

UNITED NATIONS
General Assembly

FORTY-FOURTH SESSION

Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
24th meeting
held on
Tuesday, 31 October 1989
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 24th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KAHORE (Burkina Faso)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 94: INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING INSTITUTE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 103: ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (continued)

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
- (b) UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT FUND FOR WOMEN
- (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

This record is subject to correction.
Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned
within one week of the date of publication to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, Room DC2 750,
2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.3/44/SR.24
16 November 1989
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

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-S/20743; A/44/416)

AGENDA ITEM 103: ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (continued) (A/44/38, A/44/238 and Corr.1, A/44/342, A/44/409-S/20743, A/44/411, A/44/457, A/44/551)

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)
- (b) UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT FUND FOR WOMEN (A/44/389)
- (e) NATIONAL EXPERIENCE RELATING TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE SITUATION OF WOMEN IN RURAL AREAS (A/44/516)

1. Mrs. JOSHI (Nepal) said that although the importance of the role of women in development was increasingly recognized, they continued to suffer from discrimination at work and at home, especially in countries where poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy reigned. She noted with appreciation the many initiatives taken by the United Nations and the specialized agencies to eliminate all discrimination against women, including the adoption of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, while emphasizing the need for Member States to redouble their efforts to bring about concrete results. The elimination of discrimination against women required more than the adoption of legislation, especially since that legislation was not always well understood by women, particularly women in rural areas. The co-operative effort of all public bodies was crucial if that legislation was to be implemented effectively.

2. The Constitution of Nepal guaranteed equal rights to men and women in all spheres of life. Thus, unmarried daughters had the same inheritance rights as men, and polygamy and child marriage were prohibited. The establishment of a women's service co-ordination committee marked a turning point in the history of Nepalese women. That committee was responsible for co-ordinating and integrating the activities undertaken by the State and non-governmental organizations for the advancement of women, as well as implementing the Forward-looking Strategies at the national level. Thanks to the Committee's efforts, separate units for women in development had been established in various ministries and given specific responsibility for advocating and promoting the advancement of women, particularly in rural areas, and, among other objectives, generating self-employment opportunities for rural women and enabling them to obtain bank credit for food production.

(Mrs. Joshi, Nepal)

3. The Women Development Division's function was to co-ordinate those activities and to serve as the national focal point for women in development activities within the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation.

4. National development plans also emphasized the integration of women in development, in line with the recommendations of the Strategies. The Nepal Women's Organization played an important role in that respect, particularly in terms of its literacy and training programmes. Many programmes for the integration of women in development (such as production credit and small farmers' development programmes) served as poverty alleviation programmes and thus provided a model.

5. The first summit conference of the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation had given due attention to the question of women and development, and regular expert group meetings were held to exchange ideas and experience for promoting the status of women in the region. It was important for the United Nations and the specialized agencies to support national efforts. The activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women in the Asian and Pacific countries, particularly in the areas of agriculture and food security and the collection and use of data demonstrating women's productive roles in the economy, were especially significant.

6. The role of the Commission on the Status of Women, which monitored the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies, was also significant. Her delegation agreed with the Commission that many of the objectives set at Nairobi would not be achieved by the year 2000. That was why Member States should take steps at the national level to support the activities of the United Nations specialized agencies and the non-governmental organizations.

7. Miss MYINT (Myanmar) said that in her country women enjoyed a unique status. Because of the traditions and culture of the country there were no legal, social or other impediments to prevent them from participating in professional, political or other careers. Thus, marriage and divorce took place by mutual consent and were subject to customary law which safeguarded the interests and rights of the spouses on a basis of complete equality, particularly with regard to inheritance. Although in most cases men were the breadwinners of the family, it was the women who usually managed the family finances.

8. Women were, moreover, treated as men's equals in politics. It was therefore not surprising that there had been no feminist movement in the country, with the possible exception of the colonial period, when women had had to fight for the abolition of the legal provision which barred them from election to the legislative Council. However, those provisions had been quickly abolished and a woman had been elected to the Council as early as 1929.

9. The Forward-looking Strategies served as a roadmap. It was therefore vitally important to review their implementation and to adjust them wherever necessary. Her delegation fully endorsed the system-wide comprehensive reporting system for the United Nations adopted by the Economic and Social Council to monitor, review

(Miss Myint, Myanmar)

and appraise the implementation of those Strategies. It also supported the Council's decision to extend the 1990 session of the Commission on the Status of Women so that it could carry out its work more effectively.

10. She noted with satisfaction that 99 countries had ratified or acceded to the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and was happy to witness the rapid expansion of the United Nations Development Fund for Women.

11. Mrs. CASTAÑO (Colombia), speaking on agenda item 94, emphasized the importance of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, which was a source of up-to-date and relevant information on women's problems. That was why consideration should be given to the report on the preliminary results of the implementation of the Nairobi Strategies prepared by the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Office at Vienna, which recommended that United Nations bodies as well as the Institute should facilitate serious research at all levels to improve the statistics and studies on that question.

12. Turning to agenda item 104, and in particular the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (A/44/511), she said that special attention should be given to the question of development, because the status of women was closely linked to the economic situation. Without development there could be no improvement in the status of women.

13. With regard to national experience in improving the status of rural women, she emphasized that her country's legislation recognized women's role as mother, wife and worker and granted her various rights - the right to retain her maiden name after marriage, rights with respect to children in case of divorce, the right to vote. However, there remained one point on which there was no real equality between men and women: women were generally less well paid than men, especially in the lower ranks of society, where, in spite of the laws, maternity was an obstacle to the access of women to the labour market. In other words, poverty was the factor which most prevented women from enjoying the rights established by law.

14. Economic problems notwithstanding, much had been done to advance women in Colombia, and progress had been made in several areas (fertility reduction, migration of girls, reducing family size and upgrading educational levels). Government efforts were aimed chiefly at consolidating the role already played by Colombian women in the country's economic life.

15. Of all of Colombia's development programmes, she wished to draw particular attention to those that had been operating for several years in rural areas. The Government had endeavoured to guarantee women access to facilities that would enable them to engage in productive labour, such as land, credit, technical assistance and training. Women farmers in Colombia were given technical training so they could be more effective agents for development and producers of wealth. Such programmes were aimed at ensuring women's participation in projects that

(Mrs. Castaño, Colombia)

helped generate employment and income and improved family nutrition levels. The programmes involved small organizations, generally comprising some 15 women, which, after receiving special credit and technical advice, would be able to engage in a wide range of activities: marketing their crops, food processing, small-scale primary production and handicrafts production. Although not all the programmes had been successful, they had nevertheless been an effective vehicle for training and a source of income for the community. Thanks to those programmes, women in Colombia had been able to obtain better training, increase their income, feed their families better and gain self-confidence; as a result, they continued to participate more actively in the economic, political and social life of their community.

16. Miss DE SILVA (Sri Lanka) said that although Sri Lanka had had the world's first woman prime minister, women continued to be poorly represented in decision-making bodies there. Her delegation thus believed that the issue of equality in political participation and decision-making should be a priority theme. In fact, the 1978 Constitution contained provisions to eliminate discrimination against women which had allowed them to enter fields previously considered the exclusive domain of men.

17. Legislative measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women had not been implemented on the scale desired. It was therefore imperative that Member States should remove the economic, social and cultural barriers to the implementation of such measures.

18. Her delegation supported the priority themes selected for the 1990 session of the Commission on the Status of Women as set out in the Secretary-General's report (A/44/511) and urged the international community to redouble its efforts to realize the goals of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies and thus integrate women in development. The informal paper prepared by the Division for the Advancement of Women made it clear that little progress had been achieved, largely for a lack of resources. She nevertheless welcomed the fact that 99 countries had already ratified or acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. She urged other countries to do likewise.

19. While the number of women in the labour force had increased, women's salaries continued to be markedly lower than those of men, particularly in developing countries. Illiteracy, which also contributed to women's unemployment, was the underlying cause of that situation. In that connection, it should be noted that the literacy rate for women in Sri Lanka was 81 per cent in rural areas and 91 per cent in urban centres, which explained the fact that 45 per cent of all persons holding professional and technical positions were women.

20. The theme of peace was particularly important. Her delegation believed that women must play a bigger role in decision-making and policy formulation in matters relating to peace and international co-operation. Accordingly, she welcomed the decision to discuss that subject in depth at the 1992 session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

(Miss de Silva, Sri Lanka)

21. With regard to the Secretary-General's report on the situation of women in rural areas (A/44/516), her delegation wished to see a strengthening of local institutions for the advancement of women, especially national women's institutions. It was disturbing to note that little progress had been made in the preceding year in increasing the number of women in Professional posts within the United Nations system. It was to be hoped that that situation would be rectified without delay, in keeping with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 40/258 B of 18 December 1985.

22. She welcomed the evaluation being conducted by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the progress achieved by Member States in implementing the Convention; she recalled also that her country's second periodic report, which had been submitted in December 1987, had not yet been considered by the Committee.

23. She concluded by paying a tribute to the important activities carried out by United Nations bodies, especially the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, as well as by non-governmental organizations and the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation.

24. Mrs. SIPILA (Finland), speaking on agenda item 104 (b), recalled that the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) had promoted and implemented projects which had resulted in the full integration of women in all aspects of development.

25. The United Nations system had already devoted human and material resources to the promotion of women. Her delegation was encouraged by the wide range of steps taken by various intergovernmental bodies, and especially by the inter-agency co-ordination which existed in that area and constituted the only way of preventing the waste or overlapping of resources. In that context, her delegation attached particular importance to the establishment of women-in-development units in organizations. More attention should be paid to that issue in the implementation of UNDP and UNIFEM programmes.

26. The increasing number of national committees for UNIFEM was proof of the growing support for the Fund's special role. The first national committee for UNIFEM had been established in Finland in February 1981. UNIFEM had arranged global meetings to promote that activity, the most recent of which had been held in Finland in 1988 and had been attended by 22 countries. At that meeting, it had been decided to investigate the formation of a world federation of UNIFEM national committees. The federation would hold its first meeting in New York in 1989 while the General Assembly was in session. Invitations had been sent to 15 countries that had either established or planned to establish national associations or committees.

(Mrs. Sipila, Finland)

27. The importance of popular participation in mobilizing grass-roots support was obvious. Proof of that had been demonstrated by UNICEF, which, while working with many non-governmental organizations, had a mechanism for national committees which had been incorporated into its own structure and provided strong support.

28. The same could be achieved in the case of UNIFEM if the world federation of UNIFEM national committees was authorized to speak in the Governing Council of UNDP when questions of interest to the Fund were considered, thereby enabling the federation to co-operate and work closely with the Council on matters of mutual interest.

29. Finland acknowledged the great support given to UNIFEM by numerous national and international organizations, and particularly by women's organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.

30. In Finland, the Finnish National Association for UNIFEM had several thousand members who contributed to the activities of the organization through membership fees. Its membership also included 50 national organizations that formed information channels to about half a million people. The major part of the income directed to UNIFEM projects came from a very active network consisting currently of 81 local committees in all parts of the country. The system had shown its effectiveness by the amount of contributions made by the Finnish National Association for UNIFEM. From 1981 through 1989, the total had come to \$US 650,000. She pointed out an error on page 21 of annex III of document A/44/389: the total sum paid by the Finnish National Association for UNIFEM was 474,036 dollars. An official United Nations document ought to give exact figures.

31. Her Government had shown a growing interest and confidence in UNIFEM, for it had in the past few years become one of its major donors. Finland had just pledged 5 million markkaa for 1990, an increase of 61.3 per cent over 1989.

32. In conclusion, Finland expressed concern that for many women, particularly in the developing countries, economic and social developments during the 1980s had not brought any advantages and what was happening was the feminization of poverty. The consequences of adjustment policies had too often been borne by the poor, and particularly by women.

33. Finland believed it was crucially important to develop accurate statistical indicators showing that women were receiving an insufficient proportion of benefits and that their potential for the development of their countries was being underutilized. A knowledge of the situation would increase an understanding of the need to provide UNIFEM with sufficient means to remedy it.

34. Ms. ANSEMI (Italy) said that she fully endorsed the statement made by the representative of France on behalf of the European Community emphasizing the support of the Twelve for the Nairobi Strategies. The first results of their implementation were, however, disappointing. Even though the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women provided an adequate legal

(Ms. Anselmi, Italy)

basis and was an unprecedented historical event, equality between men and women was far from being an everyday reality. To achieve that, women must be guaranteed access to political power, because for the moment they represented on the average world wide only 10 per cent of office-holders.

35. The participation of women in economic, social and cultural development had not advanced much either. To be sure, there had been the economic crisis, but women ought none the less to be able to take on a greater role, not only in the area of education but also in the other sectors of society. Rural women deserved particular attention from the point of view of education but especially of health. Any remedies proposed should be part of a comprehensive approach, covering education, employment, political life, the family, and social services, for any improvement in one area would have a positive impact on the others. The Forward-looking Strategies must therefore once again be resolutely put into effect.

36. She explained how in her country the condition of women had improved over the last five years. Italian women were striving to develop a culture of peace and for peace, based on tolerance, dialogue, solidarity and action against violence. However, despite their influence in the political parties and in the country, women had hardly any opportunity to exercise an influence within Italian institutions. If women constituted 12 per cent of the office holders, that was thanks above all to the Italian Communist Party, to which 60 per cent of the women elected belonged. The Chamber of Deputies was, however, presided over by a woman and the Government did have one woman minister and three women vice-ministers. The Commission for Equality between Men and Women, over which she presided, was preparing an informational campaign to increase the number of successful women candidates in the 1990 elections. For all the political parties, quotas had been set which guaranteed that 15 to 30 per cent of those elected would be women. The representation of women in trade unions was also making headway, but generally the process had to be accelerated by bringing about a change at all levels in women's cultural and other attitudes.

37. Efforts had been made in the labour field as well. Although in Italy only 37 per cent of the jobs were held by women, a majority of the young people finding a first job were girls. There were as many girls as boys in the last years of secondary school. Nevertheless, girls had to be given more information in order to direct them towards the new technologies and the scientific disciplines, where the number of female students was 20 to 25 per cent lower than the number of male students. Note should be taken of the work being done by the Equal Opportunity Committee of the Ministry of Labour, and also at the regional and local levels, to bring an end to all forms of direct and indirect discrimination against women. At any rate, it was currently an established cultural fact that women no longer looked upon work as a passing experience but as something they could contemplate as a lifelong means of expression and creation. Such an evolution was also making itself felt in the agricultural sector, where the betterment of living, housing and schooling conditions was allowing women to play a large economic role in both individual farms and co-operatives. Rural women had also benefited from the adoption of a single inheritance system.

(Ms. Anselmi, Italy)

38. In 1986, the Italian Parliament had extended maternity protection to women in the areas of trade, handicrafts and agriculture and it was currently studying a new law on parental leave. In addition, attempts were being made in Italy to protect the dignity of women. Violence within and without the family was being reported with increasing frequency. Unfortunately, a basic cultural disagreement between men and women was preventing the adoption of a new law that had been under review for a number of years prohibiting all forms of violence against women and minors. National action was being considered to oblige the media to respect dignity of women and to promote a culture that celebrated the value of each individual, and therefore of every woman, because at the root of physical violence there was always a moral violence that in the end lent legitimacy to it.

39. Mrs. SIMHA (Israel) said that she would speak on the problem of battered women, the most serious manifestation of discrimination against women, because it was in the home that the principles of equality, development and peace must first be applied. The family being the natural and fundamental unit of society, it was entitled to protection from the State. However, in many respects, the law was sometimes ineffective.

40. During the last decade, the problem of domestic violence had attracted more attention, especially thanks to the women's movement, which had provided help for battered women and at the same time raised public consciousness. Domestic violence was essentially a social problem because the civil and criminal laws passed by most countries on the matter did not seem to suffice. In fact, most often brutal treatment was tolerated and kept secret in the family and when it was brought to the attention of the judicial authorities they preferred not to intervene, on the grounds of respecting the privacy of the parties. Consequently the discreet intervention of social welfare services seemed to be indicated. Noting that no sector of the population was immune from violence, she enumerated about a dozen potential causes as well as various circumstances under which the common forms of violence surfaced.

41. Some countries provided shelters for battered women, but that was inadequate. It was better to prohibit, under penalty, the husband's access to the matrimonial home while still requiring him to contribute to household maintenance. That was the practice in Israel, where battered women were at the same time offered the possibility of going to shelters. In her view, the only way of improving the situation was through legislation and law enforcement. Interesting recommendations had been adopted in November 1983 in Vienna by the International Seminar on Violence in the Family, where she herself had submitted a substantive report. In the course of the last decade, all the conferences on women had stressed the need to ensure the dignity, equality and security of each member of the family, with particular emphasis on abuse of women and children. In 1985 in Milan, the Seventh United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders had adopted several resolutions on the question.

42. In the area of domestic violence, time would certainly be needed to bring about a change in attitudes, but because the task was difficult did not mean that it did not need to be done.

/...

43. Mrs. KABA-CAMARA (Côte d'Ivoire) said that, although the United Nations Decade for Women had not lived up to expectations, it had at least given women a new impetus by making them aware of the need to improve their status and their contribution to their countries' development. Since the goals of the Decade had not been achieved, it was necessary to strengthen mechanisms and to draw the appropriate lessons from its failure.

44. In the area of equality, considerable progress had been made in the normative field: many countries had acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and new legislation had been adopted. However, the situation was completely different with regard to education, work, pay, and access to capital goods and to decision-making bodies; women must understand that equality would never be given to them, they would have to win it. In order to do so, they must be properly armed. Most of the time, however, women were over-burdened with domestic chores and weakened by illness and hunger, and were in no position to take an interest in political life. That explained the importance of the second goal of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, namely, development. The international community unanimously recognized the importance of women as agents of development and change. Since the implementation of programmes for the advancement of women had suffered from the economic crisis, perhaps the Strategies should be redirected towards less ambitious and less burdensome goals, such as the lightening of household chores, family planning, literacy programmes, primary health care and income-generating women's activities.

45. While her delegation encouraged the work of UNIFEM, it regretted that African women did not derive sufficient benefit from its services, apparently because of a lack of information. UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP and WHO should co-operate more closely in order to take multisectoral action in favour of women in developing countries. Her delegation commended the role of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) in the collection of data and information from the public on the status of women, and hoped that the Institute would disseminate the conclusions of its work more widely. She also commended the Division for the Advancement of Women for the work it had accomplished with limited means.

46. With regard to the goal of peace, in 1984, the President of Côte d'Ivoire had recommended that Ivorian women teach peace to their children. It was the mission of all mothers in the world to cultivate peace in the hearts and minds of men; in that way, women would provide the security and protection afforded by family life, in particular against the dangers of drug abuse and delinquency.

47. Her delegation called for solidarity among women, from both the cities and the countryside and from the North and from the South, as well as solidarity among men and women - whose roles were complementary - in order to usher in a world of peace, harmony and prosperity.

48. Mr. KMET (Czechoslovakia) said that Czechoslovakia appreciated the efforts made by the United Nations to enable women to enjoy their rights fully, to ensure their full equality with men, to improve their status and to translate the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies into specific measures and programmes at the national, regional and international levels. The United Nations Decade for Women and the Forward-looking Strategies had underscored the common interests and the priorities to be taken into account in order to improve the status of women at all levels. The slackening, indeed the halting, of progress towards equality made it necessary to give greater attention to the implementation of the Strategies, which should remain topical. That goal would be furthered by the convening, in 1995, of another world conference.

49. Thanks to the revision of its agenda, the rationalization of its work and the definition of priority themes, the Commission on the Status of Women had been able to perform its task at its thirty-third session, in which Czechoslovakia had taken an active part in its capacity as Vice-Chairman. At its extended 1990 session, the Commission would be able to consider ways of improving and accelerating the implementation of the Strategies and agree on a date for the convening of a world conference.

50. For Czechoslovakia, the full participation of women in political life and decision-making was a very important aspect of the implementation of the Strategies. The aim of the Czechoslovak Union of Women, a voluntary social organisation, was to encourage more women to participate in the restructuring and democratisation of society. The task of the Union was to report all cases of de facto inequality and also to look for ways of enhancing the status of women in the context of the development of society. The absence of discrimination against women was a reality of Czechoslovak life; moreover, article 27 of the Constitution provided for the equality of women within the family, in the workplace, and in society.

51. Czechoslovakia, which had been one of the first countries to sign the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, welcomed the efforts of the United Nations and other international organizations to eliminate discrimination against women. It went without saying that Czechoslovakia scrupulously respected the provisions of that instrument.

52. Czechoslovakia attached importance to the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and supported the proposal that the Secretariat should provide greater assistance to the Committee in its work. The Committee's competence and objectivity in considering reports and other issues remained a key element. Czechoslovakia approved the Committee's efforts to rationalize its methods of work. It was necessary to find a way of enabling States, particularly States parties to the Convention, to derive greater benefit from the Committee's knowledge and experience.

53. Czechoslovakia had already submitted its second periodic report to the Secretariat (CEDAW/C/13/Add.25).

54. Miss VERLEZZA (Venezuela), speaking on agenda item 104 (a), noted with concern that major obstacles had prevented the attainment of the goals of the Forward-looking Strategies. One example was the limited participation of women in policy-making and their low level of representation in senior civil service posts in general. That was why her delegation believed that there should be an interregional consultation on the role of women in public life. The status of women within the United Nations system itself was another example. Venezuela urged the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to reach an overall rate of 30 per cent in the percentage of women in Professional and decision-making positions by 1990.

55. She emphasized the relationship between the status of women and the economic situation. The deterioration of the economic situation had hindered the development of policies which would permit the integration of men and women on an equal footing in the economic process of countries affected by the crisis. Venezuela endorsed the ideas expressed in the report on the protection of women in areas affected by armed conflict and believed that women should participate more actively in decision-making with respect to peace.

56. Referring to the note by the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (A/44/389), she reiterated her country's support for that organ, which played an important catalysing role by making possible a systematic examination of problems related to the status of women, and whose programmes had benefited many developing countries. She was particularly pleased that during the biennium 1988-1989 the Fund had directed certain of its activities to the status of women in Latin America.

57. Her delegation had examined with interest the report of the Secretary-General on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (A/44/457), which noted that 18 December 1989 would be the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Venezuela was one of the 99 States parties to that Convention, and in 1986 it had submitted an initial report on the application of the Convention (CEDAW/C/5/Add.24). The second report, which had already been submitted through the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, concerned the period 1985-1988.

58. Current Venezuelan legislation was in full accordance with the provisions of the Convention. Over the past few years, the Venezuelan Government had taken various steps to ensure equal opportunity for women in all fields of national life. However, various obstacles beyond the Government's control prevented real progress from being made in that field. The main such obstacle was the lack of the economic and human resources required for development. The economic crisis of recent years had adversely affected the Government's social policy, especially measures in favour of women.

59. Nevertheless, over the past two years, Venezuela had initiated priority programmes to give women management training, to combat violence in the family and to promote women to managerial posts.

(Miss Verlessa, Venezuela)

60. However, it should be emphasized that women were not sufficiently informed of their rights: they were not always aware of the rights provided by their country's Constitution and even less aware of those provided by the Convention. Venezuela therefore attached great importance to the introductory seminars on the Convention organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women at Athens and Guatemala City, in January and August 1989. It was hoped that other such seminars would be organized to promote awareness of the provisions of the Convention and the methods of submission of national reports, in order to facilitate implementation of the Convention.

61. Venezuela felt it was a highly important and timely decision to hold an international commemorative seminar on the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention.

62. In conclusion, she said that her delegation approved of the report of the Secretary-General on the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (A/44/416). The activities of the Institute concerning statistics and its programmes for training, participation and integration of women in development had been most beneficial to all countries that wished to promote real participation of women in all sectors of society.

63. Mr. SAELZLER (German Democratic Republic), commenting on items 103 and 104, emphasized that the advancement of women was a world-wide problem which should be addressed by every politician. One could not ignore the opinions and the activities of women, who represented one half of mankind, when dealing with international security, the elimination of underdevelopment or the protection of the environment, in other words, problems which concerned both the present and future of humanity.

64. In the more than 40 years of work by the United Nations in that field, 18 December 1979 was an important date marking the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

65. Since then, 99 States had signed or ratified the Convention; more than 50 States, however, had not yet done so.

66. The majority of Member States had adopted the measures envisaged under the Convention and were striving to implement equal rights between men and women. In his latest report on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies (A/44/511), the Secretary-General underscored the progress achieved in that field. There were still certain obstacles to the full achievement of those goals. That was very clearly reflected in the situation of women and children under apartheid, as well as in that of Palestinian women and children inside and outside the occupied territories.

(Ms. Saelzler, German Democratic Republic)

67. The Constitution of the German Democratic Republic provided for equal opportunities for men and women. However, experience showed that legal foundations alone were not sufficient. Full implementation of the relevant provisions presupposed political, economic, social, intellectual and cultural changes. Equal rights were not something that came automatically. It was, and for many years would remain, necessary to overcome outmoded traditions and customs. That was not only true of the public sector (for example, education or vocational training) but also of family life, where certain traditions hindered women from achieving their fullest potential.

68. Many women in her country had made full use of the opportunities offered them: 86.4 per cent of women had completed vocational training and 31 per cent held senior posts in economy.

69. In contrast, the percentage of women assigned to high-level posts in government agencies or in executive decision-making was lamentably low, because in terms of expertise or of capabilities, women were fully able to fill such posts.

70. Her delegation attached great importance to United Nations work in favour of women and felt that an exchange of views and experience would help to implement the Nairobi Strategies world wide within a framework of peaceful international co-operation.

71. Mr. ZAWACKI (Poland), speaking on items 104 and 105, said that the Nairobi Conference had placed emphasis on common interests and priorities and had provided in its Forward-looking Strategies valuable guidelines for the advancement of women, thus promoting a wide-ranging discussion of the question, which obliged Governments to pay due attention to those problems in their national and international policies.

72. The implementation of the Strategies was still meeting with economic and political obstacles which were very difficult to overcome, but less so than the social barriers related to attitudes and traditions. His country was convinced that the United Nations could and should help to eliminate those barriers by encouraging the Member States to establish at the national level governmental organs for the advancement of women. Poland commended the work of the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs at Vienna, as well as that of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

73. Although various efforts had been made over the past decade to promote equality between men and women, it should be noted that the Strategies had not been implemented everywhere to the same extent. The debate during the thirty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women had revealed that, following significant progress for women in the 1970s, advancement had slowed and, in some cases, even stopped in the 1980s. If the goal of equality of opportunity by the year 2000 were to be achieved, a great effort would have to be made to revive the pace of progress.

(Mr. Zawacki, Poland)

74. His delegation considered the 1990 extended session of the Commission as an *important one*, since the Commission would not only review and appraise the progress in the implementation of the Strategies, but would also make a recommendation to the General Assembly on the convening of a world conference, in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1987/20. Such a conference would contribute to broadening political support and 1995 seemed to be the most appropriate date to convene it. It also seemed reasonable to prolong the validity of the Strategies beyond the year 2000.

75. With a view to implementing the Strategies at the national level, his Government had in 1986 adopted a governmental programme of action specifically designed to improve the socio-professional status of women and their living and working conditions. All the ministries concerned and all local authorities were required to submit annual reports on its implementation to the Government Plenipotentiary for Women's Affairs. The latter had submitted his first report to the Council of Ministers in the autumn of 1988. Some questions, such as the improvement of women's working conditions and their increased participation in management, would have to be analysed from a longer-term perspective. His Government was aware that much remained to be done to remove the institutional and attitudinal barriers which prevented women from exercising real choice and from participating fully in Polish society.

76. At the end of 1988, his Government had submitted to the Secretary-General its second report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which would be considered by the corresponding Committee in January 1991.

77. Miss CHENG Phobol (Democratic Kampuchea) said that, despite the progress achieved in the advancement of women since the proclamation of the United Nations Decade for Women and the adoption of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, gender-bases of discrimination remained widespread and an ever-increasing percentage of women lived in poverty, illiteracy and ignorance, as the Secretary-General had pointed out in his report (A/44/511). Her delegation was satisfied with the way in which the United Nations system was implementing the Strategies and continued to give full support to the activities being undertaken, but felt that it was absolutely essential for international efforts to be supported by action at the national level.

78. She looked forward with interest to the extended session of the Commission on the Status of Women to be held in 1990 to review and appraise progress in implementing the Forward-looking Strategies. The preliminary study carried out by the Division for the Advancement of Women pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 1989/32 showed that little progress had been made with regard to the advancement of women, particularly in developing countries, which were wholly concerned with achieving economic self-reliance, self-determination and independence.

(Miss Cheng Phobol, Democratic Kampuchea)

79. While Cambodian women shared the concerns of other women around the world, their first priority was to defend their motherland. They had therefore participated voluntarily in full co-operation and on an equal footing with men, in all aspects of national resistance. That situation was not unique to Cambodia; women in Europe during the Second World War and women today in South Africa, Palestine and elsewhere had been or were performing the same tasks. Without the participation of Cambodian women, the national resistance would not have been so firmly anchored. Their participation was only a means of bringing the aggressors to the negotiating table in order to find a comprehensive political solution to the Cambodian problem in accordance with the five-point peace plan put forward by the nation's leader, Prince Norodom Sihanouk. That plan consisted of two key elements: (i) the genuine and total withdrawal of all Vietnamese forces and settlers from Cambodia under the supervision of an international control mechanism operating under the auspices of the United Nations and assisted by the peace-keeping forces; and (ii) genuine national reconciliation within a provisional quadripartite Government headed by Prince Norodom Sihanouk. That was the only means of achieving a balance of forces to ensure lasting peace, security and stability in Cambodia, enabling the Cambodian people to exercise their right to self-determination through free elections under United Nations supervision. By categorically rejecting those two elements, Viet Nam was clearly refusing to accept any comprehensive political settlement and was pursuing its colonialist occupation by means of the puppet régime it had installed and through the considerable numbers of its forces disguised in the ranks of the puppet army and concealed among the Vietnamese settlers in Cambodia. Those 1 million settlers were part of a premeditated plan to prevent the Cambodian people from freely exercising their right to self-determination through general election after the withdrawal of the Vietnamese forces from Cambodia. The Vietnamization of Cambodia had brought about a disastrous change in the social and cultural structure of the people's daily life and was bound to have grave implications for the future of Cambodia and generations to come. Faced with such a situation, Cambodian women demanded that the issue of the settlers be dealt with as part of the comprehensive settlement to the problem of Kampuchea.

80. Forged in 11 years of common struggle, the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea continued to grow and gather strength. Cambodian women looked forward with optimism to a future of peace within the framework of genuine national reconciliation. In partnership with men, they would contribute actively to establishing a liberal democratic parliamentary régime with a free-market economy. That aspiration had been defined in the general principles for a draft constitution of Cambodia agreed upon by all components of the Coalition Government. Even after liberation, Cambodian women would strive to ensure that there was no deviation from that goal and would work in co-operation with the international community for peace and prosperity. Devastated by the war, Kampuchea would need foreign aid and investment for reconstruction and development in order to guarantee its independence, neutrality and territorial integrity.

81. Ms. MIGNOTT (Jamaica) said that the Plan of Action based on the three themes of "Equality, Development and Peace" called for women to play an integrated role in all international affairs. At its extended session to be held in 1990, the Commission on the Status of Women would carry out its first review and appraisal of the implementation of the Strategies, five years after their adoption, enabling it to assess what progress had been made, identify the obstacles to be overcome and define the relationship between the priorities set forth in the Strategies and the global economic and social trends which had an impact on their implementation.

82. The economic crisis had led to the adoption of policies emphasizing short-term corrective measures and at times harsh structural adjustment measures at great social cost, which had affected women above all because those policies had eroded programmes for the advancement of women. The report called for by the Commonwealth Heads of Government had stressed the need for a different approach to the issue of structural adjustment. Those policies must be reshaped in an integrated approach that would involve not only organizations dealing with women's concerns but also the economic forums which decided on economic policies and discussed adjustment strategies.

83. As the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund had emphasized, population and environmental issues affected women directly. Women must therefore be educated and encouraged to participate in decision-making in that field. Women's problems should be viewed in all their ramifications and women should be given particular attention until they were fully integrated in national and international planning.

84. Turning to agenda item 103, she said that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had helped considerably to encourage countries to bring their legislation into line with the objectives of international instruments. De jure discrimination had largely been eliminated, essentially because countries were respecting their obligations under the Convention. Now ratified by 99 countries, the Convention could be regarded as the most successful international instrument. When considering country reports, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women drew attention to the de jure practice of States and to de facto implementation of the law. The reporting obligations under the Convention encouraged Governments to review their own legal systems. Her country, as a party to the Convention, believed that the Committee's work was essential to the implementation and follow-up of the objectives of the Decade.

85. Referring to the pessimistic view expressed by the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women concerning the stagnation and regression of programmes as a result of the economic crisis, a view confirmed by the detailed analysis of conditions influencing the situation of women given in the 1989 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development, she pointed out that there had nevertheless been significant progress and emphasized the importance of giving the Strategies broad support at the policy- and decision-making levels.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.