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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 18th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. AL-SHAALI (United Arab Emirates)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 95: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued) (A/46/3 (chap. IV, sect. D 38, 77, 325, 344, 377, 439, 462, 491 and 501/Rev.1)

1. Mr. SIDDIG (Sudan) said that, as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women met his country's aspirations with regard to the emancipation of Sudanese women, the Sudan would soon ratify it. He drew attention to the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000 (A/46/439), which testified to the efforts made to achieve the targeted goals despite the existing obstacles, and stressed the need for continued struggle against persisting discriminatory practices with a view to their ultimate eradication.

2. The problems addressed in the report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (A/46/38), including limited resources and the duplication of work, could be overcome only through the concerted efforts of the international community. It was encouraging to note the measures adopted by the United Nations treaty bodies, as mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General (A/46/462).

3. In the Sudan, despite the official prohibition of all forms of discrimination against women, they were still disadvantaged in comparison with men.

4. The integration of women in development had become an issue at the top of the international agenda. Women must become partners in development, in which they could play a catalytic role, and no longer merely its beneficiaries. However, women were among those most adversely affected by the overall economic crisis generated by debt and by deteriorating terms of trade. His delegation shared the view of the Secretary-General, expressed in document A/46/439, that the issue must be approached from the perspective of both donors and developing countries and must be reflected both in national development programmes and in international development activities.

5. Recalling that, in resolution 45/124, paragraph 8, the General Assembly had welcomed the initiatives taken, in accordance with general recommendation No. 11 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, to provide training and information seminars for States considering acceding to the Convention, his delegation advocated the convening of a regional information seminar for Africa, similar to the one held in March 1991 in Rarotonga (Cook Islands) for the South Pacific States.

6. His delegation welcomed Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/25 and Commission on the Status of Women resolution 35/3, which recommended a close relationship between the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

(Mr. Siddig, Sudan)

7. The Sudanese Constitution provided for equality between men and women. Women constituted 57.5 per cent of the population and 71 per cent of them lived in rural areas and were engaged in subsistence economic activities. The illiteracy rate was extremely high, especially among women over 40. Urban women constituted 29 per cent of the female population and had a relatively low illiteracy rate (11 per cent). There were more girls in school than boys and, for the past 10 years, 60 per cent of university students had been female. In Government offices, 28 per cent of the staff were women. Nevertheless, the number of women at the highest policy-making and planning levels remained very low.
8. As part of its efforts to improve the status of women, the Sudan had convened a Conference on Sudanese women at Khartoum in March 1990. Despite those efforts, the needs and aspirations of Sudanese women remained to be met, owing to social and economic constraints. The Sudanese Government was particularly committed to eradicating the tradition of female genital mutilation which, although contrary to the teaching of Islam and a crime punishable under the Sudanese Penal Code, was still widely practised both in rural areas and in urban centres. To that end, the Government had launched an intensive campaign through its top officials, religious authorities, women's associations, social workers and the media.
9. The Sudanese Government, mindful of the importance of strengthening the national machinery for the effective implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, had established a National Consultative Committee on the Status of Women under the Minister of Social Welfare and Development, the purpose of which was to defend the interests of women and to advise the Government on issues affecting women.
10. His delegation paid tribute to the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), which had been able to fulfil its mission despite its limited resources; Sudanese women had greatly benefited from INSTRAW.
11. His delegation welcomed the activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), particularly the technical and financial support which it provided at the grass-roots level in order to facilitate the economic and social integration of women.
12. The Sudan was one of the countries which received the largest number of refugees. It was currently hosting approximately 1 million refugees, in addition to some 3 million Sudanese who had been displaced by the war in the south and by unfavourable climatic conditions. The majority of the refugees and displaced persons were women, who faced the highest health risks, as shown by the mortality and morbidity statistics. In addition, women had suffered from the country's economic difficulties and from insufficient international assistance.

(Mr. Siddiq, Sudan)

13. His delegation welcomed the measures adopted by the Secretary-General, accordance with General Assembly resolutions 45/125 and 45/239, to increase the number of women in the Secretariat. While hoping that such efforts would make it possible to achieve the objectives set for 1995, his delegation was convinced that even more strenuous efforts should be made to overcome fully the underrepresentation of women in various organizational units of the Secretariat.

14. Mr. FISENKO (Belarus) noted with satisfaction that, 10 years after the entry into force of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 109 States had become parties to it. Belarus supported the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, whose consideration of the periodic reports of States parties to the Convention was useful even though not always successful in promoting fruitful dialogue between experts and government representatives.

15. Belarus supported the Committee's recommendations (A/46/38) concerning unpaid women workers in family enterprises, the measurement and quantification of the unremunerated domestic activities of women and their recognition in the gross national product, and disabled women.

16. Moreover, the Committee had rightly decided to give careful consideration, at each of its sessions, to the implementation by States parties of a particular article of the Convention. The Committee should strengthen and expand its links with other bodies established under human rights instruments and with the Commission on the Status of Women. In that connection, Belarus had noted with interest paragraphs 25 and 30 of the Committee's report, as well as the information concerning the contribution of the Committee to the World Conference on Human Rights, the International Year of the Family and the World Conference on Women.

17. Belarus was currently preparing its third periodic report. It had already indicated in its two previous reports that the main principles of the Convention were embodied in its national legislation. In practice, however, analysis of the distribution of employment according to sex, for example, revealed imbalances. Moreover, while Belarusian women participated actively in the activities of the production sectors, the services set up to assist them were inadequate. Men and women therefore had unequal chances when it came to raising children, finding employment or succeeding in professional or family life. In addition, the transition of Belarus to a market economy would only worsen the employment problems of women, who would be the first to be affected when industrial workers were laid off since they comprised largely unskilled labour. Retraining, placement and subsidy programmes were planned for them, especially within the framework of the economic stabilization and social welfare plan adopted by the Belarusian Parliament in June 1991.

18. Those measures had been reinforced by several recently enacted laws, decrees and programmes concerning women, the family and children, the

(Mr. Fisenko, Belarus)

significance of which had been increased even further by the devastation caused by the Chernobyl catastrophe. In the regions of Gomel and Mogilev, which were the most seriously affected, the incidence of anaemia, nose and throat diseases, and birth defects had increased sharply. The immune, endocrine, nervous and circulatory systems of the population of the affected zones had deteriorated. There was an increased incidence of cancer and leukaemia, which should reach its peak in 1994-1995. There had also been a decline in population growth.

19. His delegation was not the only one to attach great importance to the preparation for the fourth World Conference on Women, which would be a major international event in 1995. That was why Belarus had been particularly interested in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000 (A/46/439), which would be considered by the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-sixth session. Belarus also supported the inclusion in the provisional agenda of the thirty-sixth session of the Commission of the three priority themes contained in the report on its thirty-fifth session (E/1991/28). Those themes genuinely reflected the aspirations of millions of women from different regions of the world and it was in that spirit that the fourth World Conference should be prepared both in the Commission on the Status of Women and at the national level.

20. His delegation agreed with the Secretary-General (A/46/439) that, while considerable progress had been made in creating greater awareness and eliminating legal discrimination against women, discrimination continued to be practised in all countries, whatever their level of development, including Belarus.

21. Belarus had noted with interest the ideas contained in the report on the integration of women in the process of development and their role in the protection of the environment, and fully shared those ideas. With respect to the environment, technological catastrophes, such as that of Chernobyl demonstrated clearly how urgent the situation was; that factor deserved to be given priority, particularly in the above-mentioned report.

22. He also wished to draw attention to the participation of women in all efforts to promote international cooperation, peace and disarmament, a subject in which Belarus had always been very interested, as well as to paragraph 66 of the report, which dealt with the participation of women in public life.

23. Mrs. AGUILERA (Mexico), speaking on behalf of Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela, said that two of the issues most deserving of attention in the Committee's consideration of the subject of the advancement of women were the monitoring of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and the 1995 World Conference on Women. Those activities seemed to be suffering currently from the lack of resources mentioned by Mrs. Sellami-Meslem; it seemed also that action in favour of

(Mrs. Aguilera, Mexico)

women had slowed and that there was less awareness of the many obstacles impeding the advancement of women. The various documents submitted under the agenda item presented a bleak picture of the progress made in improving the status of women, since the views and interests of women were still largely overlooked and the initiatives taken in that field were very bureaucratic.

24. The efforts of the various United Nations bodies and other national, international, governmental and independent agencies, though laudable, were inadequate. They nevertheless indicated the path to be taken in future, which was to focus initiatives on the society as a whole, to continue adapting the analysis and compilation of information to forms of participation that were appropriate for women, and to encourage and improve networks of cooperation between all interested bodies. It was also necessary to recognize the active role of women in the processes of production, reproduction and development of the society, without overlooking the fact that, together with children, women comprised the group that suffered most from the consequences of conflicts and other phenomena, such as the intifadah, apartheid, immigration and the refugee problem.

25. It was disturbing to note that in certain regions, only 12 per cent of the Governments had signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and that that figure dropped to 10 per cent world wide. Furthermore, many studies had shown that the discrimination and violence of which women were victims also affected those around them, including children, and had repercussions on development and on the interests of men themselves. It was heartening to note that women were continuing to struggle bravely to achieve de facto and de jure equality and to change the perception which men and women themselves had of their participation in the life of their country.

26. It was imperative for the international community to be made aware of the manifold obstacles that still stood in the way of women's advancement and to speed up implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, taking advantage of the new era of international cooperation that appeared to be dawning in order to eliminate ancestral prejudices. She drew attention to three issues that should be explored in the coming years: the effect of structural adjustment measures on the status of women; the feminization of poverty; and women's health and nutrition. Regarding the first issue, the structural adjustment measures adopted by most developing countries to cope with the economic crisis of the 1980s had had adverse social and economic consequences for the status of women. It was essential, therefore, to promote recognition of the need for urgent measures to reverse that trend, and especially to facilitate women's access to credit, the means of production, markets, and the decision-making process. As for the feminization of poverty, the number of women living in destitution, far from diminishing, had greatly increased in recent years. Education and training were needed, and income-generating activities should be promoted to enable women to escape from the vicious circle of poverty. The deterioration in women's health and

(Mrs. Aguilera, Mexico)

nutrition in many parts of the developing world was particularly alarming in view of its effects on the health of infants and children's chances of survival. The improvement of women's health, through adequate and accessible health-care services, should be given priority during the remainder of the century.

27. The 1995 World Conference on Women should give the international community an opportunity to reaffirm its determination to work for the improvement of women's status. Although independent bodies concerned with upholding women's rights and combating discrimination and violence against women were increasing locally, nationally and internationally and gaining growing support from Governments, it must not be forgotten that women's position was still inferior at every level of society, in all aspects of life and in every country in the world. It was thus extremely important that the World Conference should be properly prepared and provided with the support needed to give it the widest possible effect and the best chances of success, despite financial constraints and the requirements of rationalizing the work of the international organizations. In that connection, she hoped that the General Assembly would recommend that the Commission on the Status of Women should accept China's offer to host the Conference in 1995, bearing in mind the principle of equitable geographical distribution.

28. The situation of women in the Secretariat was still a matter of concern. According to the Secretary-General's report (A/46/377), women's participation did not seem to have changed much, particularly in the senior and middle levels. She noted in particular that the percentage of women recruited did not exceed the percentage of male candidates in any category. The target of 35 per cent of women in senior and director-level posts by 1995 was a long way from being achieved, seeing that only 8.6 per cent of women were at the D-1 level. A special effort must therefore be made to recruit more women and to continue nominating women candidates for vacancies.

29. Lastly, she stressed the importance of the role played by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the only United Nations body with the express task of providing financial and technical support for women's participation in all aspects of development. She commended UNIFEM for the direct support it had provided for various operational activities for development aimed at women, and welcomed in particular its role in encouraging the inclusion of women's interests in the programmes of development organizations, the institutionalization of women's issues and the allocation of resources for women. The Director of UNIFEM must continue her efforts to improve the Fund's effectiveness and profitability and tackle the world economic and social crises that had temporarily interrupted some of the Fund's programmes.

30. Ms. REHN (Finland), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that the principle of equality between men and women was fundamental in a just and democratic society. De jure discrimination might have been eliminated, but de facto inequality remained. The majority of women still lagged far behind

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in power and wealth. They were disadvantaged in many areas: education, productive assets, credit, income and services, decision-making, employment and remuneration.

31. To implement the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies and the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for the period 1996-2001, every United Nations body must take the necessary steps to enhance the status of women. Within the United Nations system two bodies were responsible for promoting equality between men and women and safeguarding women's rights: the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

32. The Commission had the task of monitoring the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies in Member States as well as within the United Nations system. In February 1991, the Commission had started preparing for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace. It had to draw up a programme of action, including goals and concrete guidelines focusing on a limited number of issues identified as fundamental obstacles to the advancement of the majority of women. The Nordic countries appreciated the work done thus far by the Commission and intended to continue their cooperation. They hoped that, at its next session, the Commission would be able to decide by consensus on the venue of the World Conference. The Nordic countries wished to stress the importance of placing women in the mainstream of development in preparing for the Conference. Women should not be viewed only as recipients, but rather as contributors to the economic, political and social process.

33. However, adequate resources were needed for the demanding preparatory task. The Division for the Advancement of Women must be able to give the Commission the necessary support and the developing countries the assistance they needed to ensure that their national reports on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies were included as part of the background documentation.

34. The Nordic countries wished to emphasize the importance of regional and national conferences in preparing for the global meeting. At the European level, preparatory meetings could contribute new ideas, especially in view of the dramatic changes which had taken place in Eastern and Central Europe. The Nordic Council of Ministers had decided to organize another Nordic Forum in 1994 in Finland, on women's life and work. Women's organizations and groups from the whole Baltic region would be invited to attend.

35. On the basis of the experience gained from the world conferences on women held at Mexico City, Copenhagen and Nairobi, the Nordic countries were convinced of the importance and value of the NGO forum to be held in parallel with the 1995 World Conference. The forum should be open to all women's organizations and groups, whose participation and cooperation were an example to all Governments everywhere.

(Ms. Rehn, Finland)

36. During its 10 years of existence, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had acquired considerable experience and achieved positive results, especially in view of the limited resources at its disposal. The Secretary-General should accord higher priority to strengthening the Committee within the limits of existing resources.

37. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which was a powerful tool for the advancement of women, had so far been ratified by 109 States. The Nordic countries had on several occasions expressed their concern at the many reservations linked to the ratification of the Convention. That trend was unacceptable, and they urged the States concerned to amend their legislation and withdraw their reservations; those States which had not yet done so should ratify the Convention as quickly as possible without reservations.

38. The Nordic countries considered that the very important issue of the mechanisms for communications on the status of women, which was dealt with by the Commission on the Status of Women, had not received the attention it deserved, and they hoped that the Commission would consider the issue further at its next session.

39. If the United Nations was to live up to its role as an international promoter of the principle of equality, it was vital that it should begin by implementing that principle at all levels within its own system. Year after year, the General Assembly had reaffirmed its determination to see the number of women in the Secretariat increase. The Nordic countries hoped that the Secretary-General would do his utmost to achieve the new target of 35 per cent set for 1995. It was particularly important for more women to be employed in senior posts, bearing in mind the principle of equitable geographical distribution. To that end, Governments must also put forward more female candidates for such posts.

40. The Nordic countries wished to pay a tribute to Mrs. Aung San Suu Kyi of Myanmar, who had recently been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, for the exceptional personal courage she had displayed in her non-violent struggle for democracy and fundamental human rights in her country.

41. It was unfortunate that the consultation on women in public life scheduled for 1991, had been postponed; the Nordic countries hoped that it would be reinstated on the schedule of United Nations meetings.

42. The Nordic Council of Ministers had adopted a plan of action for Nordic equal status cooperation for the period 1989-1993. The plan concentrated on two themes, namely the role of women in economic development and the problems inherent in combining family and working life. In that context, consideration should be given to a number of factors: the role of men in the family; child-care facilities for working parents; parental leave; information on contraception and abortion; equal employment opportunities, pay and career

(Ms. Rehn, Finland)

prospects; measures to combat sexual harassment; and the suppression of all forms of trafficking in and prostitution of women.

43. While women were moving to the forefront of the global agenda for social, economic and political development and playing a greater economic role in all parts of the world, women's participation in actual economic and political decision-making at all levels had not increased. That situation was all the more tragic in that women not only played a central role in the development process, particularly in determining family size, but also acted as environmental managers. In the light of that dual role, women's activities were crucial to sustainable development.

44. The Nordic countries had taken a keen interest in the work of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and hoped that it would be equipped with adequate resources to pursue its tasks. They looked forward with interest to the follow-up to the evaluation report on the Institute's activities.

45. UNIFEM was another important United Nations body seeking to involve women in mainstream development activities. The Nordic countries were convinced of the value of the national committees established in 12 countries, including the five Nordic countries themselves, in helping to increase awareness of the Fund's role and its efforts to improve the situation of women in the third world.

46. With reference to the ongoing process of reform within the Economic and Social Council, particularly the combining of two sessions into one, the Nordic countries felt that all questions relating to equality should be grouped in a cluster on the Council's agenda and considered simultaneously. In that way, the question of women in development would be firmly integrated into the overall discussion of equality issues.

47. In conclusion, she referred to the changes which had recently affected the world, stressing the importance of global problems and concerns common to all humankind, men and women alike, and the need to increase women's awareness of their rights and possibilities so that in the future problems could be resolved more equitably than they were at present.

48. Mr. SHOMAKHI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that, although they made up half of the world's population, women were still underrepresented in the social, economic and political spheres. They should therefore be accorded equal rights with men and their participation in the decision-making process guaranteed at all levels of economic and social development. That being said, it was clear from the report on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (E/CN.6/1990/5) that discrimination still existed in all countries, whatever their level of development. His delegation therefore hoped that all States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, would meet their obligations in that regard.

(Mr. Shomakhi, Libyan Arab
Jamahiriya)

49. Having considered the report of the Commission on the Status of Women on the work of its thirty-fifth session (E/1991/28), his delegation particularly welcomed the draft resolutions on Palestinian women and women and children under apartheid.

50. His delegation also looked forward to the World Conference on Women to be held in 1995, which would offer an opportunity to assess the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies and to take fresh measures for the promotion of women. He hoped that the venue of the Conference would be decided by consensus.

51. After the glorious revolution of 1 September, Libyan women, who had hitherto been excluded from social and political life by colonialism and underdevelopment, had gained rights equal to those of men and full access to education and all the professions. They now participated fully in the country's political, trade-union and economic life; they took part in the conduct of affairs of State and represented the country on multilateral bodies or in its dealings with foreign Governments.

52. His delegation welcomed the activities of UNIFEM and INSTRAW, which were essential if women were to participate fully in economic life.

53. Mr. KASOULIDES (Cyprus) drew attention to the significance of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on its tenth anniversary and urged all States to ratify or accede to it. He noted with satisfaction the efforts being made to coordinate the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women with that of other human rights treaty bodies so as to avoid duplication and overlapping. Small States found it increasingly difficult to abide by the multiple obligations arising under such instruments and would prefer a single reporting procedure, which would certainly facilitate both implementation and monitoring. Cyprus thanked the Division for the Advancement of Women for having helped it prepare its report, which would shortly be submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and believed that all States could, like it, benefit from the Division's excellent advice.

54. Since discrimination and injustice, from which the majority of the female population of the world continued to suffer, aroused considerable frustration, the United Nations had an obligation to create the conditions whereby equality for women could become a global priority. Moreover, the Organization should comply with the resolutions on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat. The briefings with regional groups were useful in that they enhanced public awareness of shortcomings in that area and helped accelerate the pace of reaching the targets set. Furthermore, publications such as The World's Women, 1970-1990 provided useful guidance and information on the progress made and the obstacles remaining.

(Mr. Kasoulides, Cyprus)

55. It was obvious that, over the years, some progress had been made in the struggle for equal rights for women and for their full participation in all levels of decision-making. Attitudes had changed and aspects of discrimination against women were now debated in public and criticized, resulting in slow but steady progress. Accordingly, he welcomed the preparations for a world conference on women as one of the priorities of the United Nations. The success of the conference would depend on the active and substantive participation of women's non-governmental organizations at all stages of its preparation and running.

56. The new-found awareness of the close interrelationship between women and the environment should include recognition of the role of women in preserving and improving the environment. Women's participation in activities relating to water supply, sanitation and new and renewable sources of energy should be expanded and formalized since, in most societies, women were the custodians of environmental purity and, without their active and conscious participation, efforts to preserve the environment would not succeed. There should also be growing recognition of the role of women in development, given its vital importance for economic success and sustainable development.

57. Cyprus had always attached great importance to international efforts to achieve complete equality between men and women and to eliminate all remnants of discrimination against women. His Government recognized the important role which Cypriot women had played and continued to play in the search for a peaceful solution to the Cyprus problem, which lay in reconciliation and peaceful coexistence without external interference.

58. The Government of Cyprus was aware that legislative reforms should be followed by substantive changes in society. For that reason, its National Plan of Action on the Status of Women included long-term programmes aimed at promoting and securing the full participation of women in the country's political, economic, cultural and social life. That policy was coordinated by a national mechanism consisting of a Secretariat for Women's Rights and a committee of representatives of all ministries, under the Ministry of Justice. Believing that women's rights should not be separated from human rights in general, Cyprus had ratified not only the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, but also a number of international conventions which provided for equality between men and women, such as the European Social Charter, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Convention on the Political Rights of Women. Legislation on civil marriage, equal pay for both sexes and the protection of motherhood had recently been introduced and seminars and conferences on issues ranging from the role of the media in shaping social attitudes and the participation of women in public and political life had been held in an effort to enhance public awareness and promote the advancement of women in all areas of social and political life.

59. Ms. SZAFARZ (Poland) said that her Government had been aware for many years of the importance of equal participation by women and men in social and

(Ms. Szafarz, Poland)

economic development. In 1986, it had adopted a programme of activities for the advancement of women encompassing 22 areas of action, established national machinery pursuant to the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies and entrusted a plenipotentiary with coordinating the tasks to be undertaken.

60. Changes in Poland's political, economic and social system had affected women more adversely than men, especially with regard to unemployment and the overall decline in living standards. As a result of growing competition on the labour market, women might need retraining more often than men. Central and local administrative bodies and the national machinery for the advancement of women would have a role to play in that regard. One way of combating unemployment was to promote small business. Having no experience in that field, Poland wished to benefit from international cooperation. It noted, in that connection, that a conference organized jointly by the women's section of the trade union "Rural Solidarity" and the American Foundation for the Development of Polish Agriculture had been held in June 1991 to train women entrepreneurs in agriculture.

61. While Polish legislation guaranteed equal rights for women, and there was no discrimination against women within the meaning of article 1 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the situation often differed in practice. Because women were unaware of their rights, they were not always able to benefit from them. For instance, by law they could participate in the formulation and implementation of policy and could hold office at all levels of government, but in practice they were heavily underrepresented in decision-making. The report on the legal situation of women in Poland prepared by the national machinery for the advancement of women had served as a starting point for a comprehensive programme of action designed to improve knowledge of the legislation in force. However, in order to ensure women's political and economic participation, it was necessary for all concerned, especially women's organizations and the media, to make a real commitment to action.

62. Poland supported the convening in 1995 of a further world conference on women and was prepared to participate actively in the preparatory process. The discussions should not be limited to a mere exchange of views, however, but should lead to conclusions and recommendations. In her delegation's view, the implementation of conclusions and recommendations and the flow of information between United Nations organs and Member States should be improved. In view of the constructive role which non-governmental women's organizations had played in the success of the Nairobi Conference, Poland supported the full involvement of non-governmental organizations in a new world conference. Preparations for the conference should be the responsibility of all relevant units of the United Nations system, and her delegation expected that both the Economic and Social Council and the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Administrative Committee on Coordination would coordinate United Nations efforts and Member States' contributions to ensure the full success of the endeavour.

(Ms. Szafarz, Poland)

63. Her Government was particularly interested in developing regional and interregional cooperation on the advancement of women. The regional seminar on the impact of economic and political reforms on the status of women in Eastern Europe and the USSR, held at Vienna in April 1991, had provided an opportunity to formulate recommendations which were important to all States that were transforming their economies and political systems. Poland was looking forward to the interregional consultations on the role of women in public life. It regretted the postponement of those consultations, but hoped that the additional time would allow Member States and the Division for the Advancement of Women to prepare for them more thoroughly.

64. Poland attached great importance to the East-West conference on women's issues organized by the Council of Europe, which was to be held in Poland in December 1991.

65. Her Government believed that the United Nations should place particular emphasis on the following subjects: the impact of recent changes in Central and Eastern Europe on the status of women and their place in society; the position of women in public life, as a reflection of de jure and/or de facto discrimination; and women and AIDS.

66. Mrs. SKOWRON-OLSZOWSKA (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that the advancement of women was one of the top priorities of UNESCO, as its Director-General had reaffirmed at the twenty-sixth session of the General Conference held in Paris. Two thirds of the world's illiterate people were women and there was a renewed conviction within the international community that in order to resolve the enormous problems that existed, efforts must be made to involve vulnerable populations, including women, in the development process. UNESCO had accordingly given priority to literacy training and education at all levels for girls and women and their access to scientific and technical education. It had also promoted women's participation in cultural development and their access to the communications professions. UNESCO would henceforth devote half of the budget allocated to the advancement of women to literacy and primary education programmes, particularly in rural areas.

67. Even though considerable progress had been made, notably through normative action, inequality between the sexes was still prevalent in education and vocational training, particularly in developing countries, and was often exacerbated by the economic crisis.

68. The World Conference on Education For All, held in 1990 in Thailand, had blamed that situation on the fact that insufficient attention was paid to the division of roles according to sex and to the part played by women in development. As a follow-up to the Conference, an inter-agency project on basic education for girls had been proposed and would focus on the different aspects of the problem. UNESCO would ensure that the interdisciplinary approach was maintained and would improve cooperation among the specialized agencies of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations.

(Mrs. Skowron-Olszowska, UNESCO)

69. The total number of member States who were parties to the Convention against Discrimination in Education was still 77, the same as in 1989. At the fifth consultation of States parties (1990-1991), in which 71 States had taken part, it had been stressed that serious obstacles would have to be overcome in order for women to be treated in the same way as men, but that considerable progress had nevertheless been achieved, particularly in the field of education. In countries where education was for the most part reserved for boys, youth and women's organizations and other non-governmental organizations were endeavouring to remedy the situation. Most countries had opted for a coeducational system. Thirty-three countries had a fully coeducational system (from nursery school to university) and none of them wished to reconsider their decision. In 32 other countries, schools reserved for one or the other sex, particularly at secondary level, still existed. Only eight countries, all of them Islamic, had set up wholly segregated systems for boys and girls above the age of 10, although the entrance requirements were identical for both sexes.

70. With regard to studies and research and exchange of information and experience, many studies on the connection between education, vocational training and fertility had been carried out, particularly in the context of literacy or post-literacy activities, in a number of Islamic countries. That had prompted more detailed studies on the family, marriage, family planning and the social and cultural development of the community.

71. Studies on the technical and vocational training given to girls and women with a view to finding well-paid employment indicated that emphasis should be placed not only on teacher training and curriculum reform but also on the upbringing given to girls in their families.

72. With regard to vocational training, the International Literacy Year (1990) had given rise to many initiatives and publications.

73. Programmes in the field of literacy and adult education, implemented by UNESCO and financed for the most part from extrabudgetary funds, were under way in a number of African countries, and a literacy project was being proposed for nomadic women in the Gobi desert, in Mongolia. In 1990, a pilot project for post-literacy and vocational training had been implemented in Laos for girls belonging to ethnic minorities, and in Senegal, a functional literacy project for adults was adopting a special strategy to enlist fuller participation by women in the programme. Within the framework of the follow-up to the World Conference on Education for All, the implementation of the Pan-African programme on the schooling of girls at primary level was continuing in 15 countries. A meeting would be held to analyse the findings and prepare new operational projects.

74. Lastly, on the question of the status of women in organizations in the United Nations system, detailed statistics comparing the situation of men and women in the UNESCO secretariat had been made available to delegations.

75. The CHAIRMAN reminded delegations that, in preparing draft resolutions, they should conform to the provisions of General Assembly resolution 45/175 on the rationalization of the work of the Third Committee and to the Committee's biennial programme of work.

The meeting rose at noon.