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New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 19th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. AL-SHAALI (United Arab Emirates)  
  
later: Mr. ALFARO-PINEDA (El Salvador)  
(Vice-Chairman)  
  
later: Mr. AL-SHAALI (United Arab Emirates)  
(Chairman)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

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

1. Mr. THOMPSON (Jamaica) said that endorsement of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000 by the General Assembly in 1985 had shown the willingness to change many inequalities existing between men and women. By adopting resolution 45/129, the General Assembly had again reaffirmed its determination to encourage the full participation of women in society. The report of the Secretary-General (A/46/439) on the first review and appraisal of implementation of the Strategies had concluded that considerable progress had been made in eradicating legal discrimination against women; however, discrimination still existed in practice in all countries regardless of their level of development. Therefore, Governments must enforce and monitor women's legislation in order to redress de facto discrimination. Public declaration of commitment to an equal opportunity policy and its consistent execution would also have an impact on governmental programmes to promote equality.
2. Jamaica was a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and its Constitution guaranteed fundamental rights and freedoms for all citizens. It had also adopted a national policy statement reaffirming its commitment to women's development and directing all government departments to implement that policy. Its goals included ensuring that economic, trade and employment policies protected and increased women's access to employment and income; identification and upgrading of women's skills, improved access to credit, markets and support services, improvement in women's pay and conditions of work, diversification of women's employment, and appropriate child-care measures. The Bureau of Women's Affairs also helped women to realize their potential while creating avenues for their full integration into national development.
3. Jamaica was pleased that a special analysis would be made of the contribution of ageing women to development, and that the Commission on the Status of Women would be provided with a comprehensive picture of the issue of ageing women as a potentially vulnerable group.
4. In order to be active participants in development, women must be active in politics and decision-making. In Jamaica, women held high positions in the political arena and the public sector. Furthermore, a non-governmental organization offered a training programme geared towards preparing women for political life. His delegation appreciated the Secretary-General's efforts to increase the recruitment of women in the United Nations Secretariat, though continuing and forceful efforts would be necessary in order to reach and possibly surpass the set goals. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) should be congratulated on its programmes, which had enabled many women in developing countries to seize control of their own lives and well-being.

5. Mrs. BARGHOUTI (Observer for Palestine) said that, while her delegation appreciated the Secretary-General's report on the situation of Palestinian women (E/CN.6/1991/9), that report did not reflect the harsh reality of their conditions. Moreover, although her delegation highly appreciated the work of UNRWA, its report was not related to Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/11, which requested a report on the situation of Palestinian women. Her delegation had hoped that the report would have responded to that resolution and to the recommendation of the report of the mission of experts (E/CN.6/1990/10).

6. The condition of Palestinian women and children in the occupied Palestinian territory continued to deteriorate at an alarming rate, as a result of Israeli occupation and oppression. Those women were suffering physically, socially, economically and emotionally. Curfews, confiscation of land, military terrorism, destruction of the educational and cultural structure of Palestinian society, and separation of families through deportation of husbands, brothers and fathers were inflicting great harm on Palestinian women and their families. Meanwhile, medical services had deteriorated drastically.

7. In response to the worsening conditions for Palestinian women prisoners held in Israeli jails, the United Council of Palestinian Women had appealed to the international community to intervene on their behalf. The Council had demanded improvement in medical treatment, nutrition and sanitation, educational materials, family visitation rights, and an end to collective punishment.

8. Living under occupation, the Palestinian woman faced the danger of losing her identity and being deprived of her basic human rights. She also faced discrimination, unemployment, violence and persecution. She and her family suffered from poverty, hunger and thirst, along with deteriorating health facilities and interrupted education. But those experiences had failed to crush the determination of Palestinian women. They would continue to fight against Israeli oppression until the international community took the necessary action to protect them. The advancement of Palestinian women and their full equality and self-reliance could only be achieved by an end to the Israeli occupation and the attainment of their right to self-determination and establishment of an independent state in accordance with United Nations resolutions and the Charter.

9. Mr. PARSHIKOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation welcomed the increased number of States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and at the same time shared the concern that most States which had not acceded to the Convention were situated in regions where the status of women left much to be desired. The States participating in the recent Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe held in Moscow had agreed to urge the States which had not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Convention and the States parties which had expressed reservations to consider withdrawing them.

(Mr. Parshikov, USSR)

10. The States participating in the Conference had reaffirmed that their objective was to achieve both de jure and de facto equality of opportunity for men and women and had undertaken to carry out the necessary measures to implement the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, strengthen existing national machinery for the advancement of women and take steps to halt all forms of violence against and exploitation of women.

11. In accordance with the final document of the Moscow Conference, the participants would encourage efforts to provide all possible economic opportunities for women. Particular importance had been attached to the need to ensure that no structural reform policies or programmes discriminated against women.

12. The participants had also undertaken to encourage the broadest participation by women in all aspects of political and social life, decision-making, training and employment and to collect information in order to evaluate the status of women in society and improve it.

13. Ensuring the rights of women was a major aspect of the overall question of human rights. That view should be taken into account in the preparations for the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights because it would be impossible to build a civilized and democratic world community without eliminating discrimination against women. But such discrimination still existed, and women were very rarely in a position to participate in national and international policy-making.

14. Nevertheless, there were grounds for optimism. Since its inception, the Organization had made significant efforts to achieve equality of men and women. The relevant United Nations bodies were making an important contribution in that regard. Positive results were also being achieved at the regional level. Non-governmental organizations were playing a more active role in protecting the interests of women and many countries were carrying out as a matter of priority national programmes for the advancement of women. Although his country had proclaimed equality of men and women and ensured equal rights for women under the law, millions of Soviet women lacked medical care, services and household appliances, and were employed in arduous and low-paying jobs. His Government considered the advancement of Soviet women a top priority and he hoped to be able to report on progress at the next session of the General Assembly.

15. Mrs. GOLAN (Israel) said that she was pleased to report that Israel had recently ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, together with the two Human Rights Covenants. After thorough examination, her Government had been able to ratify those instruments without the need to adopt or amend any legislation.

16. In surveying the status of women in Israel and the problems still to be faced, she said that Israel was a heterogeneous, pluralist society in which people of different religions, cultures and social traditions lived side by

(Mrs. Golan, Israel)

side. Women's legal and social status reflected the interaction of traditional life patterns with a modern western lifestyle. Full and equal rights for men and women were embodied in Israel's Declaration of Independence, and those principles had been strengthened subsequently by laws defining the rights of women. The right of different religious communities to jurisdiction over matters of personal status, such as marriage, divorce, maintenance and guardianship, had been inherited from the Ottoman and British legal systems in force before independence. Since the establishment of the State of Israel, additional laws were in conformity with modern concepts had been enacted. She provided an overview of the wide range of legislation enacted to ensure women's equality in the workplace.

17. Although Israel's democratic system allowed for equal participation of all citizens in its multi-party political arena, women were still underrepresented on both national and local levels. Many were reluctant to enter public life because its demands might curtail the time they could devote to their family. At the same time, many women active in public life found themselves at a disadvantage due to the existing nomination process for candidates. Women were becoming increasingly conscious of the need to be more politically assertive and in recent years, women's organizations had been encouraging women to meet the challenges of political life more effectively.

18. Arab and Druze women had exercised their right to vote since the earliest elections but had not yet fully participated in political life. They had attained independent legal status and equality of educational opportunity, which had brought about far-reaching changes in their perception of their role within the family and the community. Many worked outside the home and contributed to the family income, thereby strengthening their position within the family. Increasing numbers had acquired post-secondary and university education, opening more opportunities for professional employment. Some resulting shifts in attitudes towards women had begun to occur, but deeply-rooted traditions still hampered Arab and Druze women in fully benefiting from their rights and privileges under law.

19. About 7 per cent of Israeli women lived in cooperative rural communities, such as the kibbutz and the moshav. Women were equal members of the kibbutz in all respects and were socially and economically independent. Released from domestic duties, they were equal participants in the kibbutz labour force. Jobs in all branches of the kibbutz economy were open to them. Membership in the moshav was by family, although both husband and wife were considered members in their own right. Agriculture was the main source of employment in the moshav. With the introduction of agricultural mechanization and labour-saving devices in the home, moshav women were increasingly able to seek employment outside the home and farm.

(Mrs. Golan, Israel)

20. Government bodies and voluntary organizations shared in the commitment to advance the status of women by including components specifically intended to promote women's interests. She listed the government and public bodies specifically concerned with the status of women which had been established following the 1975 International Year for Women.

21. Women in Israel had greatly narrowed the gap between their equality by law and societal constraints on its full expression. The growing awareness among women of their potential as equal partners had generated pressure for more representation on national and local levels and more influence in decision-making in all spheres of life.

22. Mr. HUSSAIN (Pakistan) said that the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies had created an awareness that women could no longer be marginalized in the national development and political process. Women dominated a large segment of the non-cash economy, especially subsistence agriculture and domestic labour, and must be viewed as vital participants in development.

23. Progress in the implementation of the Nairobi Strategies could be achieved only under favourable socio-economic conditions. Underdevelopment, hunger, disease and population growth adversely affected the advancement of women in developing countries. A major change in attitudes about development was required on the part of not only developing countries but also financial institutions and donor countries. The negative impact of structural-adjustment measures was greatest on vulnerable groups, particularly poor women. The advancement of women must be part of an overall development strategy based on a concerted international effort.

24. Although investing in the advancement of women would not solve all development problems, it would contribute to efforts to deal with those problems and promote better use of resources and opportunities in the future.

25. The World Conference on Women to be held in 1995 would enable States to renew their political commitment to the full implementation of the Strategies by the end of the century. A limited number of goals should be identified for a programme of action to be adopted at the Conference and realistic targets should be set with concrete guidelines for achieving them.

26. The Constitution of Pakistan guaranteed equality of opportunity for all citizens, irrespective of sex. His Government was fully committed to integrating women into the mainstream of national development. A Ministry of Women's Development had been established to promote the advancement of women through development programmes targeting such areas as education, health, vocational training and social welfare. The Pakistan Commission on the Status of Women, established in 1984, had the task of making recommendations to the Government to safeguard women's rights.

(Mr. Hussain, Pakistan)

27. The Government had set up a bank staffed and run exclusively by women in order to integrate women into the national business community. His country had set a 5-per-cent quota for women's employment in the public-service sector and equal employment opportunities were available through open competition. Non-governmental organizations involved in the social and economic advancement of women received considerable financial support from the Government. Women could participate in decision-making at the highest level by standing as candidates in open elections for national and provincial assemblies.

28. Pakistan continued to provide shelter to the largest single concentration of refugees in the world. Despite limited resources, it was doing its best to assist the over 3 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan, three quarters of them women and children. The international community must take steps without delay to facilitate their voluntary return to their country of origin in safety and honour.

29. The International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) had made a valuable contribution to the implementation of the Nairobi Strategies. His country continued to support the efforts to increase the percentage of women in the Secretariat, particularly at senior policy-level and decision-making posts. Emphasis should be placed on increasing the representation of women from developing countries to rectify the existing imbalance.

30. Ms. SURAPOLBHICHET (Thailand) said that the Nairobi Strategies were a milestone in United Nations efforts to promote the advancement of women. The constructive recommendations adopted in 1990 at the first review and appraisal meeting should be fully implemented. The success of the Strategies required concerted efforts at every level by all parties concerned. Thailand supported the United Nations system-wide medium-term plan for women and development. The 1995 World Conference on Women would give new impetus to the implementation of the Strategies. She hoped that the preparatory activities would produce additional recommendations.

31. At the national level, Governments must establish their focal points without delay. National machinery was essential to ensure that the women's agenda became an integral part of national development plans. The Organization should therefore use all possible means to support the work of the national machinery.

32. In Thailand, the National Commission on Women's Affairs spearheaded efforts to improve the status of Thai women and had played a crucial role in revising the country's long-term women's development plan and formulating policy on women's development in the current five-year national development plan. The Commission planned to convene a national assembly on women's development in the near future to ensure that the agencies concerned understood the objectives set and how to achieve them. The plans emphasized

(Ms. Surapolbichet, Thailand)

education, the participation of women in decision-making, legal measures to improve the promotion of women's rights and law enforcement to deal with crimes committed against women.

33. Thailand was determined to improve its educational and training systems on the basis of the principle of non-discrimination so that women would have greater opportunities and access to more services. Some of Thailand's reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination against Women had been withdrawn in 1990 and the few remaining reservations were currently under review. Her delegation supported the call for broader accession to and ratification of the Convention. Lastly, she commended the work of the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM) for its remarkable world-wide programmes.

34. Mrs. MOLOJWANE (Botswana) said that the 1995 World Conference on Women would provide a good opportunity to review and appraise the progress made in implementing the Nairobi Strategies. States should demonstrate the political will to bring about social and economic changes in order to eliminate the structural imbalances that perpetuated the disadvantaged position of women in society. It was disturbing to note that women still played a disproportionately small part in political life and decision-making in most countries. States should eradicate legal discrimination against women and eliminate cultural and tradition-related factors which were discriminatory against women.

35. In developing countries, particularly in Africa, attention should focus on both the needs of families headed by single females and the plight of married women. In some cultures in Africa, married women were viewed as minors and, for example, were unable to obtain a loan without the consent of their husbands. States should take into account all categories of women, including the disabled, refugees, the elderly and the illiterate.

36. The Botswana Women's Development Planning and Advisory Committee, made up of representatives from various ministries, consulted with and advised various government departments and non-governmental organizations on women's issues. Under the Government's decentralization policies, local authorities managed health and primary-education services, permitting greater participation by women in development planning and implementation. The contribution of Botswana women in the non-formal sector could not be overestimated. Over 90 per cent of day-care centres in the country were run by women's organizations.

37. The Botswana Women's Affairs Unit conducted workshops and seminars for women from all walks of life in order to identify their needs and problems and formulate strategies to address them. On the basis of the Unit's recommendations, the Government had granted women full pay for maternity leave. With regard to employment, the highest proportion of working women was in the Government and, on the whole, the proportion of women employed in the



(Mrs. Molojwane, Botswana)

formal sector had increased to nearly one third. Men and women received equal pay for equal work. However, much still remained to be done. In conclusion, she commended United Nations bodies such as UNIFEM for their wonderful work in promoting the advancement of women throughout the world.

38. Ms. MANSARAY (Sierra Leone) said that her Government attached great importance to United Nations activities aimed at improving the status of women, and that it was essential for the machinery designed for that purpose to function efficiently.

39. In Sierra Leone, many women suffered under the triple burden of domestic responsibilities, agricultural production and, most importantly, the increasing need to ensure the family's survival by participating in the formal or informal economic sector. After endless hours spent in agricultural labour and household chores, women had little time and energy for taking part in public life, and that, in turn, limited their access to positions of power. Moreover, it was not easy for them to avail themselves of education and training opportunities in order to obtain better employment.

40. Sierra Leone's policy for the advancement of women focused on income generation and employment, legal protection, education, training and health care, with special emphasis on women heads of households and on adolescent and pregnant women.

41. Sierra Leone had participated in various international meetings on women's issues and had acceded to the Convention in 1989. Her Government called for a comprehensive approach towards eradicating discrimination against women.

42. Mrs. KOGNAW (Togo) said that her country had become a party to the Convention in 1983 as a means of joining in international action for the implementation of all its provisions, taking account of the characteristics of each society. She therefore welcomed the general recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in document A/46/38 on unpaid women workers in family enterprises, measurement and quantification of unremunerated domestic activities and disabled women. Her delegation welcomed the latest report of the Commission on the Status of Women, particularly its concentration on vulnerable groups of women. Togo believed that national action on the advancement of women needed strengthening; it shared the view that development required the full participation of women and that without institutions to deal with women's issues, their contribution would continue to be ignored.

43. She noted from the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies (A/46/439) that the targets had still not been achieved. The lack of integration of women in political and administrative decision-making only strengthened her delegation's conviction that political stability, social harmony and the cessation of armed conflicts could never be

(Mrs. Kognaw, Togo)

achieved until the objectives of the Strategies had been realized. In that respect, she supported the preparatory work for the 1995 World Conference on Women if carried out in implementation of the Nairobi Strategies. The Conference offered an opportunity to demonstrate political will to make the social and economic changes needed to eliminate the cultural imbalance suffered by women, particularly in the developing countries.

44. She commended UNIFEM on its activities in highlighting the role of women and promoting action at all levels. She also commended INSTRAW on its activities and supported its new programmes concerning the environment, communications, work in the informal sector, and AIDS, particularly in the developing countries.

45. Togo recognized the importance of women's role and women were already being appointed to top political and administrative posts. Women were also active in the private sector. In general, action for the advancement of women was still focused on the rural sector.

46. Ms. AL-KHALID (Kuwait) said that Kuwaiti women had proved their courage during Iraq's occupation of Kuwait; those in Kuwait at the time had played their part alongside the men and suffered the same ordeals, including martyrdom, whilst those abroad had represented their country, organizing demonstrations and support systems. Today, they were effectively channelling their skills into the reconstruction of Kuwait on an equal basis with their male compatriots. Her delegation attached great importance to the advancement of women, given their role in all walks of life and their effective contribution to development.

47. Men and women had equal rights and duties under the Constitution, which also protected family welfare. Moreover, legislation had been enacted to protect women at work and provide for equal pay, equal promotion, equal holidays and maternity leave. Women in Kuwait now held senior positions in both public and private sectors as a result of the attention given to raising their educational level. Having ratified the conventions of the United Nations intended to eliminate discrimination against women and improve their status both socially and in the workplace, Kuwait was attempting to achieve the aims of the United Nations Decade for Women. She urged the Committee to step up its efforts concerning the advancement of women, adding that moves to assist women in exercising their rights and freedoms should no less be forgotten.

48. Ms. AJHIPALA (Namibia) said that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which her country was in the process of ratifying, had been adopted at a time when Namibian women had no voice in their own country. With independence, however, women were encouraged and enabled to play a full, equal and effective role in the reconstruction of their nation. The Constitution outlawed sex discrimination and protected women's rights as individuals and within the family, thus opening doors to women which had been barred. The Department of Women's Affairs, established

(Ms. Ashipala, Namibia)

in 1990, had been examining how it could relate to other government institutions in order to further the constitutional provisions on the advancement of women. It was also organizing workshops, in cooperation with non-governmental organizations, to ensure that women at all levels understood those provisions.

49. The long existence of traditional and discriminatory apartheid laws had disadvantaged women in many ways, particularly in respect of property rights. Following repeal of those laws, the Cabinet in September 1990 had instructed the Department to identify discriminatory legislation and the Ministry of Justice had invited other ministries and government officers to assist in setting up a Law Reform Commission to review discriminatory laws and recommend amendments. The Department was now lobbying for the appointment of a woman in the Office of the Ombudsman and for a Cabinet decision that all draft legislation should be submitted to the Department for comment. She expressed her delegation's appreciation to UNIFEM for its assistance to the Department. Her delegation welcomed the ILO decision to assist in a symposium on development of strategies and policies for the promotion of equal opportunity and treatment for men and women.

50. The migrant-labour system had left women on their own to contribute to agriculture and livestock production, which were strenuous and labour-intensive. The environmental degradation caused by the destruction of forests was increasing rapidly, but women were dependent on natural resources for domestic and production purposes, and found it difficult to balance the requirements of conservation with the need to feed and provide for their families. Namibia therefore attached great importance to the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. It was essential for women all over the world to participate in the Conference since they bore the brunt of environmental degradation, which was linked to rural poverty.

51. Since access to arable and grazing land for rural dwellers was not based on ownership rights, women's access to land was channelled through their relationship with men and was therefore insecure. That practice must end. In the southern region, for example, poverty was compounded by isolation from the major centres of production; women were employed as seasonal or temporary workers and thus locked in a vicious cycle of insecurity and family retrogression. In the northern region the after-effects of the war continued even today. Young women accounted for an increasing proportion of landless and marginalized squatters seeking to earn income from informal-sector activities such as the sale of alcohol. In that connection she referred to the Land Conference held in Windhoek earlier in the year. Its recommendations, in which women had been consulted on the land issue for the first time, irrespective of marital status and in their own right, were to be presented to the Government for the formulation of its land-redistribution policy.

52. Following the adoption of the World Declaration on the Survival,

(Ms. Ashipala, Namibia)

Protection and Development of Children, Namibia had committed itself to a national plan of action, whose goals for the period up to the year 2000 concerned women's fundamental needs, particularly in relation to health and education. Namibia appreciated the support it was receiving from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

53. Her delegation welcomed the 1995 World Conference on Women, which would provide a further opportunity to review the Nairobi Strategies, and urged that any new strategies should take account of the differing situation of women from region to region. Her delegation also welcomed the forthcoming First Ladies' Summit on Rural Women to be held in Brussels.

54. Ms. RAOELINA (Madagascar) said that Madagascar had a young population with a high fertility rate. Some 80 per cent of the women lived in the rural areas. Women represented a valuable and growing human potential, since over half of them were of working age.

55. Although Malagasy society today was patriarchal, there were traces of the former matriarchal civilization in that women were regarded as the link between the past and the future because of their procreative faculty. That would largely explain their privileged status as the source of life. Malagasy women had always played an active role in promoting the family and the community.

56. In Madagascar, private law on women, which was partly customary, under the influence of French private law, reflected the efforts of the legislature to promote the status of women. Madagascar had ratified or acceded to a number of international conventions concerning women, and the Administrative Chamber and the Constitutional High Court were responsible for monitoring equality between men and women. In 1976 a Ministry for Population and Social Advancement had been established, with a department on the status of women and children to monitor the status of women, implement government policy on women and coordinate the activities of women's organizations.

57. Women's emancipation depended on economic and social conditions. Governments must define the role of women in national development, but the international community must ensure favourable conditions for the realization of the objectives of development. Her delegation regretted the slow progress in implementing the Nairobi Strategies. The obstacles in the developing countries, particularly in Africa, included extreme poverty, disease, hunger, and the chronic external debt.

58. Her delegation supported the proposal of the Group of 77 calling upon the Commission on the Status of Women to pay special attention to women in the developing countries, particularly in Africa and in the least developed countries, who suffered disproportionately from the world economic crisis, the burden of debt and structural adjustment. The 1995 World Conference on Women must define measures to eliminate those obstacles.

59. Mr. Al-Shaali (United Arab Emirates) resumed the Chair.

60. Mr. AL-HABASHI (Oman) said that women were entirely capable of sharing the responsibility for social and economic development with men. In Oman, women were rightly deemed to be a major factor in the success of any social institution, whether within the family or in society at large, and improving their educational, health, social and economic levels would benefit social progress. Omani women had made an effective contribution to development, having been well-prepared to assume their responsibilities in that respect. In recognition of their role, a comprehensive system of support services for women was in place, with positive results. A women's association was active throughout the country, and a national development plan encompassed programmes to raise the overall educational level of women in the rural areas. Oman had always endeavoured to make an effective contribution to enterprises concerning the advancement of women, whether regionally or internationally.

61. In Oman, unlike some countries, there was no discrimination against women in terms of work or pay. They enjoyed rights of ownership under Islamic law, had the same educational and employment opportunities as men, and were entitled to paid maternity leave. Women in Oman were now employed in all vocational and professional fields at all levels, meaning that their status as an influential element in society had been fully acknowledged.

62. Mr. ROKOTUIVUNA (Fiji) said that his delegation was grateful to the Division for the Advancement of Women for conducting in Rarotonga a regional seminar on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The technical nature of the seminar and advisory services would assist Fiji in enhancing the role of women in development.

63. In Fiji, equal opportunity for women in the upper echelons of government had gained greater impetus with the establishment of the Ministry for Women. There were currently two women ministers with cabinet rank and two women heads of government departments; for the first time, a woman had been appointed a magistrate. Many others occupied senior positions in public service or private enterprise, and were influential in all spheres of development, including policy formulation, programme implementation and decision-making.

64. His Government placed great importance on enhancing the quality of life of women in rural areas, and several projects were under way to improve housing and the water supply and to provide access to education and health services. Workshops had also been organized to promote women's skills and family planning and to ameliorate nutrition and hygiene. In all those activities, Fiji was grateful to UNIFEM, UNDP and WHO, as well as to all the donor States, for their assistance.

65. Women in Fiji were relatively well-educated, had equal voting rights and accounted for a significant proportion of the workforce. They were an integral part of Fiji's development process.

66. Ms. ARUNGU-OLENDE (Kenya) said that one of the most intractable obstacles to the advancement of women was the persistence of social and cultural practices and attitudes even when equality existed by law. Although campaigns had been conducted to influence traditional sex bias, those efforts were far from achieving the desired goal. Assistance to those involved in implementing programmes to bring about change was therefore crucial if improvement was to be made in the long term.

67. The debt burden and structural-adjustment programmes of the 1980s had impeded the advancement of women in Kenya. Success in implementing the Forward-looking Strategies had been adversely affected by the existing international economic order and by increasing urban poverty among women and children. There was an urgent need for programmes tailored to young women that focused on adolescent fertility and single mothers.

68. Following the 1985 World Conference on Women held in Nairobi, a two-year operational-research project had been launched by the Kenyan Women's Bureau and Public Law Institute on abuse and violence against women, with a view to creating multidisciplinary services for the victims and mapping out a long-term strategy. Owing in part to the victims' reluctance to come forward, the project had met with considerable difficulties. Women must be encouraged to speak out on the issue, which was not confined to one country or cultural system. Action by Member States at the national level must be encouraged. Education to promote respect for every individual, starting from childhood, must be furthered. Her delegation was pleased to note that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) would be discussing the issue under article 6 of the Convention.

69. The growing impoverishment of women must not be allowed to continue. Young women must be vigorously encouraged to pursue educational opportunities. Women needed skills for participating in the informal sector on an equal footing with men, and must not be prevented from working in male-dominated occupations for lack of financial assistance or credit.

70. Her delegation supported the work of UNIFEM, which must show greater flexibility in meeting the demands of poor urban and rural women. The roles and needs of women changed with the times, and UNIFEM's mandate must be amended accordingly.

71. The Secretary-General's report on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/46/377) showed that unless Governments stepped up their efforts at the national level, it would be difficult to meet the 35-per-cent target set for 1995. Governments, especially African Governments, must be asked to do more in that respect.

72. With regard to the venue of the 1995 World Conference on Women, her delegation supported the position of the Group of 77.

73. Ms. SELLAMI-MESLEM (Director, Division for the Advancement of Women) said that the debate had been stimulating and had shown her that the Division was on the right track and was responding to the programmes of both developing and developed countries in achieving the advancement envisaged by the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. The priority themes - such as poverty; women as heads of households; the impact of the economic crisis, debt and structural readjustment on women in the third world; violence; participation in decision-making; women as refugees and displaced persons and women living in centres of conflict; and elderly women - were now being dealt with in projects undertaken by United Nations agencies, largely on the basis of recommendations from expert groups, seminars and the Commission on the Status of Women.

74. Those projects were the result of prospects opened during debates in the Third Committee, for which she was extremely grateful. The continuing dialogue between Member States and the Division guaranteed success - the realization of equality between men and women - perhaps by the year 2000. There had, of course, been frustration over lack of resources, but she was confident that, through the determination of the members of the Committee, the competent organs of the General Assembly would respond to appeals.

75. Many representatives had expressed the hope that the high-level interregional consultation on women in public life could be reinstated. She assured them that as soon as the necessary voluntary contributions had been received, including contributions to finance the participation of the least developed countries, a date would be fixed in consultation with the Commission on the Status of Women, which would welcome suggestions.

76. In response to questions, she said that the Division hoped to take part in the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development and the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights. It would certainly take part in the Global Assembly of Women and the Environment to take place at Miami in November 1991 and had already prepared two papers. As to the next session of CEDAW, she looked forward to hearing as soon as possible from the countries that would be submitting reports, namely, Barbados, China, Czechoslovakia, El Salvador, Ghana, Honduras, Spain, Sri Lanka and Venezuela. That session would be followed by a meeting of States parties, at which those parties whose membership in the Committee ended in 1992 would be invited to submit new nominations.

77. Miss SHIELDS (Director, International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)) thanked the members of the Committee for their thoughtful and constructive approach to the reports before them. Despite impatience at the slow pace in the advancement of women, and despite the fact that it was more than 16 years since the first United Nations Conference on Women and 10 years since the coming into force of the Convention, the Institute's efforts were still very necessary. No one was more conscious of the need for action in the area of development for women - and by women - than the people working on their behalf in the United Nations. The problems were not easy to solve, but with real commitment, adequate

(Miss Shields)

resources and political will, she was confident that progress could and would be made. She appreciated the confidence shown in the Institute and believed that the only meaningful response was to endeavour to turn words of hope into action.

78. Mrs. CAPELING-ALAKIJA (Director, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)) said that the 1990s would be the most demanding decade that the developing world had ever faced. Centres of economic power were shifting, and rapid technological advances and emerging concepts of global governance were opening up new frontiers. But if human development was to take its rightful place in the centre of all development efforts, new forms of leadership were required, and an environment must be created in which it was at last acknowledged that some leaders were, indeed, born women.

79. As the debate on the item had shown, there was a growing understanding that sustainable development could be achieved only if every source of human potential was utilized and if men and women learned to live in harmony with one other and with the ecosystem.

80. It was gratifying to hear delegations speak in support of the United Nations collaborative effort that had produced the publication The World's Women 1970-1990. Words advocating the interests of women, however persuasive, needed the power of numbers in order to influence policy. UNIFEM appreciated that support and looked forward to guidance from delegations with respect to making the update of that publication a regular responsibility of the United Nations. The World's Women provided compelling arguments for increased social monitoring to reveal the terrible inequalities hidden behind the averages for per capita GNP.

81. Collaborative efforts within the United Nations system throughout the 1970s and 1980s had also produced a significant record of achievement as part of the international endeavour to integrate women in mainstream development. Strides had been made in generating resources and raising awareness. Most countries and development institutions had had women-in-development units that had assembled data to provide the conceptual basis for designing programmes incorporating the women's dimension. Equality, peace and development were intrinsically linked to the international movement for women in development. Now that institutional structures had been established, the time had come to focus on the strategic application of efforts in specific contexts and locations.

82. In closing, she urged financial support for the Division for the Advancement of Women at a time when preparations were beginning for the 1995 World Conference on Women. That year would be an important reference point for bringing the women's dimension into global issues, because it marked the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and the tenth anniversary of the adoption, by global consensus, of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. It was to be hoped that women in the United Nations Secretariat would be able to



(Mrs. Capeling-Alakija)

celebrate the achievement of targets set by the General Assembly and that the Conference would provide concrete solutions to the development problems faced by the millions of women who lived in poverty.

83. Ms. HABACHY (Focal Point for Women, Office of the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management) expressed appreciation on behalf of her colleagues to delegations that had spoken on the issue of the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat. She had taken due note of the useful suggestions made and would relay them to her colleagues in the Office of Human Resources Management and to the Steering Committee for the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat. Delegations must continue their endeavours to set targets, provide women candidates and give support and advice.

84. Mr. ALI (Iraq), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that Iraq had handed over lists with the names of detained Kuwaitis to the International Committee of the Red Cross. Kuwait had not undertaken the required procedures to ensure their return, on the pretext that it could not distinguish between Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis on the list. Iraq had shown a willingness to hand over the persons concerned whenever Kuwait wished to receive them. Many Kuwaitis were waiting to return until living conditions in Kuwait had improved. Iraq was not responsible for Kuwaitis loitering around in first-class hotels in Europe, the United States and elsewhere. Kuwait was simply attempting to mobilize public opinion against Iraq so that the embargo would be prolonged.

85. Ms. AL-KHALID (Kuwait) said that Kuwait had handed over to the International Committee of the Red Cross lists of 2,101 Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis, including 214 women and 53 children under the age of 12, who were being held in Iraq. The lists had also contained names of non-Kuwaitis because they too had been removed from Kuwait during the occupation. She called upon Iraq to allow the International Committee of the Red Cross to have immediate access to those prisoners.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.