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UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR WOMEN: EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Second
Half of the United Nations Decade for Women by the
United Nations and other organizations of the United
Nations system

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. This report has been prepared by the Secretary-General in pursuance of resolution 22 adopted by the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, held at Copenhagen from 14 to 30 July 1980, which calls on the Secretary-General and the heads of specialized agencies and organizations to report to the General Assembly, at its thirty-fifth session on what arrangements should be made to implement the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the Decade and to ensure efficient co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation of implementation.
2. The Conference adopted a Programme of Action for the Second Half of the Decade, 1980-1985, based on a review and an evaluation of progress achieved in the implementation of the World Plan of Action and related resolutions adopted by the World Conference of the International Women's Year held at Mexico City in 1975 ^{1/} and endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 3520 (XXX) of 15 December 1975. The Copenhagen Conference also adopted 48 resolutions and one decision.
3. The Programme of Action and the resolutions of the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women are contained in the report of the Conference (A/CONF.94/35) ^{2/} which is before the present session of the General Assembly. Arrangements to implement the Programme of Action will have to be undertaken in the light of the decisions of the General Assembly on the report of the Conference and, wherever necessary, in consultation with the specialized agencies. The Secretary-General will therefore, if so requested, present a more comprehensive report on this matter to the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session. In the meantime, however, and in partial response to resolution 22 of the Conference, the Secretary-General is submitting the present report on some aspects of international action contained in the Programme of Action in regard to which it should be possible to take action even at this stage and, thereby, to respond to the urgency and importance attached by Member States to the deliberations of the Conference. The statement by the Secretary-General of the Conference to the current session of the General Assembly has already provided a policy analysis of the recommendations of the Conference.

II. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO INTERNATIONAL ACTION

4. The aim of the Programme of Action is to strengthen comprehensive and effective strategies to overcome obstacles and constraints on women's full and equal participation in development, including actions to solve the problems of under-development and of the socio-economic structures which place women in an inferior position, and to increase their contribution to the strengthening of world peace.

^{1/} Report of the World Conference of the International Women's Year (United Nations Publication, Sales No. E.76.IV.1).

^{2/} United Nations Publication, Sales No. E.80.IV.3.

5. The major thrust of the Programme, therefore, based on the experience gained from the review, is that any measures for women which are isolated from the major priorities, strategies and sectors of development cannot result in any substantial progress in attaining the goals of the Decade for Women. With a view to ensuring the full mobilization of efforts and integration of activities, the Programme therefore calls upon organizations of the United Nations system to establish and/or to strengthen machinery in order to integrate women in development. It also seeks to ensure that women's concerns are taken into account in the formulation, implementation and review of the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade.

6. The Programme of Action also stresses the need for strengthening the programmes and activities of regional commissions for women, particularly in the areas of economic and technical co-operation, advisory services and training, and research, data collection and analysis. It also stresses the importance of integrating issues of concern to women into relevant substantive areas.

7. The Programme and resolutions of Copenhagen stress the need to develop new and relevant methodologies for the integration of women in development in all the programmes and activities of the organizations of the United Nations system, as well as to reassess, redefine and revise development concepts, objectives and policies to achieve them, and to develop new approaches for the mobilization of women.

8. The Programme of Action explicitly states:

"Commensurate with the need for more dynamic programmes and policies is the need for co-ordination of activities of the various organizations in the United Nations system as well as the appropriate institutional arrangements within them, involving, wherever necessary, structural transformations. ... In line with the integrated nature of the development process itself and with the need to reduce both isolated actions and overlapping of activities, the Programme of Action aims also at greater cohesiveness and co-ordination of efforts of the various organizations" (A/CONF.94/35, para. 217).

9. A number of resolutions deal with institutional arrangements for the strengthening of women's programmes. They are directed to the strengthening of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Branch for the Advancement of Women, the regional commissions, the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women. In addition, there are recommendations relating to the need for focal points within relevant substantive areas. The Conference also stressed the need for implementation of the Joint Interagency Programme with respect to a number of activities.

10. Broadly speaking, the recommendations might be reviewed under the following areas of the Programme of Action:

(a) The Programme of Action calls for more intensified and expanded technical co-operation, training and advisory services, programmes within the context of

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over-all development and closely co-ordinated with all relevant United Nations departments, regional commissions and United Nations bodies. New target groups for assistance include women in southern Africa and in refugee camps (resolution 45, paras. 241-243), Palestinian women inside and outside the occupied territories (para. 244), women refugees and displaced women (resolutions 12 and 13, paras. 245-256), Lebanese women, especially from southern Lebanon (resolution 10), and disabled women (resolution 2).

(b) With respect to the elaboration and review of international standards, the Programme of Action urges that the needs of women be taken into account in the formulation of international standards.

(c) Underlining the important roles of multisectoral and interdisciplinary action-oriented research, and of data collection and analysis, in formulating development objectives, strategies and policy measures responsive to the needs of women and men, the Programme stresses priority areas of special need, where little or no information exists, such as migrant women, industries in which an overwhelming majority of employees are women, and an increased level of investment in long-range funding of research on women and development aimed at providing a sound data base for development planning. In addition, there are recommendations relating to the analysis of data which would highlight the interrelationship between women's roles and demographic phenomena (para. 257), data on working and employment conditions of rural women (para. 224), and on the situation of elderly women, including their access to social and economic security (resolution 4).

(d) The Programme of Action seeks to enlarge the dissemination of information and experience in every conceivable way and stresses the participation of women in all relevant programmes and information activities, e.g., in radio programmes, special booklets, pamphlets and publications. In addition, the Programme of Action emphasizes the need to have information and communication components on issues relating to women, in all existing and planned development programmes, in existing information systems and in the work of a new international information order.

III. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

11. The Programme of Action assigns the central role for the review and appraisal of the progress achieved in implementing the provisions of the World Plan of Action and of the Programme for the Second Half of the Decade to the Commission on the Status of Women.

12. With its mandate as the intergovernmental body responsible for the preparation and implementation of the plans and programmes of the United Nations Decade for Women, the Commission on the Status of Women remains the body responsible for monitoring the United Nations system's activities and links between national, regional and international activity to assist the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

13. Resolution 40 calls for the strengthening of the Commission and requests that it pay particular attention to the implementation of the Programme of Action and other recommendations of the Conference, and formulate proposals and recommendations for the Economic and Social Council based on all the relevant information. It also requests the Secretary-General to consider appropriate measures enabling the Commission to fulfill these functions and strengthen the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs so that it may effectively help the Commission on the Status of Women to carry out these tasks. It further requests the Commission on the Status of Women to contribute, through its work, to the establishment of the new international economic order and the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade.

14. Closely related to this recommendation is the one which calls for the improvement of the integrated reporting system which has been developed to obtain the information required for the biennial studies on review and appraisal of progress made in attaining the objectives of the Decade for Women (para. 274). The scope of this system would need to be expanded so as to cover adequately the priority areas of action identified in the new international development strategy. This means a more systematic examination of the role of women in such areas as international trade, industrialization, food production and energy.

15. A necessary corollary for improving the integrated reporting system is the need to strengthen the interdisciplinary research capacity of the Advancement of Women Branch which is responsible for administering the system. In particular, it is necessary to strengthen its capacity as regards the analysis of the economic aspects of women's participation in development. Full consideration should, for example, be given to the contribution of women in the establishment of the new international economic order and how their enhanced participation in development would facilitate progress towards the solution of international economic problems and sustained global economic growth.

16. The Programme of Action further emphasizes the need to strengthen and reorient the integrated reporting system so as to reflect more adequately regional concerns. This places an additional responsibility on regional commissions to report comprehensively on specific aspects of the situation of women in every sector of their development programmes.

17. Paragraph 282 of the Programme of Action recommends that regional commissions should submit reports regularly to the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat (on women's programmes) as part of the over-all review and appraisal of the World Plan of Action. The effective implementation of this recommendation necessitates the establishment of closer links between the Branch and the regional commissions. The conceptual framework, updated and reoriented in the light of the experience gained in the past five years of the Decade, and the recommendations following from it for expanded and new areas of activities at the international level, place considerably increased demands on the Advancement of Women Branch of the United Nations Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs.

IV. INTERAGENCY CO-ORDINATION

18. In broad terms, the recommendations which the Programme of Action directs at the international and regional bodies place special emphasis on strengthening activities in all sectors and at all levels of the development process. They accordingly call upon all the organizations in the United Nations system to reorient and reinforce, within their respective areas of competence, relevant programme activities and to take into full consideration the essential role of women in the development process at national, subregional and international levels. They also call for increased participation of women in decision-making and in activities of the United Nations system.

19. The Programme of Action attaches highest priority to improved co-ordination and co-operation among the specialized agencies and United Nations bodies, with a view to ensuring that the United Nations system as a whole makes a concerted effort at implementing the provisions of the Programme.

20. Machinery for co-ordinating the activities of the organizations and programmes of the United Nations system in the economic and social fields exists and is functioning at the global, regional and national levels. At the apex of this machinery is the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC), which meets under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General of the United Nations organizations, programmes and agencies. This machinery is available to co-ordinate activities in all sectors, including the three areas addressed by the Conference - employment, health and education - and any other fields of concern to Governments.

21. Following the World Conference of the International Women's Year, 1975, an interagency programme for the integration of women in development was established in accordance with General Assembly resolution 3520 (XXX) under the aegis of ACC. The agencies contributed to the biennial reports on activities for the United Nations Decade for Women and periodic interagency meetings were held in connexion with the Programme. In addition to this formal machinery, there has been collaboration and co-operation among agencies or groups of agencies on specific projects and programmes which have implications for women.

V. SUGGESTIONS FOR THE INITIAL PHASE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME

22. As referred to in paragraph 5 above, all of the organizations of the United Nations system have been called upon to establish and/or strengthen machinery in order to integrate women in development so as to ensure the full mobilization of efforts and integration of activities. As a consequence, the establishment, where they do not exist, or the identification of focal points in all relevant substantive sectors of the organizations of the United Nations system is urgently required with a view to integrating issues relating to women in their work programmes (resolution 39).

23. The organizations of the United Nations system would need to examine carefully the provisions of the Programme of Action upon its adoption by the General Assembly, and take appropriate action to implement effectively recommendations

addressed to them. The following measures were recommended at informal interagency consultations held during the Copenhagen Conference:

(a) The Administrative Committee on Co-ordination could prepare and submit to the spring session of the Economic and Social Council in 1981 an agenda of themes relating to women emanating from the Copenhagen Programme of Action as adopted by the General Assembly for its consideration during the remainder of the Decade for Women;

(b) The Consultative Committees on Substantive Questions of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination could ensure that a dimension reflecting the concerns of women is incorporated in their substantive discussions;

(c) Subsidiary machinery of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination including the Sub-Committees on Statistics and Nutrition and Special Task Forces on Rural Development and Long-Term Development Objectives could take specific account of women's issues in relation to their subject areas.

24. Interagency aspects of the follow-up to the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women were considered by the Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (CCSQ) (Programme) at its second regular session of 1980. It concluded that this subject should be a main theme at its March 1981 session. Subsequent to the further consideration of this item by the Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Programme) and by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, the Secretary-General could, if so requested, report on methods for strengthening interagency co-ordination in the area of women and development to the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session.

25. In addition, greater efforts to achieve improved co-ordination of the activities undertaken by the organizations of the United Nations system will be required in the area of technical co-operation, with a view to ensuring a more integrated approach to development at the country level. Attention is also invited to the relevant sectors of the Programme concerning, for example, assistance to women in southern Africa (paras. 241-243), assistance to Palestinian women inside and outside the occupied territories (para. 244 (a)-(h)) and assistance to women refugees and displaced women the world over (paras. 245-251).

26. The Programme recommends, in paragraph 280, that co-ordination and co-operation among the specialized agencies and United Nations bodies should be effected by the increasing use of the Inter-Agency Programme for the Decade of Women and of the Advancement of Women Branch. According to General Assembly resolution 32/138 of 16 December 1977, the Advancement of Women Branch in the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs has been serving as the focal point of the Inter-Agency Programme for the Decade. The Programme of Action of the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women calls, however, for intensification and, in some instances, initiation, of interagency collaboration and co-operation in its implementation, particularly in regard to, inter alia,

technical co-operation, training and advisory services (paras. 231-251), elaboration and review of international standards (paras. 252-256), research, data collection and analysis (257-263), dissemination of information and experience (264-272), and review and appraisal (273-284). It also calls for the intensification of collaboration and co-ordination with regional commissions, and with concerned non-governmental organizations. These added dimensions impose increased responsibilities on Advancement of Women Branch in the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs.

27. Attention is also drawn, in the meanwhile, to the efforts being made by relevant United Nations bodies to respond to the substantive recommendations of the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women within the context of the budget proposals of the Programme of Action for 1982-83. For example, action is being taken to appropriately reinforce and reorient activities in this direction in programmes relating to population, statistics and development research and analysis.

28. In this initial phase, it is imperative to reinforce the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs in the Advancement of Women Branch which will continue to play a pivotal role in the implementation of the Programme. The activities of the Branch, in addition to the already programmed activities for 1981, need to be expanded and reoriented to meet with the increased and pressing mandates emanating from the recommendations of the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women. These additional responsibilities would include more interdisciplinary, multisectoral research, to ensure that women's concerns are adequately reflected in the implementation of the international development strategy, to develop new and innovative approaches to the integration of women in development, consolidate and reinforce the integrated reporting system, strengthen a wide range of technical co-operation, training and advisory services, the development of international standards in all relevant areas of activity, and to undertake specific research as indicated in paragraph 10 (c) above. In addition, the responsibility for joint interagency programmes will be considerably increased and expanded.

29. Close and continuing contacts as well as a catalytic role will need to be maintained between the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs and the relevant United Nations bodies located at United Nations Headquarters in New York, and with some Member States and non-governmental organizations which do not yet have representation at Vienna. There is also a need to follow the implementation of measures of assistance to women under apartheid. In his statement to the World Conference, the Director-General for Development and International Co-operation stated that, in this regard, a small unit of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs at the United Nations Headquarters in New York is envisaged which would be concerned primarily with liaison work and would assist the Centre in integrating the contributions of other substantive units in New York towards the implementation of the Copenhagen Programme of Action. It is the intention of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to proceed accordingly.

30. These added responsibilities call for the strengthening of the Advancement of Women Branch as the substantive secretariat to the Commission on the Status of

Women. The Assistant Secretary-General of the Centre for Social Development Humanitarian Affairs would need the assistance, at a higher managerial level than is now the case, of the Advancement of Women Branch in order to ensure effective interaction at the policy-making level, both with Member States and within the United Nations system, and to ensure effective implementation of the Programme of Action.

31. All of the organizations of the United Nations system, including the regional commissions, have been called upon to establish and/or strengthen machinery for the integration of women in development. The purpose is to ensure the full mobilization of efforts and integration of activities undertaken at the international, regional and subregional levels to achieve the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women. Therefore, it will be necessary to establish or identify focal points at the regional level in all substantive departments where they do not exist at present to integrate issues relating to women in their work programmes (resolution 39). Resolution 21 and the Programme of Action call for the strengthening of the women's programmes in the regional commissions by a variety of measures. All relevant services, programmes, entities and organs of the United Nations will be carefully considering the provisions in the Programme of Action and will provide, at an appropriate time, further information.
