

United Nations  
**GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY**



THIRTY-SECOND SESSION

Official Records \*

THIRD COMMITTEE  
22nd meeting  
held on  
Tuesday, 18 October 1977  
at 3 p.m.  
New York

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 22nd MEETING

Chairman: Mrs. MAIR (Jamaica)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 85: UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR WOMEN: EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE:  
REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 81: INTERNATIONAL COVENANTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS:

- (b) STATUS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS, THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS AND THE OPTIONAL PROTOCOL TO THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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Distr. GENERAL  
A/C.3/32/SR.22  
24 October 1977

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 85: UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR WOMEN: EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/32/3, chap. VI, sect. B., A/32/174, A/32/175, A/32/211, A/32/216 and A/32/218)

1. Mrs. MORENO (Mexico) said that the problems of women were closely linked with those of the society as a whole. To solve them, and also in order that society should not lose the benefit of the resources represented by women, urgent steps must be taken to eliminate discrimination against them. As Mexico had already stated at the World Conference of the International Women's Year at Mexico City, it was essential that they should be able to become fully involved in the development process on an equal footing with men, if it was hoped to succeed one day in establishing a new international economic order. The double exploitation imposed on women by under-development must be eliminated. Men and women should have the same rights and the same responsibilities in all fields of activity: family, work, education or politics. In particular, women must receive the same pay as men for the same work; they should also have the right to transmit their nationality to their children. As the Mexican Minister for Foreign Affairs had said recently in the General Assembly, both legislation and mentalities must be changed in order to eliminate any trace of discrimination. It was also necessary that women themselves should lose all feelings of inferiority.

2. Mexico, which considered that the draft Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women should be adopted without delay, hoped that the work of the Working Group, in which it intended to play an active and constructive part, would start as soon as possible. The Mexican Government had no objection to the substance of the text proposed; it had already considered making several of the proposed measures legally binding. However, it might be useful, in order to ensure that the final text presented no legal problems of interpretation, that the Chairman of the Committee should have the draft Convention studied by a joint committee of the Sixth and Third Committees, as she was empowered to do by General Assembly resolution 684 (VIII). That would make universal ratification of that important instrument all the easier.

3. It might also be possible to adopt an interdisciplinary approach to contemporary problems, as suggested in the very interesting proposal made by Senegal that questions connected with the status of women and the International Development Strategy should be studied jointly by the Second and Third Committees. The solution of those questions would certainly be facilitated if, for example, an effort was also made to simplify and improve data collection systems to make the maximum use of existing resources, in particular through the interorganizational programme for the Decade, or to strengthen the United Nations organs which dealt with questions connected with the status of women.

4. Mrs. BARVINOK (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that economic and social progress and the welfare of mankind called for universal recognition of the importance of the role of women. That was the objective of the Declaration, the World Plan of Action and the resolutions adopted at the Mexico Conference in 1975, which consisted in enabling women, through the elimination of all discrimination against them and the confirmation of their equality with men, to play a more active part in development, in the defence of the peace and security of peoples, and in the fight against colonialism, racism and racial discrimination. It could be seen from the Secretary-General's reports on that question that, in many countries, women, who now represented an influential social force, effectively contributed to the material, social and cultural development of mankind. Women and mothers, who perhaps understood better the importance of the maintenance of peace - which was indispensable if future generations were to be guaranteed a happy future - supported the action of peace movements to promote détente, eliminate sources of tension and put an end to the arms race.
5. As could be seen from document A/32/211, Ukrainian women, in solidarity with all those who were victims of imperialist aggression and all forms of exploitation and oppression, contributed actively to the fight for the liberation of peoples, encouraged by the State, which attached great importance to their participation in active life, in the strengthening of peace and in the process of international détente. For instance, the Ukrainian Committee for the Defence of Peace had 25 women members. Ukrainian women maintained friendly relations with foreign women's organizations by participating in exchanges, meetings and international seminars; they showed their international solidarity in particular by celebrating International Women's Day, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and participating in the organization of international campaigns to support oppressed peoples.
6. Equality between men and women was a principle recognized by socialist society which had been duly reflected in the Ukrainian legislation long before the pertinent international instruments had been adopted. Article 102 of the Constitution stipulated that women should have equal rights to those of men in all spheres of public, social, cultural and political life and the exercise of those rights was effectively guaranteed in the fields of employment, salaries, leisure, social security, training and the protection of working mothers. The new Constitution, at present being worked out, would not fail to confirm and strengthen that sovereign principle of the equality of men and women. Sixty years after the Great October Socialist Revolution, social democracy, the planned organization of the economy, the increase and development of productive forces, the elimination of unemployment had given women the possibility of exercising all the rights embodied in the legislation. Each year, measures were adopted to improve their living and working conditions in order that they might be able to reconcile their family and professional obligations. All those measures encouraged women, who constituted slightly more than half the active population, to participate fully in the life of the country. They were well represented in all spheres of activity, in particular, agriculture, medicine and teaching where the proportion of women was respectively 45 per cent, 66 per cent, and 72 per cent. They played an important role in public and political life as well

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(Mrs. Barvinok, Ukrainian SSR)

as in the world of the arts and letters. It had been possible to obtain those results thanks to the campaign to combat illiteracy launched by the State 60 years earlier. It was therefore clear that in Soviet society equality between men and women was not a purely theoretical idea but a reality.

7. With regard to the draft Convention under consideration (A/32/218), she reminded the Committee that the Ukrainian SSR had voted in favour of General Assembly resolution 3521 (XXX), the implementation of which had been entrusted to the Committee on the Status of Women in 1976. Her delegation thought it would have difficulty in accepting the text submitted to the Committee; it hoped, however, that the comments on certain specific points which it had made in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2058 (LXII) and the proposal submitted by certain States would enable some improvements to be made in order that the General Assembly might adopt it at the current session. If it was rapidly implemented, that Convention should in fact lead to the final elimination of the discrimination still suffered by women, and thus attain the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women.

8. Mrs. PEREYRA (Venezuela) said that the World Conference of the International Women's Year and the United Nations Decade for Women had set the goal of combating the discrimination to which women everywhere were subject because their participation in world development was a prerequisite for improving the quality of life of humankind as a whole. The success of development depended on the concerted efforts of all elements of the community and therefore required the participation of all its members on a footing of equality. It was true that the problems posed by under-development did not concern women alone, but the solution of women's particular problems, which would in the long run benefit society as a whole, was of necessity linked to far-reaching social and economic reforms.

9. Governments must therefore promulgate laws and then see that they were scrupulously applied. The difficulty in that connexion was that account must be taken of the problems of both rural and urban women, which were very different. Nevertheless, those two social groups should have the opportunity effectively to exercise their fundamental rights with respect to such important matters as food, education and health, fields in all of which rural women were greatly disadvantaged. In certain countries, despite the existence of laws enacted to protect women's rights, Governments had not succeeded in eliminating the discrimination to which rural women were subject from the day they were born, for in rural areas men were given preferential treatment where food was concerned on the pretext that their labour was more useful.

10. Attention must be directed first of all to the very large number of women, whether rural or urban, who, because of ignorance, did not yet possess the means of asserting their rights; without wishing to compete with men, such women aspired to decent living conditions and wanted to be informed and educated so that they could improve their lot and that of their children and achieve their full potential in the economic independence they sought to gain by the fruit of their labours.

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(Mrs. Pereyra, Venezuela)

11. In Latin America poverty was an everyday reality. The number of male heads of families who were unemployed was considerable and that circumstance had adverse consequences for women, who, if they were duly educated, could help to raise the level of living of their families. Vigorous measures should therefore be taken at the family, community, regional, national and international levels to strengthen their role, which had traditionally been regarded as inferior. To that end, national legislation should be amended, new provisions should be effectively applied and social structures should be transformed so as to protect women who worked and at the same time had to meet family responsibilities. The social policies adopted in that connexion in the various countries of Latin America had thus far been too timid and women there were still obliged to play the traditional role imposed on them by society. Only governments which were the authentic representatives of the people and which encouraged their participation could succeed in that endeavour, for governments of other types would not dare to take measures which might be unpopular with the minorities that kept them in power.

12. It was true that increasing efforts were being made at the international level to enable women to take their proper place in society, as attested by the adoption of many international instruments and the holding of regional seminars such as those of Caracas and Buenos Aires, the Mexico World Conference and the recent meeting at Havana at which a regional plan of action for the integration of Latin American women in economic and social development had been adopted; nevertheless, many countries did not yet understand the seriousness of the problem and were unaware of the means of solving it offered them by the United Nations, UNDP, ECLA and some of the specialized agencies.

13. The injustice of the present international order also had adverse consequences for the status of women. If they were to be able to exercise their rights there would have to be a transformation of economic, political and social relations at the international level, for their situation depended on the situation of the countries in which they lived and their liberation went hand-in-hand with the liberation of the people to which they belonged. If two thirds of the human race was still condemned to under-development, it was because a very large number of countries were kept in a situation of dependence by the exploitation of their natural resources and an inequitable system of trade, and that situation would continue as long as a new international economic order was not established.

14. The Venezuelan Government, convinced of the necessity of guaranteeing de jure and de facto equality to all citizens, was accordingly undertaking reforms of the country's legal and other systems which might be of a traditionally discriminatory character, believing as it did that as long as declarations of intent were not accompanied by vigorous measures and the institutional machinery necessary for their application, all efforts would be in vain.

15. Mrs. NAVCHA (Mongolia) said that her delegation noted with satisfaction that the international community was increasingly concerned with improving the status of women and their participation in the life of society. The People's Republic of Mongolia whole-heartedly supported the United Nations Decade for Women and subscribed fully to its goals: equality, development and peace.

16. Mongolian women were participating actively in the building of socialism in their country. The triumph in Mongolia 50 years earlier of the Great October Revolution had established the equality of women with men at all levels and in all fields in her country. That equality, proclaimed in article 84 of the national Constitution, had gradually become a reality. Women constituted one of the vital forces of the nation; they accounted for more than 44 per cent of the workers in industry and more than 60 per cent of the workers in agriculture, and they were also very numerous among teachers, doctors and so forth. Through various regulations, the Government assured them of equal treatment with men in all sectors. They had opportunities to improve their qualifications and also a number of privileges. The latter were aimed in particular at protecting mothers and pregnant women within the framework of a broader policy of maternal and child welfare, to which the State devoted a substantial portion of its budget. For example, pregnant women could not be dismissed and there were provisions for transferring them during their pregnancy to less arduous jobs without any reduction in their pay. Mongolian legislation likewise provided for maternity leave. In article 162 of the Labour Code, inter alia, provision was made for leave to be granted on favourable conditions to pregnant women and unwed mothers.

17. The status accorded to women enabled them to participate actively in the political life of the country and in the activities of peace-loving forces striving to consolidate world peace and security and to promote co-operation among nations, general and complete disarmament, the elimination of racism and respect for the right of peoples to self-determination and for human rights in general. To that end, the Mongolian Women's Committee maintained close contact with similar organizations in other countries.

18. The People's Republic of Mongolia had joined in international action to combat discrimination against women. It had accordingly ratified, inter alia, the United Nations Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education and the ILO Convention concerning Equal Remuneration and it had expressed its whole-hearted support of the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

19. In the view of her delegation, the draft Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women contained important provisions which would undoubtedly help to combat the discrimination to which women were still subject in many countries. The draft as a whole seemed to it acceptable but it reserved the right to take up certain points at a later stage. It hoped that that draft could be adopted at the current session of the Assembly and, to that end, it was prepared to co-operate actively with other delegations so that the final draft text could be completed.

20. Miss DJIMADOUNGAR (Chad) said that since the beginning of the United Nations Decade for Women in 1975, more or less convincing efforts had been made by many Governments to improve the status of women. Her Government considered the participation of women in all sectors of her country's life as an imperative and had set in motion a series of measures aimed at eliciting and encouraging such participation. For that purpose, a bureau for the advancement of women had been set up to co-ordinate, control and plan all action by the various public and private services concerned and to propose to the Government all necessary measures to accelerate the process of advancement. A number of things had already been done over the previous two years. Vocational training was provided to women on a continuing basis through retraining programmes and competitive examinations. Other programmes had been planned to enable working women to gain access to higher level positions. A functional literacy campaign was also planned in both rural and urban areas to enable women more easily to find their place in society. In the field of health, a sizable network of health centres had been established, although, unfortunately, not all the women of Chad were able to benefit from it; it was sad to say that, due to interference in the internal affairs of Chad by a country which was stirring up rebellion in its northern territory, the network could not be extended to the whole country.

21. Her delegation noted with satisfaction that, according to document A/32/175, the interagency programme was now ready; its effectiveness would depend on whether the parties concerned knew which agency to turn to to ensure better co-operation. She hoped that, in future, greater interest would be taken in the status of women in Chad by United Nations bodies.

22. The Draft Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women would represent real progress provided that its provisions were translated into realities. For some women, they were already a reality in Chad, where, since the country's accession to independence, the right to vote had been granted to women and where, both in the public and private sectors, women earned an equal wage for equal work. Consequently, although there was no discrimination against women in Chad, a further effort was required to increase their participation in political, economic and social life. In certain other areas, such as marriage or nationality, Chad was attempting to reconcile tradition, which was always slow to change, with the principles established by law. Her Government would spare no effort to enable women in her country to occupy the place in society to which they were entitled.

23. Mrs. COLLINS (Liberia) questioned whether, since the adoption of the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, all the Governments, agencies and persons appealed to in the Declaration had actually done all they could to promote the implementation of the principles it proclaimed, since, despite the many resolutions, conventions, protocols and other instruments adopted over the years, women had not yet achieved their goal. Although they constituted half the world's population, very few occupied positions of leadership in Government. Consequently, they participated neither in decision-making nor in planning and development. It was, therefore, not surprising that they were poorly informed and lacking in civic consciousness and self-confidence to support programmes for change.

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(Mrs. Collins, Liberia)

24. The integration of women in the national development process could only come about in co-operation with men rich in experience and well versed on all aspects of the multiple problems to be dealt with, which had been so well presented by the representative of Saudi Arabia. She recalled the difficulties which women in her country had encountered from the beginning of their struggle for equality in the 1920s, when men felt that it would be impossible for women to combine participation in public life with domestic duties. That had not prevented women from organizing, and the Liberian Women's Social and Political Movement, after a long and arduous struggle, had achieved an initial victory by winning the right to limited suffrage in municipal elections; after nearly 10 years, it had finally won out when women were granted full suffrage. It had thus been demonstrated, once again, that it was first and foremost up to women themselves to take up the gauntlet and assert their equality.

25. Although women appreciated the efforts of the United Nations to accelerate their integration in national development by organizing programmes and seminars and by adopting recommendations and resolutions to that effect, the situation was not changing rapidly enough, despite the fact that no country could develop without using all its human resources. Her delegation believed that the cause of peace in the world would be better served if women could work for it; however, without equal opportunity, they could not make a contribution.

26. Mrs. CERTAINS (Lesotho) said that her Government continued to have reservations on certain articles of the draft Convention before the Committee. Nevertheless, it sincerely hoped that the United Nations Decade for Women would wipe out the last vestiges of discrimination against women, which was an obstacle to development. Without development, there could be no peace.

27. Due to the particular situation of her country, women had not suffered excessively from discrimination on the basis of sex. There had always been more women than men in Lesotho because poverty had forced the men to become migrant labourers and many worked in the mines of South Africa. Consequently, by force of circumstance, women had had the opportunity to pursue their education and become eligible for better jobs, especially in the civil service. The legislation of her country, however, remained somewhat discriminatory, especially with respect to married women, but the Government was being forced by manpower requirements to revise certain provisions. Thus, women could no longer be dependent on man as in the past, and by participating fully in the country's development, they were fulfilling themselves as human beings.

28. Her delegation recognized, naturally, that men and women were biologically different, but such differences provided no legal basis for discrimination against women. Awareness of those differences should, on the contrary, be used for a fair division of responsibilities towards society. In that connexion, women should stop believing that they had to be protected by men, and learn how to assert themselves and stand up for their rights. Accordingly, her country trusted that the United Nations Decade for Women would lead to concrete achievements, and hoped that the results of 10 years of time and effort might be harder to destroy.

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(Mrs. Certains, Lesotho)

29. Referring to item 74 (d), she said that administrative technicalities had prevented her delegation from voting in favour of draft resolution A/C.3/32/L.6.

30. Mrs. KULKARNI (India) said that her Government had a continuing concern about the need to undertake definite measures to bring about equality between men and women by implementing its national plan of action. Under that plan, State Committees had been established in each State to promote education, employment, welfare, health and a better legal status for women, on the basis of a blueprint adopted by the Committee on International Women's Year. The plan called for various legislative measures, a review of a recruitment, promotion and other personnel practices as well as a wage policy in public and private undertakings, to ensure that there was no discrimination against women, and sought to promote village and cottage industries as avenues of employment for women. It was especially important to have State plans of action in a country as heterogeneous as India. It was indispensable, moreover, if planning was to be effective, that it take into account local and regional needs and resources. For that reason, her country welcomed the establishment of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Women and Development.

31. Women had a very special place in Indian society. The equality they enjoyed was to a large extent the result of the role they had played in the political struggle through which India had achieved independence 30 years earlier. Mahatma Gandhi had from the beginning associated the women of India in the freedom struggle and had given them leading roles. They had thus established themselves as equal partners in a fast-evolving nation. They were no longer confined to their homes, but were actively participating in social, cultural, political and professional life on the basis of equality with men. The Parliament and state legislatures had many women members. No profession was closed to them. India was proud that the first woman President of the General Assembly of the United Nations had been from India, as far back as 1953.

32. Yet, much remained to be done, particularly in the rural areas. The Indian Government was carefully examining the changing role of women and assessing the impact of various constitutional, legal and administrative provisions on their social status and employment and educational opportunities. However, their problems were more the result of an economic situation brought about by under-development and poverty than of their social status. The Constitution of India ensured equality for women with men before the law and equal protection to all citizens. Moreover, it empowered states to adopt special measures benefiting women and provided that they should not discriminate against any citizen on grounds of religion, sex, caste or place of birth.

33. Yet there was often a gap between constitutional provisions and their implementation. The Indian Government therefore had planned various strategies. For example, a constitutional provision required each state to endeavour to provide free and compulsory education for all children until they reached the age of 14. In order to attract girls to make good use of their right to an education, the Government provided scholarships, textbooks and uniforms. The National Council

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(Mrs. Kulkarni, India)

for Women's Education had been set up to advise on policies and programmes for the education of girls. It had also increased the number of women's polytechnical institutes.

34. Her Government therefore supported, in principle, the adoption of a Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and hoped that it would enter into force as soon as possible. It was also happy to see from document A/32/218 that Member States had, by and large, reacted favourably to the draft Convention. Her own delegation's comments on it would appear as part of the addendum to the report. Her delegation would also have occasion to comment on various specific provisions in the course of the discussion in the open-ended Working Group.

35. In some cases, however, the provisions of the draft Convention were not exactly similar to Indian law and could present certain problems. For example, article 15 (2), making registration of all marriages compulsory, was in conflict with existing laws and practices. Further consideration would also have to be given to article 9 (4), article 15 (1) (c) and article 15 (3). The implementation of article 10 (c), which required the speedy achievement of coeducation, might not be immediately feasible because of the federal structure of India, under which education was primarily left to the states. Another possible problem of immediate implementation might arise with regard to article 11 (a), not because India had any objection to the inalienable right of all people to work, but because, mainly for financial reasons, it might not be in a position to guarantee the right fully at the moment. Her delegation shared the concern voiced by Portugal and Japan in paragraph 15 of document A/32/218, that a number of countries would have to introduce considerable changes in their national legislation before they could ratify the instrument in its present form. For that reason, her Government would like to see a degree of flexibility introduced into various binding provisions of the draft Convention in order to expedite its entry into force.

36. She wished to express her delegation's warm appreciation for the important work done by the Consultative Committee on the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women. It welcomed their emphasis on the fact 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 and that the Fund should serve as a catalyst for carefully selected specific projects benefiting women in the developing countries. It also appreciated the more significant role envisaged by the Consultative Committee for the regional commissions, as reflected in its decision regarding bloc allocations to the commissions, from which disbursements would be made to projects which they selected, formulated and implemented. That was entirely in keeping with the World Plan of Action and the Programme for the Decade. She suggested that a brief summary of the principal projects for which disbursements would be made from the Fund might be circulated to Member States, who might also be kept informed from time to time of progress in the implementation of the projects, thus giving them a global picture of ongoing projects.

(Mrs. Kulkarni, India)

37. Her delegation was also happy to note from the reports contained in documents A/32/216 and A/32/211 that Governments, specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations took very seriously the provisions of the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and General Assembly resolution 3519 (XXX).

38. She wished to draw the attention of the Committee to the important initiative taken by the Ministerial Meeting of the Co-ordinating Bureau of Non-Aligned Countries in April 1977 in proposing the holding of a conference with the participation of development administrators, researchers and representatives of non-governmental agencies engaged in development work among women in non-aligned and developing countries. The conference would discuss the evolution of national development plans, particularly in rural sectors, the social and economic impact of legal reforms, education, health and other welfare services for improving the social and economic status of women so that they could make a more effective contribution towards the establishment of a new economic and social order. Her Government was confident that the conference would provide a very valuable input to the World Conference to be held in 1980. Women could and should - on an equal footing with men - make a constructive contribution to development and to the cause of peace. The international community must work to achieve advancement for women and their emancipation through concrete, concerted and well co-ordinated action within the framework of the World Plan of Action and the resolutions of the World Conference of International Women's Year.

39. Mrs. LEFORT (France) said that the main concern of her Government was to ensure the harmonious development of all the vital forces of the nation, since an atmosphere of peace and understanding that would benefit all could only be achieved by reducing inequalities and injustices. Her delegation therefore welcomed the efforts that had been made both nationally and internationally to improve the status of women and to remedy a profoundly unjust situation; the Mexico Conference and the Women's Decade were concrete examples of such efforts.

40. The principles of equality and non-discrimination on grounds of sex had been established in the French Constitution since 1946. At a very early stage, France had undertaken to promote those principles both nationally and internationally through its adherence to international conventions, and within the ILO and the EEC. In 1974 that commitment had taken the form of establishing a Secretariat of State which in 1976 had become a Delegation on the Status of Women, with which the Women's Labour Committee and the Women's Information Centre co-operated actively.

41. The French policy of non-discrimination against women sought first of all to build equality. It consisted in showing that women had skills which enabled them to share productive life with men. That was the purpose of coeducational classes in secondary schools, greater incentive to choose fields traditionally reserved for men, increased access to higher positions, and, lastly, the establishment of a training-employment contract open to unskilled girls as well as

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(Mrs. Lefort, France)

to women heads of family, which helped them to enter vocational fields. The French Government had endeavoured to ensure recognition that certain categories of women who could be classified as "invisible", such as rural women, played a valid role in economic life. In 1977, they had obtained funds for training purposes and the possibility was being considered of giving them the status of "co-cultivators", which would enable them to be recognized as professional farmers. At the legal level, too, the Delegation on the Status of Women was seeking to achieve improvements; in particular, it was currently trying to prevail upon the Minister of Justice, when the penal code was reviewed, to update existing texts on rape.

42. That policy sought, secondly, to enlarge the range of opportunities in order to secure the equality which had been recognized. To achieve that, women should have access to employment, and work should not be an obstacle to motherhood. To that end, French legislation was oriented towards reconciling work and family life: measures to protect women from being laid off during pregnancy, special measures on behalf of manual workers, post-natal leave, improvement of social facilities, and access of children to nursery schools from the age of two. It also sought to involve men in family tasks, which was the purpose of the leave granted to parents in order to raise their children and which was accorded to men and women alike.

43. Lastly, the ultimate goal of that policy was to make women responsible. Since 1965, women had the right to work without the permission of their husbands. Under the new legislation, they henceforth ceased to be treated as minors. The Act of 17 January 1975 authorized the voluntary interruption of pregnancy; the Act of 11 July 1975 on parental authority recognized the responsibility of both spouses within the family. As a result of those improvements women, who enjoyed the right to vote since 1946, could become increasingly involved in political life. There was currently a strong involvement of women in trade unions and at the last municipal elections in March 1977, the number of women elected had doubled. The Minister of Health and the Secretary of State for Universities were women. In addition, women's associations - over 100 in number - were very active in France.

44. The draft International Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women which was before the Committee seemed acceptable to the French delegation, subject to the necessary compromises; it reserved the right to make known its views on the text in due course. She could already state that she was in favour of its adoption but wished to point out that there were already many texts on the subject and it was essential to ensure their implementation. Indeed, it was only to the extent that the existing texts were implemented that the future Convention would be fully effective.

45. Mr. HADDAWI (Iraq) said that from centuries of colonial domination his country had inherited social vestiges destructive to both men and women. The Iraqi Government was seeking to eradicate them, trying to create a society of well-being, which women as well as men should help to build. In order to

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(Mr. Haddawi, Iraq)

achieve that ambition and to ensure that men and women worked together in that task in equality and freedom, it was essential to fight everywhere against the evils which frustrated it: imperialism, colonialism, zionism and discrimination in all its forms. Clearly, economic dependency was a factor in social under-development, which was one of the major obstacles to the development of the individual and of women in particular. Development and social progress were consequently essential to the advancement of women and to the elimination of discrimination between the sexes. Since the beginning of the Decade for Women, women had shown that they were capable of assuming their responsibilities. His Government's policy in that regard sought to eliminate outmoded prejudices while preserving some balance and retaining the positive elements of traditional Arab values without falling into the excesses of modern Western civilization.

46. The Iraqi Constitution guaranteed the same opportunities to women as to men, opportunities which they had been able to use to advantage, since women occupied a large number of posts in the civil service and in the Government. There were also a great many women in education, in cultural services and in the health services. They were treated equally with men in all fields: they had the same rights and obligations, the same salaries and the same amount of leave.

47. The Regional Federation of Iraqi Women maintained relations of friendship and co-operation with a number of similar bodies in Arab countries and in the non-aligned countries. It participated in meetings at the regional and international levels, dealing not only with specific problems such as family planning and the integration of women in society, but also with major international activities aimed at fighting imperialism and colonialism in all their forms. At the national level, the Regional Federation of Iraqi Women had carried out a study on ways and means to raise the general level of women and to improve their productivity as well as the working conditions of working women. That document had been thoroughly discussed at the grass-roots level as well as in official circles. The socialist system in Iraq already guaranteed to women free education and medical care and equal pay for equal work.

48. The Iraqi delegation considered that the draft Convention before the Committee was on the whole entirely satisfactory. Such a text could not fail to play a role in the fight against any possible discrimination against women. However, in order to guarantee its effectiveness, legislation had to be enacted to enforce it. Words alone did not suffice; they must be followed by deeds. In that connexion, several delegations had stressed that it might be difficult in some countries to apply all the provisions to the letter. Therefore, it might be desirable for the Committee to wait for a certain period of time before adopting the draft Convention, so that each delegation could study all its provisions carefully and a final text could be worked out that would be widely accepted.

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AGENDA ITEM 81: INTERNATIONAL COVENANTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS:

- (b) STATUS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS, THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS AND THE OPTIONAL PROTOCOL TO THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/32/44, A/32/188, A/C.3/32/L.7)

49. Mr. CANTAVE (Haiti) announced that his delegation had joined the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.3/32/L.7, and expressed the hope that the Committee would vote in favour of that text.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.