



# Economic and Social Council

Provisional

22 August 2000  
English  
Original: Spanish

---

## Substantive session for 1998 Operational activities segment

### Provisional summary record of the 21st meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 9 July 1998, at 6 p.m.

*President:* Mr. Olhaye (Vice-Chairman)..... (Djibouti)

## Contents

Operational activities of the United Nations for international development  
cooperation

- (a) Advancement of women: implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action  
and the role of operational activities in promoting, in particular, capacity-building  
and resource mobilization for enhancing the participation of women in development  
(*continued*)

---

Corrections to this record should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of this document* to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza.

*The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m.*

## **Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation**

### **(a) Advancement of women: implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the role of operational activities in promoting, in particular, capacity-building and resource mobilization for enhancing the participation of women in development** *(continued)* (E/1998/10, E/1998/54 and Rev.1 and E/CN.6/1998/3)

1. **Ms. Sibal** (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) expressed her support for the proposal of the European Union that the Economic and Social Council should consider reaffirming its commitment to the target of closing the gender gap in primary and secondary education by the year 2000, and remarked that the report of the Secretary-General (E/1998/54) was of particular interest to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) from the standpoint of joint programming in the future, as well as impact evaluation on the ground. During the mid-decade evaluation of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, it was important to examine the follow-up measures adopted in relation to operational activities at the national level among United Nations agencies and in close cooperation with civil society and Member States, with a view to determining the priorities and choices adopted by Member States in implementing the Beijing Platform, a matter that was not addressed in the report.

2. Having read almost all the annual reports of the United Nations Resident Coordinators for 1997, UNESCO had found no automatic link in programming between, on the one hand, the basic policy exercises of country strategy notes and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, and on the other, the joint activities of United Nations agencies in the field of gender issues. Considering that only 9 countries were included in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, and that — although the number of country strategy notes amounted to as many as 60 — not all Member States were included, it was apparent that many joint United Nations projects in the field of gender issues had not resulted from joint programming. UNESCO had established a list comprising 40 Member States in

which various United Nations agencies had carried out activities relating to gender issues. An analysis could not, however, be conducted solely on the basis of that list, since it did not discern tendencies or draw conclusions about choices made or priorities adopted by Member States on the basis of the Beijing Platform for Action, even though such an analysis was essential in order to evaluate the participation of women in development.

3. Referring to the experience of UNESCO in operational activities directed towards promoting the participation of women in development, she said that, in the past two years, a new structure had been established in UNESCO, consisting of a gender mainstreaming coordinator, two major projects managers, and gender focal points both at the main divisions of headquarters and in field offices. That had enhanced the capacity of the Organization to implement gender concerns that had emanated from recent global conferences.

4. UNESCO was carrying out 10 special projects which dealt with the 5 of the 12 principal areas of concern identified in the Beijing Platform for Action. Those projects constituted a framework within which UNESCO programmes for the advancement of women could be fully realized. In programming the current phase of their implementation, a larger proportion of funds had been earmarked from the regular programme funds for activities that benefited women. Among the examples that might be cited to illustrate the activities of UNESCO in advancing the cause of women mention might be made of the project, conducted in the sub-Saharan Africa region, on women and the supply and use of water resources, which drew on the expertise of UNESCO in the areas of hydrology, training methods, and knowledge of cultural values in the communities where the project was implemented; the development of legislation and policies that reflected women's needs in water resource management and considered women as equal partners in the decision-making process; two workshops on gender-sensitive education statistics and indicators, organized by UNESCO in Ghana in 1996 and in the Ivory Coast in 1997; and the "Guidelines on Non-Sexist Language", the first version of which had been distributed through UNESCO field offices and national commissions, as well as through non-governmental organizations.

5. Considering that the General Assembly had proclaimed 2000 the International Year for the Culture

of Peace, and that the overriding aim of UNESCO in that regard was to help women to express their views and expectations as to how peace could be achieved and maintained in the contemporary world, UNESCO hoped that the topic of women and the culture of peace would be introduced into the evaluation of the Beijing Platform for Action to take place in 2000.

6. For all the progress that had been made, much remained to be done before women's issues could be fully incorporated into all aspects of life. Lacking a sufficient understanding of the concept of gender and of the ways in which the role of women might be fully realized in specific projects, UNESCO programme sectors tended to elaborate "women-specific" projects rather than to integrate a gender perspective into the mainstream of their work, a problem mentioned in the Secretary-General's report.

7. UNESCO was determined to continue its active participation in the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, and looked forward to improved interaction between that Committee, the agencies and the Council on the basis of the discussions held at the special session of the Council in May 1997.

8. **Ms. Trone** (United Nations Population Fund) said that, since its inception, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) had worked to establish an enabling environment which would afford men and women the right to make choices affecting their health and well-being and to have equal opportunities to realize their fullest potential.

9. All the global conferences of the 1990s had shared a common theme: to be successful, development efforts must be people-centred. The International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in 1994, was the first of those conferences to recognize that, in population and development, global and national needs coincided with personal rights and interests; that reproductive health, including family planning, was a right of men and women alike; and that investing in health, education and gender equality promoted human rights and population stabilization. The Beijing Conference, recognizing the importance of investing in women, had not only adopted the Cairo agenda, but had also defended women's reproductive and sexual rights.

10. The Fund was working closely with other United Nations agencies to realize the objectives of the Programme of Action adopted at the Cairo Conference and the Beijing Platform for Action, and recognized the need for both men and women to participate as partners in all aspects of population and development, as well as the important role of men in achieving women's empowerment. The initiatives undertaken at headquarters and in the field to ensure that a gender perspective was incorporated into all the Fund's programmes and technical activities included the establishment of a gender theme group; the revision of the guidelines for mainstreaming gender in population and development programmes; participation in the work of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality; and the elaboration of a gender, population and development training manual for use at headquarters and in the field. It was worth noting that the Fund had the highest percentage of female staff members in the Professional category and in senior management positions, compared to similar organizations in the United Nations system.

11. The Fund was working closely with national institutions to strengthen their capacity to design and implement better strategies for integrating gender concerns into their policies and programmes, was participating in the various sub-groups of the United Nations Development Group, particularly the Sub-Group on Gender, and was striving to integrate gender concerns into the work of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, the Resident Coordinator system and the reform process launched by the Secretary-General.

12. The Fund also recognized the human rights factor in gender, population and development activities, especially with regard to such areas as reproductive and sexual health and rights, sexual violence, harmful traditional practices, reproductive health in emergency situations, and civil unrest, and was working closely with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the treaty-monitoring bodies, in particular the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, with a view to addressing those issues.

13. In 1999, when reviewing the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development, an evaluation would be made of the extent to which

gender issues had been addressed and of the challenges to be confronted in the coming years. The Fund would also participate in the review of the follow-up to the Beijing Conference, and would make recommendations for meeting the challenges that remained in the area of gender concerns. In that regard, it was worth mentioning that gender mainstreaming in all of the Fund's programmes and activities was an ongoing process, assisted by the creation of operational strategies that promoted gender-responsive outcomes and institutional strategies aimed at producing structural changes that would create an enabling environment; that gender mainstreaming must be nurtured with support from the highest policy level and that actions undertaken must be monitored; that gender mainstreaming should not be geared towards women alone, but should also recognize the importance of male issues in the process; that the girl child should be considered of critical importance, and that every effort should be made to ensure her rightful place in the socio-economic order, as well as her access to services affecting her health and well-being; and that all United Nations agencies must speak with one voice on gender issues and develop a common strategy for mainstreaming gender concerns into their various areas of competence.

14. **Ms. Watanabe** (United Nations Development Programme) said that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defined its paradigm for sustainable human development as development which was pro-poor, pro-women, pro-jobs and pro-environment. Thus the advancement of women was at the core of the work of UNDP.

15. In UNDP programmes and activities, gender mainstreaming did not happen by decree or through administrative instructions or programme manuals. The key was in capacitating the personnel of its offices, and through them its counterparts, by developing skills and knowledge and by changing behaviour and attitudes.

16. UNDP was promoting systematic capacity-building development for gender mainstreaming in its programme countries. Over the past two years, its gender focal points from 100 countries had taken part in learning, consultation and briefing workshops at the regional, global and country levels. Gender mainstreaming was a key goal shared by the whole United Nations system. Thus capacity-building activities also encompassed support to the Resident Coordinator system. Within that framework of support,

17 United Nations Volunteers specializing in gender issues had been assigned to programme country offices to support capacity development and Beijing follow-up actions. A second form of support to the United Nations Resident Coordinator system was the placement of 10 gender advisers, primarily in UNDAF countries, to support inter-agency collaboration at the country level for gender equality policy and programming work. UNDP recognized that management profiles and accountability were integrally linked to programme priorities and outcomes at the country level. In the light of those assumptions, UNDP management had reaffirmed its commitment to the advancement of women within UNDP, as demonstrated by the fact that the number of women in D-2 and Resident Representative posts had doubled since 1994. Thirty per cent of the members of the Executive Committee were women, and the target for female Resident Representatives was 38 per cent, compared with the present figure of 17 per cent. Under the new policy, management accountability measures had been adopted, a recruitment policy had been devised to bring women into senior positions, and specific commitments had been made to improve the quality of the workplace.

17. UNDP had also achieved very satisfactory results in its programmatic commitments from core resources to gender equality. At the global level, its programmes for 1997-2001 allocated 28 per cent of its total resources to gender mainstreaming and the advancement of women in the areas of poverty eradication, environmental regeneration and governance.

18. With funds amounting to US\$ 7.8 million, the Global Gender Equality Programme, approved in 1997, focused on capacity development and the establishment of learning networks, the creation of policy and analytic frameworks for gender equality and advocacy, and capacity-building for Beijing Platform for Action follow-up activities. An important initiative undertaken under that programme was the collection of labour market statistics, broken down by sex, in collaboration with the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Statistics Division and bilateral donors. At the regional and country level, at least 20 per cent of the respective Regional Programme resources were earmarked for the advancement of women and issues related to gender mainstreaming in programmes and activities. The focus varied from one region to another, and included poverty eradication policies, women's

economic and political empowerment, capacity-building for introducing a gender perspective into national policy analysis, and support for the introduction of a gender perspective in national reports on human development. Many regions had identified violence against women as a major factor affecting women's health, their participation in the labour force and their full participation in society on an equal footing with men. Violence against women was both a human rights and a development issue and featured prominently in the programmes of all the regional offices.

19. There were clear indications that gender issues were increasingly forming part of the analysis of all UNDP programme documents and national human development reports. UNDP had established partnerships to support the mobilization of resources for gender mainstreaming in programmes and activities for the advancement of women, such as the UNDP/MICROSTART initiative to build capacity in microfinance at the country level, in which at least 40 per cent of the direct beneficiaries were women, and the Japan Women-in-Development Fund, which focused on promoting women's economic empowerment and their health and education.

20. In spite of the progress achieved, there were still major challenges to face. In the sphere of accountability, it was necessary to hold managers accountable for applying the principles, practices and financial commitments which had been adopted in order to incorporate a gender perspective into programmes and activities. Better tracking systems must be developed and applied to monitor the incorporation of a gender perspective as a cross-thematic issue. For that purpose, UNDP was intending to devise a system of indicators which would provide improved monitoring not only of financial inputs, but also of the impact of programmes in advancing gender equality. In that context, UNDP welcomed the collaborative work being done within the United Nations system in the Inter-Agency Committee on Gender Equality. It was also necessary to promote the creation of networks to facilitate capacity development. UNDP was working to improve knowledge management, paying special attention to learning activities and the sharing of good practices in all areas of sustainable human development, including gender. The network of gender focal points which linked every

bureau and country office was an essential starting point in setting up those networks.

21. In conclusion, she emphasized the need to encourage cooperation within the entire United Nations system in order to incorporate a gender perspective into programmes and activities. UNDAF presented an important opportunity to strengthen that collaboration and to monitor its impact in a coordinated manner. It was an opportunity that should be more fully exploited in terms of joint programming and the advocacy of women's interests, so that organizations throughout the system could continue to act together.

22. **Ms. Ahluwalia** (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) said that, although there had been relatively little time to assess the effectiveness of the post-Beijing initiatives, the Secretary-General's report (E/1998/54) provided important future directions and recommendations concerning the advancement of women.

23. One of those recommendations, which the Federation strongly supported, was the need for a study on the role of gender units and focal points, including the extent to which focal points had support from and access to the highest levels of decision-making.

24. For its part, the Federation encouraged the designation of gender focal points in all its regional and country delegations — six of them already had gender focal points — and initiatives were under way to place a short-term gender specialist delegate to work at the two regional delegations of the Federation in Asia. In all, there were 50 national societies in Africa, Asia and Europe with gender focal points.

25. The Federation believed that the recommendation in the report of the Secretary-General that the United Nations system should incorporate gender into the follow-up to recent global conferences and continue to strengthen its capacity to support and implement commitments made at those conferences relating to human rights, women's empowerment and the elimination of violence against women was extremely important, not only for the United Nations system but for all organizations committed to gender mainstreaming.

26. The Federation was reviewing selected programmes with a gender perspective, placing special emphasis on disaster relief operations. A revision of the data collection system was also planned with a

view to the adoption of a system of using sex-disaggregated data in the planning and evaluation of Red Cross and Red Crescent programmes. In that connection, it should be mentioned that the main emphasis of the regional programmes for East Africa for 1999 would be on the development of tools to monitor gender sensitivity in programmes targeting health and institutional development and refugees, and that gender theme groups would be established in national societies to review programmes and develop case studies in order to document best practices. In the work on those issues, the Federation hoped to share experiences with the United Nations system and others concerned and looked forward to the outcome of the work being done by the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (IACWGE) on developing guidelines for the compilation of good practices and performance indicators.

27. With regard to the strategic frameworks and programming of activities relating to women in development and gender in development, it should be pointed out that gender mainstreaming as a cross-sectoral issue had been fully reflected at regional conferences of national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies held in Africa and Europe in 1996 and 1997 and that similar strategies would be pursued at forthcoming regional conferences to be held in Asia, the Pacific and the Americas in November 1998 and April 1999.

28. Some of the regional action plans were being translated into specific regional programmes. The regional delegation of the Federation in Abidjan was taking special measures to address the differences in needs, constraints, opportunities and responsibilities related to men and women in the context of the assistance provided to the most vulnerable. In March 1998 a governance and gender workshop had been organized for the presidents and secretaries-general of the 16 national societies of the West Africa subregion. As a result of that workshop, a recommendation had been made for the development of a strategy that would contribute to the eradication of female genital mutilation and the establishment of a subregional training team on gender issues.

29. The Federation also supported the recommendation that strategies for gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment should be incorporated in country strategy notes and in the formulation of the United Nations Development

Assistance Framework (UNDAF), including those for countries in crisis. The situation of women in times of crisis, when they were subjected to the violation of their rights and to greater violence and exploitation, was a cause of special concern. In that connection, the Federation welcomed the inclusion of women's rights in the work of the Commission on Human Rights at its recent session, as well as the consideration given to gender issues by the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs and the Executive Committee on Peace and Security.

30. The international community needed to renew its determination and efforts to address gender issues. It was important to utilize collective resources, through effective coordination, in order to meet the needs of millions of women whose lives had yet to feel the full positive impact of global efforts for the advancement of women.

31. **Mr. Kunda** (Zambia) said that his delegation subscribed to the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. It appreciated the fact that the Council was considering gender mainstreaming within the context of operational activities, a sign that States Members and the United Nations itself were taking questions relating to the advancement of women seriously. There was a need to act with caution, however, in order to guard against a situation where gender mainstreaming was viewed as an end in itself, since it was only one of the components of the Beijing Platform for Action and must be integrated with other components in order to achieve equality between men and women. Before policy decisions were taken, it was important to carry out an analysis of their impact on men and women respectively. Policy analysis must not become the goal, but a means to an end.

32. That was particularly important when it was a question of operational activities and programmes. It would be unfortunate if reports submitted to the Council and other United Nations organs gave an account only of the progress achieved in gender mainstreaming, which was extremely important in the stages of setting national objectives but which could not become a substitute for action. His delegation believed that it was important to achieve policy coherence on gender mainstreaming within the system as quickly as possible and then supplement it with viable action on all fronts.

33. The issue of capacity-building was an important one for developing countries. In Africa, despite the enormous obstacles they faced, women had made energetic efforts to organize, articulate their concerns and make their voices heard, and were pressing for the expansion of their economic and social opportunities and the advancement of their rights. Unfortunately, those efforts had not translated into improved access to resources or increased participation in decision-making or leadership.

34. Gender equality was a prerequisite for development and Member States had to commit themselves to implementing policies aimed at improving women's lives. For that reason, his delegation, which believed that gender issues and development must become a crucial aspect of operational activities, supported a broader perspective on those issues rather than a narrow approach to women in development. It therefore urged the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to give priority to technical assistance geared to capacity-building and to build strong gender components into their programmes and projects while paying particular attention to the need for education and training for women and girl children. His delegation believed that the guidelines for the elaboration of UNDAF should from the start include gender equality and an integrated gender perspective.

35. He would like to see a continued and better commitment by UNIFEM to capacity-building projects, especially in Africa. Over the years, UNIFEM had undertaken small projects the end results of which had had a great impact. It was therefore disappointing that, despite the commendable work that had been done, the operating budget of UNIFEM continued to be very small. That ran counter to the efforts made to achieve capacity-building.

36. The issue of inadequate resources, particularly in relation to the advancement of women, was a matter of great concern within the United Nations and the international community in general. In the view of his delegation, more could and should be done to mobilize resources, particularly when dealing with operational activities, which was where action would count. If the United Nations system was to be in a position to support the implementation of the Beijing Platform for

Action, priority would have to be given to the mobilization of the resources that would have to be invested in the advancement of women.

37. The mobilization of resources would have to be accompanied by accountability in the operational activities of the United Nations. It was important to begin to consider facts and figures as opposed to policy statements or statements of intent. His delegation supported the recommendation of the Inter-Agency Workshop on Field-level Follow-up to Global Conferences, organized by the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) that there was a need to provide financial assistance to non-governmental organizations and other national mechanisms working on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in order to facilitate and accelerate the implementation of the objectives set.

38. Lastly, he emphasized the importance of establishing good partnership in order to achieve equality between men and women, partnership in which each partner — men, women, national Governments, the United Nations and the international community — was prepared to take on its responsibilities.

39. **Mr. Al-Hitti** (Iraq) said that Iraqi women enjoyed equality with men, an equality which was guaranteed by the Constitution and the legislation in force in the country. In order to reaffirm its commitment to the principle of equality between men and women in all spheres, Iraq had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. All State organs in Iraq had also adopted numerous programmes and established machinery to guarantee the advancement of women, in accordance with the Nairobi Strategy and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

40. It was, however, regrettable that the legislative and executive measures adopted by the Iraqi Government since the beginning of the 1980s, and earlier, to improve the situation of women had been suspended owing to the economic embargo imposed against Iraq since 1990. The cumulative effects of that embargo had reached a disastrous point and its terrible consequences were felt in all spheres of Iraqi society, especially among the most vulnerable sections of the population, including children, women and older people, who had lost their legitimate rights to life, work, food and well-being. When the decisions

adopted at the Beijing Conference were reviewed to assess to what extent its lofty objectives, such as equality, development and peace, had been attained, it was evident that the attainment of those objectives had been impeded in various countries, in particular Iraq, where the retaliatory aggression used to resolve international disputes, instead of peaceful means, and the imposition of sanctions, instead of the granting of aid, had exacerbated conflicts.

41. In a report issued by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) it was pointed out that the fundamental problem facing children and women in Iraq was malnutrition and its serious consequences for health and child development. The study indicated that the number of children underweight at birth had increased from 9.2 per cent in 1991 to 22.8 per cent in March 1998. Moreover, the infantile mortality rate had doubled between 1990 and 1994, while the number of women dying during childbirth had increased from 18 to 310 per 100,000 women between 1990 and 1996.

42. In the annual report of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies on world disasters in 1988, a whole chapter was devoted to the tragedy of children and women in Iraq. In that report, it was stated that the economic sanctions imposed against Iraq had placed the people under siege, since many Iraqis had been forced to sell their personal property in order to be able to survive.

43. He urged all members of the international community to discharge their legal and moral responsibilities in order to put an end to the extermination to which the people of Iraq were subjected, under the aegis of the United Nations and for political reasons and purposes that had nothing to do with the resolutions of the Security Council on the subject. He also urged the implementation of paragraph 145, subparagraphs (h) and (i), of the Beijing Platform for Action, which reaffirmed the need to refrain from adopting any measure not in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations that impeded the full achievement of economic and social development by the population of the affected countries, in particular women and children, and to take all measures to alleviate the negative impact of economic sanctions on women and children.

44. Lastly, he reiterated that the use of food and medicines as a means of political pressure against other States was a very serious matter and was immoral and

unlawful, and that the whole international community had an obligation to confront that phenomenon, whatever the excuses given and the causes cited.

45. **Ms. Rodriguez** (United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)) said that, in response to the Beijing Conference, UNIDO had formulated its own Plan of Action as an integral part of its medium-term plan (1998-2001), which focused on the enhancement of women's contribution to industrial development through skills upgrading and better equipping women as manufacturers, technicians, entrepreneurs and workers.

46. The UNIDO Plan of Action had three main components: the promotion of gender-sensitive industrial policies and strategies to facilitate the integration of women in industrial development and better prepare them for managerial posts in industry; entrepreneurship development and human resources development to facilitate the access of women to new and non-traditional types of industry and acquisition of new skills enabling them to enter new markets and achieve competitiveness; and promotion of a network of investment and information centres for women to provide them with relevant information on matters related to industry.

47. Since the Beijing Conference, UNIDO's activities had focused on four areas: gender sensitization; research and analysis; skills enhancement for women in industry; and development and dissemination of technologies for rural women.

48. UNIDO had provided support and advisory services for mainstreaming gender in industrial development programmes and policies at a series of workshops designed for those involved in projects and programmes in industrial development, which had been held at UNIDO headquarters and in Kenya and Uganda. Government officials, national counterpart personnel and support institutions such as training institutions and credit organizations had participated in the programmes.

49. UNIDO had developed methodologies and approaches to assess the industrial human resources base and had provided assistance to develop an integrated programme for the promotion of the participation of women in industry. The database on women in industry, a collection of socio-economic indicators for women's participation in industry, had



been developed and the user-friendly retrieval system was being prepared.

50. UNIDO had also developed tailor-made training programmes for women's entrepreneurship development in selected subsectors, including food processing and the textile industry. Those programmes had been implemented mainly in Africa, although a training programme for women managers had been developed and implemented in China, particularly with a view to increasing modern management skills, and a similar project was being formulated in the Russian Federation.

51. A series of programmes to introduce appropriate technologies for rural women at the community level had been developed, for instance in Mali and Burkina Faso introducing a multi-purpose platform where a diesel engine could be connected not only to various cereal processing equipment during the harvest but also to other small appliances such as battery chargers and water pumps. The introduction of technologies was assessed and validated through the pilot phase in order to adapt it to the needs of rural women.

52. UNIDO was actively participating in the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, under the leadership of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues to the Secretary-General, and providing substantive inputs to the medium-term plan for the advancement of women (1996-2001). It would also fully cooperate in the activities of the Beijing+5 special session of the General Assembly, to be held in 2000.

53. **Mr. Matute** (Peru) said that the Beijing Platform for Action had given formal impetus to his country's focus on women, which from the outset had been part of the broad strategy to combat extreme poverty.

54. The inflationary spiral of the period 1988-1990 and the levels of terrorist violence had considerably aggravated the problem of poverty in Peru. It had therefore been essential to improve standards of living so that women could fully enjoy the rights proclaimed by law. Encouraging results had been achieved: the figures showed that total poverty had started to decrease, from 54 to 45 per cent between 1991 and 1995, and extreme poverty had declined from 22 to 19 per cent over the same period. Under the strategy to combat extreme poverty, women had become the focus of human development. In that connection, the policy pursued in Peru gave priority to the national literacy programme, which was geared to education for

development and included elements connected with reproductive health, full citizenship, prevention of domestic violence and productive activities designed to enable women to take decisions and improve their quality of life. There was a network of 26,143 literacy workers, mainly women, dealing with 522,860 persons acquiring literacy skills. The overall illiteracy rate had declined from 10.7 per cent in 1996 to 9.7 per cent in 1997 and should drop to 4 per cent in 2000.

55. In June 1988, the National Nutrition and Food Plan had been adopted with the aim of improving the food and nutrition status of the Peruvian population suffering from extreme poverty. By concentrating efforts and resources from the public and private sectors and the grass-roots social organizations, it was hoped to reduce levels of chronic malnutrition among children under five years of age from 25.8 to 18 per cent. Support would continue to be provided to the activities of nutritional promotion and food security carried out under the National Programme of Food Assistance through, inter alia, public cafeterias, emergency cafeterias, children's cafeterias, mothers' clubs, childcare centres and micro-businesses. In that connection, projects had been undertaken to provide information and facilitate credit to rural women in order to give real impetus to self-sufficiency.

56. Those examples not only showed how the commitments made at the Beijing Conference were being put into effect, but also reflected a plan of action based on the establishment of an ongoing dialogue between the Government, the private sector and non-governmental organizations. In order to enhance the effectiveness of that dialogue, on 29 October 1996 the Peruvian Government had established the Ministry for the Advancement of Women and Human Development in order to strengthen the role of women and the family in society through policies leading to programmes and projects geared to social development and efforts to combat extreme poverty, incorporating the gender perspective across the board in order to increase participation by women in the political, social, legal, economic and cultural spheres.

57. A few days previously, Peru had renewed its strong commitment to one of the most important international instruments in the sphere of women's advancement — the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women — by submitting its third and fourth periodic reports. The experts on the Committee for the Elimination of

Discrimination against Women had recognized the transparency of those reports and the reliable presentation of the progress made and the remaining problems. In the same spirit, Peru was adopting a serious approach to its commitments under the Beijing Platform for Action and all the international instruments concerning women.

58. His delegation was fully aware that the formulation of legal and policy instruments represented an important step but that true gender mainstreaming should be reflected in practice. For that reason, it felt that the decrease in contributions for the development activities of the United Nations system was not commensurate with the level of interest displayed by States in many of their national policies, and that the reduction would affect programme delivery. It was important to evolve new forms of financing to enhance cooperation that had yielded positive results in project execution as a means of obtaining results.

59. Lastly, he agreed with the Secretary-General that the reform of the Organization should encompass the work resulting from the various international conferences in order to ensure gender mainstreaming and announced that Peru would continue to strive to grant equal opportunities to all its citizens, men and women.

*The meeting rose at 7.15 p.m.*