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Twenty-sixth Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 643rd MEETING

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Tuesday, 21 September 1976, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mrs. GONZALEZ de CUADROS (Colombia)

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THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR WOMEN: EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE, 1976-1985  
(agenda item 4) (continued):

- (a) EVALUATION OF ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN DURING THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR  
(E/CN.6/593; E/CN.6/NGO/261)
- (b) THE PROGRAMME FOR THE DECADE AND RELATED QUESTIONS INCLUDING TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION  
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- (c) REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF PROGRESS MADE UNDER THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY  
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- (d) PREPARATORY WORK FOR THE 1980 CONFERENCE (E/CN.6/600; E/CN.6/NGO/258)

1. Mr. HEPPLING (Director, United Nations Development Programme in Europe) read out a message to the Commission from the Administrator of UNDP, who was unfortunately unable to attend the session owing to the forthcoming opening of the Second United Nations Development Co-operation Cycle.

2. The Administrator believed that the beginning of the Decade for Women coincided with two events of great importance for the development process, namely, recognition that development planning required now as never before an integrated, unified approach, and acceptance that a country's human resources were its most valuable development asset. Enhancement of the role and condition of women in line with that new attitude could be a major agent of constructive change, for many countries had so far denied themselves the optimal contribution of what was the largest single category of human resources available for economic and social development. To halt that waste would require advances in virtually all fields of development, even though specially selected projects might well be vital in the initial stages.

3. UNDP was fully conscious of the distance to be covered to achieve women's full participation and integration in development, and had taken steps to launch that process. It had commissioned a booklet entitled Integration of Women in Development - Why, When, How, which was widely used by governmental and non-governmental organizations, the United Nations system, and educational institutions. In 1975, moreover, it had co-sponsored an international seminar on Women in Development, and a collection of papers relating to that meeting had now been published by the Overseas Development Council in Washington, D.C., under the title Women and World Development.

4. UNDP had already issued instructions to its resident representatives and other administrative field staff concerning the formulation, design, implementation and evaluation of projects with a view to integrating women as participants and beneficiaries in all relevant areas of development work. In that connexion, the special resources for technical co-operation to be made available from the Voluntary Fund for the Decade for Women would be most welcome, and the Administrator had already suggested that he and the

Assistant Secretary-General for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs should jointly issue instructions concerning their use to UNDP resident representatives. In addition, UNDP was currently issuing more detailed Programming Guidelines on the Integration of Women in Development to its field offices and hoped they would lead to consultations and exchanges of information between all the authorities and United Nations agencies involved in the projects it assisted.

5. It was very important to gain a better understanding of women's crucial role in all societies and of its implications for their integration in the development process, because change, in order to be acceptable, must not be too disruptive. WHO and UNICEF had recently done some important work on a strategy for the integration of women in development, the results of which were described in documents E/ICEF/L.1322 and L.1342. Women's traditional role in all societies lay in areas in which the creation of public services was now recognized as an essential part of any broad-based development effort, and UNDP accordingly looked forward to close collaboration with other United Nations organs in promoting women's participation in that and other basic aspects of the development process.

6. UNDP was currently preparing special orientation and training materials on the entire subject of women in development, in close co-operation with the United Nations Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. In addition, UNDP and UNFPA, operating in close consultation with the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, the Centre for Economic and Social Information of the Office of Public Information and many other development-related agencies, had recently considered how they should follow up World Population Year and International Women's Year in their public information activities and their work with non-governmental organizations. Their study had pointed up the need for a fully concerted, all-agency joint information programme to support and advance the objectives of the Decade for Women, especially with regard to a change in attitudes, and UNDP stood ready to accord high priority to such an undertaking.

7. Like the Commission on the Status of Women, United Nations multilateral technical co-operation was in its twenty-sixth year, and the Administrator readily acknowledged what had been lost during the past quarter of a century through failure to involve women in the development process. He considered that Governments, international organizations and individuals must all take decisive and energetic action to ensure that the world benefited during the next quarter of a century from the contribution of the 50 per cent female segment of humanity, and thereby accorded them the equal respect which was their fundamental right.

8. Ms. FREDRICK (United States of America), noting that the activities listed in section III B. 2. of document E/CN.6/594 were directly related to the United Nations system, said that the regional economic commissions in particular, with the assistance of the specialized agencies, should help to ensure that women played an integral part in the programming process in their countries under the activity described in section B. 2. (b).

9. Referring to section B.3, she suggested that the drafting group might give specific consideration to the portrayal of women in educational materials and the question of "sextereotyping". The area covered by that section was one in which the Commission might make recommendations to the organizations in the United Nations system or address requests to Governments.
10. In connexion with the Voluntary Fund, it was important to note those activities which might be eligible for funding, as well as those currently proposed for funding.
11. Mrs. HUSSEIN (Egypt) considered that the Commission should pay due attention to the detailed development of national programmes, even though very few replies from Governments had in fact described national plans in detail. The Commission should not only suggest national activities but also consider the question of strengthening international, regional and national organizational structures. The Commission should make emphatic recommendations on that point at the beginning of the programme for the Decade, particularly in view of the uncertainty surrounding the Commission's future.
12. In suggesting recommendations concerning training, the drafting group should give due consideration to the experience of ECA and UNESCO with their innovative approaches.
13. Referring to section C.2.(a), she suggested that training programmes for women should be developed not only in public administration, but in other areas as well. In connexion with section C.3, her delegation would like to know the status of the Commission's Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict.
14. Mrs. SIIPIA (Assistant Secretary-General, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs) observed that the Egyptian representative's observations concerning structures were very important, as most members of the Commission had little contact with the government departments in their countries which followed the Commission's recommendations. In that connexion, she drew attention to a proposal (to be submitted to the General Assembly) to abolish the Commission. That proposal had been made in a document submitted by a group of experts on the reorganization of United Nations activities in the economic field, which had recommended that the Commission on the Status of Women and two other commissions which dealt with non-economic affairs should be abolished. Before the proposal was considered by the General Assembly, it would be taken up by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Restructuring of the Economic and Social Sectors of the United Nations System, which met several times a year. That Committee had not yet discussed the proposal in any great detail. However, it was not for the Secretariat to ensure the survival of the Commission; that was the responsibility of Member States, which should express their views on the question.
15. It was true that national structures were not mentioned in the programme, except in a very general manner in section C.2. In 1974, however, the Commission had proposed a world-wide programme recommending activities at the national, regional and international levels - a programme which had been followed practically to the letter. On that occasion Governments had been left in no doubt about what the Commission had in mind.
16. The uncertainty which persisted about the fate of the Decade was due to the fact that no programme had yet been established. The fact that a review conference was scheduled for 1980 would help to keep alive at least the first part of the Decade.

Any programme recommended by the Commission should be aimed at the national level at which the need for the Commission's assistance was most keenly felt.

17. When the symbol for the International Women's Year had been agreed on in 1974, considerable interest had been expressed in the possibility of using it for commercial purposes, with the result that it had become very controversial. The United Nations had had to ascertain how the use of the symbol could be protected in order to prevent third parties from making money out of it without contributing royalties to the Voluntary Fund. The Secretariat would now like guidance on whether the use of the symbol should be continued and whether the United Nations should exercise control over its commercial and non-commercial use. It was impossible to obtain a copyright for the symbol because it had been made public before any question of a copyright had arisen. The United Nations had not interfered with the efforts made in many countries to use the symbol for commercial purposes because women's organizations had benefited from its use. But if the symbol was used on a large scale, there was no reason why royalties should not be paid to the Fund and used in particular for the benefit of women in the developing countries.

18. Miss TYABJI (India) supported the views expressed by the representatives of the United States and Egypt.

19. Mrs. DAHLERUP (Denmark) said that it would be useful if the Secretariat could submit a paper indicating the various studies already prepared at the request of the Commission or other United Nations bodies on the integration of women in development, and similar studies which were being brought up to date or planned.

20. The Commission had been informed at the 641st meeting that the 10 principal objectives for the joint interagency programme had been reduced to nine, and that the Commission was not competent to change those objectives. Her delegation would appreciate further information on the reasons for the change in the number of objectives because, in its opinion, the original list would have been preferable. For example, it preferred the original wording of objective 3, as it was important that the ILO should consider the effect of the employment situation on women workers. Her delegation agreed with the new wording of objective 4, which should be given high priority, both at the national and at the international levels. It was regrettable, however, that the "equitable sharing of family responsibilities", referred to in the original objective 6, was no longer mentioned in the new objective 8.

21. Her delegation strongly endorsed the new objective 1 (formerly objective 10). The question of ensuring the full integration of women in development could be dealt with in both the developed and the developing countries. The Governing Council of UNDP, for example, had in January 1975 requested that the integration of women in development should be a continuing concern in the planning and execution of UNDP projects, and had invited Governments to take appropriate decisions to ensure the participation of women in the planning process. It was to be hoped that the Governments of developing countries would give due consideration to the impact of the participation of women in that process. At present the Danish Development Assistance Agency was giving particular attention to means of improving the economic and social

situation of women in developing countries. It had expressed to the authorities in a number of African countries its keen interest in projects in which the improvement of the situation of women was taken into account.

22. In the opinion of her delegation, the use of the symbol for the Year should be continued throughout the Decade, and the United Nations should exercise control over its commercial use.

23. Mrs. HIRLEMANN (France), referring to the proposal to abolish the Commission, asked whether the Ad Hoc Committee's decisions on the subject would be submitted to the General Assembly and the Council at their forthcoming sessions.

24. Mrs. SIIPIA (Assistant Secretary-General, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs) said that the Ad Hoc Committee had so far made little progress in its discussion of that proposal, only one Member State having expressed an opinion on it. In any event, there was no reason why the Commission itself should not say whether or not it wished to continue to function.

25. Mr. EHSASSI (Iran) agreed with the observations of the representative of Egypt and the Assistant Secretary-General concerning national activities.

26. In his opinion, there was no reason why the symbol for the Year should not be accepted as the symbol for the Decade. Several years might well elapse before the Ad Hoc Committee, which was composed of Government representatives, made any recommendation concerning the future of the Commission. In all probability, the Ad Hoc Committee, taking into account the fact that the Commission was the only body which dealt with the problems of women and that the United Nations had already proclaimed the Decade, would not recommend its abolition. It was for the members of the Commission to take that question up with their Governments, which could instruct their representatives on the Ad Hoc Committee to express support for the continuation of the Commission.

27. Mrs. NIKOLAEVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the question raised by the Assistant Secretary-General and the representative of Egypt was a most important one. In her opinion, paragraph 13 of General Assembly resolution 3520 (XXX) made it clear that the General Assembly had no intention of abolishing the Commission but, on the contrary, wanted its role to be strengthened; the members of the Ad Hoc Committee must surely be aware of that and similar decisions. Members of the Commission, as government representatives concerned with the status of women throughout the world, should make it absolutely clear at the present session that their work, which was gathering new momentum in the wake of International Women's Year, must continue and become even more productive and effective than before. In that connexion she regretted that the practice of holding seminars between sessions of the Commission had been discontinued in the past two years. The success of past seminars, such as those held in London and Ottawa, and the results achieved suggested that they offered a most effective means of increasing the Commission's impact.

28. Mrs. SIPILA (Assistant Secretary-General, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs) agreed that paragraph 13 of General Assembly resolution 3520 (XXX) appeared to offer a guarantee of the Commission's continued existence. It should, however, also be noted that paragraphs 16 and 17 of the same resolution called for a strengthening of the Secretariat's resources; that was a most important aspect of the problem. The Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs had submitted its revised budget estimates for 1977, which were to be discussed by the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly at the thirty-first session. The decisions taken in that connexion would be crucial.
29. Mrs. COCKCROFT (United Kingdom) said she agreed with the views expressed by the Soviet representative, and would support all efforts to maintain and strengthen the Commission. Referring to section III.B.4(b) of document E/CN.6/594, she urged that a special section on publicity should be included among the projects for funding the Decade. The symbol of the International Women's Year, in slightly modified form, could be widely used to publicize the Decade, appropriate measures being taken to ensure copyright protection. Similarly, the International Women's Year Bulletin prepared by the Secretariat during the Year might be revived for the purposes of the Decade, possibly at the rate of one or two issues a year. The publicity project should also provide for the largest possible number of talks to be given at meetings, on radio and on television, as well as for letters and articles in the press, to raise funds and publicize the Decade.
30. Begum FARIDI (Pakistan) endorsed the United Kingdom's representative's suggestions and added that another publicity idea might be a postage stamp bearing the Equality, Development and Peace symbol.
31. Ms. HENDSCH (United States of America) also agreed with the suggestions made concerning the symbol, which would certainly have to be modified slightly to ensure copyright protection throughout the world. On the subject of publicity in general, she emphasized that the Commission should try to find ways of publicizing the Decade without increasing the financial burden upon the United Nations. As to the Commission's future, she said that the United States expert on the Ad Hoc Committee had been made well aware of his Government's strong commitment to the maintenance of the Commission. All members of the Commission should make sure that their Governments accorded the Commission's future the importance it deserved, and instructed their representatives on the Ad Hoc Committee accordingly.
32. Mrs. HUSSEIN (Egypt) said that the procedure recommended by the United States representative was helpful. It should be borne in mind that the Ad Hoc Committee's function was only advisory and that its views, even if unfavourable to the Commission's continued existence, were unlikely to outweigh those of the General Assembly. However, she was somewhat alarmed by the reference to "the Commission on the Status of Women or other appropriate body" in paragraph 34 of document E/CN.6/594 in connexion with the establishment of an International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women. The Commission's proposals for the programme should clarify the relationship between the Commission and the Institute.

33. Mrs. GERLO-VAN LCEY (Belgium) observed that section III.B.3. of document E/CN.6/594 was closely related to agenda item 5. To adopt any decisions on that part of the programme before item 5 had been considered would be to pre-judge the issue. Referring specifically to section B.3.(b), she recalled that her delegation had already expressed doubt as to the usefulness of such an extensive study, and stressed the need for co-ordination of activities in that field. A similar study was to be undertaken by the International Council of Women, and any duplication of effort must be avoided. Referring to section B.4., she requested the Secretariat to supply information on the present position as regards contributions to the Voluntary Fund.

34. Mrs. STABILE de MACHINANDIARENA (Observer for Argentina), speaking at the Chairman's invitation, said that her delegation was not entirely in agreement with the principal objectives of the joint interagency programme, revised by the ad hoc interagency meeting held from 1 to 8 September 1976 (E/CN.6/594/Add.1), for they were too general and failed to give priority to national activities. It was for individual Governments to define their programmes in the light of the World Plan of Action and regional plans.

35. With regard to the establishment of an International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, she emphasized the need to co-ordinate the research programme of the Institute with those of other institutions already in existence at the national and regional levels. In that connexion, she supplied details of the Multinational Women's Centre to be set up in Buenos Aires under the auspices of the Inter-American Commission of Women and the Organization of American States. Regional institutions of that kind, whose activities were adapted to the needs of a particular region and whose financing did not exclude support from private organizations, could make a most important contribution.

36. Mrs. TYABJI (India), referring to that part of the programme dealing with the integration of women in development, suggested that section B.2.(b) should specify that regional and sub-regional programmes should pay the most specific attention to providing employment opportunities for women. In particular, special short-term training courses should be organized at the rural or reduced urban level for training nursery teachers and day care personnel, two areas which provided vast employment opportunities for women. It should also be recognized that, in production areas, training facilities in themselves were not sufficient; in addition to training, there was need for production centres where on-the-job teaching could continue. Marketing facilities were also needed to make such production centres as self-supporting as possible. The integrated approach involving training, production and marketing should be followed at all levels, including that of exporting to the developed world.

37. As regards the strengthening of the Commission's role, she felt that good results could be achieved if members from the developed countries took steps to interest the voluntary organizations of their respective countries in helping the developing world. She was also in favour of the suggestion made at an earlier meeting by the representative of Thailand for the promotion of indigenous technology in developing countries.



38. Mrs. SALYO (Indonesia) warned against the danger of overloading the programme for the Decade with activities not included in the World Plan of Action, which had already been endorsed by the General Assembly. If the Commission produced a programme which differed from the World Plan in too many respects, its proposals would have to go through the Economic and Social Council, and a great deal of time would be lost. In that connexion, it would be advisable to spell out the mandate of the proposed drafting group in very clear terms.

39. Princess PURACHATRA (Thailand) asked whether the Secretariat could supply a list of the countries represented on the Ad Hoc Committee.

40. Miss ST. CLAIRE (Secretary of the Commission) said it was impossible to say exactly which countries were members of that Ad Hoc Committee because it was an open-ended body that reported to the General Assembly, not to the Council.

41. Mrs. BRUCE (Assistant Director, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs) said that the fact that the programme for the Decade was intended as a programme for the United Nations system as a whole had perhaps led to confusion in the minds of some members of the Commission. In that connexion, she explained that the Commission would not be responsible for taking action to implement all parts of the programme. The General Assembly would, in accordance with the resolutions it had adopted, be responsible for some of the studies referred to in section B.1.(b) of the programme and, under resolution 3520 (XXX), for the elaboration of the joint interagency programme for the integration of women in development. The first step in the elaboration of that programme was to be taken by the Secretariat, which would conduct a survey of available data and information within the United Nations system. In addition, the study referred to in section B.3.(b) would be carried out in co-operation with UNESCO. The Commission itself would be responsible for the studies dealing with the impact of scientific and technological developments on the status of women and on questions relating to prostitution and the illicit traffic in women referred to in section B.1.(b) (iv) and (v). The studies mentioned in section B.1.(b) (vi) and (vii), might be entrusted to the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women. The Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs would be responsible for the study of the relationship between female criminality and other social problems brought about by rapid social change (section B.1.(b) (ix)), and WHO, FAO and the ILO would undertake the studies on health and nutrition and the classification of occupations listed in section B.1.(b) (x) and (xi).

42. With regard to the changes made in the objectives of the joint interagency programme, she drew the Commission's attention to the information contained in document E/CN.6/594/Add.1 and said that the main problem encountered in preparing the inventory of organizations' activities was that of obtaining the approval of the heads of agencies and of avoiding any duplication of the work to be carried out by various organizations. She emphasized, however, that although there were now nine principal objectives rather than the original ten, no changes had been made in the priorities of the joint interagency programme. The interagency meeting had, moreover, stressed the fact that the highest priority should be given to programmes for women in rural areas. It had also agreed that the inventory, to be completed by 31 March 1977, should be updated biennially with further information concerning the activities of organizations.

43. She thought that the answer to the question raised by the representative of Belgium concerning the educational and informational activities referred to in section B.3.(b) would probably become clear when the Commission discussed agenda item 5. The Secretariat hoped to organize an inter-regional seminar on the mass media and women's roles in society, but no Government had yet offered to act as host to such a seminar.

44. Referring to the question of the status of contributions to the Voluntary Fund, she drew attention to document E/5773, which had been submitted to the sixtieth session of the Economic and Social Council and provided detailed information on contributions to the Fund for the International Women's Year and to the Fund for the Decade for Women. After considering that document, the Economic and Social Council had adopted resolution 2005 (IX) in which it recommended certain criteria for the use of the Voluntary Fund and made proposals for its future management. The proposed criteria to govern the use of the resources of the Fund were referred to in paragraph 49 of document E/CN.6/594 and in document E/CN.6/594/Corr. 1. In addition, the Council had recommended that the Secretary-General should consult UNDP on the use of the Fund for technical co-operation activities and that the President of the General Assembly should select five States to appoint the members of a committee which would advise the Secretary-General on the use of the Fund.

45. In reply to the question raised by the representative of Egypt concerning the Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict, she said that, although that Declaration had been proclaimed by the General Assembly in resolution 3318 (XXIX), neither the General Assembly nor the Commission had provided for any system of reporting on the progress made in implementing it. She suggested that studies on that subject might be included in section C of the programme relating to the involvement of women in international co-operation and the maintenance of peace.

46. Mrs. SIIPIIA (Assistant Secretary-General, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs), replying to the question raised by the representative of Indonesia, said that the World Plan of Action provided guidelines for international action to be taken during the Decade for Women, while the resolutions adopted by the Commission at its twenty-fifth session (E/5451) gave an idea of national machinery which could be established with a view to the implementation of the programme for the Decade.

47. With regard to the question raised by the representative of Egypt concerning the last sentence of paragraph 34 of document E/CN.6/594, she said that that statement reflected the views expressed by the Group of Experts appointed by the Secretary-General and by the Economic and Social Council. The words "other appropriate body" referred to a body to which the Institute would report in the event that the Commission was abolished.

48. Referring to the question put by the representative of Belgium concerning studies and research, she said that the fact that many non-governmental and inter-governmental organizations were doing work similar to that of the United Nations gave added importance to the inventory of organizations' activities under the joint interagency programme for the integration of women in development because each organization had to be aware of the work being done by all the other organizations of the United Nations system. In that connexion, she said that she agreed with the Assistant Director of the Centre that the principal objectives of the joint inter-agency programme should be used as guidelines for the co-ordination of the activities of all organizations. The inventory would also enable Governments and non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations to avoid any duplication of the work being done by the United Nations.

49. Mrs. DAHLERUP (Denmark) said that, although her delegation appreciated the explanations given by the Assistant Director, it would have liked the Secretariat to provide a progress report on the studies and research being carried out under the programme for the Decade for Women.
50. Mrs. HIRLEMANN (France) suggested that principal objective 2 referred to in document E/CN.6/594/Add.1 might be included in section A or B of the programme for the Decade.
51. The CHAIRMAN said that that suggestion would be taken into account by the working group.
52. Mrs. BRIDEL (Observer for the International Federation of Women in Legal Careers), speaking at the invitation of the Chairman and introducing document E/CN.6/NGO/267 which had been circulated in accordance with paragraphs 159 and 160 of the World Plan of Action, said that the International Federation requested that an in-depth legal study should be carried out of the situation with regard to prostitution at the national and international level. Although most countries had laws on the suppression of traffic in persons and the exploitation of women for the purpose of prostitution, the de jure position was often quite different from the de facto situation. Existing laws should therefore be supplemented or amended to take account of the actual situation. In the past, such matters had been studied by a commission established by the League of Nations to deal with the white slave trade. Subsequently, the United Nations had established its own Commission to consider the problem of the suppression of the traffic in persons and of the exploitation of the prostitution of others. That Commission had sent questionnaires to the States parties to the 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, but the number of replies received each year declined steadily, and in 1967 the Commission had ceased to deal with the question of prostitution. In 1974, however, a Working Group on Slavery was set up by the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities and at the present time the problem was how to increase public awareness of the existence of millions of women who were being subjected to slavery in the form of forced prostitution (E/CN.4/Sub.2/373, para. 11).
53. The International Federation was of the opinion that questions such as measures to ensure employment opportunities for young women and equal pay for equal work, as well as the problems of young delinquents who had no opportunity for vocational training during detention, should be included in the study to be carried out with the co-operation of the ILO, UNESCO, FAO, UNHCR, UNICEF and non-governmental organizations such as the Anti-Slavery Society and Amnesty International, and with the support of Interpol. The Federation would submit a report on that subject to the Commission at its next session in 1978 and to the Conference to be held in 1980.
54. In addition, the study to be carried out should draw attention to the fact that, to an increasing extent, many of the victims of prostitution were minors. The Federation was therefore of the opinion that the International Year of the Child to be celebrated in 1979 would provide an excellent opportunity to inform world public opinion of the seriousness of that problem. The Commission might consider the possibility of submitting a report on the question to the meetings to be held during the International Year of the Child.

55. Mrs. REED (Observer for the World Women's Christian Temperance Union), speaking at the invitation of the Chairman, said that the Union, which was the world's oldest women's organization, had 2.5 million members in 72 countries. As a non-governmental organization, it had a very important role to play in providing liaison between the organizations of the United Nations system and people at the grass-roots level. It had, for example, been a member of the committee of 50 non-governmental organizations which had worked diligently in preparation for the World Conference of the International Women's Year and had been active in implementing the recommendations of the World Plan of Action.

56. A matter of concern to many non-governmental organizations was that of prostitution and illicit traffic in women, to which reference had been made in paragraphs 159 and 160 of the World Plan of Action and in section B.1.(b)(v), of the programme for the Decade for Women (E/CN.6/594). In that connexion, she noted that the Union had homes in many countries for young women and children whose lives had been affected by such problems. It considered that, during the Decade for Women and the International Year of the Child, attention should be drawn to the fact that many of the victims of prostitution, who were being drawn into the net of crime, were very young children.

57. Lastly, she stressed the fact that non-governmental organizations had a wealth of expertise to share with the organizations of the United Nations system in their efforts to improve and protect the lives of all women and children in urban and rural areas throughout the world.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.