



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 30th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. CHAVANAVIRAJ (Thailand)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 91: UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR WOMEN: EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE (A/38/203)

- (a) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE SECOND HALF OF THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR WOMEN: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/38/146)
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AGENDA ITEM 92: ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN:

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (A/38/45, A/C.3/38/7)
- (b) STATUS OF THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/38/378)

1. Mrs. SHAHANI (Assistant Secretary-General, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs) said that, although important gains had been achieved by women in issues relating to equality, development and peace since 1975, when the first intergovernmental global conference on women had taken place in Mexico City, progress had been uneven and generally had not gone far enough or deep enough. In most countries, developing as well as developed, women were still obliged to carry a disproportionate share of the burdens of home and family, and many therefore fell far short of realizing their potential in the economic, social and political spheres of life. The recession had complicated those problems, with women often being the last to be hired and the first to be fired. Moreover, the need to change attitudes on the part of both men and women remained a problem.

2. The most urgent question before the Committee with regard to agenda item 91, however, was the preparatory work for the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women. An important initial step in those preparations was the holding in Vienna, earlier in 1983, of the first session of the Commission on the Status of Women Acting as the Preparatory Body for the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women. The report of that session had been transmitted to the General Assembly by the Economic and Social Council and was now before the Committee (A/CONF.116/PC/9). The Preparatory Body had adopted six recommendations concerning the preparations for the Conference by consensus. The first set forth the provisional agenda, of which items 7 and 8 dealt with the critical review and

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appraisal of progress achieved and obstacles encountered at the national, regional and international levels to attain the goals and objectives of equality, development and peace. By spelling out separately the three sub-items dealing with the goals and objectives, the Commission had sought to indicate that equal importance should be attached to each of the three components of the theme of the United Nations Decade for Women. The emphasis of agenda item 8 was on effective strategies of implementation for the advancement of women for the period up to the year 2000. The Preparatory Body had emphasized that a primary concern of such strategies was to lead to a real improvement in the lives of the vast majority of women throughout the world. Those strategies could not be fulfilled, however, unless planners and policy makers, particularly at the national level, incorporated the concerns of women into broader development plans and programmes.

3. The provisional agenda was the product of the accommodation of different points of view not only of individual Member States but also of the regions represented in the Preparatory Body. Specific topics which were deemed of priority to Member States could be discussed under any of the components of the theme - equality, development and peace. It was her sincere hope that the Committee would approve the provisional agenda as recommended by the Preparatory Body and as endorsed by the Economic and Social Council.

4. The 1985 World Conference provided a unique and historic opportunity to make recommendations on a broad range of issues. While taking into account the specific possibilities in each country to advance the status of women, the Conference must be united in its overriding purpose of achieving common goals and, in so doing, transcend the divisive issues that could divert it from its true purposes. The time had come for women to participate fully with men in the conduct of international affairs, and the preparatory activities for the Conference presented an opportunity for many women to learn the art of quiet diplomacy and negotiation.

5. Turning to recommendation II, which dealt with the documentation for the World Conference, she said that it was the wish of the Preparatory Body to avoid a proliferation of documentation. Among the key documents were a report on the review and appraisal of progress made during the Decade at both national and international levels, a world survey on the role of women in development, and a compilation of selected statistics and indicators bearing on the status of women. The Conference secretariat had given much attention and effort to formulating a questionnaire soliciting information from Governments on progress made at the national level in implementing the goals of the Decade. Governments were requested to complete and return the questionnaire by March 1984, which should allow sufficient time for analysing the results. She made a strong appeal to Governments to give the questionnaire the attention it merited by providing comprehensive information derived from scientific research techniques. It was also her hope that developing countries could be assisted in preparing their replies, for it would be regrettable if comprehensive replies came only from Member States which had the resources to respond to the questionnaire.

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6. The report on review and appraisal would then serve as the basis for formulating the forward-looking strategies for implementation which the Conference was expected to consider. The test of those strategies was whether they would be able to identify those elements which would promote broad-based women's participation in all spheres of development. The Conference would also have before it the world survey on the role of women in development, the purpose of which was to address some of the crucial aspects of the situation of women as they related to economic development in the context of the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade.

7. The third recommendation was concerned with preparatory meetings and activities. It was recommended that regional meetings should be organized as preparatory activities for the Conference; the recommendations of those meetings would be of utmost importance in relation to proposals to be placed before the Conference. Preparations were now under way in each of the regions to convene those preparatory meetings in 1984. She expressed the hope that funding for the regional meetings would be approved by the General Assembly, since without adequate funding the preparatory activities could be seriously jeopardized. Through a broad-based, national, regional and international preparatory process, much could be done to identify common concerns and goals of women as well as methods of implementation at preliminary stages and help ensure co-operation and consensus at the Conference. The existing network for the North-South, East-West and South-South dialogues could be used to realize that aim. Finally, with regard to recommendation V, no effort should be spared in mobilizing the information programmes of the United Nations system to give full publicity to the Conference.

8. Referring to the administrative and financial implications of the Conference (A/C.3/38/2/Add.1), she noted that a lean budget had been presented and that she felt confident that the Assembly would provide the necessary means to organize a conference worthy of the goals of the Decade. In that context, part of the third recommendation proposed the establishment of a Special Trust Fund to assist in the preparation of the Conference. That fund would be set up under the auspices of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and could be used for such important purposes as enabling the least developed countries to participate in the Conference, undertaking specific research relating to the documentation, and financing unforeseen requirements. In view of the severe budgetary restraints, she made an earnest appeal for donors to contribute generously to the Special Trust Fund, which was solely devoted to the purposes of the Conference.

9. She drew the Committee's attention to the preparation of a directory of national focal points for the advancement of women, which would list the national machinery established by Governments for the advancement of women as well as national liaison officers or correspondents for the forthcoming 1985 World Conference. She urged Governments to send the information required as soon as possible.

10. Referring to agenda item 91 (d), she shared with the Committee some of the major accomplishments of the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women

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(A/38/530). The year under review had seen the approval of 96 new projects, 88 per cent of which were at the country level. Other special features of Voluntary Fund assistance were the support of national non-governmental organizations and the use of revolving loan funds in lieu of outright grants for equipment and supplies; a new type of programming mission was also tested for the development of new projects and for project evaluation. The Forward-Looking Assessment of the work of the Fund had entered its intensive stages of execution, and a Knowledge Bank was being developed for Fund-assisted projects. The Consultative Committee on the Voluntary Fund had asked that the Committee's attention be drawn to the matter concerning posts for senior women programme officers at the regional commissions. It was a matter of great concern that the original programmes be assured of security and continuity through the allocation of regular budget posts.

11. Lastly, she informed the Committee of the action taken by the Secretary-General in response to General Assembly resolution A/37/62. Following a review of the operations of the Fund by the Administrative Management Service, an Implementation Unit had been formally designated to assist in managing the Fund's operations, and two additional Professional posts and one General Service post had been created. Those arrangements, plus an excellent working relationship with UNDP, assured the handling of the substantive and financial aspects of the work with greater efficiency.

12. Referring to agenda item 92, she noted that the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women had been a milestone in the efforts of the international community to free women from legal and de facto discriminatory practices. An essential and unique feature of the Convention was the provision for an implementation procedure through the establishment of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. That Committee had the responsibility of reviewing States parties' reports on the measures adopted to give effect to the Convention and on progress in that respect. Its reports (A/38/45 and A/38/378) would bring the Committee up to date on its work and on the status of the Convention. She expressed her appreciation for the work accomplished by the Committee at its two sessions in October 1982 and August 1983. It provided tangible evidence of the progress being made and the existing political will to achieve equality between men and women both in law and in practice.

13. The Convention had received, as of the end of September 1983, 90 signatures, 48 of which had been followed by ratification, and four States had acceded to the Convention, making a total of 52 ratifications and accessions. That achievement indicated the importance that Governments attributed to the Convention, since by becoming parties States had in effect accepted the international jurisdiction of the Committee to review the state of implementation of the Convention in their own countries. It also demonstrated the leadership role which the United Nations could play in bringing about international co-operation and agreement among countries. She made an urgent appeal to those Governments which had not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Convention. She pointed out the links which agenda items 84, 88, 89 and 90 had with items 91 and 92, and said that, although women's issue went

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beyond those subject areas, it was useful for Governments, non-governmental organizations and the Secretariat to make the necessary linkages for more effective implementation of related programmes.

14. Mrs. PASTIZZI-FERENCIC (Director, United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women) said that following General Assembly resolution 34/157, the INSTRAW permanent headquarters had been inaugurated on 11 August 1983 in Santo Domingo. The transfer of the Institute to its permanent headquarters marked the end of its formative stage and the establishment of an organizational framework to be reflected in the statute of INSTRAW.

15. As the 1985 World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women approached, efforts should be strengthened to open new and more optimistic perspectives for more than half the world population. During the course of the United Nations Decade for Women, the interrelationship between the aspiration for an equal status and an active role for women in the development process had been clearly established. That interrelationship, an innovative concept at the time it had been presented to the world community, required continuous efforts if it was to be translated into pragmatic action.

16. INSTRAW's work programme had been determined by its mandate and by the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade because references to women's role and contribution to society were included in many parts of IDS. INSTRAW also sought to promote the integration of women in development through TCDC activities. In addition, it attached great importance to improving statistics, indicators and data on the situation of women by co-operating with the United Nations Statistical Office.

17. INSTRAW was entirely financed by voluntary contributions. However, financial constraints should not be regarded as a barrier to carrying out its activities, but rather as a challenge to devise effective modalities for closer co-operation with United Nations bodies, intergovernmental, governmental, academic and non-governmental institutions aimed at minimizing costs. INSTRAW's undertaking therefore depended above all on the levels of co-operation it could find within and outside the United Nations system.

18. Mrs. BOS-BEERNINK (Netherlands) said that the themes of the United Nations Decade for Women, namely, equality, development and peace and its sub-themes of employment, education and health should be maintained and the 1985 World Conference should concentrate on reviewing and appraising achievements in those fields. In that connection, her delegation attached great importance to the compilation of selected statistics and indicators on the status of women and their role in areas such as employment, health and education, as suggested by the Commission on the Status of Women. With respect to the preparations for the World Conference, her delegation was in favour of emphasizing the regional approach because, as all were aware, there were important differences between the cultural, social and economic and religious attitudes towards women in the various regions of the world.

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19. On the other hand, her Government did not regard it as advisable to draw up another detailed programme of action or to seek a second decade for women. After 1985, specific topics relating to women's issues should continue to be dealt with in appropriate forums such as the General Assembly and the competent agencies and organizations. That would ensure a genuinely integrated approach to the many different problems and issues involved. Her delegation wished to stress that the necessary resources for the preparation and the holding of the Conference should be provided from the regular budget, supplemented by voluntary contributions which could be channelled through the Special Trust Fund. In no event should the resources of the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women be used to finance any of those activities. The Netherlands was in favour of the Fund's continuing existence as a recognizable unit after the Decade for Women had ended. However, it would advocate that the Fund be transferred from the United Nations Secretariat to another United Nations agency, for example, UNDP, with which the Fund had already worked in close collaboration and with positive results.

20. The recession had had a negative effect on efforts to achieve equal rights and opportunities for women. Employment opportunities had been reduced and cuts in public spending and the introduction of labour-saving technology in sectors employing a high proportion of women had created further difficulties. There should therefore be an improvement in women's professional qualifications through education and vocational and on-the-job training in order to provide them with access to a greater range of jobs and to reduce existing job segregation. At the same time, the responsibilities and work-load within the family must be fairly distributed in order to enable both men and women to mesh their family and professional obligations more satisfactorily.

21. Another problem confronting women in all parts of the world was sexual violence against women and its prevention should be regarded as an integral part of emancipation policies. The abuse of women and children was a violation of fundamental rights and freedoms which must be opposed with every available means at both the national and international levels.

22. In the past 10 years, the awareness had grown that women were of vital importance to the development of the third world. It was encouraging to note that many United Nations agencies now recognized the need to incorporate efforts to improve the position of women into their overall development strategies and were aware that it was an enormous waste of human resources not to involve women in development policies. Unfortunately, the danger that the current economic crisis would have a disproportionately adverse effect on women and the opportunities available to them was also present in the developing countries. One of the priorities of the Netherlands development policy was to improve the living conditions of women in developing countries and their interests and needs were borne in mind when bilateral programmes were set up. Women were traditionally the food producers and should therefore be the first to receive information on agriculture and credit facilities and should be involved in the preparation and implementation of development planning at the local and national levels. Another important task was to stimulate the exchange of information between women in

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developing countries so that women could learn from one another in their efforts to change their situation.

23. While concentrating on the Decade for Women and the 1985 Conference, members of the Third Committee should not lose sight of other new United Nations activities which might be of importance to women. In that respect, she wished to draw attention to the International Conference on Population to be held at Mexico City in 1984. As UNFPA had stated, attempts to halt population growth could succeed only if they formed part of an integrated development policy in which attempts to improve the position of women played an important role.

24. Mr. EHRLICH-ADAM (Austria), speaking on agenda item 91, said that the preparations for the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women had reached a decisive stage. In less than two years, the international community would be required to assess the achievements of 10 years of efforts to secure the advancement of women.

25. By its resolution 37/60, the General Assembly had agreed that the Commission on the Status of Women should be the preparatory body for the World Conference. In that capacity, the Commission had submitted to the Third Committee for consideration a number of recommendations, including one on the provisional agenda for the Conference which, in accordance with paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 37/60, had been adopted by consensus. His delegation wished to congratulate the Commission on having found a formula which ensured a fair balance between the need to review progress achieved and obstacles encountered in attaining the objectives of the Decade and the development and implementation of a strategy aimed at continuing efforts for the advancement of women until the year 2000.

26. His delegation also supported the Commission in its approach to the provisional agenda for the World Conference. There would be ample room, under items 7 and 8 and their sub-items, for discussion of political questions. The draft agenda had the threefold virtue of being balanced, being logical and taking account only of questions specifically related to the advancement of women: to reopen discussion on it would be unwise. Political questions could, if delegations so wished, be raised under the main theme "Peace". In the opinion of his Government, however, the World Conference should be devoted solely to questions of specific concern to the advancement of women; political problems not directly linked to the advancement of women should be dealt with by the competent political organs of the United Nations.

27. His delegation noted with satisfaction that considerable progress had been made in the matter of equality. National constitutions, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women all placed women on an equal footing with men. All that remained to be done was to implement the provisions of those instruments; there, unfortunately, there was still room for improvement.



(Mr. Ehrlich-Adam, Austria)

28. Turning to the theme "Development", he said that the full integration of women in the development process was still far from complete.

29. Women were more affected than men by the unemployment crisis. In the opinion of his delegation, high priority should therefore be accorded to the sub-theme "employment" at the World Conference.

30. The success of the World Conference would depend on conscientious preparation and on the widest possible participation. It was satisfactory to note that the preparatory body and the Secretariat had taken steps to ensure the quasi-universal participation of Member States. The organization of regional intergovernmental meetings formed an integral part of the preparatory arrangements. As was known, for regional meetings programme-budget implications could be presented for ECA, ECLA, ECWA and ESCAP; they could not, however, be presented for ECE. His Government, which attached great importance to the advancement of women, considered that the European countries should also be offered an opportunity to hold a preliminary meeting at which to work out common approaches to the questions to be discussed at the World Conference. It was, therefore, happy to invite the member countries of ECE to attend a European intergovernmental preparatory meeting which would be organized with the collaboration of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs at Vienna in 1984.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.