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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 26th MEETING

**Chairman:** Mr. OGURTSOV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic)

**later:** Ms. SHERMAN-PETER (Bahamas)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 94: INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING INSTITUTE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued) (A/44/409 and Corr.1 and 2, A/44/416)

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AGENDA ITEM 104: FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN TO THE YEAR 2000 (continued)

- (a) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NAIROBI FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (A/44/511, A/44/551)
- (b) UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT FUND FOR WOMEN (A/44/389)
- (c) IMPROVEMENT OF THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE SECRETARIAT
- (d) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN PROMOTING INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND CO-OPERATION
- (e) NATIONAL EXPERIENCE RELATING TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE SITUATION OF WOMEN IN RURAL AREAS (A/44/516)

1. Mr. HASHI (Somalia) said he was gratified to note that since the adoption of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, slow but steady progress had been made towards the improvement of the status of women. Recognition had been given to priority themes such as equality and the economic improvement of the status of women, as well as the situation of women who were victims of armed conflicts or racial discrimination.

2. In Somalia, women's rights had been greatly enhanced since independence in 1960. The Somali Constitution outlawed gender discrimination and stipulated that education should be free and compulsory from the age of six for all girls and boys. In economic terms, there was no difference in wage scales between men and women in whatever field of activity.

3. The Commission on the Status of Women was preparing to consider the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (A/44/511). It was important for it to do so at a time when equality was almost totally lacking, the economic crisis was adversely affecting women in the developing countries and the majority of the world population was stricken by drought and famine.

4. Indeed, throughout north-eastern Africa, the brunt of economic problems was borne by women, many of whom were refugees. The international community must

(Mr. Hashi, Somalia)

recognize the need to understand and thus find a solution to the situation of those refugee women. He urged the relevant United Nations bodies to address themselves to that question.

5. Somali women earnestly desired peace and the opportunity it brought for development. They shared in the struggle of Namibian women, Palestinian women and the women of South Africa to exercise their basic rights.

6. He recalled General Assembly resolution 41/123, which called upon Governments, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations to assist refugee women and children outside South Africa and Namibia and to provide for the widest possible dissemination of information about their situation. He also underscored the importance of resolution 35/206 N of 16 December 1980, which called for the observance of an International Day of Solidarity with the Struggle of Women of South Africa and Namibia each year on 9 August. In that connection he was gratified that the Special Committee against Apartheid and the Association of Women's Clubs of Zimbabwe had organized a Seminar on the Special Needs of South African and Namibian Refugee Women and Children at Harare, Zimbabwe. That Seminar had, inter alia, called for the establishment of a support group of eight eminent women to monitor closely the conditions of refugee women and children, to provide publicity to their conditions, and to promote measures to alleviate their hardships and to facilitate their reintegration into society.

7. He urged the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Population Fund and other relevant bodies to co-ordinate their efforts more fully with the Special Committee against Apartheid, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication in their activities in favour of women.

8. Ms. VUKI (Fiji), speaking on agenda item 104, said that the proclamation of the United Nations Decade for Women and the Nairobi Conference had succeeded in heightening international awareness of women's concerns. However, it appeared that the objectives of the Decade - equality, development and peace - and the Strategies aimed at bringing about the "feminization of development" might not be achieved by the year 2000. Despite some progress and some achievements, a stagnation, and even a deterioration, in development could be discerned. In fact, an emerging concern, particularly in the developing countries, was the "feminization of poverty". The economic crisis in those countries was not the sole explanation and it seemed that inadequate attention was being given to the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies.

9. Obstacles to the development of women were numerous and had multiple effects. A woman's lack of control over her reproductive capacity would affect her health, aggravate her domestic burdens and virtually leave her with little or no time for her own self-improvement, which would, in turn, put a strain on the family unit. When such a situation was the norm, it became a social phenomenon which had a negative impact on the social service system, particularly in the developing countries.

(Ms. Vuki, Fiji)

10. It therefore stood to reason that acknowledging and advancing the rights of women, such as reproductive rights, would ensure a more stable family life, which, in turn, would ease the demand on the provision of social services.
11. Factors which hampered the advancement of women were institutional and ideological: traditions and cultural stereotypes which confined women to the home, an inadequate and biased education system, and so on.
12. In his report on the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies (A/44/511), the Secretary-General stressed that women were underrepresented in political decision-making, as well as in the top levels of public sector management.
13. It was cause for concern that Governments did not demonstrate their commitment to the objectives of equality, development and peace in a sufficiently concrete manner. The advancement of women was not a natural evolutionary process, but an activity requiring such action-oriented programmes as the introduction of special quotas for women in national administrations and international organizations. In that connection, her delegation welcomed the decision by the Economic and Social Council (1989/129) to endorse the recommendation of the Commission on the Status of Women that is convene in 1991 a high-level interregional consultation on women in public life. She expressed the hope that the consultation would be fruitful.
14. In 1987, the Government of Fiji had established a Ministry for Women, which was headed by a woman. That Ministry had established a priority programme for rural women.
15. Earlier in 1989, her Government had held a national economic summit meeting to which non-governmental women's organizations had been invited. It had been recommended at that meeting that the women of Fiji should be encouraged to participate in decision-making on social and economic matters.
16. Her delegation considered that education programmes on issues relating to women were vital to advance the status of women. Moreover, that type of education embraced the entire community. Women represented one half of a country's population and their problems deserved to be handled as national issues, because the enhancement of the status of women was synonymous with the country's improved well-being.
17. Lastly, she noted that 1994 was to be designated the international year of the family. Her delegation, mindful of the fundamental role of the family in the transmission of norms and values to young people, suggested that the programme to be carried out in connection with the observance of that year should include an educational component, portraying how the family could transmit the values of equality, development and peace, and thereby contribute to the elimination of gender-related prejudices.

18. Mr. ONKOBO (Burkina Faso), speaking on agenda items 103 and 104, said that the past decade had been marked by a growing awareness in the international community of the role and place of women in society. The United Nations had spared no effort to improve the status of women. Considerable progress had been achieved in that regard, including the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women.

19. Women in Burkina Faso constituted a social group whose importance was due not only to their numbers: as mothers, educators and effectively heads of household, they were the major element in the family, which was itself the basis of society.

20. Thus, particular attention should be paid to the living conditions of women and the psychological and cultural obstacles hindering their advancement should be eliminated. To that end and pursuant to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to which it had acceded, Burkina Faso had taken numerous organizational and institutional measures to overcome the obstacles which could jeopardize the effective participation of women in national development efforts. In that regard, a "Women's Plan of Action" had been elaborated, the main elements of which were the following. In the political field, a Union of the Women of Burkina Faso had been established, enabling the country's women to mobilize to ensure their effective integration into national political life. Women took part in decision-making, and three important Ministries - the Ministries of Finance, Information and Culture, and Basic Education and Mass Literacy - were headed by women. In the legal field, under the agrarian and land reform women were granted the status of farmers on an equal footing with men. Regulations concerning family benefits, remuneration, allowances and material benefits granted to civil servants had been amended to enable women also to receive such benefits. Women civil servants, whether married or single with dependent children, had the same rights as men. The new Code of the individual and the family conferred new responsibilities on women. Maternal and child health programmes had been intensified and primary health care services had been strengthened. Numerous consciousness-raising and educational campaigns had been carried out in the field of nutrition, with the assistance of the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Population Fund and some non-governmental organizations. A vaccination campaign, focusing primarily on pregnant women and children and the expanded programme of immunization had made it possible to reduce the infant mortality rate. Burkina Faso had adopted a family planning policy and some backward practices, such as excision and infibulation, which affected maternal and child health were the subject of discussions and consciousness-raising campaigns to induce people to refrain from them.

21. Education was another important component of his country's action for women. Burkina Faso had selected the mass literacy method in the national language for rural women. The initial "Bantaaré" operation had enabled 10,000 women to learn to read, write and count in one of the three national languages. A second, "post-Bantaaré", operation had made it possible to retrain 6,000 women, who were now able to run a literacy centre in each village.

(Mr. Onkobo, Burkina Faso)

22. As to employment, women held political, administrative or management positions in the public and semi-public sectors. Women, like men, performed their national service obligations and increasing numbers of women were holding jobs that were traditionally reserved for men. In rural areas, women played an essential role in gathering, processing and distributing foodstuffs. Lastly, various measures had been taken to ease domestic tasks and household chores so as to enable women to take part as economic agents in survival and development activities.

23. In the economic sector, the National Fund for the Stabilization of Prices of Agricultural Products gave women financial support to gather and process local produce. Credit facilities were granted to women by the National Agricultural Credit Bank. Moreover, in 1988 the authorities had decided to establish a People's Bank for Women to provide financial assistance for the economic activities women in both urban and rural areas.

24. Burkina Faso hoped that the support of friendly countries and international institutions would make it possible to consolidate its initiatives and actions for women.

25. He welcomed the fact that the States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had carried out a considerable amount of work for the advancement of women. Measures had yet to be taken to put an end to practices, resulting from outmoded cultural patterns, which debased women and to assist women who were victims of armed conflicts and violence.

26. As to the Secretary-General's note on the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) (A/44/389), he commended the action being carried out by UNIFEM, particularly in many developing countries, to promote innovative and experimental activities for women. His country needed the Fund's support to meet the needs of rural working women.

27. In conclusion, he congratulated the Committee on the Status of Women on its work in evaluating implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women.

28. Mrs. BARGHOUTI (Observer Mission of Palestine), speaking under agenda items 103 and 104, pointed out that the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies constituted a historic document, that their implementation implied elimination of discrimination against women in all aspects, and that, in order to achieve the objectives of the Decade for Women - equality, development and peace - all the efforts of the international community were required.

29. Almost 15 years after the adoption of the Nairobi Strategies, it was apparent that progress had been very slow and very limited, especially with regard to women's participation in decision-making. According to the Interparliamentary Union's survey of various countries, the percentage of women in the world's legislatures had fallen from 14.6 per cent at the beginning of 1988 to 12.7 per cent in mid-1989.

(Mrs. Barghouti, Observer, Palestine)

30. Another issue which called for intensified efforts on the part of the international community was the status of women in the countries under colonial domination and foreign occupation. The situation of the Palestinian women was unique and had no equivalent other than that of South African and Namibian women. Palestinian women were denied the basic rights that were granted to every person irrespective of his or her race, sex or religion. From that perspective, the role of Palestinian women was linked to the struggle of the Palestinian people for liberation and independence.

31. For some long time the Palestinian people in general and Palestinian women in particular were subjected to brutal and oppressive measures by the Israeli military authorities which sought to deprive the Palestinian people of the right to live in peace and dignity in their own country. The response of the Palestinian women to the Israeli racist policy had been to continue their struggle until they attained their rights.

32. The impact of the important role of Palestinian women was very clear during the intifadah. The intifadah was characterized by the development of an alternative social structure: mainly popular committees which included health committees responsible for door-to-door delivery of health care; education committees which had successfully filled the vacuum created by the closure of schools by the Israeli authorities; and production committees which were responsible for co-ordinating the work done in different areas. Women played a major part in building and maintaining those new economic, social and political structures. The uprising had given Palestinian women a new role consisting of two main aspects: defiance of the occupation, on the one hand, and active defence of the community and individual life on the other.

33. The price paid by Palestinian women was heavy. Since the beginning of the intifadah, 782 Palestinians, including 100 women, had been killed. Reports and statistics showed that many Palestinian women had been seriously wounded. Hundreds of them had been brutally beaten and, in many cases, had died as a result of the beatings. Others had been shot dead by Israeli soldiers. Tens of thousands of Palestinian women suffered from a lack of food and medicine. The number of miscarriages had increased to an alarming extent; since the beginning of the intifadah, 2,200 cases had been recorded. The condition of Palestinian women prisoners was critical. Women prisoners were subjected to torture and sexual harassment by Israeli soldiers. In Jalemeq prison, they had no access to toilets. They slept on the floor in overcrowded rooms.

34. She thanked all the Governments and organizations for their support of, and solidarity with, the Palestinian people in their struggle for freedom. She appealed to all peoples and the international community to support the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and their right to establish an independent State on their national soil. Palestinian women could then participate fully in the development of their society and live in peace, dignity and freedom.

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35. Mrs. PETRITSCH-HOLADAY (Austria) said that the commitment to achieving the goals of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies was largely verbal. It was true that many countries found it difficult to allocate the resources necessary for the advancement of women owing to the unfavourable economic climate. The situation must therefore be remedied, inter alia, through special measures for the advancement of women - for example, by granting them preferential treatment on a temporary basis and making provision for long-term strategies. There was also an urgent need to inform and, for that purpose, to establish appropriate national machinery, so as to ensure full participation of women in the decision-making process at all levels and in all sectors of society. The United Nations system could play an important role; there was a need for assistance in the sectors of information, training and advisory services and for sharing experiences.

36. With regard to item 104, on the eve of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, sufficient resources must be made available to the Committee to enable it to perform its functions. Austria had incorporated article 4 of the Convention into its constitutional law, considering that the temporary preferential treatment of women was not at variance with the principle of equality between men and women. In addition, Austria was preparing a series of events for providing information and a media campaign to create public awareness in the context of the tenth anniversary of the Convention.

37. The holding of intergovernmental consultations concerning women's participation in political life and decision-making had proved very successful. Austria therefore welcomed the holding of an interregional high-level meeting on women in public life in 1991.

38. Implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies required close co-operation between Governments and international bodies. In that connection, Austria intended to focus on a continuation of high-level round-table meetings of representatives of national and international bodies, on research activities and on information and public awareness campaigns.

39. Mrs. CARMENATE (Cuba) said that the research, training and information programmes of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women were substantial contributions towards implementing the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. On the eve of the Institute's tenth anniversary she paid a tribute to the Dominican Republic for the support given by it to the Institute.

40. Although no fewer than 99 States had signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the situation in that respect was still disturbing. The 1988 report of the United Nations Population Fund showed that women accounted for two thirds of the total number of hours worked in the world, whereas they had only one tenth of the world's income and one hundredth of its real estate at their disposal. That situation was even worse in the developing countries because of the external debt problem.



(Mrs. Carmenate, Cuba)

41. In his report (A/44/511), the Secretary-General provided information on the obstacles to the full integration of women in development and their participation in economic, social and political activities. The evaluation of progress made within the framework of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies nevertheless presented difficulties. Only 55 States had replied to the questionnaire drawn up for that purpose. Thus, at its extended 1990 session, the Commission on the Status of Women should use the data contained in the World Survey on the Role of Women in Development in order to overcome those shortcomings.

42. She pointed out that her country had already achieved the national objectives set for the year 2000 in the report of UNFPA. Life expectancy for women in Cuba was 76.1 years and they represented 38.3 per cent of the work force and occupied 24.7 per cent of managerial posts.

43. Ms. Sherman-Peter (Bahamas) took the Chair.

44. Ms. MØLLER (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, welcomed the fact that the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1990-1991 provided for the allocation of all necessary resources to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. With regard to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, she hoped that the countries that had made reservations would re-examine their positions and noted with satisfaction the steps being taken by the Department of Public Information in the context of the tenth anniversary of the Convention.

45. The Nordic countries welcomed the new method of work adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women. In that regard, it was evident from the work carried out by the working group to prepare for the review and appraisal of progress made in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, which the Commission would undertake at its extended 1990 session, that the situation in that field was rather unsatisfactory.

46. Women's issues could not be treated as isolated phenomena. Their integration into national policy-making, nevertheless, required support at the highest political level and the setting up, for that purpose, of national machinery with sufficient resources. To that end, there was also a need for gender-specific data and measures specially designed to promote the advancement of women. Education and the raising of public awareness in that regard were of crucial importance in order to change ingrained attitudes concerning women and promote a more equitable sharing of household tasks and parental responsibilities.

47. In the economic field, it was absolutely essential that women should have access to means of production and education - a prerequisite for participating in public life - as well as the labour market in accordance with the principle "equal pay for work of equal value". Women must also be able to participate on an equal footing with men in social and political fields, including those related to peace, disarmament and security at the national, regional and international level.

(Ms. Møller, Denmark)

48. She recalled the progress made by the Nordic countries concerning the participation of women in the decision-making process; she expressed regret, however, at the fact that women were significantly underrepresented at senior management levels within the United Nations, which should serve as a model in that field. In that regard, it should also be stressed that, since the concept of sustainable development could not be separated from environmental questions, women, by virtue of their contribution to development, must be involved in decisions on the environment.

49. With regard to the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, the holding of world conferences was essential in order to keep the question of the advancement of women at the top of the international agenda. In that connection, the non-governmental organizations of the Nordic countries had organized the previous summer in Oslo the Nordic Forum, at which there had been an exchange of experience by participants of all ages and different educational and political backgrounds. In a similar vein, the General Assembly should select 1995 for holding the World Conference to precede the one already planned for the year 2000. In the mean time, the extended 1990 session of the Commission on the Status of Women was of particular importance and it was hoped that, despite the controversy surrounding the enlargement of the Commission, all delegations would work together in a constructive spirit.

50. Ms. GEBRE-EGZIABHER (Ethiopia) said that her country attached great importance to the advancement of women, particularly the implementation of the forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women to the year 2000, which should be given the highest priority at all levels. Her delegation was concerned at the fact that the implementation of the Strategies, as indicated in the report of the Secretary-General (A/44/511), was not commensurate with what was needed to improve the situation of women. If that state of affairs continued, it was unimaginable that the objectives set could be achieved by the year 2000.

51. Admittedly, the number of States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had increased and many countries had adopted legislative measures to eliminate inequality between men and women. However, despite those legal measures, the status of women had not improved substantially and discrimination and prejudice against women continued to exist. Women still did not have the opportunity to participate fully in political life and decision-making, particularly with regard to matters directly affecting their well-being. Furthermore, the World Survey on the Role of Women in Development and the Report on the World Social Situation showed that employment opportunities for women were limited and that the deteriorating world economic and social situation had exacerbated the plight of women, particularly in the developing countries.

52. Stressing the importance of the contribution of women to the establishment of peace, which the international community had furthermore recognized by adopting the Declaration on the Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Co-operation, she looked forward to the day when Namibian women would take their place in the Third Committee as the representatives of a free Namibia, the evil system of apartheid would be eradicated and Palestinian women would finally achieve success in their struggle for self-determination.

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(Ms. Gebre-Egziabher, Ethiopia)

53. In view of the importance that it attached to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, her delegation considered that the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was of great value and believed that that Committee should be given the necessary support to carry out its mandate effectively. She also hoped that the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention would be the occasion for the States that had not yet done so to become parties to it.

54. Her delegation also valued the activities of UNIFEM in developing countries, including Ethiopia, and the Fund's continuous efforts to improve the economic situation of women. The lack of continuity in the implementation of policies and projects to benefit women, which the International Seminar on Women and Rural Development had demonstrated, was a problem which UNIFEM could help solve if it had adequate resources.

55. Her delegation welcomed the efforts made by INSTRAW to improve statistics and indicators on women.

56. Among the obstacles that prevented improvement in the status of women the most important was undoubtedly the economic problems facing many developing countries. As long as that situation remained unchanged, the goals and aspirations of those countries in terms of improving the fate of women could hardly be achieved. It was therefore important for the Commission on the Status of Women to review and evaluate implementation of the Strategies in that context.

57. Ethiopia, which was party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, had enacted legislation to ensure equality of rights between men and women. The Government had also instituted, together with the Revolutionary Ethiopian Women's Association, programmes for women in the areas of development, education, employment and health. Despite those initiatives, much remained to be done to improve the situation of women in Ethiopia and the Government was determined to pursue its efforts in accordance with the objectives set forth in the Nairobi Strategies.

58. Mrs. HERCUS (New Zealand) said that equality between men and women was a principle to which New Zealand was profoundly attached and for which it was actively working at the national, regional and international levels. She was encouraged in that connection by the fact that, with 99 States parties, the Convention on the elimination of discrimination against women was one of the international instruments that had received the largest number of accessions. The Convention was one of the two pillars of the international programme for the improvement of the status of women, the second being the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. Concerning those Strategies, her delegation had said at Nairobi that everything must be done to ensure progress in the status of women to the year 2000. However, four years after the adoption of the Strategies, the progress expected was not in evidence. There had been stagnation and even regression. While de jure discrimination had been partly eliminated, de facto discrimination persisted. Getting women to participate more in decision-making had proved a major

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(Mrs. Hercus, New Zealand)

obstacle. Specific measures were required to help women to play a more active role in managing the affairs of their countries. New Zealand was also very disappointed to note that the United Nations system, which should be a model in that respect, had done so little to increase the number of women in the Professional category despite repeated directives from Governments.

59. In the developing countries another major obstacle to improving the status of women was the economic situation, which had often deteriorated, particularly in Africa and Latin America. In the developed countries, the range of occupations held by women was increasingly restricted and their occupations were often badly paid.

60. Improvement of the economic status of women was of vital importance because women were a major force for change and because encouraging women to realize their potential enabled them to participate fully not only in their own development but also in that of their families, their communities and their nations.

61. In New Zealand women had waged a long battle to achieve equality and had won the right to vote 96 years ago. In 1989, for the first time, the Deputy Prime Minister was a woman, and several women occupied high-level posts in the Government, New Zealand was also one of the first countries to establish, in 1985, a department of State for the specific task of improving the status of women and making sure that the needs of women were seriously considered. Where barriers persisted - particularly attitudinal ones - New Zealand was making every effort to remove them.

62. There was a basic link between the economic status of women and the overall development of a country. Hence the New Zealand Government was actively seeking to improve the economic status of women, particularly their occupational status, and to make sure that women were represented in all decision-making areas. National machinery had been established specifically to promote the interests of women, including Maori women, in all areas - employment, social services, natural resources, child care, industry and commerce. In 1989 the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Department of Statistics had made a study of the contribution to the economy of women's unpaid domestic work. It showed that, although women were joining the ranks of the paid work-force in increasing numbers, the time spent by men on unpaid domestic work did not increase proportionately, which meant that working women continued to do two jobs simultaneously and that a completely unwarranted division of labour persisted. The purpose of the study was to upgrade women's unpaid work and make sure that it was the result of a genuine choice. The study might reveal a need to develop totally different economic and social well-being indicators.

63. Implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies required an innovative approach and the formulation of priority objectives valid for the United Nations system-wide. The existence of specialized agencies for the advancement of women did not relieve the United Nations system as a whole from responsibility. All issues were women's issues. A New Zealand lady was serving on the Board of

(Mrs. Hercus, New Zealand)

Trustees of INSTRAW and the New Zealand delegation was pleased that she would be making New Zealand's experience in pioneering projects for women available to the Board.

64. Mr. Ogurtsov (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) took the Chair.

65. Miss LISSIDINI (Uruguay) was pleased that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had adopted, at its eighth session, recommendation 10 designed to ensure wide dissemination of the Convention. Only through education and knowledge could the de jure equality of women become de facto equality.

66. In actual practice, it was discouraging to note that adjustment policies had had a negative impact on women in the developing countries, particularly in Africa and Latin America, giving rise to what was called the "feminization of poverty" and intensifying the inequality between women and men in such areas as health, nutrition, literacy and access to education. Seeing their access to employment in the structured section of the economy increasingly limited, women were forced to turn to the informal sector, where they ran the risk of discrimination and exploitation. Lastly, it must be kept in mind that, in the developing countries, women with responsibilities as heads of the family were increasingly numerous.

67. In view of that situation, her delegation attached great importance to the first review of the implementation of the Nairobi Strategies that the Commission on the Status of Women would undertake in 1990 and to the three topics the Commission would address, namely, participation in politics, the world economic situation and the effects of armed conflicts.

68. Turning to the activities of INSTRAW, she said that the work done by the Institute in collecting basic data concerning the status of women in the economic and social fields as well as the new classifications adopted by the Institute to measure the participation of women in the work-force was extremely important. She also supported the holding of a meeting of experts to examine the role of women in the non-structured sector and was pleased that, in its medium-term plan for 1990-1995, the Institute planned to intensify its information, documentation and communication programmes so as to heighten awareness of issues relating to women and development.

69. Her delegation was paying close attention to UNIFEM's support operations for initiatives taken by disadvantaged women in developing countries in various regions of the world. Similarly, it had listened very closely to the statement by the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund who had emphasized the need to integrate women in all population and development activities. In order to demonstrate its support for the Fund, Uruguay would increase its contribution by 20 per cent in 1990.

70. Uruguay, which had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in October 1981, had taken several measures to ensure equality of treatment for women. In 1987, it had established a Women's Institute whose function was to make provisions for expanding women's role in society. In 1988, it had set up the first commission for the express purpose of hearing

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(Miss Lissidini, Uruguay);

complaints relating to crimes against women. Lastly, in 1989 a law had been enacted to ban all discrimination against women in the work-force.

71. Education establishments had also been requested to launch educational campaigns in order to promote understanding of the situation of working women and to remove the obstacles preventing them from developing their abilities to the full.

72. Mr. PIBULSONGGRAM (Thailand) said that the tenth anniversary of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women provided an opportunity to evaluate the progress made in implementing the principles set forth in the Convention and the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies adopted in 1985.

73. Thai women, who amounted to approximately half of the population and constituted 67 per cent of the labour force (the highest percentage in that region of Asia), were responsible for more than 50 per cent of food production, processing and marketing and also carried out their traditional family responsibilities. His Government therefore attached great importance to the role of women in the country's economic and social development and had adopted a long-term development plan for women covering the years 1982 to 2001. Under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister himself, the National Commission for Women's Affairs, established in March 1989, had the function of recommending amendments to existing laws and regulations in order to ensure equality for women in all sectors and to integrate them into all levels of national development.

74. At the international level, his country, which had participated actively in the 1985 Nairobi Conference and was a member of the Commission on the Status of Women, supported all United Nations activities for the advancement of women. His delegation looked forward to the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Strategies to be undertaken by the Commission for the first time at its 1990 session and hoped that the Commission would produce constructive recommendations on how best to achieve the objectives set forth in the Strategies by the year 2000.

75. His delegation welcomed also the efforts of the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, to develop a medium-term plan for the advancement of women within the United Nations system. It also thanked the various United Nations bodies, especially UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIFEM and INSTRAW, for their valuable contributions to projects for the advancement of women in several countries, including his own.

76. Various types of action could promote the advancement of women. The educational system should be redesigned to increase enrolment opportunities for women at all academic levels and to lay greater emphasis in the school curriculum on the importance of equality between men and women. A commission on women's affairs should be established at the national level to formulate policies and co-ordinate plans and actions concerning the advancement of women. Laws and regulations impeding that advancement should be amended. Lastly, Governments should launch campaigns at the national level to promote women's rights and to change traditional values that hindered the exercise of those rights.

77. Mrs. ARUNGU-OLENDE (Kenya) said that the increase in the number of Member States represented in the Commission on the Status of Women should enable it to conduct a broad-based debate, in particular during the mid-term review of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, to be carried out in 1990. The fact that more than half of the Member States had not responded to the United Nations questionnaire on the subject had been taken as an indication of considerable stagnation in the implementation of the Strategies, but she emphasized that the questionnaire required a great deal of information gathering and co-ordination, a task which was very time-consuming in the absence of sufficient personnel. Many speakers had referred to the difficulties experienced by their countries in responding to the various United Nations questionnaires and endeavouring at the same time to fulfil their reporting obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Her country had the same problem. The time-limits set for the return of those questionnaires should be more realistic because co-ordination among the various ministries and non-governmental organizations could be time-consuming and, without such co-ordination, it was impossible to give accurate and precise responses. It was therefore necessary to improve and closely co-ordinate the issuing of those questionnaires so as to avoid duplication of efforts and reduce considerably the burden of work for national administrations.

78. Discrimination against women continued in spite of existing legislation. As the various reports before the Third Committee had emphasized, it was necessary to remove the economic, social and cultural barriers which, in many developing countries, restricted women to low-status jobs. The key to moving women into better jobs was more education and training, which would enable women to compete with men in the job market. It had also been found that, for many families, the quality of life improved with a rise in the women's educational level.

79. As the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund had stated, women throughout the world had two jobs, at home and outside the home, and suffered because the difficulty of their situation went unrecognized. In that connection, one imperative need was to ensure literacy and schooling for girls and women. Her delegation therefore recommended that, in the literacy campaigns to be carried out in the forthcoming International Literacy Year, priority should be given to the education of girls and women. The advancement of women had not been as rapid as expected partly because economic difficulties had forced many Governments to cut back expenditures, in particular in social sectors, but also because of a lack of interest in women's needs, as had been demonstrated at the planning level. The policy-makers must appreciate that fact and deal with it.

80. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) had made efforts to enable poor women in rural and urban areas in the developing countries to improve their standards of living and take control of their lives into their own hands. Her delegation believed that, with increased resources and with the experience it had acquired, UNIFEM could do even more to demonstrate how women's needs could be incorporated into the mainstream of development. Support for UNIFEM should be maintained and increased.

(Mrs. Arungu-Olende, Kenya)

81. Where improving the status of women in the Secretariat was concerned, her delegation would like the Secretariat to inform members of the Committee what had been done towards employment of African women in the Secretariat, which had been lagging far behind that of other regions.

82. Her delegation saw the work of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) as highly relevant to those concerned with planning and programming on women's development. It noted the co-operation between INSTRAW and the regional commissions, and hoped that close collaboration would be established between the Institute and focal points on women's questions, in order to create greater awareness of the valuable information the Institute had managed to gather during its existence.

83. Regarding discrimination against women, women seemed not to be aware of their rights under the relevant Convention and many lacked the skills and knowledge to use the legal system to pursue their rights. In Kenya, that lack of legal information had been found to be an obstacle to both men and women. A great deal therefore depended on the protection of those rights and adherence to the provisions of the Convention by the authorities, since without literacy and education it would be hard to change the situation.

84. Mrs. KALMYK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that, on the threshold of the tenth anniversary of its adoption, nearly 100 States were parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which held a place of honour among the major international human rights instruments. The increase in the number of parties to the Convention would undoubtedly strengthen international co-operation on equal rights for women. In February the Soviet Union had recognized the mandatory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice in respect of that Convention, the Convention on the Political Rights of Women and the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others.

85. The positive developments in relation to action by the international community to achieve a nuclear-free and non-violent world, settle regional disputes by peaceful means and resolve difficult world economic problems had a substantial impact on the implementation of the principle of equality of the sexes. As many speakers had emphasized, discrimination against women had not disappeared - far from it. In developed and developing countries alike, the statistics were damning: women continued to suffer discrimination in education, employment and health; they were the first to suffer from poverty, hunger and violence.

86. Very few women played a part in political and public life, although in most countries there was no legal impediment to their participation. Her delegation shared the hope expressed by the representative of France, on behalf of the 12 member States of the European Community, that the study of women's participation in political life and in decision-making, to be undertaken by the Commission on the Status of Women at its next, extended session, would open up new prospects for improvement.



(Mrs. Kalmyk, USSR)

87. The reasons for inequality varied according to country and region, but there were some common factors. She endorsed the conclusion of the first training seminar on the Convention, held at Athens, that the elimination of discrimination against women depended to a large extent on the political will of the Governments. But sound economic and social programmes were also necessary, as well as the establishment of national mechanisms or the improvement of existing ones. Also important were scientific research, and the establishment in every country of a system for collecting reliable data on the situation of women, the dissemination of information, and education on equality of the sexes.

88. The Soviet Union had had some success in the advancement of women. Nevertheless, it forced the same problems as other countries. For example, many women in the Soviet Union had hard jobs to do. The difficulties of daily life were a heavy burden on them. They also suffered from the relics of patriarchal traditions about women's role in society. Although the proportion of women in decision-making posts was higher than in the rest of the world, it was still not high enough.

89. Under the current process of perestroika the Soviet Union had adopted a new attitude to the status of women. The Supreme Soviet had proclaimed a systematic approach to the protection of women and the promotion of their role in society. It had established a committee on women, protection of the family and mother and child welfare. An autonomous division on those questions had been set up under the Council of Ministers, reporting directly to the Head of Government. The women's movement was becoming more active: more than 250,000 women's councils were engaged in independent non-governmental action. A comprehensive forward-looking programme was being prepared, with the direct participation of women, taking account of particular national and regional characteristics, with the object of establishing the best conditions for the realization of their rights.

90. It would be impossible to build a more human, truly civilized and democratic international community unless discrimination against women was totally eliminated. In an interdependent world, the status of women was of universal importance. It was particularly important for States to disseminate information on their positive experience, at national and regional level, on the question of improving the status of women and developing co-operation to the benefit of all countries, whether small or large, or developed or developing. The Soviet Union was ready to play its part in that co-operation, both bilaterally and multilaterally.

91. Her delegation hoped that the international seminar to be organized jointly by the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Soviet Union to celebrate the Convention's tenth anniversary in September 1990, would contribute to the development of mutually beneficial co-operation in ensuring equality of rights for women. It attached great importance to the forthcoming extended session of the Commission on the Status of Women which could give new impetus to national, regional and international action to implement the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies.

92. Mrs. WEIJENBORG-POT (Netherlands) said that by appointing a woman representing the women's organizations in her country as a member of the Netherlands delegation, her Government showed the importance it attached to the contribution women made to the work of the United Nations. Four years after the Nairobi Conference, it was clear that action for the advancement of women was slowing down and in some cases had come to a complete stop. Inequality between men and women was growing and poverty among women increasing. Member States should discuss what measures could be taken within the framework of the United Nations to give fresh impetus to the advancement of women.

93. More and more countries were introducing legislation to guarantee equality between men and women. Unfortunately, such legislation was not enough. There was a need to adopt affirmative action programmes giving preference to women in employment, guaranteeing contract compliance and affording more opportunities for women. The United Nations should discuss such measures and recommend further action by Member States. Women should be aware of their rights and be able to stand up for them. Collective action through women's organizations and trade unions was essential for the full exercise of those rights. A debate should be held at the United Nations to map out the course to be followed for women to achieve true equality.

94. For the first time, the World Economic Survey had devoted a chapter to the role of women in the economic process. It showed that prosperity and the fair distribution of resources increased as the degree to which men and women shared their responsibilities, and the number of women in paid employment, increased. With regard to the development process, it was essential that women should play an active role in social, economic and political life. That required above all a change of attitude leading to recognition of women's economic role. Priority must be accorded to income-generating projects for women, the informal sector should be given a formal structure and minimum wages and the principle of equal pay for work of equal value had to be guaranteed. In the rural sector, the status of women should be improved by affording them access to training, credit facilities and land. Lastly, the work of the United Nations must be supported by local women's organizations. The note by the Secretary-General on the United Nations Development Fund for Women (A/44/389) showed that UNIFEM had an important role to play in furthering women's contribution to development.

95. Peace began inside every home, in the relationship between one human being and another and between men and women. Violence against women was common where power was not equally shared between the sexes. Physical violence, female circumcision, bride burning and sexual abuse such as incest and rape were phenomena to which women in all socio-economic classes were frequently exposed. The number of female victims of such abuses was growing. Inequality between men and women was intensified by the commercialization of sexual relations, the most obvious forms of which were the traffic in women, forced prostitution and sex tourism. Those were not to be regarded as purely private matters; Governments had an evident responsibility in that regard and should remain in close consultation with the various sections of society in order to develop and implement common action.

(Mrs. Weijzenborg-Pot, Netherlands)

96. Recent research commissioned by the Netherlands Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment had demonstrated that violence against women was not always visible and obvious. From a study of 1,000 women it had emerged that one in nine women between the ages of 20 and 60 had repeatedly suffered moderate to serious violence at the hands of a man. It was commendable that the findings of that study and similar research had been published in recent years. They uncompromisingly brought the problems facing women to the attention of the public in general. That was of the utmost importance, since changes in the relations between men and women could take place only with broad-based support from all strata of society.

97. The Secretary-General had taken effective action to set up women's programmes in virtually every United Nations agency and organization. It was not clear, however, if and how those programmes benefited women. Her delegation therefore recommended that the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and the United Nations agencies should measure the results of such policies by collecting separate data on men and women. It was also important to seek ways of rendering data-collection methods more sophisticated and more sensitive. The co-ordinating role of the Economic and Social Council with regard to policies for the advancement of women should be strengthened, as should the role of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. In addition, the Fifth Committee should give more detailed consideration to the planning and budgeting of programmes concerning women.

98. Since the goal of ensuring that 30 per cent of senior posts in the Organization would be occupied by women by 1990 had not yet been achieved, efforts in that direction should be intensified. The increase in the number of focal points for women in the United Nations system was a very positive development. It was self-evident that they must be provided with sufficient funds to carry out their task, if necessary through the reallocation of resources.

99. Careful consideration should be given to the proposal of the Commission on the Status of Women for the holding of an interregional consultation on the role of women in public life in 1991. A meeting of that kind would be relevant only if, in the preparatory stage, various recent contributions concerning feminist thinking were taken into account. If that was done, the meeting could shed light on existing obstacles to progress and outline possible new policies.

100. Various documents now before the Third Committee referred to the work of non-governmental organizations and the need for co-operation between them under the auspices of the United Nations. Women's non-governmental organizations played a significant role since they kept a critical eye on policy and supplied information which was generally unavailable to official policy-makers. They conducted research in previously unexplored areas and drew up new strategies. It was therefore essential that women members of non-governmental organizations, women experts and women from grass-roots organizations should be closely involved in the work of the United Nations.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.