

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FOURTH MEETING
held on Tuesday, 30 April 1968, at 3.25 p.m.

Chairman:

Mr. AGUILAR

Venezuela

Rapporteur:

Mr. PAHR

Austria

FORMULATION AND PREPARATION OF A HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAMME TO BE UNDERTAKEN SUBSEQUENT TO THE CELEBRATIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR FOR HUMAN RIGHTS FOR THE PROMOTION OF UNIVERSAL RESPECT FOR, AND OBSERVANCE OF, HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS FOR ALL WITHOUT DISTINCTION AS TO RACE, COLOUR, SEX, LANGUAGE OR RELIGION, IN PARTICULAR (agenda item 11.) (A/CONF.32/C.2/L.5, A/CONF.32/C.2/L.8 and L.9):

(d) MEASURES TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN THE MODERN WORLD, INCLUDING A UNIFIED LONG-TERM UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued)

Mrs. TELLAWI (United Arab Republic) said that measures to promote women's rights should be dealt with simultaneously at the national and the international level. The Conference should request all Governments to change any national legislation which might be considered degrading to the status of women, to ratify the United Nations Conventions concerning the status of women and to make every possible effort to implement those Conventions and other international instruments on the subject, to eliminate customs and habits which hindered the efforts made to promote the status of women and to issue publications to inform public opinion about the various Conventions and Declarations.

The promotion of women's rights at the international level would be best carried out by a unified long-term United Nations programme. That idea had been discussed at the last session of the Commission on the Status of Women, where there had been general agreement that such a programme would be of great value. Unfortunately, there were apparently budgetary difficulties in the way of its achievement. The seminar on women's problems scheduled to take place in 1968 had still not been held because no country had volunteered to act as host and the United Nations budget could not afford the total expenses entailed. The last session of the Commission on the Status of Women had adopted a resolution recommending that such seminars should in future be held at the headquarters of the United Nations regional economic commissions should no country volunteer to act as host. The Commission had also requested that the United Nations should issue a publication giving the text of the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, to inform public opinion and information media about its contents.

From the practical point of view, family planning was essential to the advancement of women and deserved consideration by the United Nations. It was especially needed in the developing countries which were already overpopulated and whose development was being hindered by their rapid population growth. Although it might appear unacceptable to some countries, it increased the welfare of the whole family by improving the health of the mother, enabling the children to have a better education and freeing the father from economic worries.

In her country there was no discrimination against women in the legislation or the Constitution. Women had access to free education from the primary to the university level, since 1956 they had participated in civil and political life and in all administrative offices, and they received equal pay for equal work. The real obstacle to the advancement of women, however, was the fact that they had too many children. For that reason her country had adopted family planning as an official policy, on the understanding that it was the prerogative of every country to decide whether family planning was necessary for its development.

In addition to the above steps to promote the advancement of women, the United Nations should reconsider the budget allocated for its unified long-term programme on the advancement of women, which had to deal with many questions such as illiteracy, education, health, vocational training and participation in political, civil and cultural life of the country. The United Nations should give more attention to women in the decolonized countries and those where there was racial discrimination and violation of human rights in the general sense of the word. At its last session, the Commission on the Status of Women had agreed to include a new item on its agenda: "The protection of women and children in emergency and wartime fighting for peace, independence and national liberation" and it was hoped that the United Nations Secretariat would present a working paper on the subject to the Commission at its next session.

Two official Israel papers had given figures for the education of Jewish and Arab girls. At the end of 1964, 38,000 Arab girls of school age had been attending school as compared with 243,000 Jewish girls and during the school year 1964/1965, 19,000 Arab girls and 202,000 Jewish girls had been attending primary school. In those two papers, the Israel Minister of Education had said that he was preparing the syllabus for the Arab schools on the basis of Hebrew culture. Her delegation therefore requested that the United Nations should pay more attention to countries in which there was discrimination against minority groups.

Mr. BOTTO (Uruguay) said that, since the adoption of the Convention on Equal Civil and Political Rights for Men and Women, which had been submitted by his delegation at the Ninth International Conference of American States, held at Bogotá in 1948, countries of the American continent had been incorporating the appropriate measures in their national Constitutions.

The Committee was called upon to study a particular question in connexion with human rights: the attainment of equal rights for men and women. An example of the

positions which could be attained by women at the present day was the fact that the President of the Conference was a woman. Unfortunately, however, women had not attained equality in every country; discrimination still persisted. In his own country there was no legal, social, religious, cultural, juridical, philosophical or racial inequality. Women had for many years equal legal status with men.

Experts from all walks of life had come to the Conference and their speeches were full of lofty sentiments. But the world was expecting something more than a lesson in ethics, justice, intelligence, good will and solidarity: the Conference should ensure that human rights were guaranteed by law. It was with that end in view that his delegation had submitted the draft resolution appearing in document A/CONF.32/C.2/L.8.

Mrs. GONZALEZ ALVAREZ (Spain) said that her delegation fully endorsed the remarks by the representative of Uganda concerning the importance of establishing machinery for the implementation of existing recommendations rather than formulating more declarations and principles. The Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women embodied all the principles upon which any programme of action, either social or personal, should be based and recommended, in article 3, that public opinion should be educated and national aspirations directed towards the eradication of prejudice and the abolition of customary and all other practices based on the idea of the inferiority of women.

The evils which the Universal Declaration of Human Rights condemned, such as hunger, war, racial discrimination, were all too obvious, whereas the evil of discrimination against women was not directly visible. Men and women had to be educated to understand it, because even the most impersonal relations between men and women were based to a great extent upon instinct. The practical application of the principles demanded by so many representatives required the transformation of a mentality which at present was largely influenced by instinct into an adult mentality capable of appreciating the full meaning of those principles. Full recognition of the equality of the sexes could not be attained without that adult mentality, which would increase the possibilities of action and therefore eliminate discrimination. The only way of avoiding the old traditional mentality was by directly overcoming the instinctive prejudices which often appeared so natural.

It had been said that emancipated women lost their femininity. That particular charm, however, was not the exclusive attribute of the immature, dependent woman; an adult woman with personality had her own undeniable charm. Nor need there be any fear for the family; on the contrary, the new development of women would make them more

fitted to be the founder and "angel" of the modern home, as equal partners with their husbands. That shared responsibility would fulfil the true Christian idea of the dignity of women.

All the United Nations Conventions concerning the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women were in the process of ratification by her Government and by the end of the International Year for Human Rights the relevant instruments would be forwarded to the United Nations.

Mr. POPESCU (Romania) said that, although history had hitherto been written by, for and about men without any mention of women, to whom men owed so much, the evolution of contemporary society was inconceivable without the contribution of all its members, including women, who constituted half the world's population. In order that all people should profit from the possibilities offered by nature at the present state of science and technology, it was essential that the maximum use should be made of human resources.

The equal participation of women in political life was not only essential to the progress of society but helped to form their personality. Such participation depended on various factors peculiar to each State but it should nevertheless be considered at the international level. His delegation had therefore welcomed the adoption by the General Assembly of the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women as an important step towards the achievement of the principles of the Universal Declaration.

His country had shown its interest in the emancipation of women by acting as host in 1961 to the participants in the first seminar on the status of women in family law. The emancipation of women was an integral part of general social progress. A legal status for women conferring upon them equal rights was an essential condition for any progress in that respect. In his country the principle of equal rights for men and women was laid down in the "family code" and supplemented by other laws. The legal status should be accompanied by a social status which ensured women's equality. To that end consideration should be given to the changes that might have to be made in economic life in order to give women access to employment and the professions and to allow them the necessary time to play their part in political and social life. A predominance of women in certain sectors such as social services and teaching was desirable, but the access of women to the various professions depended upon their receiving the necessary training. Education was necessary, firstly to teach women their rights and how to use them and, secondly, to overcome the prejudices against

women's role in society which still persisted. The first step was of course literacy, a basic problem in many parts of the world. Then came education and the creation of vocational training centres. Radio, television, the cinema and literature provided still other opportunities for education.

Particular attention should be given to the education of young people. With that in mind, his delegation, together with others, had submitted a draft resolution (A/CONF.32/C.2/L.5) on the education of young people to respect human rights, among which the rights of women were of capital importance.

Mrs. HADDAD (Tunisia) said that the twenty years since the adoption of the Universal Declaration had been marked primarily by the decolonization of the countries under foreign domination and by the "decolonization" of women in most countries.

Since attaining independence in 1956, her country had devoted its attention to the promotion of the status of women in general, and not merely of an elite. It had therefore worked out legal measures to enable women to play their part in the economic and social development of the country. In 1956 the legal emancipation of women in accordance with the Universal Declaration had been embodied in a code of personal status, which instituted new laws concerning marriage, prohibited polygamy and eliminated unilateral repudiation as the sole requirement for divorce, which henceforth had to be decided by a judge and could be requested by women as well as by men. Legal emancipation had been followed by political emancipation: in 1957 women had been given the right to vote and their political rights had been included in the Constitution in 1959. Women now participated in political affairs at the local, regional and national level.

For women to take part in political life, however, they had to be educated. Education had accordingly been made available to girls on the same footing as boys and a literacy programme for women had been instituted. Unfortunately, only 50 per cent of the girls of school age were attending school as compared with 90 per cent of the boys, owing to prejudices and the economic difficulties current in most undeveloped countries. There was no discrimination in principle with regard to employment but owing to the lack of vocational training women still occupied mainly the less well-paid posts. The labour laws covered women's work as well as men's and in 1964 a law had been passed to protect women's health, encouraging married couples to regulate the number of their children through a family planning system.

She had described the experience of her own country to show that, in spite of great efforts, much remained to be done. It was impossible to be optimistic about improvement in the status of women at a time when human rights were being violated in

so many countries, for example in South Africa and in the Arab territories occupied by Israel. Countries which did not recognize women's rights usually disregarded other human rights also.

International instruments were of no use unless they were ratified, and ratification was useless without full implementation, which was often prevented by financial considerations. Full enjoyment of women's rights was often prevented by factors such as illiteracy and ingrained prejudices.

The action for the emancipation of women in developing countries should be based on the following principles: firstly, it was a problem which concerned both men and women; secondly, the defence of women's rights should not be entrusted to men but should be undertaken by national women's organizations in collaboration with national Governments, international non-governmental organizations and United Nations organs; thirdly, women should be helped to understand and defend their rights through education and vocational training.

Action should be taken by the United Nations to convince Member States of the importance of creating national commissions on the status of women to decide on needs and priorities, revising their Constitutions and national legislations with respect to the rights of women as laid down in the Universal Declaration, introducing new laws to protect those rights, ratifying the Conventions on the status of women and especially those on equal pay for equal work, equal access to employment and against discrimination in education, making particular efforts to educate the public with regard to women's rights and to co-operate with women's organizations, allocating a percentage of their national budget and funds received from international aid to promoting the status of women, encouraging women to participate in development by establishing programmes for different geographical regions, appointing them to key government posts, especially those responsible for requests for technical assistance, and encouraging national commissions on the status of women to co-operate at a regional level. The United Nations and its Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) should allocate more higher educational, research and training fellowships to women; work out a special programme for the education of girls in the developing countries, provide financial aid for the construction of day and boarding schools and, in conjunction with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), establish national vocational training and re-training centres. The United Nations should send committees to countries where there was an aid programme to supervise its working and to ensure the effective participation of women. It would be helpful if more meetings and seminars were organized at international

and regional levels and if the Commission on the Status of Women were to meet either once a year or once every two years in a different region to enable women throughout the world to participate.

Mr. SNELLING (Australia) said that his country was impressed by the achievements of the Commission on the Status of Women, in whose work it had always taken an active interest. It considered technical assistance and advisory services, seminars, teaching and education to be of vital importance in promoting women's rights.

Australia considered that a unified long-term United Nations programme for the advancement of women should be developed within the framework of existing technical assistance and advisory programmes. Those programmes should be co-ordinated in order to meet the most pressing needs facing women, especially in developing countries. The advancement of women in those countries should be considered, not as a separate problem, but as part of the general economic, social and cultural development. Women's advancement would be achieved more smoothly within existing cultural pattern and should not be pressed to such an extent that the community would not be able to adjust to too rapid changes. It would be a mistake to seek to impose standards practicable for the more advanced countries upon countries which could not implement them and which had not yet been educated to accept them.

United Nations programmes should be directed to improving the condition of women within the context of each of five broad categories: political, civil, economic, social and cultural. In the political sphere there should be universal adult suffrage and women should be free to stand for election at all levels of government. There should be political education and women should be eligible for appointment as judges or magistrates. In the civil field all existing legal barriers to complete equality should be removed. In the economic field all barriers preventing women from seeking paid employment should be removed. Labour standards should be regulated, with women themselves participating in inspection services. In the developing countries women should be given the opportunity to enter new occupations, but should not be unduly encouraged to seek urban employment until employment opportunities were available in urban areas. In the social sphere assistance should be given by the establishment of agencies which would provide for such things as nutritional guidance centres, home nursing facilities, handicraft centres, child-care centres, community centres and co-operative stores. Standards relating to health, welfare and employment should be established and information relating to population control should be available to women. In the cultural sphere countries should be helped to provide free education for all and

it would doubtless be necessary to encourage parents to send girls to school. Educational planning should be co-ordinated with the pattern of employment opportunities and girls should be educated to appreciate the practical side of training.

In planning for the advancement of women in developing countries, the forms of assistance most appropriate to the needs and economic objectives of a particular country must be selected. Women's advancement should keep pace with men's: for example, whenever possible a wife should accompany her husband on overseas training courses.

Even in the developed countries much remained to be done. In some of those countries women did not participate as fully as they might in many professions and occupied positions of less responsibility than men. There seemed to be a certain diffidence among women themselves in seeking higher levels of employment and in taking up vocational training outside the occupations traditionally entered by women. Indeed, prejudice was one of the main impediments to a realization of those rights secured by women in United Nations instruments. It was in that area that the influence of the United Nations should concentrate its efforts.

Mr. SOKO (Zambia) said that his country recognized that the rights of women were a matter of human rights. Its Constitution did not permit discrimination against women in any of the institutions which it had created. Women could occupy any post in the Government or in the public service. To enable women to advance in those fields, the Government had launched massive education programmes. Nevertheless, traditions and customary law in marriages inhibited the women of his country. The Zambian Government had therefore set up a commission to inquire into the nature and practice of those customary laws with a view to revising them.

His country hoped that the United Nations would assume the larger part of costs of seminars on the status of women and would expand its literacy programme. It would support any programme for ensuring that women enjoyed all the rights embodied in the Universal Declaration.

Sir Samuel HOARE (United Kingdom) said that his country had always supported United Nations programmes concerning the advancement of women and its record concerning ratification of the Conventions was good. In the United Kingdom there were a large number of non-governmental organizations devoted entirely to furthering the rights of women and many of them formed part of international associations. During the current year the United Kingdom had been celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of women's achievement of the vote. Women occupied high posts in the Government and the civil

service and there were many in the professions. A National Consultative Council of Women had been established in which both the Government and women's organizations were represented and thus it was able to review and co-ordinate the work of women's organizations.

The problem of furthering United Nations action in the field of the advancement of women was a complex one owing to the inadequacy of United Nations resources and to the differences between the developed and the developing countries. His delegation agreed with the Moroccan delegate's view that the first priority was the advancement of the status of women in developing countries and that that was closely related to economic and social development. He also agreed that education was vital but it was difficult to decide which lines of action should have priority in view of the difference in the circumstances and the resources available in developing countries. His delegation would support all resolutions which were likely to lead to the advancement of the status of women both in developed and in developing countries.

Mrs. KUME (Japan) said that she shared the view expressed by many speakers that the question of the advancement of women was part of the whole question of promoting human rights. Prejudice and discrimination against women existed even in the most advanced societies. Women were not seeking special privileges but were fighting for equality. Just as the fight against racial discrimination had gained momentum only after those who were subject to discrimination had come to realize its meaning and inherent injustice, so the elimination of discrimination against women would be fully attained only when women themselves fully understood the problem. Although it concerned the whole of society, the fight for equality was particularly a problem for women and needed the massive participation of millions of women. Education through all available media was of fundamental importance for the achievement of that aim.

The Committee should avoid duplication of work that could be done by competent United Nations bodies and should concentrate on formulating guidelines for the future work of the competent organs and on indicating the areas in which further efforts should be concentrated.

Mrs. SERGEEVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the equality of men and women was important, since women traditionally transmitted man's heritage to the new generation. Yet women had always been and still were in an inferior position.

The best minds had always defended the position of women. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was a result of the aspirations expressed in the preamble to the United Nations Charter. The Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination

against Women was of particular importance, in that for the first time in history it had not only proclaimed that there should be no discrimination against women, but had set forth the principles on which equality was based. It was regrettable that those principles were not being put into practice. In many parts of the world women were deprived of their rights and many Governments were making little effort to alter the situation. A recent enquiry undertaken by UNESCO had shown that in many countries only a minimal percentage of women were members of Parliament. Those who worked were in inferior positions, while many women were unable to work because of the prevailing unemployment in their country or because there were no pre-school institutes. Their education was often not as advanced as that of men, particularly with regard to vocational training. The status of women was even worse in countries suffering from apartheid, colonialism and war.

The experience of the USSR showed that women advanced most in truly democratic States, where the economic conditions were favourable to the development of both women and men. It had been said that women would make greater progress when the State had enough resources, but the history of the USSR had shown that it was possible to achieve equality of men and women from the very beginning of the development process. In the USSR, women now formed half the labour force and were predominant in the fields of education and medicine. They held responsible posts in all professions and political institutions and received equal pay for equal work.

Much was done for mothers in the USSR in the way of health centres and dispensaries. In particular, medical services were free of charge and there were nurseries, kindergartens, camps and sanatoria.

She read out the text of a draft resolution (A/CONF.32/C.2/L.9), submitted by the Byelorussian SSR, the Mongolian People's Republic and the USSR, which called for the elimination of discrimination against women, urged States to implement measures for the advancement of women and recommended the preparation of an international convention on the elimination of discrimination against women. She hoped that the draft resolution would gain the support of the Committee.

Mrs. HENRION (Belgium) said that, although the role of the United Nations had been invaluable in the advancement of women's rights, much remained to be done. Many of the problems women had to face confronted men too, for reasons of religion, social origin or race. The degree of development of a country had a considerable influence on the possibility of a full realization of human rights. It was therefore necessary to draw up an order of priority, bearing in mind that the ideal towards which all peoples

should strive was the achievement of all the rights set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The representatives of the developing countries were right to accord first place to education, since it was through education that women in the developed countries had achieved their better status. That had led to the attainment of political rights. Greater participation in economic life had also advanced women's rights. The fact of leaving the home to undertake paid work had led to economic independence and had widened women's perspectives. It was in the labour world, however, that inequality even in the developed countries was most persistent.

Although Belgian women had had the vote for twenty years and all posts were open to them, and although a considerable number had entered the professions, there were still few women in Parliament. The Belgian authorities had made all educational opportunities available to women, but at the higher levels of achievement they had not been seized. The reasons for that were obviously psychological ones. For example, girls were reluctant to undertake studies which might be interrupted by marriage and parents gave their sons' education preference over that of their daughters. Girls still tended to choose traditional occupations. Although an increasing number of married women were working, most of them discontinued their career after the birth of their second child. Those traditional attitudes must be altered. Co-education was one excellent means of speeding up the disappearance of prejudice between the sexes. The role of women must be thought out afresh, as must also the conception of motherhood, which was being increasingly recognized as a social and not simply a private matter. Both parents should assume responsibility for children, and society should help them. Moreover, personal relationships within marriage would be enriched if the wife was accorded true equality.

Miss CHATON (France) said that two types of action could be envisaged in connexion with the item under discussion. The first consisted of normative work on the various declarations and conventions drawn up over the last twenty years. Steps should be taken: (a) to bring those texts to the attention of the public by all available means; (b) to secure their ratification at the national level through the efforts of individuals and groups; (c) to see that they were applied through changes in existing laws and administrative practices; (d) to supplement them where gaps had been shown to exist.

The second type of action was related to the actual situation with regard to women's rights. In practice inequalities still existed between men and women. Attention should be drawn to the importance of the woman's role both in the family and

in society as a whole. Education for women was inadequate; they were not properly trained for family life in the modern world or for professional activities. As a result, their moral, intellectual, economic and social potential was wasted.

Practical measures were needed to remedy the situation. Among long-term measures, she recommended that all plans for education, vocational training and social welfare should be drawn up in the light of the needs of the female population. Short-term measures should include literacy programmes for women and girls, a higher rate of school attendance for girls, programmes of rural and community development and an emergency training scheme for qualified female personnel.

The means to be used for those purposes included both national resources and United Nations technical and financial assistance. Social service, whether compulsory or voluntary, should be carried out by girls and experimental programmes should be launched along the lines followed in Algeria and Iran. Steps should be taken to ensure the co-ordination of national programmes with international activities. In that connexion she wished to draw attention to the long-term programme for the advancement of women drawn up by UNESCO.

Mrs. MARIN de SOTO (Costa Rica) drew attention to the achievements of her country in the political, economic and social fields. As a result of Costa Rica's political stability and the social reforms that had been carried out, development was taking place in a harmonious and balanced way. The Constitution of 1949 had fully recognized the rights of women, although the fulfilment of those rights in practice required an effort on the part of the community as a whole. She supported the draft proposal submitted by Uruguay, which called upon all States to apply the principles of the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and called for an intensive educational and information campaign. It was essential that States should undertake to translate the legal equality of women into practice. In her view the Uruguayan proposal reflected the views expressed by most representatives with regard to the importance of women's rights and she hoped it would receive wide support.

Costa Rica intended to submit a draft resolution on equality of political opportunities for women, drawing attention to the provisions of article III of the Convention on the Political Rights of Women. The advancement of women depended on a change in attitude and approach, which would be accelerated if more women held public office and exercised public functions. It was important to enact measures to secure equality of opportunity for women, so that they could occupy responsible posts at the highest level. She appealed to all representatives to support her proposal.

Mrs. IDER (Mongolia) praised the work accomplished by the United Nations and the specialized agencies for the promotion of women's rights. Nevertheless, the actual situation was not satisfactory in many countries, where women were still subject to discrimination in the political and economic fields and in private law. The national legislation of some countries did not reflect the principles set forth in international documents. In general, it could be said that the status of women depended on the level of economic and social development. Much could be achieved by including measures for the advancement of women in national development plans, but States also required external assistance.

She outlined the progress achieved in Mongolia since the 1921 Revolution. In particular, the Constitution of 1924 had abolished inequality between men and women and granted equal rights to women in political, economic and cultural affairs. Women occupied important posts in Mongolia and were represented in all sectors of public and professional life.

In her view it was essential that every State should reflect in its national legislation the principles of the United Nations instruments concerning the rights of women and should include in their national development plans measures to promote the advancement of women. International organizations should give special attention to helping women in the developing countries.

Mrs. FILIPPOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that every effort should be made to implement in practice the provisions of the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. She called on all States to take steps to enable women to make their full contribution to the social and economic progress of the community. The status of women in a society was a measure of the freedom that society enjoyed. Progress in women's rights was slow in many regions where women were denied their right to employment and to equal remuneration. The solution to that problem was connected with economic and social conditions that were deeply rooted in society.

In the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic women enjoyed equality with men in every field. That principle was embodied in the Constitution and was applied in practice. Women were largely represented in every sphere of activity and played a vital role in political, economic and social life.

The United Nations should give constant attention to the problem of the social and economic rights of women and should try to help States to ensure that all women enjoyed the right to education, employment and equal remuneration. A large fund of national experience was available and the United Nations and the specialized agencies should

make greater use of it. In conclusion, she expressed the hope that the draft resolution submitted by Mongolia, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and her own country would be adopted.

Mrs. TABEL (Lebanon) said that her country had always been noted for its culture, although the influx of refugees after the two world wars had greatly increased its percentage of illiterates, which had been only 7 per cent at the beginning of the century. The women of her country were, however, taking an active part in the efforts to remedy that state of affairs.

Long before the European countries had done so, Lebanese law had recognized the economic independence of women and many other rights which through negligence or ignorance had not been practised. However, all now understood, demanded and exercised their rights. All careers were open to women, who had received equal pay for equal work since 1946. A complete social service had been started two generations earlier and even the work of the Red Cross was entirely directed by women.

Although women had had the vote and had been eligible for Parliament since 1952, no Lebanese women had yet been elected, but at the recent elections one woman candidate had been defeated by only 22 votes.

She did not wish to quote her country as an example but thought that they had the right approach to obtain respect for women's rights. Girls were given civic education at school to teach them their value and their complete equality with men and to convince them of the need to educate themselves and to help in the education of others.

As the French representative had said, Governments should be persuaded to implement the different United Nations conventions and those of the ILO and UNESCO, which would help the women of all countries to enjoy their rights to the full.

Mrs. CEFKOVÁ (Czechoslovakia) expressed her appreciation of the work carried out by the Commission on the Status of Women, all of whose treaties and conventions had been ratified by Czechoslovakia. The national legislation of her country was based on its Constitution, which clearly established the principle of equality between men and women and placed the State under an obligation to ensure that women's rights were protected. Thus the legal aspect of women's rights in Czechoslovakia was fully covered.

In practice, however, certain problems arose, which had to be dealt with by sociological analysis and discussion. That work was being carried out by women's organizations. Czechoslovakia had accumulated a great deal of experience in questions concerning the employment of women, who were fully represented in every sector of production, and was ready to share that experience. She wished to support the

launching of international programmes for the advancement of women and would favour any proposals made for that purpose. She thought the Conference should try to work out a common programme for the fulfilment of the provisions of the Universal Declaration.

Mrs. RYNNING (Norway) expressed her gratitude to the Commission on the Status of Women and called upon every country to make an effort to follow up its work at the national level. It was much easier to deal with the legal aspects than with actual implementation. Ingrained habits among both men and women were difficult to overcome. In political life, for example, women in Norway had enjoyed full rights for over fifty years, yet the number of women elected to public office was still low despite strenuous efforts on the part of the National Council of Women. Marked progress had been achieved at the municipal elections of 1967.

As many speakers had pointed out, education was a vital area; in that connexion she thought that school textbooks, which sometimes implied that women were inferior to men, should be revised. She also wished to stress the importance of family planning and to suggest that the Conference should consider taking action to protect the rights of children born out of wedlock.

In conclusion, she said that international and national legislation was not enough and that public opinion would be the decisive factor in ensuring complete respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of all people. An effort would have to be made to change the general attitude of both men and women and to bring about a better understanding of the many different forms of discrimination that still existed.

Mr. SINGH (India) said that in his country women enjoyed complete juridical equality and their rights had been translated into the actual life of the nation. Despite centuries of tradition, women now had the right to property and inheritance, divorce, separation and re-marriage. They were also fully enfranchized and had held many of the highest posts open to an Indian citizen. Women could be found in every walk of life, in particular in teaching, medicine and cultural affairs. There were many women members of parliament and magistrates. Family planning had been introduced as part of official State policy. Women were making headway in every sphere of activity and occupied high policy-making positions.

At the same time, the essential differences between the sexes must be recognized. The woman was the mother of the race, and child-bearing should be treated as an honour, not a disability. Women were at the centre of family life and should become neither cogs nor parasites in the economic machine. In other words, discrimination must go but differences should remain. In conclusion, he expressed his support for social and educational progress throughout the world in favour of the equality of the sexes.

Mr. ZELTNER (Israel) said that he wished to exercise his right of reply to criticisms that had been made of his country. The representative of the United Arab Republic had seen fit to introduce a political and polemical element into an otherwise objective debate. In so doing, she had misinterpreted and suppressed certain facts. She had stated that in 1964 the percentage of Arab girls receiving elementary school education had been well below the corresponding figure for Jewish girls. In that connexion he wished to point out that at the time of the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, most Arab women, unlike Jewish women, had been illiterate. A figure of 50 per cent literacy twenty years later represented real progress. Moreover, if the representative of the United Arab Republic had looked at the figures for 1966 or 1967 instead of those for 1964, she would have noted a considerable improvement. He doubted whether the literacy rate in the United Arab Republic remotely approached 50 per cent. School attendance in Israel was compulsory for all boys and girls up to the age of 14, irrespective of race, and would soon be extended to 15. The difficulties encountered in school enrolment in rural districts were common knowledge. While it was true that education in Jewish schools in Israel was based on the Hebrew culture, Arab literature, history and traditions formed the central part of education in Arab schools, where the language of instruction was Arabic.

With regard to the question under discussion, it had to be acknowledged that equality of rights for women might enter into collision with freedom of religion in cases where a religion did not recognize equality of rights between the two sexes but gave preference to the man, or where a particular religion was the official State religion and matters such as marriage and divorce, the rights and duties of children towards their parents, the right to make a will and the problems of intestate inheritance were the responsibility of religious courts as distinct from civil courts. Such a state of affairs existed not only in developing countries but in countries already highly developed. Jewish religious law, for example, discriminated between men and women. One of the first laws passed by the Parliament of Israel, the Equality of the Rights of Women Law of 1950, had done away with that discrimination, giving women the same substantive and procedural rights as men in both civil and religious courts. Compliance with those rules by religious courts was enforced by the High Court of Justice. That Law applied to the religious courts of every denomination.

He had mentioned those facts in order to point out that a clash between religious beliefs and the principle of the equality of women was possible and even likely. In such cases the principle of equality of rights of men and women should prevail and that

rule should be clearly expressed in the human rights programme to be prepared by the Conference. He wished to stress that the difficulties entailed in changing or abolishing old laws, customs and traditions discriminating against women should not be underrated..

Mrs. AHMED (Pakistan) said that the Constitution of her country provided for equal rights for men and women. Women in Pakistan held high administrative office, but they represented only a small fraction of the female population. For a general improvement there were two major requirements: firstly, free and compulsory education at the primary level and secondly, the eradication of illiteracy. The unchecked growth of population was another obstacle that had to be overcome. Prejudice and tradition stood in the way of the adoption of methods which could limit the growth of population. Public opinion must be mobilized in order to solve that problem.

In conclusion, she stressed the importance of involving women in the economic life of the community.

The CHAIRMAN declared the general debate on item 11 (d) closed.

The meeting rose at 6.50 p.m.