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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 14th MEETING

Chairman: Mrs. ESPINOSA (Mexico)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 103: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued)\*

AGENDA ITEM 104: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN (continued)\*

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\* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 103: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued) (A/51/3 (Parts I and II), A/51/38, 90, 180, 210, 277 and Corr.1, 304 and Corr.1, 309, 325 and 391)

AGENDA ITEM 104: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN (continued) (A/51/90, 210 and 322)

1. Ms. Enna PARK (Republic of Korea), commenting on the establishment of a framework in the United Nations system to follow up the Beijing Conference, acknowledged the progress documented in reports issued by the Secretary-General and relevant United Nations bodies, including the development of policies to mainstream the gender perspective within the system. However, in several areas, reality had fallen short of expectations.

2. The first area of concern was the Division for the Advancement of Women, where an approved increase in the staffing levels had not yet been fully implemented. The second was the status of women in the Secretariat. Her delegation believed that the Secretariat should serve as a model workplace, but much remained to be done if the target of gender equality was to be reached by the year 2000. The third area of concern was the gender balance of delegations to the United Nations, to which a commitment had been made at the Beijing Conference. As a model of worldwide human-centred development, the United Nations should continue to set the pace for the empowerment of women. That required the political will of each Member State.

3. The Conference had emphasized that implementation of the Platform for Action was the primary responsibility of Governments. The Government had formulated 10 medium- to long-term policy priorities for women, and had constructed the framework of a national plan of action to implement the Platform. The Women's Development Act of 1995 had provided the legal basis for rectifying de jure and de facto gender discrimination in all areas of society, and the Government had also developed several strategies to increase the recruitment of women in public service and enterprises through affirmative action. The Asia-Pacific regional meeting on strengthening national machineries for the advancement of women had been held in the Republic of Korea in September 1996, in order to strengthen regional cooperation. Her Government had given financial support to the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the Trust Fund for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and would increase its contributions in the future.

4. In order for there to be substantial progress in such critical areas as the poverty of women in developing countries and the protection of the basic human rights of women in armed conflicts and refugee situations, the full participation of each Government, all United Nations bodies and civil society was necessary. Implementation of the Platform for Action would depend on the strength of global cooperation.

5. Mrs. PHAM THI THANH VAN (Viet Nam) said that the programmes of action adopted by a number of recent world conferences, and accelerated cooperation at all levels, had created more favourable conditions for the advancement of women.

6. The Platform for Action of the Beijing Conference reaffirmed the role of women as indispensable for sustainable development. Initial responses to the Platform, such as the creation of new mechanisms, the upgrading of existing structures and the development of participatory processes, had been encouraging. However, many countries were facing budget cuts, lack of resources and a general decline in donor assistance. Nevertheless, determination must be shown in order to realize the pledges made in Beijing.

7. Her Government had accorded high priority to the advancement of women, and had been doing its utmost to bring equality to and empower women in all fields. In cooperation with numerous national organizations, the Government had undertaken a number of activities in response to the Declaration and Platform for Action. The national committee for the advancement of women, set up in 1993, was developing a national programme for women to the year 2000, which would cover the 12 critical areas established by the Conference. That plan would pay special attention to increased participation by women in economic and social development.

8. Political empowerment and the participation of women in public administration was another priority. A number of women held top political posts, while nearly one fifth of the members of the National Assembly were women. Her country was thus making every effort to achieve the advancement of women.

9. Mr. TELLES RIBEIRO (Brazil) said that the Platform for Action was a source of stimulation and guidance for Governments in promoting the cause of women. His country had consistently supported international instruments on women's rights, and some of their directives had been incorporated into the Constitution. His delegation greatly appreciated the outstanding contribution of the United Nations to raising women's awareness of their rights, and had therefore been increasing its financial contribution to UNIFEM. He also expressed support for the activities of INSTRAW.

10. Measures had been taken in his country to implement the Platform for Action, giving priority to the reduction of poverty, the fight against violence and discrimination in the workplace, and the improvement of health services. A national programme for preventing violence had been launched, and the Criminal Code would be amended so that sexual crimes would be considered crimes against the human person rather than against morality. Draft legislation was currently being considered in other areas affecting women's rights. A new poverty programme promoted access to credit and other specific needs of women, particularly as heads of family.

11. Priority had also been given to education, and female students currently represented 50 per cent of school and university enrolments. A professional training programme specifically designed for women had been approved, and measures were being taken to incorporate a gender perspective in school textbooks. Schoolteachers were also being trained in gender issues.

12. With regard to health care and reproductive rights, the Constitution assured the protection of unmarried mothers, granted maternity and paternity leave, and encouraged family planning. Other innovative measures were also being undertaken.

13. Women in Brazil enjoyed increasing participation in the administration and legislature. A law had been approved requiring at least 20 per cent of candidates for municipal elections to be women, and the mayors of main cities were preparing to implement the Beijing Platform for Action.

14. Mrs. OUEDRAOGO (Burkina Faso) said that since the first World Conference on Women, progress towards the advancement of women had been sporadic. The numerous obstacles to progress had serious consequences for the whole of humanity. It was important to maintain the determination of the Fourth World Conference in order to ensure the development and well-being of women. A pragmatic approach should be adopted in preference to an excessive reliance on theory. At all levels, the question of financial resources was basic to the implementation of the Platform for Action.

15. In Burkina Faso, the Government's objective was to ensure the participation of women in development by improving their access to the means of production and their social status. Any violation of their basic rights should be punished through legislation.

16. The most serious violations currently endured by women and the girl child were sexual exploitation and trafficking. She welcomed the holding of the recent World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Stockholm, and hoped that measures would be taken to combat that evil, including efforts to raise awareness and involve civil society in the search for solutions. Progress could be made by devising rehabilitation programmes for the victims, training personnel and strengthening cooperation in society. The draft programme of action for the prevention of traffic in persons and the exploitation of the prostitution of others should be noted at all levels, and States parties should include such information in their national reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Her delegation also supported the recommendations of the expert group meeting on violence against women migrant workers (A/51/325).

17. Her delegation welcomed the increase in the number of States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. However, the Committee established under that Convention was currently overwhelmed by a backlog of reports. The proposed increase in the number of its sessions was therefore essential. She accordingly urged States parties to ratify the proposed amendment to the Convention concerning that issue, in order to bring it into force. Sufficient funds should be made available so that the Committee could expedite its work.

18. States parties should also integrate the 12 critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action into their reports, in order to accelerate implementation.

19. Women's position in the Secretariat was improving very slowly. The financial crisis should not affect goals, particularly those relating to

positions of responsibility. As to the advertising of vacant posts on the Internet, very few women in developing countries had access to that source. They should, nevertheless, not be excluded.

20. In conclusion, her delegation wished to thank INSTRAW and UNIFEM for the work they did for the advancement of women.

21. Ms. FLOREZ PRIDA (Cuba) said that, one year after the Beijing Conference, the situation of women all over the world was still very difficult.

22. During the preceding year, the Commission on the Status of Women had focused on the need to eradicate poverty. It was inconceivable that, given the progress in science and technology, 25 per cent of the world's population continued to live below the poverty line, and that a growing proportion of them were women. The situation was especially tragic in developing countries, beset by foreign debt, adjustment programmes, unilateral coercive measures and the scourge of war.

23. National and international resources still needed to be mobilized to attain the goals reaffirmed in Beijing. The developing countries required new international cooperation to mobilize additional funds to advance the status of women. Another priority was to continue work to end violence against women.

24. She expressed satisfaction that universal ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women seemed close to reality. She supported the work of drafting an optional protocol to that Convention on the right of petition, and supported steps taken to mainstream a gender perspective throughout the United Nations system, as described in the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/322). Additional resources from the regular budget should be allocated to efforts to achieve women's equality.

25. A national seminar held recently had examined Cuban women's achievements in areas of special interest identified in Beijing, the main difficulties that still persisted and goals for the next millennium. Important policy proposals had been made and a national plan of action had been outlined; they had reaffirmed and consolidated the current and future roles of women in Cuban society. The Cuban example provided proof that, given political determination and specific programmes aimed at integration, development and ending discrimination, the situation of women could radically change. Indeed, women played a major role at all levels of Cuban society.

26. She pointed out that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had that year noted the negative impact of the blockade imposed by the United States on Cuba, as a result of which some of the programmes for the advancement of women had been suspended and the food situation had worsened.

27. She said that there were no easy solutions to the problems to be overcome in fulfilling the commitments made at Beijing. Her delegation would continue to actively participate in the major role which the United Nations system must play in promoting the climate of cooperation and participation required to cope with that challenge.

28. Ms. ZHANG Fengkun (China) said that great successes had been achieved by Governments and United Nations agencies in preparing plans to follow up the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. That would greatly improve women's status around the world. However, commitments by Governments to implement the Platform for Action must be scrupulously honoured. Plans prepared by Governments and United Nations agencies, while commendable, must be successfully carried out.

29. The eradication of poverty was the most urgent of the 12 areas of concern, especially since women accounted for two thirds of the world's poor, lacking basic conditions for survival. Moreover, international cooperation, with the rich developed countries helping the developing countries with resources and technology, was essential, and she appealed to the developed countries to achieve as soon as possible the target set for official development assistance. The United Nations, for its part, must devote greater resources to women's issues, especially since expenditures for some non-priority programmes were increasing despite the financial crisis.

30. She stressed her Government's commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. First, it would provide cultural and technical training to some 10 million women in poor areas, prepare women-oriented economic programmes to help the poor and find jobs for poor women so that by the end of the century, women would have stable access to food and clothing. Second, it would enhance women's participation in management and decision-making in social and State affairs, and increase the percentage of women occupying leadership positions at all levels of Government. Third, it would seek to eliminate illiteracy among young and middle-aged women by the year 2000 and raise the percentage of women students at all educational levels. Fourth, it would strive to ensure that both urban and rural women enjoyed sound health care and reproductive health services. Lastly, it would formulate administrative measures to implement legislation on the protection of the rights and interests of women, including measures to curb violence against women.

31. Her Government was ready to join with the international community in working to turn solemn commitments into actions in order to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

32. Ms. WONG (New Zealand) said that fundamental progress in achieving the equal rights of men and women reaffirmed in the Charter was long overdue, and much remained to be done both at the national level and in the United Nations. She agreed with the Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, that it was time to move from policy formulation to implementation.

33. Her delegation believed that Governments should work with non-governmental organizations; consultations had been held throughout her country to familiarize women with the Platform for Action and to identify priority areas. The resulting report would be used by the Government to develop its implementation strategy, which would focus on a number of key issues, including the gender pay gap, the rights of indigenous women and girls, enhancement of women's role in decision-making, and the collection of data on all aspects of women's lives.

34. A key part of her country's strategy to implement the Platform for Action was the mainstreaming of gender analysis in all public policies and programmes. A framework for gender analysis had been published in May 1996, and the Ministry of Women's Affairs had since worked to promote the framework in the public and private sectors. The Platform for Action had been used to intensify the debate on what remained to be done. A national long-term strategy was being completed in order to build on the gains already made.

35. With regard to global action, a key task was to mainstream a gender perspective in the work of the United Nations. She therefore welcomed the appointment of the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Gender Issues. It was important that the Secretariat, especially the Division for the Advancement of Women, should be given adequate resources; she noted some delays in making appointments to several posts in the Division, and hoped that the vacancies would soon be filled.

36. She expressed serious concern at the difficult circumstances under which the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was working, as was clear from the Secretary-General's report (A/51/277). She supported the Committee's need to hold two three-week sessions annually. New Zealand had recently formally accepted the amendment to the Convention enabling the Committee to extend its meeting time, and urged others to do the same in order to reach the required two-thirds majority for it to come into force.

37. She welcomed the opportunity to participate in the Working Group established to consider a draft optional protocol to the Convention. That mechanism would help to address violations of women's human rights, but many important issues had first to be resolved. She urged the Secretary-General to provide from within existing resources the means for the Working Group to meet during the next session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

38. In the interests of efficiency, her delegation would support consideration of a Third Committee omnibus resolution on the subject of women, incorporating in particular the annual resolution on improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat. She welcomed the Secretary-General's report on the latter issue (A/51/304), and was pleased that the 35-per-cent target had now been achieved, but was concerned that the overall goal of 50/50 gender distribution by the year 2000 might not be reached. Despite the financial crisis, she felt that other means to improve the status of women in the Secretariat were not being fully exploited. She rejected the suggestion in the report (*ibid.*, para. 34) that the 50/50 goal set by the General Assembly should perhaps be revised, and urged the Secretariat to redouble its efforts to increase the numbers of women at the D-1 level and above, which remained unacceptably low.

39. She expressed surprise at the changes contained in document A/51/304/Corr.1, in which the Secretary-General modified the conclusion as set out in his report (A/51/304), which had already been introduced. The improvements seemed marginal and she wondered why the Secretary-General seemed at the last minute to be trying to paint a better picture. She felt that the words of the Charter and of the Beijing Conference should not be mere empty promises and that everyone must work to recognize basic human rights and empower women.

40. Mr. DONOKUSUMO (Indonesia) welcomed the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/51/322), and was encouraged that most of the intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations system had adopted guidelines for mainstreaming. He also welcomed the Economic and Social Council's endorsement of the multi-year programme of work of the Commission on the Status of Women and the revised system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women. He looked forward to the mid-term review to be undertaken in 1998. He was concerned, however, that the financial crisis, especially further staff cuts, would threaten implementation. If Member States seriously wished to end discrimination against women, then sufficient levels of funding must be made available to follow up the Beijing commitments.

41. His Government remained committed to achieving the goals in the Beijing Platform for Action, and was in the process of formulating its own implementation plans. They would address development and poverty alleviation, the most serious problems affecting equality for women, within the context of its overall development programme, which aimed to reduce poverty drastically. There was a significant level of cooperation between the Government, national women's organizations and non-governmental organizations.

42. He reiterated his support for increasing the participation of women in the United Nations system, including in policy-making positions, provided the principle of geographical distribution was maintained.

43. His delegation was concerned by violence against women migrant workers, a situation which must be resolved. His Government had adopted general policy guidelines in an effort to guarantee the protection of Indonesian overseas workers, and had also undertaken to provide them with the vocational training required by the host country.

44. He supported the request made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for additional meeting time, in the light of the increasing backlog in the consideration of States parties' reports. He reaffirmed his delegation's commitment to the Beijing agreements and, in partnership with the international community, would continue its efforts, begun at independence, until ultimate success was achieved.

45. Mr. HABONIMANA (Burundi) said that his country fully supported the conclusions of the Beijing Conference. Within the limits of its means, the Government carried out programmes for reducing poverty among women and promoting their access to education, training, and health-care and their active participation in development.

46. On behalf of the African Group, he pointed out that in July 1996 the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) had adopted an important resolution concerning the Beijing Platform for Action. It had reaffirmed the commitments undertaken by African Governments at Beijing and underscored the central need to integrate women's concerns into policies and programmes aimed at combating poverty. Ensuring access to services such as education, health care, employment, maternal and child care and credit had been considered essential for the total integration of women into development. OAU



member States had been called upon to adopt strategies to halt the feminization of poverty, undertake legislative and administrative reforms to provide women with equal access to economic resources, promote the participation of women in decision-making at all levels, include questions relating to women's concerns in all economic and social policy directives, and broaden participation by women in the settlement of conflicts and protect them in situations of armed conflict. The OAU Secretary-General had been called upon to include questions relating to women in all OAU programmes and policies. To that end, its women's unit would be restructured in order to enhance its capacity for coordinating the implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action.

47. In spite of the continued existence of certain discriminatory attitudes linked to negative aspects of the traditional culture, women in Burundi benefited from a legal framework enabling them to reach their potential in society, notwithstanding the state of war which still paralysed the country. Burundian women's associations had done much to promote the emancipation of women. A sustained effort to heighten public awareness was nevertheless necessary in order to settle questions linked to inheritance and land ownership and to ensure the total integration of women in development.

48. The crisis affecting Burundi since October 1993 had dealt a serious blow to almost all its development programmes. Women and children had endured the most suffering in that human tragedy. Many women had become widows and were traumatized by the tragedies that they had experienced, including rape and all types of cruelty. There was a lack of housing, food, health care and clothing. The climate of insecurity and fear in the refugee camps took a heavy toll on the physical and mental health of the women and children concerned.

49. His delegation expressed appreciation for the humanitarian assistance provided to all those persons, particularly by the United Nations and its specialized agencies, the European Union as well as various countries and non-governmental organizations. Efforts to help women and children who were victims of the crisis in Burundi must be stepped up. A round table for mobilizing assistance to the victims should be organized under United Nations auspices. Substantial funds should be provided to international and regional organizations dealing with women's questions in order to provide emergency aid to the victims of armed conflict in Burundi and other African countries. UNIFEM should be given the means to take greater action on behalf of women. Civil society could play a more important role, with the assistance of the United Nations, its specialized agencies and various donors, in order to assist population groups in distress, particularly women and children in countries torn by armed conflict.

50. His Government sought to address the political and ethnic divisions in Burundi that had caused so much loss of life in the past, and was committed to restoring peace and security, organizing a dialogue with all parties to the conflict and initiating a democratic process taking account of the interests of all groups. Accordingly, Burundi was counting on the support of the international community in order to achieve success in creating lasting conditions for peace and prosperity for all.

51. Ms. FOO Chi Hsia (Singapore) said that her delegation supported the suggestion to have an omnibus draft resolution on the two agenda items dealing with women's issues.

52. On the question of violence against women migrant workers, she felt that the report (A/51/325) was extremely controversial and represented an obstacle to achieving consensus. She hoped that the current session's draft resolution on the question would not significantly depart from General Assembly resolution 50/168, which had reflected a delicate balance between various points of view. The key question was whether and how the draft resolution should take note of the report and what weight, if any, should be given to the conclusions and recommendations adopted by the expert group meeting on violence against women migrant workers. Her delegation believed that those conclusions and recommendations were procedurally and substantively flawed.

53. The report in question distorted the letter and intent of the mandate set forth in paragraph 8 of resolution 50/168 "to develop concrete indicators for determining the situation of women migrant workers". Dealing with the question of violence against women migrant workers in a balanced way required a comprehensive consideration of the total situation as it existed. The situation of women migrant workers must be viewed in the context of the economic and other benefits that they also undoubtedly enjoyed. If that were not the case, no one would leave home to work abroad.

54. The statement in paragraph 18 of the report that there was "wide acceptance that the issue of violence against female migrant workers needs to be placed on the global agenda" clearly misrepresented a complex reality. If there really was such "wide acceptance", it should be asked why only a fraction of the 185 Member States had become party to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. The poor response to that Convention showed that the vast majority of Member States had reservations on whether a global approach was appropriate. The only practical way to address the problem was through the national legal and administrative frameworks of receiving countries.

55. The recommendations by the expert group were also extremely intrusive, suggesting, inter alia, that undocumented migrant workers should receive services superior to those enjoyed by citizen workers of receiving countries. Furthermore, the recommendations also focused on the obligations of the receiving countries, glossing over the sending countries' responsibility to their own citizens to reduce the outflow of migrant workers. Such considerations clearly demonstrated that document A/51/325 was seriously flawed.

56. Singapore had an excellent record of protecting all workers, whether foreigners or citizens, men or women. While not perfect, Singapore was well known to be a relatively safe, corruption-free, crime-free and accountable society. Crime rates in general were low and its laws were strictly and impartially enforced. Her country had a comprehensive civil and penal system as well as administrative measures to protect all workers, citizens or foreigners. Women were specially protected under the Women's Charter. Protection against sexual abuse and violence was provided under the Penal Code. Foreign workers were covered under the Workmen's Compensation Act and allowed to join trade

unions. Employers found guilty of abusing domestic workers were liable to heavy sentences, including jail terms and corporal punishment, and were permanently barred from employing foreign domestic workers in the future.

57. Ms. SILWAL (Nepal) said that, even with the approach of the twenty-first century, gender bias was almost universal. Women were discriminated against in jobs and remuneration and in participation in decision-making at every level. Nepal fully supported the United Nations efforts to promote the advancement of women, particularly in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the most effective way. UNIFEM and INSTRAW should play a more active role in empowering women worldwide, promoting women's human rights and encouraging their leadership in ensuring sustainable human development. The Commission on the Status of Women, in particular, and the Economic and Social Council, in general, should guide the efforts of the United Nations system by taking major policy decisions. The implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action required a concerted effort by all United Nations bodies, non-governmental organizations and the private sector in general. In that connection, her delegation appreciated the efforts of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to address the feminization of poverty and the economic empowerment of women. Easy access to credit and the generation of employment through small entrepreneurship by rural women were basic ways to further their advancement.

58. Her delegation appreciated the Secretary-General's initiatives in mainstreaming a system-wide gender perspective and hoped that the working groups established would facilitate the implementation of the Platform for Action in an integrated way. As a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Nepal hoped that female victims of violence, especially women and children in armed conflicts, and refugee and displaced women would receive sufficient support from the international community and, in that regard, strongly supported the extension of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women. The role of national and international media was also crucial for promoting the cause of women, who should be given a larger role in projecting the image of women in the media as leaders of society and the nation as a whole.

59. Almost 75 per cent of the women in Nepal were illiterate, which was a great handicap to development. The Government had given heavy emphasis to the education of girls, which was the only way to ensure the long-term advancement of women in all spheres of society. In formulating its ninth five-year plan, Nepal was seeking to incorporate the basic guidelines set forth in the Beijing Platform for Action. Various programmes were being implemented in order to achieve universal primary education through increased enrolment of girls in schools, and encouraging a maximum number of educated women to become teachers. The Ministry of Women and Social Welfare was the Government's focal point for the advancement of women. With the establishment of multiparty democracy in Nepal and the setting up of the Ministry, a general awakening with regard to gender issues had spread throughout society.

60. Mr. HETTIARACHCHI (Sri Lanka) said that the primary responsibility for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action lay with the national authorities, and noted with satisfaction that many Governments were proceeding with that task in cooperation with relevant institutions and non-governmental

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organizations. Sri Lanka had taken specific measures to implement the Platform. A national plan of action for women had been drawn up to identify problems in the areas of critical concern and to implement specific strategies and measures.

61. The Commission on the Status of Women had taken an important initiative with regard to the elaboration of a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women concerning the right of petition. He looked forward to the renewal of the mandate of the Working Group on that question and hoped that duplication of the work by treaty-monitoring bodies with similar mandates would be avoided.

62. Sri Lanka reaffirmed its support for General Assembly resolution 50/168 on violence against women migrant workers. The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women were important mechanisms for addressing that problem. There were about 500,000 Sri Lankan migrant workers and nearly half of them were women. They faced various constraints and hardship, including lack of proper service contracts, non-payment of wages, lack of insurance and social security, and sexual harassment. Both sending and receiving States had obligations in protecting the basic human rights of migrant workers and should conduct regular consultations to protect their internationally accepted rights. National and international awareness of that question should be enhanced.

63. Sri Lanka had acceded in March 1996 to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Once in force, the Convention would facilitate international action in that field. He hoped that countries which lacked national standards concerning migrant workers would formulate legislation to ensure greater harmony with the standards laid down by the Convention.

64. His country shared the international concern over trafficking in women and girls. The Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery of the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities had done valuable work in that regard. Based on that work and national experience, preventive strategies should be devised and implemented at the national and international levels. Trafficking in women and girls had international criminal dimensions and required new forms of cooperation between States and international organizations. Practical approaches were needed to assist women victims of transnational trafficking under the guise of migration for employment. General Assembly resolutions on trafficking in women should include a reference to that aspect of trafficking in persons.

65. With respect to improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat, Sri Lanka noted with satisfaction that the target of 35-per-cent overall representation of women in posts subject to geographical distribution had been reached, but noted with concern the failure to achieve the target of 25 per cent for women in senior decision-making levels.

66. Ms. ACUNER (Turkey) said that the report on violence against women migrant workers (A/51/325) set forth important indicators of violence and vulnerability and to a certain extent addressed the problems of a number of countries. It was hoped that additional indicators and data would be developed to include various

types of reasons for migration by women and young girls, such as natural and man-made disasters. INSTRAW and other United Nations bodies could determine further indicators relating to the migration of women. Her delegation would welcome a follow-up report at the next session of the General Assembly on steps taken by the Administrative Committee on Coordination and other United Nations bodies to implement recommendations put forward.

67. The document on the advancement of women through and in programmes of the United Nations system (A/51/180) indicated that measures were being taken by appropriate coordinating mechanisms with regard to gender perspectives in policies and programmes, gender training and the promotion of women staff members. She hoped that a full report on the concrete follow-up actions could be submitted at the next session of the General Assembly.

68. Her delegation welcomed Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/39 on INSTRAW and supported the view that the Institute should report also to the Second Committee in areas of environment, natural resources and migration. She hoped that that resolution would be implemented accordingly.

69. Programmes emanating from major United Nations conferences needed to be analysed in a more holistic manner; it would be useful if a document could be prepared for the next session of the General Assembly analysing the implementation of those plans and programmes in relation to gender activities undertaken by the entire United Nations system. That would enable better evaluation and monitoring of the necessary integrated approach.

70. Her delegation supported the proposed amendment of article 20 (1) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and welcomed the ongoing work on the elaboration of a draft optional protocol to the Convention.

71. Her Government had pursued the policy of ensuring participation of women in all aspects of the development, and had committed itself to withdrawing all reservations made upon ratification of the Convention. The Government and the women's movement in Turkey had been working together for the realization of that strategic objective, which would contribute highly to the enhancement of the status of women in their country.

72. She called upon Member States to expand their financial support for INSTRAW, the only institute of its kind in the United Nations system. Without solid research, data collection, training and dissemination of information, gender equality and implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action would be only partial. Improved financing should also be provided for the Division for the Advancement of Women and for UNIFEM.

73. Mrs. APONTE de ZACKLIN (Venezuela) said that Venezuela had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1983, and supported the request of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for two annual three-week sessions. Venezuela had also taken a leading role in the struggle against violence waged by the Organization of American States, which had led to the adoption of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of

Violence against Women, which had been ratified by 23 States. The Venezuelan Criminal Code laid down severe penalties for violence against women.

74. Her delegation supported the Secretary-General's efforts to increase the percentage of women occupying senior posts within the United Nations. Despite the financial crisis, the principle that 50 per cent of senior posts should be occupied by women must be pursued so that, in the coming century, the United Nations could play a leading role in gender-related issues.

75. Despite the economic crisis, her Government had increased its support for the national women's council in Venezuela. A new labour law had been adopted, enshrining the principle of equal opportunities and equal pay for women and men, and providing considerable benefits for working mothers. Programmes for the empowerment of women included workshops, seminars and courses for training and employment, workshops designed to increase women's participation in political leadership and to train women candidates for local elections, forums for information exchange, and training programmes at the university level. Draft laws were being prepared against family violence and sexual harassment, for the protection of children and adolescents, and for reform of the law on equal opportunities for women.

76. Policy planning incorporated goals established by the national women's council, designed to enable women to achieve equal opportunities in all areas of the country's life. Government projects incorporating a gender perspective included those concerning violence, health, education, employment, the economy and the environment. They were the response of the Venezuelan State to its duty to promote full participation for women in society as a guarantee of democratization and social equity.

77. Mr. KA (Senegal) said that the Fourth World Conference on Women had been a historic step in women's struggle to take their proper place in society. The international community must strive to pass on to future generations a society free of discrimination, particularly sexual discrimination. Only then could humanity move forward towards genuine development with the participation of all sectors of society.

78. He welcomed the recommendation of the Commission for Social Development that a gender perspective should be integrated into policies and programmes for the eradication of poverty. A number of United Nations bodies had taken steps to implement that proposal.

79. The involvement of regional organizations was essential. He noted that all the United Nations regional commissions had taken decisions which would contribute to improving the general situation of women throughout the world. The African Economic Community had published a guide to the implementation of the African Platform for Action, showing the determination of African countries to make the advancement of women a central element in their development policies. The advancement of women and the promotion of their legal and social rights would be central to the policies of African Governments during the coming three years.

80. In Senegal, the plan of action for women was centred upon education, health, economic development and the struggle against poverty. The plan would cover the years from 1997 to 2001, and should provide for coordinated and efficient planning and implementation of future activities for the advancement of women.

81. He paid tribute to non-governmental organizations which, particularly in Africa, were endeavouring to make women fully aware of their rights, the legitimacy of their aspirations, and the essential nature of their participation in the harmonious development of society.

82. Mr. BORDA (Colombia) said that his Government, as well as other sectors of society, had taken action to implement the Beijing Platform for Action. A high-level body responsible directly to the President of the Republic, had the task of promoting the incorporation of the gender perspective into national policies and programmes and for following up efforts in the legislative and judicial branches to implement the Platform for Action with the assistance of non-governmental organizations. It was working on the basis of a two-year plan, giving priority to education, health, employment, justice and rural development.

83. The goals were to eliminate barriers to the advancement of women, to protect their economic, social and cultural rights and uphold humanitarian law in armed conflicts, to ensure increased political participation by women and to eliminate violence against them. Women's organizations as well as government bodies were involved in the planning, implementation, follow-up and assessment of commitments. Consultation was taking place with local officials for the creation or strengthening of agencies responsible for women's issues.

84. A number of women senators who had represented Colombia at the Beijing Conference had organized a meeting within the national Congress to publicize the outcome of the Conference, and government ministers had taken part in a discussion of policies concerning international commitments in favour of women, and had reported on progress made. Furthermore, the Constitutional Court had already established a considerable body of jurisprudence on the protection of the rights of women and girls.

85. An Andean subregional forum had been organized, with the participation of governmental and non-governmental representatives from Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela, to establish a common agenda for monitoring the implementation of the Platform for Action.

86. The effectiveness of such efforts would be determined by the volume of resources available. It was vital that the international community should provide assistance in support of gender-equality programmes in developing countries. The United Nations system had an important part to play in the creation of a new culture conducive to the elimination of barriers to equality, development and peace for women.

87. Miss MORGAN-MOSS (Panama) said that her delegation hoped that the beacon lit at the Beijing Conference would continue to be a guiding light for the entire world. The General Assembly, and in particular the Third Committee, had

a political role, in the highest sense of the word, in ensuring the implementation of undertakings made at the Conference.

88. Forums, seminars and meetings organized in Panama to discuss women's issues had shown the openness of Panamanian society to the commitments entered into at Beijing, which had been a landmark for the country's women. Her Government attached great importance to the elaboration of an optional protocol to guarantee implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the protocol would be one of the pillars of the commitments entered into at the Vienna and Beijing Conferences, and its text should be negotiated and adopted as soon as possible.

89. The "Expomujer" conference, organized in Panama by a national association of business and professional women, had vigorously promoted the role of women in growth, economic development and social harmony in Panama. During 1996, women had participated in national debates on the challenges which the country would face in the twenty-first century. A gender perspective still needed to become more widespread, despite increasing Government actions in favour of young and adolescent girls, indigenous women, and women with disabilities.

90. The Beijing Platform for Action was mostly oriented towards developing countries and countries in transition. The Platform's aspiration to globality was based on the hope that understanding of individual countries' problems would lead to international solidarity, generosity and mutual assistance.

91. Her delegation welcomed the decisions of the Commission on the Status of Women at its latest session, particularly those concerning follow-up to the Beijing Platform, and also the recommendation of the Economic and Social Council in resolution 1996/6 concerning the role of regional platforms and programmes of action in the review and appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

92. In Latin America and the Caribbean, greater use should be made of the capacities of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and there should be increased cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). In addition, the regional offices of the relevant specialized agencies had useful roles to play. The advantages of South-South cooperation and North-South dialogue should also be borne in mind, by the leadership of the United Nations in the follow-up to the Beijing Conference.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.