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CONTENTS

Agenda item 56:

*Draft Declaration on the Elimination of Dis-
crimination against Women 387*

Chairman: Mrs. Halima EMBAREK WARZAZI
(Morocco).

AGENDA ITEM 56

Draft Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (A/6303, chap. XI, sect. XIII, paras. 498-502, A/6349; E/4175, chap. II; A/C.3/L.1341/Rev.1, A/C.3/L.1383/Rev.1, A/C.3/L.1384-L.1386, A/C.3/L.1392, A/C.3/L.1400 and Corr.1, A/C.3/L.1401, A/C.3/L.1403, A/C.3/L.1406, A/C.3/L.1413)

1. The CHAIRMAN announced that the draft Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which was the subject of item 56 of the agenda of the General Assembly, was now before the Committee. The General Assembly, in its resolution 1921 (XVIII), adopted at its eighteenth session in 1963, had requested the Economic and Social Council to invite the Commission on the Status of Women to prepare a draft declaration on the elimination of discrimination against women, with a view to its consideration by the General Assembly, if possible, at its twentieth session. Governments of Member States, the specialized agencies and appropriate non-governmental organizations had been invited to send to the Secretary-General their comments and proposals relating to the principles that might be incorporated in the draft Declaration.

2. In December 1963, the Economic and Social Council had transmitted that resolution to the Commission on the Status of Women. The Commission had devoted a large part of its eighteenth and nineteenth sessions in 1965 and 1966 to preparing the text of the draft Declaration^{1/} which was now before the Third Committee. At its eighteenth session, held at Teheran in March 1965, the Commission had set up a drafting committee composed of twelve of its members to consider all the proposals and suggestions submitted and to prepare a single text for the consideration of the Commission. After a brief discussion on the text submitted by the drafting committee, the Commission had decided, owing to lack of time, to adjourn further debate on the draft Declaration until the nineteenth session and had re-

quested the Secretary-General to circulate the draft Declaration, as well as the relevant working papers, to the members of the Commission for their comments. At the nineteenth session of the Commission, held at Geneva in February - March 1966, a number of proposals had been submitted, including a draft declaration submitted by Ghana and a new draft prepared by the United Kingdom; the Commission had decided, however, to take the drafting committee's text as the basis for discussion. The Commission had devoted fifteen preliminary meetings to the preparation of the present text of the draft Declaration, which it had adopted unanimously on 8 March 1966.

3. The Economic and Social Council, after considering the report of the nineteenth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, had decided, at its forty-first session in July 1966, not to embark on a detailed discussion of the draft Declaration. By its resolution 1131 (XLI), the Council had transmitted the draft Declaration to the General Assembly together with the amendments thereto submitted at the forty-first session of the Council, the summary records of its discussions, the report of the Commission on the Status of Women and the summary records pertaining thereto (A/6349, para. 8).

4. After reading a list of the relevant amendments, the Chairman invited the Committee to begin its consideration of the draft Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (A/6349, annex I).

5. Mrs. SIPILA (Finland) said that the Commission on the Status of Women had encountered many problems in drawing up the draft Declaration; in particular, it had had to clarify what was meant by the term "discrimination against women", determine means of eliminating discrimination and specify to whom the Declaration should be addressed. It had also had to consider the advisability of including in the Declaration only items which related strictly to equal rights and responsibilities of men and women. It had devoted much time, in particular, to the article dealing with the status of women in private law and in regard to family legislation, because that was the field in which the various traditions, religions and social systems exerted the greatest influence. The family was the smallest and most important unit of society, but it must be acknowledged that its protection was essentially a matter for national legislations.

6. The draft Declaration, as it had finally emerged, was not exactly as each delegation would have wanted it, but it was the best compromise formula. The many amendments which had been submitted gave evidence of the interest taken in the Declaration. It would certainly be difficult for the Third Committee to consolidate the various amendments. Even the

^{1/} See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Thirty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 7 (E/4025), chap. III, and *ibid.*, Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 7 (E/4175), chap. II.

Commission on the Status of Women, which had a much smaller membership, had had to set up a drafting committee, a style committee and a working group. The Third Committee might follow the same procedure, but she did not believe that it would have time to complete the task. Her delegation, therefore, suggested that the draft should be referred back to the Commission on the Status of Women, together with the amendments, since the reason why the General Assembly had originally invited the Commission to draft the Declaration was, apparently, that it had considered the Commission specially qualified to do so. Moreover, the amendments which had been submitted undoubtedly contained important new ideas. The Commission would also have the benefit, at its next session, of the experience of thirteen new members which were sure to contribute new ideas and suggestions.

7. If the General Assembly adopted the Finnish proposal, it should also decide to give the draft Declaration priority at its twenty-second session. By asking the Commission to prepare the draft for its twentieth session, it had attributed some urgency to the task; moreover, 1968 had been designated International Year for Human Rights, and it would be particularly appropriate to adopt a declaration on the elimination of discrimination against women immediately prior to the beginning of that year.

8. Referring to the situation in her own country, she stated that the women of Finland had had equal voting rights and equal eligibility with men for more than sixty years; they had had equal access to education at all levels for nearly a century, and marriage legislation and inheritance laws provided for equality between spouses. In a country where equality between men and women had been recognized by law for generations past, the key to the solution of the problems mentioned in the draft Declaration was in the hands of the women themselves; all that was needed was the wish fully to exercise their rights. The Declaration should therefore be addressed to women themselves, encouraging them to participate more effectively in the affairs of the community and to take advantage of all the opportunities they had. That would be to the benefit of the whole community, since no community could afford to do without the active participation of all its members.

9. Mrs. ZEYDNER-REMPT (Netherlands) said that the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was of exceptional importance, since it aimed at eliminating all kinds of discrimination, with particular reference to economic and social handicaps, so as to enable women to participate fully in the social, economic, political and cultural life of their countries.

10. She wished to stress that, although education of women was necessary, one must also combat deep-rooted prejudices in the minds of men. The Declaration should therefore be addressed not only to women but also to men, and to Governments of States throughout the world. The emancipation of women required a corresponding development in minds and attitudes, in view of the transformation of society which was currently in progress and which aimed at giving women their proper place. However, the con-

cept of discrimination against women should be clarified. Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations proclaimed the equality of men and women, but the actual situation was more complicated, because men and women were not identical. That implied that equal treatment would, under certain circumstances, constitute discrimination against one of them and that different treatment would be most just. The women's movement in the Western world had set out to prove that women were capable of doing the same things as men, in the same way as men, and it had actually succeeded in doing so; later, however, a subtler idea had evolved, and the thought now was that women should share the responsibilities with men, not only because they were quite as able as men to assume them, but because they were different, and therefore indispensable. Consequently, measures which took into account the fundamental differences between men and women could not be called discriminatory.

11. She regretted that the fifth paragraph of the preamble of the draft Declaration, which advocated the equal participation of women in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their countries, did not mention the family sphere; for discriminatory treatment of women within their homes continued in many parts of the world, and that situation was the basis of all the other inequalities.

12. Article 3 of the draft Declaration was of essential practical value as it was a fact that all legislative measures would remain ineffective unless backed by enlightened public opinion. One of the first objectives would therefore be to remove prejudice, particularly in the developing countries where family patterns and customs were not conducive to the implementation of such a declaration. The developed countries themselves still had a great deal to do to put the principles of the draft Declaration into daily practice. In that connexion, attention should be drawn to the role played by voluntary women's organizations which should receive help from Governments. The latter should also secure the co-operation of socio-religious bodies. Programmes designed to eliminate discrimination against women through family education and adult education activities were planned as part of the International Year for Human Rights.

13. With reference to article 8 of the draft Declaration, she pointed out that prostitution could not be abolished by the stroke of a pen and that legislative measures would not suffice. In that area too, it was essential that public opinion should be educated.

14. Article 10, which provided for measures designed to ensure for working women equal rights with men, did not take adequately into account the role of women within the family. It merely mentioned social services, including child-care facilities.

15. In the developing countries, women generally occupied an inferior position within the family in matters such as marriage, profession, divorce, family planning and inheritance. Authoritarian control of the family by the father should be replaced progressively by a more egalitarian form of association. In order to promote that change, research programmes should be undertaken to determine the various family

patterns conducive to promoting human rights within the family. It was also necessary to undertake social welfare programmes emphasizing family education, adult education and community development to bring about the desired changes in the social and family structures.

16. Human rights problems and decolonization and development problems were closely connected with problems concerning the status of women. After all, those problems were all problems of emancipation of the individual, which was a prerequisite for the development of the community as a whole. In that connexion, she referred to a recent statement by a Netherlands Minister in which he had stressed the desirability of drawing up a charter for development which would include principles for eliminating all forms of discrimination.

17. A world-wide social movement should be launched to educate public opinion and mobilize all international, regional, national and local resources in order to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.

Mr. Ronald Macdonald (Canada), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

18. Mrs. STEVENSON (Liberia) said that her delegation attached great importance to the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. During the nineteenth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, her delegation had participated in drawing up the draft Declaration and had voted in favour of the text which had ultimately been adopted by the Commission.

19. Referring to the situation in her own country, she said that the Liberian Constitution guaranteed essential rights and fundamental freedoms for all citizens without distinction and that, in 1945, the Liberian Government had removed all obstacles to the participation of women in political activities and had granted them suffrage. Since that time the women of Liberia had made full use of their rights.

20. Although the picture had improved in many parts of the world, the role of the female in society was still controversial, for old prejudices remained strong. The significance of woman's role as wife, mother and homemaker was fully acknowledged, but she now had to win her rights in the economic, social, political and educational fields.

21. As Princess Ashraf Pahlavi, representative of Iran, had pointed out at the opening of the nineteenth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the aim was in no way to establish a privileged status for women, but to ensure that the principles of equality prevailed. There was no better criterion of a nation's level of development than the extent to which women participated in its public affairs. World peace could be ensured only through the unremitting and concerted efforts of all mankind.

22. Since its inception, the United Nations had worked assiduously to advance the status of women: the Preamble of the Charter proclaimed the equal rights of men and women and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights set forth a number of rights to which everyone was entitled without distinction as to sex. Ever since it had been established in 1946, the

Commission on the Status of Women had sought unremittingly to promote the status of women throughout the world. The various conventions and declarations which it had drawn up showed the value and extent of its contribution to the ideal of justice and equality. The programme of advisory services in the field of human rights had assisted immensely in advancing the rights of women. Through seminars and scholarships women had been able to increase their participation in all areas of public life.

23. However, an appreciable distance remained to be covered and therefore the General Assembly, in its resolution 1921 (XVIII), had requested the Economic and Social Council to invite the Commission on the Status of Women to prepare a draft declaration on the elimination of discrimination against women. This document (A/6349, annex I) constituted a charter of the rights of women and set forth a series of principles that would have to determine the action of generations to come. It was too important to be adopted in haste. In view of the number of amendments that had been proposed to the draft it would be better to postpone the detailed examination of the text until the twenty-second session of the Assembly. Her delegation supported, therefore, the draft resolution that had been proposed by Finland.

24. Mrs. BULTRIKOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the discrimination suffered by women in certain countries was a flagrant injustice. In the Soviet Union, all the problems of women's emancipation had been solved along with the problems of economic and cultural development, through a radical transformation of society. As an illustration of that change, she cited the example of the Republic of Kazakhstan from which she came. Before the Revolution, that region had been one of the most backward in the Soviet Union and 98 per cent of the population had been illiterate. The Kazakhs had been a nomadic people deriving their livelihood from livestock-raising and Kazakh women had lived in a state of complete subjection. Since then, however, the Kazakh Republic had caught up with the times. At present illiteracy had been eliminated. There were 10,000 primary schools, 39 higher education establishments, 168 special intermediate schools and nearly 400 technical and vocational schools. The Academy of Sciences of Kazakhstan was a vitally important cultural centre. Some 18,000 persons were at present engaged in scientific activities; there were 3,500 doctors and science graduates, more than half of whom were women. Women were working in posts at high levels in all fields; 48 per cent of the specialists with university training were women.

25. The Soviet woman was making a major contribution to the building of socialist culture. Nearly 800 women had been awarded the Lenin prize or other government distinctions. Medicine in particular was attracting women: of the 530,000 doctors practising in the Soviet Union, 74 per cent were women. Before the Soviet Revolution, the Kazakh Republic had had only 244 doctors; it now had 22,500 or 18.4 doctors per 10,000 inhabitants, which was the same ratio as in the United States of America and the Federal Republic of Germany. Most of the other capitalist countries had not yet achieved such a ratio.

26. Women represented 82 per cent of the teaching profession. They also took a very active part in political life. The percentage of women participating in elections was very high, as the number of votes cast in the elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on 12 June 1966 had represented 99.9 per cent of the electorate. At the present time, there were 222 women in the Soviet of the Union and 203 in the Soviet of Nationalities, or 29 per cent and 27 per cent respectively of the total number of deputies. Soviet women had access to all posts in the governmental system and the economic and social administration of the USSR. The Vice-Chairmen of the Soviet of Nationalities were women. The thirty-six members of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet included four women, and 30 per cent of the assessors of the People's Courts were women. There were also many women in all branches of the arts. Motherhood received special protection. The Soviet Government organized crèches serving approximately 8 million children. It gave substantial assistance to mothers who were head of the family and to mothers of large families. Mothers were a subject of special concern, because the Soviet Union attached extreme importance to the education of the younger generation. New measures had been adopted with a view to facilitating women's work with their families. In many capitalist countries, by contrast, women were still subject to discrimination in all fields. They could not participate fully in public life, and the United States Congress, in particular, included only seventeen women.

27. The women of the Soviet Union whole-heartedly supported all measures taken by their Government to help the freedom-loving peoples, and particularly the people of Viet-Nam fighting for its independence. They felt a common bond with those women throughout the world who were fighting against imperialism.

28. Her delegation attached very great importance to the drafting and adoption of the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. It would, however, have liked the text to be much more specific, so that women throughout the world could enjoy the same advantages as the women of the socialist countries. Nevertheless, the Declaration could serve the purposes of international co-operation and could show those countries where the rights of women were still flouted the objectives they should strive to achieve. The text before the Committee (A/6349, annex I) had very great moral significance, and her delegation was prepared to support it. Certain provisions should, however, be made more specific, and her delegation had therefore submitted a number of amendments (A/6349, annex II, paras. 9-12).

Mrs. Embarek Warzazi (Morocco) resumed the Chair.

29. Mrs. SIPILA (Finland) introduced, on behalf of twenty-four delegations, a draft resolution (A/C.3/L.1413) by which the discussion would be adjourned. She thought that explanations of the amendments would facilitate the work of the Commission on the Status of Women, and she suggested that the discussion should relate mainly to the amendments.

30. Mrs. AFNAN (Iraq) said that, if the Committee adopted the Finnish draft resolution and decided to

refer the draft Declaration and the amendments to it back to the Commission on the Status of Women for consideration at its next session, the members of the Committee should be allowed to express their views on the question, so that the Commission on the Status of Women could take them into account when reviewing the question.

31. Mrs. TSATSOS (Greece) stressed the advances that had been made by women in society over the past ten years. She pointed out, in that connexion, the decisive importance of the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (General Assembly resolution 640 (VII), Annex) which had been opened for signature in New York on 31 March 1953 and which Greece had signed in December of the same year. The Convention had recognized the fundamental right of women to participate in elections and to be elected and had thus given them access to all offices. In Greece, the percentage of women who went out to work had increased considerably, having risen in ten years from 35 to 54 per cent for the 21-24 age group and from 30 to 40 per cent for other groups. The birth rate had also declined. Nevertheless, prejudices against women, and among women themselves, still existed in all countries. If women were to have access to all offices, they must be given a sound education, and she stressed the importance of article 9 of the draft Declaration, which ensured women equal rights with men in education. Too rigid rules should not be laid down, such as might, by imposing absolute conditions of equality with men, prevent any possibility of future development. For instance, women could not be expected to work without the interruptions necessary to their duties as mothers, and article 4, subparagraph (b), which guaranteed women the right to hold public office on equal terms with men, did not take that fact into account. In her country, by a very recent decree issued by the Prime Minister, women civil servants with children less than two years old were allowed to arrive at work two hours later than others.

32. She was ready to agree to the adjournment of the discussion on the question, but if the draft resolution proposing such adjournment was rejected she would maintain her amendment.

33. Mrs. AHMED (India) and Begum HASHIMUDDIN (Pakistan) said that, as the time which the Committee had decided to devote to the agenda item was in any event insufficient, it would be better to put to the vote immediately the draft resolution (A/C.3/L.1413) proposing postponement of consideration of the draft Declaration until the next session.

34. Mrs. HENRION (Belgium) said that she too would support the draft resolution proposing adjournment of the discussion on the question. She considered, however, that if the Committee decided to refer to the Commission on the Status of Women the amendments which had been submitted it should also inform the Commission of the reasons underlying the amendments. The sponsors of the amendments must therefore be invited to speak, in the order in which the amendments had been submitted.

35. Mr. HOVEYDA (Iran) said that he was opposed to the Indian representative's proposal. As the Com-

mission on the Status of Women was composed entirely of women, a discussion in the Third Committee seemed essential.

36. Miss GROZA (Romania) stressed the keen interest taken by her country in the status of women in modern society. At the eighteenth and twentieth sessions of the General Assembly, her delegation had spoken in favour of the adoption of a declaration on the elimination of discrimination against women, because it believed that such discrimination still existed in many parts of the world. There were countries where women did not yet have the right to vote, and there were some where they were still subject to a discriminatory system of remuneration. There were also countries where recognition of the equality of women was purely formal and could not be realized in practice because the necessary social and economic conditions did not exist. Finally, the prejudices to which women were still exposed prevented them from doing the best of which they were capable. An end must be put to that situation, and her delegation considered that a document of international significance could accelerate the process of the emancipation of women and the achievement of equality between men and women. It could also help women to play a more active part in the economic development and social advancement of their countries. The participation of women on a basis of full legal equality with men in the political, economic, social and cultural life of a country had proved to be an important factor for advancement. Conversely, economic and social advancement made a decisive contribution to the development of the feminine personality. Of course, the training of women as an active element of society depended primarily on a mass of political, economic, social and legal factors peculiar to each country and on the measures which each Government saw fit to take at the national level. However, United Nations action in the matter was still important. Moreover, the idea of drawing up a declaration on the elimination of discrimination against women was entirely in keeping with the basic principles of the Charter and of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which proclaimed the full legal equality of men and women, stating that all human beings were born free and equal in dignity and rights, without distinction as to race, sex or religion. The prevention of discrimination against women would be beneficial not only to individuals, to the family and to every nation, but to the whole of society.

37. The draft Declaration represented a step towards the realization of the ideals and principles proclaimed in the Charter. Those ideals and principles were fully recognized in the Socialist Republic of Romania, where the transformation that had taken place in every sector had radically altered the position of women. The latter now enjoyed full rights, the conditions necessary for freely developing and asserting their capacities, and a chance to occupy the place in society to which their aptitudes entitled them. The Romanian Constitution guaranteed the complete and universal equality of men and women before the law and protected female labour, the family and the interests of mothers and children. Thanks to the economic, political, educational, social and legal measures which had been adopted and were still being

adopted by the State, the status of women was constantly improving. Indeed, the work of social and economic construction being carried out in Romania would have been impossible without the mobilization of the country's entire human resources, including women, who formed more than half the population. The development of the nation's economy had made it possible for the untapped energies of its women to be channelled, freely and to an increasing extent, into social and productive activities. Throughout the various branches of the national economy, women constituted more than 47 per cent of the entire working population. The extent of the rights enjoyed by women in Romania was shown by the fact that they were actively engaged, together with men, in such spheres as technology, science, education, culture, art and public health. It was also shown by the high proportion of women in the National Assembly and the people's councils, or occupying senior economic and administrative posts. The example of Romania proved that women could make an important contribution to progress. An analysis of the different aspects of female emancipation in the modern world revealed the growing importance of the part played by women in the economic, political, social and cultural life of their own countries and on the international scene. The large number of amendments which had been submitted proved that the draft Declaration before the Committee was a matter of keen interest to the various countries concerned.

38. As to the draft Declaration itself, her delegation thought that it contained a considerable number of valuable ideas, but had considered it necessary to submit an amendment (A/C.3/L.1384) drawing attention to the contribution women had made through the centuries to the progress of humanity and their constantly increasing social role at the present stage of development of society, and stressing the necessity of creating adequate conditions for the development of women's aptitudes so as to enable them to occupy the place to which they were entitled in society.

39. She thought, however, that, since the time still remaining to the Committee seemed too short to permit a definitive text to be drafted on the basis of the various amendments that had been submitted, the adoption of the Declaration should perhaps be postponed until the twenty-second session of the General Assembly, it being understood that the question would then have priority.

40. Mrs. SOUMAH (Guinea) also stressed the importance of the question of discrimination against women. Since the establishment of the United Nations, there had been a number of outspoken resolutions on the subject but none of them had been given practical effect, so that everything still remained to be done. Her delegation saw a striking contrast between the urgency of the problem, which was an insult to human dignity, and the temporizing attitude of the authorities who had the responsibility of proposing measures for the abolition of the continuing anomalies in the status of women. The United Nations and its specialized agencies were constantly endeavouring to remedy that hopelessly anachronistic situation, and many meetings had been held, at Lomé, Teheran and Geneva, with the

object of accelerating the process of feminine emancipation. However, her delegation was convinced that decisive improvement in the lot of women depended on the action of Governments. The problem could be finally solved only by democratizing the machinery of the State, which meant renouncing atavistic practices and customs often rooted in religious and social attitudes. The elimination of discrimination against women could be achieved neither by legislation alone nor by high-sounding declarations; it required genuine political determination on the part of the various States to put an end to the assumption of female inferiority. No nation or individual could be considered entirely free as long as human beings were still the victims of an unjustifiable social inequality and of an arbitrary differentiation based on sex. That was why her country had always aimed in its policy to ensure the equality of all elements of the population.

41. Present-day Guinea had only one category of citizens, all entitled to enjoy and exercise rights on the same grounds and in the same degree, but that state of affairs had not been achieved overnight; it was the result of a long process of popular education and enlightenment. The women of Guinea had been more deeply involved than anyone else in that transformation of their society. The colonial policy of direct administration had encouraged differentiation on grounds of sex, religion and tribe, but the single-minded action of the Guinean people had caused those efforts of the colonialists to fail. No longer hampered by any complexes or prejudices, the women of Guinea, whose contribution to the struggle for liberation had been decisive, now played a confident part in all the nation's activities. They had the right to vote and to be elected, and thousands of them were filling positions of great responsibility in politics, the trade unions and management: for example, fourteen of the seventy-five members of Parliament were women; the Minister for Social Affairs was a woman and a number of high ministerial posts were held by women. Delegations of Guinean women took part in international and African conferences. In social and economic matters, women had shown their adaptability and were working, in increasing numbers, on construction sites, in workshops and in factories, where, in a spirit of healthy competition, they were doing a man's full job. Furthermore, they enjoyed free public education at all levels, and statistics showed that the school attendance rate among the female population had increased by 250 per cent since independence. Guinea was therefore more advanced in that respect than many countries, including some large ones.

42. Her delegation, which had helped to draw up the draft Declaration, wished to make it clear that Guinean policy in that particular field went considerably beyond the purport and scope of the document, which was the result of a compromise and certainly did not meet all the wishes of Guinea on the subject. She concluded by quoting the following recent statement of President Sekou Touré: "The complete emancipation of women could double the value of our national effort by doubling the strength, energy, qualities and initiative expended on it, for its greater glory."

43. Mrs. TELLEZ (Mexico) said that her delegation was a sponsor of the draft resolution submitted in document A/C.3/L.1413. In view of the item's importance, she thought that it was indeed necessary to examine the draft Declaration carefully and to ensure its unanimous acceptance. Mexican women took part in all the activities of their country, even in spheres hitherto exclusively reserved for men. Since the revolution, in which women had fought side by side with men, all doors had gradually been opened to them and they no longer suffered from any discrimination because of their sex. Her delegation supported the draft Declaration but stressed the need to examine carefully a text which was to provide guidance to nations that had not yet done what was necessary to combat discrimination against women.

44. Mr. HENRION (Belgium) said that her country, too, was most progressive on the matter under consideration. In the spheres of both public and private laws, Belgian legislation was among the most egalitarian there was. Belgium also had women ministers, ambassadors, magistrates, lawyers, doctors, and so forth, but she wondered whether that was really enough. In her view the primary value of the draft Declaration was educational. Many people failed to see the problem because they were conditioned by the traditions of centuries. That applied in all countries, whether Eastern or Western, developed or under-developed. Some forms of discrimination still survived everywhere, although the equality of men and women had been proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations. An attempt had therefore been made in the various articles of the Declaration to track down discrimination wherever it existed, both in society and within the family. For example, women did not have the same educational opportunities, especially for technical training, and they were not always paid as much as men. Nor had enough been done to relieve them of their domestic tasks. Yet, more than ever, mankind needed competent men and women and to bar the way to women was to waste one half of mankind's potential. Her delegation wished, in due course, to explain its amendments (A/C.3/L.1386) to the draft Declaration and particularly to article 6, which it felt was the essential article of the document and the one on which it would be most difficult to reach agreement. However, it preferred to hear the views of other delegations before doing so.

45. Mrs. DAMIRON DE ALBA (Dominican Republic) said that all Dominican citizens enjoyed the same rights. Women had evolved and must no longer be confined to the role of wife or mother. Women had their place in society side by side with men, even in politics, as the example of certain countries such as India and the United Kingdom showed. She hoped that the draft Declaration would receive general approval.

46. Mrs. THORSSON (Sweden) said that the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights solemnly proclaimed that all human beings were born free and equal in dignity and rights and that everyone was entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights without distinction of any kind, *inter alia* as to sex. Everyone knew, however, that those principles were far from being put into practice.

Human beings were not regarded primarily as persons but as members of a particular group who were denied certain rights. Women, who made up half of the world's population, constituted one of those groups. There was no need to dwell on the manner in which the principle of equality was applied to them; the facts spoke for themselves. She would not waste time enumerating the many reasons for that regrettable discrepancy between solemnly adopted principles and sad realities. It was worth noting, however, that almost everywhere very definite improvements were taking place in the legal guarantees of equality between women and men. In many countries laws had been enacted or were being drafted to put an end to discrimination against women. Yet, as the representative of Belgium had pointed out, there was not a single country in the world in which all discriminatory practices against women had been abolished and where women were absolutely free and equal to men. It was public opinion which was most to blame for the persistence of prejudice and discrimination. On the one side were preconceived ideas as to the alleged natural inferiority of women, and on the other, there was an attitude of passivity towards, not to say acquiescence in, those ideas. That situation, which was attributable to prejudices handed down for centuries from generation to generation, contributed greatly to the survival of discriminatory practices, despite the laws enacted to end them. The fight to end discrimination against women was therefore primarily a psychological one. The battle had to be fought at the level of public opinion, the habits and ways of thinking which decisively influenced ways of life. It was not, of course, a matter of criticizing any group or any ruling class; to attempt to do that would be both fruitless and unwarranted, since no one could assert that there was a deliberate intention on the part of those concerned to defend a position and antiquated and obsolete privileges. That, it might be noted, was made clear in the report of the Commission on the Status of Women. What was to be fought was the general indifference and the lack of imagination that had prevented people from giving serious consideration to the possible consequences of the full-scale application of the ideas which all countries had solemnly endorsed.

47. The Swedish delegation would like, in particular, to see an effort made to influence minds, first of all by removing from school books, advertising, radio, television and films all the tendentious images and clichés likely to give men from their early boyhood a false idea of the status of women. That would eliminate the type of involuntary discrimination represented by the fairly widespread opinion that the so-called feminine problems were special and relatively unimportant ones the solution of which could be left to women. The fact was, on the contrary, that the problems quite erroneously described as feminine were in fact extremely serious ones the solution of which concerned all members of society. All possible means should therefore be used to influence and educate public opinion in that decisive process. Her delegation believed that the adoption by the General Assembly of a declaration on the elimination of discrimination against women could be an important step in that direction.

48. She wished to pay tribute to the work done by the Commission on the Status of Women, which had prepared a constructive and well-balanced draft Declaration. The Declaration must keep its energetic character, and she would be sorry to see it weakened by amendments. As was stated in the Commission's report, it was not a matter of drafting an international law or convention, as it were, which the largest possible number of Member States would be able to sign and ratify. There must be no attempt, therefore, to reduce all tendencies and all opinions to the lowest common denominator, for to do so would make the Declaration meaningless and deprive it of any influence on public opinion. She thought it preferable to draft the Declaration in the most energetic and positive terms possible, and in such a way as to give the impression that the fight was not against something, namely, discrimination against women, but, on the contrary, for something, namely, the liberation and utilization of a hitherto partly unexploited potential. For that reason her delegation had submitted a number of amendments (A/C.3/L.1385) to the draft Declaration.

49. The women of the world could no longer be content with a theoretical affirmation of the principle of equality. Practical efforts were necessary. In adopting the Declaration the United Nations would be embarking upon a constructive action and would be helping to eliminate prejudices which were all too widespread.

50. Mrs. HENRION (Belgium), introducing her delegation's amendments (A/C.3/L.1386), pointed out first of all that a declaration was not a binding legal instrument and only set out to define the goal to be attained in the more or less early future, according to the situation in each State. Since it was not a binding document, all States should be able to adopt it without difficulty. In addition, States should not wish the Declaration to restate what was already in their national legislation, for any attempt to reduce the text to the lowest possible denominator would render it meaningless.

51. Her delegation had proposed a number of amendments to article 6, which concerned the private rights of women. It might almost have been sufficient for that purpose to reproduce article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; but the Commission on the Status of Women had felt it necessary to be more explicit, so that the Declaration would be clearly understood by everyone. While approving the substance of article 6 her delegation was not happy with its arrangement. It would be better to specify women's personal rights first, and their property rights afterwards. Her delegation had therefore reproduced the paragraphs of the original text but arranged them differently, and had thought it particularly important to maintain the statement of the essential principles in the introductory paragraph. She pointed out in that connexion that, in the first line of the original text of article 6, the French word "essentiellement", which did not properly translate the word "primarily", ought to be replaced by the word "principalement". Paragraph 1 (a) of her delegation's amendments represented the greatest innovation in the original text. Her delegation took as its starting point the principle underlying

the organization of the family throughout the world; the principle that the husband and wife must live together and that married couples had a "duty of co-habitation". The family was the essential element in society. It would be erroneous to state, as some did, that one of the two spouses must take the decisions, and that it was for the husband to decide where the conjugal residence would be. Under Belgian legislation the husband and wife had to agree and choose together the locality which would be most beneficial to family life. If the wife did not approve her husband's choice she could apply to the president of the court. It was recognized, for instance, that living with the parents-in-law could be detrimental to family life. Similarly, residence in a district in which the children would be exposed to bad company was considered an adverse factor. That was an extremely important question, for mutual understanding was the binding force of the conjugal union.

52. With regard to marriage, in accordance with the principles stated in both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, men and women had the right freely to choose their marriage partner, a right which excluded child marriage and the betrothal of girls before puberty, etc. That principle was recognized in para-

graph 1 (c) of her delegation's amendments. In paragraph 1 (e) the word "duties" had been inserted, since her delegation felt that there could be no rights without duties. The following sub-paragraph affirmed the equality of the father's and mother's rights and duties with regard to the children, but made it clear that the interest of the children should be the paramount consideration. The second paragraph of the amendment concerned the property rights of the spouses.

53. Her delegation was also submitting an amendment of a secondary nature to article 10 relating to social rights, and more particularly what were called social welfare benefits. It did not find the idea of placing the right to holidays with pay first in the enumeration of benefits in paragraph 1 (c) very appropriate. Moreover, it felt it necessary to state that those rights should be granted "on the same terms as those applicable to men", since in the social legislation of most countries there were inequalities between the rights of women and those of men. For instance, the unemployment benefit granted to a mother was sometimes less than that paid to single men.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.