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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Sub-Commission on Prevention of
Discrimination and Protection
of Minorities
Fortieth session
Agenda item 15 (d)

PROMOTION, PROTECTION AND RESTORATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AT
NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION AND PROTECTION OF WOMEN

Written statement submitted by the following non-governmental
organizations in consultative status

International Alliance of Women - Equal Rights, Zonta International
(Category I); All-India Women's Conference, Arab Lawyers Union, Baha'i
International Community, Commission of the Churches on International Affairs
of the World Council of Churches, Co-ordinating Board of Jewish Organizations,
Four Directions Council, Indigenous World Association, International
Association for the Defence of Religious Liberty, International Association of
Democratic Lawyers, International Commission of Jurists, International Council
of Jewish Women, International Federation of Human Rights, International
Federation of University Women, International Federation of Women Lawyers,
International Fellowship of Reconciliation, International League for Human
Rights, International Movement A.T.D. Fourth World, International Movement for
Fraternal Union among Races and Peoples, International Union of Students,
International Zionist Organization, Pan-Pacific South-East Asia Women's
Organization, World Jewish Congress. (Category II); World Union for
Progressive Judaism on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following communication which is
circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council
resolution 1296 (XLIV)

[17 August 1988]

The above-mentioned organizations are pleased that the Sub-Commission has six experts and four alternates who are women. We hope that they will make the issue of "the role and equal participation of women in development" resolution 1987/26 of the Sub-Commission, a priority item instead of relegating discussion on this item to the very end of the session.

We take note that the Sub-Commission has requested the report of the Commission on the Status of Women and of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. We also note that the Director of the Branch for the Advancement of Women has been invited to speak to the Sub-Commission.

But this is not enough to eliminate discrimination of women or to ensure their equal participation in development. This is why we call the Sub-Commission's attention to the critical condition of women.

All over the world, and especially in developing countries, women are disadvantaged - denied education; cloistered within their homes; condemned to a life of domestic servitude that begins in childhood and often includes physical and psychological ill-treatment; undervalued and underpaid when they enter the work force; unable to exercise basic human rights and fundamental freedoms such as freedom of movement and the right to own property (being themselves often regarded as pieces of property); and each year dying needlessly in their thousands because of lack of adequate medical care during childbirth.

It is not enough to say that women should participate in the development process, because women have been rendered mute by being excluded from the educational process; by their treatment as second class citizens; and by traditions of denial and suppression that make them psychologically incapable of speaking out.

Recent United Nations studies have shown the difficulty of convincing people to change existent social structures, therefore we believe that Governments must be persuaded to include women in the development process at all levels. We appeal to the Sub-Commission to emphasize this aspect of the right to development.

This means that women must have equal opportunity in education, both general and vocational, as well as protection against violence in the family and in society. It is important in this regard to note that the Commission on the Status of Women, at its 1988 session, decided to include "violence in the family and in society" as an integral part of peace.

We therefore request the Sub-Commission:

To reinforce co-ordination and sharing of information, particularly the excellent studies already made, with the Commission on the Status of Women, the Branch for the Advancement of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women;

To give higher priority to this item on the agenda;

To ensure that balanced development occurs through a clear assertion of the essential role and equal participation of women in the Sub-Commission's agenda item "The new international economic order and the promotion of human rights."

The concerned non-governmental organizations emphasize once again that development cannot be realized without equal participation of women at all levels.