



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 23rd MEETING

Chairman: Mrs. MAIR (Jamaica)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.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 Corr.1, A/32/218 and Add.1, and A/C.3/32/L.8)

1. Mr. LOPATKA (Poland) said that his country had been extremely active at the national, regional and international levels in efforts to promote the equality of women because it was inspired by humanitarian ideals and scientific socialism as well as the conviction, based on its own experience, that equality between free men and women was an important factor in social progress and in the self-realization of every individual. Poland not only had been active in the adoption of international instruments relating to women's equality but had consistently implemented their provisions through its own legislation as well as all activities of the State and many social organizations. Its recently updated Constitution reaffirmed women's equality in every field and at the same time asserted new values with respect to women's rights and duties. The State had long been active in enhancing the position of women in society, especially mothers and working women, through measures aimed at improving their social welfare and ensuring their full participation in the country's development and their complete social emancipation.

2. The social equality of women could not be achieved, however, without eliminating the exploitation of human beings by other human beings, without racial and ethnic equality, without thoroughgoing progressive transformations in the class structure of society and in the ownership of the means of production, and above all, without strengthening peace. Equality in prosperity, not equality in poverty, was Poland's ideal and it therefore paid special attention to employment opportunities for women. Indeed, in the past few years the rate of increase in employment of women was higher than that of men, a situation due not only to the country's economic requirements and the rising aspirations and qualifications of women but also to the desire to raise family levels of living and to the policy of State aid to working women. Women were significantly represented in nearly every area of the economy, and increasingly so in areas which had previously been reserved to men. Notable progress had also been achieved in raising women's educational level and increasing their participation in the country's social and political life, as reflected in their increasing numbers in higher educational establishments, in the administration of justice, in politics, journalism and so forth. Of course much still remained to be done and Poland would not slacken its efforts.

3. The situation of women in many countries was far from ideal and Poland accordingly favoured all measures likely to improve it, in particular the draft Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (A/32/218). It felt that that Convention would be an extremely useful addition to existing international instruments affecting women because it codified universal norms and provided a clear statement of objectives and of women's political, civic, social, economic, cultural

(Mr. Lopatka, Poland)

and legal rights. It also provided adequate international control machinery. Nevertheless, his delegation would favour amendments intended to eliminate provisions which exceeded the scope of the Convention, such as those general ones relating to family and children, as well as amendments according women certain privileges in respect of pregnancy and child-birth and their particular physical characteristics. Equality did not require, however, a provision under which there would be no mother or father model but only a parent model. Those amendments which aimed at establishing equality of duties as well as rights should be supported because there could be no rights without duties. Amendments should not be accepted merely in order to harmonize the Convention with the legislation in force in a particular country. No country's legislation could be a model for the world. On the contrary, the Convention itself must constitute an example for all countries and provide a minimum standard. It was the duty of Governments to adjust their laws to accepted international norms.

4. Among the measures provided for in the Programme for the Decade, Poland attached special importance to the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and had high hopes for it. It also welcomed the results of the World Conference of the International Women's Year held in Mexico in 1975 and had even greater hopes for the new World Conference planned for 1980. It would participate in preparations for the latter Conference at the international and regional levels.

5. Mr. RIFAL (Jordan) said that his Government, which had enacted legislation to ensure political and economic rights for women, was still giving careful consideration to certain provisions of the draft Convention in document A/32/218 and would submit its views on that matter at a later stage.

6. In pursuing the goals of the Decade, Jordan had undertaken efforts at the national, regional and international levels. Its leading women's organizations had made unparalleled progress in the development of women's rights through periodic campaigns to publicize the need for the advancement of women and through a variety of cultural and educational activities. They had also requested the Government to enact appropriate legislation relating to such vital matters as marriage, divorce and child custody.

7. At the regional level, the Government of Jordan was involved in negotiations with specialized agencies of the United Nations and with other Governments with a view to hosting a regional consultation to be held in Amman in 1978 under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Western Asia in order to adopt a regional plan of action.

8. At the international level, it had decided to contribute the token sum of \$3,000 to the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women and had offered to contribute to the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women by providing the services of experts.

9. In conclusion, he drew attention to the sixth preambular paragraph of the draft Convention, which accurately reflected his country's thinking on the question of the cause of women.

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10. Ms. BEAGLE (New Zealand) said that the serious problems facing the world could not be solved until the artificial distinction between questions concerning women and those concerning the development of society as a whole was eliminated. Women must participate in all aspects of community life and at every level, and no society could afford to under-utilize their contributions.

11. The success of efforts to achieve the fundamental objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women depended essentially upon maintaining the consensus reached at Mexico City on the World Plan of Action and at the thirty-first session of the General Assembly on the Programme for the Decade. Her delegation was therefore disturbed at the statement which had been made at the previous meeting by the representative of Saudi Arabia to the effect that Western countries alone had taken the initiative in promoting the Decade. The fact was that many third world delegations had played a key role in drawing up the World Plan of Action and Programme for the Decade, both of which had been sponsored by delegations from all regional groups and had been adopted by consensus. It was important that the draft Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women should also be adopted by consensus.

12. As to the draft itself, New Zealand had long held the conviction that the drive to eliminate sex-based discrimination would be considerably advanced by the adoption and entry into force of a single comprehensive convention. Although equal rights for men and women had been acknowledged in principle in a number of international instruments, there was, given the persistence of extensive discrimination against women, a need for a binding international instrument to make those instruments effective.

13. Her delegation urged the Committee to have the Convention ready for adoption at the current session, but realized that it would be impossible to produce a text which could be ratified by all nations without reservation. The objective must be an international instrument which provided clear international standards to combat sex discrimination but which was flexible enough to enable countries to meet those standards in their own ways. States should be able to support the Convention even if it was at variance with their own legislation, since its purpose was precisely to spur them to improve their legislation. Her delegation also hoped that delegations would exercise restraint in submitting amendments because the draft already represented a compromise worked out after extensive discussion and exchanges of views. Although not perfect, it was balanced and positive and attempts to alter it would only jeopardize the possibility of the speedy adoption of a strong Convention by consensus.

14. Her delegation wished to reiterate the importance it attached to the system-wide evaluation of the implementation of the World Plan of Action as part of the process of review and appraisal of progress made under the International Development Strategy and was disappointed that no reference had been made in the report of the Committee on Review and Appraisal to the implementation of the World Plan of Action. At the thirty first session it had welcomed the efforts made by the Secretariat to produce a joint interorganizational programme involving many United Nations agencies, but it could not find in document A/32/175 any

(Ms. Beagle, New Zealand)

indication of significant progress in putting that programme into operation. Since the preparation of the programme had been completed, her delegation would appreciate further information from the Secretariat regarding the prospects for its implementation. The documents before the Committee also failed to indicate to what extent there had been a response from United Nations bodies to the General Assembly's request in resolution 31/136 for massive public information programmes to heighten awareness of the need to implement the Programme for the Decade. The United Nations had a responsibility to provide stimulation and leadership, and that had not been forthcoming in the past two years.

15. Her country's own efforts to implement the Plan of Action included the establishment of a National Committee on Women as an official advisory body on the status of women, with the task of promoting and co-ordinating national activities, monitoring progress and advising the Government on all matters pertaining to the welfare of women and the achievement of the objectives of the Decade. The Committee had identified areas requiring special attention and made recommendations for legislation which were currently being implemented. There had also been vast improvements in women's access to public services and career opportunities. Furthermore, non-governmental organizations had made a valuable contribution to stimulating governmental activity and informing public opinion, especially with respect to increasing the participation of women in strengthening international peace and security (A/32/211).

16. Her delegation supported the criteria set forth in Economic and Social Council resolution 2005 (LX) on the use of the Voluntary Fund, and agreed with the Consultative Committee that the role of regional commissions with respect to the programme of the Fund should be strengthened on the ground that programmes and projects had to be adapted to the social conditions of each country or region and would therefore be more effective when formulated at the regional level.

17. Mr. MAÏADOU (Niger) said that the liberation of women from the prejudices to which they were subjected in all modern societies required important changes in attitudes and habits. International Women's Year had correctly diagnosed the problem and the World Plan of Action pointed the way to a solution. The 1980 World Conference to evaluate the results of action taken was crucial to the success of the Decade and therefore required the most careful preparation. The International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women would also be a positive step and he hoped that it would begin operation as soon as possible. He welcomed the pledging conference for the Voluntary Fund scheduled for 8 November and hoped that it would be highly successful.

18. His delegation would also welcome the adoption by the General Assembly of the draft Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The draft was a logical and consistent extension of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and similar instruments, and his delegation found its text acceptable because it reflected the Niger's concern for securing and safeguarding the legitimate rights of women everywhere. Indeed, his country attached special importance to the problem because it was poor and therefore had to be self-reliant, which meant making use of all available resources, including human resources, to win the

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(Mr. Mamadou, Niger)

struggle for development. The Niger encouraged local and national women's groups to work for the implementation of measures aimed at achieving women's equality, heightening their awareness and increasing their decision-making power at all levels. Many seminars and discussions were organized for that purpose and legislation had been enacted to ensure equality without violating the essential African character of the Niger. The country was also making preparations for an inter-African conference which would devote special attention to the problem of women in rural areas.

19. Miss TAYLOR (Papua New Guinea) said that her Government wished to express support for the United Nations Decade for Women. It accordingly accepted in principle the draft Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and urged the General Assembly to adopt that instrument at the current session, thus establishing a universal principle of equality. It was important to remember that both the World Plan of Action and the Programme for the United Nations Decade for Women had been sponsored by delegations from all regional groups and adopted by consensus.

20. The implementation of the principles of equality, development and peace would be a national as well as a regional responsibility. The objective must be to produce an international instrument which would set out clearly international standards to eliminate all discriminatory practices on the ground of sex and to guarantee to all women the full and equal enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

21. In Papua New Guinea it was government policy for women to participate equally in development, not only at the national but also at the regional level, including active participation in the Pacific Women's Resource Centre based in Fiji. Her Government had established a Bureau of Women's Affairs, the head of which was directly responsible to the Prime Minister. However, the majority of women in her country still played a secondary role and that situation must be corrected through education before true equality could be achieved.

22. Princess Ashraf PAHLAVI (Iran) stated that her delegation would comment on the United Nations Decade for Women at a later stage of the Committee's deliberations. With regard to the draft Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, her delegation's position had been made clear in both the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council. Her Government had reservations about several articles of the draft Convention but would go into the matter further when the working group met. Nevertheless, she believed that every effort should be made to adopt a Convention which would set a standard for all Governments.

The adoption of the draft Convention by the General Assembly would represent an important step towards the eradication of discrimination against women and would contribute to the success of the United Nations Decade for Women. She wished, however, to draw attention to certain problems which could have a decisive influence on the success of the Decade and on the Committee's efforts to promote women's rights throughout the world. As had been observed by the Assistant Secretary-General

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(Princess Ashraf Pahlavi, Iran)

for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, the cause of women's rights was making slow progress and results were not always commensurate with aspirations. Of course it would be unrealistic to expect to be able to remedy in a short period of time a situation which had existed for centuries but the difficulty of the task should stimulate, rather than discourage, the Committee's efforts. The Mexico Conference had fired new enthusiasm and had accelerated the process of the eradication of situations which involved flagrant violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. However, it was difficult to remedy one aspect of a situation without calling in question the economic, social and cultural framework of which it was part. The task was therefore complicated and it was essential that enthusiasm and faith should not be lost. Her Government had accordingly proposed that a conference should be held in 1980 which would give further impetus to action. It was to be hoped that Governments and organizations would work at the national, regional and international levels to ensure that a balance-sheet of achievement - modest, perhaps, but positive - could be drawn up in 1980 and the efforts of the international community renewed. Her Government's offer to host the 1980 conference bore witness to its faith in the cause of women.

23. A lack of relevant information, statistics and social indicators handicapped the preparation of adequate programmes to meet the specific needs of women. The research centres which had been set up at the regional level had already played an important part in filling that gap. She noted in that connexion that the work of the African Regional Centre was well known and had led to the establishment of similar centres in other regions, notably in Asia, where an ESCAP research and training centre had been set up in 1976.

24. There was no organ at the international level dedicated solely to women's problems and it was for that reason that the General Assembly had decided to establish the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women. That body would be able to define the areas which required detailed research as a prelude to action on the most urgent needs of women, co-ordinate its research efforts with those of the regional research centres, collect and co-ordinate relevant information and statistics and encourage or initiate training programmes for women at all levels of decision making and execution. The Institute, if adequately supported and financed by the international community, could be of decisive importance for the success of the United Nations Decade for Women. Her Government had announced a contribution of \$1 million to the Institute, out of the \$3 million required, as well as the use of offices and facilities in Teheran. It was urgent that the balance should be found as quickly as possible. She accordingly appealed to Member States to contribute towards the establishment of the Institute and hoped that a majority of States would be in a position to pledge contributions - not only to the Institute but also to the Voluntary Fund for the Decade - when the pledging conference took place on 8 November. Her Government had contributed \$530,000 towards the Voluntary Fund.

25. Miss DJURICKOVIC (Yugoslavia) said that the second year of the United Nations Decade for Women afforded an opportunity to evaluate the progress made since the Conference of Mexico as well as what action still needed to be taken to expedite

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(Miss Djurickovic, Yugoslavia)

implementation of the decisions adopted at that time. The activities initiated by the United Nations in connexion with the designation of 1975 as International Women's Year were the broadest and most successful actions of their kind. They had included expert analysis of the problem of women and men in society and the family, and had promoted the involvement of women throughout the world in activities of wider social importance for understanding the over-all social situation and the position of women in society. It was significant that, at the invitation of the United Nations, the majority of Governments had initiated national action to deal with the question, thereby acknowledging the over-all social significance of the problem. There had been a radical world-wide change of attitude with respect to the social status of women. In particular, there was now a tendency to abandon the feminist approach to the problem as it came to be recognized that the struggle for a better social status for women was in fact a component of the struggle for the improvement of the position of all, men and women alike. It was therefore vital to involve women directly in the economic and social development of their respective countries and to bring about changes in family patterns and in the fields of child care, health, literacy and training for women. Such action must be accompanied by far-reaching economic and social changes. The problem of women must be treated not as a separate humanitarian and social issue but as part of the general struggle for equitable relations among peoples and States, for accelerated development and for the establishment of the new international economic order. With women playing a direct role in the economic life of society, the questions of motherhood and family welfare should be resolved as a matter of interest to society as a whole.

26. Her delegation stressed the need for women to participate actively in development. That position had been adopted at the Fifth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries held at Colombo in 1976 and, in conformity with it, her country had hosted an international seminar on the theme 'Women and Development' from 10 to 13 October 1977. She hoped that the conclusions of that seminar would contribute to the realization of the goals of the United Nations Decade for Women.

27. The adoption of the draft Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women would make it incumbent upon Governments to promote national legislation in that field. The Convention would also show that what was at issue was the existence of profound social forces owing to which the majority of human beings - men and women alike - continued to live in dire poverty, hunger and illiteracy.

28. Her delegation supported the establishment of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and of the Voluntary Fund for the Decade for Women and had requested her Government to consider the possibility of contributing to both.

29. Ms. JAHAN (Bangladesh) stated that her delegation welcomed the draft Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The crucial problem of implementing the equal legal rights set forth in the Convention would, however,

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(Ms. Jahan, Bangladesh)

remain. Her delegation believed that there was a need not only to focus attention on the elimination of discrimination against women but also to create a new social-economic-political order in which women and men would participate equally in development and decision making at all levels.

30. In Bangladesh, as in many other countries of the third world, the major challenge facing Governments was the satisfaction of basic needs such as food, shelter, health care, education and work for the majority of the population, both women and men. Particular attention must, however, be devoted to the problem of women because women were the poorest of the poor and the most disadvantaged of the disadvantaged. In a poor family a female child has less access than a male child to food, education and training for employment. The elimination of inequalities between women and men as well as the integration of women in the development process constituted a central component of her country's development strategy for the next decade.

31. Measures adopted by her country to eliminate discrimination against women and to promote the goals of the United Nations Decade for Women included prohibition of discrimination against human beings on the basis of sex, in accordance with the Constitution, which guaranteed the equality of both sexes before the law and specified that they had equal political and economic rights. The Constitution also allowed the State to adopt special measures that would eliminate the existing social and economic inequalities between the sexes. Thus elementary education was free for girls. In order to increase the participation of women in the government sector, a policy of reserving 10 per cent of all new recruitment for women had been adopted. Measures to ensure the participation of women in all political bodies, at both the national and local levels, had also been adopted. For example, two seats were reserved for women in each local council. Bangladesh had also appointed a Special Assistant to the President on Women's Affairs and had set up a separate Women's Affairs Division to support the activities of the Special Assistant. A new National Women's Organization, entrusted with the task of organizing women at both the national and grass-roots levels, had also been set up. The goals and the Programme of the United Nations Decade for Women were being publicized in Bangladesh both by the Government and by non-governmental organizations.

32. Her delegation felt that the draft Convention covered the essential measures needed to eliminate discrimination against women. It felt, however, that the draft should have given more emphasis to the problems of rural women in the third world countries. Such women were already working and already integrated in development their problem was rather the absence of official recognition of their crucial contribution to the economic survival of their families. The draft Convention should therefore have focused more sharply on the rights of women in the non-monetized sectors of the economy, in which millions of women of Asia and Africa were employed. The draft Convention should also emphasize the creation of social and economic conditions that would ensure the implementation of its provisions. For example, the implementation of the provision regarding the minimum age for marriage was feasible only where births were registered and women were provided with educational and employment facilities.

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(Ms. Jahan, Bangladesh)

33. Her delegation also supported the establishment of the proposed International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and was in total agreement with its proposed priorities. Research on concepts, methodologies and indicators was essential in connexion with a mid-decade evaluation of the achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women in 1980. Bangladesh would contribute to the Voluntary Fund and would make the appropriate announcement at the pledging conference.

34. Mrs. SIMUKWAI (Zambia) observed that the inability of women to contribute fully towards the well-being of their country adversely affected the whole community. She said that the World Plan of Action offered an opportunity to women that they could not afford to reject: they must put more zest into their quest for self-realization and fulfilment in all fields.

35. In Zambia the attainment of independence had marked the beginning of equal opportunity for all people regardless of sex, colour or creed. A deliberate course of action had been taken to remove the discrimination by which Zambians under colonialism had been denied the exercise of human rights. Zambia's Constitution and laws guaranteed equal opportunity and fundamental freedoms for all. Today, women were making significant contributions in such fields as politics, government service and trade unions. Zambia continued to accord due attention to the full integration of women in development, which would contribute significantly to the satisfaction of essential human needs.

36. The policy of her country's Party and Government was based on the fundamental premise that women were part of society, with equal rights and duties. Inspired by the past performance of Zambian women in all spheres of national life, Zambia was now determined to transfer their energies and dedication to development. It was firmly convinced that the elimination of poverty and social disparities would largely depend on the success of efforts to integrate all women in the development process. Strenuous efforts were being made to mobilize women in rural development, which should in time become the backbone of Zambia's self-reliant development. The country's policies and programmes concerning women's role in development would continue to be inspired by the decisions adopted at the Mexico Conference and by the Programme for the Decade.

37. Zambian women were very much concerned with internal peace in the country, which had been enhanced, following independence, by the introduction of the one-party system. There was still much to be done to integrate women in development, since age-old discrimination could not be erased over-night. The colonial exploitation of the country had created a disparity between men and women by favouring educational opportunities for boys, women being relegated to their traditional roles.

38. The problems that still beset Zambian women included inadequate credit and social welfare facilities, a lack of self-confidence and a high rate of illiteracy. A major step in efforts to deal with the problems of women was the national programme of action drawn up by the women of Zambia for the period 1976-1985, with particular emphasis on rural areas.

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(Mrs. Simukwai, Zambia)

39. At the international level, Zambian women would continue to work together for the advancement of women and the search for a peaceful world based on equality and justice. They supported United Nations efforts to that end and believed that the regional commissions should be strengthened in order to deal more effectively with regional problems.

40. Mrs. SIRADZE (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) noted with satisfaction the constantly growing movement for women's equality in all aspects of society and their involvement in development, the strengthening of international peace and security, the struggle against colonialism and racism and efforts to achieve the national and social liberation of oppressed peoples. The success of efforts to strengthen national independence and social progress had created favourable conditions for further progress in achieving equality for women.

41. The World Plan of Action and the Declaration of Mexico marked a significant step in raising the social status of women and mobilizing world public opinion. In implementing the Programme for the Decade, however, United Nations organs should be guided by General Assembly resolutions 3519 (XXX) and 3520 (XXX). The General Assembly had endorsed all the decisions of the Mexico Conference, and the avoidance of a selective approach to these decisions naturally applied also to the activities of the United Nations Secretariat.

42. A genuine improvement in the status of women and their involvement in all aspects of the life of each country obviously hinged on the nature and extent of their training. The elimination of discrimination against women and the harnessing of their potential was an important indicator of the development of society.

43. The Great October Socialist Revolution had paved the way for the genuine equality of Soviet women and the flowering of their creative forces. History showed that the emancipation of women was closely linked with the struggle for national and social freedom and the revolutionary transformation of the world. The Soviet Union was justly proud to have been the first country to proclaim and guarantee in practice full equality for women in all spheres of life, a factor which had assisted the country's economic, social and cultural revival and its transformation into a highly developed socialist State.

44. Particularly noteworthy in connexion with the solution of problems relating to women were the achievements in the Republics of the various nationalities, formerly backward colonial regions of Tsarist Russia. Before the Revolution the most oppressed group of all had been the women of her own Republic, Georgia, one of the 15 sovereign Republics of the USSR. Georgia had a history of struggle for freedom and independence. The Revolution had spelled the end of poverty and ignorance, illegality and national prejudices. The Republic had made remarkable progress in all spheres of human activity, with the spiritual and political rebirth of the working masses and the emancipation of women. Having access to education, women had become economically active. They constituted 45 per cent of the workers of the Republic, now a centre of heavy industry, highly developed agriculture and advanced culture.

(Mrs. Siradze, USSR)

Georgian women held posts as scientists, artists, managers, doctors and teachers. By their creative work, patriotism and internationalism, they had won the respect and recognition of the people.

45. Great attention was being paid in the Soviet Union to the provision of facilities enabling working women to rear children and at the same time take a more active part in public life, as well as facilities for rest, study and cultural activities. Women in the Soviet Union, all of whom were able to choose their occupation, constituted one half of those engaged in science and over 40 per cent of engineering and technical workers. In addition to measures that ensured equality of rights in the labour field, special measures had been adopted to protect mothers of large families.

46. Women in the USSR were guaranteed equal participation in public and political affairs. Women constituted about one third of the members of the Supreme Soviets of the Union and of the Republics, and nearly half of the members of the local soviets of working people's deputies. Great attention was devoted to enabling Soviet women to combine socially productive work with motherhood and to the legal protection of mother and child. An already extensive network of child care centres was being constantly expanded.

47. The new Constitution of the USSR strengthened and extended the legal guarantees of equal rights for women in all fields. Women were guaranteed equal rights with respect to work, pay and promotion. There was no competition between men and women since, under the planned development of the socialist economy, there was enough work for everyone. Over 92 per cent of economically active women were engaged in the economy or in part-time study.

48. A permanent committee had been established under the auspices of the supreme Soviet to improve women's working and living conditions. Similar committees had also been set up at the Republic and local levels. They were concerned with overseeing the implementation of legislation on the status of women by ministries and other State institutions. A similar system operated in the trade union sphere. The committees had already ensured a greater allocation of resources to the improvement of the status of women.

49. State and public institutions made every effort to ensure the maximum participation of women in economic, social and cultural development and in strengthening international peace, friendship and co-operation.

50. The statements of a number of speakers testified to the yearning of the women of the world for peace, to the burden of the arms race, unemployment, inflation and other social evils, and to the desire of all mothers to ensure a brighter future for their children. Soviet women took an active part in furthering objectives of the country's peaceful foreign policy through their work and public activities, and through their support of the struggle for peace, détente and disarmament.

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They did their utmost to ensure the practical implementation of the Programme of Further Struggle for Peace and International Co-operation and for Freedom and Independence of the Peoples, adopted at the Twenty-fifth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

51. Soviet women were represented in the international women's movement and in international, regional and national forums by the Soviet Women's Committee. In the interests of peace and mutual understanding that body maintained links with 250 national, regional and international organizations in over 120 countries. It actively participated in the work of the Women's International Democratic Federation aimed at maintaining and strengthening peace, national independence, democracy, social progress, equality of women and child welfare.

52. In promoting co-operation with the women of Asia, Africa and Latin America, Soviet women pooled their experience in solving the problems relating to women. In 1975 the Soviet Women's Committee had conducted a seminar for Asian women on the role of women in economic development and in educating the young.

53. Soviet women supported the efforts of the independent countries to eliminate colonialism and strengthen their independence. The Soviet Women's Committee sent various experts to those countries, including doctors and teachers.

54. An international seminar had recently been held in Moscow entitled "Women and socialism", in connexion with the sixtieth anniversary of the Revolution.

55. Soviet women consistently supported the struggle of peoples and liberation movements in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia for national independence and against apartheid. They also supported the newly independent States still striving to eliminate neo-colonialism, and the struggle against fascism and for democracy and social progress.

56. Soviet women were now seeking to implement the decisions of the Mexico Conference and the Berlin Congress held to promote co-operation with the international women's movement. They fully supported the United Nations Decade for Women. Her country's replies to the Secretary-General on the implementation of the objectives of the Decade were reproduced in documents A/32/211 and A/32/216.

57. Her delegation attached great importance to the elaboration of the draft Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Despite its short-comings, that text was a sound basis for the formulation of a final version. The views of the Soviet Union on that question were embodied in document A/32/218. Her delegation intended to participate in the further work on the draft text and hoped that, if due attention was paid to the various viewpoints of Member States, it would be possible to adopt the draft Convention at the current session.

58. Mrs. SHAHANI (Philippines) stated that there was no dearth of ideas about how women's rights should be advanced. What was needed was the political will and financial means to implement the World Plan of Action adopted in General Assembly resolution 3520 (XXX).

(Mrs. Shahani, Philippines)

59. The draft Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was in general acceptable to her delegation and she hoped it would be possible to adopt it at the current session. She trusted that the reporting system reflected in the biennial report of the Secretary-General on the "United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace" (A/32/216) would be continued. However, it was the view of her delegation that that system should be streamlined. The great number of questionnaires to be answered had become a burden both to Governments and to the Secretariat.

60. An important step had been taken in the field of women's rights with the establishment of the Voluntary Fund as well as with the decisions adopted by the Consultative Committee at its past two sessions. The Consultative Committee had rightly recognized that the regional commissions must have the main responsibility for formulating and implementing projects which should be financed by the Voluntary Fund. In selecting projects the Consultative Committee had been careful to follow the guidelines embodied in General Assembly resolution 31/133. Her delegation hoped that Member States would communicate with their respective regional commissions regarding the formulation of appropriate projects to be funded.

61. Her delegation likewise hoped that all Member States would contribute to the Voluntary Fund at the pledging conference on 8 November so that it would become truly universal and international in nature. Contributions, however modest, would demonstrate the genuine interest of Member States in making the Decade significant. She hoped that the pledging conference would be held annually, and requested the Secretary-General to study other ways and means by which the Fund could be augmented. The fund-raising activities of UNICEF could serve as an example for the Voluntary Fund. Her delegation also hoped that pledges would be made to the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women. Thought must likewise be given to the preparations necessary for the Conference to be held in 1980 in Teheran.

62. Any resolution adopted by the Committee on item 85 should refer to the so-called "umbrella resolution" (3520 (XXX)) and should cover the subsequent ratification of the Convention, the holding of an annual pledging conference, the need to emphasize the role of the regional commissions and the specialized agencies, and the streamlining of the reporting system concerning women's rights.

63. The CHAIRMAN said that she wished to present to the Committee the proposals of the Bureau concerning the draft Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The Bureau had noted the fairly wide consensus in the Committee in support of the adoption of the Convention at the current session. It fully understood, however, that the adoption of a legally binding instrument that would receive the widest ratification would require much more work. The Bureau had taken that situation fully into account, and wished to ensure that the proposed working group functioned as speedily and efficiently as possible.

64. The Bureau therefore proposed that a working group should be established for the purpose of carrying out a final, article-by-article study of the draft Convention, and should submit a final draft text no later than one week before the

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Committee resumed consideration of the item. It proposed that the working group should be open-ended, and should therefore not meet simultaneously with the Committee. It also proposed that Mrs. Ider (Mongolia) should be appointed Chairman of the working group, and Mr. Pedersen (Denmark) its Rapporteur; and that the group should meet twice weekly, beginning on Friday 21 October. The Bureau also recommended that the working group should consider adopting a "rule of silence" while discussing the articles. That rule, which had been very effectively employed in other United Nations bodies, meant that only those members who strongly opposed a provision should be given the opportunity to speak.

65. Finally, the Bureau wished to put forward a proposal by the delegation of Mexico to the effect that the Bureau be authorized to arrange consultations with the Bureau of the Sixth Committee with a view to tapping the legal expertise available in that Committee. The Bureau felt that that proposal might make a useful contribution to the work of the group, provided the work was not thereby delayed.

66. Miss SHAHKAR (Iran) fully supported the Bureau's proposals. With regard to the "rule of silence", she suggested that, as far as possible, delegations wishing to put forward amendments to articles of the draft Convention should submit their proposals in writing at least one day before consideration of the relevant article by the working group.

67. The CHAIRMAN said that, if she heard no objections, she would take it that the Committee agreed to the Bureau's proposals.

68. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.