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UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR WOMEN: EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT
AND PEACE

Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women

Report of the Secretary-General

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* A/32/150.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The General Assembly, at its thirtieth session in 1975, in proclaiming the period from 1976 to 1985 as the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, decided that the Voluntary Fund for the International Women's Year, which had been established by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1850 (LVI) of 16 May 1974, should be extended to cover the period of the Decade. ^{1/} It further requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Economic and Social Council at its sixtieth session in 1976 an accounting report of the Fund, as well as proposals for its future management and for the criteria to be applied for future disbursements.

2. After considering the report of the Secretary-General (E/5773), the Council in resolution 2005 (LX) of 12 May 1976, recommended a draft resolution for adoption by the General Assembly, in which it proposed certain criteria to be applied in the utilization of the resources of the Voluntary Fund, and proposals for its future management. The Council's recommendations were endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 31/133 of 16 December 1976.

3. With respect to the criteria established by the General Assembly, it is provided in paragraph 1 of resolution 31/133 that the resources of the Fund should be utilized to supplement activities in certain areas designed to implement the goals of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace and that priority should be given to programmes and projects of the least developed, land-locked and island countries among developing countries. The specific areas mentioned in the resolution are the following:

- (a) Technical co-operation activities;
- (b) Development and/or strengthening of regional and international programmes;
- (c) Development and implementation of joint interorganizational programmes;
- (d) Research, data collection and analysis, relevant to (a), (b) and (c) above;
- (e) Communication support and public information activities designed to promote the goals of the Decade and, in particular, the activities undertaken under (a), (b) and (c) above.

In addition, in the selection of projects and programmes, special consideration should be given to those which benefit rural women, poor women in urban areas and other marginal groups of women, especially the disadvantaged.

4. In paragraph 3 of resolution 31/133, the General Assembly requested the President of the Assembly, to select, with due regard to regional distribution, in

^{1/} See Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirtieth Session, Supplement No. 34 (A/10034), p. 100, items 75 and 76.

the first instance for a period of three years, five Member States, each of which should appoint a representative to serve on the Consultative Committee on the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women.

5. In a communication dated 16 March 1977, the President of the General Assembly informed the Secretary-General (A/31/477) that, following consultations with the chairmen of the regional groups, he had selected the following five States as members of the Consultative Committee on the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women: German Democratic Republic, Jamaica, Nigeria, Philippines and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

II. DECISIONS OF THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

6. The first session of the Consultative Committee was convened at United Nations Headquarters from 21 to 23 March 1977. Mrs. Leticia R. Shahani, representative of the Philippines, was elected Chairman-Rapporteur of the Committee. The Committee held four meetings.

7. The Committee had before it a document prepared by the Secretariat entitled "Proposed Programme and Procedure of the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women". The document included: (a) a statement of the current status of the Fund, including the contributions and pledges made to date (sect. I); (b) a brief statement of the objectives to be applied in developing the Fund programme (sect. II); (c) the framework for the Fund programme, with suggestions concerning the types of projects by categories of activities and by region (sect. III); (d) suggestions concerning the management procedure of project selection, execution and review (sect. IV); and (e) a short summary of conclusions and recommendations (sect. V). Annexes I and II gave examples of project guidelines to be used in agreements between the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs and executing agencies for projects to be financed by the Fund. The Secretariat proposed to allocate the sum of \$1,700,000 to be utilized in 1977 from resources of \$1,958,328 available in the Fund as at December 1976.

8. The Consultative Committee recognized that the Controller of the United Nations was responsible for the management of the Fund which should be operated in accordance with the Financial Regulations and Rules of the Organization. Nevertheless, the Committee felt it necessary to clarify its terms of reference in the light of the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly in paragraph 3 of its resolution 31/133. The mandate of the Committee as set forth in that resolution is "to advise the Secretary-General on the application to the use of the Fund of the criteria set forth in paragraph 1" of the resolution. The Committee considered that the mandate to advise the Secretary-General on the criteria should be interpreted in the widest possible sense and should include advising the Secretary-General on the screening, appraisal and selection of projects to be funded and on the amounts to be allocated to those projects. The Committee members emphasized that they had been appointed as representatives not only of their own countries, but of the regions concerned and they felt that they had a responsibility for the regions they represented.

9. The members of the Consultative Committee felt that the document submitted to them by the Secretariat was a very useful and comprehensive one, but that it could not be endorsed at that stage since they had not had the necessary time for consultations with the regions.

10. The Committee also expressed the view that the role of the regional commissions vis-à-vis the programme of the Voluntary Fund should be strengthened, since they were in the best position to know the needs of their respective regions. In this connexion, statements were made by Committee members on the lack of precedents for this type of committee and its need for feedback from the regions to fulfil its mandate.

11. The Consultative Committee, in discussing the framework of the programme of the Voluntary Fund, strongly urged that the Fund should be a supplement to and not a substitute for other programmes undertaken within the United Nations system on behalf of women. They emphasized that the Fund, in spite of its small size, should serve as a catalyst for carefully selected specific projects benefiting women in the developing countries, and that priority should be given to the poorest women in the least developed, land-locked and island developing countries. The Committee indicated that high priority should be given to field projects and that the resources of the Fund should not be allocated for overhead expenses or programme-supporting services, which should be carried out within the regular budgets of the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the specialized agencies.

12. The Committee decided also that the Chairman-Rapporteur should address a letter to the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions concerned, requesting (a) their comments on the document entitled "Proposed Programme and Procedure of the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women" and (b) a short list of proposals for priority projects from their region which might be considered for funding under the Voluntary Fund, all of which would be used as additional working material at the second session of the Committee. In the meanwhile no disbursement from the Fund could be approved by the Committee. The implications of this position were pointed out, but given the Committee's interpretation of its mandate, it felt that no action could be taken until the views of Member States in the respective regions had been obtained.

13. The second session of the Consultative Committee was held at Headquarters from 21 to 24 June 1977. The Committee held five meetings.

14. The Committee had before it the document submitted by the Secretariat at the first session and a proposed programme of the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women submitted by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) sent two project proposals for the consideration of the Committee. The Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) stated that it would reply to the Chairman-Rapporteur's letter after the Regional Plan of Action has been approved by the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women in the Economic and Social Development for Latin America (to be held at Havana from 13 to 17 June 1977). It is expected that this reply will be forthcoming shortly.

15. During the session, the members of the Committee decided that the following general guiding principles should apply in the management of the Voluntary Fund:

(a) The Fund should develop policies and standards of its own, not duplicating the operations of existing United Nations funds;

(b) In the formulation of projects for support by the Fund, a "grass-roots" approach is desired in which the regional commissions are expected to play a major role in technical assistance, the programmes of which should reflect the needs of countries in their respective regions. In addition, the regional commissions should assure a flow of information to Governments about the purposes and operations of the Fund;

(c) A system of bloc allocations should apply to regional commissions and the United Nations Secretariat in order to implement the "grass-roots" approach and assure flexibility in co-ordinating Fund resources with those of regular programmes and other technical assistance projects;

(d) The regional commissions should be guided by the criteria of General Assembly resolution 31/133 in preparing their proposals, making provision for necessary machinery for implementation and evaluation of projects to ensure the relevance of these projects to the needs of the region. In this connexion, the Committee noted with interest the machinery approved by the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women in Economic and Social Development for Latin America with the aim of achieving effective implementation of the Regional Plan of Action adopted by the Conference;

(e) The allocation of Fund resources for the appointment of personnel to the regional commissions is to be regarded as necessary at this time to enable the commissions to start to undertake programmes for women, but should not be regarded as a precedent for budget support in an area of programme activity for which the commissions have mandated responsibilities;

(f) While giving responsibility to the regional commissions for effective programme formulation and implementation, it was felt that the right to examine the proposals and make appropriate observations on them should be reserved; furthermore, it was also felt that provision should be made for evaluation of projects and follow-up programming as a necessary component of the Committee's review of the regional programmes;

(g) While recognizing the necessity for Headquarters activities in connexion with development and implementation of the joint interorganizational programme, research and data collection, communications support and public information in promoting the Decade for Women, these activities of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs should be adequately met by a bloc allocation for these purposes. Communications support and public information could be more effectively integrated into regional and national project planning and execution. The formulation of the content of its activities consistent with the criteria of resolution 31/133 was left to the Centre. The Committee reserved its right to examine the project proposals of the Centre and to make appropriate observations on them.

16. The Committee approved the implementation of the ECA programme presented in May 1977, while at the same time requesting ESCAP and ECLA to elaborate their programme proposals along the lines indicated by them. The Committee requested the Economic Commission for Western Asia (ECWA) to present proposals for its women's programme as soon as possible.

17. The Committee encouraged ESCAP, ECLA and ECWA to appoint women as programme officers and/or consultants in order to advance as rapidly as possible, first, in programme identification in an indicative manner and, secondly, elaborating programme content by breaking it down into specific projects and activities; and sufficient funds should be allocated immediately from the bloc allocations to the regional commissions especially for this purpose.

18. The Committee also decided to make the following "bloc allocations" out of a total amount of \$2 million from the Voluntary Fund:

- (a) \$400,000 each for ECA, ESCAP, ECLA and ECWA;
- (b) \$100,000 for contingency cases which would include the advancement of women in colonial territories and in the poorer countries of developed regions;
- (c) \$300,000 for the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs.

The Committee arrived at the above figures bearing in mind the United Nations requirement for an appropriation for overhead costs of specific projects.

19. In so far as these overheads are calculated in approximate terms, and keeping in mind the target population at which projects under the Fund are aimed, the Committee recommended to the relevant administrative offices that these overheads be kept to the minimum. The Committee further recommended that future reports on the state of the Fund should clearly indicate the cost of overhead.

20. In recommending that the largest share of the existing resources of the Fund should be allocated to regions, the Committee is assuming the wholehearted commitment of the regional commissions to the integration of women within their regional programmes.

21. Since the Committee was allocating funds to the regional commissions for the first time, it decided to do so on a basis of equality for all regions concerned in order to enable them to develop fully their programmes on women. It recognized, however, that the Committee should take account in its future deliberations of allocation of funds to regional commissions the following factors: population of the region, number of countries in each region, and cost and content of project proposals.

22. The Committee pointed out that, although it had decided to allocate equal amounts of funds to the above-mentioned regional commissions, it wished to make a distinction between allocations and disbursements. It was stressed that actual disbursements of funds will be made only after consideration of well formulated,

worthy projects submitted by the regional commissions. It was noted that as of now only the projects put forward by ECA were satisfactory and met the criteria for disbursement set by the Committee.

23. The Committee also pointed out that the \$100,000 is a 'contingency fund' and disbursements out of it will be made only after careful review by the Committee of requests made against those resources.

24. As to the "bloc allocation" made to the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, the Committee, after examining the proposals submitted by the Centre, was of the view that the Centre itself was in the best position to evaluate its priorities for the use of those resources. It was emphasized, however, that the \$92,248 allocated for the preliminary work involved in the establishment of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women by the first session of the Consultative Committee is included in the sum of \$300,000 as is the allocation of \$38,000 for phase I of the study on women's issues being carried out by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD).

25. The Committee expressed its readiness, if so requested, to advise the Secretary-General on the use of funds donated to the Voluntary Fund by individuals and non-governmental organizations and earmarked for specific purposes. However, the Secretary-General may act on his own discretion as long as contributions fall within the criteria set out in the annex to General Assembly resolution 31/133.

26. Concerning the interest accruing to the Fund, the Committee recommended that any legitimate procedure which would bring the highest rate of interest for the Fund should be utilized for this purpose.

27. The Committee reaffirmed its previous concern for obtaining additional funds for the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women. It recognized that the success of the pledging conference was crucial to the Decade. Committee members agreed to convey this view to their respective regional groups at the United Nations. They expressed the hope that, in order to demonstrate their support for the Decade, Member States would contribute at the pledging conference either to the Voluntary Fund or to the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women or to both. The Committee took note with appreciation of the efforts made by non-governmental organizations to encourage their respective Governments to contribute to the Fund at the pledging conference.

28. The Committee was of the view that its third session should tentatively be scheduled for the first week of October 1977. The members agreed that the end of August 1977 would be an appropriate deadline in order to enable the regional commissions concerned to forward their project identifications to the Committee for evaluation. In this way, the Committee would be able to make decisions where feasible on appropriate regional projects before the convening of the pledging conference on 3 November 1977. It was felt that the availability of such documents from the regional commissions would enhance the success of the pledging conference.

III. OBSERVATIONS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

29. The Secretary-General wishes to reiterate at this stage that the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women is a trust fund to be administered in accordance with the financial regulations of the United Nations and the procedures established by the Secretary-General for the operation, administration and control of trust funds. The arrangements to apply to the management of the Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women are contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 31/133.

30. The Secretary-General notes the concern expressed by the Consultative Committee in paragraph 25 above for obtaining additional funds for the Voluntary Fund. While fully sharing this concern, the Secretary-General emphasizes the necessity of supplementing the amount already in the Fund or pledged so as to make the Fund fully operative and effective. In this connexion, the Secretary-General is confident that special efforts will be made at the pledging conference for the United Nations Decade for Women to be convened at Headquarters on 8 November 1977 to provide substantial voluntary contributions to the Fund.

ANNEX

FINANCIAL STATUS OF THE VOLUNTARY FUND

Table 1

Statement of assets, liabilities and unencumbered fund balance
and income and expenditures as at 30 June 1977

(in United States dollars)

I. Statement of assets, liabilities and unencumbered
fund balance

Assets

Interest-bearing bank deposit	2 179 651 91
Pledged contributions receivable from Governments <u>a/</u>	665 066 00
Accrued interest receivable	10 578 39
Remittances to executing agencies	9 592 21
Total assets	<u>2 864 888 51</u>

Liabilities and reserves

Accounts payable	562 00
Unliquidated obligations	7 596 55
Deferred contributions and income	330 033 00
Reserve for allocations	9 592 21
Due to United Nations General Fund	14 996 47
Total liabilities and reserves	<u>362 780 23</u>

Balance of unencumbered fund

Balance available 1 January 1976	1 571 461 00
Less: Adjustments	(2 576 89)
Balance available 1 January 1976 (after adjustments)	1 568 884 11
Add: Excess of income over expenditure (see below)	942 816 38
Less: Allocations issued for programmes	(9 592 21)
Balance available 30 June 1977	<u>2 502 108 28</u>
Total liabilities, reserves and unencumbered funds	<u>2 864 888 51</u>

II. Statement of income and expenditure

Income

Contributions from Governments (see table 2)	870 383 00
Public donations	28 850 40
Interest income	150 676 78
Miscellaneous	55 036 94
Total income	<u>1 104 947 12</u>

Less: Expenditure

Salaries and common staff costs	79 630 90
Travel	46 294 22
Contractual services	31 449 44
Operating expenses	1 541 58
Acquisitions	978 11
Fellowships, grants, other	2 236 49
Total expenditure	<u>162 130 74</u>

Excess of income over expenditure

942 816 38

a/ Includes \$330,033 future year pledge (1978) from the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Table 2

Contributions from governments as at 30 June 1977
 (in United States Dollars)

<u>Country</u>	<u>Unpaid pledges as at 1 January 1976</u>	<u>Pledges and adjustments for 1976 and 1977</u>	<u>Pledges for future years</u>	<u>Collections during 1976 and 1977</u>	<u>Unpaid pledges as at 30 June 1977</u>
Belgium	20 000	-	-	20 000	-
India	-	10 000	-	10 000	-
Indonesia	-	4 000	-	4 000	-
Iraq	3 000	-	-	-	3 000
Netherlands	-	196 850	-	196 850	-
Philippines	-	500	-	500	-
Senegal	2 000	-	-	-	2 000
United Kingdom of Great Great Britain and Northern Ireland	-	659 033	330 033	329 000	660 066
Total	25 000	870 383	330 033	560 350	665 066