

UNITED NATIONS

GENERAL
ASSEMBLY



Distr.
LIMITED

A/CONF.94/PC/L.5/Add.2
29 June 1978

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

PREPARATORY COMMITTEE OF THE WORLD
CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS
DECADE FOR WOMEN, 1980

First session

Vienna, 19-30 June 1978

Agenda item 7

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE

Chapter

Preparations for the Conference of 1980: (a) Provisional agenda;
(b) Organization of work; (c) Documentation; (d) Participation
in the conference; (e) Secretary-General of the conference;
(f) Rules of procedure; (g) Publicity for the conference

Rapporteur: Ms. Soheyla Shahkar (Iran)

1. The Preparatory Committee considered agenda item 3 at its 3rd to meetings and at meetings of an informal working group of the whole, which the Committee established at its 6th plenary meeting in order to expedite consideration of a number of priority issues. Further, the Committee established, at its 9th meeting, a formal drafting group, composed of the representatives of the German Democratic Republic, Egypt, Iran, Mexico and the Netherlands, to propose specific recommendations to the plenary based on the discussions at the plenary meetings and in the informal working group.
2. In its consideration of the item, the Preparatory Committee had before it a note by the Secretary-General on the implementation of the programme for the United Nations Decade for Women, including preparations for the World Conference (E/CN.6/610); the report of the Commission on the Status of Women on its twenty-seventh session (E/1978/32 (Part II)); and relevant resolutions of the first regular session, 1978, of the Economic and Social Council (E/RES/1978/28-34).

3. In introducing the documents, the Assistant Director of the Branch for the Advancement of Women of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs stated that the Economic and Social Council, at its first regular session, 1978, had adopted, on the recommendation of the Commission on the Status of Women at its twenty-seventh session, three resolutions that had a direct bearing on the agenda and the general orientation of the Conference. She pointed out that the Council, in its resolutions 1978/30 and 1978/34, had recommended that the following items should be included in the provisional agenda for the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women: review and evaluation of the progress made in attaining the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace in the period from 1976 to 1980, at the national, regional and international levels; programme of action for the second half of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, 1980 to 1985; and an item on the effects of apartheid on women in southern Africa. She further stated that the Council had recommended, in its resolution 1978/32, the adoption of the subtheme Employment, Health and Education for the Conference, whose over-all objective would continue to be, however, the review and evaluation of progress made in the first half of the Decade and the recommendation of changes and readjustments for the second half of the Decade. The attention of the Committee was drawn to the draft provisional agenda for the Conference prepared by the Secretariat (A/CONF.94/PC/L.13), and to the following documents: "Preliminary estimates of the cost of preparations for the 1980 United Nations Conference on the Decade for Women" (A/CONF.94/PC/L.6) and "An information programme for the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, 1980 - Teheran, Iran" (A/CONF.94/PC/L.3).

4. The Minister of State of Iran in charge of women's affairs addressed the Committee. She stressed the importance which her Government attached to the Committee's work and to the 1980 Conference. She observed that the Commission on the Status of Women, at its twenty-seventh session, had initiated the preparations for the conference, and that at least three regions had incorporated the minimum objectives for the 1980 Conference in their regional plans of action. The Minister stated that the Conference should ensure that the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women were implemented at the national, regional and international levels. She stressed the need for collaboration between Governments and women's organizations and mentioned that her country's national plan of action had evolved through such joint efforts. She expressed the hope

that the 1980 Conference would give adequate attention to the problems of women in the developing countries and that the specialized agencies would be invited to make a contribution. With regard to the preparations for the Conference being undertaken by her Government, she stated that a special committee had been established for that purpose and that it was awaiting the recommendations of the Preparatory Committee.

Agenda item 3 (a): Provisional agenda

5. In the discussion of agenda item 3 (a), it was agreed that both the agenda of the Conference and the documentation should be action-oriented and concentrate on priority areas and concrete projects and proposals. That approach should also apply to all inputs to the Conference. The need to pay special attention to the specific problems of women in developing countries was generally emphasized in that connection.
6. With regard to the subtheme of Employment, Health and Education recommended by the Economic and Social Council, there was agreement that those priority areas were most important. However, a few representatives expressed the view that those areas should be considered by the Conference in a broader context. Some representatives expressed their concern that the subtheme should not be allowed to overshadow the threefold main theme of the Decade, Equality, Development and Peace, which, they indicated, should be spelled out in the provisional agenda.
7. The representative of Egypt proposed an amendment to item 8 of the draft provisional agenda of the Conference (A/CONF.94/PC/L.13) to include the words "Equality, Development and Peace" after the word "Decade".
8. In connection with review and evaluation of progress made, it was felt that attention should also be given to the obstacles that might have been encountered thus far in attempting to attain the objectives of the Decade and the minimum objectives set forth in the World Plan of Action.
9. The representative of Iran proposed that item 8 of the draft provisional agenda should be amended to include a reference to obstacles encountered. Both amendments were adopted by consensus.
10. Several representatives welcomed item 9 of the draft provisional agenda and noted that the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1978/30, had recommended that the provisional agenda of the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, 1980, should include "Programme of action for the second half of the United Nations Decade for Women, 1981 to 1985."

11. The representatives of Egypt and Yugoslavia proposed that item 9 should be amended to read as follows:

"9. Programme of action for the second half of the Decade for Women:
Equality, Development and Peace, with the aim of implementing the World
Plan of Action (1981-1985)

- (a) National strategies for women's integration in economic and social development with special emphasis on the subtheme;
 - (i) Planning and monitoring
 - (ii) National machineries
- (b) National targets and objectives regarding the subtheme on Employment, Health and Education
- (c) Regional and international strategies".

The Committee adopted these amendments by consensus.

12. It was generally agreed that the draft provisional agenda for the Conference should include an item on the effects of apartheid on the condition of women in southern Africa. Many representatives noted that the issue had been extensively discussed by the Commission on the Status of Women at the twenty-seventh session and that the Economic and Social Council had recommended, in its resolution 1978/33, the inclusion in the agenda for the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women of an item on "effects of apartheid on women in southern Africa". The Committee consequently decided to amend the draft provisional agenda for the Conference to include a new item 10 entitled "Effects of apartheid on the condition of women in southern Africa", and to renumber original item 10 as new item 11.

13. Many representatives stressed the importance of the struggle to strengthen international peace and security and combat colonialism, racism, racial discrimination, foreign aggression and occupation and all forms of foreign domination. Some representatives expressed the wish that an item could be added to the provisional agenda of the Conference concerning the question of elaborating a draft declaration on the participation of women in that struggle. On the other hand, some representatives questioned the advisability of deciding the question at the current session of the Preparatory Committee, in view of the request made by the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1978/29, to the Commission on the Status of Women to consider, at its twenty-eighth session, the question of elaborating such a draft declaration with a view to submitting it to the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women.

14. The text of the draft provisional agenda for the Conference, as agreed on in the general discussion, was issued as document A/CONF.94/PC/L.2.

Agenda item 3 (b): Organization of work

15. The Preparatory Committee felt that there should be a general debate at the beginning of the Conference. There was also agreement that the statements in the general debate should be limited to approximately 15 minutes.

16. Several representatives proposed that in addition to a plenary, committees and working groups should be set up to facilitate the work of the Conference. Some representatives proposed the establishment of two committees, which had been done at the World Conference of the International Women's Year, while other representatives preferred only one main committee. The number of committees was considered to be dependent on several factors, such as the number of items to be discussed by the committees and the overlapping among the facilities available, and the time schedule of meetings of the committees and working groups. This matter was therefore referred to the informal working group for further consideration.

Agenda item 3 (c): Documentation

17. The Committee stressed that the success of the Conference would depend on the quality of the documentation submitted to it and ruled that documents must be circulated in all working languages well in advance, preferably three months before the Conference. The need to set a time-limit for receipt of the necessary documents by Governments was emphasized.

18. At the request of several representatives, the Secretariat prepared a time schedule for meetings and submission of documents for the World Conference.

19. Many representatives shared the opinion that it might be necessary to recruit consultants to assist the Secretariat in preparing documents. One representative, however, had reservations about the use of consultants, noting that in her country experience had shown that serious work did not always result from their employment.

20. Some representatives expressed concern about the expected move of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs from New York to Vienna and its possible effect on the preparation of the documents and on the Conference itself. They suggested that consideration should be given to postponing the move to Vienna until after the Conference in order to ensure that preparations for the Conference would not be jeopardized.

21. In connection with the substance of the reports to be submitted to the Conference, it was generally felt that such reports should be analytical, precise and action-oriented and that they should cover the three objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women and, in addition, emphasize the subtheme. Co-ordination between the regional commissions and the various interested United Nations agencies and departments of the United Nations Secretariat was vital in order to avoid unnecessary duplication. Some representatives stressed the importance of careful drafting in the preparation of the questionnaire to be addressed to Governments as part of the review of progress achieved and obstacles encountered in the implementation of the World Plan of Action and the attainment of the objectives of the Decade, and proposed that questions should be short and precise and avoid duplication. This would enable Governments to answer questions adequately, thereby facilitating the review.

22. Some representatives noted that the time schedule prepared by the Secretariat did not include all documents requested in relevant resolutions of the Economic and Social Council. Moreover, the representative of Iran, in commenting on the time schedule noted that the Secretariat had proceeded on the assumption that the Conference would be held sometime in May 1980, while according to his Government, the Conference should preferably be held in March 1980 which was the most suitable time of the year in Teheran. He also added that his Government would naturally abide by the recommendations of the Preparatory Committee. The representative of the Branch for the Advancement of Women explained that the Secretariat had proceeded in accordance with paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 32/140, according to which "the Conference will in principle be held at Teheran in May 1980 for a period of two weeks". With reference to documentation, she pointed out that it was essential that only a limited number of basic documents be submitted to the Conference for its consideration in order to allow maximum concentration of the discussions. Documents such as reports of regional and sectoral meetings would be available to the Conference as background material. In this connection, she referred to the annotations to the provisional agenda of the first session of the Preparatory Committee (A/CONF.94/PC1/Add.1) and, more particularly, to the documents mentioned therein, on pages 4 and 5, under review and appraisal and the programme of action. The Preparatory Committee decided to proceed on the assumption that the Conference would be convened in May 1980 unless the Council decided otherwise.

Agenda item 3 (d): Participation in the Conference

23. Several representatives, commending the tasks undertaken by non-governmental organizations in their endeavour to implement the objectives of the Decade for Women and the World Plan of Action, suggested that non-governmental organizations should be invited to participate in the Conference. Other representatives, however, stated that only those non-governmental organizations that held consultative status with the Economic and Social Council should be invited. A number of representatives objected to the convening of a meeting similar to the International Women's Year Tribune of Mexico, which was held concurrently with the World Conference of the International Women's Year, 1975, on the grounds that the Tribune had created a poor image and had been unable to make any contribution to the deliberations of the Conference. Some representatives stressed the need for a closer partnership between non-governmental organizations and Governments, which would enable the non-governmental organizations to make an input through Governments. The need for adequate representation of non-governmental organizations from both developing and developed countries was stressed. A few representatives felt that interested non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council might be invited in order to ensure the widest possible participation in the Conference. Further, the view was expressed that non-governmental organizations should be given the opportunity to address the Conference and to submit written statements. It was also suggested that non-governmental organizations themselves might select a few representatives with the relevant expertise to speak on their behalf at the Conference. The representative of Iran indicated the preference of his Government for the convening of a conference of non-governmental organizations two to three months before the Conference, wherever was deemed appropriate, which would enable the World Conference to consider recommendations emanating from the non-governmental organizations' conference. It was generally agreed, however, that the question of whether non-governmental organizations should hold a conference was a matter to be decided by the non-governmental organizations themselves.
24. It was proposed that intergovernmental organizations should be invited to participate in the Conference.

Agenda item 3 (e): Secretary-General of the Conference

25. Several representatives proposed that the question of the appointment of a Secretary-General of the Conference and her staff should be decided as soon as possible. Some representatives felt that the Secretary-General should be chosen from among the most capable women outside of the United Nations system so that she could work full-time on the preparations of the Conference. It was imperative that the Council for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs collaborate closely with the Secretariat of the Conference to ensure that the preparations for the Conference were as efficient as possible.

Agenda item 3 (f): Rules of procedure

26. Several representatives felt that the standard rules of procedure for United Nations conferences were adequate and saw no need to deviate from them.

Agenda item 3 (g): Publicity for the Conference

27. The representative of the Secretariat introduced the information programme for the Conference (A/CONF.94/PC/L.3) and explained that the estimated costs cited in the document were subject to modifications by the Budget Division of the Office of Financial Services.

28. Many representatives stressed the importance of adequate publicity for the Conference. In this regard, several representatives felt that the staff facilities and expertise of the United Nations Office of Public Information should be utilized to the maximum extent possible to publicize the Conference and other related activities. Some representatives suggested that the Preparatory Committee should request the General Assembly to make available the necessary budgetary appropriations included in the budget of the Office of Public Information for the biennium 1978-1979 (A/CONF.94/PC/L.3).