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THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Study prepared by Mrs. M.K. Baxter

The Preparatory Committee for the Conference was entrusted by the General Assembly, in resolution 2081 (XX) of 20 December 1965, with the responsibility, inter alia, to organize and direct the preparation of the necessary evaluation studies and other documentation for the Conference. In accordance with its decisions, various reports, studies and other documents have been submitted by the Secretary-General to the participants in the Conference in the A/CONF.32/ series.

As regards the evaluation studies, the Preparatory Committee expressed the view that, where necessary, the Secretary-General would find qualified persons with backgrounds in the various social and legal systems to assist him. The Secretary-General accordingly invited a small number of distinguished personalities from various regions to submit studies on selected subjects. These persons were free to express their own opinions and in particular to evaluate independently the work of the United Nations in the field of human rights.

The present document contains a study prepared by Mrs. M.K. Baxter, Former President of the National Council of Women of Great Britain. The views expressed in the study are those of the author.

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INTRODUCTION

1. Human Rights Year, 1968, twenty years after the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and twenty-two years after the establishment of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, seems a suitable time for taking stock of women's position in the world. Perhaps a view of the present shows up more clearly against a background of the past.

2. Although, over the years, nations have cherished records or traditions of famous women - outstanding personalities, who, forcing their way out of obscurity, achieved fame and prominence in their time, - these were the exceptions who made even more manifest women's stunted role as the inferior and subservient sex.

3. In the nineteenth century, as a result of a variety of causes, including the industrial revolution, and the spread of education, women in the Western world, and the dependencies associated with it, became aware of new horizons, conscious of new potentialities, and seized with the need for improved conditions and opportunities for themselves, as well as for those peoples of the world who were suffering various forms of slavery. There is a significant historical link between the anti-slavery movement and the movement for women's rights.

4. In 1848, a few women called together the "First Women's Rights Convention" at Seneca Falls, New York. At this meeting they listed a number of grievances arising from women's inferior status, and framed a declaration based on a famous model:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that the history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man towards women."

They publicly proclaimed goals towards which women must work, and so inspired an organized movement towards women's rights.

5. The next forty years saw women increasingly employed in factories, workshops, and in the new "white collar" occupations, with some women forcing their way into higher education and thence, into the professions. There were signs of a growing awareness among women of the need for voting rights as a means to enable them to gain sufficient influence to secure other rights. In many parts of the world, women's societies were created, not only for cultural pursuits, but also for

temperance work, missionary work, penal reform, to help prisoners and orphans, and to help friendless girls. By 1888, associations working for women's suffrage and for civic education were in being. In 1888, the first permanent international voluntary organization for women was established, and its aims included the removal of discriminations against women.

6. Progress in obtaining voting rights is indicated by the fact that, by 1900, women had, in one country, obtained the right to vote in all elections; by the end of the First World War, the right had been gained in twelve more countries, and by 1945, women had obtained the vote in approximately forty countries.

7. Internationally, one or two women's organizations made tentative approaches towards relationship with the International Peace Conference at The Hague, in 1899, and 1907. Certain matters concerning women's rights were the subject of international action in 1902, when conventions concerning marriage, divorce, and the guardianship of infants were adopted. The Covenant of the League of Nations contained Articles relating to working conditions for all, irrespective of sex, and, for the suppression of traffic in women. The regional organization of American republics pioneered intergovernmental action against sex discrimination, and, in 1928, set up an Inter-American Commission of Women to work for women's rights. The Latin American Republics urged the League of Nations to consider the civil and political status of women, and to make surveys of the position of women in public, private, and penal laws. The Second World War prevented the completion of work undertaken in this connexion.

8. The Covenant of the League of Nations made no mention of human rights, but there were indications in it, and in the work of the International Labour Organisation established in 1919, that protection of certain rights had come to be regarded as an international obligation. However, the idea of internationally-organized institutionalized restraints on the rights of sovereign Governments over their subjects was still in its infancy. Initiatives by an international body in the sphere of women's rights were unknown, and any efforts towards achieving rights for women had to push their way laboriously from below.

9. With the setting up of the United Nations in 1945, work for the advancement of women entered on a new dimension.

I. United Nations authority for action to further women's rights

10. The United Nations Charter contains seven specific references to human rights. Firstly, the Preamble states, "We the peoples of the United Nations determined... to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women... have resolved to combine our efforts to accomplish these aims...". Secondly, in Article 1, the achievement of international co-operation in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is put on a level with the maintenance of international peace and security as one of the declared purposes of the United Nations. The third reference is in Article 13, which instructs the General Assembly to initiate studies and make recommendations for the purpose of assisting in the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. Fourthly, Article 55 provides that the United Nations shall promote universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion, and this may be viewed in conjunction with Article 56, by which all Members pledge themselves to take joint and separate action in co-operation with the Organization for the achievement of the purposes set forth in Article 55. The fifth reference is in Article 62, which states that the Economic and Social Council (established as a principal organ of the United Nations under Article 7 of the Charter) "may make recommendations for the purpose of promoting respect for, and observances of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all". (It is, perhaps, relevant to mention also Article 8, which stipulates that "The United Nations shall place no restriction on the eligibility of men and women to participate in any capacity, and under conditions of equality in its principal and subsidiary organs"). Sixthly, in Article 68, the Economic and Social Council is instructed to... "set up commissions... for the promotion of human rights". The seventh specific reference to human rights is in Article 76, where one of the basic objects of the Trusteeship System is stated to be "to encourage respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion...". Additionally, by virtue of Article 1, every Article which refers to the purposes of the United Nations also refers to human rights.

11. It is abundantly clear from these extracts that the term "human rights" in the United Nations Charter includes equal rights for men and women, and excludes all irrelevant distinction and discrimination based on sex.

12. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, proclaimed on 10 December 1948, without a dissenting voice, declared, as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, the effective recognition and observance of the principles of human rights and freedoms, without distinction of any kind, the dignity and worth of the human person, and the equal rights of men and women, which had been reaffirmed in the Charter. It gave amplification and precision to the principles, including those affecting the rights of women.

13. As a unique and comprehensive international instrument covering the whole field of human rights, the Universal Declaration is recognized as a landmark in the history of the United Nations, and its impact on the peoples and nations to whom it was addressed has been great. Through it, for the first time in history, responsibility for the protection and pursuit of human rights, including the rights of women, has been formally assumed by the international community, and accepted as a permanent obligation.

14. It is on this firm foundation that United Nations activities for the advancement of women have been based.

II. United Nations action for women's rights

15. Activities concerning human rights were included within the functions of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, established by the Economic and Social Council at its first session in January-February 1946, and matters affecting the status of women were allocated to a Sub-Commission. In June 1946, the Economic and Social Council gave this body the status of a full commission, to be known as the Commission on the Status of Women, in itself an important development. The Commission has been mainly, but not exclusively, responsible for the preparation of recommendations, reports etc., on the promotion of women's rights in political, economic, civil, social and educational fields. It has also recommended action on urgent problems requiring immediate attention in the field of human rights, with the object of securing the implementation of the principle that men and women shall be accorded equal rights.

16. In order to gain a clear idea of the extent of the United Nations activities towards the achievement of women's rights, it is useful to consider them under broad groupings - political - legal - economic, educational, and others. /...

III. Political rights of women

17. From its earliest days, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women gave high priority to the question of women's attainment of equal political rights. From 1946, it has reviewed each year women's progress to political equality under national laws, on the basis of reports prepared by the United Nations Secretariat.

18. It regarded the acquisition of political rights on equal terms with men as an essential first step towards the achievement of women's equality with men in other fields, and beginning in 1949, its efforts were directed to the drawing up of an international instrument on this subject. After a considerable amount of preparatory work, discussion and debate, a Convention on the Political Rights of Women was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1952, and came into force in 1954. Based directly on article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and expressing the desire and intention of the Contracting Parties to equalize the status of men and women in the possession and exercise of political rights, it provided that women shall be entitled to vote in all elections on equal terms with men, that they shall be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies established by national law, on equal terms with men, and that they shall be entitled to hold public office and exercise all public functions established by national law on equal terms with men, without any discrimination.

19. This Convention is of particular interest as being the first international treaty under which States Parties undertook a legal obligation concerning the domestic exercise of political rights, and the first application of the principles of the Charter regarding the equal rights of men and women to a concrete problem. Article 25 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966, and article 4 of the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 1967 contain similar stipulations to those in the Convention.

IV. Legal rights

20. The legal status of women has long engaged the attention of the Commission on the Status of Women, and, at its first session in 1947 it included among its aims: "Full equality for women to exercise all civil rights, irrespective of nationality, race, language or religion". Among these it stressed rights regarding

marriage, guardianship of children, nationality, legal capacity and domicile. Its work in these spheres has led to recommendations, followed by action by the United Nations at various levels.

(a) Nationality of married women

21. At an early stage, the Commission took up the problem of the nationality of married women, a problem for which a solution had been sought in other spheres for many years. Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provided that everyone has the right to a nationality and that no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality, nor denied the right to change his nationality. In 1948, the Commission initiated a study of existing laws and administrative practices in this field, and it emerged from this that there existed considerable discrepancies between law and practice, and that the tendency was for both to operate to the detriment of married women's rights. Consequent on the Commission's advice, the Economic and Social Council, in 1954, recommended Governments to take action to remedy the position. The Commission proceeded to prepare a draft convention, and, in 1957, the Convention on the Nationality of Married Women was adopted by the General Assembly. It provided, inter alia, that neither the celebration nor the dissolution of a marriage between a national of a State, and an alien, nor the change of nationality by a husband during marriage, shall automatically affect the nationality of the wife; and that the alien wife of a national of a State may, at her own request, acquire the nationality of her husband, through specially privileged naturalization procedures.

22. The Commission continues its study of national legislation on this subject, assisted by regular reports from the Secretary-General on information collected from Member States, with a view to stimulating progress towards the attainment of the Convention's aims. In order to publicize these aims, publications based on the reports were issued in 1950, 1955, and 1963. In addition, the Secretary-General issued, in 1962, a pamphlet entitled "Convention on the Nationality of Married Women", containing details of the Convention and its provisions.

(b) Consent to marriage, minimum age for marriage and registration of marriages

23. One of the rights specified in article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was that of men and women of full age to marry. The article also provides that marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses. Regulation and harmonization of the law regarding marriage is complicated by the fact that in many parts of the world marriage is governed by traditions and ancient laws and customs which have no regard to the rights of women. The Commission on the Status of Women, already involved in efforts to secure an improvement in the position of women in private law, was invited by the Economic and Social Council in 1957 to consider a suggestion made by the Conference of Plenipotentiaries convened in 1956 in connexion with the preparation of the Supplementary Convention on Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery. The suggestion was that there should be a study of the question of marriage with the object of drawing attention to the desirability of free consent of both parties, and of the establishment of a minimum age. The study was undertaken and in the light of it, it was considered appropriate for the United Nations to lay down desirable standards in an international instrument. The Commission also considered compulsory registration of marriages, since without this, the other requirements would not be of much avail. In 1962 the General Assembly adopted a Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, which provided that no marriage shall be legally entered into without the full and free consent of both parties, that States Parties to the Convention shall take legislative action to specify a minimum age for marriage, and that all marriages shall be registered in an appropriate official registry by the competent authority. In 1965 the General Assembly adopted a recommendation on the same subject for the benefit of such States as may not be in a position to become parties to the Convention. Some of the requirements are less stringent, but the recommendation does expressly provide that the minimum age for marriage to be specified by Member States shall be not less than fifteen years. Further, the recommendation, unlike the Convention, specifically provides for international machinery for implementation, namely, national legislation or other action, notification of such action to the Secretary-General, and a regular reporting procedure. Reports received under this procedure

are examined by the Commission on the Status of Women, and recommendations are to be made as deemed necessary.

(c) General

24. Much of the vast expanse of private law which has a bearing on the rights of women has been studied by the Commission on the Status of Women, and included among the subjects on which, arising out of its recommendations, the Economic and Social Council has passed resolutions are:

- Equality of rights and duties of husband and wife in family matters,
- Right of wife to full legal capacity,
- Right of wife to engage in work outside the home,
- Equal rights to acquire, administer, enjoy and dispose of property,
- Rights of wife over community and separate property during marriage and at its dissolution, and over property owned at the time of marriage,
- Right of wife to engage in independent work and to control her earnings,
- Married women's right of domicile,
- Equal rights and duties of spouses with regard to the children of the marriage, including guardianship,
- Equality of inheritance rights,
- Equality of rights in the event of dissolution of marriage, annulment of marriage and judicial separation,
- Customs, ancient laws and practices adversely affecting the human dignity of women,
- Certain physical operations based on custom.

25. Articles 5, 6 and 7 of the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 1967 deal with the legal rights of women.

V. Economic rights

(a) Equal remuneration for work of equal value

26. The principle of equal economic rights for women, implicit in the terms of the Charter, has been a goal towards which the Commission on the Status of Women has directed its energies since its earliest days. In particular, in the light of

the explicit guidance in article 23 (2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights - "Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work" - it has made special efforts towards the achievement of equality in this field. In this, it has been able to avail itself of the help of the International Labour Organisation, which was established in 1919, and which is one of the specialized agencies of the United Nations. It receives, every year, reports on the activities of the International Labour Organisation of special interest in connexion with women's employment. In 1948, the Economic and Social Council, in a resolution adopted on the recommendation of the Commission on the Status of Women, reaffirmed the principle of equal rights of men and women laid down in the Preamble to the United Nations Charter, approved the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value for men and women workers, and called upon Member States to implement that principle in every way. At the same time it invited the International Labour Organisation to proceed as rapidly as possible with the further consideration of the subject, and in 1949, it transmitted to it recommendations regarding relevant principles put forward by the Commission on the Status of Women. In 1951, the International Labour Organisation adopted a Convention and a Recommendation on Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value. The Convention provided that States should undertake to promote and ensure, by appropriate means, the application to all workers of the principle of equal remuneration of men and women workers for work of equal value, and made reference to alternative methods of application. The Recommendation laid down more detailed rules with regard to measures and methods for implementation and called for various types of preliminary and consequential action to facilitate the application of the principle.

27. In 1952, the Economic and Social Council commended the International Labour Organisation's adoption of the Convention and Recommendation, and recommended the adoption of the principles embodied in those instruments not only by the States members of the International Labour Organisation, but also by all other countries. The Council continued to urge action in specific recommendations in 1953, 1954 and 1955, and in the last year added a suggestion that plans for technical assistance should be utilized in the pursuit of effective methods of application of the principles. In 1957, and again in 1962, it urged ratification and implementation of the Convention.

28. A further stimulus to the adoption of these principles is contained in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966 (article 7), in which the States Parties recognize the right of everyone to "... Fair wages and equal remuneration for work of equal value without distinction of any kind, in particular women being guaranteed conditions of work not inferior to those enjoyed by men, with equal pay for equal work". Article 10 of the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women calls for equal remuneration with men and equality of treatment in respect of work of equal value.

29. In 1960, at the request of the Commission on the Status of Women, the United Nations published "Equal Pay for Equal Work", a pamphlet prepared by the Secretary-General, in collaboration with the International Labour Organisation.

(b) Discrimination (employment and occupation)

30. From 1952 onwards the question of discrimination in employment, including discrimination against women, was one of the matters which engaged the attention of the Commission on Human Rights and its Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. At the invitation of the Economic and Social Council, the International Labour Organisation undertook a study of this subject on a global basis, which led to the preparation and adoption of the Convention on Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) 1958. This provides inter alia that the States Parties shall declare and pursue a national policy designed to promote, by appropriate methods, equality of opportunity and treatment in respect of employment and occupation, with a view to the elimination of discrimination. The definition of discrimination in the Convention includes any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of sex, and the terms "employment" and "occupation" include access to vocational training, access to employment, and to particular occupations and terms and conditions of employment.

(c) General

31. Other matters relating to the economic rights of women with which the Commission on the Status of Women has concerned itself are:

- Access of women to training and employment in the principal professional fields - the Economic and Social Council suggested, to Governments, non-governmental organizations and others, means, including training schemes, by which this might be assisted.

- Age of retirement, and pension rights - position has been studied, and differences of opinion are under consideration.
- Part-time work and older women workers - the special problems arising in respect of these categories of workers have been under review and solutions are being sought.
- Women in handicrafts, and cottage industries - developments useful in organization, and the avoidance of the abuse of industrial home work have been studied in conjunction with the International Labour Organisation.
- Working women with family responsibilities - comprehensive inquiry into this matter conducted by the International Labour Organisation was of great interest, and the subsequent unanimous adoption by the International Labour Organisation in 1965, of the Recommendation on Employment (Women with Family Responsibilities) was welcomed, as "of fundamental importance in combating and eliminating discrimination against women".

32. Article 10 of the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 1967, proclaims a number of economic rights which ought to be assured to women.

VI. Educational rights

33. The importance which the Commission on the Status of Women has attached from its earliest days to the question of the education of women - without which women will be unable to take advantage of other rights to which they are entitled - has resulted in a series of resolutions and recommendations many of which the Economic and Social Council has issued to Member States and others.
34. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares the right of everyone to education and indicates that this term includes primary, higher, technical and professional education. The Commission's action has been directed to securing the access of women and girls to all types of education, at all levels. In this it has had the close collaboration of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and has recently had the advantage of yearly reports from that body dealing with such subjects as the access of women to the teaching profession, out-of-school education, education in rural areas, and primary, secondary and higher education. In addition, the United Nations

Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization furnishes the Commission, every two years, with reports on its activities which are of special interest to women.

35. Subjects on which the Economic and Social Council has made recommendations to Member States and, on occasion, to specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations between 1948 and 1960, often at the instance of the Commission, have included:

- Equal educational rights and opportunities for women and girls,
- Equal access to all types of education, including technical and vocational education,
- Equal opportunity to take basic school curricula, including choice of curriculum,
- Eradication of illiteracy among female population,
- Provision of sufficient free, compulsory, primary school places for all, including girls,
- Equal opportunities for awards of scholarships and study grants,
- Development of out-of-school and adult education for women, and intensification of campaign against female illiteracy,
- Provision of facilities for married teachers with family responsibilities.

(a) Convention against Discrimination in Education

36. Following an intensive inquiry into discrimination in education, in which various organs of the United Nations, in conjunction with technical and legal experts appointed by Member States took part, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization adopted, in 1960, a Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education. This provided inter alia that States Parties would abrogate any statutory provisions and any administrative instructions, and discontinue any administrative practices involving discrimination in education. They would undertake to apply a national policy to promote equality of opportunity and treatment in matters of education, and this policy would make primary education free and compulsory, secondary education generally available and accessible to all, and make higher education equally accessible to all on the basis of individual capacity. The definition of discrimination includes any distinction, exclusion, limitation, or preference based on sex. The Recommendation gives, in greater detail, action to be taken to implement the national non-discrimination

policy laid down in the Convention. A Protocol of 1962 provides for a Conciliation and Good Offices Commission for seeking a settlement of disputes between States Parties, and dealing with measures of implementation.

VII. Other rights

(a) Action on slavery

37. The assumption by the United Nations of the powers and functions formerly exercised by the League of Nations under the International Slavery Convention of 1926, and the adoption, in 1956, of a Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery, constituted a significant step in the long international effort to end the still-remaining flagrant violations of the dignity and human rights of men and women.

(b) Action on traffic in women

38. The action of the United Nations in 1949, in approving the Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in Persons, the purpose of which was to consolidate a series of older international instruments relating to white slave traffic, and traffic in women and children, and to extend the scope of these instruments - although not part of the United Nations human rights programme in a narrower sense - was in keeping with its aim of striving to maintain the dignity and worth of the human person, with particular reference to women and children.

(c) International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

39. These two Covenants, adopted in 1966, are directly inspired by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and together form something in the nature of an international bill of rights. They cover, with a few exceptions, the comprehensive and wide range of principles included in the Declaration, and a number of rights, including some relating to women, are more explicit. The two Covenants are the culmination of years of effort to enshrine human rights in an international treaty, in terms of binding international obligations. The attainment of human rights, including the rights of women, is likely to benefit from this achievement.

(d) Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

40. Although a number of the Conventions referred to above have included provisions aimed at eliminating discrimination against women, the General Assembly of the United Nations considered it desirable that a declaration containing a comprehensive list of discriminations regarded as prejudicial to the advancement of women should be prepared. On 7 November 1967, the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was adopted by the General Assembly - a fitting prelude to the initiation of the long-term programme for the advancement of women.

VIII. United Nations achievement

41. If, in Human Rights Year 1968, women in all countries of the world had reached a position when they could lead full lives in freedom, enjoying conditions and opportunities in equality with men, and with all discriminations based on sex, and denial of equal rights with men, eliminated, this would indicate that the United Nations activities of the past twenty years or so for the advancement of women had achieved success. It can be said at once that this situation has not been reached, and that it is not likely to be reached in 1968, so the success of the United Nations in its efforts for the advancement of women must be measured in relative terms.

42. The Covenants, and other instruments to which reference has been made, are the United Nations interpretation of the principles and purposes of the Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights concerning women's rights, expressed in institutional terms. The building up of this body of international law on women's rights constitutes, in itself, a notable achievement. It is significant, and in contrast to the situation in the years before the establishment of the United Nations, that initiatives for the advancement of women have arisen at international level. In a manner, the Conventions are a consensus of the views of Member States as to what ought to be done. Progress from this point takes place when they actually begin to do it, and the obvious first step in this is the ratification of conventions. Ratifications of the principal Conventions on women's rights as at the end of September 1967 were as follows:

Number of ratifications
by Member States

Political Rights of Women, 1952	54
Nationality of Married Women, 1957	36
Consent, Age and Registration of Marriage, 1962	17
Discrimination (Employment and Occupation), 1958	58
Equal Remuneration, 1951	57
Discrimination in Education, 1960	36

43. As already suggested, statistics of ratifications are some indication, but in no way conclusive, as to progress. For instance, with regard to the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, as a result of the voluntary reporting procedure arranged in connexion with this Convention, both for States which have ratified it and those which have not, it is known that eighty-two countries have taken action since the signature of the United Nations Charter in 1945 confirming, granting, or extending, full or limited political rights to women. The position reported as at 15 September 1967 was that there were:

117 countries (Members of the United Nations and/or specialized agencies, and/or Parties to the Statute of the International Court of Justice) where women may vote in all elections and are eligible for election on an equal basis with men;

4 countries where the right to vote and/or the eligibility of women are subject to limitations not imposed on men;

7 countries where women have no voting rights, and are not eligible for election.

44. It seems from this that there has been a very considerable formal advance towards the attainment by women of complete suffrage rights, and it can scarcely be doubted that this is largely attributable to the sustained efforts of the United Nations.

45. Despite acceptance of the principles embodied in international conventions, it seems that progress in the advancement of women in Member States is likely to be uneven owing to the existence of such factors as diversity of political, economic and social systems, and different levels of material development in these States. The formal attainment of legal rights may not always be accompanied, in practice,

/...

by their free exercise. Detailed empirical studies would seem to be necessary if light is to be thrown on the extent to which women are able to exploit rights to which they are formally entitled. In this paper, I shall make a brief assessment, under the headings political, economic, legal and education, of the position in a number of countries of Western Europe, on the basis of a study I made last year from information supplied by women's organizations.

(a) Political

46. Between 1913 and 1952, women in all the countries of Western Europe, except one, gained equal voting rights, and equal rights to stand for election to national legislatures. In most countries, no separate record of women's votes had been kept, but where separate recording has taken place, a substantial women's vote has been reported, percentages of actual to eligible women voters varying between 77 per cent and 84 per cent. In one case it was stated that the percentage of women who had exercised the right to vote was greater than that of men. It seems clear that women have full voting rights, in practice as well as in law, so that in this complete equality has been achieved.

47. Women's position with regard to election to legislatures seems less satisfactory.

48. In most countries, the number of women elected to the main legislative body had been very small. According to my study of the position in thirteen countries of Western Europe, the highest percentage of women members to total membership was 16.5 per cent, and this was in only one country. In the other countries, figures ranged from 10 per cent down to 1.6 per cent.

49. Women members of Second Chambers, or Senates, whether elected or appointed, were few in number. In regional and local assemblies, the position did not differ, in essence, from that at national level. Percentages of women elected varied between 0.2 per cent and 11 per cent of total membership.

50. It was apparent that women in Western Europe played only a small part in their countries' legislative activities, and, in some countries, there were signs of a decline. In each country under review, the number of men and women in the total population was roughly equal, with, perhaps, some preponderance of women. Standards of literacy were about the same, and women might reasonably have been expected to have attained political maturity.

51. The general position seemed to be that candidate selection was mainly in the hands of the political parties, and that the number of women selected as candidates by them was small and showed signs of declining. In most countries, women's participation in party politics seemed to be, principally, of a social or fund-raising nature, remote from party decision-making.

52. In one country, where women constituted about half the adult population and about half the voters on the voters' list, the figures in a recent election had been: women candidates, eighty; out of a total of 1,700 candidates and women elected, twenty-six or 4.1 per cent, out of a total of 630 members elected. In each election, from 1955, there had been a decrease in the number of women candidates put forward by the two main political parties. It was suggested in the Press that, to the powerful party selection committees, women were less acceptable than men as candidates. This was said to be, on the one hand, a brutally simple truth, and, on the other, an old myth. Supporters of the myth theory suggested that women do not have the time, interest, or ambition for a political career, and do not, therefore, come forward as would-be candidates. Yet one has met able young women of more than one party, eager to go into Parliament, and prepared to work very hard, who say, ruefully, that it's a man's world, and a woman needs to be twice as good as a man to have even a chance to be selected as a Parliamentary candidate.

53. The question is open as to whether hidden discriminations play a part in preventing suitable women from standing for election to national legislatures.

54. With regard to another aspect of political rights, women's access to high governmental, judicial and diplomatic posts, membership of international delegations etc., information received from the countries under review was that in each of six countries one woman held ministerial office, in another country there were two women ministers, and another country, exceptionally, had seven women ministers. The other countries had no woman minister. According to reports received, few women held high judicial office. Figures varied between 0.5 per cent and 5 per cent of the total holders of such office. Only a few women held diplomatic posts or were members of international delegations.

55. The general picture suggested a wide gap between legal rights of access and their actual realization. Much more detailed research would be necessary to elucidate the reasons and produce suggestions for effective remedies.

(b) Economic

56. Looking first at the question of equal pay for work of equal value, of the thirteen countries under review, six were members of the European Economic Community, committed to equal pay under article 119 of the Treaty of Rome, and under the International Labour Organisation Convention 100, which they had ratified. Four countries, not members of the Community, had ratified Convention 100, and three countries had not ratified.

57. The position in practice seemed roughly the same for all countries, whether or not they were legally committed to equal pay. The principle seemed to have been applied, to a great extent, in the civil services, public services, and the professions, to some extent in industry, but, normally, not applied in the lower ranks of industry. In a number of countries women in this sphere seemed to be paid only 60 per cent to 80 per cent of men's wages. Not only was there inequality, but there seemed, also, to be evasion of the spirit, if not the letter, of the principle, by the down-grading of work in which only women were employed, and the restrictive interpretation of the term "work of equal value".

58. With regard to discrimination against women workers, the six Common Market countries were committed to non-discrimination, under article 118 of the Treaty of Rome, and two of them, as well as five of the other countries, had ratified the International Labour Organisation Convention 111, on discrimination (employment and occupation).

59. The position in practice was that in all countries there was a high concentration of women in the lower-paid jobs, and proportionately few in the professions, and this was attributed not to lack of ability and enthusiasm in women and girls for the more demanding jobs, but to inadequate vocational guidance and training facilities. In every country there was discrimination against women in regard to high-level jobs. It was reported that while, in theory and according to law, there were no restrictions, in practice men with fewer qualifications and merits were given the high-level jobs in preference to women. It was suggested that this was chiefly attributable to prejudices in both men and women.

(c) Legal

60. In three of the countries women had achieved almost complete equality with men in such matters as ownership of matrimonial property, inheritance, guardianship of children, exercise of a profession, and social security. The position varied considerably in the other countries. In one, it was as recently as 1965 when husbands ceased to have almost sole rights over their wives and family property, and the fight to obtain equal rights with regard to the children of a marriage still continued there, as it did in several other countries. In many countries, even the more advanced, taxation laws were inequitable. There were countries where women were still struggling with the aftermath of years of repression and legal equality seemed a long way off. On the whole, the recent trend had been towards improving women's status in law.

(d) Educational

61. Although some discriminations persisted, for instance, in the choice of curricula, in access to certain special types of education, to vocational training, and to certain universities, girls seemed to have, on the whole, equal access with boys to education. There seemed to be a welcome tendency to increase the provision for girls in technical training and in specialized higher education.

62. The number of women in the higher professional positions tended to be low, about 2 per cent of the total was quoted, and 8 per cent to 12 per cent in the lower professional posts.

63. In the teaching profession, percentages of women teachers to total staff varied between 60 per cent and 70 per cent in primary education, 34 per cent to 60 per cent in secondary, and a lower figure in higher education. One country was exceptional in having over-all figures of women 35 per cent, and men 65 per cent, of total teaching staff.

64. There appeared to be few women in top-ranking jobs in educational administration.

65. Looking at the position in Western Europe as a whole, the emergence of new patterns such as the increasing life span, earlier marriages, smaller families, new technological processes leading to the elimination of drudgery in the home, improved educational facilities and the increasing need for more skilled workers,

would seem to provide a material situation favourable to the early achievement of equality for women with men. But discrimination against women still persists, rather like an iceberg, with only a little showing on the surface, but incalculable depths below. The product of a habit of mind conditioned by years of deep-rooted prejudice, it seems to be the main impediment to the realization of those rights formally secured to women by United Nations instruments. So far, Governments have in the main failed to tackle it; perhaps the influence of the United Nations directed to this problem would bring a solution.

66. It was interesting to find that in the countries of Western Europe the spearhead of campaigns for the advancement of women had been, and still were, women's voluntary organizations which were national affiliates of international non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, and closely linked with the Commission on the Status of Women.

67. In Western eyes the progress of women in the East, both in the older and the newer countries, has been dynamic. Within a generation or less, many women have emerged from obscurity into the full blaze of public life. Today, a considerable number hold high political office, and are included in their countries' international delegations, and one woman presides over one of the most populous countries of the world. Principles for which women in the West have struggled for generations are written into the new constitutions, obviously under the inspiration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But in some countries, formal rights exist in circumstances which seem to preclude any possibility of their early achievement in practice - adverse economic and human conditions and conditions of illiteracy in which women seem to be the principal sufferers. The United Nations has already initiated and supported schemes designed to reduce and ultimately remove hindrances to the practice of accepted policies favourable to women's progress. It is on the development and acceleration of such schemes that the advancement of women in these countries would appear to depend.

68. Looking to the Americas, which have pioneered so many efforts for the advancement of women, there seem to be, as in other parts of the world, some countries where women are struggling against material obstacles which hinder their progress to equality, while in others the greatest need seems to be to combat what has been described in contemporary criticism as "the silken curtain of prejudice

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and discrimination against women". I have not sufficient knowledge to enable me to comment on this.

69. Perhaps it would be true to say that the United Nations greatest achievement in the field of women's rights has been its creation of a firm foundation of law to serve as a base for future progress to equality and in the evolution of a groundwork of practical methods to help to make the international legislative machinery effective. But between law and practice, there is still a deep chasm to be bridged.

IX. Methods used by the United Nations in its work
for the advancement of women's rights

70. Several organs of the United Nations are concerned with human rights, including rights of women. The United Nations Charter allotted to the Economic and Social Council a specific function in respect of human rights, and directed it to set up commissions for their promotion. The Council established a Commission on Human Rights at its first session, in February 1946, and a Commission on the Status of Women at its second session, in June 1946. The General Assembly and other political bodies of the United Nations take up issues on human rights, within their general powers.

71. One of the divisions of the United Nations Secretariat is the Division of Human Rights, the functions of which include the provision of substantive services and documentation for a number of functional commissions, including the Commission on the Status of Women, and the administration of the programme of advisory services in the field of human rights.

72. Probably the most spectacular method of furthering the advancement of women adopted by the United Nations has been the formulation of women's rights in terms of binding international obligations, as described earlier. Such instruments, often the result of years of research and deliberation, are, in a sense, a distillation of world knowledge, experience, and wisdom, for application to world problems in the field of human rights.

73. The adoption by Member States of a convention relating to women's rights, while indicating that the States are in agreement with its principles, is no guarantee that those principles will be carried to their logical conclusion, the enjoyment by women in the Member States of the rights secured in the convention.

74. Difficulties may be encountered at a number of stages. In the first place, circumstances may exist which present an apparently insuperable obstacle to ratification. If ratification takes place, situations may arise which appear to render implementation difficult or impossible. Another contingency is that after the Member State has ratified, and has taken steps at the national level to implement the terms of the convention, its female citizens may be unable to take advantage of the rights secured to them for reasons beyond their control.

75. The United Nations has devised a number of methods designed to help States to solve their problems in connexion with human rights, including rights of women,

and to further the practical realization of its aims in this field. Among the most important of these are reports, studies and advisory services.

(a) Reports

76. Article 62 of the United Nations Charter empowered the Economic and Social Council to arrange with Member States for the furnishing by them of reports on steps taken to give effect to various United Nations recommendations. Accordingly, reports were obtained at intervals from Member States, and examined by the appropriate commissions. A system of periodic reports by Member States, of development and progress in the field of human rights, was evolved later, with provisions for regularly-timed reports from Member States and specialized agencies, and with arrangements for the Secretary-General to advise Member States on their preparation, to summarize information received, and to refer it to the appropriate Commissions. A further development was an invitation to non-governmental organizations in consultative status to submit comments and observations of an objective character, these to be studied in conjunction with the periodic reports. The system was revised in 1965 so as to provide for information to be supplied within a continuing three-year cycle, with different aspects of human rights dealt with in each year of the cycle. The full reports were to be made available to the Commission on Human Rights and to the Commission on the Status of Women. In 1966 and 1967 the system was re-examined, and it was found that it had become possible to identify, in the reports, certain important trends, knowledge of which would be valuable both generally and in helping Member States to overcome difficulties.

77. The Economic and Social Council has expressed the opinion that the system of periodic reports is not only a source of information, but is also a valuable incentive to Governments to protect human rights and to implement the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

78. Some international conventions contain undertakings by Member States to submit reports on the measures they have adopted, and the progress they have made, in achieving the observance of their terms. Where such undertakings have not been contained, as in the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the Economic and Social Council has requested States Parties to report on measures taken by them to implement the provisions, and, in this particular case, a similar request was

addressed to States not Parties to the Convention. The tendency in recent conventions and covenants seems to have been for more precise reporting procedures, with a limitation of area to be covered. There are provisions also for the establishment of special committees of the States Parties to consider reports made by Governments.

79. An important function of the Commission on the Status of Women has been the study and evaluation of reports pertaining to women's rights. In addition to preparing conventions, declarations, and recommendations, and considering their implementation, primarily on the basis of these reports, it has adopted a great number of resolutions, many containing recommendations for action by Governments, specialized agencies, and non-governmental organizations. The Economic and Social Council has addressed many recommendations to Member States based on these resolutions. A few resolutions on civic and political education of women may be mentioned. In 1954, the Commission on the Status of Women adopted a resolution urging non-governmental organizations to continue to further the education of women in citizenship and to adopt suggested methods to equip them more fully for participation in public life. In 1960, the Economic and Social Council adopted a resolution in which it recommended that Governments take the necessary steps to remove legal and other obstacles impeding the access of married women to public services and functions. The Council adopted a resolution, in 1965, inviting Member States to consider organizing national and local seminars on the participation of women in public affairs, suggesting that co-operation should be invited from interested specialized agencies, and national non-governmental organizations in consultative status, and further suggesting that the Secretary-General should examine the possibility of holding an additional annual seminar on civic and political education of women as a demonstration or pilot project for follow-up at national and local levels. Reports from the specialized agencies, such as the International Labour Organisation and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, on matters affecting the status of women on which they have expert knowledge, have been particularly valuable, and have assisted co-operation and co-ordination of activities.

80. A reporting system of the type described must depend for its success on the content and quality of the reports received, as well as on the use made of them, and a sufficient number of reports must be received to make the exercise worth while.

81. It has been suggested that reports from Member States have tended to be uneven in presentation, content, and informativeness, and to have given more information about achievements than about failures and difficulties. An instance which comes to mind of the need for more informative reports concerns governments' reports of the number of women appointed to high level public posts. It seems to be usual for absolute figures only to be supplied, whereas progress to equality could be measured only if percentages were also given.

82. It is said that reports in the United Nations Yearbook on Human Rights (an annual compilation, which includes inter alia information contributed by Member States on developments in the field of human rights), while accurate and informative, has been marked by generality and complacency. Another criticism is that there has been a general tendency for reports to be unfocussed and diffuse, and the suggestion has been made that annual reports from Member States, on progress in a particular field of human rights, or in the application of particular conventions, would be more effective than reports in general terms.

83. Alterations in reporting procedures, made from 1965 onwards, apparently designed by the United Nations to secure more streamlining and more definition and precision in information supplied by Member States, should help to remedy any previous deficiencies.

84. When reading publications containing replies from Governments to United Nations requests for information on matters pertaining to women's rights, I have sometimes regretted that women had not had a chance to reply also. It was not so much a question of the "manysidedness of truth" as of the fact that views often depend on the position of the observer, and it might have assisted understanding if the views of women, at the heart of the matter, had been available.

85. Increasing use of the powers to invite reports from non-governmental organizations would probably help here, and it is for consideration whether, in cases of special significance, information at national non-governmental level might usefully be obtained.

86. In the earlier stages of the reports system, the normal arrangement was for summaries of reports relating to human rights to be prepared by the Secretary-General and supplied to the appropriate Commissions, which, after consideration, would initiate such action as they considered desirable on the lines referred to above in connexion with the Commission on the Status of Women. A more recent development was for the information to be given in full to the Commissions, and for an ad hoc Committee of the Human Rights Commission to make a preliminary study and evaluation and to submit comments. Recent proposals are for the Secretary-General to prepare analytical summaries in respect of each right under consideration, giving important trends, difficulties encountered, methods adopted to overcome them, and suggestions for possible further action. Some recent instruments have provided for the setting up of special committees to consider reports which are to be made in accordance with the terms of the instruments.

87. One purpose of the continuing reappraisal and revision of the reports system seems to be to give it such added strength as to enable it to become what has been described as the king-pin of a future United Nations implementation system for human rights.

88. Brief reference has been made to the co-operation of non-governmental organizations in the reports system. Article 71 of the Charter provides that the Economic and Social Council may make arrangements for consultation with international non-governmental organizations concerning matters within their competence. At an early stage, the United Nations made specific provision for such organizations, as auxiliaries, both in the propagation of principles, and in the formulation and execution of certain sectors of its economic and social programmes. This provision included the establishment of several categories of organizations recognized as having consultative status.

89. The organizations interested in women's rights fall, mostly, into category B: bodies having special competence in, and concerned especially with, certain aspects of the Council's work. They are allowed to submit memoranda, send observers to public meetings, and, with permission, make oral statements, as well as co-operate in the reports system and other activities.

90. Many of these organizations exist wholly, or partly, to protect human rights. The earliest is probably the Anti-Slavery Society, and it was largely at the

instance of this Society that a series of international conventions concerning slavery was concluded in the 1880's. This is regarded as a classic case of a reform instituted by Governments, through the pressure of an unofficial organization, and it is mentioned here as an illustration of the extent to which a non-governmental organization was able to mobilize, and render effective, world public opinion, in support of human rights. Several women's organizations, one of which has been fighting for women's rights for eighty years, work in close touch with the Commission on the Status of Women.

91. It is considered that, in the consultative non-governmental organizations, the United Nations has a great potential in its work for human rights, including women's rights. They show great enthusiasm for a worthy cause, their experience is long and far-reaching, they are capable of flexibility in operation, and, very important, many of them have a network of national and local affiliates and are in close and constant touch with "the peoples". Recently, I saw an assertion by a political writer that the Human Rights Commission remains totally unknown to more than 99 per cent of the world's population. Whatever may be the accuracy of this estimate, I would say that it was mainly through the activities of non-governmental organizations, rather than through any official bodies, that United Nations work in the field of human rights was made known in Western Europe prior to the campaign for Human Rights Year.

92. Current United Nations proposals concerning the possibility of joint consultation, exchanges of information, and closer collaboration between the Commission on the Status of Women and interested non-governmental organizations, will, it is hoped, lead to effective utilization of their services in the long-term programme for the advancement of women.

93. A suggestion which merits consideration is that the United Nations should encourage the formation, in every country, of a committee of representatives of national non-governmental organizations, interested in the advancement of women's rights, the national committee to be given some form of link with the Commission on the Status of Women. The national committees need not be restricted to representatives of women's organizations. Such committees could be the means of broadening the channel of communication between the United Nations and the peoples of Member States, which tends, inevitably, to be narrowed at international

non-governmental organization level. They could be of great use in stimulating publicity at national level. They would have some similarity to the existing National Committees for Human Rights Year, 1968, and their formation might be a means of sustaining, beyond 1968, the interest and drive towards the achievement of human rights that these national committees have brought into being. Further developments at regional level would be a possibility.

94. In addition to reports, the United Nations employs various other important methods to assist its members.

(b) Studies

95. The initiation and making of studies is one of the methods to further the realization of human rights for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion, referred to in Articles 13 and 62 of the Charter, and this method has been used extensively. The main aim of studies undertaken in respect of human rights has been to provide United Nations organs with information on situations existing, in law and in fact, in respect of a variety of human rights questions.

96. The main sources of information have been Governments, specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations, research and similar institutions, and members of committees undertaking the studies. The studies have been carried out by committees of Member States, of experts serving in a personal capacity, the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, and rapporteurs. The specialized agencies have also conducted studies at the request of the Economic and Social Council. The Division of Human Rights has furnished assistance in the preparation of many studies, and the United Nations Secretariat has played a central role; the Secretary-General has himself made a number of important studies, including an analytical and technical study concerning the question of the implementation of human rights through a United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights or some other international machinery.

97. Some studies have been destined, from the outset, as a preparation for an international instrument while others, such as the study on discrimination in education, have resulted in the eventual drawing up of an international convention.

98. Studies relating to women's rights have covered such subjects as family law, slavery, discrimination in the field of employment and occupation, access of women to training and employment, age of retirement, pension rights, access of women to the teaching profession, and of girls and women to education at different levels, and the Secretary-General's study of a unified long-term United Nations programme for the advancement of women.

(c) Advisory services

99. The constitutional basis for the United Nations programme of advisory services in the field of human rights, under which it can provide experts, award fellowships and scholarships, and organize seminars in human rights, is Article 66 of the United Nations Charter, which authorizes the Economic and Social Council, with the approval of the General Assembly, to "perform services" at the request of Member States. The programme of advisory services in human rights is the only United Nations programme expressly concerned with the status of women as an aspect of human rights. Some services relating to the rights of women were rendered in the 1953-4 period, but it was in 1955-6 that the programme of "Advisory services in the field of human rights" came into being.

100. Comparatively few Governments have availed themselves of the services of experts. One of these requested the services of an expert to advise on measures to increase the effective participation of women in social and political life, and expressed itself well satisfied with the advice given.

101. It took some time for Governments to avail themselves of the chance to nominate women as candidates for fellowships and scholarships. These involved study of an approved human rights subject in another country. However, an average of thirty Governments nominated about a hundred candidates a year, for the years 1963 to 1966, and, in 1966, the proportion of Governments nominating women rose significantly. Awards in these years were, thirty-nine, forty-four, fifty-four and nineteen, respectively, the low figure for 1966 having been due to a budgetary readjustment. Most awards were granted for advanced study tours, and special training, and a broad range of subjects in the field of human rights was covered, many of them concerned with the status of women. The extension of advisory services to include regional training courses in human rights is under consideration.

102. One of the most important and successful of the United Nations advisory services in the field of human rights has been the seminar, the purpose of which is to bring together responsible national officials, experts, and key people in a region, and afford them an opportunity to share their knowledge and experience, and to have frank and informal discussion, and in the course of it, to shed new light on existing problems of human rights, and encourage a greater awareness of them throughout the region. Four seminars on the participation of women in public life have been held, at the invitation of host Governments, in Asia, Africa, and the Western Hemisphere, and four seminars on the status of women in private law have been held, three in the same regions, and one in Europe. In addition, a seminar concerning the long-term programme for the advancement of women was held in Asia, and an inter-regional seminar on Civic and Political Rights of Women was held, recently, in Europe. In the series on public life, and on private law, approximately the same subjects were discussed in each region, and there emerged an interesting, near-world picture of the position of women in relation to these matters. The purpose of the seminar is not to seek final conclusions, and there are no resolutions. The United Nations publishes reports in which are recorded trends of discussion, and the main views expressed. Seminars can be of special help to women in developing countries, whose rights may have been only recently acquired, and in older countries, where women's progress towards equality has become static. Seminars have been described as one of the most dynamic and useful features of the human rights programme, and it may be that their extension could be a means of attacking the hard-core of resistance to the advancement of women.

103. Although the advisory services programme constitutes a great potential in the cause of women's rights, it has been pointed out in a recent United Nations report that a basic problem is the apparently low priority which many Governments feel able to accord to requests for advisory services and technical assistance aimed at advancing the status of women. Both the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council have adopted resolutions urging Governments to make more use of these services. Perhaps the long-term programme will afford a further stimulus.

(d) Publicity

104. The United Nations has sought to promote respect for human rights by publicity aimed at the education of public opinion and by the issue of recommendations and suggestions concerning the educational policies of Governments and the educational activities of non-governmental organizations in the light of this aim. Governments have been asked to publicize the adoption of instruments in the field of human rights. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has, in co-operation with the Economic and Social Council, encouraged education in human rights for adults and children, and the use of facilities for the dissemination of information in schools, and through the Press, radio, and film services. The Secretariat of the United Nations, and the specialized agencies, have produced much informative literature on activities for the advancement of women - for instance - pamphlets on the civic and political education of women, and on equal pay, publications relating to the Conventions on Political Rights of Women, and Nationality of Married Women, and a publication on the legal status of married women. This last is due to be revised on the basis of information contained in the documentation of the seminars on the status of women in family law, and other matters. The material seems excellent, and perhaps the making of closer contacts with the Press, broadcasting, television and cinema world would enable it to influence a wider public. It has recently been said that "publicity for human rights, and for the means for their protection, is itself an essential human right, for no human rights can be effectively protected without it."

105. The General Assembly of the United Nations has made clear its determination that the principles of the Charter, and of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in regard to women's rights, now embodied in United Nations conventions and other international instruments, shall be applied in practice as well as in theory. Two particular instances of this determination were its initiatives for the establishment of a unified long-term United Nations programme for the advancement of women, particularly in developing countries, and for the elaboration of a comprehensive declaration on the elimination of discrimination against women. The long-term programme is now in being, and the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was adopted, without a dissenting voice, in November 1967, on the eve of Human Rights Year 1968.

106. The General Assembly has set the targets and provided the legislative machinery; it is now for the United Nations to prove itself, in action, a "dynamic instrument" for their achievement.

107. A preliminary requirement seems to be that every country should come to grips with reality - that there should be a sober appraisal of the actual position of its women, compared with the position as it would be if women were accorded equal rights with men. The bridging of the gap between the two positions, or, to put it another way, the removal of the hindrances to fusion of what is with what ought to be, would appear to be the essential goal of the programme for the advancement of women.

108. A number of obvious obstacles to the attainment of this goal have already been mentioned - those of an economic, educational, political, and legal character, on the whole, identifiable, and, with the help of the resources of the United Nations calculable, and, ultimately remediable. The United Nations has devised methods in co-operation with the specialized agencies, and with special reference to the needs of developing countries, of attacking and reducing these obstacles, and it seems vital that they should be applied with increasing vigour if the ultimate goal of the long-term plan is to be achieved.

109. Also involved, however, are more intangible elements, psychological and sociological attitudes and deep-rooted prejudices which defy neat analysis, and which may well be responsible for many of the discriminations which persist irrespective of the acceptance of international instruments, and which must be eliminated. One means by which the United Nations could assist in this sphere would be to arrange for the making of a series of empirical studies to be carried out by experienced psycho-sociologists, designed to probe into and analyse the hidden causes of discrimination in selected areas and to lead to recommendations of practical measures to secure their eradication.

110. An area of fundamental importance in relation to human attitudes is the family. Article 16(3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reads: "The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society, and is entitled to protection by society and state". If the United Nations were to sponsor an integrated study of the family, this might constitute a valuable aid to inquiry into the uncharted region of the "intangibles", which seems to block women's

progress to equality. The study might include inter alia the functional division of labour in the family, historically and geographically, including consideration of the economic value of work in the home, usually done by women; the effects of inventions and modern technological development on work of the family; personal values, the attitudes of men and women to them, and how "development" has effected them; composition of family, and relationships, husband, wife, children, the old. Some of this information may already have been obtained by the specialized agencies and others, but the filling up of gaps, and integration, would assist not only in connexion with the application of Article 16(3) but also, in defining women's position in society. The United Nations projected study of family planning in relation to the advancement of women might benefit from this background information.

111. A few minor personal observations may be relevant to the question of attitudes. One wonders if the term "status of women", used so much in connexion with the advancement of women, has become a psychological blunder. It seems to be regarded by the many who do not appreciate the need for rectification of an inferior status as a somewhat loaded term, implying concern to obtain a preferential position for women. A similar dislike seems to have arisen, often among young women, for the term "women's rights". It is for consideration whether more use of the terms "equal rights" and "equal status" for men and women, might help to dissipate prejudice and secure more co-operation from both men and women.

112. Another useful change of emphasis might be to aim at, and speak in terms of, civic and political education of men and women, not of women only. In the many countries where men hold political power, unless men receive such education, they are unlikely to take steps to give women civil and political rights.

113. Experience on a National Committee for Human Rights has led me to think that, even among educated and public-spirited men, there is great ignorance as to why there is need for a campaign to secure equal rights for women, but that when informed, they seem to recognize the need. If women's organizations would emphasize the need for educating men as well as women in problems relating to equal rights for men and women, they might be more effective in mobilizing public opinion to support the drive for equality. Extensions of national and local

Human Rights Year Committees beyond 1968 might help in a similar manner, and have the advantage of retaining the interest of many student and youth organizations which have participated in the activities for Human Rights Year and have recognized women's attainment of equal rights as one of their objectives.

114. The Member States of the United Nations have solemnly committed themselves to an intensified and sustained campaign to secure to women the realization of the equality and freedoms that the Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declare to be theirs. The United Nations Organization has built the foundations and supplied the guide-lines to help its members to achieve, in their own countries, their declared object. But the problem of the gap between promise and performance, between the formal and the real equality, remains.

115. A feature of the present relationship between the United Nations Organization and the individual man or woman (and the human person is, under the Charter, the ultimate point of all United Nations activities) is that, normally, it does not intervene directly, or, at least, on any formal level, within national frontiers, but operates through the respective State governments. This considerably limits its capacity in the field of the advancement of women: there are so many factors, forces and influences existing in national communities, which determine whether or not women shall, in fact, exercise equal rights, and, in respect of these, the United Nations has, so far, had very little impact. Consideration should be given to the question whether the United Nations should be enabled to employ greater direct influence upon the national communities in respect of women's rights, and, if it should, the form which such influence should take. On the answer to this, the real advancement of women in the foreseeable future may depend.
