



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 24th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. GARVALOV (Bulgaria)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 80: UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR WOMEN: EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE
(continued) (A/35/3/Add.19, A/35/236, A/C.3/35/7)

- (a) WORLD CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR WOMEN (A/CONF.94/35;
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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 (continued) (A/35/428)

1. Mrs. KOLAVCRA (Bulgaria) said that the People's Republic of Bulgaria had always supported the efforts of the United Nations to achieve equality between men and women and the full integration of women in the political, social and cultural life of their countries. The struggle to eliminate discrimination against women, which was the goal of the most progressive social and political movements, was now an active factor in the attainment of economic and social progress for all mankind and the consolidation of world peace and security.
2. By reaffirming its allegiance to the ideas of the Mexico City Declaration, the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women had made it possible to unify the efforts of the international community for peace, equality and progress. The Programme of Action for the second half of the Decade and the resolutions adopted by the Conference clearly emphasized the need for greater efforts to implement the objectives of the Decade.
3. Her country attached particular significance to the first part of the Programme of Action which emphasized the importance of strengthening international peace and security and détente. Every attempt to consider the problems of women's equality separately from the settlement of political and socio-economic problems was an attempt to avoid their practical solution. The problems of women could not be solved without providing the material, legal and socio-economic guarantees for such equality.
4. It would be futile to speak of equality for Palestinian women without taking into account the right of the Arab people of Palestine to self-determination and the establishment of their own State. Similarly, equality for women in Namibia and South Africa implied the eradication of the disgraceful system of apartheid. It was therefore important to formulate, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Copenhagen Conference, a draft declaration on the participation of women in strengthening international peace and security and combating colonialism, racism, racial discrimination, foreign aggression and occupation and all forms of foreign domination.

(Mrs. Kolarova, Bulgaria)

5. The Copenhagen Conference had shown that the current complex problems could not be solved without the participation of women: they already constituted one third of the labour force world wide and their full participation in political, social and cultural life was a matter not only of social justice but also of social necessity.

6. It was well known that in a number of developed Western countries women did not yet enjoy even formal legal and constitutional equality, to say nothing of their inferior status in the economic sector. The full-scale integration of women in the productive and non-productive sectors of the economy raised a number of problems, the solution of which depended on the socio-economic system and the level of national income and the principles of its distribution. Equality before the law and equal education, professional training and employment opportunities had already been achieved in the socialist countries. In Bulgaria those fundamental problems had been solved by the first decree of the people's Government when it had come to power in 1944.

7. Another aspect of the problem was the creation of conditions to enable women to combine their social and professional activities with motherhood. Bulgarian women were active members of public and political organizations and exerted a strong influence on public opinion and the development of society; their economic situation was nearly the same as that of men and they were free to choose their professions. Her country had long recognized the social function of motherhood, as was illustrated by the right of all working women to paid maternity leave of long duration.

8. Bulgaria, which had been an active participant in the preparation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and which was a signatory of the Convention, now welcomed its entry into force. It was an unfortunate fact, however, that the Programme of Action for the second half of the Decade had not been endorsed by all delegations and had even been rejected by some. She considered the Programme to be a reflection of the real and objective necessity for stepping up the efforts of the United Nations to attain the three basic objectives of the Decade. She reaffirmed her country's sincere desire to contribute to the attainment of real equality for women in the interest of social and economic development in conditions of international peace and security.

9. Mrs. SAELZLER (German Democratic Republic) pointed out that, in spite of a great number of activities carried out in implementation of the World Plan of Action, adopted by the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women in 1975 to ensure equality and respect for women's rights, the participants in the Copenhagen Conference, held five years later, had had to state that discrimination against women still continued in various parts of the world. Serious political, economic, social and cultural problems were still blocking the way to achieving women's equality. Women and children continued to fall victim to aggression, racism, apartheid and neo-colonialism.

10. The German Democratic Republic was one of the first 10 States to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and had hoped that the Convention would, as soon as possible, become an effective instrument for eliminating further discrimination against women in all countries.

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(Mrs. Saelzler, German Democratic Republic)

11. Her country fully endorsed the Programme of Action for the second half of the Decade and welcomed the great importance it attached to the participation of women in strengthening international peace. The women in all continents who advocated peace and détente were aware that secure employment, free education, adequate nutrition and health care, the protection of mothers and children and the construction of kindergartens, schools, and hospitals presupposed a halt to the armaments race and effective steps to limit armaments and promote disarmament. They understood that the goals of the United Nations Decade for Women would be reached only if women themselves participated actively in political affairs and the development of their countries and in solving the fundamental issues of the times. That was why her country had especially welcomed and supported the resolutions of the Copenhagen Conference which aimed at solving those problems, and particularly those dealing with the strengthening of peace, disarmament and the struggle against colonialism, racism and apartheid, the preparation of societies for life in peace, assistance to Lebanese women, the situation of women in Chile and El Salvador and the holding of an international conference on sanctions against South Africa.

12. The safeguarding of international peace and security, respect for the sovereignty of States and the restructuring of international economic relations on a democratic basis were indispensable prerequisites for the achievement of women's equality in all countries.

13. In order to comply with the request made in resolution 11 of the Copenhagen Conference for the early preparation of a declaration on the participation of women in strengthening international peace and security, her country was ready to submit a draft to the Committee: it believed that such a document would facilitate the achievement of the goals of the Decade and complement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

14. Mrs. RICHTER (Argentina) thought that the statement by Mrs. Mair, Secretary-General of the Copenhagen Conference, introducing agenda items 80 and 83 should be circulated to members of the Committee in all working languages.

15. Argentina had supported the initiatives concerning the status of women which had been taken at the regional level by the Inter-American Commission, and also the specific measures later adopted by the United Nations system with a view to guaranteeing the equality of human beings without discrimination based on sex or marital status. It believed, however, that it would be wrong to perpetuate measures designed to compensate for existing inequalities and counteract the effects of acts or activities that were unjust and prejudicial to women. Perpetuation of those measures would merely translate into reality the idea of separate development, which would be tantamount to an apartheid based on sex.

16. The Copenhagen Conference had provided evidence of the appreciable progress made since the beginning of the Decade, and had helped to identify the obstacles still to be overcome. Her delegation realized that the situation of women depended largely on the level of development in the country in which they lived and that the

(Mrs. Richter, Argentina)

prejudices, fear and ignorance which stood in the way of their full integration into society were aggravated by under-development and by tension in international relations. However, the efforts made by women themselves, and their recognition of all their obligations as citizens, were the surest guarantees of the rights acquired as a result of sacrifices made by earlier generations.

17. With regard to the situation in the United Nations, which was a yardstick of progress achieved on the way to equality, her delegation noted with regret that the appointment of women to certain posts was still regarded as a concession granted on an exceptional or provisional basis only, and that each of the women appointed to such posts was obliged, in addition to her other tasks, to try to ensure that other women could obtain such appointments also.

18. Argentina thought that another world conference on women should be convened in 1985. Her delegation was prepared to support the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the Decade, but wished to reiterate the reservations it had expressed at Copenhagen on paragraphs 146 and 274 of the text. With regard to family planning, Argentina believed that it was for each State to determine its population policy in the light of its own particular circumstances. With regard to the need for protecting the health of women, she understood the concern aroused by too frequent pregnancies and the danger of secretly performed abortions; but she could not accept the solution proposed, which amounted in fact to giving women exclusive responsibility for the use of contraceptive methods. She felt bound also to state that certain international non-governmental organizations were, on the pretext of helping poor women in developing countries, distributing pills and other contraceptives whose sale had been prohibited in the country of origin owing to their harmful effects on the health of women using them.

19. With regard to paragraph 274 of the Programme of Action, concerning the Commission on the Status of Women, she wished to remind the Committee that the Commission was a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council, whose terms of reference could not go beyond those of the Organization itself. It was essential not to misrepresent the role of the Commission, which was the organ responsible for preparing reports on the status of women but was not in any sense a policy-making body.

20. Her delegation understood that a number of specialized agencies had not yet had the opportunity to place the report of the Copenhagen Conference before their intergovernmental bodies; but she stressed the need for the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination to ensure that the importance of activities to facilitate the integration of women into society was duly taken into account in the preparation of all programmes in the United Nations system.

21. It was regrettable that the measures proposed in the Programme of Action had not been unanimously adopted at the Conference, but her delegation did not see why they could not be approved by the General Assembly, regardless of differences of

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(Mrs. Richter, Argentina)

opinion on the "Background and framework" section which had been adopted in the early hours of 31 July, and particularly on paragraph 5 of which her delegation maintained its own interpretation. Nothing should prevent the Committee from giving its wholehearted support to specific measures adopted in favour of women.

22. Argentina was particularly interested in the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, and wished to state that negotiations on the headquarters agreement had not been progressing at a satisfactory rate. The fact that the Institute was continuing its activities at New York was not simplifying its task or making it easier to obtain the contributions needed for the execution of its projects and its future expansion. Her Government was prepared to contribute to the work of the Institute by offering fellowships and providing expert services, in conformity with the high priority it accorded to technical co-operation between developing countries in its national plans. It would, therefore, like to be informed of the procedures to be followed with regard to contributions in kind, and hoped that the formalities to be complied with in that regard would be simplified.

23. Mrs. MAMZADYN (Mongolia) reminded the Committee that the principal objective of the World Conference held at Copenhagen had been to assess the progress made in the implementation of the World Plan of Action for the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, adopted at Mexico City in 1975, and to elaborate further measures to overcome the obstacles encountered and attain the objectives fixed.

24. The Conference had successfully accomplished its task, since it had taken important decisions and adopted the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the Decade, which made provision for concerted action to solve the crucial problem of discrimination against women, to guarantee their equality in all fields and to help them play a more active political, economic and social role in society.

25. The Copenhagen Conference had demonstrated the interdependence of the three objectives of the Decade; and, as had been pointed out in document A/35/1, it had shown that women fully intended to play a more active role in determining, at the national and international levels, their own destinies as well as sharing in key decisions in matters of peace and development.

26. The Mongolian delegation unreservedly supported the decisions and the Programme of Action adopted by the Conference and hoped that the General Assembly would at its present session adopt a resolution on measures to give effect to those decisions. In order to ensure that the objectives of the Decade were achieved, all United Nations organs and specialized agencies must take account of the decisions of the Conference in their programmes of work. Also, the interests and needs of women must be taken into account in implementing the new International Development Strategy adopted by the General Assembly at its eleventh special session.

27. At the national level, each State should take the necessary steps for achieving the objectives fixed and implementing the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the Decade.

(Mrs. Mamzadyn, Mongolia)

28. The Mongolian People's Republic had taken constructive steps to enable women to participate in the construction of a new society and, in particular, to abolish illiteracy. The equality of rights of men and women was proclaimed in the Constitution and in legislation. The role of women in the life of the country had constantly increased over the years, as was clear from the high proportion of women employed in the social field. Their share in the total number of persons employed amounted to 51.7 per cent in industry; 48.6 per cent in agriculture; 50 per cent in communications; 57.5 per cent in commerce; nearly 70 per cent in cultural activities and education; 37 per cent in scientific activities and 53 per cent in health services. Women were also participating to an ever-increasing extent in public affairs, and held high offices in party organizations and State services.

29. At the same time, the State was trying to improve conditions of work for women and intended, during the Decade, to take all the necessary practical measures to enable women to reconcile the holding of a paid job with the responsibilities of motherhood.

30. Mongolian women unreservedly supported their Government's foreign policy in favour of peace and security in the world, and would continue to support all international initiatives designed to abolish discrimination against women in all its forms.

31. The Mongolian delegation was convinced that equality and development could not exist without peace and détente, and it thought that the General Assembly should adopt the declaration on the participation of women in the struggle for the strengthening of international peace and security and against colonialism, racism, racial discrimination, foreign aggression and occupation and all forms of foreign domination.

32. Mrs. RUSSELL (Barbados) said that, idealistically speaking, the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women had been a unique experience. In reality, however, the participants had been left with little doubt of the monumental task still to be done to achieve equality for the women of the world.

33. As the Secretary-General of the Conference had said in her statement to the Third Committee, the satisfaction of women's demand for equality, combined with development and peace, was inextricably linked with the establishment of a new international economic order. Whatever slender gains women might have made in the drive for equality might be totally erased because of the serious economic disabilities so many third world countries were facing.

34. As stated in the report of the Copenhagen Conference, it was inevitably the weaker sectors of the population that were most adversely affected by the hardships caused by a slackening of industrial and commercial activity, the first victims being the women in occupations hard hit by the downturn of the economy.

(Mrs. Russell, Barbados)

35. The issue of the equality of women could not be seriously tackled in individual Member States until serious action was taken to restructure the global economy by establishing a more just and stable international economic order.

36. Since 1975, Barbados, like other developing countries, had embarked on programmes aimed at improving the status of women in its society which could not succeed if the economies of those countries continued to totter on the brink of the abyss. It was therefore essential that the developed countries which had shown such intransigence at the eleventh special session of the General Assembly should, for the sake of the women of the world, retreat from their position.

37. If world economic inequities were not removed, the principles of equality, development and peace would be mere chimeras and programmes for the eradication of disease, illiteracy and unemployment would be useless.

38. In that connexion, her delegation welcomed the decision to transmit the findings of the Conference to the eleventh special session of the General Assembly for incorporation into the International Development Strategy. It agreed fully with the comment by the Secretary-General of the Conference that the International Development Strategy should include measures designed to place women alongside men in the mainstream of development in the 1980s.

39. Note should also be taken of the statement in document A/35/82 that, in order to resolve the problems faced by women in most developing countries, it was necessary to carry out a comprehensive set of measures designed simultaneously to improve the immediate condition of women, to adjust policies concerned with what had been termed "intermediate" processes, to adjust underlying national macro-economic and financial policies and, finally, to bring about a new international economic order specifically designed to enhance the effective contribution of women to development.

40. It was well known that some two thirds of the world's illiterates were women and that women were still discriminated against in both general education and vocational training.

41. Her delegation urgently called on all countries, including those which had not voted in favour of the Programme of Action adopted at Copenhagen, to adopt measures to facilitate the attainment of the objectives of the Decade.

42. If women really wanted equality, they must prove themselves adult enough to face every aspect of the problem. Women the world over had the opportunity to unite to proclaim women's rights and a programme for achieving those rights.

43. With regard to the conditions of employment of women within the United Nations system, the Barbados delegation had spearheaded a movement in the Fifth Committee not only for the recruitment of women, especially third-world women, but also for the advancement of women within the Secretariat. Barbados therefore fully supported

(Mrs. Russell, Barbados)

the resolutions calling for professional equality for women, as well as the call made upon the Secretary-General of the United Nations to ensure that, in accordance with the target set in General Assembly resolution 33/143, 25 per cent of all Professional posts should be held by women, subject to geographical distribution.

44. The Barbados Government was deeply involved in the struggle for a better deal for all women, in education, agriculture, the home, the cities and the United Nations. At the international level, it would continue to support all the programmes for the Decade. In that connexion, it should be noted that Barbados had become the eighth Member State to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

45. At the national level, the Government of Barbados would continue to promote the rights of women by special programmes and through legislation.

46. Mr. SOKALSKY (Poland) said that his delegation had chosen a man to speak on such an important subject as the rights of women and the fight to eliminate discrimination against them because, contrary to the belief unfortunately held in some quarters and some regions, it considered the United Nations Decade for Women to be an international undertaking in which men had an important role to play. Its purposes could be furthered only if it mobilized the support of the entire international community without distinction on any grounds. Another requirement indispensable to the success of the Decade was that there should be adequate understanding of the interrelationship of its three objectives.

47. During the first half of the Decade and at the Copenhagen Conference, his delegation had become convinced that the end result of the Decade would have to be viewed in the context of the interdependent effectiveness of plans and actions at the international and national levels.

48. At the international and regional levels, it must be understood that, although peace would not be lasting without development and the elimination of inequalities and discrimination at all levels, it was equally true that peace was also indispensable to the establishment and maintenance of true equality and effective development.

49. Although, on the national plane, the equality and development of women constituted a primary objective, their achievement implied in the first place women's integration and equal participation with men in all aspects of national development, political, social or economic.

50. In striving to eliminate inequalities between men and women the aim should not be to withdraw the privileges of the first in order to give them to the second but rather to ensure that men and women had the same access to resources and participation in the life of society, particularly decision-making. While men and women should be jointly responsible for the welfare of their families and children, they should also play an equal part in efforts for the welfare of the entire

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(Mr. Sokalsky, Poland)

society, for its cultural and spiritual growth and for the future of the nation. It was vital that measures to that end, whatever the form they took in the various countries, should be more effective and more vigorous than they had been in the first half of the Decade.

51. Poland had always been a defender of the status of women and in the forefront of women's emancipation; even if that statement seemed partisan, there could be no doubt that socialist society favoured the establishment of real equality between the sexes, as shown by the fact that women in the socialist countries had been the first to enter the professions traditionally reserved for men. Though it did not claim to have created a model society, Poland had made efforts to guarantee women full access to employment, free education at all levels and free health care. The practical difficulties in the way of equality for women had not all been surmounted, but Poland had nevertheless succeeded in doing away with the psychological barriers which had in the past hampered women's emancipation and prevented them from taking their rightful place in society.

52. In connexion with the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, the Polish delegation had noted certain differences of opinion as to the nature of the Conference. To some it had been obvious that all the complexities of a situation affecting at least half of humanity ought to be taken into consideration. Others had felt that the Conference ought to devote itself to very specific questions such as employment, health and education. The Polish delegation, which had felt that the Conference ought above all to concern itself with the fate of human beings, was glad to note that reason and logic had prevailed and that the report of the Conference represented the common denominator of the different positions. It was sure that Member States would be able to improve the position of women in the world even if they confined themselves to implementing those parts of the Programme of Action which were in line with their respective positions.

53. Poland had played a constructive part in the work of the Conference and was resolved to see that the Programme of Action, a comprehensive analysis of which it had already begun, was put into effect.

54. One of the striking achievements of the Conference at Copenhagen had been to encourage a great number of States to sign the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Poland, which had already signed that international instrument, had been one of the first States to ratify it in accordance with its policy of codifying all national and international instruments that advanced the equality of women.

55. His delegation hoped that all States would respond to the appeal in resolution 28 of the Copenhagen Conference to sign and ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and take all the necessary steps for its effective implementation.

56. Mr. ALMOSLECHNER (Austria) paid a tribute to Mrs. Sipilä, Assistant Secretary-General and head of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, and

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(Mr. Almoslechner, Austria)

Mrs. Lucille Mair, Secretary-General of the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, for their contribution to the advancement of women, in particular in the context of the Conference at Copenhagen.

57. Although some delegations had regretted that the Conference had paid too much attention to current political problems and had not concentrated sufficiently on substantive matters affecting women, the reason was that those questions arose in the context of heightened political tension from which it was difficult to separate them.

58. The Austrian delegation to the Conference had hoped that the Programme of Action could be adopted by the greatest possible number of Member States and had spared no effort in that direction. However, certain paragraphs had prevented it from voting for the document as a whole. It had nevertheless played an active part in the work of the various committees and in the drafting of proposals and resolutions. In explaining its vote, the delegation had made it clear that Austria was committed to the implementation of the various parts of the Programme.

59. Among the steps taken in that direction, he noted that, on the initiative of the Minister of State for Women's Affairs, a German translation of the Programme of Action was being prepared which would be the subject of a public debate that would bear not only on issues of concern to Austrian women - a field in which Austria had already done a great deal - but on the measures which remained to be taken, both nationally and internationally. The Austrian Government wanted to make the Austrian people aware of the problems of women in other countries, especially those of the third world, for human well-being could not be the prerogative of a few countries. It was only through fruitful co-operation using all the capacities available, at the national and international levels, that the status of women in the world as a whole would be improved.

60. The Programme of Action demonstrated that it had been possible to find common language for many of the problems relating to the situation of women in many countries and regions. It contained a wide range of measures to improve the situation of women in respect of employment, education and training, health and welfare, and participation in political as well as family life. Special emphasis had been placed on the situation of women in the countries of the third world, especially those in rural areas, and on the fate and living conditions of women refugees. The measures proposed in that connexion constituted not only a noble aim but a necessary pre-condition for the development of those countries.

61. During the first half of the Decade, special offices, government agencies and committees dealing specially with women's affairs had been established in both the industrialized and the developing countries. While those institutions were not always sufficiently equipped, they had already produced valuable results, including the changes made in many industrialized countries in the legislation regarding the family and marriage. In many developing countries, they had set up programmes relating to education, employment and health for women.

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(Mr. Almoslechner, Austria)

62. Austria had signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women at Copenhagen and intended to ratify it very shortly.

63. The Programme of Action assigned to the Commission on the Status of Women the task of evaluating the progress made in implementing the provisions of the World Plan of Action and the Programme. It would be desirable, therefore, to reinforce the Advancement of Women Branch of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs to enable it to carry out the additional responsibilities entrusted to it by the Copenhagen Convention. In order not to lose the momentum generated by the Copenhagen Conference, such action should be taken at the current session of the General Assembly.

64. Mrs. GU (China) said that the Copenhagen Conference, in which her country had played an active part from the preparatory stage onwards, had achieved some positive results. Firstly, it had provided an opportunity for nearly a thousand representatives of over a hundred countries to meet and share their experiences. Secondly, it had adopted the Programme of Action for the second half of the Decade and 48 resolutions, most of them by consensus. Those results showed that, despite their differences in levels of economic development, social systems, history and traditions, countries had a common language and common needs. It was natural and understandable that there should be divergences of views among representatives of countries with different backgrounds on some paragraphs of the Programme and a few of the resolutions, but they should not become an obstacle to the unity and co-operation demonstrated on major issues.

65. Her delegation had voted in favour of the Programme of Action, the three elements of which - equality, development and peace - were closely linked. Women in certain countries such as Afghanistan and Kampuchea, for example, were still suffering from wars of aggression and foreign occupation. Women in South Africa and in the Middle East were still being persecuted and oppressed by racists and by Israel, respectively.

66. In the field of the world economy, women should strive for the establishment of the New International Economic Order, because any lack of progress in that area would directly affect the social and economic conditions of women the world over. Only the New International Economic Order and the New International Development Strategy could guarantee equal economic, political and cultural status to women. The Programme of Action also made reference to employment, health, education, working conditions and the status of rural women. Her delegation was of the view that women should take into account the actual conditions in their respective countries and formulate practical and feasible plans in accordance with the spirit of the Programme.

67. Upon signing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Chinese representative had stated that China was not bound by the first clause of article 29 of the Convention. It would pledge \$US 50,000 for the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women.

68. Chinese women, with the rest of the nation, were making a great effort to build a modern socialist country. The Chinese Constitution guaranteed equal rights to

(Mrs. Gu, China)

women in political, economic, cultural, social and family life, as well as equal pay for equal work; marriage, the family, mothers and children were protected by the State. Her Government had adopted positive measures to put those provisions gradually into practice in everyday life. Many outstanding women had been elected to high government office. In the 60,000 rural people's communes, more than 10,000 directors or deputy directors were women. Women formed 33 per cent of the country's total work force, 25.2 per cent of the university teachers and one third of the scientists and technicians. Since the level of the country's economy and education was still low, women would have to improve their education and their knowledge of science and technology if they were to make greater contributions to the modernization of the country. Because China was still economically and technologically backward, women continued to be burdened by heavy manual labour and housework; the number of nurseries and kindergartens was far from adequate. Those problems could only be solved step by step in the course of China's economic and cultural development.

69. Mrs. TASHIBEKOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) noted with satisfaction that the value of the objectives of the Decade - equality, development and peace - was receiving increasing world-wide recognition. Millions of women were being integrated into the development process and becoming involved in efforts to strengthen international peace and security and to combat racial discrimination, racism, subjection and exploitation. The Copenhagen Conference had taken stock of the first half of the Decade and of the implementation of the resolutions and the Plan of Action adopted at Mexico City. During that period, her country had witnessed important events such as the adoption in 1977 of its new Constitution, which contained legal guarantees of the equality of women and men in employment, remuneration, training, recruitment and promotion, guarantees that were being reflected in everyday life. The Constitution also provided for the protection of the health of women at work, the protection of mothers and their children, including paid holidays and shorter working hours for the mothers of young children.

70. Several studies had been conducted in the Soviet Union on the full development of the modern woman, her place in a developed socialist society, and her role in building a communist society. The wealth of sociological and historical data thus gathered showed that in choosing a profession and a role in production, women were less motivated by a hankering for material benefits than by the desire to enrich their personality and to play a useful role in society. In the USSR, every effort was being made to tailor women's work more closely to their physiological and psychological characteristics, and to enable them to combine professional and family life. Indeed, with the scientific and technical revolution and mechanization, women's work had changed. Women formed 51 per cent of manual workers, 69 to 73 per cent of doctors and teachers, 59 per cent of specialists with secondary or university education, and over 50 per cent of heads of enterprises and directors of institutes working in the fields of health, education and commerce.

71. Women had to participate in economic and political life if they were to play an active role in society. An indication of the extent of their participation in political life was the number of women elected to the soviets: in 1937 they had constituted 16.5 per cent of the deputies elected to the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union; in the Kirghiz Republic they formed 36 per cent of the deputies to the Soviet, and in other local soviets, an average of 50 per cent.

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(Mrs. Tashibekova, USSR)

72. In her country all aspects of the development of a woman's personality were studied together - employment, greater participation in social and political activities, improvement of woman's place in the family. Special importance was attached to the family, because the full flowering of a woman's personality was determined not only by her professional duties but also by the fulfilment of her function as a mother. Socialism, as it had developed, made it possible to achieve de facto equality between husband and wife and a less authoritarian allocation of tasks within the family. A woman could thus combine her social, political, economic, professional and family obligations - truly liberated, she had become a fully fledged member of Soviet society.

73. The period 1980-1985, corresponding to the second half of the Decade, coincided with the USSR's new five-year plan, which made provision for further enhancing the status of women. The preceding five-year plan had increased the number of places in kindergartens by 3 million, and the State met 80 per cent of the cost of maintaining and educating the children.

74. The Copenhagen Conference had contributed to the attainment of the objectives of the Decade and the decisions taken there on contemporary political and social issues had been welcomed by the world's States and peoples. The Programme of Action rightly linked the participation of women in the development of each country to democratic change at the national level. Its three objectives - equality, development, peace - were based on the premise that priority should be given to disarmament and the reduction of military budgets, to the strengthening of peace and détente, and to the establishment of a new international economic order. Indeed, as the report of the Conference stressed, a mere 8 per cent of world military expenditure would be enough to eliminate hunger, disease and illiteracy from several developing countries.

75. Colonialism and neo-colonialism, racial discrimination, hegemonism and foreign interference must also be eradicated. The Programme of Action stressed the tragic plight of the women of Palestine and southern Africa and the right of the peoples of Palestine and southern Africa to self-determination, and also described the status of women in Chile and El Salvador, and South African aggression against Angola.

76. The Conference, recognizing the increasing role of women in strengthening peace and eradicating colonialism and foreign aggression, had decided that a declaration on the subject should be elaborated. Her delegation, which had whole-heartedly supported that decision, hoped the declaration could be adopted at the current session and believed that the draft submitted by the German Democratic Republic provided a good starting point. The Soviet Government, which had been among those originally responsible for the Convention and had signed it at Copenhagen, supported the Programme of Action as a whole, and it objected to the selective and tendentious attitude adopted by certain delegations towards a number of the Conference's decisions. Her delegation was prepared to co-operate constructively with other delegations to attain the goals of the Decade.

77. Mr. GAGLIARDI (Brazil) remarked that the results of the Plan of Action for the first half of the United Nations Decade for Women, evaluated at the Copenhagen

(Mr. Gagliardi, Brazil)

Conference, provided no reason for much optimism. The most positive results had been seen in the area of legislation. In other sectors, however, the absence of political will in certain countries had delayed the adoption of reforms. In others again, the political will, when it existed, had not been strong enough to offset the negative impact of the current situation on the status of women. That had been so, for instance, in the developing countries, and the current economic deadlock provided little hope of any substantial change in the position of women, or of men, in the developing countries.

78. As his delegation had stated in 1975, it made no sense to seek benefits only for women, and in a developing country like Brazil, the word "equality" did not mean sharing existing poverty on equal terms: it meant that men and women should have the same opportunity to enjoy the benefits of development. Seen from the viewpoint of international relations, men and women should be equal everywhere; there was no justification for some to be more equal than others in privileged parts of the world. Those who considered that equality should be confined to certain societies impeded the adoption of the reforms included in the goals of the Decade. Equality could not be selective, and could exist only if respected everywhere and at all levels. For that reason, his delegation had constantly stressed the relevance of development to improving the status of women. Men and women were both the agents and the beneficiaries of development, and could enhance their role in society only when development took place. Development implied more general access to culture, and where women had become more conscious of existing limitations and prejudices they had developed ways of speeding up change; where the economic situation was stagnant, on the other hand, they still suffered from a lack of health care, a restricted access to education and culture, and unemployment, and had to fight for their survival without even being aware of their potential or of the taboos and prejudices of which they were victims. No single pattern could serve as a model for all societies, for the special cultural characteristics of each people had to be taken into account.

79. His delegation welcomed the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the Decade because it included some of the principles he had mentioned, such as the fact that the status of women could not be improved by isolated action, for it was at the same time both a cause and an effect of development. The establishment of a new international economic order would benefit both women and men: it was therefore distressing that political obstacles continued to prevent it. The conclusions of the Copenhagen Conference would have taken on new dimensions had the eleventh special session of the General Assembly met all the expectations of the developing countries. Even so, the Programme of Action adopted at Copenhagen contained very significant provisions on a number of other aspects, and had the merit of reaffirming the commitment of the world community to the ideals set forth in the Mexico City Plan of Action. It was saddening, however, that in spite of all the efforts made to accommodate minority views, the Programme of Action should have been adopted only by a vote.

80. Regarding the establishment of a liaison office in New York for the Centre for

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(Mr. Gagliardi, Brazil)

Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, now transferred to Vienna, his delegation felt that such an office should not become a substitute for the Centre or serve as a justification for retaining staff who were to have been terminated at the end of the Copenhagen Conference: that would be contrary to resolution 31/194.

81. The facilities provided for future conferences like the Copenhagen Conference should permit regional groups to meet more often so as to enable them to co-ordinate the action of their members more effectively. The Group of 77 had been affected by the situation, which had delayed consideration of questions of particular interest to its members. In Copenhagen, because of lack of time, only four countries from each regional group had been able to participate in drafting the section of the Programme of Action dealing with activities at the national level. New methods of work should be devised to permit as many States as possible to participate in the discussion of documents that were universal in scope.

82. The proposal to strengthen the role of the Commission on the Status of Women should be given further study and considered particularly in the light of the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations.

83. One means of strengthening the Commission's role would be to alter the regional distribution of its current membership; the position of each regional group and the importance of each regional culture should be reflected in the Commission to the same extent as in the General Assembly.

84. His delegation hoped that the 1985 World Conference would be able to conclude that the Decade had been a success, and that the Programme adopted at Copenhagen would set the plan of activities in the right perspective.

85. In September 1980 the Permanent Representative of Brazil had been Chairman of the Latin American Group and in that capacity had attended a meeting called by Mr. Jean Ripert, Under-Secretary-General for International Economic and Social Affairs, to appoint the Director of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women. Delegations had been informed of a nomination by the Board of Trustees of the Institute. Before making his final choice, however, the Secretary-General had wished to consult with Member States in accordance with paragraph 4 of the resolution on the Institute (34/157). His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's decision to consult with Member States, which had been taken in December 1979. What it deplored, however, was the delay that had occurred between the adoption of that decision and the initiation of the consultations, on 19 September 1980. Moreover, the Institute's Board of Trustees had recommended a specific candidate to the Secretary-General, which his delegation believed to be inconsistent with its mandate. His delegation trusted that in future, matters relating to the Institute would be dealt with in a manner that was more in line with the General Assembly's decisions.

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86. Mr. ABAWI (Afghanistan) said that, following the April Revolution in 1978, which had entered a new phase on 27 December 1979 and had ushered in an anti-feudal and anti-imperialist uprising, a new type of Government had been established in Afghanistan reflecting the aspirations and safeguarding the interests of workers, women and all segments of the population. By establishing a Government based on profound respect for the country's national, historical, cultural and religious traditions and committed to the principles of Islam, the Revolution had opened the way for the liberation of the Afghan people from all forms of exploitation, and especially for the liberation of women, who constituted the most disadvantaged group. The Revolutionary Council had promulgated a number of decrees, including a decree on the equality of rights of men and women before the law, which contained provisions guaranteeing the advancement of Afghan women in the cultural, social, political, economic and educational spheres, and their full participation in all aspects of the country's life. The exercise by Afghan women of their fundamental rights and freedoms, both national and international, was also guaranteed by law. Afghan women were thus free to decide their own future. A delegation of Afghan women had participated in the Copenhagen Conference. Since the victory of the Revolution, the Afghan Government had introduced useful reforms directly affecting women with a view to making better use of their skills, both within and outside the home.

87. Afghan women were not satisfied merely with participating in local and international activities but were also taking part in the struggle for the strengthening of international peace and security and for understanding among nations. The Democratic Organization of Afghan Women, which had been established 14 years earlier, had earned international recognition for its courageous struggle on the national and international fronts for peace, equality and the participation of women in the life of society. The Government and various organizations had launched a crusade for the eradication of illiteracy among women and many housewives had voluntarily enrolled in literacy classes offered in the capital and the provinces. All necessary measures for the implementation of the right of women to education, employment, health care and full participation in the national development process on an equal footing with men had been envisaged in the Fundamental Principles. Some obstacles, however, had yet to be overcome in solving the structural problems affecting the status of Afghan women. Some of those problems were the result of the shameful activities of bands of mercenaries who misinterpreted the teachings of Islam and exploited the religious sentiments of the uneducated rural population to oppose the reforms of the revolutionary Government. The machinations of those mercenaries, who had been trained abroad at the instigation of imperialistic, hegemonistic and reactionary forces and dispatched to Afghanistan to carry out subversive and inhuman activities, included attacks on women's organizations, setting fire to schools in rural areas, and terrorism directed against female civil servants, especially teachers and nurses.

88. Despite those problems, Afghan women, like their sisters throughout the world, were striving with determination to defend the cause of progress and fundamental reform.

(Mr. Abawi, Afghanistan)

89. The exploitation, oppression, torture and ignorance to which women were subjected in some parts of the world as a result of imperialist, colonialist, racist, Zionist or other reactionary policies should be condemned in the strongest terms.

90. Mr. MIDONZI (Burundi) said that, at the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women in Copenhagen, his Government had signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. His country was endeavouring to promote the participation of women in development, which was all the more important since Burundi was among the poorest countries. The President of Burundi, Colonel Bagaza, had summed up the Government's policy on women by stating that, in the struggle against oppression and discrimination, it was necessary to set aside various antiquated notions about women and to promote their emancipation, political training and participation in political life. The President had invited the women of Burundi to redouble their efforts to promote the social and economic development of the country.

91. The Code of the Individual and the Family, which established the equality of both partners of a marriage, had just been promulgated. Parental authority, which encompassed the right to custody of the children, the administration of the property of the children and legal competence, was exercised jointly by husband and wife. They had equal responsibility for the education of their children. The women of Burundi had always played an important role in political life, especially in the independence struggle, and they represented a considerable force in the struggle for the progress and harmonious development of the country. Burundi had been one of only a few third-world countries to give women the right to vote, and, in 1958, large numbers of women had joined the only independence party. By voting overwhelmingly in favour of that party, women had enabled it to win a major victory in 1961. The women of Burundi were currently exercising increasingly important responsibilities and were involved in the administration of the country at all levels of public service. The Union of Burundi Women (UFB), a movement affiliated with the UPRONA Party, participated fully in the country's political life; its primary role was to promote the emancipation of women and train women in social affairs. At the first national congress organized by UPRONA in late 1979, the Government had reaffirmed its desire that the Union of Burundi Women should participate fully in the preparation and implementation of development plans.

92. His delegation was convinced that the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, which had been held in Copenhagen in July 1980, had made a tangible contribution to the attainment of the objectives of the Decade. It was pleased to note the real progress already made with respect to the Plan of Action adopted at the Mexico City Conference in 1975, and his country would spare no effort in adopting appropriate measures for the implementation of the programme for the second half of the Decade. At the international level, the objectives of the Decade were connected with the establishment of a new international economic order. The persistence of inequalities and situations of economic dependence resulting from an inequitable international economic system acted as a drag on the development process in the poor countries. That phenomenon impeded the

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(Mr. Midonzi, Burundi)

rational utilization of the potential of the labour force in those countries, especially as far as women were concerned. The establishment of a new international economic order was therefore a key factor for the attainment of the objectives of the Decade.

93. The Copenhagen Conference had focused on the three objectives of equality, peace and development at the national, regional and international levels, in accordance with the World Plan of Action drawn up in Mexico City in 1975 with a view to attaining the objectives of the International Women's Year. While the balance-sheet for the first half of the Decade showed that progress had been made in some areas, the results achieved in the pursuit of the goals of equality, development and peace were not very encouraging.

94. His delegation hoped that the programme of activities for the second half of the Decade would be implemented in a more satisfactory manner by Member States and that many States would sign the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women before the end of the Decade.

95. Lastly, he endorsed the recommendations of the Copenhagen Conference with regard to the convening in 1985 of a third conference of the Decade.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.