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**SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 28th MEETING**

**Chairman:** Mr. JATIVA (Ecuador)

**later:** Mr. CASAJUANA (Spain)

**CONTENTS**

**AGENDA ITEM 94: ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN**  
(continued)

**AGENDA ITEM 95: FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN TO THE YEAR 2000** (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

**AGENDA ITEM 94: ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN**  
(continued) (A/43/3, A/43/38, A/43/273-S/19720, A/43/354 and Corr.1, A/43/370, A/43/393-S/19930, A/43/605)

**AGENDA ITEM 95: FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN TO THE YEAR 2000** (continued) (A/43/3, A/43/370, A/43/638, A/43/643)

1. Miss BROSNAKOVA (Czechoslovakia) praised the efforts of the United Nations and its bodies which, by virtue of their persistence, led to recognition of the need for equality between men and women in all walks of life. The importance of the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women for the period up to the year 2000 as an instrument for national economic, social and political development and for the search for solutions to problems specific to women had been confirmed. The integration of the Strategies in the Organization's medium-term plan was another positive and noteworthy development.
2. It was important that the Commission on the Status of Women should carry out an in-depth analysis and a synthesis of the specific problems of women and propose practical solutions which reflected the political, social and economic structures and conditions as well as the cultural aspects of individual States.
3. Of the concrete steps taken to ascertain what States had done to improve the status of women, particular mention should be made of the questionnaires distributed by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. From the standpoint of the 1990 session of the Commission on the Status of Women, it was important that States should report objectively their efforts to promote women's emancipation. Fortunately, the questionnaire, which had already been sent out, was simple, and an analysis of the replies would begin in early 1989.
4. The fact that 94 States had already become parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women confirmed that the overwhelming majority of States were determined to strengthen international co-operation for the emancipation of women. In that connection, the importance of the work done by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women should be acknowledged, despite that body's organizational and technical problems.
5. Noting that the Committee's work was behindhand in its consideration of reports submitted by States parties to the Convention on their implementation of the provisions of that instrument, she maintained that the Committee's prestige would increase if more politically and economically important States acceded to the Convention.
6. The achievement of equality between men and women continued to be a major concern in Czechoslovakia. Full equality was guaranteed by the Constitution and legislation, and remarkable results had been achieved in the areas of education and employment, with the country's percentage of women in the labour force one of the highest in the world. The restructuring of Czechoslovak society accommodated the

(Miss Broznakova, Czechoslovakia)

need to make domestic and family tasks less burdensome so that women could have more time for themselves and for finding additional rewarding activities. Women's problems could be solved within the framework of economic and social development and an in-depth study of the phenomena characterising all modern societies. Czechoslovakia was not adverse to drawing on the positive experience acquired in that sphere by other States, which could in turn learn from Czechoslovakia's solution of such problems as maternal care, pre-school education and family allowances.

7. Like many previous speakers, she believed it was important that the recruitment of women in the Secretariat should be improved, particularly at senior levels, so that all geographic groups would be represented. In conclusion, she commended the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs and its Branch for the Advancement of Women for their contribution to the implementation of the main objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women; she also expressed appreciation to Austria, host country to the Centre, for the active and constant role it had played in strengthening the international dialogue on a cause for which no State had yet done enough.

8. Mrs. ALTURAIHI (Iraq) said that agenda items 94 and 95 were particularly important because they concerned half the world's population. Women's problems were growing increasingly acute, particularly as social relations underwent change. Women must be guaranteed the same rights as men, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women provided the appropriate legal framework for all efforts undertaken to that end.

9. From time immemorial, women had helped build societies, particularly agricultural societies, in which they had always assumed several functions, even though they had never owned land. That situation had had an adverse impact on social conditions, which had led women to take action so that they could enjoy equal treatment and opportunities.

10. While technological progress had opened up new prospects for them, discrimination against women persisted. A gap remained between the de jure and de facto situations. Stereotypes were deeply rooted. There were few women in senior posts both in the United Nations Secretariat and in Member States, raising the question of how women's status could improve if women did not themselves hold responsible positions.

11. Her delegation had read the Secretary-General's report (A/43/638) with interest, particularly paragraphs 64 to 71, and believed it was of the utmost importance that any activities undertaken on women's behalf should take the economic, social, cultural and religious aspects of a given situation into account. She fully endorsed paragraph 17 of the report and noted that the proportion of women in active life was not even 0.5 per cent. That meant that de jure measures had not led to any real improvements; consequently, there should be a change in the way women were treated, especially women in the home who were not gainfully employed. Furthermore, action should be taken not only in the legal

(Mrs. Alturaihi, Iraq)

sphere; special attention should be paid to societies that lacked the basics, such as water and electricity. Special attention should also be paid to women who were victims of oppression and occupation, as were women in Namibia, South Africa and Palestine. They played an invaluable role in the liberation of society as a whole. In all those cases, the differences that characterized each specific situation should be taken duly into account, with priority accorded to rural areas. Vocational training and education should be given special emphasis, with assistance from the relevant bodies of the United Nations, particularly the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

12. Iraq fully endorsed the position of FAO set out in paragraph 44 of the aforementioned report, since poverty led to ignorance and vice versa; that vicious circle must be broken through sustained development. Women also played a determining role in food security. However, FAO itself did not employ enough women in senior posts because there were not enough women specialized in the requisite fields.

13. She drew attention to the role of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, which was endeavouring to increase women's participation in national development, improve their situation in rural areas and strengthen their contribution to essential activities. The global approach recommended at the Nairobi Conference was more necessary than ever, as were regular progress reports, since reports on national efforts would provide a variety of examples of solutions and activities that might be useful in achieving the objectives that had been set.

14. Mrs. NIKOLIC (Yugoslavia) said that, in her view, the fortieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was an opportunity to assess what had been done thus far to change the legal status of women. She noted that the activity of the United Nations in that field had been particularly productive from 1952 to 1979. All the conventions concerning women's rights had been adopted in that period, and the codification of those rights had been completed by the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The proclamation of the International Women's Year in 1975, however, had inaugurated a new aspect of activity by promoting the social status of women. The United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, 1976-1985, had made a remarkable contribution to enhancing awareness of the social problems of women, which were in fact largely the same problems as those of contemporary society as a whole. The experiences and results of the Decade had confirmed that progress and development required active participation by women.

15. Yugoslavia attached great importance to the Forward-looking Strategies, whose adoption by consensus at the Nairobi Conference in 1985 had been the pinnacle of the Decade. The role of the Commission on the Status of Women was irreplaceable in the implementation of the Strategies. Her delegation supported the reforms initiated by the Commission, including the restructuring of its agenda, the adoption of priority themes and its new working methods. It also supported the proposal for an extended session of the Commission in 1990 to appraise the implementation of the Strategies.

(Mrs. Nikolic, Yugoslavia)

16. She drew attention to the Secretary-General's report (A/43/538), including the review of actions taken throughout the United Nations system for the recruitment and promotion of women. Her delegation supported the temporary measures suggested in the report to improve the de facto situation, which in many economic and social sectors did not reflect the de jure situation. That 94 Member States had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was an indication of good progress, but it would be discouraging if that number remained the same.

17. In view of the backlog of 22 reports and the further 72 reports expected by the end of the year, her delegation fully supported the Committee's suggestion that the General Assembly should again approve, as an exception, eight additional meetings in 1989.

18. As to the second priority theme (development), Yugoslavia felt that the needs and aspirations of women must be taken into consideration in the formulation of development policies, plans and programmes. It hoped that the expert group meeting in Vienna from 14 to 18 November 1988 would propose recommendations for family planning, child-care facilities and the sharing of domestic, parental and other family responsibilities. In that regard, it was important for women themselves to participate as much as possible in the overall process of development.

19. Her delegation appreciated the activities of UNIFEM and INSTRAW. The Institute's work in the areas of research, training, information and communications relating to the role of women in development was fully in keeping with the Forward-looking Strategies. Its work in valuating women's production and contribution in the informal sector of the economy was most timely, especially at a time when the System of National Accounts (SNA), the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO), the International Standard Industrial Classification of all Economic Activities (ISIC) and the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE) were undergoing revision, an exercise which took place once every approximately 20 years. The Institute's catalytic role and its efforts to translate the Forward-looking Strategies into pragmatic action, especially by bringing the women's dimension into mainstream development, should be encouraged.

20. With regard to the third priority theme (peace), her delegation noted with satisfaction that the report to be presented at the next session of the Commission on the Status of Women would emphasize women's contribution to newly-independent countries and the creation and improvement of social and political institutions in all countries. Emphasis should be given to the political participation of women in large numbers, especially in national elections, both as voters and as candidates, in parliamentary elections, leadership of political parties and trade unions, national liberation movements and non-governmental organizations. Her delegation hoped that the meeting of experts to be held in September 1989 in Norway under the auspices of UNESCO would examine effective ways in which women might more significantly influence public authorities in their countries.

(Mrs. Nikolic, Yugoslavia)

21. The Forward-looking Strategies were the linchpin of the activity of the Yugoslav commission for co-ordinating national and international activities for the promotion of women, and a separate book had been published on the Strategies containing, inter alia, their translation into Serbo-Croatian. The work of the commission also included planning a Yugoslav seminar on indicators and research in respect of the status of women, continuing research on the economic role of women in Europe and preparing the Yugoslav Government's reply to the Secretary-General's questionnaire with a view to appraising progress in the implementation of the Strategies at the 1990 session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

22. Mrs. KAUR (India) said that, for the first time in 40 years, the Secretary-General, in preparing his proposals for the next medium-term plan, had formulated a separate major programme on the advancement of women.

23. Her delegation had read with interest the Secretary-General's report (A/43/638), including the excellent assessment of progress relevant to the priority themes. Her delegation welcomed the increase in the percentage of women in the Secretariat from 22.9 per cent in March 1985 to 26.2 per cent in March 1988. In that regard, it called for due regard to the principle of equitable geographical distribution, as recommended in General Assembly resolution 42/62.

24. Her delegation recognized that much of the substantive work on the advancement of women had to be done at the national level. In India, equality of rights between men and women was guaranteed by article 16 (2) of the Constitution. The right to acquire, administer, enjoy or dispose of property and the right of equal pay for equal work were provided for in legislation enacted since independence.

25. Indian women's struggle for emancipation had been a long one. Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the Indian nation, had from the beginning deliberately involved women in the struggle for freedom. In 1925, he had written that woman's rebellion, no doubt non-violent, would be none the less effective. Gandhi's traditions and ideals, pursued by successive Indian leaders, had been enshrined in legislation which enabled women to participate actively in social, cultural, political and professional fields on an equal basis with men. In India there were many women in the State legislatures, Parliament (almost 10 per cent) and ministries; there were women doctors, engineers, teachers, lawyers, ambassadors and writers of renown. As early as 1953, the first woman President of the United Nations General Assembly had been an Indian woman. A National Advisory Committee on Women had been set up, presided over by the Prime Minister. The Department of Women and Child Development had been traditionally headed by a woman minister.

26. Creating new opportunities for women in India as in other developing countries was, however, a complex task. Women were not a homogeneous group, nor were their rights identical in different strata of society. To make a woman a contributing member of both family and society, she had to be given an opportunity to become an independent earner. Employment was therefore one of the highest priorities of the Government, which was making an effort to create more jobs in both rural and urban areas.

(Mrs. Kaur, India)

27. The successive five-year plans had deliberately taken into account the promotion of women's education, employment and health. None the less, the dynamics of social change and development had adversely affected certain groups of women, particularly among the poor, and the sixth five-year plan had therefore contained for the first time a chapter on women and development. It had also shifted emphasis from welfare to development and was concerned less with education and health than with economic development, particularly in areas such as agriculture, rural development and land rights.

28. The seventh five-year plan had concretised the concern for equity articulated by the United Nations Decade for Women by giving women greater access to critical means of production such as land, and to productive resources such as credit, marketing, management training and technology.

29. A draft National Perspective Plan for Women to the Year 2000 was in the process of completion. The objective was to evaluate the impact of development plans and programmes on Indian women, especially in rural areas. The expansion of employment opportunities, the adoption of special measures for young and teen-aged girls and the universalisation of infant-care facilities to help working women were among the important recommendations. The draft Plan also laid stress on developing a national communications policy for women.

30. She commended UNIFEM for its work. India had contributed \$US 20,000 to it in 1988, and had pledged the same amount for 1989. The Fund, after having pioneered in the area of women's access to education, training, technology, credit and decision-making, was serving as a catalyst to ensure the involvement of women in mainstream development activities and, wherever possible, in the elaboration of pre-investment strategies, and to support innovative projects in line with national and regional priorities. As a member of the Consultative Committee of UNIFEM, India had encouraged the Fund, which had 200 ongoing projects in 104 countries, to take more initiative in the Asia-Pacific region. It welcomed the efforts made by the UNIFEM secretariat to identify viable projects in that region and its establishment of a regional plan for western Asia.

31. Indian women were deeply conscious of the fact that they had far to go before they integrated themselves into the development process and saw to it that legislation became a reality. Joining in the collective struggle against oppression and exploitation, they were working to do away with the stereotypes that constrained them. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had observed that the role of women was an indicator of the rate and the success of a country's development.

32. Miss LEOW (Singapore) said that since the end of the Second World War, four women in Asia had become heads of government. That was paradoxical because Asian societies were said to be among the most traditional and conservative in the world. While that was an encouraging sign of progress, the struggle for women's rights in Asia none the less continued.

(Miss Leow, Singapore)

33. The Women's Charter enacted in 1961 had given the women of Singapore all the rights for which women in many of the more advanced countries were still fighting at the time. Thanks to greater education, women had been able to break into what had previously been men's domains. The rapid industrialisation of the past two decades had spurred women to join the labour force. They were beginning to hold important administrative and managerial posts. In the political arena, on the other hand, the lack of participation by women was still glaring.

34. The traditional image of a woman whose place was in the home was still strong in Singaporean society. Many women left the work force in order to take care of their children. Her Government sought to provide incentives for them to return to work after their children were born. It was thus encouraging various child-care schemes, especially reliance on care by grandparents. Many provisions allowing mothers to take special leave in order to attend to their children had been introduced in the civil service. A system of flexible schedules still had to be developed to help mothers working in the private sector.

35. The emancipation of women in Singapore had led to a decline in the birth rate. For a small country with a small population that was a particularly serious problem. It could not be solved until a comprehensive policy towards women was adopted that would enable them to reconcile their professional lives with their family lives.

36. Mr. CAMARA (Observer, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) said that, in accordance with FAO Conference resolution 3/87, the Women in Agricultural Production and Rural Development Service had established a plan of action, together with various other administrative units, for the integration of women in development, under the co-ordination of the Inter-Divisional Working Group of Women in Development. The aim of that document was to outline FAO activities for the period 1990-1995. It applied the principles of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies to the sectors of agriculture, food, and rural development. FAO would continue to support women in their role as agricultural producers. Future activities would give greater recognition to the special needs of women in the areas of income-producing activities and control of income, educational and training opportunities, and technologies and other means to ease women's burdens and increase their productivity.

37. In order to monitor and evaluate progress in the advancement of women, FAO had established a computer-based coding system to identify the extent to which both the regular programme activities and the field projects were oriented towards women. The first results showed that 32 per cent of regular programme activities were explicitly concerned with women to some degree. Information on selected FAO projects had been reviewed in order to check whether women had benefited from them. Projects that had adequately integrated women's concerns would be analysed in greater detail. Such information would form part of the FAO input to the Cross-Organizational Programme Analysis. FAO was also involved in the preparation of the chapter on the role of women in food systems and agriculture for the Update of the World Survey on the Role of Women in Development.



(Mr. Camara, Observer, FAO)

38. Pursuant to FAO Conference resolution 4/87, nine experts had been invited to participate in a consultation which had focused on the integration of gender issues in planning, the monitoring and evaluation of agricultural and rural-development programmes and projects, and models for training staff on the question of women in development.

39. Although FAO had no specific numerical targets, the plan of action for the integration of women in development included a section on measures to increase the number of women employed at professional levels at headquarters and in the field, in accordance with the recommendations outlined in the Forward-looking Strategies.

40. FAO reported annually to the Economic and Social Council through the Commission on the Status of Women on the implementation of the Strategies. A copy of the latest report had been distributed to delegations.

41. Mrs. SYLLA-LINGAYA (Madagascar) said that, while there was a positive trend in the status of women throughout the world, much still remained to be done before the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women - equality, development and peace - were achieved. Equality of rights, though apparently an established fact, were proving difficult to put into practice in the economic, social and political fields. In Madagascar, measures had been taken to ensure greater participation by women in economic, social and political development, while eliminating existing inequalities between men and women. Action had been focused on health care, literacy, education and the promotion of small and medium-scale enterprises in which women could expand their activities. Special attention was accorded to rural women, who constituted the majority of Malagasy women.

42. Her delegation supported the request made to the Secretary-General by the Economic and Social Council in resolution 1988/29 concerning the holding of a seminar on women and rural development.

43. While it was the responsibility of States to determine policies and implement programmes for the improvement of the status of women, the United Nations had an important role to play in promoting such action and providing Governments with appropriate technical and financial support. The Commission on the Status of Women was the main co-ordinator of those efforts and the identification of priority themes would undoubtedly help to enhance their effectiveness. Her delegation supported the Commission's efforts to incorporate the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies in the United Nations plans, programmes and budgets. She noted with satisfaction that a separate programme for the promotion of women was envisaged in the revised plan submitted by the Secretary-General to the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination. The Secretary-General should accord all necessary attention to the question of the level of resources needed to enable the Commission on the Status of Women and its technical secretariat, the Branch for the Advancement of Women of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, to effectively discharge their mandate.

(Mrs. Sylla-Lingaya, Madagascar)

44. The Secretary-General's report (A/43/638) illustrated clearly the essential contribution made by United Nations bodies to the advancement of women and support for policies for the integration of women in development. In that connection, mention should be made of the training strategies developed by the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement for Women and its advanced research into the economic activities of women in the non-structured sector. The activities of non-governmental organisations also deserved mention.

45. Her delegation had taken note of the report of the Administrator of UNDP on the activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) (A/43/643). The priorities established and the drafting of a regional plan of action should enable the Fund to be even more effective in future. Her delegation welcomed the efforts made by UNIFEM to strengthen its co-operation with other United Nations bodies and various regional organs. The Fund's support to the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference to enable it to take greater account of the needs of women in the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990 demonstrated the dynamic nature of its activities for the advancement of women.

46. The preliminary draft of the global study on the role of women in development submitted by the Secretariat to the Commission on the Status of Women had revealed a deterioration in the status of women in developing countries. The factors contributing to that deterioration should be identified more clearly and ways found of eliminating them as obstacles to the realization of the objectives of the Forward-Looking Strategies.

47. Peace and security were prerequisites for the advancement of women. The Declaration on Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Co-operation recognized the positive contribution that women could make to peace-related activities. Special attention should be accorded to women who were victims of wars and conflicts throughout the world.

48. In order to participate in political and social life, women must be given training in politics and civics. In Madagascar, while women enjoyed the same political rights as men, few of them held official posts. Accordingly, efforts were being made by women's organizations to encourage greater participation of Malagasy women in political affairs.

49. Mrs. GEBRE-EGZIABHER (Ethiopia) said that it was gratifying to note that the improvement of the status of women was one of the major concerns of the international community. In spite of some commendable results, the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women - equality, development and peace - were far from being realized. The magnitude of the problems encountered by women, particularly in the developing countries, was immense. Consequently, the co-ordination of action should be strengthened and greater resources mobilized at the national, regional and international levels for the immediate and effective implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies.

(Mrs. Gebre-Egziabher, Ethiopia)

50. The Commission on the Status of Women had taken important measures in that regard. As the majority of women in developing countries, including Ethiopia, lived in rural areas, her delegation attached singular importance to the priority theme concerning the involvement of women in development to be considered by the Commission.
51. Her delegation supported the establishment of a comprehensive reporting system to monitor, review and appraise the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies at all levels.
52. The Secretary-General's report (A/43/638) should assist the Commission on the Status of Women to focus on the needs and aspirations of women that called for immediate action. In that regard, she stressed that the consideration of priority themes should take due account of the steadily deteriorating economic situation of developing countries as it affected the lives of women and that the Commission should recommend concrete remedial measures.
53. She noted with satisfaction that the activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women were continuously expanding. Her delegation believed that the Fund's capacity should be further strengthened to enable it to alleviate the lack of resources for women-related programmes in many developing countries.
54. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women should be universally accepted and put into effect. It was regrettable that an insufficient number of States had ratified or acceded to it. The work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women should be fully supported and given all the necessary resources to enable it to discharge its responsibilities. Her delegation supported the Committee's general recommendations and suggestions in that regard.
55. Her Government was committed to improving the status of women in Ethiopia and implementing the Forward-looking Strategies. The new Constitution contained a number of provisions guaranteeing the equal rights of women. Ethiopia had long been a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the advancement of women was an integral part of the overall national development plan. Women participated in the decision-making process at all levels, as well as designing and executing development plans and programmes through the Revolutionary Ethiopian Women's Association. They had made considerable progress in the areas addressed by the priority themes to be considered by the Commission on the Status of Women.
56. Ethiopia's main economic objective was to increase agricultural production, and in particular food production, an area in which women played a vital role and for which they were given all the necessary support. In the industrial sector women were offered numerous possibilities of employment on the same conditions as men and at equal rates of pay. While the social status of women was improving and increasing recognition was given to their role in the family, the community and the nation, it was none the less true that traditional discriminatory attitudes had not been fully eliminated.

(Mrs. Gebre-Egziabher, Ethiopia)

57. With regard to education, the eradication of illiteracy, and health and social services, particular attention was being paid to women and children. Women were increasingly participating in literacy campaigns and their formal education was improving.

58. The participation of Ethiopian women in national construction and in the creation of a just social and political system had substantially improved. Ethiopian women took part in all elections both as voters and as candidates, and were represented in political bodies at the highest level.

59. Ms. ALOUAZE (Algeria) said that the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, which marked a turning-point in the campaign on behalf of women, now called for efforts which were in tune with reality, and made it essential to identify the specific obstacles in the path of women's development.

60. In that connection, particular attention should be paid to the problems of women in the developing countries, who were hard hit by the effects of underdevelopment and their economic circumstances. Given the ever-widening gap between those who benefited from development and those who were left out, there was a need to tackle the most urgent tasks, i.e., to meet the latter's basic needs.

61. A further matter of concern to her delegation was the situation of women who were fighting side by side with their peoples in the struggle for self-determination and independence. For such women, the search for equality in daily life counted for little in comparison to the endeavour to achieve the independence of peoples still subject to the domination of occupying colonial Powers.

62. Those two examples clearly showed the need for a plan of action adapted to specific situations. Commitment to the advancement of women could not be confined to piecemeal measures whose result would merely be to exclude the most vulnerable and disadvantaged categories of women.

63. The laws and teachings of the Koran, which preached justice, tolerance and objectivity, had from the very beginning defined the legal status of women and embodied their rights. It was thus natural that the reports submitted by Muslim States Parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women should draw extensively on the Islamic sources.

64. In that connection, she was surprised at the way in which the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had dealt with those parts of the reports which related to Muslim law. In her view, the consideration of the initial report of a Muslim State had been the occasion of shocking and unfair observations. What was still more serious was that it seemed that such intolerant attitudes had persisted throughout the most recent session of the Committee and were tending to become the rule. She considered that certain experts on the Committee had forgotten the original purpose of that body. It was absolutely essential that the Committee should avoid all prejudice and should not seek to

(Ms. Alouaze, Algeria)

impose narrow or simplistic approaches in all cases, and that it should overcome intolerant reactions: in short, it should respect the unchanging values and religious teachings which governed the lives of almost one billion Muslims.

65. Ms. FARRA-FROND (Central African Republic), referring to agenda item 95, said that in their struggle to improve their status and, in particular, to overcome the prejudices, injustices and inequalities of which they were victims, women had consistently appealed to the conscience of the international community. It was thus comforting to note that efforts had been made in the United Nations to make Member States aware of the need to ensure that women could exercise their rights fully and to adapt their role and status to the changing times.

66. The activities undertaken within the framework of the United Nations Decade for Women, whose culmination had been the adoption of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, had achieved significant progress. The objectives laid down in the Strategies focused on the three themes of equality, development and peace, and were fully in keeping with the new roles which women were to play in present-day society.

67. She considered that the concept of equality should go beyond the framework of legality, since women should be able to exercise all of the rights accorded to them under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

68. With regard to development, women would be integrated in the economic development process only when they participated more fully in the political, economic, social and cultural life of their countries. Finally, there could be no social peace unless women, exercising their rights to the full, were involved in the search for those factors which were conducive to peace itself.

69. Her country, in the desire to ensure the advancement of women, had established a project entitled "Support for the preparation and implementation of a policy for the advancement of women in the Central African Republic" which enjoyed the support of the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Children's Fund. The project had four components: the establishment of a national advisory body on the advancement of women; the establishment of a documentation centre for collecting and disseminating information for women; research on the status of women; and the training of officials for the advancement of women.

70. Such a project required considerable resources, and her Government called upon the international community and United Nations bodies for assistance in its implementation.

71. She also expressed the hope that the international community would continue its efforts to increase global awareness so that women throughout the world, and particularly in South Africa, would achieve victory in their struggle for emancipation and equality.

72. Mr. Casajuana (Spain) took the Chair.

73. Mr. SAVUA (Fiji) said that the equality of women and their integration in development were two closely interrelated objectives, and that he wished to consider certain major factors which should be taken into account in any activities aimed at achieving those objectives, namely the customs, traditions and resulting attitudes which were to be found in many societies.

74. For centuries, custom and practice had clearly distinguished between the man's sphere of responsibility as the family's provider and defender and that of the woman as mother and housekeeper. It had taken centuries for attitudes to evolve, and it was not until 1935 that the League of Nations had considered the status of women in its political and civil aspects.

75. His country was steeped in traditions and customs and it was difficult completely to discard traditional views that had guided the people's lives for centuries. A long-term effort to change beliefs and attitudes was needed.

76. Like most developing countries, his country faced a daunting array of social and economic problems, among which the question of the status of women was of high priority. In August 1987, the Ministry for Women was established to co-ordinate the work of all agencies dealing with women's issues. The Ministry was engaged in drawing up a programme of work to further the rights and interests of women.

77. Woman was the corner-stone of the family, and the family was the very basis of society. Modernization must not undermine the critical role of women in the family, for the erosion of the family unit could only lead to the destruction of the very fabric of society.

78. His delegation supported the Forward-looking Strategies, the broad thrust and principles of which would guide its future activities for the advancement of women. The task would not be easy, since it was first necessary to change society's attitudes towards the role of women. His Government believed that each country, and indeed each society, had to determine for itself the role of its women and the pace at which that role would change and develop. Having said that, his delegation applauded the many initiatives of the United Nations, the specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations.

79. Very substantial and unprecedented progress had been made during the past 50 years. Further advances were needed, and should be consistent with other changes which were dramatically altering the structure, fabric and values of society.

80. Mr. Jativa (Ecuador) took the Chair.

81. Mr. AL-SABAH (Kuwait) underscored the importance of women in all spheres of activity and recalled that woman was man's partner in the development process. The Constitution of his country proclaimed the equal dignity of all human beings and the equality of rights and duties, and prohibited discrimination of any kind. Moreover, labour legislation provided for equal pay for men and women and, inter alia, contained a prohibition against compelling women to perform night work or hazardous work. It also provided for benefits for mothers, namely, maternity

(Mr. Al-Sabah, Kuwait)

leave. His country attached considerable importance to other fields, including education. Accordingly, Kuwaiti women had attained a high level of education and occupied many positions of responsibility: for example, as Government deputy ministers, general managers of firms, and university deans and rectors.

82. There were four women's associations in his country whose objective was to inform the public on women's issues and highlight their views. His country had ratified all United Nations instruments concerning working conditions, in particular, the Convention on the Abolition of Forced Labour. He felt strongly that the situation of women living in countries subject to foreign occupation must not be forgotten. For example, it was imperative to draw the attention of the international community to the suffering endured by Palestinian women in the occupied territories. The plight of South African women also must not be forgotten, and it must be recognized that in their case the only solution was to eliminate apartheid.

83. Turning to the report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (A/43/38), he expressed his concern regarding paragraphs 66 to 69. While welcoming the honest attempts to explain the contribution of Islam to the fight against all forms of discrimination, including discrimination against women, he believed that the scope of the explanation, as proposed, went beyond the Committee's competence. He was amazed that the Islamic religion had been singled out for the study in question from among all other religions and beliefs, and wondered whether that was not perhaps a sign of prejudice. Moreover, the Committee, like others unfamiliar with the spirit and the letter of the Koran, appeared to embrace erroneous premises and failed to distinguish between the provisions of the "Shariah" proper and the traditional practices of a given country. Frequently, such practices were not based on the Islamic religion, but had been inherited from periods predating the country's conversion to Islam. Moreover, in most societies the provisions of the Shariah applied only in certain clearly defined areas and did not regulate all aspects of social life - far from it. The traditional practices of a given country must not hastily be assimilated with the laws of Islam. The study in question should be abandoned.

84. Mr. BUZO (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that his country closely followed the development of co-operation with regard to the advancement of women, as well as the expansion and increased effectiveness of the activities undertaken by the competent United Nations bodies. The World Plan of Action and Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women had defined the general orientation to be followed and had established agreed principles and priorities for action at the national, regional and international levels. The Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Declaration on the Participation of Women in the Promotion of International Peace and Co-operation, which had resulted from the three World Conferences on the Status of Women, formed an integral part of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. Although, as many delegations had indicated in their statements, the objectives of the Strategies were still far from having been attained, the very importance of that document lay

(Mr. Buso, Byelorussian SSR)

in the fact that it had created an awareness of the problems to be solved and specified joint action to be taken in the future.

85. How the Strategies should be integrated in national and international plans and programmes had been the central theme of the debates in the Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council and the Third Committee. In that connection, annual sessions would enable the Commission on the Status of Women more effectively to plan and co-ordinate the activities undertaken under the three themes of equality, development and peace, and that could not help but have a favourable impact on the extended session it would hold in 1990 to review the implementation of the Strategies.

86. His country favoured expanding the membership of the Commission on the Status of Women and believed that the method adopted by the Commission on Human Rights with respect to the distribution of seats should be followed.

87. His delegation had read the report of the Secretary-General (A/43/638) with interest and believed that the three themes of the Strategies should be examined in greater depth. The measures taken to ensure the de jure equality of women unfortunately did not fully guarantee their equal participation in development. His delegation therefore welcomed the meetings of experts referred to in the report, which were to consider the experience of States with regard to the participation of women in various sectors of the economy and social life and prepare recommendations to improve the status of women. It was essential, however, to ensure that women's issues were not dealt with without their participation.

88. The issue of peace was particularly critical in the current period, and the women of southern Africa, Palestine and Central America needed peace even more than others if they were to help achieve the goals of development and equality. For that reason, the United Nations must mobilize public opinion, particularly that of women around the world, in order to settle all conflicts as fast as possible so that all peoples of the world could enjoy the fundamental right to peace.

89. Women in this country enjoyed full equality of rights in all areas of social life. The Commission of the Supreme Soviet of the Byelorussian SSR on Women's Work and Social Conditions and the Protection of Motherhood and Childhood was the main body in charge of making recommendations and submitting bills that were taken into consideration in the economic and social development plans of the Republic. Similar commissions in the local Councils of Deputies and trade unions, as well as the Council of Women of the Republic, acted as co-ordinating bodies for all questions concerning women. Women occupied high positions in all the State and social bodies of the Republic. Sixty per cent of high-level specialists and 65 per cent of middle-level specialists were women. Needless to say, the new philosophy of restructuring and openness would prompt the Byelorussian SSR to take a fresh look at the status of women.

90. His country had participated actively in all the activities undertaken in the framework of the Decade for Women and in the drafting and adoption of the



(Mr. Auzo, Byelorussian SSR)

Forward-looking Strategies. It remained ready to co-operate constructively with all delegations on the major priority issues in order to permit continuing progress on the advancement of women.

91. Mrs. GARUBA (Nigeria) said that her delegation welcomed the activities undertaken by the United Nations to focus world attention on issues concerning women; the creation of the Commission on the Status of Women had been particularly important. Her delegation had read with great pleasure the report of the Secretary-General (A/43/638) on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies; achieving equality of the two sexes by the year 2000 would clearly be one of the most dramatic social changes of the times. Equality between men and women in the political, economic, cultural and social spheres was the surest way to achieve development, but was a goal that required co-ordinated and integrated efforts in all areas at once. The international community had no other option than to make better use of the vast human resources that women represented.

92. Issues involving the status of women were receiving wider publicity and attention had begun to be focused on women as a labour market force. According to available statistics, the worldwide population of women would increase by some 635 million by the year 2000. Increased life expectancy for women in developing countries would mean that more women would enter the labour force after their child-bearing years. Women's reproductive role should not be an obstacle to full economic participation, nor should it serve as a punitive measure to would-be mothers. Special programmes must be organized to ensure that women who stopped working to have children could receive special training afterwards, preparatory to returning to work. Having acquired maturity as well as skills, such women would be more of an asset than a liability.

93. The statistics proved that greater female participation did not in any way jeopardize employment opportunities for men, because employment trends for both sexes had tended to run parallel. Moreover, women's active involvement at the micro-economic and social levels of the economy was often the only way to protect the family in times of difficult economic conditions. However, even if women's contribution to the economic and social aspects of life increased, there was no guarantee that women would derive benefits proportional to the increase.

94. Nigeria had signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and had ratified it without reservations in June 1985. The federal Government had established a National Committee on Women at the federal level and State Committees on Women at state level. National Committee members received remuneration like members of the Government. Adequate financial resources had been provided for the National Committee to fulfil its responsibilities. The Women's Department in the federal Ministry of Social Development served as a liaison between the National Committee and the Government. There were several sub-committees responsible for implementing the sub-themes covered by the Convention, one of which was the Committee on Women's Education.

(Mrs. Garuba, Nigeria)

95. At the initiative of Nigeria's First Lady, a strategy for better life in rural areas had been launched. In order for women to exercise their full political rights, a public awareness campaign had been undertaken. A national workshop had brought together women from all the country's rural areas to examine the problems they were facing (lack of facilities and supplies and of basic assistance for their own and their children's health. Emphasis had been placed on encouraging women to be more creative, particularly in the areas of arts and crafts. Committees and sub-committees had been set up to improve the production of locally manufactured products.

96. A National Commission for Women had been established recently in Nigeria, and the Lagos Fair for Rural Women, held in September 1988, had been attended by representatives from the country's 21 States, who had displayed their accomplishments, bringing to the fore their role and skills.

97. Traditionally, women's work outside the home had been primarily agricultural. With the introduction of paid employment, work outside the home had placed additional burdens on women, over and above their traditional role.

98. The Constitution of Nigeria guaranteed equal treatment for men and women in all spheres of life (sect. 39), and Nigerian women had participated fully in political activities since 1970. Women had excelled in the cultural sphere and had attained recognition in commerce and in the legal field. The principle of equal pay for equal work was fully implemented. Women received maternity benefits and retirement pensions; they could receive housing loans and experienced almost no discrimination. However, certain bureaucratic directives, coupled with ingrained attitudes, prejudices and traditions, had sometimes raised obstacles to the full participation of women in all spheres of national life. That paradoxical situation had been clearly reflected in the report submitted by Nigeria to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. It was heartening to report, however, that her Government had embarked upon campaigns to alert the population to the negative effects of certain traditional practices and biases.

99. Mrs. MUJUMA (United Republic of Tanzania) said that her country's emphasis on the participation of women in development was explained primarily by the fact that women accounted for over 60 per cent of agricultural production, while agriculture played a key role in the nation's survival. Furthermore, the country was seeking to build a society in which equality between the sexes was guaranteed. Notwithstanding the efforts which her Government had made so far to further the emancipation and advancement of women, much remained to be done.

100. Tanzania had strongly supported the proclamation of the International Women's Year (1975), the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985) and the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, which had promoted awareness of women's complementary roles at the national and international levels.

101. In May 1988, the Tanzanian ruling party had organized a seminar for party officials in order to make political decision makers and planners aware of the

(Mrs. Mujuma, United Republic  
of Tanzania)

activities, role, rights and position of women in economic and social development, with a view to ensuring equal treatment. Measures taken by Governments to promote the emancipation of women had been described. Her delegation believed, however, that women themselves should make a conscious effort to ensure that their existence as human beings, their role in society and their capabilities in various fields were recognized. It was also up to them to influence decision makers at national and international levels in order to enhance the status of women.

102. Tanzania had been an active participant in various meetings and seminars on women and appreciated all the more the activities undertaken, despite financial constraints, by the United Nations Development Fund for Women and by the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW).

103. The elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, which was necessary to ensure equality of the sexes, called for a universal approach. Her delegation therefore urged Member States to ratify or accede to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

104. Mr. RIESCO (Director, Staff Administration and Training Division, Office of Human Resources Management), replying to questions by the representatives of Canada, Greece (on behalf of the 12 States members of the European Community) and New Zealand with regard to the measures taken to continue the work of the office of the Co-ordinator for the Improvement of the Status of Women, referred to the statement on personnel questions made to the Fifth Committee by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management who, after paying tribute to the Co-ordinator, had said that the Office of Human Resources Management would henceforth be responsible for programme implementation, taking the necessary corrective action and setting new targets.

105. He reminded members of the Third Committee that the Secretary-General had stated in his report (A/C.5/43/14) that the Office of Human Resources Management was responsible for implementing the action programme, including the special measures approved by the Secretary-General, whereas the Steering Committee for the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat, a high-level advisory group of senior men and women appointed by the Secretary-General, monitored the progress made and provided guidance through regular reports to the Secretary-General. In accordance with paragraph 17 of that report, a staff member at the D-1 level, who actually worked in the Office, had been appointed to co-ordinate activities.

106. Ms. PEARCE (Australia) asked whether that person would be performing those functions on a full-time basis.

107. Ms. REAGAN (United States of America) asked who it was that had been appointed.

108. Mr. RIESCO (Director, Staff Administration and Training Division, Office of Human Resources Management) said that the person appointed would be performing

(Mr. Riesco)

those functions on a full-time basis. It was not customary to identify Secretariat officials by name, but the D-1 official in question had been closely involved in such activities. The appointment did not preclude the subsequent assignment of another staff member to that post, if the need arose.

109. Ms. NYMAN (Finland) asked how many times the Steering Committee had met since the Co-ordinator's mandate had expired.

110. Ms. VASSILIOU-ZACHAROPoulos (Greece) said that the Committee had been told, on the one hand, that a staff member had been appointed to act as a focal point for activities to follow up and facilitate the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat and, on the other hand, that a D-1 official would be assigned later to work full-time on those issues within the Office of Human Resources Management. She wished to know exactly when the post would be filled.

111. Mrs. PELLICER (Mexico) said she was concerned, dismayed even, that the post had not been given to a woman.

112. Ms. AHLUWALIA (Canada) asked when exactly the person who was to act as a focal point for activities would be appointed and what measures had been taken to continue the implementation of the action programme since July 1988.

113. Mrs. WARZAZI (Morocco) shared the concern of the representative of Mexico. The Secretary-General's reports, the studies and surveys undertaken and the statements made by representatives had all said that programmes concerning women should be undertaken with the latter's support. Women were in a better position than men to understand the problems directly affecting them. There were plenty of competent women in the United Nations, so why had a man been appointed to perform that function?

114. Mr. LINDHOLM (Sweden) said that the question of the office of the Co-ordinator had been considered by the Economic and Social Council at its latest session. By its decision 1988/124, the Council had requested the Secretary-General to extend the mandate of the Office of the Co-ordinator until the General Assembly was able to take a decision on the matter. It was surprising, therefore, that the mandate should have expired on 1 July and he would like to know the reason.

115. Ms. REAGAN (United States of America) echoed the concern expressed by the representative of Mexico. When it had been announced that, for financial reasons, the functions of the office of the Co-ordinator could be taken over by the Office of Human Resources Management, the proposal had been accepted in the belief that the work would be successfully completed. That was beginning to seem doubtful.

116. Mr. RIESCO (Director, Staff Administration and Training Division, Office of Human Resources Management) said that he had hesitated to name the appointee, not because the staff member in question was a man, but because he was a colleague of the Assistant Secretary-General who had taken on those functions on a temporary basis. The intention was to appoint a woman to the post as soon as possible and

(Mr. Riesco)

the appointment would be made as soon as all the administrative formalities had been completed.

117. The General Assembly had decided at its forty-second session that the Co-ordinator's mandate would be extended until the end of June 1988. After that date, the Office of Human Resources Management had taken over her functions. The Steering Committee made recommendations that the Office implemented through the intermediary of a high-ranking staff member who acted as a focal point.

118. The post had already been filled and the appointee had been doing the job since the Co-ordinator's mandate had expired.

119. He would answer the question concerning the number of Steering Committee meetings at a later date.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.