



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 30th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. GARVALOV (Bulgaria)

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The meeting was called to order at 6.30 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 80: UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR WOMEN: EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE
(continued) (A/C.3/35/Add.19; A/35/286; 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. Mr. SAIF (Democratic Yemen) said that the United Nations Decade for Women represented the efforts of the international community to eliminate all the forms of discrimination and injustice to which women were subjected throughout the world. However, with the first half of the Decade already past, much still remained to be done to achieve all its objectives.
2. The World Conference at Copenhagen had been a victory for women in the political, economic and social sphere, and it was to be hoped that the work of the Conference would win support in the Third Committee. The struggle of women for equality was part of the struggle of all peoples to free themselves for all time from colonial dependence and the racist yoke. In that context, the sufferings of the women of South Africa, Namibia and Palestine, under policies of racial discrimination, apartheid, colonialism and foreign occupation, could not be forgotten. Support for the struggle of those oppressed and heroic women was an essential part of the obligations of the international community with regard to the objectives of the Decade.
3. The Constitution of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen guaranteed men and women equal rights, and set forth the conditions required to make that equality a reality as well as to provide for the needs of working women and mothers. The women of Yemen had participated in all the stages of the struggle for liberation and were now playing a part in the country's political, economic, social and cultural life, through the Union of Yemeni Women.
4. The State attached particular importance to respect for the political rights of women which enabled them to participate in the People's Assemblies and mass organizations, in the social and economic building of the nation and in the defence of the Revolution and the Fatherland.

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(Mr. Saif, Democratic Yemen)

5. Democratic Yemen supported the efforts of the United Nations to achieve the objectives of the Decade for Women, but they could not be achieved without a commitment to put into effect the Programme of Action and the resolutions of the Copenhagen Conference.

6. Mr. RAKOTOWALALA (Madagascar) said that the Programme of Action for the second half of the Decade for Women was a milestone in the recognition of women's effective participation in the search for solutions to the problems plaguing the world and the abolition of the traditions and stereotypes that prevented women from playing their full part in society.

7. Resolution 11 of the Copenhagen Conference requested the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session to further the elaboration of a draft 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. The delegation of Madagascar was proud to be a co-author of the text of the draft declaration.

8. During the Copenhagen Conference, there had been references to the manoeuvring of certain delegations which had allegedly sought to politicize the debate and divert attention from the problems specific to women. Madagascar, for its part, could not remain indifferent to the fate of the women of Palestine, South Africa and Namibia and of refugees and displaced women, since, as the Charter of the Malagasy Revolution stated, as long as there were sister countries living under imperialist and racist domination, the independence of Madagascar would not be complete. To act in any other way would be to deny Madagascar's tradition of fighting for national liberation.

9. During the Copenhagen Conference, women had indicated their determination to make their voices heard and to participate actively and increasingly in all aspects of political, economic and social life. In Madagascar, earlier in the year, the Government had organized the subregional seminar for East Africa of the International Democratic Federation of Women, the results of which were to serve as a preparation for the debates at the World Conference. At the regional level, the Pan-African Organization of Women in 1978 had organized an international conference at Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar at which African women and demonstrated that they were playing an important part in the struggle for the economic, social and cultural liberation of the continent. On that occasion it had also been decided to amend the statutes of the Pan-African Organization of Women and to admit the Democratic Saharan Arab Republic to full membership in that organization.

10. In the five years that had elapsed since the triumph of the Malagasy socialist revolution, much had been done to improve the lot of the women of the country: the Government had established a Department of women's and children's affairs and it should be borne in mind that the Charter of the Revolution regarded women as one of the pillars of the revolution. Women occupied their rightful place in Malagasy society, and Madagascar was trying to eliminate all vestiges of the exploitation of man by man.

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(Mr. Rakotowalala, Madagascar)

11. In accordance with that principle, the following measures had been adopted, among others: in the political field, Malagasy women, who had always had the vote, increasingly occupied more responsible positions in the country, both within the Government and outside it. On completing secondary education, young women were mobilized either for military service or to work in literacy campaigns, as school-teachers or in agricultural extension. In the economic field, pre-co-operatives had been established for handicrafts as well as centres for socio-economic advancement. In the social field, child care centres had been established, the campaign against illiteracy was going forward and a family code was in draft form. In the cultural field, equality between the sexes applied in primary, secondary and higher education as a result of the democratization of education and the decentralization of the university.

12. In conclusion, his delegation called upon those Member States which had not yet done so to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

13. Miss MANGAZA (Zaire) said the fact that the Programme of Action of the World Conference in Copenhagen had not been adopted unanimously did not mean that the Conference had been a failure. The Conference had recognized the need to improve the status of women and had made it possible to approach the problem of women's struggle for equality, development and peace on the basis of the specific subthemes of employment, health and education.

14. Her delegation endorsed the entire Programme of Action for the second half of the Decade and regretted that the eleventh special session of the General Assembly had not achieved its objectives. The lack of progress in the establishment of a new international economic order had direct implications for the socio-economic situation of women throughout the world.

15. The Republic of Zaire attached great importance to the improvement of the status of women. Following the Conference in Mexico City, the Executive Council of the Republic had made great efforts to achieve the objectives set forth in the World Plan of Action. Long before the proclamation in 1975 of International Women's Year, the Constitution of the Republic had proclaimed that all Zairians were equal before the law and that no one should be subjected to discriminatory measures based on religion, racial or ethnic origin, sex or place of birth or residence.

16. The President of the Republic of Zaire had promoted a policy of integrating women in the national development process. Women were represented on an equal footing with men in the principal State institutions and there was no sex discrimination with regard to salaries or education. The Executive Secretariat concerned with the status of women was responsible for accelerating and implementing equality of opportunity for women with a view to promoting their integration and participation in development in accordance with the recommendations of the Mexico Plan of Action.

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(Miss Mangaza, Zaire)

17. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which her country had signed during the official ceremony in Copenhagen, represented an important step in the struggle for the promotion and improvement of the status of women. She supported the recommendation to the General Assembly on the advisability of convening a third conference on the Decade for Women in 1985, and agreed with those delegations that had been in favour of proclaiming a Second United Nations Decade for Women beginning in that year.

18. Miss BAZIYAKA (Rwanda) said that the origins of the problem of the advancement of women should be sought in the traditions of each people and analysed. One of the causes was the division of labour according to sex and the childbearing function of women and the fact that, because of certain value judgements, women had been considered inferior because they performed an "indoor" role, as opposed to the "outdoor" or public role of men. The advancement of women depended mainly on success in correcting that situation; that was, in fact, the purpose of the United Nations Decade for Women.

19. Rwanda had participated in the Copenhagen Conference, where it had co-sponsored several draft resolutions, and it had also participated in the Lusaka Conference. At the national level, it was making a great effort to integrate women in the economic and social development of the country. It had been the third country to sign the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and expected to ratify it shortly. The Rwandan Constitution established that there would be no discrimination on grounds of sex; that principle was evident in policies governing salary, work, education and politics. In economic life, women played a very important role in agriculture, which was the bulwark of the economy. With regard to health, women were particularly important because they were directly responsible for the care of children.

20. In legislation, the family code was being revised in order to make more specific the rights and duties of every member of the family. Furthermore, plans were being made to establish a national women's association as part of the National Revolutionary Movement for Development, which would include all women from rural and urban areas. Draft by-laws for the association, prepared by a group of women, were under study. Finally, her delegation appealed to all States Members of the United Nations that had not done so to sign and ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women or to accede to the Convention.

21. Miss CASTILLO (Dominican Republic) said that the Constitution of the Dominican Republic guaranteed to women full equality before the law. A series of multisectoral mechanisms at the State and private levels were carrying out programmes aimed at gradually improving the status of women. However, despite the efforts being made, it was difficult to achieve rapid change because of the high level of illiteracy and because of traditions. In the rural areas, men were given priority in schooling, although efforts were being made to remedy the situation by building more schools. Very few rural women participated in the sewing and fashion centres aimed at raising family income. In the area of health, the problems were

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(Miss Castillo, Dominican Republic)

serious because of the paucity of resources; although more rural medical centres were under construction, it would take some time to solve the problem completely.

22. The Autonomous University of Santo Domingo had a development programme for rural women which included agriculture and livestock production, as well as arts and crafts and adult education, particularly literacy programmes, which were co-ordinated with the Community Development Office and other government agencies. The Office provided courses aimed at training administrative technical personnel and executive personnel to enable them to become community leaders. It also conducted research on the true situation of women in the various regions of the country, worked to make women aware of the urgent need to organize, and carried out campaigns in the areas of sanitation, cleanliness, literacy, home improvement, livestock breeding and small industries and workshops.

23. Article 15 of the Constitution of the Dominican Republic guaranteed official protection for mothers and decreed that the State should take the necessary health and other measures to prevent, in so far as possible, infant mortality and to enable children to grow up in good health. Subparagraph (b) of the same article provided that married women should be fully equal before the law and that the law should establish the necessary means to protect the parental rights of married women under any system. The Dominican Republic was a signatory of the Convention on the Nationality of Married Women, signed at New York in February 1957 and reaffirmed in resolution 4750 of the National Council, dated 26 July 1957.

24. At the World Conference in Copenhagen, the delegation of the Dominican Republic had supported almost all the resolutions pertaining to the integration of women in national development, and particularly the measures on behalf of young women, migrants, disabled women, displaced and refugee women or victims of violence in the family, as well as those aimed at promoting equality in education, the gathering of data concerning women through census questionnaires and many others, as well as the Programme of Action for the second half of the United Nations Decade for Women. It would vote in favour of all those resolutions when they were submitted to the General Assembly at the current session. The Dominican Republic had also contributed to the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women.

25. The Dominican Republic was not in complete agreement with delegations which had claimed that the work of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women was at a standstill. The Foreign Ministry of the Dominican Republic had just received the United Nations documents on the Agreement, as amended, and the Institute should be ready in early 1981. The Dominican Republic had also signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on 17 July 1980 in Copenhagen, and was now preparing to ratify it. It hoped that other States which had not yet done so would also ratify it.

26. With reference to the argument that political questions were not concerned with women, there was no doubt that inequality was a social injustice, a form of discrimination and a violation of civil and political rights. In other words the

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(Miss Castillo, Dominican Republic)

oppression to which women were subjected was political, just as discrimination against women was political, and women exposed to such injustice were therefore obliged to resort to the political system imposed on them in order to try to free themselves from the indignities to which they were subjected in most countries of the world. Therefore, whenever women met at a conference, be it the Mexico Conference of 1975 or the Copenhagen Conference of 1980, they inevitably reverted to political problems, since it was politics which imposed them on women.

27. Mrs. THANH (Viet Nam) said that, like the overwhelming majority of participants in the Copenhagen Conference, the delegation of Viet Nam had voted in favour of the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women, which contained concrete measures to ensure their integration in the development process and to attain the objectives of the Decade: Equality, Development and Peace. It was normal that conflicting views should have arisen with regard to the text of the Programme, in view of the different historical circumstances of each country and each people and the wide diversity of political, economic and social situations in which the women from the various countries represented at the Conference found themselves. Her delegation noted with satisfaction that the Conference had to a large extent succeeded in reconciling the various points of view and in promoting efforts towards co-operation to meet finally on the common ground of "Equality, Development and Peace".

28. Her delegation also welcomed the marked success achieved by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women since its adoption at the thirty-fourth session of the General Assembly, as well as the fact that in less than one year 81 countries, including Viet Nam, had signed the Convention and eight had ratified it. No international legal instrument had so far encountered such a broad and profound response, which showed that the Convention met the aspirations of hundreds of millions of women throughout the world and constituted a dynamic and effective contribution to the United Nations and the international community in the struggle to improve the status of women and their participation on an equal footing with men.

29. The Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women had correctly laid emphasis on the importance of the struggle against the scourges which opposed the emancipation of women and their development, such as imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, zionism, racism, racial discrimination, apartheid, hegemonism, foreign occupation, domination and oppression.

30. In referring to mankind's unanimous desire to improve the lot of women and children, it was not out of place to note that, at the mid-term of the Decade for Women and the International Year of the Child, the aggressor armies of a hegemonist Power had been guilty of the following depravities on Vietnamese soil: 400 hospitals and maternity establishments destroyed along with 600 schools, thousands of foundling homes and mothers' centres, and whole towns and villages completely wiped out in the six frontier provinces in northern Viet Nam. In the face of such destruction and suffering, the Vietnamese housewife had once again *taken on her responsibilities as a citizen* and had fostered a powerful movement of solidarity which had mobilized the entire population of Viet Nam to succour the destroyed areas.

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(Mrs. Thanh, Viet Nam)

31. The Vietnamese woman had always played a dynamic part in applying new technology and in innovative movements in industry and agriculture, thereby coming to participate in all economic, political, cultural and social activities, making up 52 per cent of the labour force, or some 60 per cent in agriculture and 45 per cent in industry and in the administrative staff of the State. Furthermore, 50 per cent of primary schoolchildren were female, as were 45 per cent of the students at secondary vocational training schools and 25 per cent of students in universities and advanced courses. Women also constituted a high proportion of the country's doctors and graduates in mathematics, physics and other professions.

32. Taking a full share in the country's reconstruction and defence, Vietnamese women were conscious that their efforts contributed to the common struggle waged by women and by peoples throughout the world to strengthen international peace and security. In that spirit her delegation reaffirmed its full support for the draft declaration on that subject which had been submitted by the German Democratic Republic (referred to in document A/C.3/35/7) and noted by the Economic and Social Council at its first regular session of 1980.

33. She added that the voices of women representing 145 States from the four corners of the world had been heard at the Copenhagen Conference and that those voices were a new source of inspiration for the aims of the second half of the Decade, including the aim to overcome the negative factors standing in the way of the promotion of women, whether in the developing countries which were suffering from serious economic deficiencies, or in the so-called developed countries, where women were the victims of grave social injustices and reactionary prejudices which gave a distorted image of them. Only in that way would it be possible to attain the noble objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace.

34. Mr. AZHARUL ABIDIN (Malaysia) said that with a population of over 13 million, 50 per cent of whom were women, Malaysia was committed to implement comprehensive development programmes in economic and social fields that would raise the quality of the lives of its people and therefore improve the socio-economic status of its women. Malaysia had recently reconstituted its National Advisory Council for Women in Development, with the responsibility of implementing at the national level the Programme of Action of the Copenhagen Conference.

35. Though there still remained certain constraints for Malaysian women's full integration in development, bred by their long-standing historical and cultural heritage, the past five years had witnessed changes in values and attitudes paving the way for the integration of women in all stages of the development process and had provided women in Malaysia with increased access to the employment market, due to the modernization brought about by greater industrialization and urbanization. In the field of health, significant improvement in family health status had been noted as a result of the Government's effort in accelerating rural health programmes and providing basic infrastructural facilities.

36. The Copenhagen Conference had adopted various practical resolutions and a commendable Programme of Action which could serve as guidelines for the individual

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(Mr. Azharul Abidin, Malaysia)

countries and the international community as a whole to assist women achieve equality in all spheres of life. His delegation considered that those positive results far outweighed the negative factors which had arisen at the end of the Conference and to which a number of delegations had referred during the current debate. The reservations expressed in Copenhagen with regard to specific paragraphs of the Programme of Action must not be an impediment to the over-all objectives of the Decade.

37. The Malaysian delegation felt that all countries should work together in a spirit of pragmatism and understanding on all issues affecting women, in the light of their common goal of improving the status of women at both national and international levels.

The meeting rose at 8 p.m.