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THIRD COMMITTEE
26th meeting
held on
Thursday, 1 November 1984
at 10.30 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 26th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MADAR (Somalia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 92: INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING INSTITUTE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/39/511 and A/39/568; A/C.3/39/6)

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- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (continued) (A/39/45, vols. I and II)
- (b) STATUS OF THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/39/486)

1. Mrs. PAPAJORGJI (Albania), speaking on agenda item 93, said that the many problems currently facing women were closely linked in each country to such questions as freedom, independence and democracy. The United Nations Decade for Women was nearing its end, but the plans of action and the programmes adopted at Mexico City and Copenhagen were far from showing the results expected. Indeed, the serious economic, political and social crises being experienced by the capitalist and revisionist countries had struck hardest at the working masses, and primarily women, who were the first to be affected by unemployment.

2. Discrimination against women, who according to UNESCO estimates represented 70 per cent of the total number of illiterates in the world, was felt not only in employment but also in the field of education. Similarly, the participation of women in political life was reduced to its simplest form in a number of countries and the few women who were active in politics generally represented the upper middle class. Moreover, equality of men and women before the law was largely illusory in a society in which oppression and exploitation prevailed.

3. The worst form of discrimination to which the women of southern Africa and occupied Namibia were exposed was racial discrimination. At a time when elsewhere in the world the talk was of peace, détente and disarmament, thousands of women and

(Mrs. Papajorqji, Albania)

children continued to be murdered in the occupied Arab territories, Lebanon and Afghanistan. It was therefore right that women had joined their voices to protest against the arms race in which the United States and the Soviet Union were engaging.

4. Her delegation believed that the problems of women and the struggle for their emancipation could not be dissociated from the struggle of peoples for national and social liberation and from the great problems currently affecting the world. That was the path that women had followed in Albania, and the dignity which they enjoyed in that country was one of the greatest achievements of the Albanian people's rule, which was celebrating its fortieth anniversary that year. Albania's socialist society attached special importance to the emancipation of women, who were helping to accelerate progress in the country. The building of socialism had created conditions permitting women to enjoy rights such as the right to work, education at all levels, social security and health care. Albanian women participated actively in the life of the country in all areas. They represented 46 per cent of the total number of workers, 38 per cent of the intellectual workers, 40.7 per cent of the total number of members of the People's Councils and 34 per cent of the workers employed by the institutions of the Academy of Sciences. Many among them, including workers and peasants who had received an education, occupied leadership positions.

5. In conclusion, her delegation reaffirmed that Albanian women would continue to interest themselves in the problems faced by the majority of women throughout the world and would support the just struggle which they were waging on the side of the peoples for national and social liberation, a prerequisite for true emancipation of women.

6. Mrs. MARKUS (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the International Women's Year proclaimed in 1975 and the nine years which had elapsed since the start of the United Nations Decade for Women had brought about greater awareness of the difficulties faced by women, as a result of the inequality of laws and the burden of customs and traditions, in the education of their children, the performance of household tasks and the exercise of professional activity. Women themselves had become more aware of their role in society, which was the basis for progress and the development of the community.

7. A group of experts comprising representatives of various ministries and the Union of Women's Associations had been constituted to reply to the questionnaire sent to Governments with respect to the review and appraisal of the results of the United Nations Decade for Women, to which the Libyan Government attached great importance because it could serve as a basis for elaborating strategies for the advancement of women. In that connection she observed that while the questionnaire correctly dealt with the role of women as mothers, it neglected the role of the family, which was still the foundation of society. As indicated in the questionnaire, priority must be given to strategies aimed at meeting the needs of the most deprived women, such as women refugees or displaced women, aged or disabled women, women in the occupied Arab territories who were subjected to the oppression of the Zionist entity and women who were victims of apartheid.

(Mrs. Markus, Libyan
Arab Jamahiriya)

8. Her delegation welcomed the participation of ILO, FAO and UNESCO in the preparatory work of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women and hoped that WHO would also co-operate in it.

9. With regard to the report of the Secretary-General on the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women (A/39/146) her delegation believed that priority assistance should be given to developing countries for the planning of programmes for the advancement of women and the improvement of their status. The Fund could provide financial assistance to the least developed countries for the execution of such programmes and the implementation of programmes for women who were in particularly difficult situations. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya believed that the administrative headquarters of the Fund should remain in New York and maintain closer relations with the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs.

10. With respect to the report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (A/39/45, vols. I and II), she noted that 59 countries had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women or had acceded to it. She welcomed the fact that Arabic had become a working language of the Committee. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya was in the process of studying the Convention with a view to acceding to it with some reservations on the articles that did not correspond to the Islamic Shariah or to the country's existing legislation. Libyan legislation granted women rights that were far superior to those in the Convention, and the Koran made no distinction between men and women, all of whom had rights and duties. She noted in that connection that women had in the past participated with their husbands in the Islamic Holy War.

11. In the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, women had full freedom to participate actively in all areas of social life. With respect to employment conditions, women were not permitted to perform arduous or dangerous tasks or to work more than 48 hours per week, and the rule "equal work, equal pay" was applied in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. Maternity leave was for three months, and during the nursing period women could absent themselves several times a day to nurse their children. The retirement age was set at 55 years for women, who could, if they so desired, continue to work until the age of 60. Working women had the possibility of taking leave without pay for one year or longer in order to care for their children. In the political field, women participated equally with men in the People's Congresses and Committees, trade unions, professional unions and so on. They could undertake military studies and become officers in all branches of the armed forces. Any woman, employed or not, could choose to receive military training during certain hours of the day.

12. In conclusion, she stressed the importance of the role of women in society and above all their role as mothers. Within the framework of equality, sex differences must be respected: that was the spirit in which the section of the Green Book concerning the social basis of the third universal theory had been written. Women must participate more generally in efforts to establish peace throughout the world and to solve the other major world problems.

(Mrs. Markus, Libyan
Arab Jamahiriya)

13. She hoped that the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women would be a success.

14. Mrs. ABAS (Indonesia) said that her Government was committed to promoting the ideals and objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women and was implementing a national plan of action to achieve those goals. The Indonesian Constitution and legislation guaranteed equal rights for men and women. In both the guidelines for State policy and the national development plan, the Indonesian Government had taken into account the role of women in development. However, there were still many obstacles to be overcome in that field, some of which were rooted in the traditional and cultural value system and others in the inhibitions of women themselves.

15. Since women represented slightly more than 50 per cent of the total Indonesian population and most lived in rural areas and were not yet involved in major development activities, her Government's policy for the advancement of women was primarily addressed to underprivileged and unskilled rural women. The national plan of action had identified three strategic priority areas: (a) enhancement of women's role in socio-cultural development; (b) provision of increased employment opportunities for women; and (c) improvement of women's skills and capabilities in various fields such as food production, post-harvest activities, family welfare and marketing. The Office of the State Minister for the Role of Women had been entrusted with the task of formulating and implementing policies relating to women.

16. With regard to the preparations for the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women, she said that her delegation supported the recommendations contained in the report of the Commission on the Status of Women Acting as the Preparatory Body for the Conference (A/CONF.116/PC/19). She stressed the importance of paragraph 2 (q) of the Commission's draft decision I relating to the time when the Conference's documentation should be available, and expressed the hope that draft decisions I, II and III would be adopted by consensus. She supported the rules of procedure for the Conference but pointed out that, with regard to the distribution of seats for the General Committee of the Conference, it was necessary to wait until the General Assembly, at its current session, adopted the draft Standard Rules of Procedures for United Nations Conferences or, failing that, to follow the precedent established at the Mexico City and Copenhagen Conferences.

17. With regard to the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women, she said her delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's invitation to Member States to submit their views on how the Fund could best continue its activities beyond the end of the Decade. Having studied document A/39/571, her delegation felt that the Fund should be administered as a special fund in association with UNDP for the purpose of continuing to carry out development activities.

18. Her delegation was pleased to announce that the Government had signed and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against

(Mrs. Abas, Indonesia)

Women, the provisions of which were legally binding throughout the country. She hoped that the Convention would be ratified by a growing number of States so as to enable the international community to improve and protect the status of women more effectively.

19. With regard to agenda item 92, she said that her delegation greatly appreciated the activities of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, particularly its co-operation with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in seeking more relevant training materials to improve the skills and capabilities of women in industrial development. She noted with satisfaction that the statute of the Institute had just been approved by the Economic and Social Council, and fully supported its adoption by the Third Committee.

20. Mrs. Mariko TOURE (Mali), speaking under agenda item 93, said that in proclaiming the United Nations Decade for Women the international community had recognized that women, who represented more than half of the world's population, were not occupying their rightful place in political and socio-economic life. Despite the efforts made, particularly since 1975, prejudices and discriminatory practices against women persisted in every society.

21. The Nairobi Conference must take account of the main concerns of all delegations. Mali, which was concerned over the fact that certain developing countries had had difficulty in meeting the Decade's objectives because of such circumstances as the world economic recession and adverse climatic conditions, hoped that the international community would give increased support to programmes designed to promote the role of women in development. In particular, women in the rural areas of Africa, who were the first victims of the effects of desertification, must be given assistance. The seminar on women in agriculture organized in October 1983 by FAO had highlighted the need to review the conception and execution of rural development programmes taking into account the needs of rural women, to promote small agricultural projects which could lighten their tasks, and to strengthen co-operation between the United Nations system, Governments and non-governmental organizations in technical assistance and investments to benefit women in the agricultural sector.

22. Her Government encouraged women's participation in politics, as was demonstrated by their nomination to decision-making positions within the Party, the Government and the National Assembly. The National Union of Women, which was responsible for co-ordinating the preparations for the 1985 World Conference, had developed a three-year plan for 1984-1986 which gave priority to the economic sphere, on the grounds that de jure equality of rights and responsibilities was not enough, and that that equality must be made real. The three-year programme provided, inter alia, for the supply of materials and equipment which women used in their work, the implementation of pilot and other projects, the promotion of co-operatives and the introduction of handicraft and food-conservation techniques. It was also aimed at making women aware of the need to improve productivity, sanitation and food hygiene and confront social problems, at promoting literacy

(Mrs. Mariko Toure, Mali)

among women, at improving their health and at combating the rural exodus and juvenile delinquency.

23. The Nairobi Conference must work out a special assistance programme for women who were the victims of the twofold discrimination constituted by prejudice on the one hand and apartheid in South Africa and foreign occupation in Palestine on the other. Mali hoped that the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women would continue beyond the end of the Decade to finance programmes undertaken by the developing countries for the advancement of women and for economic and social development.

24. Mr. ZADOR (Hungary) said that Hungary was following with great interest the preparations for the World Conference at Nairobi and had already replied to the Secretary-General's questionnaire on the progress achieved and obstacles encountered during the Decade. Although all the Decade's goals - equality, development and peace, employment, education and health - were important for women the world over, peace remained the absolute prerequisite for the realization of the other objectives.

25. Hungarian women were aware of the complex international situation in which the preparations for the World Conference were being made. The arms race and the economic difficulties which it engendered, colonialism and regional crises - in the Middle East and southern Africa, for example - often hit women much harder than men, while women continued to be discriminated against and their political, economic and social rights were constantly being violated. Hungarian women were preparing for the World Conference through, inter alia, the Hungarian preparatory committee, and hoped that the Conference would be an important landmark in progress towards achieving women's equality and participation in the life of society.

26. Turning to agenda item 94, he said he regretted that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had been signed by 91 countries but ratified by only 60, and that some of the most developed countries continued to evade their obligation to report on the status of women in their countries. Hungary had been a party to the Convention since 1981 and, in conformity with its obligations, had submitted its initial report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which had commended it for its frank exposition of the situation of women in Hungary. Such frankness was essential to the progress of women and it was not enough for the reports to express pious and vague wishes in that connection.

27. In recent years Hungary had continued its efforts to promote women's equality and had made progress in that area, albeit irregularly because of the economic crisis. In the field of employment, women's employment had reached the highest possible ratio, which represented 80 per cent of women of working age. Women were represented in all occupations, although the sexes were unequally represented in certain sectors. Almost half of those with academic qualifications were women. However, there still remained a pay differential of about 30 per cent, even though it had narrowed. The participation of women in public life had increased and women

(Mr. Zador, Hungary)

today represented 30 per cent of the members of parliament and 51 per cent of elected trade-union officials. In senior posts, however, women constituted only 26 per cent of the total, because of the survival of a conservative attitude regarding the promotion of women to positions of responsibility. At middle levels, the rate of progress was faster, particularly in economic, statistical or planning posts, as opposed to technical jobs. As in all countries, women's equality was harder to achieve in families than in other units of society because of resistance based on the idea that maternity was incompatible with work outside the home. To remedy that situation, Hungary was continuing to develop its system of day nurseries and kindergartens and its child-care allowance scheme.

28. While the problems could only really be solved at the national and local levels, international co-ordination and co-operation were nevertheless useful in order to meet the expectations of women all over the world.

29. Mrs. KOLAROVA (Bulgaria) said that her country attached particular importance to the goals of the United Nations Decade for Women. During the Decade, Governments, international and non-governmental organizations and women themselves had gained a great deal of experience which would facilitate their further efforts to surmount the obstacles still impeding the full implementation of those goals. Equality, development and peace were of vital importance, particularly in the present tense international situation, with its threat of a nuclear catastrophe. The escalation of the arms race, precipitated by imperialism, had led to the escalation of military spending and a squandering of the human resources needed to realize the goals of economic, social and cultural development. An illustration of the growing awareness of those realities was the anti-war movement, which included in its ranks millions of women who, although of various political, religious and philosophical affiliations, were united in their desire to maintain and strengthen international peace and security.

30. It was in the light of those considerations that the Bulgarian delegation had considered the results of the thirtieth regular and the second special sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women. It welcomed the resolutions and decisions of the Commission which focused attention on the most outstanding questions relating to the implementation of the goals of the Decade, particularly the resolution in which it called upon Member States, in preparing their national programmes for social and economic development, to consider taking measures to convert some resources spent for military purposes to the promotion of social progress.

31. The World Conference in 1985 should devote attention, as a matter of priority, to the need for measures to eliminate discrimination against women living under apartheid and to guarantee to Palestinian women their right to self-determination. She therefore also welcomed the decision of the Commission on the Status of Women requesting the Secretary-General to prepare reports on those subjects and to submit them to the Conference.

(Mrs. Kolarova, Bulgaria)

32. The inclusion in the Conference's agenda of items relating to such important social problems as employment, education and health care attested to the significance of those problems in achieving the objectives of the Decade.
33. Bulgarian women vigorously supported those goals and had repeatedly called for a halt to the arms race and for disarmament and strengthened international peace and security. The Committee of the Bulgarian Women's Movement, in addition to its other activities, had in the previous year hosted the International Peace School, whose participants had expressed their deep concern over the danger of nuclear war and had stressed the need for greater co-operation between women's organizations in their efforts to promote peace and disarmament as the basic prerequisites for achieving equality and development.
34. As the United Nations Decade for Women drew to an end, each of the three aspects of the role which women played in society as mothers, workers and public figures, should be formulated and reaffirmed so as to contribute, within the framework of international and national policies, to the establishment of conditions promoting the genuine equality of women.
35. Mrs. FLOREZ PRIDA (Cuba), speaking on agenda items 92, 93 and 94, and referring to the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women, said that the situation of Cuban women had continued to improve and that women today constituted approximately 35 per cent of the working population, despite the international economic crisis. Women now had full access to education and health services, and had been among the major beneficiaries of the economic and social development which had followed the 1959 revolution. Nevertheless, it was necessary to continue to work towards the full integration of women in the country's development and to pursue after 1985 the activities undertaken during the Decade, in order to achieve the established objectives.
36. Looking ahead to the 1985 World Conference, the Council of Ministers had established a National Preparatory Committee in which 35 governmental bodies and public organizations participated, and which had completed the review and appraisal at the national level and was now working on the preparation of strategies and measures to be adopted by the year 2000.
37. From 19 to 22 November 1984, the intergovernmental regional meeting preparatory to the World Conference would be held at Havana to consider the three-fold topic of the integration of women in the economic and social development of Latin America and the Caribbean, the progress achieved and the obstacles encountered during the Decade, and the mapping of strategies for the year 2000. Two days before the meeting, the non-governmental women's organizations of Latin America and the Caribbean would meet in Cuba to consider the problems of women in the region. They had invited the Governments to participate in the closing meeting, which could only promote the ties between the governmental and non-governmental sectors and benefit both. The report of the Commission on the Status of Women acting as the Preparatory Body for the Conference showed that the preparations for the Nairobi Conference had advanced. The resolution which the

(Mrs. Florez Prida, Cuba)

Third Committee would adopt on that subject should reflect the results already achieved. Also, in view of the importance of the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women to the women of the developing countries, it would be desirable for the Fund to continue after the end of the Decade and for more countries to contribute to it. Cuba was pleased that the Board of Trustees of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women had agreed to hold its first session in Cuba the following year. Although the number of States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had increased, States which had not yet acceded to it should be urged to do so before the end of the Decade.

38. Miss OLOWO (Uganda), speaking on agenda items 93 and 94, said that her country attached great importance to the World Conference to be held at Nairobi since it would provide a supreme opportunity to take stock of the Decade. In that connection, her delegation had been encouraged to learn that preparations for the Conference and for Forum '85, a meeting of non-governmental organizations, were nearing completion.

39. It was disturbing to note that some of the goals of the Decade had not been achieved such as, for example, that of equality. Equality meant, first of all, equality between the sexes and implied, in concrete terms, equality of opportunity, rights and privileges. Women remained the most underprivileged group, particularly in the developing countries where there persisted traditions and laws prejudicial to them. That was particularly the case in Africa, where women bore the entire burden of agricultural labour in countries in which agriculture was the very basis of the economy, but where, as a result of the inequitable distribution of income in the family, they could not be said to enjoy the fruits of their labour. Since the burdensome tasks of family life were also left to them, it was not surprising that their health suffered and their life expectancy was lower as a result. Owing to adherence to customary matrimonial practices, women were not allowed to own property in their own right or to inherit family property. Despite laws adopted by some countries with regard to employment, women had neither the same employment opportunities nor the same income as men. Moreover, despite liberal education laws enacted by most Governments, the level of education of women remained lower than that of men. Lastly, the participation of women in the decision-making process was still inadequate and it could only be regretted that so little had been done in an area that called for direct Government intervention.

40. The quest for equality between men and women was only one aspect of the wider struggle for human equality, dignity and rights. Women, exposed to discrimination based on sex, were also victims of racism, racial discrimination and apartheid. It was for that reason that her country supported those measures in the World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year and the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women dealing with the situation of women under apartheid. Her delegation was aware that some Member States disapproved of action taken in the context of the Decade to promote that wider concept of equality. Such action seemed nevertheless to be justified when, for instance, it had been estimated that more than

(Miss Olowo, Uganda)

6.5 million women would, as a result of the recent constitutional changes, be condemned to live in the poverty of the bantustans.

41. Another goal that had not been achieved in the course of the Decade was that of development. The vast majority of women in the developing countries continued to live in acute poverty. While it was true that women played a vital role in economic production, their participation in the preparation of national economic plans remained marginal. The economic situation of women could not be divorced from the general level of economic development and their situation could not be improved as long as an inequitable international economic system persisted. It was therefore the view of her delegation that forward-looking strategies should address the question of development in its totality and encourage the active participation of women in the new international economic order.

42. Peace, the final goal of the Decade, had also eluded attainment since the period in question had seen an unrestrained arms race and a proliferation of armed conflicts. It was for that reason that her delegation supported the Declaration on the Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Co-operation (General Assembly resolution 37/63).

43. Her delegation had always supported the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women and favoured the continuation of its activities beyond the Decade. With regard to the future administrative location of the Fund, her delegation was of the view that not only must the links between the Fund and the other organizations of the United Nations system be preserved but that the Fund should remain accessible to recipient countries.

44. The World Conference at Nairobi would have a difficult task and it was hoped that the measures adopted by it would be implemented in full.

45. Mrs. PATHAMAVONG (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that, in the prevailing climate of economic crisis, conflict and political tension, women, who represented more than one half of humanity, must unite in order to thwart colonial exploitation, foreign domination, racism, racial discrimination and the aggressive policy of imperialism and international reaction, and avert thereby the danger of war.

46. Her delegation welcomed the decision of the General Assembly in its resolution 35/136 to convene in 1985 a World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women since it demonstrated the interest of the international community in the status of women and because the Conference would make it possible to determine whether the three goals of the Decade had been accomplished.

47. Her country's policy with respect to women had underlain their mass participation in the national liberation struggle and subsequently in the task of the reconstruction, defence and advancement of the socio-economic development of the country. The equality of men and women had been officially assured since 1975

(Mrs. Pathammavong, Lao People's
Democratic Republic)

and had been reaffirmed in the resolutions of the Third Congress of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party held in April 1982. Since that time, Lao women had effectively enjoyed their political, social, economic and cultural rights. Guided by the slogan "women with three qualities" (to be a good citizen, a good wife and a good mother) and "with two tasks" (to defend and build the homeland), Lao women were strengthening their role as full members of society.

48. Several obstacles common to the developing countries, and even to a number of developed countries, remained to be overcome in achieving the goals of the Decade because of social traditions which made women subject to exploitation. It was up to Governments to increase, through education, awareness of the role of women as full members of society and as partners and equals of men in the development process.

49. Mr. HAWKES (Canada) drew attention to the question of senior women's programme officer posts at the regional commissions, dealt with in an addendum to the report of the Secretary-General on the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women (A/39/569/Add.1). The Secretary-General had, in that document, stated his intention, in the light of the discussions on the subject at the thirty-ninth session of the General Assembly, to explore the means by which the staffing situation for women's programme activities in the regional commissions could be regularized (A/39/569/Add.1, para. 13). Since Member States had frequently expressed the view that women must be integrated into the development process on equal terms with men, and since the General Assembly had expressly assigned to the regional commissions the responsibility of designing and implementing comprehensive policies and practical measures to ensure the full and equal participation of women in all sectors of activity and at all levels of development, including economic development, Canada found it difficult to understand why the five regional commissions were unable to effect a permanent redeployment of regular budget resources to maintain those very important senior women's programme officer posts. Temporary arrangements suggested that the posts might be considered peripheral, and that idea caused his delegation some concern. His delegation therefore requested the Secretary-General to provide clarification, in the form of an oral report, of the meaning of the words: "it has not proven feasible to [continue the posts in question at the regional commissions] solely through permanent redeployment of regular budget resources without running the risk of jeopardizing the overall programme of work" (A/39/569/Add.1, para. 13). The Committee could then perhaps help the Secretariat to find solutions to the obvious problems.

50. Mrs. CHIWELE (Zambia) said she was satisfied with the way in which preparations for the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women were being made. Her delegation was particularly gratified that among the categories of women identified as requiring attention were women under apartheid, rural women and refugee and displaced women.

51. The theme of the Decade, Equality, Development and Peace, and its subtheme, Employment, Health and Education, were interdependent. Above all, peace was a

(Mrs. Chiwele, Zambia)

prerequisite for any meaningful development. The international community should spare no effort to resolve the conflicts that continued to threaten international peace and security. The eradication of oppressive systems such as apartheid would do much to promote the establishment of a climate conducive to the attainment of the goals of the Decade.

52. Participation of women in national development had been the policy of the Zambian Government since independence. The Women's League of the ruling party, and the Women's Affairs Sub-Committee of the Central Committee of the party, represented the women of Zambia at the highest policy-making level and those two bodies were headed by two members of the Central Committee who were both women. To organize implementation of the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, the Women's League had established three Committees: the Equality Committee, the Development Committee and the Peace Committee. With regard to the sub-theme of the Decade, she said that women in Zambia, in particular young women, had benefited from the free education system. All women could attend Adult Education Programmes conducted by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Women also benefited from the free medical care provided by the Government. As for employment, women enjoyed equal pay for equal work.

53. Improvement of the situation of rural women was a priority area for the Women's League. It had undertaken a pilot project in community action for disadvantaged rural women in the small-scale farming sector, which enjoyed the full support of the Government. The idea was to turn existing women's clubs into co-operatives and to change traditional women's activities, such as sewing, to agricultural activities such as growing vegetables, raising poultry and rearing pigs. The intention was also to educate women and to make them understand that participation in group projects was more beneficial to them than individual effort. The Government also supported independent co-operatives formed by women on their own. An example of such support was the formation of a multi-purpose women's co-operative in one of the rural districts. Although it might be too early to make a conclusive assessment of those projects, there were indications that, with appropriate support, it was possible for women to run co-operatives when they had been trained in simple management and bookkeeping. The role of outsiders should remain advisory, which helped women to identify more closely with the project in which they participated and to have confidence in their own judgement.

54. Sister RICHARDSON (Observer for the Holy See) extended the sympathy of the Mission of the Holy See to the Indian delegation and to the Government and people of India on the great loss they had sustained with the death of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India.

55. The World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women, in addition to producing a review, intended to formulate forward-looking implementation strategies for the advancement of women up to the year 2000. The debates of the Committee therefore made a useful contribution to the preparations for the Conference by clarifying existing viewpoints on action to be taken.

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56. The equal dignity of men and women was part of the teachings of the Catholic Church and the position of the Holy See. That equality was manifested not in uniformity but in complementarity. Fostering the recognition of equality in and through complementarity was an important task for the current generation. Failure to reach that ideal was, in many parts of the world, the reason why women were the first victims of inadequate health care and education. Established customs and cultural practices often marginalized women and prevented them from making their full contributions to social, economic and political life.

57. In that context, the Holy See called the attention of the international community to the serious consequences for so many women resulting from the spread of permissiveness and the weakening of the institution of the family, which characterized current society. Prostitution and abortion had increased with the worsening economic situation and moral crisis. Other groups of women suffered particularly from the excesses of contemporary society, both in the developed and the developing countries. Domestic servants, women refugees and migrants, elderly women, women prisoners, and also young women, often passed through an identity crisis because of the current changes in women's roles. The "preferential option for the poor" affirmed at the Puebla Conference of Latin American Bishops carried particular significance for those women who currently lived in both oppressive and marginal conditions. The Catholic Church and the delegation of the Holy See were deeply concerned with defending the dignity of women, and she reminded the international community of certain essential values. The first was human freedom, thanks to which all human beings - both women and men - made progress and realized their fulfilment within a specific culture. The equal dignity and responsibility of men and women fully justified women's access to public functions, so that they might, in the world of work, contribute to the renewal of society. However, the Church also recalled that society should not force women to take up professional activities when they wished to devote themselves to their family.

58. The second essential value was family life. The family had been influenced by the many profound and rapid changes that had affected modern society, but it was reassuring to note the current greater awareness of the need to reinforce the family socially, morally and juridically. It was well known that the survival and development of young children was linked to the level of education of their mothers and it was therefore important to ensure that women, especially future mothers, received an adequate education which would give them a better understanding of their role in the nutrition and education of their children. Such educational programmes should also be aimed at improving the health of the women themselves, especially in developing countries. In the past, when the family had been seen as more important, the Catholic Church had devoted much of its resources at grassroots level to family education and the education of women, making particular use of marriage preparation programmes.

59. The third value was women's participation in work outside the home. The family was a community made possible in part by work, and since the family was also the first school where certain qualities and skills essential to work were learned,

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the Catholic Church held that it was essential and certainly possible to create new models of society and the significance of work, making new means of participation for women in the work force possible. At the practical level that meant the adoption of new attitudes and conceptions of work. For the Catholic Church the work of men and women concerned not only the economy, but also and especially, personal values. The working woman wanted not only due remuneration but also the assurance that she was working for her own interests. That was not true for millions of women, forced to accept any work available because the law did not protect them effectively, and organizations did not succeed in having their rights respected. A plurality of new arrangements however, currently being put to the test, such as co-operation, volunteerism, part-time work at home and outside the home, flexible working hours and social and economic recognition of domestic work, implied changes in the image and experience of work and hence of society itself. Such wider participation in the work force presupposed more thorough social training and education by which women became more aware of their own gifts and potentialities.

60. The delegation of the Holy See viewed the Nairobi Conference as an opportunity to promote effective equality between men and women, because there were many signs of hope, for example the efforts women were making to protect their maternity and their young children, the increasing participation in shaping society; the formation of neighbourhood communities, spiritual groupings of couples and families, and the resurgence of women's organizations working for the advancement of women.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.