

United Nations
GENERAL
ASSEMBLY

FORTY-THIRD SESSION

Official Records*



THIRD COMMITTEE
29th meeting
held on
Wednesday, 2 November 1988
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 29th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. ABULHASAN (Kuwait)

later: Mr. GALAL (Egypt)

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.3/43/SR.29
7 November 1988

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.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. Mrs. MIRANDA (Chile) said that the participation of women in decision-making in the United Nations was minimal, reflecting the situation all over the world. Underdevelopment afflicting two thirds of mankind further aggravated the situation of women.
2. The report of the Secretary-General (A/43/638) graphically described the difficulties that women faced in achieving the full implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies by the year 2000 and attaining the goals of equality, development and peace. The prospects of achieving equality for women in the region were uncertain: Latin American women could not hope for economic equality, still less development or peace, if their countries were overwhelmed by a crushing external debt. The basic indicators in the report showed that women's economic and social participation had not varied over the past decade; the inequality of the status of women remained unchanged.
3. When women achieved positions of political power they could bring about substantive changes in society; otherwise, consensus agreements and resolutions remained a dead letter. The path of women in politics was fraught with difficulties; changes in the role of women in society were only beginning. All those factors must be taken into account in preparing the in-depth analysis to be carried out in 1990.
4. The past year had been a success for the United Nations; it could set an example for the world by improving the levels of recruitment of women so as to bring the Organization into line with the reality of a world in which 250 million people were women.
5. Chile had signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; it would be in a position to ratify the Convention after amending the Civil Code, the Law on Minors and the Civil Registry Act. Those changes would be made in early 1989, when restrictions on the legal capacity of married women would be removed so as to ensure their greater participation in the administration of property.
6. The international community had a commitment to future generations to lay the foundations for greater equality between men and women within the framework of the United Nations.

7. Mrs. KOZAKOU-MARCOULLIS (Cyprus) said that three years after the adoption of the Forward-looking Strategies, the momentum of the advancement of women seemed to be waning, giving way to a slow-moving process of evaluation and assessment which was more theoretical than practical in its approach. The report of the Secretary-General (A/43/638) presented a grim picture of women's plight almost everywhere and the problems in translating the Forward-looking Strategies into reality. It was doubtful that the targets would be met even partially in any area by the year 2000.

8. In the first priority theme, equality, notwithstanding the considerable contribution of the United Nations, it was discouraging to note the discrepancy between the de jure and de facto equality of women. Women must be afforded equal opportunities for active participation, qualitative as well as quantitative, in all aspects of life. A vital need was the education of the general population to reject the deep-rooted prejudices and stereotypes which were primarily responsible for the very slow pace of change. Women and men had to become aware of the true meaning of equality; the Forward-looking Strategies should be translated into the official languages of the subscriber countries, and be made part of school curricula at all educational levels. The media were of the utmost importance in promoting and publicizing the Forward-looking Strategies so that they did not become the exclusive information of the privileged few educated women.

9. On the second priority theme, development, the situation of women in many societies was still far from satisfactory because of high illiteracy rates, higher school dropout rates of girls, high perinatal mortality rates, minimal participation in decision-making and obstacles to full employment and advancement. The lack in many countries of regular and reliable data needed to evaluate progress in the advancement of women made it impossible to identify improvements within countries, or between countries and regions. Governments must ensure that the results of surveys were used to identify the obstacles that hampered women's contribution to economic development and their participation in the labour force. National research and statistics were essential tools for assessing the existing situation and highlighting areas which required special attention and further planning.

10. On the last priority theme, peace, it was clear from the experience of many countries, especially newly independent and developing countries, that women had played and continued to play a major role in national liberation struggles, but that their participation in the political process and particularly their election to high office, or decision-making positions was globally at a very low level. There should be a thorough study of the reasons for women's limited participation in the political process, and ways and means must be sought to stimulate women's interest in public life. Governments should create the necessary infrastructure to enable women to accept more demanding and responsible roles in society and should promote more women to decision-making positions. Non-governmental organizations and in particular, women's organizations, could also play a very significant role by mobilizing resources, promoting the participation of women and exerting pressure on Governments to discharge the responsibilities they had assumed in subscribing to the Forward-looking Strategies.

(Mrs. Kozakou-Marcoullis, Cyprus)

11. The progress achieved so far was significant, particularly in terms of the promulgation and adoption of documents, conventions and declarations. The task of translating the objectives they established into reality lay ahead; the slogan for International Women's Day, "Time for action", was therefore very apt.

12. Mrs. FOTSO (Cameroon) said that equality of rights and duties of all citizens, men and women, was clearly established in the constitution of Cameroon. As wives, mothers and citizens women were a key element of society and her Government had established structures to provide special training facilities and promote their economic, social and cultural advancement. Those institutional structures were overseen by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Status of Women, one of whose main tasks was to formulate and implement policies and programmes for the advancement of women. It was responsible for preserving all the positive traditional values of benefit to women; formulating and implementing programmes to facilitate the full participation of women in development; assisting women's economic groups; and promoting the use of appropriate technology to lighten women's work. An advisory committee for the advancement of women, consisting of representatives of various technical ministries, had been established to assess the situation of Cameroonian women and propose activities and programmes to ensure their optimal participation in the national construction effort. In provinces, departments and above all rural areas, other structures had been established to provide permanent support to rural women, and vocational training for the most vulnerable groups to enable them to earn a livelihood. The Organization of Women of the Democratic Assembly of the Cameroonian people played a major role in the political training of women. Women also played a decisive role in the preservation of cultural values and their transmission to the young. They occupied responsible posts in all sectors and their numbers were increasing in political party organizations. Women engaged in economic or professional activities had established associations to protect their interests.

13. Cameroon participated actively in international activities and meetings concerned with women's issues. It had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. International Women's Day was celebrated every year; the theme for 1988 had been widows. It had been discussed by women in all regions of the country, and recommendations had been adopted and submitted to the Government.

14. Cameroon had attended all the major conferences on the subject of women. Despite the severe economic crisis the Government was making great sacrifices to implement the Forward-looking Strategies. Several studies on all aspects of the life of women were being conducted or were planned and were expected to produce data banks to support the activities of the Government and enable it to plan its programmes judiciously. Women in rural areas had a central place in those activities; Cameroon was self-sufficient in food largely because of the efforts of women, the vast majority of whom worked on the land, where they were organized in pre-co-operatives which had access to technical advice, technologies and even financial support. Measures were also being taken to develop small-scale businesses and women's handicrafts and to facilitate the access of women to

(Mrs. Fotso, Cameroon)

credit. The Ministry of Education was currently carrying out a study to seek ways and means of remedying the low levels of school attendance among girls.

15. Cameroon would not be able to carry out many of its projects and studies without the assistance of organisations such as UNIFEM, UNESCO, CIDA, USAID, UNDP and UNFPA and the technical and financial support of friendly countries, particularly France, Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, the Federal Republic of Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands.

16. Mrs. ARUNGU-OLENDE (Kenya) said that Kenya's post-independence development plans had consistently emphasized political equality, social justice and equal opportunity for all the people without discrimination. Kenya would make every effort to apply, where it had not done so, temporary special measures to achieve the objectives of equality, as recommended by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

17. The findings reported under the priority theme of development were very disappointing, especially in the light of 10 years of intensive efforts for the advancement of women by Member States. The findings showed that women were still concentrated in a narrow range of unskilled, poorly paying occupations with little job security and frequent health hazards because they were not unionized and were willing to accept such conditions. The efforts of the International Labour Organisation and the Food and Agriculture Organization to deal with the constraints, especially in developing countries, in such areas as education and training, attitudes and customs, financial and infrastructural supports and the socio-cultural sphere were most welcome. Obstacles that persisted and reinforced the relegation of women to a narrow range of jobs must be overcome in order to increase women's participation in the development process.

18. Education was an essential prerequisite for a faster and more effective attainment of national socio-economic development; it gave women the knowledge, skills and confidence to care for self and family in a competitive world. Kenya's education system gave equal opportunities to all. The countries of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific region had called for a broader concept of education; no efforts should be spared in translating that ideal into practice. It was said in Kenya that "when you educate a woman, you educate a family and when you educate a man, you educate an individual".

19. The World Health Organization's emphasis on primary health care was praiseworthy, particularly in the developing countries. Women were the custodians of the primary health care of their families all over the world, but their own health had often been compromised on behalf of others. UNICEF's realization that the woman accompanying the child might herself be a patient was therefore welcome. As the burdens of women increased, their health, education and development must be assured.

20. Full participation of women in the construction of their countries and in the creation of just social and political systems would have to begin with peace of

(Mrs. Arungu-Olende, Kenya)

mind and peace in the family, which to a considerable extent could be fulfilled by achieving the goals she had mentioned. Women would then be able to collect, organize and develop skills for their own political participation in peace.

21. Her delegation took note of the efforts of United Nations bodies and specialized agencies to implement the Forward-looking Strategies and hoped that they would continue to do more. It had also taken special note of paragraph 73 of the report of the Secretary-General concerning the recruitment of women for the Secretariat and requested the Secretariat to hold consultations with members of the African region in order to find out how best the problem reflected in the paragraph could be solved.

22. Mr. SHKUKA (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the efforts made since 1975 for the advancement of women had helped increase international understanding of the difficulties encountered by women in seeking to enhance their role in development. Perhaps the most important result of the United Nations Decade for Women had been the adoption of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, which highlighted international commitment to the full enjoyment of all human rights by women and their equal participation in all economic, social, cultural and political spheres of activity.

23. Despite the successes achieved, much still remained to be done, and there was a need for the most effective co-ordination of international efforts. In many societies, women continued to be regarded as second-class citizens and were subjected to discrimination because of backwardness, poverty, servitude and, in many cases, customs and traditions that were no longer in harmony with the modern age.

24. The operational activities of the United Nations in the field, as outlined in the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/43/638, stressed the importance of the integration of women in all sectors of development, whether as beneficiaries or participants. Although women made up one half of the population, they remained underrepresented in political and economic life, and the focus should therefore be on remedying that situation.

25. While his delegation commended the efforts made by the Commission on the Status of Women, it hoped that the Commission would further develop its role and redouble its efforts for the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies.

26. In any consideration of the rights of women, the situation of women living under occupation and racial discrimination should not be overlooked. African and Arab women, living under the apartheid régime in South Africa and Namibia and under the racist Zionist régime in Palestine and the other occupied Arab territories, suffered from enforced ignorance, backwardness, poverty, unemployment, oppression and deteriorating standards of living as a result of racist practices and harsh and unjust laws. The United Nations bore the major responsibility for the elimination of the causes of such injustices, and that could only be achieved through the

(Mr. Shkuka, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

combined efforts of the international community in support of the demands of the peoples of those regions for the restoration of their legitimate rights to self-determination and independence.

27. Within a short period of time, Libyan women had been able to make enormous progress against the ignorance, backwardness and seclusion enforced by the long colonialist occupation of the country. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya had accorded particular importance to the achievement of equality for women and their full participation in society. They enjoyed the same rights as men, could enter all areas of social, economic, cultural and political life and were held in great esteem by society for their effective participation in all sectors of development and at all levels of decision-making. The country's domestic legislation, which was based on the Islamic religion, enforced equal rights for women in accordance with human dignity.

28. The country's development programme stressed education as the basic element in developing women's understanding of their responsibilities and their role in society. Special emphasis was also placed on training rural women so that they could make a positive contribution to the development of their communities, and women were accorded privileges and material and moral incentives with a view to achieving that goal. Women had been highly responsive to the approach adopted and today stood alongside men at school and university, in government service, in the factory, on the farm and in the Basic Popular Congresses which decided the policies and programmes of the community.

29. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya was committed to supporting all efforts for the advancement of women and would work diligently for the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies.

30. Mrs. BARGHOUTI (Observer, Palestine Liberation Organization) considered that the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of Palestinian women did not reflect the real suffering and deteriorating conditions experienced by Palestinian women, particularly those who were prisoners or detainees.

31. It was impossible to describe the extremely harsh and brutal conditions faced by Palestinian women and children in the Israeli-occupied Territories. The number of martyrs as of 30 October 1988 was 411, including 60 women and 25 babes in arms. Of the total, 40 per cent were killed in their homes and 30 per cent were 15 years old or younger; 44 per cent were killed by shooting and 42 per cent by lethal tear gas. Prison conditions in general were inhuman, particularly in Abu Kbir prison and Ansar 3 concentration camp as well as in the Neve Tirza women's prison. None of those prisons met the minimum standard specified in the Geneva Convention. During the intifadah, hospitals, clinics and health centres had registered over 500 cases of miscarriages attributable to toxic tear gas, severe beatings and kicking.

32. Six Palestinian youths had been buried alive but had subsequently been dug out by villagers. In February 1988 14 youths in the town of Qalgilya had been burned alive. Israeli soldiers had broken into the League of Arab Women's Hospital in

(Mrs. Barghouti, Observer, PLO)

Nablus over 20 times and into the Al-Ahly hospital 12 times. Israeli soldiers had hurled canisters of lethal tear gas into hospital wards and had opened fire with live ammunition on visiting relatives.

33. In'ash El-Usra was the largest Palestinian family and children's society and served at least 34,000 Palestinian women and children throughout the occupied Territories. It provided a strong income-generating infrastructure for Palestinian families, ran a full-time kindergarten and took care of approximately 330 orphans between the ages of 4 and 15. It also ran day-care centres, adult literacy, educational and cultural centres, a library and a folklore and research centre. On 20 June 1988, after continuous harassment, the Israeli authorities had closed the society for a period of two years and subsequently the society's president, her friends and colleagues had been detained and subjected to prolonged periods of interrogation.

34. She expressed the hope that the international community would put pressure on the occupation authorities to revoke the closure of the society, allowing it to continue to service Palestinian families, as well as to restore all the confiscated property. If a society such as In'ash El-Usra could be closed without a comment of disapproval by the international community, the Israeli occupation authorities would regard it as a green light to close down other institutions servicing the needs of the Palestinian community.

35. In conclusion, she read out part of an open letter addressed by Palestinian women to American women expressing sorrow at having to listen to official representatives preaching about human rights while the Government did not question the morality of its unconditional support to Israel. An end to the brutalities practised against Palestinian women could only be reached through a comprehensive peace in conformity with United Nations General Assembly resolution 38/58 C and by the termination of the Israeli occupation and the withdrawal of its forces.

36. Ms. BARUTCU (Turkey) said that Turkey had been among the pioneers in bringing the legal status of women to parity with that of men, starting in the 1920s. The law on co-education, giving women equal opportunity with men in education, had been adopted in 1924; women had been accorded civil rights in 1926, and voting rights shortly thereafter - in local elections in 1930 and in national elections in 1934.

37. Her delegation welcomed the designation by the Secretary-General of the advancement of women as one of the Organization's two priorities for the 1988-1989 biennium and supported the ongoing efforts within the United Nations system to integrate women into economic and social development programmes. She expressed the hope that efforts would be intensified towards securing an improvement of the status of women in the United Nations Secretariat.

38. A consultative council on the status of women had been established in Turkey during the previous year. The Turkish National Commission for the Advancement of Women was a joint governmental and non-governmental body sponsored by the State Planning Organization and was composed of representatives of ministries,

(Ms. Barutcu, Turkey)

universities, the National Council of Women, the Federation of Turkish Women and the Turkish labour unions. In 1986, the Foundation for the Advancement and Recognition of Turkish Women had been established.

39. Her delegation welcomed the recent procedural reforms adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women that had enabled it to deal more effectively with the tasks entrusted to it. Those tasks had included the selection of priority themes for discussion during the Commission's next five sessions, designed to ensure the in-depth consideration of topics covered in the Forward-looking Strategies up to the Year 2000. Her delegation welcomed the informative assessment of recent developments on those themes contained in the Secretary-General's report (A/43/638).

40. There had been a significant movement towards de jure improvement in the status of women but it had not necessarily resulted in de facto implementation of women's rights programmes. Her delegation therefore shared the view expressed by the Secretary-General that the political will and efforts needed to change societal values underlying women's inequality must come not only from Governments but also from the rest of society. An essential tool for the transformation of those values lay in the education of women, the eradication of illiteracy and increased female access to the educational system.

41. Her delegation wished to commend the Commission on the Status of Women for its valuable contribution to the elaboration of a comprehensive reporting system to monitor, review and appraise the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies to the Year 2000. That reporting system would serve as an indispensable tool for the arduous task that awaited the Commission during its extended session in 1990.

42. As a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, her delegation recognized that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Commission on the Status of Women could not be regarded as self-contained, isolated entities and that periodic reports submitted to CEDAW on the implementation of the Convention had a direct bearing on the efforts of the Commission in reviewing and appraising the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies. It therefore favoured increased co-ordination between the two bodies. Turkey had submitted its initial report which would be presented to CEDAW at its forthcoming session in 1989.

43. In conclusion, her delegation, like others, wished to express concern over the problems encountered by CEDAW owing to a lack of adequate resources, including technical and substantive support. Her delegation expressed the hope that the situation would be remedied in accordance with article 17 (9) of the Convention to enable CEDAW effectively to discharge its functions within the scope of its mandate.

44. Mr. CABRAL (Guinea-Bissau) welcomed the information contained in the Secretary-General's report (A/43/638) on the improved performance of the competent United Nations bodies in implementing the Forward-looking Strategies. The effectiveness of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

(Mr. Cabral, Guinea-Bissau)

(CEDAW) must however be strengthened in order to meet the growing challenge represented by the advancement of women. There was also a need for wider dissemination of information regarding the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in order to motivate accession or ratification by more Member States and to ensure its full implementation. The difficulties faced by the Committee in obtaining financing and technical and operational support were a matter of concern and his delegation supported the view that those aspects should be taken into account during the preparation of the programme budget for the 1990-1991 biennium.

45. It was important that the flexibility and autonomy of UNIFEM should be maintained in accordance with General Assembly resolution 39/125.

46. The attention paid by the entire United Nations system to the issue of the advancement of women demonstrated the important role which the system could play but the effectiveness of the multisectoral action taken had been limited in particular by the impact of the world economic crisis on the efforts of both national and international agencies to improve the situation of women at different levels. However, the crisis must not be permitted to interfere with ongoing programmes.

47. At the national level, the urgent problems of debt, food safety and infrastructural needs had a heavy adverse impact on social programmes, particularly in the developing countries, and women were the population group most seriously affected in terms of participation in social, economic and political life. The area of greatest threat, that of education where, because of traditional attitudes, the position of women was generally inferior to that of men. Women were thus denied the main weapon which could bring them freedom, equality and the full development of their intellectual, technical and professional capacities. While significant progress had been made in terms of legislation, the improvement had not yet percolated through to the real life of the community. In that connection he welcomed the priority given to the advancement of women in the third medium-term plan (1990-1995) of UNESCO.

48. Women in Guinea-Bissau had played a key role in the country's struggle for national liberation and continued to represent an essential agent of socio-economic development. The main obstacles to their full integration into all sectors of national life were economic and financial constraints, notwithstanding the wide range of regulatory provisions of a social, economic, political and legal nature introduced by the Government.

49. The situation of women in southern Africa and the Middle East was particularly hazardous in view of the domestic, cultural, economic and psychological pressures to which they were subjected daily. The only way for the international community to express its solidarity with those women was through realistic support such as that provided by the United Nations Educational and Training Programme for South Africa and ILO's proposals for assistance to the victims of apartheid in collaboration with the national liberation movements recognized by the OAU in South Africa and Namibia.

50. Miss CHENG (Democratic Kampuchea) said it was only within the last two decades that Governments world-wide had finally recognized that women were an essential factor in the efforts of nations to survive and move forward. The fact that the Forward-looking Strategies continued to provide impetus for activities to advance women, three years after the ending of the United Nations Decade for Women, constituted a symbolic victory for women. At the same time, many obstacles to women's progress remained. Further efforts were needed to change the attitudes of peoples and Governments. For that purpose, General Assembly resolution 42/62 provided comprehensive guidelines.

51. The status of women varied widely across countries and regions because of the differences in political, economic, social and developmental structures. Adverse political or economic conditions presented serious obstacles to progress. In her own country, women had come to realize that they could not attain their full potential while Kampuchea remained under foreign occupation. Consequently, they participated fully in the struggle for independence and self-determination. The contribution of Kampuchean women had been welcomed and recognized by the entire nation: without their contribution, the struggle for national liberation would not have reached its current favourable state.

52. The struggle which lay ahead for Kampuchean women was arduous. It required new strategies. The priority issues were the need for peace and the right to choose a political system without outside coercion. Through their participation in the national liberation movement, Kampuchean women had improved their status and were making a valuable contribution to the decision-making process. That gain must be maintained after independence had been achieved.

53. The women of Democratic Kampuchea strongly supported proposals for a just, durable and early settlement of the conflict in their country. However, all the proposals to that end had been rejected by Viet Nam, whose clear intention was to perpetuate its occupation of Kampuchea. Her country reiterated its appeal to the international community to exert continuing pressure on Viet Nam to reconsider its present position and to agree to total and unconditional withdrawal from her country, following a definite timetable and under international supervision. Kampuchean women had not lost hope. The continuing moral, political and legal support of the international community for their just and legitimate cause was a great source of encouragement.

54. Her country commended the Commission on the Status of Women for giving the Forward-looking Strategies a global priority by introducing them into the United Nations medium-term plan starting in 1992. Her country agreed with the views expressed on the need to enlarge the Commission and allow it to hold an extended session in 1990.

55. Her delegation wished to reiterate its support for United Nations activities intended to promote the status of women, in particular the work of the Secretariat. It also took note with satisfaction of the work done by INSTRAW and UNIFEM.

56. Ms. ARGUILLAS (Philippines) noted that, although 94 Member States had ratified or acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the rate of ratification or accession had dropped markedly in recent years. There was therefore a need to intensify efforts to disseminate information on the Convention and to encourage Governments to become States Parties.

57. In the Philippines, tremendous gains had been made in 1987 in eliminating discriminatory provisions from the law. For the first time, the new Constitution explicitly provided for equality between women and men. It cited the role of women in nation building. It recognized their maternal and economic roles. It mentioned their special health needs. And it had allowed Philippine women married to aliens to retain their citizenship if they chose to do so. On 17 July 1987, Executive Order 227 entitled "The family Code of the Philippines", had eliminated many of the discriminatory provisions in the Civil Code.

58. The National Commission on Women played a central role in translating the improved legal situation into reality. Among its functions, the Commission advised the President and the Cabinet in formulating policies and implementing programmes for the fuller integration and mobilization of women in national development on a basis of equality with men. It was also supported by non-governmental organizations throughout the country.

59. Philippine society was still steeped in traditional attitudes. Appropriate measures were therefore being taken in the field of education to counter such attitudes and sex-role biases through active intervention in schools. For example, curricular innovations explicitly provided for the teaching of home economics and livelihood education to both boys and girls, thereby abolishing the old practice of teaching home economics to girls and practical arts to boys.

60. Her delegation welcomed the emphasis placed by the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-second session on the priority themes which needed to be addressed in connection with the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies.

61. At the thirty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women, her country had stressed the important role played by national machinery in monitoring activities to improve the status of women. The establishment by ECOSOC of a comprehensive reporting system for such activities provided an effective guide for monitoring at the national level.

62. Efforts to improve the situation of rural women must be sustained and strengthened. In her own country more than half of the entire female population lived in rural areas. The Philippines Development Plan for the period 1987-1992 contained specific programmes and policies to improve the situation of rural women by including them in the mainstream of development.

63. The main obstacle to women's participation in policy-making was the persistence of the traditional attitude that politics were the exclusive domain of men. The 1986 election of President Corason C. Aquino, the first woman president of the Philippines, had been a breakthrough and displayed the confidence of the

(Ms. Arguillas, Philippines)

Filipino people in women as full participants at the highest levels of government. There was now a marked increase in the participation of women in the decision-making processes. Women were represented at the congressional level; and the number of women seeking elective positions at the provincial and municipal levels was also increasing. In addition, women held 9.58 per cent of the total judicial positions in her country.

64. Her country's commitment to the improvement of the status of women went beyond its own national boundaries. That was clearly illustrated when in July 1988 the Foreign Ministers of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) adopted the Declaration, initiated by the Philippines, on the Advancement of Women in the ASEAN region.

65. Her delegation wished to express its appreciation for the work of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), in particular the tireless efforts of its Director. UNIFEM's flexibility, innovative programmes and sustained interest had contributed directly to improving the lives of millions of women, particularly in the developing countries.

66. Mrs. OUSENKO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the Decade for Women and the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies had given new impetus to the women's movement in her country, whose social policy devoted constant attention to women. Ukrainian women constituted more than half the work force and were increasingly employed in sophisticated professions requiring high levels of skill and education. The problem of women still working under difficult and harmful conditions was being solved through automation and mechanization and more stringent legislative controls. Another problem was that working women had less time to attend to their family responsibilities and efforts were being made to solve it by providing better social conditions, developing the service sector and improving working conditions for women. The purpose was to preserve women's economic independence and enable them to pay more attention to their families, thereby solving a number of social problems.

67. Women's organizations in her country were also very active in promoting glasnost and perestroika. They were politically active and promoted the advancement of women in the administrative and cultural spheres. Women's councils were becoming increasingly important, particularly in helping to formulate a social policy providing the legal and material conditions that would enable women to combine family responsibilities with equal participation in various spheres of life.

68. Ukrainian legislation not only guaranteed women equality but also substantial benefits that made it possible to eliminate de facto inequality. Many women, however, were insufficiently aware of their rights and failed to take advantage of the benefits to which they were entitled. Educational measures were needed to correct that situation. A number of women's problems were common to all countries and could be solved only by better mutual understanding, co-operation and peace. A basic international legal instrument to protect the rights of women was the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Her

(Mrs. Ousenko, Ukrainian SSR)

country had been a party ever since its entry into force. She urged all States to accede to it and make it universal so as to strengthen international co-operation in securing equality of women. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women deserved commendation for its work; it should also help disseminate experience in implementing the Convention while complying strictly with its mandate.

69. The goals of the Forward-looking Strategies would be fostered by turning the Commission on the Status of Women into a generally representative organ of international co-operation with an enhanced role as a co-ordinating body. Her delegation endorsed the comprehensive approach of the Commission, whose forthcoming session would be just as important as international women's conferences, and her delegation hoped that those forums would give new impetus to joint international efforts to improve the situation of women.

70. Mr. BANJA TOURE (Mali) said that the Decade for Women and the Forward-looking Strategies had done much to alert the world to the need to improve the conditions of women and had resulted in important measures to foster their full participation in all areas of life.

71. In Mali, the economic and social advancement of women, most of whom were rural, was fostered by co-operative projects designed to increase women's income and their participation in national development. The co-operative movement was regarded as the best way to ensure the advancement of women and eliminate discrimination against them through a sharing of responsibilities between men and women in co-operative organizations. That approach had also enjoyed the support of such development partners as ILO and UNIFEM.

72. Development in her country required educational and health improvements for rural women. Mali had stressed literacy and post-literacy programmes for rural women and the provision of perinatal and primary health care.

73. Much progress had been made in integrating women into development. But their full participation could be ensured only through further efforts and such efforts could be made only when the financial resources required for the implementation of the projects envisaged were available.

74. Mr. COLEMANOV (Bulgaria) said that in his country the equality of women and the protection of mothers were safeguarded by law. Women enjoyed a status that met and often exceeded the requirements of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Bulgaria was interested in the experience of other countries in that area and was prepared to share its own.

75. The advancement of women was inseparable from efforts to preserve international peace and security. He commended the emphasis in the Strategies on the indivisibility and interdependence of the three objectives: equality, development and peace. Unfortunately, in 1987, out of 116 United Nations meetings on the advancement of women, only 10 were dedicated to the problem of equality and none to peace. That should be remedied in the future through the joint efforts of all the relevant bodies in co-operation with the Secretariat.

(Mr. Golemanov, Bulgaria)

76. His delegation supported the proposal to hold an extended session of the Commission on the Status of Women in 1990 and he noted in conclusion that further progress in the advancement of women could be achieved only by taking into consideration all aspects of women's role in society. His delegation would submit a draft decision on that subject to the Commission and he hoped that it would be adopted by consensus.

77. Mrs. KABA (Côte d'Ivoire) said that some Member States, even after adopting the legislative instruments designed to ensure the advancement of women, either failed to act on them or violated them, and that they lacked national machinery for ensuring their implementation or reporting their violation. Progress had to be measured in terms of deeds rather than words. Nearly all constitutions, for example, gave women the right to vote and run for office. But very few exercised that right because women bore such a heavy burden of material difficulties, social restraints, and inadequate education. Women required economic independence and improved social welfare in order to enable them to develop in other areas. The efforts of the United Nations had given hope to many women in developing countries and should be supported and encouraged. She especially appealed to States Members, particularly those who were not paralysed by the economic crisis, to allocate additional funds to UNIFEM.

78. Despite economic difficulties, her country had started projects to lighten the work burden of women and increase their income, to teach them their rights and duties and to train and educate them to facilitate their participation in development. There were also projects specifically designed to help rural women.

79. Lastly, she appealed to the international community, and particularly the women in the more prosperous countries, to form a chain of solidarity to provide continued assistance to underprivileged women so that they too might aspire to a better life.

80. Mr. MOKBIL (Democratic Yemen), speaking also on behalf of Yemen, said that an intensification of the efforts made by the international community to assist women living under occupation and oppression in Palestine and South Africa would promote the participation of the women of those regions in the achievement of the goals of the United Nations Decade for Women. The women of Palestine, who had given birth to the generation of the uprising, and the women of South Africa were not only struggling for the elimination of oppression and discrimination and the restoration of their legitimate national rights but also for equality, development and peace, the three goals of the Decade.

81. Women had participated in the liberation movement against the Imamate in the North and colonialism in the South and had thus assisted the victory of the September and October revolutions. That they had done so was considered no more than an extension of their traditional role in the life of the community.

82. The local society accorded women full recognition as effective participants in the economic and social development process. Because of the economic and social

(Mr. Mokbil, Democratic Yemen)

characteristics of the two countries, women played a major role in the production process and were equal partners with men in the agricultural and service sectors, both in the countryside and the cities.

83. In the past two decades, the endeavour had been made to improve the situation of women and to extricate them from backwardness. They had been guaranteed full rights by the Constitution, accorded free education up to university level and provided with social, health and family-planning services. They had been granted political rights, and they participated in elections from the local-council level up to the highest levels of authority. Women occupied leadership positions in the State legislative and executive apparatus, and they played an active role in social organizations in general in addition to their own women's organizations.

84. The endeavour to implement the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies reflected the deep interest of the international community in the matter, and concerted efforts in the field would help to overcome the obstacles to the achievement of the goals they embodied.

85. Mr. BEN DOV (Israel) regretted the politization of the discussion of the status of women. It was an issue that was of universal importance and should be discussed in a non-partisan manner. The recent terrorist attack against an Israeli woman and her children, for example, had not even been mentioned.

86. Israel had been founded by visionaries whose ideals included social justice and full equality between men and women. The women pioneers among them had sought such equality by insisting on the principle of shared labour. Women in Israel had full equality not only in law but in fact. The law provided for equal pay and equal opportunity, even in respect of maternity leave, to which men and women were both entitled, thereby enabling a couple to choose which parent would remain at home and giving women an additional degree of equality and dignity.

87. Certain outstanding personalities in Israel had served as role models for its women. Their average income was only 80 per cent of that of men. They were underrepresented in parliament and in upper levels of management. Efforts were under way to correct the situation and promote the advancement of women, particularly Arab and Druze women, whose life expectancy and educational levels were constantly rising. The Palestinian women in the territories administered by Israel were enjoying greater equality and higher status, as evidenced in the increasing number of Palestinian women joining the labour force or the university student population.

88. His delegation urged the adoption of the Forward-looking Strategies at the current General Assembly as an important means for furthering national and international progress for women.

89. Mrs. SHERMAN-PETER (The Bahamas) said that decisive steps had been taken to reduce sexual discrimination. Yet the goals and objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women had not been attained. Women continued to bear a disproportionate

(Mrs. Sherman-Peter, The Bahamas)

number of responsibilities. For example, although it was now an economic necessity for women to work, they remained concentrated in low-paying jobs. Many barriers to the advancement of women remained.

90. The Forward-looking Strategies continued to provide the framework for addressing women's issues. Her delegation was encouraged by the new and dynamic approach which the Commission on the Status of Women was bringing to its task of promoting and monitoring the implementation of the Strategies. The wide range of topics being considered by the Commission was crucial to maintaining the momentum of the Decade. It was also important that the composition of the Commission should reflect United Nations principles.

91. The activities of UNIFEM and INSTRAW had also proved essential to the advancement of women. UNIFEM's approach was to be commended and she wished to emphasize in particular the Fund's activities in the Caribbean. The work of the Fund counterbalanced, although to a limited extent, the harsh realities of the debt burden and the world economic situation.

92. Her delegation was following with great interest the efforts to increase the number of women in senior positions in the Secretariat and in other Organizations of the United Nations system. Every effort should be made to reach the target of women holding 30 per cent of the total posts in the Secretariat by the year 1990.

93. System-wide efforts to promote the advancement of women were encouraging. In particular, the Branch for the Advancement of Women was to be commended for its continuing activities in that area and her delegation hoped that the Branch would be enabled to continue to play its crucial role.

94. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in setting out the basic principles for achieving equal rights for women, had stimulated government policies and programmes in that area, resulting in significant advances during the Decade. During the past year, her own Government had drafted or adopted a number of bills which had particular implications for women. In addition, her Government had stressed education as a means of enhancing women's participation in national life. In general, her Government's approach to education had met with marked success in regard to the equality of men and women. In the area of work, women were also making gains.

95. Her Government attached great importance to the political participation of women. While progress in that area had not been dramatic, some important gains had been made. There had been an increase in the number of women running for and elected to political office in the general elections of 1987. In addition, women also held a significant number of seats in the Senate and were making significant contributions in that forum.

96. Mrs. NASHANDI (Observer, South West Africa People's Organization) said that the struggle for the total elimination of all forms of discrimination against women was crucial. Black women who lived under colonialism were subject to double

(Mrs. Nashandi, Observer, SWAPO)

discrimination: first as blacks and second as women. Under apartheid laws, women were considered insignificant and their contribution to development was not valued. In Namibia, for example, the majority of black women were domestic workers and, according to South African labour laws, were not legally defined as workers.

97. It was common knowledge that any struggle waged by a certain sector of society could not be successful as long as the entire nation was denied its right to freedom and self-determination. For that reason, Namibian women had made a firm decision to participate in their country's struggle for national liberation and for the total abolition of apartheid. That decision had been very costly to Namibian women in terms of intimidation, harassment and even physical injury. Nevertheless, they were determined to fight until a final victory had been achieved.

98. It was time for societies to recognize the importance of women's contribution and to realize that they could no longer be excluded from the decision-making processes. Namibian women, through their organization, the SWAPO Women's Council, were participating actively in the national liberation struggle at the level of policy implementation and were seeking international assistance for advancing the rights of women. In recognition of women's vital role in the liberation struggle, the SWAPO Constitution, adopted in 1976, had clearly identified sexism as one of the reactionary tendencies which the movement had to combat relentlessly.

99. The General Assembly, in its resolution 41/111 of 1986, had reaffirmed the need for the Forward-looking Strategies to be translated into concrete action. That goal had still not been fully attained.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.