



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 22nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. GARVALOV (Bulgaria)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.40 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 80: UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR WOMEN: EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE (A/35/3/Add.19, A/35/286; A/C.3/35/7)

- (a) World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women (A/CONF.94/35; A/35/220)
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AGENDA ITEM 83: STATUS OF THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/35/428)

1. Mrs. MAIR (Secretary-General of the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women), introducing the items under consideration, said that the Decade for Women was critical because it spanned a period during which the international community was becoming increasingly aware of the complexity of the social, political and economic forces which shaped the history and destiny of mankind. In 1975, the world had seemed less complex and problems had been more amenable to solutions. The demand then by women for equality, development and peace had coincided with the demand of the majority of nations for a restructuring of the unjust economic relations between countries and the establishment of a new international economic order. Five years later, it was realized that not only were those two demands inextricably linked but also that progress had been as difficult to attain in one as in the other. Social and political movements were emerging as a tangible expression of deep human needs and alternative economic relations were being forged by groups or among countries.

2. The Copenhagen Conference had been a microcosm of those myriad forces. The purpose of the Conference had been to review and evaluate progress made since 1975 in achieving the objectives of the Decade for Women. The regional and global programmes of the United Nations system had been reviewed and evaluated in order to assess progress in implementing the World Plan of Action. The Secretariat had prepared a draft Programme of Action for the second half of the Decade, which had formed the basis of the Programme of Action adopted by the Conference. The broad range of issues discussed at the Conference and the decisions and recommendations it had adopted reaffirmed the basic premise that women's concerns could not be seen as separate from or irrelevant to those of men or to the global concerns considered in the various assemblies of the United Nations system.

3. The report of the Conference (A/CONF.94/35) reflected the seriousness with which participating Governments had discussed such questions as the historical perspective within which the roots of women's inequality could be traced, the lessons for the future to be drawn from the review of progress achieved in the *first half of the Decade*, together with a conceptual statement of the need to

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(Mrs. Mair)

include data and strategies concerning women in the third United Nations Development Decade. The discussions had included items on Palestinian women, women refugees, the effects of apartheid on women in South Africa and Namibia and the role of women in the struggle for liberation in Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa. Traditional attitudes towards women and assumptions about their rightful place had been perceived as tempering, if not inhibiting, their access to health services, education and training and as determining their mode of participation in the work force. They had also led to the neglect of women's needs in the formulation and implementation of policies, for example, food and nutrition policies. The Conference recommendations sought to redress those existing imbalances.

4. Another historical force which had laid the foundation for women's inequality had been the imbalance between nations, which was a direct product of imperialism and colonialism and now formed the very basis of the structure of global economic relations. That imbalance had major implications for the international division of labour, in which the exploitation of female labour was a significant element. Thus, the fate of women became dependent upon the capacity of international communities to restructure the world economy and the capacity of national Governments, developed and developing, to accept their responsibility for development. The problems of women were recognized as intimately related to the level, structure and pace of national development.

5. It was important to emphasize that the World Conference had been neither the beginning nor the end of a process, but had been strategically timed to continue the historic breakthrough made in Mexico City in 1975 and point more clearly to the path to be followed towards 1985.

6. She then summarized the contents of the Plan of Action and drew the attention of the Third Committee to the specific mandates which had been given by the Conference to the General Assembly at its current session. A number of resolutions adopted by the Conference also dealt with the conditions of employment of women within the United Nations, the co-ordination of issues relating to the status of women within the United Nations system and the strengthening of the role of the Commission on the Status of Women.

7. The conclusions and recommendations of the Conference reflected and embodied the understanding that women, far from being simply a social sector, were an integral part of every global concern in the areas of equality, development and peace. The Third Committee would be provided with a report from the Secretary-General on how the decisions adopted at Copenhagen were to be implemented in so far as they called for new or strengthened activities by the United Nations itself, once the General Assembly had set its seal of approval on those decisions.

8. At the critically important level of nations, the prospect of translating the *important and unanimously agreed* Conference recommendations into reality on a world scale would depend not only on the co-operation of the international system, but primarily on the commitment of Governments and peoples to the shared objectives arrived at in Mexico City and Copenhagen. It was one of the abiding impressions of the Conference that the conviction, energy and the courage and imagination needed for that task were not lacking.

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9. Mr. NORDENFELT (Sweden) said that discrimination against women was universal, existed in both rich and poor countries, and differed only in the form it took. However, there was a growing awareness that women's participation in economic life was a prerequisite for economic and social development. Special attention must be given to the role of women in developing countries since the women of the developing world were all too often doomed from birth to lifelong poverty and oppression.
10. The situation of women could improve only as part of over-all social and economic development. Thus Sweden, in its co-operation programmes, tried to take into account the impact on women of the projects it assisted and it believed that international organizations, and in particular UNDP, should analyse how women were affected in UNDP projects and ensure that the question of equality was taken into account in all assisted activities, including country programming.
11. The Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women attempted to stimulate the more innovative and experimental measures, called for by that approach; they could then be carried out by other international organizations. Sweden was already a substantial contributor to the Fund and would be confirming its pledge of an increased contribution at the forthcoming pledging conference. It hoped that many other countries would find themselves in a position to do likewise.
12. Although in the short run there must be special programmes for women as a first step towards fully integrating women into all aspects of social life, in the long run, programmes for the improvement of the situation of women should be part and parcel of the work of the entire United Nations system, including the specialized agencies. Sweden therefore hoped that the Voluntary Fund would operate under the auspices of UNDP.
13. The serious problem of female circumcision was one of the questions on which United Nations organizations had already been called upon to assist States. The serious medical and social consequences of that practice were of concern to people in many countries. His Government welcomed recent initiatives by international organizations such as WHO and UNICEF and was prepared to support effective health programmes which included measures designed to abolish female circumcision.
14. Since women's participation in the development process was a prerequisite for development, all forms of discrimination against women must be abolished. Sweden was pleased that so many countries had already signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and hoped that they would soon ratify it as well.
15. Development in itself, however, was no guarantee that the situation of women would improve. There was a legal recognition in the industrialized countries of formal equality between the sexes but that in itself had not eradicated discrimination. Deep-rooted traditions and prejudices, which were often surprisingly similar from one economic system to another, persisted.
16. *Equality must be translated into everyday reality and the roles of both men and women must be changed. Women could not be gainfully employed and participate*

(Mr. Nordenfelt, Sweden)

actively in society on equal conditions with men unless men accepted their share of responsibility for the home and children. A more balanced distribution of tasks within the family would give men an opportunity to share in all aspects of family life and help children to form an unbiased attitude towards sex roles.

17. Equality between women and men was a highly political question, which involved the acceptance of far-reaching changes in society. The question should be treated with an appropriate sense of priority and commitment on the part of Governments. It was regrettable that it had not been accorded such treatment at the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women and that other questions, notably the question whether zionism should be considered a form of racism, had been allowed to interfere with the work of the Conference and affect its outcome.

18. His Government was disappointed that it had been compelled to abstain on the Programme of Action; it nevertheless supported the action-oriented parts of the Programme and would work to implement them. Governments could best show the measure of their commitment by their readiness to implement the policies laid down in the Programme of Action. His Government was particularly satisfied with the measures recommended for adoption at the national level and hoped that that part of the Programme would provide a practical foundation for decisive efforts to integrate women in social and economic development and ensure their equal participation in the political process. Sweden, for its part, would be guided by that section of the Programme in its work, both nationally and internationally, to promote equality between men and women.

19. Sweden already had some national machinery for establishing equality between women and men and it would try to improve it further. The co-ordinating responsibility within the Government lay with the Minister for Equality between Women and Men. A specially appointed officer, the Equal Opportunity Ombudsman, had the task of ensuring compliance in the Swedish labour market with the legal act on equality between women and men which had recently come into force. Sweden also had a special committee on equality in which all the political parties in parliament were represented and which was responsible, inter alia, for promoting public understanding of the principle of creating equality between women and men. His Government also intended to establish machinery of a more permanent nature for co-operation with the non-governmental organizations active in the field.

20. Sweden was determined not to allow the discord of the World Conference to be an obstacle to continued co-operation in putting into effect the agreed measures to be taken on the international level. It welcomed the inclusion in the new development strategy of the concept of the mobilization and integration of women in the development effort. The objective remained to secure women's equal participation, both as agents and as beneficiaries, in all sectors and at all levels of the development process.

21. Mrs. HAGEN-POT (Netherlands) said that, as a member of the Netherlands delegation, she represented the Netherlands Council of Women, the umbrella organization of a large number of women's organizations in the Netherlands.

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(Mrs. Hagen-Pot, Netherlands)

22. It was by no means universally recognized that although everyone was born equal, the social structure of society was such that a man ususally had far easier access to appropriate education and training than a woman since her contribution to society was often seen as directly related to her reproductive function. Moreover, society generally greatly underestimated the value and potential in terms of common sense, practical knowledge and experience of the large number of women who had no particular training and education and who were mainly engaged in traditionally feminine tasks.

23. In the Netherlands, women's organizations had been active for quite some time in addressing those two points through courses and training events aimed at assisting women in increasing their self-confidence and in discovering and developing their capacities other than motherhood. Some courses involved the training of unskilled women and others aimed to improve and increase the political awareness of women and to involve women in developmental issues and in small-scale projects in developing countries.

24. The Netherlands delegation to the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women had been deeply disappointed because unacceptable and extraneous political elements had made it impossible to reach a consensus on the text of the Programme of Action for the second half of the Decade. While her Government recognized that women's lives were sometimes directly affected by political circumstances and that the emancipation of women was in itself a political problem, it felt that the political issues raised at the World Conference should have been discussed in the appropriate United Nations bodies.

25. Nevertheless, it had been recognized at the World Conference that despite the differences between women from different cultures, there were several universal factors which caused inequality between women and men, including the division of labour between the sexes, which almost universally restricted women to the domestic sphere, thus severely restricting their access to resources and their participation in many aspects of community and public life. There had also been greater recognition of the effects which global economic structures had on the situation of women and of the significant contribution that women could make, and indeed were making, to the development of their countries.

26. The adoption of the Programme of Action had ended a long period of standard-setting and formulation of recommendations, and in the years ahead, attention must be focused on the implementation of those recommendations and adherence to the agreed standards and norms. Governments and United Nations bodies alike must work towards the implementation of the recommendations. Because of the social, economic and cultural differences between countries, the measures to be taken to implement the recommendations would necessarily vary from country to country and from region to region, so that further emphasis on activities at the national and regional level would be desirable, particularly in carrying out a review and evaluation of progress achieved. A third world conference on women did not seem the most appropriate forum for such a review.

27. While working towards the qualitative improvement of United Nations policies

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(Mrs. Hagen-Pot, Netherlands)

and programmes for women in development, the ultimate goal, namely, attention to women's needs in all United Nations agencies and programmes, must at all times be kept in mind. The Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women had been a very important catalyst during the first half of the Decade and had demonstrated the impact which small-scale projects could have on women's advance towards economic independence and awareness of their own potential. Her Government would continue its financial assistance to the Fund in 1981, but hoped that the Fund's tasks could gradually be taken over by existing United Nations bodies and that the Fund would cease to exist at the end of the Decade.

28. The World Conference had provided vivid proof of the many problems confronted by women throughout the world. In many countries, inadequate health care, high illiteracy rates and a shortage of employment opportunities were widespread and the United Nations must give high priority to those problems. In the light of the immense and immediate needs, her Government felt that the elaboration of a declaration on the participation of women in the struggle for the strengthening of international peace and security should not have priority for such a declaration would establish a distinction on the basis of sex which was unwarranted. Initiatives in that area should be discussed in forums where those questions were customarily addressed.

29. In view of the achievements of the World Conference and the other accomplishments of the Decade, her Government would continue to contribute to the further elaboration, improvement and implementation of United Nations policies in respect of the emancipation of women, particularly within the context of bilateral and multilateral development co-operation.

30. Mr. YEPES-ENRIQUEZ (Ecuador) expressed solidarity with the people and Government of Algeria in connexion with the recent earthquake.

31. His Government fully supported the Programme of Action adopted at the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, especially the regional programmes it contained, and had participated actively in its elaboration.

32. During the first year of existence of the current Government, important measures had been adopted to promote equality between men and women, such as the inclusion of a special chapter on women in the five-year development plan establishing machinery for the participation of both professional and rural women in the country's development. Another measure introduced was a rule that women should be represented on all Ecuadorian delegations to international conferences. Ecuador had established a National Office for Women attached to the Ministry of Social Welfare, which was directed by a woman, and responsible for co-ordinating all activities of women in development. A law had been adopted allowing the retirement of women after 25 years' service while retaining 100 per cent of their former wage or salary.

33. Ecuador intended to apply fully all the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Ecuador had signed the Convention at the World Conference and was currently making legal arrangements for its ratification. It had decided to ratify the Convention without entering any

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(Mr. Yepes-Enriquez, Ecuador)

reservations because of its important humanitarian nature despite the fact that the provisions of article 9 regarding the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice presented it with some difficulties. Ecuador supported all parts of the Programme of Action adopted at the World Conference.

34. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the list of speakers on items 80 and 83 should be closed on Friday, 17 October at 1 p.m.

35. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 67: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME FOR THE DECADE FOR ACTION TO COMBAT RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION (continued) (A/C.3/35/L.3, L.8/Rev.1 and L.10)

AGENDA ITEM 74: ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION (continued)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION (A/C.3/35/L.7 and L.13)
- (b) FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION
- (c) STATUS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION (A/C.3/35/L.4 and L.9)
- (d) STATUS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON THE SUPPRESSION AND PUNISHMENT OF THE CRIME OF APARTHEID (A/C.3/35/L.5)

AGENDA ITEM 66: ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS OF POLITICAL, MILITARY, ECONOMIC AND OTHER FORMS OF ASSISTANCE GIVEN TO COLONIAL AND RACIST REGIMES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA (continued) (A/C.3/35/L.11)

AGENDA ITEM 75: IMPORTANCE OF THE UNIVERSAL REALIZATION OF THE RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO SELF-DETERMINATION AND OF THE SPEEDY GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES FOR THE EFFECTIVE GUARANTEE AND OBSERVANCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS (continued) (A/C.3/35/L.6 and L.12)

36. Mr. FARAH (Somalia), speaking on behalf of the African Group and introducing draft resolutions A/C.3/35/L.11 and L.12, said that traditionally the African Group had placed special emphasis on the two issues addressed in the draft resolutions in the light of their overriding importance and relevance to the enjoyment of the fundamental human rights guaranteed under the Charter, in particular the right of peoples under colonial and foreign domination to freedom, independence and self-determination.

37. Draft resolution A/C.3/35/L.11 was of special significance in the ongoing collective international effort to promote and advance the national rights of the peoples of southern Africa because it called for an end to political, military, economic and other forms of assistance to the racist régimes being provided by

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(Mr. Farah, Somalia)

Governments and transnational bodies which helped bolster those régimes and entrench their abhorrent policies of domination and apartheid. That appeal was in conformity with the desire of the vast majority of members of the international community and it reaffirmed the position taken by the General Assembly. In the body of the draft resolution, the African Group had taken great care to ensure that the various provisions would enjoy a large measure of acceptability without prejudice to the effectiveness and impact of the draft resolution as a whole.

38. Draft resolution A/C.3/35/L.12 represented the outcome of extensive efforts on the part of the African Group to reach consensus, and should prove to be a comprehensive, well-balanced and effective instrument for the promotion of the noble objectives it set out to achieve in the eleventh preambular paragraph, the words "and the" should be added after the words "St. Vincent", and in the thirteenth preambular paragraph, the words "Zimbabwe and" should be deleted and the word "régimes" changed to "régime".

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.