



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 29th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. RITTER (Panama)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

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1. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to resume its consideration of the remaining draft resolutions dealing with the second cluster of items on its agenda.

Draft resolution A/C.3/42/L.22

2. Mr. BUSACCA (Italy), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/42/L.22, entitled "Crime prevention and criminal justice", announced that Colombia, Cuba, Greece, the Netherlands, the Philippines, the United States of America, Uruguay and Yugoslavia had become sponsors. The draft resolution was a follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolutions 1987/49 and 1987/53, which the General Assembly should now endorse. The suggestions of the Economic and Social Council could be of great help in overcoming some of the problems facing the United Nations bodies concerned with strengthening international co-operation in the fight against crime. The draft resolution drew attention to the importance of careful preparations for the next United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders and of allocating adequate resources for the United Nations programme of work in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice, having regard in particular, to the magnitude of the task entrusted to the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch in Vienna. The sponsors of the draft resolution hoped that the Committee would adopt it by consensus.

3. Mr. NAHAS (United States of America) said that his delegation had welcomed with great satisfaction the main conclusions of the Milan Plan of Action, especially with regard to drug trafficking, the international "laundering" of illicit profits, organized crime and international terrorism. It was pleased by the appointment of so eminently qualified a person as Mr. Eduardo Vetere as chief of the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch. His country stood ready to

(Mr. Nahas, United States)

assist the Branch in consolidating the achievements of the Milan Plan of Action and in preparing for the next Congress, scheduled for 1990. Accordingly, it had joined in co-sponsoring draft resolution A/C.3/42/L.22.

4. Ms. KAMAL (Secretary of the Committee) indicated that the revised estimates resulting from decisions adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its first and second regular sessions of 1987 were contained in document A/C.5/42/16.

Draft resolution A/C.3/42/L.21

5. Mr. FRIEDRICH (Federal Republic of Germany), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/42/L.21, announced that Colombia, Cuba, Italy and the Sudan had become sponsors. A new paragraph 9 should be added in the operative part of the draft resolution, to read as follows:

"9. Reaffirms the decision of the Economic and Social Council that the Commission for Social Development shall review at its thirty-first session the results of the Interregional Consultation on Developmental Welfare Policies and Programmes;"

In former paragraph 9, which would become paragraph 10, the words "to convey its views concerning the implementation of the guiding principles to the Commission for Social Development for consideration at its thirty-first session, in 1989, and" should be deleted after the words "Economic and Social Council". The paragraphs should be renumbered as a result of the revisions. The aim of the sponsors of the draft resolution was to place on record their satisfaction at the outcome of the intensive negotiations carried out in the context of the Interregional Consultation, namely, the adoption, by consensus, by more than 90 Member States and numerous non-governmental organizations, of guiding principles for developmental social welfare policies and programmes, and to seek the endorsement of those principles by the General Assembly.

6. The sponsors of the draft resolution were aware that some delegations would have preferred the draft resolution to be broader in scope, while others might wish it to be more restrictive on some points. However, as the composition of the list of sponsors showed, the consensus achieved in Vienna was supported by members of all regional groups. That reflected the willingness of all concerned to co-operate in that field. The sponsors therefore hoped that the draft resolution could be adopted by consensus.

Draft resolution A/C.3/42/L.15/Rev.1

7. Mr. STIRLING (United States of America), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/42/L.15/Rev.1, announced that the Dominican Republic had joined as a sponsor. After indicating the differences between the revised draft resolution and the original version, he drew the Committee's attention to the revisions which the sponsors had agreed to incorporate into the draft resolution after consultation with other delegations. In paragraph 11, the sponsors had included the words

(Mr. Stirling, United States)

"inter alia" after the word "thereon". The purpose was to avoid limiting the study to be carried out by the Human Rights Commission on the question of genuine and periodic elections to the draft general principles alone. As was clear from paragraph 9 of the draft resolution, the sponsors were aware that there had been considerable change in political institutions and mechanisms since the adoption of the draft general principles and they considered that such new developments should be taken into account in any discussion.

8. A new preambular paragraph, to become the seventh, should be added, to read as follows:

"Noting with great concern, however, that despite such progress, gross and cruel violations of human rights under the apartheid system, itself a gross violation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the people of South Africa, continue to take place in South Africa, and in particular in this regard, rejecting the denial to the black population of their full citizenship rights,".

Lastly, a new operative paragraph should be added, that would become paragraph 6, to read:

"6. Affirms that in order to build a true democracy in South Africa apartheid should be abolished in all its forms and that the enjoyment by all South Africans of human rights and fundamental freedoms is essential for the exercise of genuine self-determination;".

9. The sponsors had endeavoured to accommodate the concerns and suggestions of all delegations which they had consulted and they would continue to act in a spirit of flexibility. They hoped, in turn, that they could count on the co-operation of the Committee.

10. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to resume its general debate on the third cluster of items on its agenda.

11. Mrs. MIGNOTT (Jamaica), referring to the important steps which had been taken in the United Nations system to promote the Forward-looking Strategies adopted at Nairobi, as described in the report of the Secretary-General (A/42/528), said that it was particularly appropriate that organizations such as UNICEF, UNEP, UNDP, the World Bank, WHO and FAO should take the needs of women into consideration in their programmes. In developing countries women dominated family and health structures, comprising more than one quarter of the industrial labour force, nearly two fifths of the agricultural labour force and 26.9 per cent of the service sector. According to recent ILO estimates, women represented 34.6 per cent of the total labour force world-wide. The figures reflected in the World Survey on the Role of Women in Development demonstrated that women's contribution to national production activities had been increasing steadily since 1950 and would increase even further by the year 2000. For that reason the establishment within the United Nations development system of the focal points referred to in the Secretary-General's

(Mrs. Mignott, Jamaica)

report was very timely. She also noted that the Branch for the Advancement of Women was playing a special role in promoting communication and co-operation among the organizations of the United Nations system, thus contributing to the achievement of the goals of the Strategies.

12. The Commission on the Status of Women, the intergovernmental body which had prime responsibility for monitoring implementation of the Strategies, had adopted a number of concrete decisions in January 1987 to improve its work and its efficiency. Those decisions (to adopt priority themes and to hold annual meetings until the year 2000) had been endorsed by the Economic and Social Council and should enable the Commission to assess methodically the extent to which the Strategies had been translated into programmes. The reports to be submitted by the organizations concerned on the implementation of the system-wide medium-term plan for the period 1990-1995 would be of great assistance in that regard.

13. The success of the Strategies was closely linked with co-ordination between the United Nations and national and regional bodies. Thus it was important to create, at the national level, mechanism to deal specifically with those issues, which would function in close co-operation with national and sectoral planning bodies and national and international women's organizations, to incorporate the needs of women in all aspects of national development planning. Jamaica had created a Bureau of Women's Affairs which was represented on Government committees appointed to develop programmes on such questions as information, family planning, health, housing, the aging and youth. Unfortunately, the shortage of resources constituted a major obstacle, in Jamaica as in many developing countries; that underscored the need for international technical and financial assistance to national bodies.

14. Her delegation endorsed the long-term perspectives of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, particularly those aimed at strengthening the national capability of developing countries in the areas of research, training and information for the advancement of women and at network-building for co-operation between INSTRAW and national, regional and international research and training bodies.

15. The United Nations Development Fund for Women had had a direct impact on the lives of women, particularly poor women, in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. The Fund's success was largely due to the dedication and professionalism of its staff and senior officials. Her delegation had noted with satisfaction the Fund's expanded involvement in the round-table process and in the preparation of regional plans for Africa and for Latin America and the Caribbean, and it hoped that the Master Plan for Asia and the Pacific would be equally successful. The Fund should be expanded and supported further, since it had acquired expertise in programming projects for women and was a major source of information for other agencies which were seeking to integrate women in their own programmes.

16. Turning to item 95 of the agenda, she said that Jamaica had submitted its initial report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All

(Mrs. Mignott, Jamaica)

Forms of Discrimination against Women. She endorsed the request by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for additional meetings, on an exceptional basis, so that it could deal with the backlog of reports.

17. Miss BROSNAKOVA (Czechoslovakia) speaking on agenda items 95 and 96, said that it was important for the Forward-looking Strategies to be viewed within the context of the general thrust of United Nations activities and for them to have a catalytic effect within the context of activities to restructure international relations on a more democratic and human basis. The Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had been given the task of urging Governments of Member States to take specific measures, in line with the Strategies, to increase the role of women in all areas of life. Czechoslovakia was a member of the Commission on the Status of Women and it was pleased to see that the Economic and Social Council had decided that the Commission should meet annually from then on. The Commission was fully qualified to analyse the implementation of the Strategies in a responsible manner. Likewise, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was becoming an increasingly representative and effective instrument for considering the status of women in the various countries. The fact that it was trying to streamline its work should not prevent it from conducting an objective analysis and evaluation of the reports submitted to it by States.

18. One of the achievements of socialism had been to win equal rights for women in Czechoslovakia. Nevertheless, the Government was constantly seeking new ways of improving the status of women in all aspects. That involved eliminating the obstacles which prevented women from fully enjoying the safeguards provided for by law and inherent in the socialist system. For example, efforts were being made to increase services for women so as to enable them to combine family and professional responsibilities. Problems relating to the emancipation of women, including the large number of divorces and the sometimes unsatisfactory percentage of women occupying decision-making and executive positions, were being analysed in greater depth than in the past.

19. Other States perhaps had similar problems and it would be interesting to have more exchanges of views on these subjects within the framework of the observance of an international year of the family. While it was true that other international years had been devoted to the fundamental elements of the family, yet, the family was the basic unit of society and it would be worth while considering ways of helping women to combine their role as mothers, workers and citizens participating in public life, which they were called on to play at the end of the twentieth century both in developed and in developing countries.

20. The World Congress of Women, which had been held at Moscow, had been the first major event organized as a follow-up to the World Conference of Nairobi. Many questions relating to the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies had been examined in detail and it had been reaffirmed that total emancipation of women had yet to be achieved because scientific and technical developments were constantly raising new problems.

21. Mrs. SYLLA-LINGAYA (Madagascar) said that her delegation had noted with interest the reports of the Secretary-General (A/42/528 and A/42/597/Rev.1) and it welcomed the catalytic role which the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) was playing and the direct support it was providing to the innovative and experimental projects which were being implemented in that area at the national and regional level. With respect to document A/42/444, her delegation could not over-emphasize the importance of the work of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) in the area of training and the preparation of statistics and indicators on women and development and, more especially, the importance of training courses relating to the role of women in water supply and sanitation. It would be a good idea to ensure that the findings of the studies which the Institute had undertaken on policies to facilitate access for women in developing countries to financing and credit should be given wide dissemination.
22. Concerning the position of women in her country, the Constitution prohibited any discrimination based on sex, and the legislative texts afforded the same civil, political, economic, property and inheritance rights to both women and men. The creation of a government Department on the Status of Women and Children was evidence of the Administration's determination to guarantee in practice equality of opportunity between men and women and to involve women in social, cultural and economic development. Since education was the basis of equality, measures had been taken to increase the involvement of girls at all levels of education and training and to reduce the percentage of illiteracy among women. Her Government considered that the increased participation of women in political affairs was a main factor in their positive development, and accordingly, had encouraged them to play an active role in local communities and in women's organizations. The national leaders, aware of women's potential contribution to economic development, had decided to set up structures - crèches and child-care centres - to increase women's availability for work and to enhance their traditional activities in agriculture and the informal sector of the economy by promoting the growth of the co-operative movement. In that regard, it should be noted that multilateral and bilateral aid could further the advancement of women, particularly those living in rural areas.
23. In implementation of the Declaration on the Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Co-operation, her Government at the national level had begun in the 1986/87 school year to include the topic of combating apartheid and racism in primary and secondary school curricula. At the international level it had encouraged participation by women in various gatherings organized to mark the International Year of Peace in 1986. Her delegation hoped that the studies and research in that field carried out by the organizations of the United Nations system would lead to concrete proposals and plans.
24. Unfortunately, the efforts that countries had undertaken to do away with the age-old inequality between men and women and to achieve the goals of the United Nations Decade for Women had been dealt a set-back by the economic crisis and threats to international peace and security. It was important, therefore, that the international community should work towards the elimination of all obstacles to the advancement of women.

25. Ms. AL-TURAIHI (Iraq) said that her Delegation attached great importance to the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women. Their adoption reflected the international community's determination to provide for women opportunities equal to those of men and to involve them fully in decision-making and the development process.

26. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 41/111, the Commission on the Status of Women had acted at its most recent session to give renewed impetus to efforts to translate the Strategies into concrete actions. It was necessary in particular to reactivate the national committees, which had offered valuable support during the preparations for the Nairobi Conference, and to ensure that women were more involved in development efforts, particularly in the regional economic commissions. Efforts were also needed to improve the status of women living in rural areas, who were the majority in third world countries. Likewise, it was important to strengthen the national focal points for the advancement of women and to co-ordinate their activities so that they could provide States with the advice they needed, while seeing to it that the Commission on the Status of Women retained its leading role.

27. Concerned to avoid a proliferation of reports, which not only was costly for the poor countries but also complicated the Commission's task, her Government subscribed whole-heartedly to the provisions of Economic and Social Council resolution 1987/18 concerning the procedures for reporting on the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies. It further supported the decisions to hold a session of the Commission each year until the year 2000 (resolution 1987/21) and to increase its membership, making sure that all regions were equitably represented (resolution 1987/23).

28. Her country was convinced that liberating women meant liberating society as a whole, and that all-round development required the full participation of women on an equal footing in all national activities. It was in that spirit that her Government had acceded in 1986 to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Its initial report on the implementation of the Convention was in preparation and would provide a full overview of the progress achieved by Iraqi women since the July revolution.

29. Under the provisions of article 28 of the Convention, her Government had expressed reservations concerning some paragraphs of the Convention. In that regard, it wished to reaffirm the right of each sovereign State to choose its political, economic and social system without any interference.

30. The preamble to the Convention stated that in situations of poverty women had the least access to basic services and that it was essential to eliminate all forms of discrimination. That aspect of the problem had been neglected in the questions addressed to States by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, a circumstance which had led the Economic and Social Council to recommend in its resolution 1987/3 that no action should be taken by the General Assembly on decision 4 adopted by the Committee, and to request that the Committee should review that decision, taking into account the views expressed by some delegations.

(Ms. Al-Turaihi, Iraq)

31. Lastly, her delegation wished to pay tribute to the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), which for 10 years had worked tirelessly to improve the status of women in all fields.

32. Ms. NIEMANN (Canada) said that, since the adoption of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, the international community had been working towards the achievement of four objectives which were all, in one way or another, attempts to rationalize the United Nations work programme on the status of women. First, the Committee had concentrated on reform of the Commission on the Status of Women in order to increase the effectiveness of its policy-making. Second, it had worked to institutionalize the Strategies in the United Nations planning, programming and budgeting systems. Third, it had emphasized the need to integrate women fully in economic development in view of the significance of their potential contribution. Fourth, it had concentrated on improving the effectiveness of inter-agency and intergovernmental arrangements for co-ordinating status of women activities throughout the United Nations system. On the whole, those objectives had been achieved. In 1987 the Commission on the Status of Women had adopted by consensus all of the planned reforms. The Secretary-General had identified the advancement of women as a priority in his introduction to the draft programme budget for the biennium 1988-1989. The adoption by the Economic and Social Council of resolutions 1986/65 and 1987/65 had strengthened the Organization's work to integrate women effectively in economic development programmes. The system-wide medium-term plan for women and development had been completed. Finally, a cross-organizational programme analysis of advancement of women issues would be considered by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination in 1989. What was now needed was greater co-ordination, mainly on the part of delegations, which must bear in mind that status of women issues were considered not only in the Third Committee, but also in the Second and Fifth Committees.

33. Her delegation strongly supported the emphasis placed by Economic and Social Council resolution 1987/24 on issues of women and development. With regard to the Secretary-General's excellent report on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, the establishment of focal points on women's issues within the various secretariats of the United Nations was exceptionally noteworthy. However, the report should have provided more information on the activities of intergovernmental bodies in the area of women's affairs and should have described the activities undertaken by the regional commissions in that area.

34. Canada reiterated its support for the principles set out in Economic and Social Council resolution 1987/18 and attached particular importance to establishing the monitoring cycle on a two-year basis and the review and appraisal cycle on a five-year basis. In that respect, since the Council had decided to undertake review and appraisal exercises on a five-year basis, a logical date for the next World Conference to review the progress achieved in the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies presented itself.

35. With respect to the Special Commission of the Economic and Social Council on the In-depth Study of the United Nations Intergovernmental Structure and Functions

(Ms. Niemann, Canada)

in the Economic and Social Fields, Canada reiterated its position that the Commission on the Status of Women should be requested to submit its views and proposals on its functioning, including the rationalization of its work programme, in accordance with paragraph (i) of Economic and Social Council decision 1987/112. Her delegation was of the view that the Third Committee should draw the attention of the Fifth Committee to resolutions 1, 2, and 4 adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its 1987 session, in particular paragraph (a) of resolution 4, in which the Commission recommended that the Secretary-General should accord priority to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies in the introduction to the medium-term plan for the period 1990-1995.

36. In conclusion, Canada commended the Secretary-General on his efforts to appoint women to high-level posts within the United Nations Secretariat. However, much remained to be done to improve the situation for women who worked in the Secretariat, and in that regard, the Canadian Government was convinced of the need for temporary special measures, as provided for in article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

37. Mrs. OLENDE (Kenya) noted that there was no lack of good intentions with regard to improving the status of women, but there was a lack of concrete actions. Various bodies had been created, at the national and inter-governmental levels, as well as within the United Nations system, to deal with the issues of women and development. Unfortunately, as had been indicated in various reports, many of those bodies were poorly staffed and lacked resources, and their influence had thus been practically negligible. That issue concerned the Advancement of Women Branch of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, which had recently held a seminar on the role of national machinery for the advancement of women. The Commission on the Status of Women had also decided to make the issue a priority item for its thirty-second session next year.

38. In Kenya, women were committed to improving their conditions, especially at the grass-roots level. The decentralized approach which the Kenyan Government had recently introduced, known as the District Focus, had given the rural population, the majority of which was women, the chance to set their own development priorities. At the national level, the Kenyan Government had introduced radical changes, as exemplified by the recent appointments of several women to decision-making posts for the first time in the country's history.

39. Recognizing the role of education, the Kenyan Government had allocated 30 per cent of its budget for education and continued to encourage the different communities to give girls as well as boys a well-rounded education.

40. As the African representative on the Consultative Committee on the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), she thanked the Fund for the attention and priority treatment it had given to Africa, in particular in the development of the Africa Investment Plan, which focused on food production, processing and storage. However, in order to fulfil new demands from countries, UNIFEM would have to expand, and that would call for increased human and financial resources. It was therefore necessary for Member States to increase their contributions to UNIFEM.

(Mrs. Olende, Kenya)

41. Her delegation appreciated the Secretary-General's efforts to recruit more women for Professional and decision-making posts in the United Nations. In that regard, she hoped that due account would be taken of the principle of geographical distribution.

42. Referring to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to which Kenya was a party, she said that given the increasing number of reports submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, her delegation was prepared to consider favourably the request of the Committee to increase its meeting time, on an exceptional basis, at its next session.

43. Her delegation noted with appreciation the progress made by the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), in particular the Institute's decision to make immediate use of some of its research findings by producing training modules, as reported in document A/42/444. Testing of those modules had already begun and Kenya was one of the countries selected by INSTRAW for the testing of a package of modules on women, water supply and sanitation. Her delegation hoped that INSTRAW would expand its channels of communication with the different government ministries in order to make its work better known, particularly in the area of statistics and indicators.

44. Mr. CONSTANTINESCU (Romania) said that his delegation shared the view reflected in the documents on agenda items 95 and 96 that, notwithstanding the important progress achieved so far, the status of women required much more attention. Contrary to general belief, greater participation by women in social life was not an automatic consequence of economic and social development, but required special programmes and tireless efforts.

45. As a result of the elimination of relations based on exploitation and oppression and of all kinds of inequality and discrimination, Romanian women took an active part in the country's economic and social life. They received a proper education, took up the jobs of their choice and could be promoted to managerial and executive positions. In addition, measures had been taken to strengthen the family, which was the basic unit of society, and to encourage and protect maternity and create favourable conditions for raising and educating children.

46. One of the consequences of the general process of industrial development in Romania was that an increased number of women were working in various industrial sectors, in particular electronics, the chemical industry and heavy engineering. They were also very well represented in intellectual pursuits, such as research, medicine and above all education, the arts and culture. Women had access to education and vocational training of every kind. Many women occupied leadership positions in the country's political life.

47. There were still many obstacles in the world which kept women from effectively enjoying their basic rights. Among those were underdevelopment, mass unemployment, drug abuse, the moral pollution of society and the serious difficulties created by

(Mr. Constantinescu, Romania)

the migration of the labour force. The solution to all those problems required international co-operation, particularly within the framework of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. The efforts made in that regard by the United Nations should help to increase the participation of women in promoting peace and co-operation, and should ensure the equality of women and their integration in economic and social development programmes. The system-wide medium-term plan for women and development (E/1987/52) was, in his delegation's view, a detailed, comprehensive, practical and action-oriented document, which was an indication of serious intention on the part of the system to translate the Forward-looking Strategies into practical actions.

48. Romanian women were deeply concerned at the present international situation and were ardently defending the supreme right of humanity to life and peace, and to free and independent development. They were fighting for a halt to the arms race, for disarmament, above all, nuclear disarmament, for the triumph of reason, and for the peaceful solution of all problems.

49. His delegation welcomed the agreement to strengthen the Commission on the Status of Women and make it more efficient. It supported the recommendations that the Commission should meet annually until the year 2000 and that its terms of reference should be expanded to include the functions of promoting the objectives of equality, development and peace, monitoring the implementation of measures for the advancement of women, and considering, at future sessions, the priority themes under those objectives.

50. His delegation endorsed the report of the Board of Trustees of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women.

51. Mrs. MARCOULLIS (Cyprus) said that her delegation had always attached great importance to international efforts aimed at achieving complete equality between men and women, and eliminating all remnants of discrimination against women. Her Government had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and was in the process of translating the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies into concrete action.

52. There were still many obstacles to women's complete integration in the social, economic and political life of their societies. Although legislation was undoubtedly a significant tool against perpetuation of the secondary role that women still played in many societies, the creation of the necessary infrastructure and support system was of paramount importance. Moreover, through proper education, existing stereotyped models and mentalities could be altered and societies could rid themselves of traditional behaviour which manifested themselves in social prejudices and inequalities and were one of the primary obstacles to the advancement of women.

53. Another area where progress was still very slow was the representation of women in decision-making positions. Although women in most societies constituted one third or one half of the gainfully employed population, they were still a small

(Mrs. Marcoullis, Cyprus)

minority in administrative and managerial positions. In most cases, they did not participate in the decision-making process, particularly in the adoption of decisions which were of paramount importance for the future of their countries and of the world at large. The complete and representative participation of women at all levels must therefore be ensured.

54. The pace at which the Forward-looking Strategies were being implemented in individual countries deserved particular attention. In that connection, it must be borne in mind that not all countries had the same level of economic and social development, the same cultural or religious values or the same political situation. The Strategies had not created a model of society which would be the ideal environment for the advancement of women. The diversity that existed globally in those areas was immense. Consequently, not all countries could implement the Strategies at the same pace and no undue criticism should be levelled without considering all the obstacles which many countries faced in that regard.

55. The three major themes of the Forward-looking Strategies - equality, development and peace - were inextricably linked. It was, for example, impossible to examine the situation of women in South Africa and Namibia without taking into account the abhorrent system of apartheid and the illegal occupation of Namibia. The women of Cyprus had undergone the traumatic experience of invasion and occupation and had come to realize that equality and development were inseparably linked to peace, freedom and justice. They were determined never to accept the forcible division of their country and people based on ethnic or religious criteria, and to continue their struggle until their country was reunified.

56. Mrs. PANDEY (Nepal) said that the record of achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women, particularly the consensus adoption of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, reflected the spirit of solidarity among Member countries in advancing the cause of women. Her delegation particularly welcomed the successful meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women in January 1987. The decision that the Commission should meet annually would greatly facilitate the monitoring of activities for the advancement of women in the years to come. Another welcome development was the creation and strengthening of focal points for the advancement of women within the United Nations system, which could provide the necessary structure for the formulation, monitoring and co-ordination of activities. Lastly, her delegation looked forward to the report of the Commission on the Status of Women on the seminar held recently at Vienna on the subject of national machinery for the advancement of women. That subject was of special interest to her Government, which had recently set up a unit in the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare to serve as a national focal point for the overall co-ordination of activities related to the advancement of women in development.

57. Action taken by Nepal as part of the United Nations Decade for Women included the creation of training centres to provide income-generating skills for rural women and the adoption of a National Plan of Action for Women's Development formulated jointly by the Government and non-governmental organizations. Another significant gain had been the incorporation into the Sixth Five-Year Plan

(Mrs. Pandey, Nepal)

(1980-1985) of a number of policies for the advancement of women. Similarly, the Seventh Plan (1985-1990) laid emphasis on enhancing the social and economic status of women and on the integration of women into the mainstream of national development. Measures included in the Plan gave priority to such areas as agriculture, education, cottage industry, family planning, health and nutrition, drinking water supply and income-generating activities.

58. Nepal welcomed the positive role played by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and hoped that the Fund would contribute even further to enhancing the status of women, especially rural women in the least developed countries.

59. Nepal attached great importance to the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Although the Constitution of Nepal guaranteed equal rights to men and women without discrimination, International Women's Year had provided further impetus for improvements in the legal system in favour of women. However, much remained to be done in order to make Nepalese women aware of the rights and benefits accorded them by the Constitution.

60. In 1977, a Social Services Co-ordination Council had been set up in Nepal under the Chairmanship of Her Majesty Queen Aishwarya Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah; the Women Services Co-ordination Committee, responsible for co-ordinating activities for the advancement of women, was one of the Committees set up under that Council. In the non-governmental sector, the Nepal Women's Organization had been playing a pioneering role in enhancing the status of women in Nepal through literacy drives, family planning, legal aid services and training in income-generating skills.

61. Lastly, the momentum gained thus far must be maintained and concrete measures taken to implement the relevant recommendations of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies.

62. Mrs. FLOREZ (Cuba) said that the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women were still very relevant and that concrete measures would have to be taken by Governments and international organizations to implement them. In that connection, the Secretary-General's intention of giving priority to the advancement of women in the programme budget for the biennium 1988-1989 was a positive development.

63. The Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) had drawn attention to the crucial problem of the external debt of the third world countries, which had tragic repercussions for the living conditions of the most vulnerable groups in those countries, particularly women. There was thus an urgent need to find solutions to that serious problem.

64. The decision taken by the Economic and Social Council in May 1987 that the Commission on the Status of Women should meet annually until the year 2000 and select the themes to which it should give priority in the next five years would

(Mrs. Florez, Cuba)

certainly help strengthen the Commission's role. Her delegation believed that such priority themes should include the situation of women in areas afflicted by armed conflict, foreign intervention and occupation, colonial domination and threats to peace. The situation of women in South Africa, Namibia and Palestine deserved special attention. Her delegation also shared the view of many other delegations that the membership of the Commission on the Status of Women should be increased in order to better reflect the current composition of the United Nations. Lastly, world conferences on women should be convened every five years to evaluate the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies and determine future orientations.

65. She welcomed the increase in the number of States which had become parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and urged countries which had not yet done so to sign that instrument. She welcomed Economic and Social Council resolution 1987/3, which recommended to the General Assembly that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women should hold additional meetings in 1988 to continue its consideration of the reports submitted to it. Her delegation welcomed the work done by the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women. The United Nations Development Fund for Women was also doing very positive work, particularly with regard to the situation of women in developing countries. Her delegation particularly supported UNIFEM's work in the Latin America and Caribbean region.

66. As active partners in the country's economic and social development process, Cuban women enjoyed, thanks to the laws governing Cuban socialist society, conditions which enabled them to both exercise their rights and perform their duties in all sectors of society.

67. Mr. KHYBER (Afghanistan) said that the United Nations Decade for Women had generated increased awareness of the role which women could play in both the national and international arenas and of the exploitation, oppression, inequality and injustices facing women at various levels. Much remained to be done to achieve the the Decade's objectives of equality, development and peace, however. The Forward-looking Strategies had provided the international community with a legal and moral framework for action in that regard. The efforts to integrate women in the development process should take into account the objectives of the new international economic order. Broader participation of women in socio-economic activities as independent citizens would contribute to further recognition in practice of their right to equality. In that connection, Afghanistan welcomed the endeavours of the United Nations system to integrate women into overall development programmes.

68. The promotion of women's rights and social participation could best occur in conditions of peace and security among States. The participation of women in the struggle for peace made an important contribution to that end. Peace and development were interrelated and mutually reinforcing and had a direct impact on the overall status of women.

69. In conformity with the tenets of Islam, Afghanistan had taken a number of measures for the advancement of women and the elimination of the historical causes

(Mr. Khyber, Afghanistan)

of their backwardness. Women were now represented in the Revolutionary Council, the Council of Ministers and other political and administrative organs. Afghan law prohibited all discrimination based on race, colour, sex, language and religion and guaranteed the promotion and protection of women advancement in the family, in education, in the work place and in society in general. The All Afghan Women's Council had become a strong nationwide organization for mobilizing women and defending their rights. It had established several commissions on such issues as women's legal status, information, literacy and family planning. The Council's programme of action took into account the guidelines of the development plan of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan for the years 1986-1990 and paid particular attention to the implementation of United Nations decisions on the advancement of women and, in particular, the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies.

70. Lastly, his delegation appreciated the work done by the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and would continue to support the United Nations Development Fund for Women.

71. Mr. JAYASINGHE (Sri Lanka) said that his delegation recognized the central role of the Commission on the Status of Women and hoped that it would receive the full support of all organizations of the United Nations system, also non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations, in promoting the advancement of women through the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. The role of the Branch for the Advancement of Women as a focal point in the United Nations system for all issues related to women was very important.

72. Since the introduction of universal suffrage in 1931, which had marked the beginning of a new era in equality of the sexes in Sri Lanka, the country had made significant progress in eliminating all forms of discrimination against women. Free education and medical services had a special bearing on women's socio-economic conditions: the literacy rate for women was now 81 per cent in rural areas and 91 per cent in urban areas, while between 45 and 52 per cent of the university student population were women. Female life expectancy was now 70 years. Family planning and family health programmes were accorded special importance by the Government and non-governmental organizations, which were making special efforts to enhance health care in rural areas.

73. In 1978, Sri Lanka had set up a Women's Bureau which, together with the Ministry of Women's Affairs, was committed to improving the quality of life of women and encouraging their participation in all areas of national life. One main focus of the Bureau was to improve the status of women in rural areas, and it had secured income-generating opportunities for more than 12,000 rural women. It was also the Bureau's function to co-ordinate the women's units that had been established in various ministries in keeping with the objectives of the Nairobi Strategies. With the assistance of experts, the Bureau was currently developing a national strategy for women's development activities.

74. Sri Lanka also attached importance to the various themes of the United Nations Decade for Women, in particular, peace. Peace demonstrations had been held and

(Mr. Jayasinghe, Sri Lanka)

continued to be held in Sri Lanka, with the active participation of non-governmental organizations. Such demonstrations reflected not only the democratic character of Sri Lankan society but also the people's desire for a better world. Education for peace played a substantial role in Sri Lanka and religious education, which was provided to young children in temples, churches and mosques, was aimed in that direction.

75. Sri Lanka had benefited from the assistance provided by UNIFEM, particularly through its assistance programmes in rural Sri Lanka. An evaluation of those programmes by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific had recently revealed that there had been an increase in the incomes of rural families and an improvement in their family health and nutritional status. Programmes assisted by UNIFEM were being expanded and would also benefit rural disadvantaged women. The Government would continue to co-operate with the Fund in achieving the goals set.

76. His Government attached great importance to research and information on the status of women and to exchanges of experience in that area. In 1978, the University of Colombo had completed the first comprehensive study on women, entitled "The Status of Women". Non-governmental organizations had also conducted research on women and, in 1984, the Women's Bureau had established a research division for the formulation of policies and programmes for women. The Bureau was currently engaged in carrying out a survey on the conditions of female workers in factories. In that connection, his delegation paid tribute to the activities of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, which Sri Lanka would continue to support.

77. Lastly, Sri Lanka considered that women's issues should be given priority and, accordingly, should feature prominently in the United Nations budget.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.