

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FIVE HUNDRED AND FOURTEENTH MEETING

Held on Tuesday, 13 February 1968, at 3.30 p.m.

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<u>Chairman:</u>	Mrs. MARINOVIC	Chile
<u>Rapporteur:</u>	Dame Mabel MILLER	Australia

UNIFIED LONG-TERM PROGRAMME FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN AND UNITED NATIONS ASSISTANCE IN THIS FIELD (continued):

- (a) THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR COUNTRIES (E/CN.6/493 and Add.1; Conference Room Paper No. 1; E/CN.6/NGO/194, 199 and 202)
- (b) DEVELOPMENT AND UTILIZATION OF HUMAN RESOURCES (E/CN.6/496; E/4353 and Add.1)
- (c) NATIONAL COMMISSIONS ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (E/CN.6/494; E/CN.6/NGO/200)

Mrs. KALM (World Health Organization) drew attention to the three areas of particular interest to women in which her organization was active: maternal and child health and the protection of the health of women, particularly in connexion with reproduction; the education of women and their children in health matters; and assistance in training for professions such as nursing and midwifery.

Health was an important factor in the development and utilization of human resources and WHO was anxious to ensure that the personnel requirements of the health sector were taken into account in all manpower planning and that, in the development and utilization of manpower in all other sectors, adequate consideration was given to potential and practical health implications.

Her organization had helped countries to draw up national health plans and to develop organized health services; it had always given high priority to the education and training of staff at various levels and in different categories. Apart from the educational programmes which it had developed in the medical and paramedical fields, WHO was encouraging the establishment of new schools for training doctors and nursing staff; it was also contributing, through its fellowship programme, to the complete training of medical and other personnel in the country itself if its facilities were adequate, or abroad if they were not.

In conclusion, she said that her organization was ready to contribute to a concerted action programme undertaken by the United Nations for the development and utilization of human resources in the developing countries. She believed that such a programme would make a significant contribution to the advancement of women.

Dame Mabel MILLER (Australia) said that her delegation had read with particular interest the documentation placed before the Commission in connexion with item 7 of its agenda, because it considered that item to be the most important aspect of the Commission's work.

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(Dame Mabel Miller, Australia)

Her delegation felt that, regardless of the type of programme for the advancement of women, United Nations assistance should be aimed at giving women the same opportunities as men for employment and for participation in public life. It was also essential that the programme should be integrated with existing programmes and that, particularly in the developing countries, the advancement of women should be linked to the broader problem of over-all development. There could be no question that economic and social development in those countries was normally accompanied by an improvement in the status of women. It was also important to take into account the level of economic and social development in each country, so that women's advancement would not be accelerated to such a degree as to make it impossible for the community to adjust to the rapid changes. Care should therefore be taken to apply suitable standards to each country, and to give the forms of assistance most appropriate in each case.

In the political sphere, assistance should be directed to removing all vestiges of discrimination against women, particularly as they affected electoral rights. Programmes of political education could be extremely valuable. In the field of civil rights, efforts should be made to remove the barriers which still prevented women in many countries from suing, from buying, selling or owning property, from entering into binding contracts and from obtaining custody of their children. In the social field, assistance should be given by providing nutritional guidance centres, handicraft centres, community centres and co-operative stores, for example. Standards relating to welfare, health and employment should be strictly enforced. In the economic field, the aim should be to prevent the exploitation of women by drawing up standards relating to wages, hours and conditions of work. The role which labour inspection services and trade unions could play in that field should not be overlooked. Moreover, since most developing countries were plagued by under-employment, better land use and the establishment of cottage industries should provide employment for women, improve their status and contribute to the economic and social development of the country. Of course, women should not be encouraged to seek employment in the towns so long as there were no real employment opportunities there. Finally, education should be free for children of both sexes at all levels, and long-term educational

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(Dame Mabel Miller, Australia)

planning should take into account the changing pattern of employment opportunities in order to ensure that education was properly directed. Training should also be given due attention, particularly in the developing countries.

In Australia, where state Governments, the private sector and voluntary organizations enjoyed a large measure of freedom of action with respect to economic and social development, women, who accounted for 25 per cent of the economically active population, played a very important role. The annual growth rate of that segment of the population was proportionately much greater than that of the male work force. Not only were many women employed in such sectors as manufacturing, commerce and services, but they were also present in significant numbers in handicrafts and home industries, the judiciary and government. In the latter sector, they held seats in all six state Parliaments and in the two Houses of the Federal Parliament. The question of establishing a status of women commission had been raised on a number of occasions, and the question of an advisory committee on matters relating to women's employment was currently being considered by the Government.

In conclusion, she said that her Government attached the greatest importance to the contribution of women to economic and social life, and encouraged their participation in every way possible.

Mrs. MARINKEVICH (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) noted that the institution of Soviet power and a socialist system in the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic had given women the same rights as men in all fields of economic, political, cultural and social life. The exercise of those rights was guaranteed in practice by granting women equal rights with men in respect of employment, remuneration, leisure, social security and education, and by protecting the interests of the mother and child.

As noted in the Secretary-General's report (E/CN.6/493/Add.1), 51 per cent of the 2,566,000 people employed in the national economy of the Byelorussian SSR were women. Women comprised 48.9 per cent of industrial workers - 27 per cent of them construction workers - and 50.5 per cent of agricultural workers. Women frequently occupied key positions in production as engineers, technical workers, supervisors, and directors of enterprises. Three quarters of the total labour force in the public services were women.

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(Mrs. Marinkevich, Byelorussian SSR)

However, the Report showed that many women still played a minor role in the economic and social life of their countries. The Commission should therefore facilitate and accelerate their integration into the process of economic and social development by making practical recommendations to that end.

Dr. SUMMERSKILL (United Kingdom) congratulated the Secretary-General and the specialized agencies on the efforts they had made to promote the advancement of women.

In her delegation's view, such a programme, besides giving prominence to education in general, particularly in the developing countries, should also give great weight to the health aspects of development. In that connexion, preventive medicine could play an important part and should be developed. Due attention should also be given to nutritional problems, which beset developed as well as developing countries. Moreover, although women had always played an important part in health and welfare activities, it was clear that more and more women wished to enter the medical profession and efforts should therefore be made to promote that objective. Health education should be provided.

Her delegation felt it would be useful to begin the study of the replies to the questionnaire sent to Governments on the role of women in development. It was to be hoped that the Governments which had not yet replied would do so in time for their replies to be studied by the Commission at its twenty-second session and for the Secretary-General to analyse them.

In connexion with the type of assistance to be provided, her delegation felt that a separate new programme for the advancement of women should not be organized and that it would be preferable to co-ordinate the aid now being provided by the specialized agencies.

She expressed the hope that, in future, the Commission would give full attention to measures for increasing the contribution of women to the economic and social development of their countries, and that the question of their role in economic development would be included in the agenda of future sessions.

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Mrs. NAHVI (Iran) noted that under the programme of technical assistance which it had been receiving from the United Nations for the past twenty years, Iran had for the first time been assigned an expert who was to devote all his time to the problems of women, and particularly to the problems of women in the rural environment. In order to ensure the advancement of women, a world-wide programme should be expressly established and paid for out of technical assistance funds. All projects should be long-term, like Special Fund projects, and in each region an expert or group of experts should study the problems of women in rural areas. The experts, who would act as short-term consultants to the various national women's organizations, should keep informed of the progress being achieved in the various countries. If wasteful experimentation was to be avoided, studies should be undertaken in order to determine the needs of the countries concerned and to promote the integration of women into the economic and social development of each country.

Her Government, out of concern for the improvement of the economic and social status of women, had launched a programme aimed particularly at providing women with an elementary education and giving them a modicum of practical knowledge about hygiene, nutrition, child-rearing, domestic science and rural agriculture; the programme also was aimed at training them for home industries, familiarizing them with the co-operative movement and community development and preparing them for village economic life. With that end in view, a national training centre for rural women workers and advisers was to be established near Teheran. The centre, where teaching was to be both theoretical and practical, would accept 200 girls each year; they would form a network of educators available to the villagers. UNICEF was to contribute some \$400,000 to the project.

With regard to the development and utilization of human resources, she noted that, in 1963-1964, 36,500 women worked for the Iranian Government, including 25,500 for the Ministry of Education. At the present time, 70 per cent of the women holding Government positions were teachers, and the remaining 30 per cent were divided between health and welfare work and office work.

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A bill was presently before the Iranian Parliament which envisaged the establishment of a voluntary female community service which would offer girls, in numbers to be fixed each year according to need, general training in the fields of hygiene, nutrition, education and literacy. After a theoretical training period of six months, they would devote twelve months to practical service in the various health and social centres, primary schools and literacy centres throughout the country. On completion of their duty, they would be given priority for employment and fellowships and could count the time they had spent in the community service towards their retirement as well as towards their seniority.

She hoped that the information she had provided would convince the Commission that the Iranian Government was endeavouring to make up for lost time and to ensure the rapid integration of women into the economic and social life of the country.

Mrs. NUITA (Japan) said that the role of women in the economic development of her country was continuing to grow. Since 1955, the pace of industrial change in her country had demanded an ever-increasing labour force, but a strain on the labour supply had developed after 1960 as a result of a drop in the birth-rate and an increase in educational enrolments. Therefore, it became necessary to turn to women and, because of the shortage of younger workers, to focus particular attention on the employment potential of older and married women. The number of women workers over thirty accounted for over 43 per cent of the total number of women workers in 1966, compared with 37.6 per cent in 1962. It was clear that the employment or re-employment of that category of workers gave rise to numerous problems; they often lacked skills and experience and many of them had difficulty in reconciling their family responsibilities with their occupational obligations. In that connexion, she noted that her Government, in close co-operation with the non-governmental organizations, was taking steps to encourage and promote the employment of older and married women. Among them she cited the short-term training courses established under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour, the special placement services for women with skills and experience and the Public Vocational Training Centres for Domestic Work. Furthermore, the Government and the local authorities supported or encouraged some 12,000 day-nurseries, public and

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(Mrs. Nuita, Japan)

private, which took care of 900,000 pre-school children while their mothers worked. All those measures demonstrated the Government's interest in the participation of women in social and economic development, which was one of the most difficult problems confronting the country.

Mrs. TELAWI (United Arab Republic) stressed the complexity of the procedure followed in establishing the Report of the Secretary-General on the role of women in the economic and social development of their countries (E/CN.6/493/Add.1). The detailed questionnaire sent to the Governments had to be communicated to different ministries, and the question dealt with the work of various departments. The questionnaire should be simplified and Governments should be allowed more time to reply.

In her country, women participated actively in the economic, social and cultural life of the country, as they had access to free education at all levels. The Government was implementing various programmes aimed at educating women and enabling them to contribute to the family income. The Government attached particular importance to the education of women in rural areas and had undertaken a long-term programme to that end. In that connexion, she emphasized that rural areas, particularly in developing countries, stood in need of much greater assistance than other areas, particularly in the field of education.

Miss ADDISON (Ghana) said that women played a major role in development in her country, where they were extremely active in such economic sectors as retail trade, banking, industry, agriculture, transport and communications, radio and television, and Government service. They were to be found in particularly large numbers in the last-mentioned sector, but they held few high positions. Not many women were interested in science and technology, and the University of Science and Technology had only 65 women students out of a total enrolment of 1,329. There were 302 women at the University of Accra out of a student population of 2,000, but only a minority of them were studying scientific subjects. One fourth of all elementary school teachers and one fifth of all secondary school teachers were women. Women also made up a large proportion of health and social welfare personnel.

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(Miss Addison, Ghana)

The fact that women did not always play an adequate role in the country's development was attributable to qualitative and quantitative shortcomings in education. She suggested, in that connexion, that UNESCO should assess the results which had been achieved and explore means of developing a type of education which would not prepare people merely for examinations but also prepare them for life. In view of the tremendous educational needs of all the developing countries, it might be advisable for UNESCO to act without waiting to receive a request from the Government concerned. It was also important for girls and women in the developing countries to be trained for the jobs of the future, particularly in science and technology, since otherwise the assistance provided by the specialized agencies would go for nought. The specialized agencies should adopt a dynamic approach, co-ordinate their efforts and exert pressure on Governments to implement their recommendations.

Mrs. THORSSON (Director, Social Development Division) said that, recognizing the close interdependence of the various factors that entered into the development process in any given country, United Nations organs were placing increasing emphasis on a fully integrated approach to development which was reflected in multi-sectoral and multi-purpose programmes. Nevertheless, the results achieved were rather modest. The major cause of that failure was the lack of proper emphasis on social factors in the formulation and execution of development plans. It was often the case that too little attention was given to the social and institutional obstacles to economic growth and the consequences of that growth and too little effort was made to utilize fully the available human resources, with the result that the countries concerned failed to attain the goals they had set for themselves. It was therefore essential for planning to be fully integrated. Economic and Social Council resolution 1274 (XLIII) on the development and utilization of human resources and the report submitted by the Secretary-General at the forty-third session of the Council (E.4353 and Add.1) represented the first steps in developing a concerted programme. She wished to assure the members of the Commission that any comments they might wish to make on the Secretary-General's report would be taken into account in preparing the second report, which the Secretary-General was to submit at the forty-fifth session of the Council in accordance with the resolution to which she had just referred.

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(Mrs. Thorsson, Director, Social
Development Division)

Regarding the second part of the Secretary-General's report (E/4353/Add.1), which dealt with the important matter of education and training, she observed that human resources - i.e. the knowledge, skills and capacities of human beings - were still being very inadequately utilized in the developing countries. An unceasing effort must therefore be made to mobilize the entire population of the country in its development.

A major contribution could be made in that regard by women, who were the subject of a special chapter of the report. Women already played such an important role in such economic sectors as agriculture, industry and services that, without their participation, the economic life of any country would be paralysed. Yet, women represented the greatest part of the unused potential of human resources. All too often, as the Secretary-General pointed out in his report (E/4353/Add.1, para. 270), women were victims of "attitudes, traditions and concepts which affect their role... in the family and the community, the extent to which they participate in economic life, their choice of occupation and the development of training facilities and employment opportunities". It could not be emphasized too strongly how harmful such attitudes were and how important it was to do away with them if women were to contribute fully to the well-being and the development of the community to which they belonged. It was also essential to cease regarding women's activities as being of a special nature - an attitude which caused women to be looked upon as a minority group and even to be treated as inferiors. It was therefore important that economic and social development programmes affecting women, instead of being drawn up separately from the general programmes for the development and utilization of human resources, should be fully integrated into them. As human beings, women must be given an opportunity to contribute to their country's economic and social development and to take part in the efforts to enable everyone to live a better and more rewarding life. It was important to keep in mind that although human beings were the indispensable tool of development, the latter's primary aim was the well-being of mankind, of men, women and children everywhere.

Mrs. CHATER (Tunisia) observed that women had been playing an increasing role in her country's development since independence; that could unquestionably be

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(Miss Chater, Tunisia)

attributed to the fact that they had access to education, training and employment under the same conditions as men. She had several comments to make on the unified long-term programme for the advancement of women, particularly from the standpoint of the developing countries.

She agreed that programmes affecting women should be integrated into over-all aid programmes, instead of being kept separate from them. She also shared the views of the representative of FAO concerning the high priority to be given to the teaching of home economics in rural areas, although she felt that that subject should be taught as part of a programme of social education for women. In Tunisia, for example, there were social education centres which taught women to read and write at the same time that they gave them instruction in housework.

With regard to the training of women in rural areas in the developing countries, it was essential, while providing "modern" vocational training designed to prepare people with the skills needed to work in co-operative farming, not to neglect the "traditional" type of vocational training which enabled women to make a useful contribution on farms of the conventional type, where they still existed.

She wished to emphasize that, if they were to be smoothly co-ordinated, the programmes of the specialized agencies must be complementary. That raised the problem of the respective spheres of competence of the specialized agencies and of the ministries concerned as well as the problem of co-operation between them. It was also essential that the assistance provided under a given programme should be of sufficient duration and should not end until the development process was well under way. Finally, it must be kept in mind that, if they were to be effective, programmes must be flexible so that they could be adapted to the particular circumstances of the countries in which they were carried out.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.

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