.9 per cent, and the coverage of the third dose from 63.5 per cent to 78.1 per cent.

205. The health situation of women in **Yemen** depends on several interrelated factors the most important of which are the following:

(a) According to 1991 statistics, life expectancy of mothers at birth does not exceed 48 years, and is thus the lowest in the world;

(b) Maternal mortality rates in Yemen are considered among the highest in the world. According to some recent studies, mortality rates range between 30 and 40 per 100,000 live births. According to 1985 statistics, maternal mortality rates are specially high in rural areas, reaching almost 100 per 100,000 live births;

(c) The official 1991 estimates state that infant mortality rates are approximately 130 per 1,000 live births. This rate is higher in the northern provinces than in the southern provinces because of the difference in educational levels and health education;

(d) Data indicate that, under five years of age, child mortality rates decreased from 390 per 1,000 live births in 1950 to 192 per 1,000 live births in 1991. However, these rates are still very high for the Arab region;

(e) Fertility rates are among the highest in the world: the overall fertility rate was estimated at 7.6 per cent in 1991;

(f) The use of contraceptives has not become widespread. The national report mentions a relative increase during the past few years, from 1 per cent to 3 per cent. Contraceptives are more widely used in the southern provinces. Some nutritional studies carried out during 1982 showed that 40 per cent of mothers in

urban areas used contraceptives, the corresponding percentages being 21 per cent in poor areas and 6 per cent in rural areas;

(g) Women of reproductive age (15-49 years), and especially those who live in rural areas, suffer from anaemia;

(h) The percentage of children under five years of age suffering from malnutrition was estimated at 56 per cent in 1990;

(i) Vaccination coverage was estimated in 1990 at 80 per cent with regard to the third dose of the triple vaccine for one-year-old children and the polio vaccine for children under five years of age. Vaccination coverage against measles for the same age group was estimated at 78 per cent and coverage against tuberculosis at 78 per cent. Vaccination coverage against contagious and fatal childhood diseases remained lower than 25 per cent up to 1987, until Yemen joined the international vaccination campaign to achieve the above-mentioned rates;

(j) The percentage of pregnant women vaccinated against tetanus rose, even though it is still very low in many districts of the country. The national coverage rate of vaccination against tetanus (second dose) for women of reproductive age (15-49 years) was estimated at 17 per cent in 1991 as compared with 7 per cent in 1987. The coverage rate for pregnant women was estimated at 20 per cent in 1990.

206. In **Palestine**, the health of women is closely linked to the general health situation in the country, which deteriorated during the years of occupation. Since 1967 no hospital has been built in the Gaza Strip and in fact the occupation authorities ordered the closure of four hospitals in the West Bank in spite of the population increase. The deterioration of the health situation is greater among women because of the sex discrimination which restricts women's role to reproduction, with scant attention paid to women's health. The health situation of women can be measured by the following indicators:

(a) Life expectancy at birth for both sexes in the occupied territories was estimated at 63 years. The Palestinian population in the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon is young, with the percentage of children under 15 years of age making up 40 per cent of the population. Life expectancy for both sexes ranges between 60 and 65 years;

(b) The mortality rate for children under five years of age in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is 51 per 1,000 in general, reaching 48 per 1,000 for males and 55 per 1,000 for females in the Gaza Strip. Mortality rates for Palestinian children in the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon are considered high even though they decreased during the last decade. Child mortality rates approximate each other for males and females even though they are higher in Lebanon than in the Syrian Arab Republic because of the civil war;

(c) Fertility rates in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip reveal that each Palestinian woman gives birth to seven children on average. The national report indicates that fertility rates during the *intifadah* increased as a result of the Palestinian population policy which encourages having children as a means of challenging Israeli settlement policies. Palestinian fertility rates in the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon approximate fertility rates in other countries of the Arab region, but declined during the past decade for several reasons, the most important of which is the improvement in the educational level of Palestinian women in addition to an improvement in living conditions, and because of other economic and social factors;

(d) About 60 per cent of pregnant women suffer from anaemia, which shows the need to develop services and health guidelines in the occupied territories;



(e) Main indicators show that cases of malnutrition (which is moderate in most cases) decreased sharply during the 1980s. Preliminary censuses which were carried out in poor areas reveal that the incidence of malnutrition was 50 per cent at the beginning of the 1980s and decreased to 15-20 per cent at the end of the 1980s. It should be noted that diseases due to malnutrition are more prevalent among females than among males, which confirms the relation between women's health and the obvious social discrimination against them. The percentage of Palestinian women who suffer from anaemia in refugee camps in the Syrian Arab Republic was estimated at 30 per cent; the percentage is lower among Palestinian women in Lebanon (26.9 per cent) . However, the incidence of anaemia increases among pregnant women, especially during the last three months of pregnancy, reaching 63 per cent in the Syrian Arab Republic and 56.5 per cent in Lebanon at the beginning of the 1990s;

(f) Available data show that vaccination rates in the occupied territories reach 95 per cent. However, it should be stressed that it is difficult to determine any differences between females and males. There is no information about the percentage of women who were vaccinated against tetanus;

(g) Ninety-seven per cent of Palestinian children in the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon are vaccinated against tuberculosis, diphtheria, polio and measles in their first year; this percentage covers an equal number of males and females; most children were vaccinated in mother and child clinics belonging to UNRWA or the Palestinian Red Crescent.

*(d) Labour*

207. Labour in the Arab countries was mainly characterized by the following:

(a) The increase in the labour force in general and in the female labour force in particular, owing to the economic and social developments in the Arab countries;

(b) The relative increase in the education rate that led to fundamental structural changes in the female workforce and to the diversification of demand on women in the non-traditional economic sectors. At the same time, the high rate of female education was an obstacle for women because, given the economic crises and unemployment faced by some Arab societies, there was a lack of available jobs commensurate with their specializations;

(c) The great difference in women's rates of economic activity among the Arab countries, especially in the informal and agricultural sectors;

(d) The large number of women working in the field of education indicated by the statistical data. This could be explained by the fact that the majority of women tended to undertake studies in the field of education. The teaching profession was in line with prevailing values in Arab society, which considered teaching as part of the main function of women in social education;

(e) The high female employment rate in salaried and non-salaried agricultural work revealed by the available data. This was due to the fact that women had historically taken responsibility for agricultural work, or to factors brought about by social changes in recent years such as the emigration of husbands to the Gulf States;

(f) A discussion of the high female employment rate requires redefining "the roles of women" in a more appropriate way, according to actual social needs and challenges. The concept of "role" embraces the rights and duties of people in society. The multiple roles played by women inside and outside the home led to an incorrect understanding of these roles. Women had to work outside the home according to new criteria

while inside the home they had to adhere to the old criteria. The multiple roles of the wife/mother resulted in psychological as well as physical hardships which affected her roles in economic production and in taking care of the family. The contribution of laws to the creation of new social systems and patterns of thought did not, however, produce radical changes in the individual's tendencies or in the family culture, or in the women themselves;

(g) Based on the new United Nations System of National Accounts, some attempts were made, statistically, to consider woman's work at home as a productive one and to include it in economic activity. However, this concept was still at the research level and was not socially and culturally accepted.

208. In **Egypt**, data differed slightly according to their sources, which were population censuses and employment research by sampling of workers in the formal economic sector (professionals and technicians, directors and clerks). These differences were mostly noticeable in agricultural work. According to the 1976 and 1986 censuses, the proportion of women working in the agricultural sector did not exceed 2 per cent of the workforce, whereas in 1988 that proportion was 50 per cent thanks to more accurate registration of women in agricultural jobs. The proportion of women in the technical and professional categories increased from 25 per cent in 1976 to 32.4 per cent in 1988 and in the category of secretarial work from 19 per cent in 1976 to more than 40 per cent in 1988. Despite the increase in the participation of women in agricultural work, most of their employment in that field was non-salaried.

209. Most of the detailed data concerning the percentage of women and men working in part-time jobs could only be found in the employment studies by sampling for 1988 and 1991. According to those data, about 89 per cent of women and 81.5 per cent of men in 1988 worked full time while those working part time did not exceed 1.2 per cent of women and 1.8 per cent of men in temporary work, and less than 0.5 per cent of men and 1.5 per cent of women in seasonal work.

210. Based on the employment study by sampling contained in the country report, the following table gives a clearer picture of the situation.

RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN  
IN ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES (Age group 12-64 years)

Type of activity	The employed (in hundreds)			Percentage				
	Total	Males	Females	1:2	1:3	1:4	2:4	3:4
Technical and scientific and related jobs	19339	13593	5746	70.3	29.7	14.0	12.4	20.1
Administrative directors and managers	1204	1072	132	89.0	11.0	00.9	1.0	1.0
Secretarial and related work	13537	9316	4221	68.8	31.2	9.8	8.4	16.3
Sales activities	12032	9994	2038	83.0	17.0	8.7	9.1	7.1
Services	8852	8304	548	93.8	6.2	6.4	7.6	1.9
Agriculture, livestock and fishing	42412	31466	10946	74.9	25.1	30.6	28.7	36.4
Production workers and operators of means of transport	40892	5972	4920	88.0	12.0	29.6	32.8	17.2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>138268</b>	<b>79717</b>	<b>28551</b>	<b>79.4</b>	<b>20.6</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

211. This table shows the major changes in the trends of the female contribution to economic activity according to the 1991 data sample. Following is a detailed description of these changes:

(a) A decrease in the trend towards scientific and technical jobs, secretarial work and services and an increase in the trend towards sales activities, agriculture, livestock and fishing as well as production activities and manual work. This change happened only to women since men tended to work more in the areas listed in the above table except for agriculture, livestock and fishing where their participation actually decreased. This shows that job opportunities offered to men in the various activities were far greater than those offered to women, driving women towards activities that did not represent real job opportunities requiring competition. It also probably reflects the conditions and educational levels of women. This situation had, undoubtedly, negative effects on the income women could provide for the family;

(b) As for the female percentage share in each of the economic activities included in this sample, women had their highest share in scientific and technical jobs (less than one third). Their share was lowest in the categories of administrative directors, business managers and services;

(c) Women represented more than one fifth of the workers in these activities while men took four fifths of the jobs. These proportions did not reflect the weight of males and females in that age group.

212. The report of the **Syrian Arab Republic** showed that official statistics did not accurately reflect the actual labour force in rural areas, or women working in the home for the market, such as seamstresses, or those women who were heads of families.

213. The main features of female employment could be summarized as follows:

(a) There was an increase in the labour force in general in recent years, and in the female labour force in particular. Indeed, it rose from 13.9 per cent of the total labour force in 1984 to 16.3 per cent in 1991;

(b) The agricultural sector had the highest number of female workers, with approximately 39.4 per cent of the total female workers in 1981, rising to 47.1 per cent in 1984 and to 54.1 per cent in 1991. This might have been caused by the emigration of male workers to the city to work in other fields and by historical factors related to rural production, whereby women had assumed responsibility for agricultural work for thousands of years;

(c) In the services sector, women represented 49.3 per cent of the total female workers in 1981, falling to 41.6 per cent in 1984 and to 38.1 per cent in 1991;

(d) The proportion of women working in industry decreased over the years. While in 1981 it was close to 21.3 per cent, it fell to 11.3 per cent in 1984 and to 8.3 per cent in 1992;

(e) It is worth noting that a sizeable number of women worked in government and in the public sector, representing 52 per cent of all government staff during the period 1984-1991. In 1991, women working in the public sector accounted for 20 per cent of total workers, compared with 17.58 per cent in the private sector. Women tended to prefer working in the public sector and in government because of the increase in the number of highly qualified women and the profusion of services in nurseries, kindergartens and the like, in addition to the job security provided by the government system;

(f) The proportion of female staff in the Ministry of Education was the highest in all ministries. This corresponds to the education policy of the Syrian Arab Republic which focuses on female education, especially primary education. After the Ministry of Education come the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of

Higher Education, the Ministry of Industry, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and International Trade, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Labour.

214. In **Lebanon** there was a noticeable increase in the number of women involved in administrative work. Almost one third of the female workforce was in this field, which ranked at the top of the various types of work undertaken by women, followed by the trade and sales sector with 21 per cent. This latter sector undeniably achieved remarkable progress from the 1970s to the late 1980s, going from only 3.2 per cent in 1970 to 21 per cent.

215. In the **Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan**, detailed findings of the 1991 survey on employment, the returnees and poverty, which were published at the end of 1992, indicate the following:

(a) Women in Jordan represented 13.3 per cent of the total number of workers in public administration, 53.3 per cent in the education sector, 36.3 per cent in the health and social activity sector, 23 per cent in social services, 7.3 per cent in agriculture and 9.3 per cent in manufacturing industries;

(b) Working women were concentrated in the government sector, with 53.8 per cent of the total number of women involved in the Jordanian economy, while the non-governmental sector comprised 46.2 per cent of the total of female workers in 1991. There are 4.4 per cent of women working in agriculture, 8.2 per cent in industry, 8.9 in private education, 9 per cent in services, 8.6 per cent in finance, business and trade and 3.5 per cent in non-governmental health and social services;

(c) Available statistics indicate that the proportion of women working in the field of education was much higher than that of their male counterparts at the kindergarten and compulsory/elementary levels. In contrast, the percentage of males was slightly higher than that of their female counterparts in secondary education. In general, the proportion of women working in the field of education increased from 25.5 per cent of the total education staff in 1980/1981 to 57.9 per cent in 1984/1985 and to 60.8 per cent in 1992/1993. This shows the ever increasing tendency of Jordanian women to work in teaching, a profession which enjoys social acceptance with regard to working women;

(d) According to the findings of the 1991 survey on unemployment, the returnees and poverty, the unemployment rate was at 14.5 per cent among men and at 34.2 per cent among women;

(e) The higher educational level of Jordanian women led to fundamental structural changes in the supply of female labour and to the diversification of local demand on them, especially in non-traditional economic sectors. However, the main obstacle that faced women was the lack of job opportunities that corresponded to their qualifications.

216. In the **Republic of Iraq**, although it was difficult to make comparisons in the distribution of female labour in 1977, 1987 and 1992 owing to different methods in conducting censuses, especially in the agricultural sector, it was possible to note a decrease in female employment in the agricultural and industrial sectors. Indeed, the proportion of women in agriculture was 37.4 per cent in 1977, falling to 14.3 per cent in 1987 and to 13 per cent in 1992. In industry, it fell from 17.1 per cent in 1975 to 14.5 per cent in 1987 and to 8 per cent in 1992. The proportion of women increased in services, however, going from 9 per cent in 1977 to 11.9 per cent in 1987 and to 79 per cent in 1992.

217. Preliminary results of the field survey of the labour force in **Yemen**, undertaken by the Central Statistical Organization in 1992, indicated that the general rate of female participation in all activities was 22 per cent, which was considered low and merely a token rate. In fact, if the figures concerning males and females working in agriculture were excluded, the general female participation rate would not even exceed

8 per cent, including in non-surveyed activities. The lack of a planning process which would establish a link between the labour needs of various fields of work and the admission of students to specialized colleges and institutes began to be reflected in several indicators. Starting in 1992/1993, women were denied posts considered unnecessary in urban centres. In addition, social conditions, especially in the northern provinces, did not permit women to work away from their families even if they were needed there. This was clear in the field of teaching and among female graduates from colleges other than education colleges, as well as in the trend to make more use of male than female holders of the General Education Certificate who are committed to civil service. Therefore, it became necessary to establish plans for the requirements in all areas of work, to be met by universities and institutes on the basis of careful planning in order to avoid wasting educated human resources.

218. In **Palestine**, women share with other Arab women the suffering caused by the division of labour according to sex. In addition, the policies of the occupation forces had a destructive effect on the productive sectors of the national economy. The deterioration of economic conditions resulted in a greater need for women to take up paid jobs, driving them to go out and work in Israeli projects where they faced discrimination and injustice. The country report showed that the decrease in the participation rate of Palestinian women in the workforce and in productive and economic activities was caused primarily by the occupation policies. These policies contributed to limiting women's work to what came to be known as "household economy" which was related to the family, the main productive and consumer unit in society. The fact that the role of the majority of women was limited to this aspect of social activity is considered one of the main causes that has led, over the past few years, to the institutionalization of inequality between men and women and to social discrimination against women in society. Statistics indicated an increase in the participation of women in agricultural production, owing to the nature of the Palestinian rural areas, where medium- and small-scale farming was widespread. Such activity was characterized by its primitive nature and lack of reliance on modern farming techniques; the long periods of time women devoted to this work were not considered productive activity. This field of activity, together with household work and child-rearing, predominated in the employment of women.

219. With regard to the Gulf States, special efforts were made in **Kuwait** to create a female workforce in the various sectors of the economy. Available data on Kuwait show the following:

(a) Employment of women increased from 17 per cent of the estimated total workforce in 1980 to 25.7 per cent in 1985 and 31 per cent in 1993. This increase in the participation of women in the workforce was due to the increase in rates of education among women. Statistics for the year 1993 showed that women with university degrees made up the highest percentage of working women, almost 30 per cent;

(b) The social and personal services sectors employed 92 per cent of the female workforce in 1993 compared with 89 per cent in 1980. The percentages of males working in these sectors during the same periods were lower and were estimated at 77 per cent and 67 per cent respectively;

(c) The female workforce is concentrated in the scientific and technical professions and in clerical professions. The percentage of women in these groups reached 90 per cent of the total female workforce in 1985 and 1993 compared with about 52 per cent and 61 per cent for men in 1985 and 1993 respectively. Women also constitute 52.7 per cent of the total national workforce in scientific professions and about 31 per cent of clerical and executive professions;

(d) The high concentration of women in scientific professions is attributed to the rapid increase in their rates of employment in teaching as well as the nature of their university studies. There is an interrelation between education and type of employment: the statistics confirm that more women are entering colleges and faculties that enable them to work in the field of education;

(e) The finance, insurance, real estate and business services sector comes second after the services sector. About 3 per cent of the female workforce worked in this sector in 1993, and about 2.8 per cent in 1985, compared with 3.3 per cent of the male work force in 1993 and 4.3 per cent in 1985;

(f) As for the remaining sectors of the economy—manufacturing industries, mining, quarrying and agriculture—the percentage of female workers is very small. According to data collected in 1993, the number of women working in the mining and quarrying sectors was only 112, in the manufacturing industries 171, and in building and construction only 63. These low numbers cannot be attributed to the issue of gender since the numbers of Kuwaiti males working in these sectors are low as well;

(g) As for agriculture, the percentage of female workers is extremely low because of the limited agricultural activity in Kuwait.

220. Women in **Bahrain** have always participated in the economy of the family. They participate in an unregulated manner in agriculture and animal husbandry. Education had a major role in helping women and freeing them from poverty. The national paper reveals the following:

(a) The participation of Bahraini women rose from 4.3 per cent in 1971 to 13.3 per cent in 1981, then 17.2 per cent in 1986, and finally 18.4 per cent in 1991. The participation of Bahraini men was in the order of 77.6 per cent, 73.8 per cent, 73.5 per cent and 76.4 per cent, respectively;

(b) The percentage of Bahraini female workers in the government sector reached 67.5 in 1991. The concentration of women in this sector is due to the fact that it provides women with legal protection as well as equal pay and working hours;

(c) Certain ministries have a fairly high percentage of female employees; they constitute 57.5 per cent of Bahraini employees in the Ministry of Education and Culture, and 44.3 per cent in the Ministry of Health, where most women occupy administrative posts. Women participated to a lesser degree in the work of other ministries such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Development and Industry.

221. In **Qatar**, women's achievements according to the national report were as follows:

(a) Data collected in 1986 show that the majority of working women are in the category of "paid employment" since about 98 per cent of the female workforce are concentrated in the government sector. About 50 per cent of women working in this sector are university graduates;

(b) The statistics indicate that women are concentrated in three professions: technical and scientific professions; services; and clerical professions. This can be attributed to the high rate of educated women and their preferences;

(c) Because of the high level of concentration of women in the government sector, their participation in the mixed and private sectors was limited; they constituted only 0.3 per cent.

222. In **Oman**, women represent around 17.2 per cent of the total workforce in the public sector, and around 27 per cent of the total workforce in the private sector.

## 7. Violence against women

### (a) *Instances in the Arab world*

223. International organizations as well as feminist movements and human rights organizations are currently interested in the issue of violence against women. In view of the prevailing values, customs and traditions in Arab society which are mainly derived from the teachings of Islam that call for respecting, honouring and protecting women, social institutions do not recognize this problem and try, as much as they can, to obliterate any evidence of violence against women. This may be attributed to the fact that any problem facing a member of the family is supposed to be treated as an internal problem to be solved within the confines of the family, especially when the issue concerns women.

224. Violence against women in some Arab countries, such as Lebanon, Iraq and Palestine, is considered a secondary issue in view of the suffering that both men and women endure as a result of war or occupation.

225. Some of the most important forms of violence against Arab women are: forcing girls to leave school; sometimes forcing them into marriage or early marriage; beating of girls by members of their own families; sometimes forcing women to waive their personal or civil rights through the pressure of customs and traditions. Some consider that the fact that polygamy is still a practice in certain Arab countries is a form of violence against women.

226. However, it is very difficult to quantify violence against women because of the lack of information on the subject, or because it is considered a family issue, or because women do not regard some of these practices as a form of violence.

### (b) *Methods used to protect women from exploitation*

227. Some Arab countries have enacted laws that protect women from exploitation. Other countries are in need of laws that ban the violation of women's rights and the rights of girls who are legally minors.

228. Non-governmental organizations are working to increase women's awareness of their legal rights by organizing workshops, issuing monthly newsletters and publications, organizing training courses and providing legal advice to women.

### (c) *Participation of women in the judiciary*

229. Although the participation of Arab women in the judiciary in all parts of the Arab world is very limited, or even non-existent in many Arab countries, this limited participation represents a transformation in the way women exercise their rights and participate in managing social issues. Available data on the participation of women in the judiciary indicate that their number increased in the Syrian Arab Republic from 1975 to 1994 to reach around 64 judges, so that female judges now constitute 5.8 per cent of the judiciary. Data on Lebanon reveal a steady increase in the number of female judges. In Yemen, female judges represent 14 per cent of the total number of judges in the southern provinces.

### (d) *Participation of women in police and public security forces*

230. With the exception of Oman and Jordan, most of the national reports did not include a reference to the participation of women in police and public security forces.

231. Information extracted from some of the reports reveals the limited participation of women in this field. The report of the **Syrian Arab Republic** indicates that women made up only 0.15 per cent of the internal security forces, while women in the armed forces were concentrated in the medical services at hospitals. The report of **Yemen** shows that a very small number of women worked in these forces in the southern provinces but were relieved of their duties after unification.

232. In **Palestine**, women were encouraged to participate in police and public security forces with the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority.

*8. The influence of continued armed conflicts and wars on women  
at the national and international levels*

233. Paragraph 261 of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies states that "armed conflicts and emergency situations impose a serious threat to the lives of women and children, causing constant fear, danger of displacement, destruction, devastation, physical abuse, social and family disruption, and abandonment. Sometimes these result in complete denial of access to adequate health and educational services, loss of job opportunities and overall worsening of material conditions."

234. The Arab region underwent six wars as a result of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Iraq-Iran war, the Gulf war in 1991, and the civil wars in Lebanon, Yemen and Somalia. The people of the Arab countries suffered from various forms of expulsion, deportation and displacement that increased the number of refugees, the majority of them women and children.

235. In the **Syrian Arab Republic**, there are 2,500 families suffering from all sorts of oppression in the occupied Golan.

236. **Lebanon** suffered from civil war, Israeli aggression and the occupation of parts of its land. However, Lebanese women did not give in to suffering; on the contrary, they fought and resisted it. Detention, abduction, martyrdom, deportation and handicaps made them stronger and more determined. They supported their families, as can be confirmed by the results of a field survey that found that 6 per cent of widows support their families on their own without any help. Following the Israeli aggression in 1982, more than 300 women were detained. Women suffered from the results of direct or indirect deportation, especially women who were responsible for their families because the husband died or was injured or had to leave the country. In addition to the psychological problems caused by war and deportation noted in some studies, field studies on children in the age group 3-9 years show that 70 per cent of mothers complain of their children's increased aggressive behaviour as a result of tension and fear all through the war period. Studies also indicate a discrepancy between the number of males and females, especially among youth. There has also been a decrease in fertility rates and a tendency to delay marriage. Finally, women suffer from the misery of war and occupation which is reflected in the deterioration of living conditions.

237. In **Jordan**, the data reveal that the number of Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA increased tenfold during the past four decades. Their number reached 1,140,199 in 1993. Jordan also received, without any prior notice, the third wave of immigrants when Jordanians and Palestinians returned from the Gulf countries as a result of the Gulf war. It should be noted that immigration waves were made up of immigrating families, i.e., women constituted half of the number of refugees and returnees. Hence women carried the heavier economic load caused by immigration: their obligations towards the family and their domestic responsibilities increased as the level of services available to them decreased. Unemployment rates among returnees as a whole increased, which meant that unemployment among women reached 67.9 per cent compared with 58.9 per cent for men according to 1991 statistics.



238. Statistical data in Jordan monitoring UNRWA activity in assisting women refugees show the existence of 20 training centres in 1993. These centres are run in coordination with local committees and some women refugee leaders in order to strengthen cooperation among private organizations and voluntary agencies.

239. Since the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war, the General Federation of Iraqi Women has assumed a clear position on the need to bring peace to the two countries, especially since the women of both countries are the first victims of the conflict. During the Gulf crisis, the Federation also worked to settle the crisis by peaceful means. The embargo affected Iraqi women and families, adding new tasks and responsibilities both within and outside the family.

240. In **Yemen**, the southern provinces witnessed the events of January 1986, which affected women and children. Wives of those killed or imprisoned had to assume responsibility for themselves and their children. After the Gulf war, 22,000 Yemenis returned home. An evaluation of the status of the returnees found among those outside the workforce 80,998 students, 3,700 housewives, and 46 disabled persons; about two thirds of them, or 60.9 per cent, were of working age, 16-45 years.

241. In the Somali war, Yemen saw the return home of 15,000 of its expatriates. About 20,000 Somali families found refuge in Aden. Somali women worked as domestic servants. Many diseases spread among them and among their families.

242. In the internal conflict in Yemen in 1994, Yemeni women suffered, for armed conflict and decision-making relating thereto were part of the male domain, although women make up part of the armed forces. However, women's participation does not reach the level of decision-making regarding war and armed conflict. In the southern provinces there are 120 women officers out of 900 officers; 380 non-commissioned officers and ordinary soldiers out of 60,000; one woman serves at the rank of colonel.

243. No group of women has suffered from continuing armed conflicts and wars more than the women of **Palestine**. During a half century of Arab-Israeli conflict, which brought suffering to the Palestinian people from the 1948 war to the 1967 war in which Israeli forces occupied all of the Palestinian territories, hundred of thousands of Palestinian families were in exile and diaspora; they were settled in refugee camps spanning Palestinian territories and neighbouring Arab States. Since 1980, males between 14 and 25 years of age have started to emigrate, thus increasing the number of dependants per wage earner; the contribution of the workforce to economic life in the occupied territories dropped. In 1980, the number of emigrants reached 17,200 persons (23.9 per 1,000) for the West Bank and 4,800 persons (10.30 per 1,000) for the Gaza Strip. As a result, the ratio of females to males increased for the population of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The rate of celibacy among females increased, thus raising the rate of polygamous marriages and the number of divorce cases. Palestinian refugee camps and communities witnessed destructive wars that peaked with the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the siege of Beirut in 1982 which brought death and dispersion to thousands of Palestinians who had to leave their homes and refugee camps. Then came the ugly massacre of Sabra and Shatila in which hundreds of Palestinian women, men and children were killed. There were also the recurrent civil wars in which Palestinian refugee camps were besieged for three years, causing more than half the Palestinian families to change place of residence over the years of the war. There are 4,122 families or about 23.8 per cent of the total number of families who have been living for years in a place other than their original permanent place of residence. Women represent 50.30 per cent of them, and children under 15 years of age account for 41.6 per cent.

244. Participation of women in military forces. Although armed struggle was a part of the Palestinian resistance as of its inception in the mid-1950s and was incorporated into the PLO in 1964, Palestinian women did not participate directly in armed struggle until the late 1960s. Women were involved in social welfare efforts for the families of martyrs and detainees in the political mobilization of women and in raising the

cultural, economic and political level of women. However, involvement of women in military action took the form of participation in the militias protecting the refugee camps and Palestinian communities. Women also helped people to remain steadfast during these difficult times by showing concern for such matters as the provision of water and health care during war, aggression and massacres. However, it is difficult to give any figures on women's participation in view of the strict secrecy surrounding it.

245. Women in the **Gulf** suffered from the impact of the Gulf war in 1991. There were 80 women out of a total of 589 martyrs and 8 prisoners of war out of a total of 625. Kuwaiti women joined the resistance movement during the war; many of them organized protest demonstrations. Other women volunteered to serve in cooperative associations. Women also cared for the handicapped, the elderly and the disabled.

#### 9. *Women and the environment*

246. The role of Arab women in the conservation of the environment is embodied by indicators contained in some country reports. Following are some of these indicators:

(a) Women in some Arab countries have joined environmental research centres and have participated in undertaking studies and setting technical criteria for protecting the environment from pollution;

(b) A high percentage of women in some Arab countries work in the ministry of environment. In the **Syrian Arab Republic**, women occupy about 60 per cent of all posts of the Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs;

(c) Women have helped organize conferences on the role of women in protecting the family from the risks of pollution;

(d) Private organizations have been keen on the protection of the environment. In **Lebanon**, statistics show the existence of 30 institutions particularly concerned with the environment. These institutions include a very large number of women;

(e) Many women representing women's private and professional associations contribute effectively to the work of committees for the protection of the environment, committees on the rationalization of water consumption, garden and flower societies, and health and safety societies. In this role, women conduct programmes and events aimed at making society aware of the importance of conserving the environment and of ways to do this, such as the rationalization of the use of water and electrical energy, maintaining cleanliness, putting in house gardens, raising birds and animals, and instilling sound values and habits in children and society through educational and guidance lectures and seminars.

#### 10. *Women and the media*

247. Within the framework of the revolution in communications and technology as in their capacity as means of economic, social, cultural and scientific transformation, the world is moving today towards a strengthened role for women in the media whether at a practical level in media agencies or in the improvement and development of media programmes dealing with women's issues.

248. The Arab States are pursuing the international approach to supporting the role of women in the media. But owing to the special situation of Arab society, it has its own indicators in this regard, some of which follow:

(a) Most of the Arab mass media still project a traditional image of women, focusing on their traditional role as spouses, housewives, and mothers, ignoring their other roles as workers, participants in decision-making, and human beings with rights and duties on an equal footing with men. When presented in their new roles, women seem to be without emotions and inhuman, thus turning viewers against them;

(b) The mass media do not address contemporary women's issues such as the environment, peace, equal opportunity and human rights;

(c) Commercial advertising exploits the image of women in the promotion of goods;

(d) There is a confused image of women in the media in some Arab countries suffering from war.

## II. COOPERATION

249. International support takes the following forms:

(a) The support of international organizations for the participation of the Arab States in international conferences and forums;

(b) Urging and supporting the Arab States to sign and ratify international agreements that improve the status of Arab women;

(c) Response by those organizations to Arab initiatives calling for international conferences on women, such as Egypt's call for convening the 1992 Summit on the Economic Advancement of Rural Women;

(d) Projects implemented in cooperation with international organizations and reflecting the interest of international bodies on the issues of women, children, and the family;

(e) Extending loans and giving technical and material assistance that strengthen official and private activities.

250. Within the framework of the evaluation of international assistance, the following observations on cooperation are worth noting:

(a) Most of these programmes and projects have overlooked the following aspects of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies: advancement of women; rehabilitation and training of women as well as influencing the behaviour of the individual; and society's perception of the status of women and the significance of women's participation in public life through the development of participation by both men and women in the family and in society. This shows the need for coordination between these programmes and projects on the one hand, and the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women on the other, in the absence of any practical indications that organizations, bodies and agencies are committed to those strategies;

(b) Much international support comes in the form of initial financing for some pilot projects or in the form of training for the employees of those projects. When international financing of those projects comes to an end, continuity and replication become problematic. In **Egypt**, for example, some ministries assumed responsibility for allocating local resources to continue the project. However, public expenditure cut-backs from 1981 until now have led to freezing some projects or to ending their replication in other places;

(c) Some States, such as **Yemen**, believe that, although international support has an effective major role in financing rural and urban projects, most such financing is spent on foreign expertise and on some projects in particular rather than others, which may be inconsistent with the policies and actual needs of the State. In addition, there is the long routine of the implementing agencies to be taken into account;

(d) In some Arab States, such as **Egypt**, most projects focus on rural women. Despite the significance of the advancement of rural women in the field of development, this focus has denied poor urban women the advantages of most of those projects. At the same time, some other Arab States, such as **Jordan**, suffer from the actual absence of any programmes or action-oriented projects aimed at advancing the status of women in the desert and rural areas, young women, immigrant women, refugee women, women with family responsibilities, and other women from vulnerable groups;

(e) From the kinds of programmes and projects concerning women that are being implemented in some Arab associations, it seems that women face only one issue, namely that of reproduction. A large portion of financial resources was allocated to family planning programmes and related programmes of mother/child health care. This requires a comprehensive reconsideration of these programmes and projects despite their significance. Also needed is the provision of adequate financing and resources for the advancement of the status of women in the areas of legislation, politics, economics, society, education, and health and reproduction in order to ensure a positive impact on the orientation of the individual and society on women's issues in general and on the ability of women to contribute effectively to the achievement of progress and growth for the family and society;

(f) Most projects focus on income-generating activities and on training in traditional activities such as weaving, cutting out garments, food-processing, and home economics. This may lead to the continuation of the rigid distribution of roles in economic activity as well as to wasting manpower and financial resources invested in those projects. Projects regarding women should raise women's awareness and provide them with income-generating skills within the general framework of the country's economy. In addition, these projects should bring about change in the rigid roles of men and women.

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