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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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I. INTRODUCTION

1. In accordance with paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 36/129 of 14 December 1981, the Secretary-General, in a note verbale dated 11 April 1984, requested the views of Member States on how best the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women could continue its activities beyond the Decade. The present report summarizes briefly the views of the 22 Member States which responded to the request. The complete texts of the replies appear in the annex to the present report.

2. By the same resolution, the General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General, taking into account the views expressed by Member States on this matter, to submit to the Assembly at its thirty-ninth session a report on the substantive and financial implications of, and his proposals for the timing and modalities for, a relocation of the Fund within the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Department of International Economic and Social Affairs at Vienna, in order to enable Member States to take a decision in the matter. The Secretary-General's report on these questions is also before the General Assembly for its consideration (A/39/571). In its resolution 38/106 of 16 December 1983, the Assembly decided that, when considering the above reports of the Secretary-General, all possible options for continuing the activities of the Fund beyond the end of the Decade would be reviewed in depth.

3. Respondents shared the view that the activities of the Fund should be continued beyond the end of the Decade, referring to the persisting need for immediate and special efforts to involve women in development with the objective of providing both direct and immediate benefits to women and expediting the achievement of overall development goals. The importance of the Fund's contributions to developing countries, and in particular to less-developed countries was cited. The Fund was seen as one of the outstanding successes of the Decade and was praised for its efficiency and professionalism.

II. PURPOSE OF THE FUND

4. The purpose of the Fund was seen by the majority of respondents as a catalytic one within the United Nations system for development co-operation and with national Governments and non-governmental organizations. While the primary responsibility for dealing with the question of improving the situation of women rested with the larger United Nations development co-operation agencies and international financing institutions, it was believed that the Fund had a vital role to play in sensitizing those organizations and in helping to redirect their technical assistance activities to include women's needs. The ultimate goal, according to one respondent, was the integration of the Fund's objectives into the regular activities of the agencies, programmes and institutions referred to above. The Fund was viewed as the main United Nations mechanism for technical co-operation uniquely devoted to women's needs in the development process, and as long as this goal had not been achieved, the Fund should continue as a readily identifiable entity to support innovative development projects which have women as their primary target, in addition to its catalytic role in regard to mainstream development activities. It was also noted that the Fund had a unique contribution to make in achieving the goals of the Third United Nations Development Decade, as well as those of the United Nations Decade for Women.

5. One respondent expressed the view that the possibility should be examined that the Fund finance the expenses of the subregional focal points on women of the regional economic commissions, with special reference to the Latin American region.

III. ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE FUND

6. Over half (13 of 22) of the respondents expressed the view that, to achieve its purpose, the Fund should remain in New York and be transferred as an autonomous unit to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Two respondents urged that the administrative location of the Fund should be studied; several made no mention of administrative location; one favoured the relocation of the Fund within the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs.

7. Those proposing the association with UNDP favoured this association in view of the already established co-operation between the two. Through association with UNDP, it was argued that the Fund would maximize its resources by further drawing on the technical resources of UNDP and its field network and financial delivery system, and thus minimize overhead costs from the Fund's limited resources. If located at United Nations Headquarters in New York, the Fund would also be able more easily to continue its co-operation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA).

8. Those respondents proposing autonomous association with UNDP stressed the importance of allowing the Fund to preserve its own identity and image and to have a degree of flexibility - to enable it to continue to act as a catalytic and innovative agent and maintain a broad outreach to Governments, women's organizations, non-governmental organizations and the regional commissions and specialized agencies of the United Nations system. Such a reorganization would, according to one reply, enable the Fund to retain the trust and confidence of both donor and recipient countries.

9. Replies indicated that the existing administrative arrangements for the Fund, providing as they do for its New York staff to report to the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs at Vienna, were cumbersome. Placing the Fund physically and operationally under the Centre would remove it from United Nations organizations in the mainstream of development efforts which are based in New York, as well as create a need to establish a separate delivery system. While the Centre's commitment to, and understanding of, a wide range of women's issues was noted, it was also pointed out that the Fund's operational direction had always been to promote technical co-operation activities. In this regard, most countries emphasized the importance of having adequate channels of communication between the Centre and the Fund.

10. One delegation expressed the view that the existing arrangement between the Fund and the Branch for the Advancement of Women within the Centre had been hampered by their being situated in different countries, with all the problems of delays, costs and other difficulties arising from the distance of their separation. In recognition of the role of the Branch in "centralizing, co-ordinating and promoting activities of the Decade", appropriate measures should be taken to ensure more effective, more efficient and smoother working relations between the two offices in future years. To achieve this, it was pointed out, geographical proximity was essential.

IV. GOVERNANCE OF THE FUND

11. In proposing the option of association with UNDP, a number of countries recommended that the Fund report to the Governing Council of UNDP, which would review Fund activities on an annual basis and report thereon to the General Assembly. One country stated that this arrangement would strengthen the information and awareness function of the Fund and make its activities part of the general development efforts of the United Nations. A number of countries also specifically underlined the importance of establishing adequate channels of communication or reporting arrangements among the Fund, the Commission on the Status of Women, and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

12. The country which proposed a careful study of the UNDP option also requested a study of the possible future functions of the Consultative Committee on the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women. Another country stressed that the members of the Consultative Committee or an equivalent body should have appropriate qualifications and experience in the specialized area of women and development, and that the Consultative Committee should be given a mandate to ensure the necessary independence of the Fund to fulfil its catalytic role effectively.

ANNEX

Views of Member States on continuation of the activities of the
Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women

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AUSTRALIA

[Original: English]

[26 July 1984]

1. The activities of the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women have been one of the outstanding successes of the Decade. Australia welcomes the fact that the General Assembly, recognizing this and also recognizing that the unique task it performs is by no means complete, has decided that the Fund should continue its activities beyond the Decade.
2. However, this very necessary continuation of the Fund must not be regarded, as so often happens where special efforts to improve the situation of women are made, as rendering superfluous continued efforts by the major operational agencies to ensure the integration of women in development.
3. The catalytic role of the Fund needs to be emphasized. The Fund should concentrate on innovative activities which may, if successful, be taken up by others, and it should be free to choose the agencies with which it wishes to collaborate according to their commitment to the integration of women in their own development efforts.
4. While the Fund was conceived as a means of implementing the goals of the United Nations Decade for Women and was accordingly placed under the responsibility of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs at Vienna, the criteria adopted for the utilization of the resources of the Fund very properly emphasize development assistance, with special consideration for the most disadvantaged women. This accords with the priority attached to development in the World Plan of Action for the implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year, which sees development as the most important means of furthering equality of the sexes.
5. Australia considers that while the Centre will undoubtedly remain an important source of support for the Fund's activities, the present institutional arrangements for the Fund are not conducive to the effective execution of the development-oriented activities which Australia wishes the Fund to continue to undertake.
6. From a practical point of view it is clearly essential to the effective operation of the Fund that it remain in New York where it can readily co-operate with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) and other New York-based agencies with which it must deal.
7. Another basic requirement in Australia's view is that the Fund should not have to use its limited resources to establish implementation staff and field services of its own.
8. The arrangements the Fund has developed in this regard with UNDP have proved very satisfactory and it would be desirable to establish these on a more assured basis.

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9. On the basis of all these considerations, and as a consistent donor to the Fund, Australia wishes to register strong support for the permanent establishment of the Fund in an autonomous association with UNDP. Within such an association the Consultative Committee on the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women, or an equivalent body, should be given a mandate which would ensure the necessary independence for the Fund to fulfil its catalytic role effectively.

10. In considering the effectiveness of long-term arrangements along these lines, Australia would stress the importance of the membership of the Consultative Committee (or equivalent) having appropriate qualifications and experience in the specialized area of the integration of women in development. A highly skilled implementation unit along existing lines would also be needed to plan and evaluate Fund-assisted activities.

11. Under the arrangements outlined, day to day monitoring of the Fund's activities by the Centre would not be practicable or appropriate. Australia is none the less concerned that adequate channels of communication should remain between the Fund and the Centre, and that the Commission on the Status of Women should receive regular reports from the Fund, together with the comments of the Centre on these reports.

AUSTRIA

[Original: English]

[21 September 1984]

The Government of Austria believes that the future of the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women needs careful consideration. The activities of the Fund are noted with appreciation and the Government of Austria sincerely hopes that the Fund may continue these activities beyond the Decade for which it has been created. The interrelation between the Decade, its programme and goals, on the one hand, and the Fund, on the other hand, must not be lost sight of. Since the Centre constitutes the focal point of the Decade within the United Nations system, it is essential that all activities of the Fund are closely co-ordinated with this Centre. This interrelation between the Fund and the Branch for the Advancement of Women of the Centre was particularly stressed by the General Assembly in its resolution 36/129.

BELGIUM

[Original: French]

[10 July 1984]

1. Belgium believes that the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women should be able to continue its activities beyond 1985. Through this Fund, projects have been prepared which recognize the role of women in the development process. It is, above all, the small-scale projects aimed at improving the living conditions of women that are important, since such projects are rarely undertaken by other international institutions.

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2. As for the status of the Fund, Belgium feels bound to opt for integrating the Fund in an appropriate way into UNDP. Belgium therefore would like to see the Fund placed under the administrative supervision of UNDP.

3. Extensive collaboration between the Fund and UNDP already exists. Furthermore, the projects financed by the Fund are mainly concerned with providing technical assistance. The integration of the Fund would also help solve the current difficulties of co-ordination.

4. As for contributions, Belgium still favours annual pledges. Multi-year pledging is not acceptable because of national budgetary procedures.

CANADA

[Original: English]

[28 June 1984]

1. The Government of Canada attaches considerable importance to the continuation of the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women after the end of the Decade in 1985. The Fund plays a vital role within the United Nations system in ensuring that the situation and needs of women are addressed in development activities, and that women participate fully in the development process, both as agents and as beneficiaries. The ultimate goal of women and development strategies is to ensure the full integration of women into the economies and societies of which they form part. To achieve this, it is essential that women are an integral part of both United Nations and national development planning and implementation, to the benefit not only of women but of the entire population. The Fund should continue, as it has done in the past, to serve as a catalyst, rather than as a substitute or palliative, in achieving this goal.

2. Canada is of the view that the Fund should be renamed to reflect the end of the Decade, possibly as the "Voluntary Fund for Women in Development". It should retain a distinct identity, but at the same time, draw increasingly upon existing administrative and project-delivery services already established within the United Nations system, particularly within UNDP. Given the primary development focus of the Fund, a semi-autonomous linkage with UNDP would maximize effective use of the Fund's resources while at the same time ensure co-ordination with other development activities within the United Nations system.

3. Canada believes that the review of future options for the Fund at the thirty-ninth session of the United Nations General Assembly will provide a useful foundation for the comprehensive, cross-organizational review of women and development within the United Nations system that will be undertaken at the spring session of the Economic and Social Council in 1985.

CHINA

[Original: English]

[27 July 1984]

The Government of the People's Republic of China highly appreciates and actively supports the help and assistance rendered by the Voluntary Fund of the United Nations Decade for Women to women in developing countries and particularly in the least developed countries. It is hoped that the Fund can continue to play its special role in fulfilling the objectives of the Decade beyond 1985. As for how best the Fund should carry out its activities beyond 1985, the Chinese Government hopes that the Fund will continue to play its role in promoting international co-operation in accordance with the objectives and goals of the Decade.

COLOMBIA

[Original: Spanish]

[17 August 1984]

1. Colombia is one of the many countries which have benefited considerably from the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women. The projects financed by the Fund cover a broad range of activities for the advancement of women and the development of their active role in the economy of the country.

2. A brief description of the projects will give an idea of the varied and important activities of the Fund in Colombia:

(a) "The image of women on radio": Executed by the Colombian Social Communication Service, in co-operation with the National Planning Department, its purpose was to study the image of women transmitted to the country through radio serials. Broad sectors of the population benefited from the results of that research.

(b) "Socio-economic development and supplementary nutrition": Executed within the framework of CADESOC with assistance from the Family Welfare Institute and the National Federation of Colombian Coffee-Growers, its purpose is to train community and groups of women belonging to co-operatives, in such areas as home economics, administration and management of small businesses, use of time, effect of the sale of subsidized food on home economics, family savings and so on.

(c) "Co-operative production and marketing": Executed by SENA (National Training Service), with technical assistance from UNICEF, the purpose is to train women in income-generating and organizational techniques aimed at the promotion of micro-industries.

(d) "Income generation for rural women in Latin America": This project, executed by the International Federation for Home Economics, with the assistance of the National Federation of Colombian Coffee-Growers, trains rural women from 12 Latin American countries as supervisors of home economics training programmes, teaching them to organize practical courses and to use teaching materials in areas such as:

- (i) Feasibility studies;
- (ii) Project preparation;
- (iii) Marketing;
- (iv) Technical training;
- (v) Financing and credit;
- (vi) Group organization and communication.

(e) "Development of micro-industries for women": Executed by the Pro-Development Women's Club of Zambrano, its purpose is to develop garment-making and commercial plant nursery industries.

(f) "Revolving fund for businesswomen": Executed through the Colombian Co-ordinating Agency for Voluntary Work, it establishes a revolving credit system for women interested in financing micro-industries, while promoting the necessary training and technical assistance.

3. All these projects have used in one form or another both the technical co-operation and the administrative machinery of UNDP.

4. Taking into account the positive results of the development programmes for promoting production incentives and, consequently, employment at the level of co-operation between private initiative and the public sectors, which is essential for the economic take-off of developing countries, we consider it essential not only to maintain but to strengthen the Fund, even beyond the Decade.

5. The Government of Colombia believes that, in view of the specific nature of the Fund, the purpose of which is to finance development programmes for women greatly in need of counselling and technical training, its identity must be maintained separate from the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs in Vienna, since, even though both deal with the problems of women, the Centre is more especially concerned with such political and social aspects as the legal status of women, questions of discrimination against women in different fields and so on.

6. The advantages of maintaining the Fund as an autonomous unit in association with UNDP at Headquarters in New York, thereby ensuring that the funds received directly can be used independently in development programmes without duplication of

central administrative services and that UNDP advice is available for obtaining financing, would be the following:

(a) The Fund would have an immediate capacity to provide direct technical assistance to programmes undertaken by the Fund in areas as varied as bee-keeping, reforestation, commercial food production, and so on.

(b) By maintaining its identity as a Fund and as an instrument for technical co-operation, it would be in a position to influence other important funds - established at Headquarters - with a view to the inclusion of women in all multilateral technical co-operation programmes undertaken by the United Nations.

(c) It would be able to confine its efforts to development itself. Distanced from political debates, the Fund could effectively help to demonstrate that the objectives of economic development are better obtained through creative co-operation between men and women, with access to the necessary development resources.

(d) Through co-operation with UNDP, the Fund could invest the bulk of its resources directly in the programmes it finances. Without such co-operation it would have to establish expensive administrative structures, not only duplicating those already existing in New York, but also spending large sums of money which would otherwise go directly towards financing the Fund's objectives.

7. Other points which further strengthen our conviction that association with UNDP would be the most efficient manner of maintaining the Fund are the following:

(a) It would help to stabilize the staffing of the Fund. Contracts made through UNDP are for long periods, whereas the current system of extrabudgetary resources necessitates the award of contracts for one year only.

(b) UNDP has great experience in fund-raising and could actively assist the Fund to increase its budget.

8. The Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs depends, on the other hand, on the regular budget of the United Nations.

CUBA

[Original: Spanish]

[3 July 1984]

1. With regard to paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 36/129, the Government of Cuba considers that the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women could best continue its activities beyond the Decade by means of a close mutual relationship with the Branch for the Advancement of Women of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs at Vienna.

2. In paragraph 5 of the above-mentioned resolution, the General Assembly stressed the interrelationship between the Fund and the Branch. However, this relationship has been hampered by the fact that these bodies are situated in different countries, with all the problems with regard to delays, costs and other difficulties arising as a result of the distance during these years of experience.
3. The Branch for the Advancement of Women is the Secretariat's machinery for centralizing, co-ordinating and promoting the activities of the Decade and, to that end, should continue to act in this capacity beyond 1985. Appropriate measures should therefore be taken to ensure more effective, more efficient and smoother working relations between the two offices in future years. The geographical proximity of the Fund to the Branch is thus essential.
4. The Government of Cuba recognizes the importance of the projects approved by the Consultative Committee on the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women for developing countries during the Decade and is therefore sure that they and other countries will continue to support the Fund, even in the event of its relocation.
5. The preambular part of General Assembly resolution 38/106 mentions the valuable contribution of women programme officers in the regional commissions. In this respect the following should be pointed out:
6. The Regional Plan of Action for the Integration of Women into Latin American Economic and Social Development, adopted at Havana in 1977, decided to establish a specialized unit within the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), in collaboration with the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. In addition, the subregional offices of ECLA have acted as liaison offices between the Governments in the various subregions and the specialized unit.
7. This specialized unit and the focal points established at the offices in Mexico and Trinidad and Tobago functioned very efficiently during the second half of the Decade, thanks to the financing received from the Fund, up to the end of 1983, in the case of the Mexican office, and up to mid-1984, for the Trinidad and Tobago office.
8. In view of the distances, languages and communication difficulties in this region, it is the opinion of the Government of Cuba that a study should be made of the future possibilities for maintaining these focal points in the subregions. If a comparative study is made of the projects approved by the Fund for the Latin American and Caribbean region, it will be apparent that they are largely due to the work done in the specialized unit and at the focal points.
9. The possibility should thus be examined of the Fund financing these expenses after the Decade or of their being financed by the regional economic commissions.

DENMARK

[Original: English]

[18 June 1984]

1. As decided in General Assembly resolution 36/129, the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women should continue its activities beyond the end of the Decade. Denmark and the other Nordic countries have frequently taken the opportunity of stressing the importance they attach to the continuation of the activities of the Fund.
2. One of the goals of the Danish development assistance policy is the integration of women in development. Although the longer term aim must be total integration of women in all aspects of development co-operation, Denmark recognizes the need for innovative development projects that have women as the direct target group.
3. The Fund has a special role to play, being the only United Nations development co-operation mechanism which specifically deals with such projects.
4. The experience gained by the Fund in this regard should influence the policy of the main programmes and agencies of the United Nations system in the field of operational activities. It is Denmark's view that the mandate of the Fund in the future should continue to reflect the importance of integration of women in the process of development.
5. It is the Danish opinion that the Fund's activities for the benefit of women could best be carried out through a closer and more direct UNDP linkage, and the possibility of using the Governing Council of the UNDP to review Fund activities on an annual basis should be considered.
6. On these matters, a solution should be worked out with UNDP. Further, in order to ensure the Fund's catalytic role it is necessary that the Fund, within the framework of the UNDP administration, has a certain independence and maintains its own image.
7. Therefore, it is not acceptable to the Danish Government to make the Fund an instrument of the Branch for the Advancement of Women of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. Placing the Fund physically and operationally under the Branch would remove it from the United Nations agencies in the mainstream of international development efforts, as well as create a need to establish its own project delivery system.
8. The Fund is not only a focal point in the United Nations family for questions of women in development, but in addition it has broad contacts with national Governments, national women's groups non-governmental organizations, etc. The future organization of the Fund must therefore ensure flexibility of approach and a level of independence for the Fund, enabling it to continue to act as a catalytic and innovative agent for women's issues and to retain its broad outreach.

9. Since the Fund was established, Denmark has been among the major contributors, and hopes that Danish contributions to the Fund can be continued on the same level. Denmark would, however, at the same time stress the importance of a broader financial basis for future funding.

FINLAND

[Original: English]

[16 July 1984]

1. As one of the major supporters of the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women, the Government of Finland considers it important that at the thirty-ninth session of the General Assembly a unanimous decision should be reached to maintain the Fund even after the end of the Decade 1985. The Fund has proved its usefulness and has functioned efficiently. Despite its relatively modest resources, the Fund projects have contributed to the implementation of the overall goals of the Decade.

2. While considering the future administrative set-up of the Fund, Finland would support a model which would give the Fund an autonomous position within UNDP. That kind of linkage with the main technical co-operation fund within the United Nations system would offer many advantages. The Fund could use UNDP services which would not be feasible for the Fund to establish for itself because of its smallness. It would also be important that the Fund report to the Governing Council of UNDP. In this way, an annual reporting cycle to the main governing body of the technical co-operation activities of the United Nations system would strengthen the information and awareness function of the Fund and would make its activities a part of the general development efforts of the United Nations. Consequently, it would be natural that the Fund's administration would remain in New York, where it could work in close collaboration with UNICEF and UNFPA whose headquarters are also located in New York.

3. This kind of future administrative arrangement of the Fund would be in line with the General Assembly resolutions of 1978 dealing with the restructuring of the United Nations.

4. The Finnish Government is further aware of the need to establish channels of communication with the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, notably with its Branch for the Advancement of Women and with the Commission on the Status of Women and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

GERMANY, FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF

[Original: English]

[18 June 1984]

The Federal Government endorses a continuation of the activities of the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women beyond the end of the Decade because the projects promoted by the Fund are of direct and immediate benefit to women.

JAPAN

[Original: English]

[30 July 1984]

1. Since the General Assembly decided that the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women should continue its activities beyond the Decade, the Japanese Government considers it most important to ensure the effective and efficient management of the Fund's activities in the future. The effectiveness of activities primarily depends on the selection of appropriate programmes. In this connection, the future function of the Consultative Committee on the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women should be carefully studied.
2. A greater co-ordination of the Fund's activities with those of UNDP is required since the activities of the Fund are carried out in the field of technical assistance in which UNDP is engaged. The possibility of establishing a closer administrative association of the Fund with UNDP, without undermining the autonomy of the Fund, should be studied.
3. The above comments are of a preliminary nature, and the Government of Japan reserves the right to make its final position known when the Forward Looking Assessment of the Fund becomes available.

LIBERIA

[Original: English]

[12 September 1984]

1. With regard to the Secretary-General's request for advice as how best the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women should carry out its activities beyond the Decade in 1985, it is the Government's position that the close working relationship established with UNDP be maintained and strengthened. Further, the Government of Liberia is pleased to note that the Fund is currently providing assistance to the country in its rural development programme, through activities in south-eastern Liberia.

2. The Government of Liberia wishes, therefore, to express its appreciation for this support, to congratulate the Fund for its achievements thus far and to recommend that the Fund's emphasis on development be retained and that its activities be continued beyond the Decade in some form of association with UNDP.

NETHERLANDS

[Original: English]

[6 July 1984]

1. The Netherlands strongly supports continued and increased development efforts directed to improving the situation of women. The primary responsibility for these efforts rests with the larger United Nations agencies and programmes involved in development and with the international financial institutions.

2. Acting as a catalytic and innovative agent for women's issues, the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women has an important role to play in sensitizing those organizations and redirecting their activities to women's needs, the ultimate goal being the full and adequate integration of the Fund's objectives into the regular activities of the above-mentioned agencies, programmes and institutions.

3. As long as this goal has not been sufficiently achieved, the Fund should continue to exist as a readily identifiable entity. It is clear, however, that the activities and the existence of the Fund should not become, or be considered as, a substitute for priority action by the major operational agencies to promote the integration of women in development.

4. The Netherlands believes that a sound financial basis is crucial for the future of the Fund. Over the past years it has been a consistent supporter and a major donor of the Fund. The final position of the Netherlands on continued financing beyond the end of the Decade will be determined by the nature of decisions to be taken by the General Assembly at its thirty-ninth session concerning future administrative arrangements for the Fund, including its location.

5. Being small, the Fund cannot develop its own implementation staff or field service, and must therefore continue to draw on the operational capacities of other agencies. In view of the existing co-operation between the implementation unit of the Fund in New York and UNDP, which has proven to be fruitful, some form of autonomous association with UNDP, preserving the Fund's own identity and a degree of flexibility, would be its natural future framework. An association with UNDP, an organization which is fully oriented towards operational activities, would ensure access to its technical expertise and its financial delivery system and field structure. In order to be able to influence the mainstream of United Nations development activities, a level of independence for the Fund would be necessary.

6. The Fund should continue to be located in New York, being the Headquarters for not only UNDP, but also for UNICEF, UNFPA and other agencies with which the Fund is

to co-operate directly. It follows that the Netherlands does not consider it desirable that the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs at Vienna maintain any direct role in policy and operational matters of the Fund. The Centre is geared to the status and advancement of women, but does not have the necessary expertise in, nor the mandate for, operational activities. However, adequate channels of communication should be established between the Fund and the Centre, notably the Branch for the Advancement of Women, as well as with the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

NEW ZEALAND

[Original: English]

[6 August 1984]

1. New Zealand has contributed to the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women since its inception and regards its establishment as one of the most positive activities of the Decade. In particular, the Fund's emphasis on technical assistance and self-help projects and its extensive and successful interaction with non-governmental organizations is to be applauded. New Zealand's major concern is to ensure that the Fund continues to exist in a form that enables it to continue this valuable work.

2. In pursuance of this objective, New Zealand believes that the Fund's basic mandate (which can be described as integrating women more fully into the development process) should remain unchanged and that the Fund should remain under United Nations auspices beyond the Decade. New Zealand believes the best arrangement would be for the Fund to be an independent, separate unit of UNDP, reporting annually directly to the Governing Council of UNDP. In this way, the Fund could benefit from association with the administrative structure of UNDP, while retaining its present mode of operation. New Zealand also recommends that the Fund continue to be operated from New York.

NORWAY

[Original: English]

[29 June 1984]

Introduction

1. By proclaiming the period 1976-1985 the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace (General Assembly resolution 3520 (XXX) of 15 December 1975) the General Assembly established women's issues as a legitimate concern of the international community. The introduction of the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women must be seen as a recognition that immediate and special efforts to support women could help accelerate the development

process. The United Nations agenda items on questions of development and those on questions of equality for women have as a common goal to create conditions which will improve the quality of life for all. Norway expects that the status and future organization of the Fund will enable it to contribute most effectively to achieving this ultimate goal. As the comprehensive in-depth analysis and evaluation of the activities of the Fund and their impact will only be available later this year, suggestions on future options for the Fund must be seen in relation to the Fund's present linkages and outreach. The Norwegian comments in response to the Secretary-General's note of 11 April this year therefore must be considered as somewhat preliminary. Norway's final position has to be reserved until the Forward Looking Assessment of the Fund has been made available.

2. As a major donor-country, Norway has over the years acquired a significant amount of knowledge and experience with regard to development strategies, project execution and evaluation. The following remarks on how the Norwegian Government considers the future arrangement of the Fund are based on these insights, as well as on the experience gained as a member of the Fund's Consultative Committee for the last two years.

Mandate

3. Integrating women into development programmes is, even when accepted as an explicit objective, a complex problem requiring the ability to disentangle the densely woven patterns of human lives. The Fund is unique in the sense that it is the only United Nations development co-operation mechanism which lies at the interface of two United Nations agenda items: development and women. That the Fund was operationally perceived to play such a role is made clear by the specification of functions assigned to the Fund in General Assembly resolution 31/133 of 16 December 1976 where the Fund is requested to offer development technical co-operation designed "to implement the goals of the United Nations Decade for women: Equality, Development and Peace, priority being given to the related programmes and projects of the least developed, land-locked and island countries among developing countries". Furthermore it is stressed in resolution 38/106 "that the Fund has a unique contribution to make to the achievement of the goals of the Third United Nations Development Decade, and even beyond it".

4. As an interfacing agent, the Fund, in its project-support operations, sees development as the overall goal and women as an integral part of it. A relatively high number of Fund-supported activities therefore involve both women and men, and several are community oriented. The need for continued efforts to link the issues of women and development within the United Nations system is well documented. The presence of the Fund as a catalytic agent working with, inter alia, United Nations organizations to sensitize and redirect development efforts to achieve a women's dimension in these activities, is still strongly needed, as is evidenced by the increasing demands made upon the Fund by these same bodies and agencies. The Norwegian Government would therefore recommend that the Fund's main objectives should remain unchanged also beyond the Decade.

Linkage and outreach

5. The Fund became truly operational only four to five years ago, when planning, implementation and evaluation of Fund-assisted activities were placed in the hands of an implementation unit of the Fund. In spite of the small staff assigned to the unit, it has proved highly professional.

6. For the present, the Fund maintains liaison with the development agencies in the United Nations family, as well as important links with national Governments, regional commissions, national women's groups/NGOs and women's research institutes. This broad range of linkages and various levels of outreaches are important aspects of the Fund which must be retained.

7. Through the extensive contacts which the Fund has with grass-roots women's movements, assisting in defining their needs and developing strategies and methods to overcome the constraints hindering their development, the Fund gains broad insight into different aspects of women's role in development. This information should in turn be brought to the attention of policy-makers at the national level as well as to planners so that the way women see themselves in the development process can be fully considered. The Fund's present ability to move information between various levels of authority must therefore be ensured in its future organization, which must also allow for flexibility in the choice of collaborating partners. The Fund's future organizational framework must therefore ensure the necessary flexibility of approach for the Fund to continue acting as a catalytic and innovative agent for women's issues and at the same time to retain its broad outreach.

Future administrative arrangements

8. The Government of Norway has carefully considered several alternatives on how the Fund can best continue its future activities. Among the factors that have been taken into consideration in addition to the points made in paragraphs 1-4 above, is the proportion of the Fund's resources. Clearly, a fund of such moderate size cannot entertain any notions of developing its own project implementation staff or field services, and must continue to draw on operational capacity of other agencies as an effective way of stretching its own resources. Accordingly, to establish the Fund as an independent entity would seem to be neither an effective nor a valid solution.

9. Further, the catalytic role of the Fund is another factor that Norway regards as decisive when considering its future set-up. The catalytic nature of the Fund in working closely with other agencies has enabled it to mobilize additional financing for Fund-initiated projects. On its part, the Fund has picked up the cost of the women's dimension included in a number of cases where United Nations agencies have failed or been unable to provide such funding. However, past and recent experiences indicate that as the budgetary resources of the specialized United Nations development agencies become more and more strained, they turn to the Fund for financing the women's component in their regular activities. This runs counter to the goals of the Fund which sees as an overriding objective, the integration of women's activities as regular parts of development projects. Thus,

One must ensure that the Fund's participation in a project does not become an alibi for the main implementing agencies not to integrate women in their regular programme and project activities.

10. This indicates the need for some flexibility on the part of the Fund as a catalytic agent to choose its partners of co-operation as well as of implementation. Selection criteria to be considered would, inter alia, be the agencies' commitment in the longer perspective to the integration of women in their own development efforts.

11. Furthermore, this alternative underlines the need for the Fund to have its own identity and image, and to continue to deliver a highly specialized, professional competence in the area of development activities for women.

12. Against this background, Norway finds that a form of autonomous association between the Fund and UNDP represents the most favourable solution, which preserves the Fund's role, image and mode of operation as its natural future framework. The Norwegian Government finds it vital that the Fund, within this organizational set-up, retain the implementation unit for the planning and evaluation of Fund-assisted activities. To redirect development strategies and activities and relate them to women's needs is a professional task for which a highly specialized competency is needed. An association of this type with UNDP would allow for flexibility for the Fund to contract for project delivery services also with other agencies clearly identified with development (the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the regional economic commissions, etc.) An association with UNDP would as well ensure access to the technical and geographical expertise of UNDP and its financial delivery system and field offices.

13. The question of a representative review body at the legislative and operational levels, in the opinion of the Norwegian Government, also has to be carefully considered.

14. A form of administrative linkage/association between the Fund and UNDP indicates that the Governing Council of UNDP could represent such a body, which would review the operational activities of the Fund on an annual basis and report to the General Assembly.

15. As to the question of making the Fund an instrument of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs (Branch for the Advancement of Women), it is important to keep in mind that while the Centre has a recognized commitment to and understanding of a broad range of women's issues, the Fund's operational direction has always been development activities. Placing the Fund physically and operationally under the Branch would remove it from the United Nations agencies in the mainstream of international development efforts, as well as create a need to establish a separate delivery system. However, adequate channels of communication between the Fund and the Centre, as well as with the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women would be useful.

Conclusions and recommendations

16. The Norwegian Government's opposition to a proliferation of voluntary funds should be well known. In the matter of women and development, however, the Government recognizes the need for special attention and initiatives to be taken on a temporary basis in order to bring stronger momentum to these efforts. Norway therefore strongly supports the decision to continue the Fund. If women and women's issues are to be placed in the mainstream of development activities, the Fund's mandate should remain in the interfacing of women and development issues. Available information on the Fund's activities reaffirms the need to retain the services and give support to the type of activities provided by the Fund beyond the end of the United Nations Decade for Women.

17. Accordingly, the Norwegian Government is aware of the need to bring continued pressure on United Nations agencies engaged in development efforts to ensure the integration of women and women's issues in these activities. This indicates the need for a special fund for women within the United Nations development co-operation system beyond the Decade. More formalized administrative linkage or an autonomous association with UNDP is strongly recommended. The use of the Governing Council of UNDP to review Fund activities on an annual basis should be considered.

OMAN

[Original: Arabic]

[25 June 1984]

The Sultanate of Oman has the honour to state that, affirming the importance of the efficacious contributions made by the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade For Women in many countries and in various fields (and particularly its contribution to the project for the development of local communities in the Sultanate of Oman which has had a conspicuous effect on the integration of rural Omani women in community development), deems it appropriate that the activities of the Fund should continue beyond the decade 1976-1985. The Sultanate considers, moreover, that Fund contributions might be extended to provide expertise in the field of women's rural crafts (which help to increase family income), including the financing of certain small-scale projects through revolving loans. The Fund has, in fact, recently carried out an evaluation study on the effectiveness of the above-mentioned project for the development of local communities, as one of the successful activities to which it contributes, with a view to presenting it to the Consultative Committee on the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women. It is also worthy of note in this connection that the Sultanate contributes to the financing of the Fund budget in the amount of \$US 10,000 a year.

SENEGAL

[Original: French]

[13 September 1984]

1. The Government of Senegal considers that the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women is a very important fund and should continue its activities beyond 1985.
2. Senegal has benefited from the Fund's activities through the financing of two projects to assist women's groups, for a total amount 59,060 United States dollars.
3. On the basis of its experience with these two projects, Senegal feels that it would be useful to improve the Fund's activities at two levels.
4. In the opinion of the Government of Senegal, current project submission procedures are too lengthy and involve steps which could be eliminated without detriment.
5. For example, in view of the growing number of projects, it would be desirable if the national projects transmitted to and considered by UNDP were sent to the Fund with copies forwarded to the United Nations regional commissions concerned without the latter having to submit their comments on these projects in a systematic manner.
6. Nevertheless, the national projects sent to the regional commissions could be examined by them and submitted directly to the Fund for financing.
7. Regional projects could be submitted directly to the Fund by the regional commissions.
8. The slowness with which financing for projects is arranged is regrettable, particularly since such financing is generally limited in scope.
9. Since the purpose of the Fund is essentially to finance specific projects and activities to bring about and promote the advancement and integration of women in the economic and social development process of developing countries in particular, it would be beneficial to shorten the period for arranging financing and, if possible, to raise the maximum level of the Fund's financial assistance in order to enable developing countries, especially those in Africa whose resources are particularly limited, to submit more ambitious projects benefiting women in the various sectors of economic and social activity.
10. These are the comments and suggestions which Senegal wished to make for the improved functioning of the Fund subsequent to the United Nations Decade for Women.

SUDAN

[Original: English]

[26 June 1984]

1. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Sudan is of the opinion that the activities of the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women should continue beyond the Decade.
2. It is contemplated that the objectives for which the Fund was established could not be fully realized within the Decade; hence, the continuity of the Fund's activities is of importance, especially in areas where the status of women calls for further promotion.
3. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Sudan further believes that Fund activities should be expanded to cover more activity areas, especially in the drought affected regions in Africa and in the rehabilitation of indigenous rural handicrafts.

SWEDEN

[Original: English]

[25 June 1984]

1. The Swedish Government believes it to be of crucial importance for the effectiveness of the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women that the Fund co-operates closely with United Nations agencies and programmes engaged in operational activities for development, particularly UNDP, but also UNICEF and UNFPA.
2. Bearing in mind the importance of the integration of women into the process of development, the Swedish Government holds the view that activities for the advancement of women should become an integral part of the work of the major operational agencies and programmes in the development field. The Fund can make a major input in achieving this objective.
3. Against this background, it is essential to preserve the Fund's identity so as to enable it to fulfil its catalytic role in promoting increased opportunities for women to participate in the development process and secure their due part of its benefits.
4. According to the Swedish view, the best way to achieve these goals is to secure an autonomous position for the Fund while associating it closely with UNDP, much in the same way as the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO). Such an arrangement would ensure the Fund's access to the administrative resources of UNDP and expertise in identifying, drawing up and evaluating development projects.

5. This association, however, should not preclude the Fund's choice of project delivery partners. The Fund should be able to co-operate, where appropriate, not only with UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA but also with, inter alia, ILO, FAO and the regional commissions.

6. As regards the question of the Fund's relationship with the Centre for Social and Humanitarian Affairs, notably the Branch for the Advancement of Women, Sweden finds it desirable to have adequate channels of communication between the Fund and the Centre. Such channels should of course also be maintained with the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

TOGO

[Original: French]

[23 August 1984]

1. Togo has not yet received assistance from the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women despite the many projects for the benefit of Togolese women which it has submitted to the Fund. However, in March 1984, the Fund accepted for study a project entitled "Organization and training of women in pottery crafts".

2. Togo therefore has an interest in the continuation of the Fund's activities beyond the Decade and hopes, moreover, that the Fund will be strengthened to enable it to assist a greater number of projects for the advancement of women, particularly in the developing countries.

UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

[Original: English]

[14 June 1984]

1. The United Nations Decade for Women comes to an end in 1985. But this should not mean any reduction in United Nations efforts in this area. Many Member States have noted that much remains to be done. The preparatory body for the 1985 World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women recognized this fact, in its recommendation that the continuing efforts of the United Nations should be aimed at the year 2000.

2. One of the principal achievements of the Decade has been the establishment and success of the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women. Over 80 Member States and many non-governmental organizations have contributed to the Fund. Nevertheless the increasing demands for its services significantly exceed the resources available to it. This reflects the Fund's high reputation and exceptional effectiveness in the deployment of its limited resources. It has not

only played a catalytic role in establishing imaginative development projects for the benefit of poor women and their communities. It has also played an important part in raising the awareness of people, Governments and international agencies of the importance of women's actual and potential contribution to the process of development in society. It has thus made a major contribution towards the full integration of women into the development process.

3. The General Assembly has already decided that the Fund should continue its activities beyond the United Nations decade for Women. At its thirty-ninth session, it will consider how this is to be done.

4. There is a clear need for some revision of current arrangements. These are excessively cumbersome, providing as they do for the Fund, based in New York, to report to the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs at Vienna.

5. The principal objective of reorganization should be to improve the Fund's effectiveness in contributing to the integration of women into the development process. This requires, above all, maintenance of the Fund in New York, where UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA are located. The Fund has developed close operating relationships with these agencies, particularly UNDP. This has enabled the Fund both to draw on their technical resources, and to make a major input into their programmes to ensure that these take adequate account of the development needs of women. These relationships could not be effectively maintained, if the Fund were moved to Vienna or elsewhere.

6. The United Kingdom is therefore firmly of the view that the Fund should remain in New York and should establish an association with UNDP which would allow it sufficient autonomy to remain a resource of special expertise, and to make an input into the programmes of other agencies. Arrangements should also be made to ensure that the Fund is enabled to maintain its existing operational relationships with the specialized agencies, and to be kept informed of the work of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, the Branch for the Advancement of Women, the Commission on the Status of Women, and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and vice versa.

7. The United Kingdom considers that such reorganization would ensure that the Fund retained the trust and confidence of both donor and recipient countries. For its part, the United Kingdom is ready to make a further donation to the Fund, as soon as it is satisfied that appropriate arrangements are to be made to ensure the Fund's continuing effectiveness.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

[Original: English]

[5 July 1984]

1. The United States appreciates the Secretary-General's invitation of 11 April 1984 to comment on how best the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women can continue its activities in the period beyond 1985. As a major

contributor to the Fund since its inception, the United States has monitored its work closely. The United States welcomed General Assembly resolution 36/129, which decided that the activities of the Fund should continue beyond the Decade, and Assembly resolution 38/106, which decided that all possible options for this continuation should be reviewed in depth by the Assembly at its thirty-ninth session.

2. Since the Fund has now been operational for several years and the Decade in which its activities were initiated will close in 1985, a review of options for the Fund's future is especially timely. The United States has stated many times that the end of the Decade should not represent the end of concerted efforts to improve the status of women world wide. Rather, it should be the occasion to review the Decade's successes and develop practical strategies to expand on these successes in the future. It is in this context that the United States submits its views on the Fund.

3. The United States believes that a major decade success has been the increased knowledge of the important role played by women in development and the consideration that this is now given in the programmes of the United Nations system. Within this overall development effort, the United States believes the Fund has played an important catalytic role which should be strengthened in the period beyond 1985. It is believed this could best be effected by the Fund's transfer to UNDP as a separate unit reporting to the Governing Council. Successful models for this type of arrangement already exist within UNDP.

4. This recommendation is based on several considerations. First, the United States believes that a major reason for the Fund's success has been and will continue to be its close relationship with UNDP. The advantages to this arrangement go well beyond the resultant low overhead costs which enable the Fund to maximize program resources. UNDP headquarters personnel and resident representatives perform an invaluable service in screening and monitoring Fund projects, co-ordinating activities with host governments and implementing organizations, and providing assistance throughout the duration of the projects. Experience has shown that this activity is invaluable in ensuring that projects complement larger, ongoing development efforts and that it also contributes greatly to the successful outcome of projects undertaken. The relatively small resources of the Fund would obviously not make it possible for it to engage its own field representatives. Thus, a transfer of the Fund to UNDP would rationalize its operations and would facilitate its administrative requirements.

5. Secondly, the United States believes that while small, demonstration projects of benefit to specific groups of women will continue to be necessary, it is essential that these projects have the capacity for expansion to reach large numbers of women. Fund criteria have included this requirement in the formulation of many projects and the United States has been pleased to note that UNDP and others have begun to assume responsibility for expanding the scope of several successful Fund models. Now that the Fund has been in operation for several years, its projects will reach maturity on a regular, ongoing basis. Incorporating these models into larger development activities will best be accomplished if the Fund itself is part of UNDP.

6. Thirdly, exhaustive research over the past 10 years has demonstrated that effective strategies to pursue balanced economic growth must focus on the economic participation of women in all aspects of development. It follows that the Fund must itself be located in the mainstream of United Nations development activity in New York if it is to play an effective role in this larger effort. The proximity of the Fund to the major development organizations of the United Nations has enabled it to develop close operating relationships which should be strengthened in the period beyond 1985. The United States would expect the period to be one of expanded Fund co-operative efforts with other organizations to ensure that women are fully integrated in all aspects of development programming.

7. As a member of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, the United States fully recognizes the responsibility of the Commission to make recommendations to improve the status of women throughout the world. The United States would welcome the Fund's participation in the biennial meetings of the Commission, along with that of the many United Nations organizations working actively to integrate women into their programs. Nevertheless, for the reasons stated above, the United States strongly recommends that the Fund be operationally situated in UNDP in New York, with sufficient autonomy to remain a unit of special expertise.
