



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 25th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. RITTER (Panama)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 95: ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
(continued) (A/42/3, 38, 383, 627)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
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AGENDA ITEM 97: INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING INSTITUTE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT
OF WOMEN: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/42/3, 444)

1. Mr. STIRLING (United States of America) requested that the vote on draft
resolution A/C.3/42/L.15 should be postponed to give delegations time to consider
the revised version of the draft.
2. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the
Committee wished to postpone the vote.
3. It was so decided.
4. Ms. PULIDO (Venezuela), speaking on the cluster of agenda items concerning the
advancement of women, said that the Venezuelan Government was working hard in that
field, as could be seen by the information contained in document A/42/516.
Venezuela therefore welcomed the Secretary-General's decision to give highest
priority, in the next United Nations programme budget, to activities for enhancing
the status of women. The role of the Committee on the Elimination of
Discrimination against Women in monitoring the implementation of the Nairobi
Forward-looking Strategies was fundamental in that regard. Her delegation
therefore supported the request that the Committee, within the financial
possibilities of the Organization, should hold additional meetings to consider the
many reports that were still pending.

(Ms. Pulido, Venezuela)

5. In respect of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Venezuela was pleased that, as indicated in the Secretary-General's report (A/42/627), four additional States had acceded to the Convention, bringing to 94 the number of Member States parties to the Convention, and that Switzerland had also signed.

6. With regard to agenda item 96, her delegation agreed with the Secretary-General's conclusions, as stated in his report (A/42/528), concerning the need to redouble efforts to involve the United Nations organizations' focal points for the advancement of women more fully in the promotion, monitoring and implementation of the Strategies. She noted with satisfaction that improvements had been made in the procedures of the Commission on the Status of Women, which would begin meeting annually. However, she pointed out that, despite some progress, much remained to be done to implement General Assembly resolution 41/131 in respect of increasing the percentage of women in Professional and decision-making positions within the United Nations system. She recalled, in that regard, that the goal had been set at 30 per cent by 1990. In that context, there was a need to support the work of the Office of the Co-ordinator for the Improvement of the Status of Women in the United Nations Secretariat, which had been established for that purpose.

7. With regard to agenda item 97, she paid tribute to the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) for its effective programmes, which had had positive effects on women and their families as well as on the communities to which they belonged. She particularly welcomed the Fund's catalytic role in mobilizing resources for general development activities, its direct support for the United Nations development system and the effectiveness of the collaboration, based on complementarity, which had been established between the Fund and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Any initiative towards extending that co-operation to other United Nations organizations would be welcome.

8. Mr. AHN (Observer for the Republic of Korea) said that man and woman were created equal and should therefore co-operate and help each other to reach their common goals: peace, development, prosperity, health and happiness for all.

9. Noting the active role of the United Nations in improving the status of women, he recalled the notable events which had marked that activity, from the proclamation of the International Women's Year in 1975 to the adoption of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, and he was encouraged to note the progress made in that regard.

10. The creation of the Republic of Korea in 1948 and the adoption of its Constitution, which recognized the equality of men and women, had put an end to the discrimination against women which had prevailed, based on Confucianism, in traditional Korean society; since then, the status of women had undergone an enormous change in the political, economic and socio-cultural areas. On the basis of principles espoused by the United Nations, the Korean Government had taken positive measures to enhance women's status at the governmental and private

(Mr. Ahn, Observer, Korea)

levels. In 1963, to provide easier access for women and children to complicated court procedures, it had established the Family Court. In 1973, it had established new curricula on women's studies in all colleges and universities. In 1982, 24 of the 30 job categories from which women had been prohibited had been opened. Lastly, the Korean Government had signed and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and had established a National Committee on Policies for Women, whose role was to implement the Convention's provisions. In 1983, the Korean Women's Development Institute, whose major task was to integrate women into the development process, had been created. The Institute conducted surveys, provided education, fostered women's activities, published and exchanged information and participated in international activities concerning women. The Institute and the National Committee on Policies for Women had drafted a long-range plan for Korean women's development, which focused on three aims, namely, utilizing the female work-force, developing women's potential and household health planning.

11. Emphasizing the importance and necessity of regional and international co-operation in the field, he noted that the women's delegations of his country had actively participated in all the international conferences held under United Nations auspices.

12. His delegation supported the Economic and Social Council resolution urging all States to become parties to, and comply with, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to which almost half of Member States were not yet parties. His delegation appreciated the achievements of the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, although their financial deficits were regrettably impeding their carrying out programmes already approved. The Republic of Korea would continue its modest contribution to programmes for the advancement of women and urged all States to support those programmes financially.

13. Mr. BEN HAMIDA (Tunisia) said that by acceding to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Tunisia had demonstrated its willingness to guarantee women their rightful role in society. Tunisia had always fully recognized women's individuality and their right to personal fulfilment on an equal basis with men. Tunisia's Constitution and legislation, and particularly its code on personal status, promulgated 30 years earlier, clearly defined the legal and social status of women. That dynamic vision of the woman's role in the community was fully consistent with Arab and Muslim values based on respect for the human being without any discrimination whatsoever.

14. Full equality in all professional, economic and political spheres remained a primary objective. It was true that sometimes the pursuit of that equality was hindered by structural or material difficulties. However, it was unacceptable to attribute the source of those obstacles to any given value-system or religion. His delegation had found it surprising that, in the report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and in the consideration of one State party's report, certain experts had taken the liberty of passing judgement on the

(Mr. Ben Hamida, Tunisia)

Muslim religion and Islamic law, but had not bothered to consider the contribution of that religion to human civilization. Thus, development problems common to many countries had been wrongly associated with the interpretation of certain precepts of the Koran. In that connection, his delegation drew attention to document A/42/38, paragraph 511 which seemed to be missing elements that were in document E/1987/L.20 of 1 May 1987, on the basis of which the Economic and Social Council had adopted its resolution 1987/3. Tunisia supported that resolution, particularly paragraph 7. In the Islamic countries, religious thinkers had full discretion to adapt certain rules of social conduct rooted in the Islamic faith to the demands of the contemporary world. However, interpretation of those rules was not within the legal competence of the aforementioned Committee or any other body. Therefore, Tunisia could not endorse the Committee's conclusion in paragraph 517 of document A/42/38.

15. Article 21 of the Convention empowered that Committee to make suggestions and general recommendations based on the examination of States parties' reports. Consequently, the Committee could not legally adopt enforceable decisions beyond the scope of the internal organization of its work, any more than it could submit for consideration by States general recommendations based on specific situations. Unfortunately, the Committee had taken a decision - decision No. 4 - which exceeded its mandate, despite the reservations expressed by some of the experts and reflected in paragraph 45 of the report. Moreover, the Committee did not have the legal capacity to state positions or pass judgement on the reservations which Member States had on some of the articles of the Convention. Experts could request information on or explanations of the reasons for a reservation in order to understand the legislation and practices of a given country. They were, however, in no way empowered to determine whether those reservations were well-founded, that remained the prerogative of each State in the exercise of its national sovereignty.

16. On the positive side, it must be emphasized that States parties had a common interpretation of the objective of the Convention - the establishment of equality between men and women. In that connection, due consideration must be given to the complexity of human nature, cultures and societies, failing which that equality would ultimately risk suffering an unrealistic interpretation.

17. Ms. LAURENT (Observer, Commission of the European Communities), speaking on agenda item 96, said that the European Community accorded the utmost importance to the full integration of women in development. That was because true development required participation by everyone and, hence, equality in all economic and social sectors. The European Community had reacted very promptly to the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies by adopting in 1986 a Medium-Term Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women (1986-1990). That Programme focused on seven priority themes. In the legal area, application of the legal provisions already in force in the Community must be improved, and legislation which had an adverse effect on the employment of women must be closely reviewed. In the area of education and training, research had begun on the impact of new technical subjects in girls' schools. The training of school counsellors on the theme of equality was also planned. Finally, since 1983, the Commission had attempted to diversify the

(Ms. Laurent)

vocational choices for women and girls. In the area of employment, the Community would continue and develop its policies of promoting employment of women, particularly in banks, the manufacturing industries, small enterprises, co-operatives and the television networks. Particular attention was being paid to self-employed women and to "disadvantaged women", such as migrant, disabled, and elderly women, or the heads of one-parent families. In the area of new technologies, which were increasing segregation in the labour market to the detriment of women, the Commission supported training programmes aimed at non-traditional occupations and occupations of the future; it was also funding a series of round-table meetings that would help to determine future measures to be taken in that area. In the area of social welfare and social security, the Community had adopted, in 1986, a Directive which added provisions on equal treatment to the social security schemes. A new proposal for a Directive was being prepared to establish equality with regard to the retirement age, survivors' pensions and family benefits. In order to facilitate the sharing of family and occupational responsibilities, maternity-leave, child-care and child-transport measures were planned.

18. In order to increase public awareness and change attitudes, the Commission continued to organize seminars, exhibits, and round-table meetings, and to disseminate extensive information and research findings to all States members of the Community.

19. Furthermore, the Community was making consistent efforts to extend the concept of equal opportunity to its overall development policy, as recommended in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. As early as 1982, the Community had adopted a resolution on development aid in relation to the situation of women in developing countries. That resolution had been followed by two others on the same theme, aimed at integrating women more fully into the Community's development efforts. The Commission was also financing a study on the role of women in developing countries. The study was designed to collect material for use in training European personnel in the planning and execution of development projects and is recognizing women's central role in development.

20. In order to acquire a better understanding of women's needs, the Community had organized two seminars in Africa and one in the Caribbean. The objectives of those seminars were to find concrete means of improving European Development Fund projects and programmes to increase the integration of women in development; to make known the workings of Community aid to Governments and non-governmental organizations; and to promote regional co-operation between the participants themselves and between the participants and the Commission. Reports on those seminars had been widely distributed.

21. The Community's relations with its partners in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific had benefited significantly from the entry into force of the Third Lomé Convention in 1986. The emphasis that Convention placed on rural development and food security brought out the importance of mobilizing the female population in developing countries. The European Community had already been informed of the

(Ms. Laurent)

programmes planned by the African, Caribbean and Pacific States under the Convention, and had been pleased to note that the promotion of women was among the objectives of one third of those programmes.

22. The Community had also entered into co-operation agreements with the countries of Latin America, Asia and the Mediterranean. There, too, the Community was making every effort, in consultation with the recipient countries, to apply its policy of integrating women in development.

23. In November 1987, that policy would be discussed by the Council of Development Ministers. The members of the Third Committee would be informed of the Council's conclusions at a later date.

24. Mrs. MSUYA (United Republic of Tanzania) said that women, who were a major force in her country's economic development, accounted for 52 per cent of the labour force involved in subsistence food production. About 97.8 per cent were involved in one way or another in agriculture, which was the backbone of the economy, while also performing their numerous family and household obligations. Such an inequitable division of labour had unfortunately had a detrimental effect not only on the health of women, but also on that of their children, which explained the high rate of infant mortality. The problems of women in developing countries were widespread, and the combined efforts of all those engaged in the planning and implementation of development plans were required in order to solve them.

25. Tanzania was proud to be among the few countries endeavouring to promote equality between the sexes in socio-economic development. A good number of women held responsible leadership positions, including five women cabinet ministers. To improve the conditions of children and women in Tanzania, the public authorities had implemented primary health care programmes at the rural level, provided better access to clean water, and opened up opportunities for education. In addition, women benefited, on the same footing as men, from the Government's policy of allocating land to villagers on advantageous terms. Her Government was also endeavouring to eradicate illiteracy among women in particular.

26. Women in rural areas were not the only beneficiaries of the Government's action. Laws to ensure equal treatment in employment and pay had been passed for the benefit of women living in urban areas. Those policies were consistent with the provisions of international instruments concerned with the advancement of women, such as the Harare Declaration, the Lagos Plan of Action and the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the year 2000.

27. Tanzania believed that the advancement of women in the world depended on the elimination of political, economic, social and cultural injustices throughout the world, and in southern Africa and Palestine in particular. By adopting international instruments, holding international conferences and establishing organizations such as the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the United

(Mrs. Msuya, United Republic of Tanzania)

Nations had taken a step in the right direction. Tanzania would continue to co-operate in its efforts.

28. Ms. ENGMAN (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that the advancement of women was a problem of society and, as such, had to be addressed in the context of the economic development and growth of society as a whole. In the Nordic countries, equality between the sexes was a guiding principle in all spheres, including that of employment. In that area, social measures, such as the introduction of day-care facilities, flexible working hours and paid parental leave, had been adopted not least as a result of the active work by women's movements. While women played an increasing role in the political life of the country, much remained to be done before there was equal representation of women and men in decision-making posts in the Government, local authorities, trade unions, political parties and Parliament.

29. The Nordic countries welcomed the decisions taken by the Commission on the Status of Women to streamline its agenda. In their view, it was better to discuss three priority themes in detail than to examine a large number of items superficially. The three themes selected for the 1988 session - national machineries for monitoring and improving the status of women, problems of rural women, and peace, including efforts to eradicate violence against women in the family and in society - were extremely important. It would also be wise for the Commission to allocate a fair number of meetings to programming, co-ordination and the monitoring of the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the year 2000. In that connection, the efforts of the Commission to translate the Forward-looking Strategies into concrete measures in the programme budget could serve as a useful example for other functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council. Indeed, the purpose of the system-wide medium-term plan on women and development, which had been adopted, was to guide the work of organizations within the United Nations system.

30. The liaison units for the advancement of women set up to implement the Strategies throughout the United Nations system had already accomplished much in that connection. The Nordic countries had followed with special interest the work of the Branch for the Advancement of Women, in Vienna, which acted as a central focal point, and in particular its preparation of the priority themes to be discussed at the 1988 session of the Commission on the Status of Women. They trusted that the Branch would pursue its study on the participation of women in the decision-making process related to peace and disarmament, to which they attached special importance.

31. The Nordic countries also hoped that the question of implementing reforms within the United Nations Secretariat in regard to the status of women would receive serious consideration. Progress had been made with the appointment in 1985 of a Co-ordinator for the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat. The mandate of the Co-ordinator should, however, be extended and, above all, the Nairobi guidelines should be applied at all stages of programming and planning within the Organization.

(Ms. Engman, Sweden)

32. The main aim, at the current stage, was to ensure that the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies were not regarded as an end in themselves, but rather as the beginning of a process. Efforts in that direction had been made by such United Nations bodies as the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and the Fifth Committee. Such efforts attested to the determination of Member States to ensure that the Strategies were integrated in a concrete way throughout the system. The Nordic countries, for their part, planned to convene a forum in 1988 to deal with their implementation of the Strategies.

33. Lastly, stressing the importance which the Nordic countries attached to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, she said that the number of substantive reservations entered by countries when acceding to that Convention was a source of concern. It was to be hoped that many more countries would soon be in a position to accede to it.

34. Mrs. HELKE (United Kingdom) said that she wished to offer certain comments on the future work of the Commission on the Status of Women.

35. Her delegation was pleased that, at its 1987 session, the Commission had managed to take decisions on all the issues it had been required to consider, and trusted that the Commission could now concentrate on substantive issues. It was particularly pleased that the Commission had decided to spend three quarters of its time on the discussion of priority themes relating to the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the year 2000: equality, development and peace. That discussion should aim to provide practical advice on how to deal with particular problems.

36. On the question of equality, her delegation believed it was right that the Commission should first consider national machinery for monitoring and improving the status of women. In the United Kingdom, a Ministerial Group on Women's Issues had been set up to review the status of women in relation to the Forward-looking Strategies and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and to identify areas where further action would be useful and practicable. Once all countries had set up appropriate national machinery, it would be easier for the Commission to monitor and facilitate the enhancement of women's participation in social, economic and political activities. Also, once it had considered the situation of vulnerable groups of women, the Commission should be in a position to take an overview of all types of discrimination against women, whether rooted in law or in attitudes.

37. Women must be enabled to participate more fully in development. To that end, the United Kingdom Overseas Development Administration had developed guidelines for all programme planners aimed at ensuring that all social factors, including the concerns and needs of women, were taken into account at all levels of planning and project design. At the international level, the proposed system-wide medium-term plan for women in development should help the integration of women's needs and concerns into development programmes and projects. The international community must encourage the relevant agencies until such integration became a habit. In

(Mrs. Helke, United Kingdom)

that context her delegation strongly supported the role of the United Nations Development Fund for Women as a catalyst in encouraging greater commitment of development funds to projects that benefited women as well as men. However, no donor could impose programmes for women against the wishes of recipient Governments. It therefore required an effort by all interested parties to ensure that women were included in all aspects of development.

38. Regarding the topic of peace, the Commission should concentrate on issues specific to women, such as violence against women, particularly in the family, and the particular problems of refugee and displaced women.

39. Mrs. ANSELMI (Italy) stressed the absolute necessity for ensuring the active participation of women in achieving the aims of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. Full equality would never be achieved as long as women could not or would not participate in such action. Action that was exclusively or largely protective would only perpetuate the weakness of the situation of women. All women's associations and movements must therefore be urged to promote a broader and more conscious participation by women. It was participation that would bring about the cultural changes that were the first condition for development.

40. Italy would shortly be submitting its first report on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. Its Constitution and legislation guaranteed equal rights for women, but it was easier to change the laws of a country than the culture, customs and the actual situation of women. It was specific conditions, therefore, that must be tackled in order to eliminate visible or invisible obstacles which prevented women from exercising their rights and making an effective contribution to the country's cultural, economic and political development. To that end, a national commission on equality between men and women had been set up in Italy to pursue all aspects of the problem of women. Some progress had been made in respect of women's participation in public life, as evidenced by an increase in the number of women in Parliament and local government.

41. Discrimination against women in Italy was prevalent particularly in work, especially in the professions, which were traditionally regarded as man's domain. Greater efforts were needed in the cultural field to overcome stereotyped sexist attitudes which prevented the advancement of women.

42. Women, as the standard-bearers for the values on which peace was built, had an important role to play in disarmament and in strengthening international economic and cultural co-operation.

43. Mrs. GJIKA (Albania) said that international action for the advancement of women should cover all aspects of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, and their three goals - equality, development and peace - should be viewed as closely linked and interdependent.

44. There was no doubt that questions relating to improving women's conditions were primarily internal matters for each individual country, depending on its stage

(Mrs. Gjika, Albania)

of development. On the other hand, the aspirations of women could not be viewed in isolation from those of the people in general, and the elimination of the factors that prevented women from playing their part in development should be the concern of everyone. Her delegation could not subscribe to the view that political issues should be set aside when discussing the problems of women.

45. Although the United Nations Decade for Women had ended, the truth was that cardinal issues concerning women had not been solved, mainly because the international situation remained tense. In the occupied Arab territories, in Lebanon, Afghanistan, South Africa, Namibia and elsewhere, women and children were still being shot indiscriminately by the aggressors.

46. There was a great deal of talk about equality and the advancement of women and the role women should play in the development of society. But there was no denying the fact that the heavy burden of the economic, political and social crisis gripping the majority of developing and even industrialized countries weighed heavily on the people, particularly the women, who faced a dual oppression: savage capitalist exploitation and various forms of discrimination by society. The external-debt problem which affected many countries had further worsened the people's living conditions, particularly in the case of women. Women the world over were protesting with increasing force against the arms race of the super-Powers and the other imperialist Powers, which consumed colossal resources. Her delegation considered that total emancipation of women would never be achieved until there was an end to the war-mongering and aggressive policies of the super-Powers and to the neo-colonial exploitation of the people.

47. Discrimination against women was particularly evident in the work place, unemployment being far higher among women than among men. The situation of women was particularly hard in the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America, as a result of foreign exploitation and a low level of economic development. Further evidence of the inferior position of women was the fact that they received little more than half men's pay for equal work. Discrimination against women was also apparent in education, political and social life and even in the home. According to UNESCO statistics there were more than 700 million illiterates in the world, most of them women.

48. Social ills such as drug abuse, alcoholism and moral and physical deterioration were assuming alarming proportions among women and young girls. In many countries, family life was in crisis. Young people, especially young women, were breaking away from their families to lead independent lives, which often led them astray and ended in their downfall. More appalling was the situation of elderly women who lived in poverty and loneliness.

49. The bourgeois and revisionist apologists were aware of women's potential for transforming society and sought to conceal the root causes of oppression and exploitation, disorientate the female masses, divert them from political issues, blunt their fighting spirit, and alienate them from the just path of struggle for national liberation and social emancipation. It was reassuring to note that,

(Mrs. Gjika, Albania)

despite that propaganda, the movement of women for national and social liberation was constantly being strengthened and was becoming increasingly integrated in the people's struggle.

50. Albanian women enjoyed a position of dignity in society. They had participated in the struggle to construct and defend their country and were today a significant and vital political, economic and social force. They were well-educated and contributed to the implementation of the country's economic and cultural development plans in all spheres. They also played a role in political life and took an active part in administration. They had a say on all issues concerning the socialist construction of the country and their views were given respect and consideration. Strengthening the country's economy, which was one of the main objectives of the Party of Labour, would have a direct effect on the advancement of women and their complete emancipation.

51. Mr. GOLEMANOV (Bulgaria) said that the year which had elapsed since the forty-first session of the General Assembly had been a fruitful period for the Commission on the Status of Women. During its latest session, held in New York in January 1987, it had adopted a series of important resolutions and decisions which had, inter alia, dealt with the planning of activities within the framework of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and which virtually all had been adopted by the Economic and Social Council; he welcomed that development. In his view the Commission should give special attention to Council resolution 1987/23 relating to the enlargement of its composition. Bulgaria strongly supported such a step, which was very important as a means of strengthening the Commission's role.

52. If they were to achieve the results hoped for, such structural measures must clearly be accompanied by a serious and in-depth approach to all existing problems, in particular those dealing with the role and participation of women in the struggle for peace and the maintenance of international security and for equality in all fields. Any slackening of effort and attention in those fields on the part of the Commission and other agencies of the United Nations system would represent a deviation from their mandate and a violation of the spirit and letter of the Strategies and would disappoint the international community's hopes, which had been expressed once again during the World Congress of Women held recently in Moscow.

53. The growing number of countries which had become parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was in itself proof of the importance attached by the States Members of the United Nations to the efforts which had been made for the protection of women. Bulgaria attached major importance to the universal application of international human-rights instruments and had been one of the first countries to ratify the Convention.

54. His delegation welcomed the work performed by the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and wished to reiterate its support. It also fully supported the activities undertaken by the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women.

55. Mrs. MAKNOON (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that most of the studies conducted by the international organizations on the problem of women had approached the issue from a quantitative and statistical point of view. She did not contest the relevance and need for such an approach but considered that it was not enough. Analysis of the status of women meant identification of the principal factors which determined that status and recognition that that status must be seen against an ethnic, religious and philosophical background which was characteristic of the society in which women had developed. That observation was particularly important in the case of the Islamic societies since the status of women was basically determined according to the patterns prescribed by the Shariah.

56. In the Western world, studies relating to the status of women had been made within a materialistic framework and basically involved an analysis of the material advantages enjoyed by women in comparison with the share of those advantages enjoyed by men. The greater the difference between those two sets of data, the easier it was to conclude that women were suffering injustice. Such a social model took into account only material values, which were extensively used in Western countries and developing countries which had chosen to follow their example, and was not valid for the 1 billion Muslims in the world. The social models for Islamic countries should be determined by Islam, which was a perfect religion and embraced all dimensions of life. Thus, the definition of oppression and injustice against women in the Western world did not necessarily have the same meaning in Islamic societies, where women's movements were all directed towards a single objective, namely, the achievement of social justice as defined by divine laws. Taking such diverging points of view into account, she questioned the traditional classification of countries by international organization into three categories, namely, industrialized Western countries, socialist States and countries of the third world. The United Nations should place Islamic countries in a specific group by reason of their ideology. Only when countries were no longer classified in terms of economic growth or industrial progress, but rather according to the ideology governing their social systems, would it be possible to approach in their true context the problems of women and, in particular, those of women in Islamic societies.

57. In Iran the Islamic revolution had restored their dignity to women, had guaranteed their full participation in the social, political and economic fields without however ignoring the spiritual and moral values enshrined in the Shariah. The role played by women in the reconstruction of Iranian society had been unsurpassed: it would be difficult to find a similar example of political awareness and responsibility among the women of Western societies. In Iran, women, however modest their position, often knew more about political events in the world than some of the educated people of the developed countries. Those same women had demonstrated remarkable courage in defending the country against foreign aggression. The Muslim women of Iran did not know exploitation as it existed in the West. In spite of all the pressures imposed upon Iranian society by satanic powers and their regional clients, Muslim women, thanks to the teachings of Islam, had remained secure from abnormalities such as drug addiction, divorce, alcoholism, abortion, to name only a few, which were rife in rich societies.

(Mrs. Maknoon, Islamic Republic of Iran)

58. The observance of Islamic rules and values had brought Iranian society benefits such as equality and justice and, as regards women, the elimination of every form of discrimination.

59. Mrs. SHERMAN-PETER (The Bahamas) said that the merit of the United Nations Decade for Women and the three world conferences on the subject which had been held in Mexico City, Copenhagen and Nairobi respectively, had been that they had altered the perspective of the role and status of women worldwide. That achievement should not make people forget that the status of a great many women in the world continued to be precarious and might indeed have worsened as a result of structural adjustments which Governments had been obliged to make because of debt and trade problems.

60. At the international level, she welcomed the decision to hold annual sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women to establish priority themes for necessary attention over the following five years. She also welcomed the initiative to create focal points for women's affairs within the various organs of the United Nations with a view to encouraging the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women.

61. The use of focal points as a means of incorporating women's concerns in policy planning was a task to which the Commission had given high priority. In The Bahamas, that task was performed by the Women's Affairs Unit of the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Community Affairs. The Unit was specifically charged with examining problems confronted by women and with serving as a link between the women of The Bahamas and regional and international organizations. The Unit also organized important meetings such as the National Women's Conference, which would be convened during November 1987.

62. The Bahamas encouraged the access of women to professional posts. Between 1970 and 1980, the number of women recruited in the technical and professional fields in The Bahamas had increased by more than 65 per cent. Women also constituted the predominant group in the public and diplomatic services. Currently, one out of every two jobs in The Bahamas was held by a woman.

63. In her view, the United Nations, notwithstanding its financial difficulties, should make every effort to attain its goal of ensuring that, before the year 1990, 30 per cent of the posts in the professional and decision-making categories would be held by women. That implied of course that the women appointed to those posts would have received proper training at the national level. It was for that reason that The Bahamas attached importance to education. The policy of the country in that field had borne fruit, as was proved by the fact that, in The Bahamas, one woman out of eight had some college education.

64. The Bahamas welcomed the roles played by the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, both of which had been set up within the framework of the Decade.

(Mrs. Sherman-Peter, The Bahamas)

65. The Bahamas was currently considering accession to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and, in the interim, was adopting legislative action in line with the objectives of the Convention. The 1987 law on maternity leave and other provisions relating to the maintenance and education of children also represented part of that policy.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.