

The Afro-Asian People's Solidarity
Organization
The Permanent Secretariat
CAIRO

World Conference for the UN
Decade for Women
Nairobi 1985

MEMORANDUM OF AAPSO to the World
Conference for the UN Decade for Woman

The World Plan of Action adopted at the World Conference of the International Women's Year held in Mexico City from 19 June to 2 July 1975 represented a global consensus on what should be done to improve the condition of women. A major focus of the plan was to provide guidelines for national action over the ten-year period up to 1985 which the General Assembly of the United Nations at its thirtieth session proclaimed as the Decade for Women: Equality, development and peace.

Nine areas were selected in the Plan as key ones for national action. The Plan noted, however, that these areas should not be viewed in isolation since in reality they are closely interrelated. The guidelines proposed, therefore, ever to be put in action in an integrated manner.

The first of these nine areas specified by the plan for national action was international co-operation and strengthening of international peace. According to the plan an essential condition for the maintenance and strengthening of international co-operation and peace is the promotion and protection of human rights for all in conditions of equity among within nations. To achieve this, the peace efforts of women as individuals and in groups and in national and international organizations should be recognized and encouraged. These efforts include the promotion of international co-operation, the strengthening of international peace and disarmament, and the combating of colonialism, neo-colonialism, foreign

domination and alien subjugation, apartheid and racial discrimination.

In other words, the Plan has envisaged the emancipation of women in the wider context of the emancipation of nations, since the former cannot be actually achieved without the realisation of the latter. This applies particularly to the peoples of Africa and Asia, and all the peoples of the developing world. Therefore a realistic assessment of the achievements of the UN decade of women should necessarily and first of all include an assessment of the achievements of the struggle of the international community for international peace and disarmament, against colonialism, neo-colonialism, foreign domination and alien subjugation, apartheid and racial discrimination.

The fact that this World conference is held in Nairobi, an African capital, in 1985 the year of drought and famine in Africa is highly significant. As a result of the colonialist legacy, and the continuous exploitation of African Peoples by TNCs protected by the existing unjust international economic order, the economies of most of the African countries have become so vulnerable that they could not withstand natural calamities. Women and children were the first victims of the drought and famine in Africa. This state of affairs exists though in other forms, in developing countries of Asia and Latin America. It is no secret that because of the continuous rejection of the developed free market countries, all efforts of the developing countries to readjust international relations and establish a New International Economic Order have failed. The imbalance of terms of trade and aggravation of the debt crisis, the deterioration of prices of raw material and the highly exploitative conduct of Transnationals have all adversely affected the development programmes of the developing countries consequently and their programmes to promote the status of women.

On the other hand, the world has been witnessing during the last ten years a spiralling increase in military expenditure and a continuously mounting arms race pushing the world to the brink of a nuclear catastrophe. The deployment of medium range missiles in West Europe, the military

build up in the Indian Ocean, the creation of new imperialist aggressive pacts and axis . . . the practices of the policy of destabilization against the peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America have posed serious threats to the independence and to the very existence of the newly liberated nations, and created the most unfavourable conditions, for their development, and particularly for the promotion of the status of women in these parts of the world.

While the Mexico Plan called for combating apartheid and racial discrimination we have been witnessing during the last ten years : many Western powers . . . providing the Apartheid regime of South Africa with all forms of material and moral support without which that regime could not have survived. Thus, instead of being eliminated, Apartheid is now being institutionalized. South Africa is still occupying Namibia, oppressing the South African people, trying to isolate and physically liquidate their leading liberation movements; SWAPO and ANC, and threatening conspiring and actually engaging in savage acts of aggression against the Front Line States. South Africa has been turned into a real arsenal threatening with its nuclear potentials the freedom of African people.

While the Mexico plan called for strengthening the struggle against foreign domination and alien subjugation, we have been witnessing during the last ten years the continuous Israeli occupation of the Arab territories, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the massacres of Sabra and Shatella where mostly Palestinian women and children were brutally slaughtered, and continuous Israeli attempts to isolate and physically liquidate the PLO, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian People. Supported

by the U.S.A., Zionist leaders have persistently rejected all initiatives to establish durable and just peace in the Middle East on the basis of respect of the sovereignty and national interests of its peoples, foremost Palestinian people. Even the latest initiative to convene a UN sponsored international conference to solve the problem with the participation of all concerned parties, including the PLO, on equal footing was rejected by Israel and the USA.

While the Mexico Plan called for enhancing the international co-operation, we have been witnessing during the last ten years a systematic persuance of the policy of destabilization in other parts of the world. It is the imperialist policy of destabilization that flamed up the communal conflicts in Lebanon India and elsewhere; and try to jeopardize the national liberation struggle in South East Asia and Central America.

It is within this context that the Afro-Asian Solidarity organization (AAPSO) assesses the achievements of the UN decade of Women in the developing countries of Africa and Asia. AAPSO has always viewed the question of promotion of the situation of women in the developing world as an integral part of the question of the reinforcement of the independence, sovereignty and socio-economic development of these nations. It believes whatever the achievements of the decade might be in other areas, there are still a lot of efforts to be made to create favourable conditions for the promotion of the situation of Women and children in Africa and Asia. The World Conference for the UN decade of Women in Nairobi is requested to focus its maximum attention on these vital problems and come out

with the biggest world support to the just struggle of the peoples of Africa and Asia for Peace, independence and development, against arms race, colonialism and neo-colonialism, foreign domination and alien subjugation, apartheid and racial discrimination. These are part and parcel of the peace efforts of women as individuals and in groups, and in national and international organizations that should be recognized and encouraged as stipulated by the Mexico plan in the first of the nine areas specified for national action.