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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 31st MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MADAR (Somalia)

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

AGENDA ITEM 92: INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING INSTITUTE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/39/511, 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. Ms. TILAYE (Ethiopia) said that the United Nations Decade for Women had brought into focus the magnitude of the oppression of women in all societies and had made all aware of what needed to be done before their emancipation was achieved throughout the world. In addition, the activities undertaken thus far had underscored the need to institutionalize local, national and international norms regarding the treatment of women and the defence of their rights. It was for that reason that the establishment of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and the creation of the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women should contribute much to the advancement of women throughout the world. In addition, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which had been duly ratified by Ethiopia, would permit each country to measure the progress accomplished in improving the status of women.

2. Ethiopia attached great importance to the 1985 World Conference to be held at Nairobi. The choice of an African capital as the venue for that Conference was significant, not only because African women, like their male counterparts, had long suffered under the yoke of colonialism and racism, but also because they were still subjected to outmoded cultural and traditional values, to which was added the burden of crushing family responsibilities. In that connection, the situation in which the women of southern Africa found themselves was aggravated further by the institutionalization of racism and apartheid. The World Conference should therefore pay particular attention to the situation of women in Namibia and South Africa.

(Ms. Tilaye, Ethiopia)

3. Her delegation was gratified to note what had been achieved on behalf of women during the Decade. Because the momentum gained should be maintained, she invited all Member States that had not yet done so to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Both as a signatory to the Convention and as a country deeply committed to the legitimate struggle for the liberation of women, Ethiopia attached paramount importance to the Decade, the proclamation of which had coincided in that country with the start of the revolution.

4. Since that date, the question of the rights of women and their liberation from the vestiges of feudal oppression in all its forms had been at the heart of the preoccupations of the Ethiopian Government, deeply committed to the creation of an egalitarian society. For her delegation, the emancipation of women was simply an aspect of justice and democracy. The status of women in Ethiopia left much to be desired, and since it was a difficult and protracted task to eliminate the old system, the Government was making sustained efforts to establish nation-wide popular organs such as the Revolutionary Ethiopian Women's Association.

5. Today, while discrimination and oppression had not completely disappeared in Ethiopia, at least their legal and extra-legal foundations had been eliminated. Ethiopian women now participated in the administration of the country at the local, provincial and regional levels, taking part in the deliberations of the highest political bodies of the country, contributing actively to its development and even occupying some command posts in the defence of the motherland. Ethiopia's commitment to the just cause of women was renewed every year on the occasion of International Women's Day, which was celebrated on 8 March throughout the country and which provided an opportunity to take stock of the measures adopted at the national level to improve the lot of Ethiopian women.

6. Ms. CLARK (New Zealand) said that during the United Nations Decade for Women considerable gains had been made at both national and international levels. At the international level, the three major achievements of the Decade were the coming into force of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which New Zealand had signed and intended to ratify after consultations with interested women's groups, the establishment of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, which had undertaken a wide range of valuable activities in key areas of development, in particular the preparation of indicators and statistics on the situation of women, and, finally, the establishment of the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women.

7. At the national level, as the New Zealand Government had indicated in its response to the questionnaire from the Secretary-General on the progress made and the difficulties encountered during the Decade, the situation of women in New Zealand, while not ideal, was evolving very rapidly and some recent developments were particularly encouraging. The new Government, recently elected, included 10 women; a portfolio of women's affairs had been created and a corresponding ministry would be established which would be entrusted with monitoring legislation and policies, ensuring liaison with women's groups, promoting research, education and publications and financing women's projects. In other words, New Zealand had the political will to achieve further progress and had made that commitment.

(Ms. Clark, New Zealand)

8. With respect to the future, her delegation believed that, in order to ensure the success of long-term strategies, no effort should be spared, at Nairobi, to ensure that the decisions of the World Conference were adopted by consensus. In addition, her delegation would work to ensure that the Conference concentrated on the search for practical solutions to the problems encountered by women throughout the world, particularly the poorest among them, in their daily lives. It was the poor women, living in urban areas in the developed countries and women living in rural areas in the developing countries that had been the least affected by the United Nations Decade for Women, and any further strategy adopted should rectify that state of affairs. At the ESCAP regional preparatory meeting, which had been held in Japan in 1984 and in which New Zealand had participated, it had been recommended that major emphasis should be placed, at the Conference, on rural development. In New Zealand, women attached the most importance to the theme of equality and the sub-theme of employment, and her delegation believed that no particular theme should be predominant, since all were closely interrelated.

9. Her delegation hoped that non-governmental organizations would actively participate in the Nairobi Conference: in New Zealand, as in many other countries, they played a vital role in all programmes for the advancement of women and in raising the consciousness of both the general public and governmental organizations.

10. New Zealand regarded the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women as one of the outstanding successes of the Decade. The twin objectives of providing direct and immediate benefits to women and of expediting the achievement of overall development goals, had been very effectively met by the Fund. The multiplier effect of many projects undertaken by the Fund attested to the power of relatively modest programmes to lead to far-reaching and sometimes fundamental changes. New Zealand was of the view that the best option to enable the Fund to continue its valuable work would be to have an autonomous association with the United Nations Development Programme, and that seemed to be the majority view. It therefore remained for the Committee to organize the necessary detailed administrative arrangements. It was important to safeguard the Fund's autonomy in project planning and the setting of priorities, and to permit non-governmental organizations to play their appointed role in initiating and implementing projects.

11. Ms. GAUCH (Brazil) also noted that the United Nations Decade for Women had led to more understanding of women's rights, duties and specific needs, and more equal opportunities for women, especially in the fields of education, health, employment, political participation and representation at the decision-making levels. There still were, however, some obstacles to their complete integration into society. The 1985 World Conference would provide the opportunity to identify the problems still lacking solutions, to formulate forward-looking strategies and concrete measures to ensure that women in their multiple roles, could take their rightful places in society on an equal basis with men. In that exercise, the international community would be called upon to bear in mind the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade as well as the establishment of a new international economic order.

(Ms. Gauch, Brazil)

12. With regard to the organization of the Conference, her delegation had supported the adoption of the provisional agenda of the Conference and the draft decisions submitted to the Economic and Social Council by the Commission on the Status of Women, acting as the preparatory body for the Conference, which had done excellent work, in particular on the basic documentation to be submitted to the Conference, and on its organizational aspects. As to the adoption of the rules of procedure for the Conference, she wished to stress that, should the General Assembly not adopt the standard rules of procedure for United Nations conferences during its current session, her delegation would propose a review of the draft provisional rules which the preparatory body had had before it at its second session. Brazil could not accept the inadequate number of seats in the General Committee provided for the Latin American Group of States and was of the opinion that it would be fairer to observe the geographical distribution of seats which had prevailed in the Mexico City and Copenhagen Conferences.

13. Her delegation considered the activities of the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women to have been extremely successful. As to the continuation of its activities, her delegation did not object to the integration of the Fund, as an autonomous unit, with the United Nations Development Programme. However, in order to retain its unique character, the Fund should ensure that all the projects it supported were closely related to its mandate, and should refrain from incursions into areas already covered by other funding bodies such as UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA. That should not prevent the Fund from co-operating with agencies of a similar nature; it should also be able to maintain contact with the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

14. Her delegation, like others, considered that the work done by the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women had made a laudable contribution to the achievement of the objectives of the Decade and hoped that the Institute, once it possessed a statute endorsed by the General Assembly, would be able to continue its very valuable work of enhancing the status of women.

15. Turning to item 94, she said that the reports of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on its second and third sessions gave a useful picture of the implementation by the States parties of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Brazil was one of the eight countries which since October 1983 had ratified or acceded to the Convention, and in 1985 would submit its first report to the Committee in accordance with article 18 of the Convention.

16. Within its overall national policy of promoting the well-being of its entire population, Brazil had undertaken significant programmes to redress past discriminatory practices against women. At the international and regional levels, her country had favoured the adoption of important documents promoting activities, programmes and plans of action aimed at ensuring equality between men and women in society. Brazil strongly regretted that those efforts were often jeopardized by world economic constraints. It was essential that efforts to integrate women fully into society, particularly into the development process, should be in keeping with the establishment of a new international economic order.

/...

17. Mrs. UMAÑA (Colombia) expressed her country's gratitude to the Kenyan Government for its offer to host the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women. The Decade had raised the international community's awareness of the important contribution of women to development. In Colombia the role of women in that regard was increasingly recognized, and national opinion had understood that by improving the status of women in all areas - education, health, employment - the situation of the married couple improved and the development of the whole country benefited.

18. Her delegation found the work of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women very useful and felt that its means of action should be augmented. The Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women had lent support to many projects in Colombia, particularly those which encouraged women to enter the production sector, and had made it possible to establish a revolving fund aimed at helping women with low incomes to run small businesses. As indicated in document A/39/146, Colombia therefore favoured the Fund's continuing its activities beyond the end of the Decade as an independent entity associated with UNDP.

19. Her delegation thought it essential that the Nairobi Conference should stress the fact that the integration of women into development was not only a matter of social justice; from an economic standpoint, henceforward it would be essential in the modern world.

20. Mrs. MOOKODI (Botswana) said that her Government had made it a priority to promote the involvement of all groups, regardless of sex, religion, tribe or socio-economic status, in the country's development. Nevertheless, since independence the involvement of women in decision-making had been minimal because although they were more than 50 per cent of the population, their roles were basically prescribed by culture and tradition. Still, there had been a great change in the status of women in Botswana since the mid-Decade Conference held in Copenhagen in 1980. In 1981, for the first time, an official body, the Women's Affairs Unit, had been established, with a mandate to co-ordinate women's activities at the local, national and international levels; to disseminate information about the status of women throughout the country; to conduct research on the overall situation of women in Botswana; and to make liaison with different Government departments on issues relating to women. To effect that liaison, the Women's Affairs Unit had established a Women's Development Planning and Advisory Committee (WODPLAC), whose membership was drawn from various ministries and voluntary women's organizations. It was the Women's Affairs Unit which, in conjunction with WODPLAC and the women's organizations, had studied the Programme of Action for the second half of the United Nations Decade for Women and had established Botswana's official position regarding the different themes and sub-themes of the Decade.

21. On the theme of equality, the Women's Affairs Unit had worked to change legislation still in force which prevented women from having control over their property and from being economically independent. Now women could negotiate loans and contracts without the consent of their husbands and male guardians. The Unit was also active in educating women about their rights, and had recently prepared a

(Mrs. Mookodi, Botswana)

handbook for that purpose. As for the theme of development, Botswana was in a special situation because with many men emigrating to South Africa to work in the cities and the mines, the woman remaining behind was often the head of the family. It was therefore essential that women should be fully integrated into the development of the country. A conference had been organized for that purpose in October 1983 by the Women's Affairs Unit in conjunction with WODPLAC. For the first time since independence, the sixth national development plan would have a section on programmes and plans to facilitate the full integration of women in development.

22. On the theme of peace, it was obvious that in Botswana, which was one of the front-line States of southern Africa, women participated in all efforts to promote peace in the region and that women's organizations made every effort to assist the victims of conflicts and political systems that encroached upon human rights, inter alia, by housing refugees from South Africa. At the international level, women from Botswana joined with all the other women of the world in appealing for an end to the nuclear arms race and for the reallocation of the energy and resources thus released to the struggle against hunger and poverty.

23. Turning to the sub-themes of the Decade - employment, health and education - she said that women still held the lowest-paid jobs in Botswana. They worked mainly in agriculture and in the informal sector, both of which were underdeveloped and not reliable sources of income. The Women's Affairs Unit was actively seeking to remedy the situation. In the field of education, while there was a predominance of girls in the primary and lower secondary school levels, that was not the case at the upper secondary and university levels. The Women's Affairs Unit was currently studying the reasons for the high drop-out rate. It was in the non-formal education programmes, currently attended mainly by women, that literacy seemed to be making the most marked progress. In the field of health, women in Botswana were more than 90 per cent of the labour force, and that greatly facilitated the community's access to care and prevention services.

24. The World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women to be held in Nairobi in 1985 would certainly be extremely beneficial to women throughout the world, but the programmes of action adopted at all the United Nations conferences for women should be continued well after the end of the Decade. In particular, the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women should be continued well after that date. The Fund should be administered as a trust fund in association with UNDP because that would provide a basis for developing the catalytic role of the Fund in promoting wider recognition of the important contribution of women to development in technical assistance by the United Nations system (A/39/571, para. 29).

25. Mr. FREYBERG (Poland) said he wished to express his delegation's views on agenda items 93 and 94. First of all, with respect to the preparations for the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women, he said he was pleased to learn that the documentation for the Conference was in its final stages of preparation. He would also appreciate it if the Secretariat could make the documentation available to the national preparatory committees as soon as it was ready.

(Mr. Freyberg, Poland)

26. Poland expected that at the world conference equal treatment would be given to its three themes - equality, development and peace - because they were interdependent. For his country and for Polish women in particular, the question of maintaining international peace was of primary importance given the current international situation. As many delegations had rightly pointed out, peace was an important pre-condition for achieving all the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women, in that there was a direct interrelationship between the acceleration of the arms race, which was a threat to peace, and the decrease in development opportunities. The States represented at the Nairobi Conference should therefore thoroughly discuss how women could contribute to the promotion of peace and international co-operation.

27. The participants at the Nairobi Conference would also have to evaluate the United Nations Decade for Women. Poland considered that the main achievements of the Decade had consisted in raising the awareness of the world community and individual nations of the potential of women and their role in society. The Decade had also helped to show that women were still often in an inferior and inequitable position with respect to men and had enabled States to start to rectify the situation. However, achieving full equality between women and men would be a long-lasting process. In many countries traditions and socio-cultural biases still constituted serious barriers to the emancipation of women, who were still subjugated to men, especially economically.

28. The Decade had none the less produced many tangible achievements, including the adoption by the General Assembly, in resolution 34/180 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to which Poland had become a party in July 1980. The status of ratification of the Convention was still far from satisfactory, and the Member States which had not yet done so should be strongly urged to accede to it.

29. Another accomplishment of the Decade was the adoption of the Declaration on the Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Co-operation. His delegation regretted, however, that the decision adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 38/105, in which it had requested that consideration be given to what measures might be necessary in order to implement the Declaration, had been disregarded. It seemed that the approach adopted for the preparations of the Nairobi Conference tended to concentrate the work mainly on the first two themes of the Decade, equality and development, neglecting the theme of peace. His delegation hoped that the Nairobi Conference would elaborate concrete measures for the implementation of the Declaration.

30. At the national level, the Decade had brought about the establishment of national machinery entrusted with women's issues, the increased participation of women in decision-making and, within Governments and other decision-making bodies, and a heightened awareness of the problems facing women. However, there was still much to be done, and the Economic and Social Council had been correct in acknowledging in a resolution that the objectives of the Decade had not yet been achieved. Women were still vulnerable, within society, often suffering from



(Mr. Freyberg, Poland)

various forms of discrimination which prevented them from fully enjoying their rights. Under the circumstances, the participants at the Nairobi World Conference should not be content with taking stock but should also provide guidelines for the future. The strategies to be adopted should not fail to establish specifically what activities and what programmes would further promote the advancement of women at the national, regional and international levels. To that end, the participants at the Nairobi Conference should not overlook the situation of women and children living under the apartheid régime in southern Africa, the situation of Palestinian women and that of migrant women in certain Western countries who were often the subject of double discrimination, as women and as migrants. The Conference should also take up the issue of the situation of disabled women.

31. In any event, the participants at the Nairobi Conference should have an opportunity to discuss all the issues included in its agenda, regardless of their complexity and even if they lent themselves to controversy. Preventing discussion of political issues, under the pretext that the work of the Conference would be politicized, would contradict the very principle of equality, and would hence be unacceptable. His delegation was convinced that women had the right to discuss political questions, because women's issues were to a great extent political and were linked to the main problems of the contemporary world. Since, moreover, the results of the Nairobi World Conference would to a large extent depend on the quality of the main documents being prepared for the Conference, at all stages of those preparations the secretariat of the Conference should be guided by the decisions of the Preparatory Committee which, at its first two sessions, had stressed the need for balanced treatment of the three main goals of the Decade, namely, equality, development and peace.

32. Poland had consistently supported the activities undertaken within the United Nations system aimed at achieving the promotion of women, and in its internal policy it strictly adhered to the principle of full equality between men and women, a principle guaranteed by the Constitution of the Polish People's Republic. However, while it was true that women were given the opportunity to participate more in the political, social and cultural life of Poland, much remained to be done, because tradition still imposed on women, even those with higher education, a disproportionate share of the burdens of home and family. Programmes for the advancement of women in Poland had therefore in recent years been aimed basically at alleviating household tasks and the duties of mothers, through the creation of crèches, kindergartens and health centres, or through reform of family and child-rearing allowances and maternity leave. The Polish Government was also constantly concerned with facilitating the living conditions and professional careers of young women.

33. Mrs. PANKOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that International Women's Year and the United Nations Decade for Women had indeed contributed to mobilizing efforts aimed at guaranteeing equality of rights for women and associating them more closely with the development of their countries, and that undeniable progress had been made in that field, at both the national and international levels.

(Mrs. Pankova, Byelorussian SSR)

34. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which the United Nations had adopted on the initiative of the USSR, was an international instrument of great importance, as the majority of delegations had pointed out at the current session, and constituted one of the outstanding achievements of the Decade.

35. It was now recognized that the emancipation of women was an irreversible process, even though attempts were still being made in some circles to arrest it. It was deplorable in that regard that a large number of countries, among them various developed Western countries, had still not yet ratified the Convention, or even acceded to it.

36. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had an important role to play in implementing the provisions of the Convention. It had demonstrated at its previous sessions that it could serve inter alia as a framework for a useful exchange of views and experience with respect to equality of rights between men and women. It was to be hoped, however, that, in its work, the Committee would respect the principle of consensus, not go beyond its mandate, and abide by the provisions of the Convention.

37. Her delegation supported the idea that the Secretariat should prepare a report on the achievements and obstacles experienced with respect to accession to the Convention and the implementation of its provisions, which would be submitted, for consideration, to the Nairobi World Conference as an official document. It was regrettable that the Secretariat had not carried out the tasks entrusted to it by the General Assembly, in its resolution 38/105, with respect to the preparation of a document on the measures necessary for the implementation of the Declaration on the Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Co-operation. In view of the topicality and importance of that resolution, it was to be hoped that the report in question would be submitted to the Assembly at its next session.

38. It was essential that the documentation to be prepared for the Nairobi World Conference should contain a detailed analysis of why certain objectives of the Decade had not been achieved, and should set forth clearly the close relationship which existed between improving the status of women, on the one hand, and solving socio-economic problems and questions concerning the strengthening of international peace and security, on the other. Her delegation hoped that reports would be prepared on the situation of women and children living in the occupied territories and on that of women living under the apartheid régime and in conditions of racial discrimination. It believed that the objectives of the Decade would be achieved only if the struggle against colonialism and apartheid continued, if effective measures were adopted to restructure international economic relations on a just and democratic basis and if the promotion of international peace and co-operation in conditions of equality was pursued.

39. In the Byelorussian SSR, the principle of equality of rights of women was fully guaranteed, primarily in article 33 of the Constitution, and the improvement of their status was an integral part of the Republic's policy. One of the main

(Mrs. Pankova, Byelorussian SSR)

successes in building a socialist society lay in guaranteeing the right to work, a prerequisite for equality between men and women. Indeed, the latter had equal opportunities in the fields of education and vocational training, wages and promotion, among others. Their rights were also guaranteed by special measures in the fields of job protection and motherhood.

40. In the Byelorussian SSR, more than 94 per cent of the women who were able to work were either in employment or studying. More than half of them worked in the sectors of industry, agriculture and transport, and they constituted a large majority of the work force in the public health, education, culture, science, and service sectors. They were particularly well represented in educational institutions at the secondary and higher levels, where they accounted for 62 per cent and 58 per cent of the staff respectively. As the following figures showed, women also participated actively in public life: 37 per cent of the deputies in the Supreme Soviet of the Byelorussian SSR were women and, at the level of the local Soviets, the figure was as high as 50 per cent. They were also very well represented in trade union organizations and mass political organizations.

41. In accordance with the principles governing the socialist society and the recommendations of the World Conference held at Mexico City, the Government of the Byelorussian SSR had prepared a plan to improve the working and living conditions of women. Various integrated programmes had also been initiated during the Decade, particularly in the area of labour protection and safety.

42. Byelorussian women, like women everywhere, aspired to peace; that was why they were deeply concerned by the fact that the imperialists' acts of aggression had considerably heightened the danger of a nuclear war; they were actively participating in efforts to strengthen international peace, security and co-operation. Their commitment was fully consistent with the Declaration on the Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Co-operation, adopted by the General Assembly on the initiative of the German Democratic Republic. A growing number of women throughout the world were becoming aware of the close link between the socio-economic development of countries, on the one hand, and the peaceful development of humanity and strengthening of peace, on the other.

43. In the view of his delegation, the Commission on the Status of Women, which acted as the preparatory committee for the Nairobi World Conference, should take due account of the prospects offered by the Conference and of its mandate. The Conference could serve as the vehicle for the exchange, on a vast scale, of experience-based data, comprehensively review and appraise in detail the achievements of the Decade, study the negative aspects of the status of women in certain countries and regions and devise a strategy to improve the situation of women. The Conference must also take action to deal with those States which still discriminated against women. Her country would continue to make strenuous efforts to promote the principle of equal rights for men and women wherever that principle was not yet applied.

44. Mr. CHIKETA (Zimbabwe) said that the women of Zimbabwe had participated in the armed struggle for national liberation without stinting their sacrifices or their suffering. It was therefore logical that, after independence had been won, the women's struggle for national liberation should extend to the struggle against discrimination based on sex, which was still perpetuated in law, tradition and practice. Zimbabwe had therefore subscribed, without reservation, to the three objectives of the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace.

45. More than any other country, Zimbabwe, just emerging from a bloody war, was particularly aware of the close relationship that subordinated development to disarmament. For a better understanding of how research and development and the production capability currently used for arms production could be used for peaceful purposes, it would be useful for States to report on their military budgets, using the reporting machinery established by the General Assembly, so as to give an idea of the funds that would be released for development as a result of disarmament.

46. In Zimbabwe, where peace - a prerequisite for development - had at last made it possible to envisage the initiation of projects aimed at the advancement of women, the Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs had, in order to generate the necessary resources, created a community development fund to which various women's groups could apply for loans to fund, for example, co-operatives or individual ventures, which would enable women progressively to surmount their initial economic disadvantage. Women were also increasingly forming savings clubs. Furthermore, in the agricultural sector, in which women were in the majority, there had been such an increase in the current year's production that the Government had been happily surprised to find that it did not need to import so much food. Women were also experimenting with drought-resistant crops such as sorghum. The International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women could, within the areas of its competence, be even more helpful, particularly in introducing technology to women as well as training them in the use and maintenance of that technology and in accounting.

47. The Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs had a legal department which was working towards the repealing of laws and the suppression of customs and practices that perpetuated discrimination against women, particularly in the area of employment. The fact remained, however, that the key to the advancement of women was education, both formal and non-formal, and economic development. Zimbabwe was perfectly aware that literacy campaigns, however vital they might be, were not enough since they did not address themselves to certain traditional and anachronistic attitudes of the community which prevented women from having enough confidence in themselves. There was clearly need, therefore, for a national education, or even politicization, which would enable the population to be mobilized for the struggle for the freedom and equality of the sexes. Zimbabwe, which was aware that its achievements in that area were still too modest, hoped that the World Conference at Nairobi would come up with forward-looking programmes and plans.

(Mr. Chiketa, Zimbabwe)

48. That was why Zimbabwe had carefully examined the views of Members States on the continuation of the activities of the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women (A/39/146). Zimbabwe supported the view that the Fund should continue its activities beyond the end of the Decade. Moreover, it hoped that the Fund would not be transferred to Vienna, since Zimbabwe, like many other Governments, did not have a diplomatic mission there and communication between the Fund and the Governments in question would be rendered difficult. Lastly, association between the Fund and UNDP would be the best formula, provided that the Fund's independence and identity were maintained.

49. His delegation was satisfied with the co-operation existing between the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and the Economic Commission for Africa. It hoped that the Institute would look more urgently into the problem of water, since in Africa drought had become a natural disaster. To avoid desertification, other cheaper sources of energy or more energy-conserving stoves were necessary. He appealed to donor countries to take greater interest in the fate of the women of Lesotho, who were victims not only of the drought but also of the frequent economic blockades imposed on Lesotho by the apartheid régime of South Africa.

50. Finally, he commented on the report of the Commission on the Status of Women Acting as the Preparatory Body for the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women, to be held at Nairobi (A/CONF.116/PC/19). With regard to draft decision I on basic documentation to be submitted to the World Conference, he agreed in particular with the idea that the documentation should focus particular attention on the topics mentioned in paragraph 2 (h). Regarding draft decision III, which also dealt with that basic documentation and, more particularly, with rural women, he suggested the addition of a subparagraph (g) to paragraph 1, so that the Conference could study the issue of improving rural communications - rail and road as well as post and telephone communications - for the purpose of transporting agricultural produce to markets and building storage facilities nearer the rural centres of food production. With regard to the part of the report containing a summary of the discussion, he noted in particular paragraph 19 because it emphasized the need for women to be involved in the establishment of a new international economic order, and paragraph 20, which stressed the interdependence between disarmament and development. With regard to paragraph 28, in which the status of female staff members in the United Nations was mentioned, he feared that, as long as men alone were responsible for recruitment to the United Nations system, women would continue to be victims of discrimination.

51. He hoped that, when considering the measures to be adopted for the next 15 years, the participants at the Nairobi Conference would pay special attention to the complex and multiple problems facing women in Africa, women under South Africa's apartheid system and women refugees and/or women living in occupied lands or under foreign domination.

52. Mrs. TON-NU-THI NINH (Viet Nam) said that, in 1982, Viet Nam had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and that it had already submitted its initial report. Since its creation, the Socialist

(Mrs. Ton-Nu-Thi Ninh, Viet Nam)

Republic of Viet Nam had been concerned with taking specific measures to ensure equality between women and men, who had fought shoulder to shoulder during the war of liberation. Since 1981, the National Assembly had launched a codification drive with a view to adopting, in 1985, a new labour code which would include: a special chapter on women workers; a new law on marriage and the family, which would take account of the results of a nation-wide survey; and a draft penal code providing for sanctions in cases of violation of women's and children's rights.

53. In order to ensure the equality of the sexes and to implement the Convention, to the fullest extent, Viet Nam had adopted a policy of "positive discrimination" with regard to women. The participation of women in public life had continued to increase in all fields. Statistics confirmed the breakthrough of women on the political scene. In the sphere of education, illiteracy had been completely eradicated, and there was equal enrolment of girls and boys in primary schools and junior secondary schools. Women accounted for nearly half the work force, and had steadily risen to positions of leadership. A network of day-care centres and kindergartens had been set up, the majority located in the countryside, in order to enable mothers of infants to work. A social security system looked after women workers' rights, especially with regard to health and maternity. A national research project was currently being carried out to study the relationship between women's emancipation and the elaboration of Viet Nam's long-term socio-economic development strategy. Since the family assumed vital importance in Vietnamese society, the law on marriage and the family considered labour in the home as productive labour and, in the case of divorce, the allotment of property would be based on the labour contributed by each side. Moreover, a family planning programme had recently been set up. In that connection, she hoped that the issue of population would receive appropriate consideration at the Nairobi Conference.

54. The Vietnamese delegation hoped that the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women would continue its activities beyond 1985, and was of the view that it should maintain its independent status while not forsaking its close working relationship with the specialized agencies of the United Nations.

55. With regard to the preparations for the Nairobi Conference, the Vietnamese delegation agreed with the agenda proposed for the Conference, and welcomed the special consideration which would be given to particular groups of women, including women in Namibia and South Africa, women in the occupied Arab territories as well as rural women. The situation of women in rural areas was of particular interest to Viet Nam, which looked forward to the results of the world survey on the role of women in development; the results of that survey could be used in the elaboration of women-related development strategies. Her delegation nevertheless regretted that the issue of peace, on which all progress relating to the status of women depended, had not been duly stressed. In that regard, she regretted that the Commission on the Status of Women had not taken, as had been requested in General Assembly resolution 38/105, measures in order to implement the Declaration on the Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Co-operation, issues which should remain at the heart of the debates at the Nairobi Conference.

56. Mrs. FRANCO (Portugal) said that her delegation supported the programme of work of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, and that it attributed particular importance to the activities of the Institute in the field of indicators and statistics on the status of women, which would be very useful in the formulation of development policies. The Portuguese delegation expressed its satisfaction that the Economic and Social Council had approved the statute of the Institute and hoped that the General Assembly would do the same.
57. With regard to the preparations for the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women, her delegation was pleased with the progress of the preparatory work and emphasized that it should be centred on the global aspects of the question of the advancement of women and on the interdependence of the themes and subthemes of the Decade. Concrete measures must also be taken in order to overcome the obstacles encountered in the implementation of the Programme of the Decade. Moreover, forward-looking strategies to be carried out at the national, regional and international levels should be established. To the extent that the themes of the Decade and the subthemes of the Copenhagen Conference had not been fully implemented, they should constitute the main framework for the Nairobi Conference's deliberations.
58. With regard to the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women, her delegation believed that it should continue its activities beyond 1985, and was in favour of its integration in UNDP in an appropriate way.
59. She reaffirmed her country's commitment to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which enshrined the principle of equality between man and woman. The ultimate objective of all activities for the promotion of the status of women was doubtless equality. That concept must be fully clarified so that progress achieved or difficulties encountered during the Decade could be accurately evaluated.
60. Ms. WARD-OSBORNE (Guyana) was of the view that the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women should continue to play a catalytic role in the efforts made to implement the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women beyond the end of the Decade. The support provided by the Institute to national machinery for the integration of women into development was of critical importance to developing countries. It was essential to ensure proper training so that personnel would have the capacity not only to deal with planners and policy-makers at the national and international level, but also to give the necessary support to the national non-governmental women's organizations. The Statute of the Institute (A/39/511) would seem to make provision for that function.
61. Guyana was looking forward to participating in the 1985 Nairobi World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women, which should concentrate on the formulation of forward-looking strategies favouring greater participation of women in the development process. The study of the situation of millions of women still deprived of their basic fundamental rights should, however, not be ignored.



(Ms. Ward-Osborne, Guyana)

62. With regard to the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women, Guyana was of the opinion that the Fund should continue its activities beyond the Decade, in order to meet the development initiatives of women in developing countries. It should remain autonomous even if officially attached to the United Nations Development Programme. Guyana was opposed to a transfer of the Fund, which would deprive it of much of its effectiveness in helping the developing countries.

63. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which Guyana had signed and ratified, was one of the loftier achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women. Guyana therefore hoped that countries which had not yet responded to the questionnaire would do so as soon as possible. Her delegation also invited those countries which had not yet done so to sign and ratify the Convention.

64. Since its independence, Guyana had promoted the participation of women in the political, economic and social life of the country. In 1973, Parliament had established an Advisory Committee on Women, which formed part of the Council on the Affairs and Status of Women established in 1972 to advise the Minister of Labour on matters relating to the employment and welfare of women. During the United Nations Decade for Women, many projects, supported by the Government, had been implemented, in particular in agriculture, where women played a very important role. The Constitution of Guyana outlawed all sex discrimination and recognized the right to work and to education of all citizens. A committee had been established to make recommendations for amendments to the laws of Guyana so as to give effect to the constitutional provisions. The women of Guyana had always been active in political, trade-union and municipal activities and were increasingly represented in the higher levels of Government and private institutions, as a result of full recognition of their abilities.

65. Like other delegations, the delegation of Guyana was concerned over the distribution of seats in the regional commissions. It was relieved to learn that the post which had long been left vacant in the Caribbean Development Co-operation Committee of ECLAC would remain filled until the end of 1985; it was to be hoped that action would be taken before the end of the Decade to ensure that those posts would be maintained within the limits of available regular budget resources.

66. Mr. UY (Office of Financial Services) recalled that at the 26th meeting of the Third Committee, the delegation of Canada had asked the Secretariat to provide information on what the Secretary-General had meant when he said, in his report on senior women's programme officer posts at the regional commissions (A/39/569/Add.1), that "it has not proven feasible to do this [maintain senior women's programme officer posts at the regional commissions] through permanent redeployment of regular budget resources, without running the risk of jeopardizing the overall programme of work".

67. As could be seen from the Secretary-General's report, three of the regional commissions had made temporary arrangements in 1984 for continuing the women's programme officer posts for which resources from the regular budget could not be



(Mr. Uy)

permanently redeployed. However, the vacant posts which were available did not correspond to the stated senior officer (P-5) level formerly financed by the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women. Specifically, ESCAP had only one vacant regular budget post at the P-5 level, which was that of the Chief of the Technical Co-operation Division. Permanent redeployment of that post was not possible.

68. In the case of ECLAC, the P-3 post in the subregional Mexico office financed by the Voluntary Fund had been replaced by temporary redeployment of a local-level post and provision of some six weeks of professional work at the P-3 level, an arrangement which could not be expected to replace fully the work of one Professional. In addition, the P-3 post responsible for undertaking activities relating to industrial development in the Caribbean, had been temporarily redeployed within the subregional office of Port-of-Spain to the programme activities for women in development. That redeployment would result in a postponement of the output envisaged under programme element 5.8 in the programme entitled "International Trade and Development Finance in Latin America". Furthermore, the two work-months which had been envisaged from that post as one of the contributions to the output under programme element 5.1 would henceforth have to be provided by another post. It should be noted that the P-2/1 post financed by the Voluntary Fund in Santiago had not been replaced but that its functions had been absorbed within the resources available in Santiago.

69. Lastly, in the case of ECA, permanent redeployment of the D-2 post for the Deputy Executive Secretary to carry on the functions of the senior women's programme officer post was not feasible.

70. It was clear that the variety of programmes required to be carried out by the three regional commissions within their limited resources had not made it possible to achieve the permanent redeployment of posts for senior women's programme officers. Each regional commission had from 18 to 20 programmes, each of which required senior-level posts to provide the leadership and expertise in the particular area which over the years had received emphasis among the member States of the Commission.

71. If the General Assembly, while recognizing the importance of the programme activities relating to women, should wish not to limit the possibilities of redeployment to P-5 posts only, then the Secretariat would endeavour to effect the redeployment at a lower level either early in 1985, or in the context of the 1986-1987 programme budget proposals that were currently under preparation.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.