

UNITED NATIONS
General Assembly
FORTY-FOURTH SESSION
Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
22nd meeting
held on
Monday, 30 October 1989
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 22nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KABORE (Burkina Faso)

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.3/44/SR.22
16 November 1989
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

89-56714 1925S (E)

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-S/20743 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)
- (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. Ms. SYLLA-LINGAYA (Madagascar) said that the various reports on the situation of women showed that discriminatory practices against women had by no means disappeared, that measures taken for the benefit of women should be strengthened and that the public in general and women in particular should be made more aware of the importance of the role of women in society.

2. Her Government's activities in that field were based upon the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to which Madagascar had acceded at the beginning of 1989, and on the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000. Women in Madagascar enjoyed the same rights as men except in some regions where discriminatory ancestral customs persisted in the field of inheritance laws. The Constitution guaranteed equality of the sexes in the employment and wages field. Malagasy citizens had equal access to education and vocational training. Women participated fully in economic life, particularly in agriculture, and were men's equals with regard to property and to the right to take decisions in land ownership matters, as well as to receive financial loans. At the political level they had, on an equal footing with men, the right to vote and to be elected.

3. In reality, however, the persistence of patriarchal traditions and the inadequacy of social services - itself aggravated by structural adjustment - as well as the inadequacy of means of making women aware of their rights formed obstacles to women's full exercise of their recognized rights. The Malagasy

(Ms. Sylla-Lingaya, Madagascar)

authorities were endeavouring to overcome those obstacles by social measures aimed primarily at improving women's and children's welfare and through projects for training needy girls and for the continuing education of mothers, especially those who were heads of families, in the countryside and among the urban poor. Women were the main beneficiaries of the Malagasy Government's policy in the field of co-operatives, and the Office for the Status of Women and Children intended to set up in each province a centre for the development of women's activities, one of whose functions would be to inform women about their rights and to dispense legal advice.

4. Political will was an essential condition for integrating the advancement of women in all levels of national life. Technical and financial support by United Nations bodies and co-operation among States were also indispensable. Furthermore, the international community had a duty to do everything in its power to eliminate the causes of the economic and political crisis situations arising in many parts of the world, to which women were particularly vulnerable and which jeopardized the improvement of their situation.

5. The activities of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women deserved support. Her delegation welcomed the proposal made by the Secretary-General in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1990-1991 to finance the total cost of support to that Committee, as well as the steps taken to provide it with services which would enable it to perform its functions normally.

6. The activities conducted by the Division for the Advancement of Women towards making the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women better known, particularly on the occasion of the Convention's tenth anniversary, represented a further source of satisfaction.

7. The attention given by the Commission on the Status of Women to the definition of priorities in the sphere of the advancement of women was also to be welcomed. As the Commission's membership should reflect developments in the international situation, its enlargement was essential in order to enable all States, and particularly the developing ones, to make a contribution towards seeking solutions to the problem of the advancement of women.

8. Her delegation was particularly interested in the follow-up of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, and supported the holding in 1990 of a session of the Commission on the Status of Women to consider and evaluate progress achieved in the implementation of the Strategies.

9. The importance and scope of the work done by the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), whose contribution to the advancement of women and their integration in development was most valuable, should not be passed over in silence. Her delegation was particularly interested in the Institute's work relating to the women's participation in development and hopes that the studies prepared on that question would be given wide publicity.

(Ms. Sylla-Lingaya, Madagascar)

10. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) was also making an important financial and technical contribution to women's activities in the fields of food production, water supply and health services. Closer co-ordination of all activities undertaken by United Nations bodies towards improving the status of women and integrating women in development would certainly help to improve the efficacy of those activities.

11. Her delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's decision to include a separate programme for the advancement of women in his draft medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 and supported the proposal to give absolute priority to measures aimed at meeting women's basic requirements in the developing countries, particularly in the literacy, employment, health and population sectors, with a view to ensuring their full integration in development and their full participation in decision-making.

12. Ms. LUISA GASPAR (Angola) said that despite the difficulties caused by the war which had followed Angola's accession to independence, considerable progress had been achieved in improving the status of women. The principal instrument of the progress made had been the Organization of Angolan Women (OMA), a social organization with long experience acquired in the course of the struggle for national liberation, which had adapted itself successfully to the country's new realities.

13. While it was true that many women were represented in government bodies and in Parliament, not all objectives relating to the integration of women in national development had yet been achieved. The worsening of the political and military situation in the past few years had led many women to volunteer for service in the national armed forces, not only in the medical corps but also in telecommunications and other specialized services.

14. The Constitution of the People's Republic of Angola as well as other legal texts, such as the Family Code, were designed to guarantee equality of men and women, as well as women's participation in the country's economic and social development. Women enjoyed equality of rights in the labour and employment field. The Angolan Government was actively concerned with the training of women, which began with literacy training. At the international level, Angola was a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Political Rights of Women.

15. OMA had continued efforts to increase awareness of the fundamental rights of women within society and demonstrate the need to improve their situation. Women were evaluated solely in terms of technical skills and cultural level, professional experience and contribution to the progress of the country. Through an OMA initiative, a number of community legal centres had been created where women could be informed of their rights and how best to use the laws that protected them. OMA had also proposed the establishment of a commission to monitor the implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

(Ms. Luisa Gaspar, Angola)

16. In order better to implement the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000, OMA had called for the establishment by the Government of a body to accelerate the participation of women in the development of the country, their professional and technical training and submit draft legislation on that subject. The advancement of women in Angola was being held back by illiteracy, a low rate of school attendance and poor technical preparation. The continuing war and the economic difficulties did not help matters.

17. Support for women's employment, their integration in co-operatives, their role in the development of the community and the protection of their health were all questions that must be taken into consideration in the drafting of national development plans. As in the majority of African countries, a considerable part of the Angolan population lived in rural and peri-urban areas. Her Government had therefore devoted particular attention to the status of those women, about 60 per cent of the female population, engaged in agricultural activities. In order to ensure the participation of women in the national food programme and to improve the situation of rural women, OMA had taken the responsibility for co-ordinating a set of programmes for reforestation and planting, increasing the productivity of tilled land, processing agricultural products and utilizing new farming techniques. Programmes were also under way in coastal areas with the co-operation of several international non-governmental organizations to involve women in the fishing industry.

18. The Angolan delegation considered that INSTRAW could play an important role by working together with the Pan African Women's Organization (PAWO) and contributing to the training of Namibian and South African women.

19. UNIFEM should be re-evaluated, because in many cases, national women's organizations did not take full advantage of its programmes. Such a re-evaluation should consider the particular circumstances of each country and the social groups targeted for assistance. One area of priority must be training of financial planning experts, managers, entrepreneurs and business administrators - to prepare women for tasks in the administrative and banking sectors and enable them to increase their participation in the informal sector.

20. With regard to the promotion of international peace and co-operation, numerous initiatives had been undertaken in Angola for women who were victims of apartheid. For years, hundreds of Namibian women living as refugees with their families in Angola had received vocational training to prepare them to assume responsibilities in a future independent Namibia. Peace endeavours assumed particular importance in Angola, a war-ravaged country where, with the co-operation of the Government, OMA had obtained international assistance to alleviate the suffering of thousands of women and orphans. Angola was strengthening its co-operation with other countries in the region, particularly the member States of the Southern Africa Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCO), and with the African Development Bank (AfDB), which, by granting credits and loans, enabled greater participation by women in socio-economic development programmes for the region.

(Ms. Luisa Gaspar, Angola)

21. The Angolan delegation regarded as extremely important the adoption by the most recent ministerial session of the Organization of African Unity of resolution 1215 on the integration of women into development, which assigned responsibility to the African Governments for the creation of mechanisms for implementing important decisions and recommendations of the Nairobi World Conference.

22. Ms. TAVARES de ALVAREZ (Dominican Republic) expressed her concern that the United Nations had not devoted the requisite attention to an extremely important group: women at mid-life and elderly women.

23. In the Forward-looking Strategies, elderly women were referred to as "vulnerable", a group that was in need of special protection. In a period that had seen a retrenchment of social services, it was important to find innovative solutions for women in the "very old" category. Elderly women were not, however, a homogenous group, and most of them continued to contribute significantly to family and society. A research report commissioned by Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the American Association of Retired Persons, in which INSTRAW had participated, had concluded that women at mid-life and older played a key role in both economic development and family stability in the Latin America and the Caribbean region. That probably held true for other regions of the world as well.

24. The contribution of those women in production and the providing of services must be quantified, otherwise it would be lost in the statistics and in national and international programmes. Unfortunately, when such data were available, they were insufficient. The United Nations organs (the Division for the Advancement of Women, UNIFEM, etc.) that dealt with women's issues and aging must take into consideration, in their studies, research and programmes, the lives of women over their entire life cycle, including mid-life and old age. New conceptual and methodological approaches in data collection should be designed to provide a more accurate picture of women's lives as they aged.

25. With the current advances in longevity, a phenomenon that would be particularly pronounced in the developing world in the next 10 years, the United Nations organs must act immediately to design programmes for middle-aged women at mid-life that no longer treated them as a vulnerable group, but as independent and productive members of society.

26. The Commission on the Status of Women should report regularly on the status of women as they advanced from mid-life to old age. In its 1986 programme, the Commission had considered elderly women only under the vulnerable groups. She therefore noted with appreciation that the Economic and Social Council had adopted a resolution on elderly women (1989/38) requesting the Secretary-General to organize a seminar, within available budgetary resources, on the situation of elderly women. She urged the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs to convene such a seminar to examine the entire range of contributions paid or unpaid - that older women made to society and to recommend specific measures to encourage "productive" aging in the third world.

(Ms. Tavares de Alvarez, Dominican Republic)

27. The problem of aging would take on increasing importance in the future. United Nations estimates showed that the number of women over 50 would have doubled between 1955 and 1990, and would double again in the next 35 years. The percentage of the female population that was 50 years and older would also increase: whereas in 1955 it had been 17 or 18 per cent by 2025 it would be over 25 per cent.

28. Viewed in that context, the issue of women at mid-life and older took on new significance, because by the year 2025, such women would no longer be a vulnerable group but a force to be reckoned with.

29. The Dominican Republic would be submitting to the Third Committee for consideration a draft resolution entitled "Mid-Life and Elderly Women", and hoped that it would receive the support of the Committee.

30. Mr. CAMARA (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said, that since its founding in 1945, FAO had included a unit for women's programmes. FAO had played an important role in the formulation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, especially in food, water and agriculture, and had also made very active contributions to the development of the medium-term plan for their implementation (1990-1995), taking responsibility for the subprogrammes on food and agriculture, nutrition, water and energy, development of statistics and indicators, dissemination of information, technical co-operation, training and technology.

31. In 1979, the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development had emphasized the vital role of women in agricultural and rural development and had recommended measures to ensure their participation on an equal footing with men in social, economic and political development, from which they should also derive equal benefit.

32. The experience gained over the years had been summarized in the document dealing with women in agriculture and rural development and intended as guidelines for the FAO programme. That document described the adaptation of FAO areas of competence to the objectives for integration of women in development and defined women's problems in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors. It included proposals on specific activities for member countries and for the organization itself.

33. Priority activities recommended by the ninety-fourth FAO Council had been grouped into two categories: programmes and administrative measures. Priority programmes were: training of FAO technical staff to promote women in development; advising member Governments on integration of women into development plans and projects; project development and follow-up, reorientation of home economics and agriculture programmes in training establishments at all levels; formulation of guidelines and manuals on the role of women in development for the use of decision makers, teachers and development workers; collection of data about the contribution of women to development and informing the public; and population education in order to integrate demographic factors into programmes and projects.

(Mr. Camara, FAO)

34. The following priority administrative measures had also been recommended: making FAO staff aware of the importance and priority of the Plan of Action; earmarking budget allocations and also seeking outside resources; increasing the number of women in professional posts; and strengthening co-ordination and existing inter-agency procedures.

35. He thanked the Commission on the Status of Women for its co-ordination role and emphasized that, for its part, FAO was collaborating directly with UNDP, UNIFEM, and INSTRAW.

36. While the results achieved in the past few years in steering women's programmes and projects towards economically viable activities were very promising, much remained to be done to achieve the goals of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. The international community must strive to obtain firmer commitments from member Governments and the United Nations system in order to implement the recommendations and resolutions adopted, encourage the dissemination of data, improve the knowledge and technical competence of the staff responsible for integrating the women's component into projects and programmes, and strengthen inter-agency co-operation in undertaking joint activities and making the best use of existing resources.

37. Mr. STUART (Australia) said he regretted, as did other delegations, that the efforts made for the promotion of women had not matched the rhetoric. Without doubt, the economic crisis had impeded progress in many countries. But there was reason to hope that in 1990 the Commission on the Status of Women would prompt Governments to give greater priority to the question of women and to take steps to: adopt legislation for the removal of legal and social discrimination against women; develop targeted strategies to increase the participation of women in decision-making at all levels and in all sectors; promote more equitable sharing of the economic and social burden borne by women and extend support to the most disadvantaged; develop training and education for both men and women regarding women's rights; and establish national machinery promoting the status of women.

38. The United Nations clearly had a role to play in those areas, especially in assisting countries with limited resources, through training and advisory services.

39. For its part, Australia was attempting to implement the Nairobi Strategies in its national agenda. Its principal mechanism was the Office of the Status of Women, which was under the Prime Minister's authority. Among its functions that office contributed to policy formulation by providing regular and reliable data on the economic and social status of women in order to determine sectors requiring government action; had established a network of health centres, particularly in rural areas and isolated zones, with women playing an advisory role; monitored the implementation of programmes and services; and kept the Australian public informed about programmes, services and activities through the publication of a women's budget statement in conjunction with the annual budget.

(Mr. Stuart, Australia)

40. Such measures had achieved positive results: since 1983 employment of women had increased by 36 per cent; women held 56 per cent of newly created jobs; they represented 51 per cent of students in higher education; and more than 60 per cent of girls completed secondary education. The Australian Government was also addressing other areas of concern to women, particularly the problem of violence against women, including domestic violence. It was working to change public opinion to produce a greater sense of community responsibility regarding the problem and to change attitudes throughout all groups, including aboriginal, islander and rural communities.

41. Emphasizing the importance of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, his delegation was pleased that the number of States parties to the Convention had risen to 99 and hoped that more countries would become parties in the near future. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women deserved to be given adequate resources in order to fulfil its functions, and his delegation welcomed the information that full funding had been allocated for the Committee's work in the 1990-1991 biennium. It would appreciate further assurance from the Secretariat that the Committee's 1990 meeting had been accommodated in the calendar of conferences. It also welcomed the steps taken to publicize the Convention and the tenth anniversary of its adoption. The Australian Government was working closely with the United Nations on the preparation of the symposium announced in paragraph 20 of the Secretary-General's report (A/44/457) and would make a substantial contribution to its cost.

42. Australia's support for the role of United Nations agencies in the improvement of the lot of women in developing countries had been amply described in the joint statement made with New Zealand on 20 October 1989 in the Second Committee under agenda item 82 (d). Through UNIFEM, the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), and the Women in Development Fund administered by the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau, Australia had been a regular contributor to programmes benefiting women. His delegation would welcome greater integration on both theoretical and practical levels of work undertaken by the Second and Third Committees under the priority theme of equality and other priority items.

43. Through its own assistance programmes, the Australian Government was trying to do more to promote the role of women in development. It was introducing gender-specific data collection and analysis into project design and assessment procedures. Training programmes would help to identify and improve opportunities for women to participate in development assistance activities and to benefit from them on an equal footing with men. In that regard, he cited examples of projects, including water supply and sanitation, health-education and training projects sponsored by the Government of Australia in Indonesia, Fiji and the South Pacific, in which women were involved both as participants and beneficiaries.

44. As to agenda item 104 (c) (Improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat), Australia would express its concerns under that item in a later statement to be made jointly with the delegations of Canada and New Zealand.

45. Mr. WON (Observer for the Republic of Korea) said that the two significant measures for women taken in the past 10 years were the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1979, which the Republic of Korea had ratified in August 1984, and of the Nairobi Strategies in 1985, which his country fully supported. Admittedly, equality between men and women was far from being a reality and the role of women in the promotion of peace was still largely a potential one. However, it was to be hoped that the first appraisal of the implementation of the Strategies in 1990 by the Commission on the status of women would give renewed impetus to the efforts of the international community.

46. For four years, the Republic of Korea had been taking significant steps in that area. Women's issues were a priority item on its national agenda. Medium-term measures for women were outlined in the Five-Year National Plan for Socio-Economic Development and long-range measures were set forth in the "Long-term Prospects for National Development to the Year 2000". A ministry, headed by a woman, had been established in 1988 in order to address women's affairs at the national level. At the local level, the country had 14 family welfare bureaux, all headed by women. Those new national and local institutions helped to integrate women in the mainstream of social and political life.

47. The Republic of Korea was also developing its legislation on the social advancement and welfare of women, with a particular view to eliminating discriminatory practices in the employment process, providing maternal and child protection, promoting vocational training and job development for women and providing housing and other assistance to the most underprivileged and vulnerable groups of women.

48. In order to integrate the Nairobi Strategies into its national policy on women, the Republic of Korea had established the Korea Women's Development Institute and the National Committee on Women's Policies in 1983. The first was responsible for studying women's issues and fostering the advancement of women through education, training and information, and the second, was responsible for co-ordinating national policies for women by formulating appropriate guidelines.

49. In future, women in the Republic of Korea, far from remaining confined to traditional tasks, would increasingly be a presence in the professions, business, industry, education, the arts and culture. Together with local organizations, the Government of the Republic of Korea intended to continue enhancing the participation of women in the country's social, economic and political development.

50. Mrs. LAURENT (Commission of the European Communities) said that the European Community, within the framework of its second Programme of Action (1986-1990), had stepped up its activities to provide equal opportunities for men and women by adapting its strategy so that it would be more closely attuned to the needs of the most vulnerable groups (migrant women, single parent families, etc.). Several initiatives had been undertaken: the organization of conferences in member States on guidelines for equality, and preparations for the publication of a volume of equal rights legislation and national and Community court decisions on the subject.

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(Mrs. Laurent)

51. The Commission had also turned its attention to the question of vocational training for women, and in particular, to training in new technologies and helping to reintegrate women in the labour market. Moreover, national seminars would be organized in every country on the theme of women in the rural world and women in companies. In 1990, the Commission would continue its activities and elaborate its third Programme of Action (1991-1995). It would have to confront new challenges which the final arrangements for the European internal market were expected to pose for employment and equal opportunities for men and women. Despite the efforts undertaken and the political will to guarantee such equality for women, the situation of women in the labour market had worsened; job insecurity and unemployment were on the rise. Hence, it would be necessary to prepare for foreseeable changes and identify the sensitive sectors and sensitive areas in which jobs held by women - which were often unskilled jobs - might be in particular danger. To that end, labour and management would have to be better informed, and the Commission planned to establish a new network enabling it to co-ordinate and exchange information with national administrations. Furthermore, the political will to establish a "European social area" as 1992 approached had led the Commission to propose a Community charter of fundamental social rights. That charter, which would have to be adopted by heads of State and Government, defined the right to equal treatment for women and men as a fundamental social right.

52. Referring to the question of women and development, she stressed that the renewal of the Lomé Convention between the Community and the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP), was in the process of being negotiated. It had already been decided that the Convention, in its renewed form, would contain a specific passage on women, stressing support for EEC/ACP co-operation with a view to improving the status of women and promoting their effective participation in the production and development process on the same footing as men.

53. The Convention would also stress the importance of making land ownership, work and technology more accessible to women and highlighting women's vital economic and social contribution in the agriculture, fisheries and small-business sectors. The crucial role of women in health and environmental protection would also be emphasized.

54. Lastly, like the Community, the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific had recognized the need to afford women access to education and continuing education. The negotiations in progress had led to a convergence of views among the States members of the Community on the role of women in development.

55. Anxious to integrate women more fully in development projects, the Community had attempted to assess how women had participated in the projects of the European Development Fund and, in so doing, to define approaches which would integrate women more effectively in the projects initiated under Lomé II and continued under Lomé III. Data on the question, however, were lacking. Therefore, the Commission had recently launched, in conjunction with the ACP/EEC Cultural Foundation, a set of projects aimed at bringing out the differences between women's and men's roles in society, respectively, and their opportunities to gain access to and control

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(Mrs. Laurent)

over resources. On the basis of such projects, it should be possible to formulate specific recommendations with a view to including women in development projects, especially in agriculture, rural development and food security.

56. The European Community attached great importance to the activities conducted by non-governmental organizations. "Women and the Lomé Convention" had been the theme of the general assembly of non-governmental organizations, held in Brussels in April 1989. It had been the hope of that assembly that it would be a continuing theme in the future work of NGOs.

57. In conclusion, at its most recent meeting, the Council of Ministers for Development had re-emphasized the importance it attached to the question of women and development and the major role to be played by women. That question was accorded priority in the Community's development assistance policies.

58. Mrs. LING (Malaysia) expressed concern that in many countries the pursuit of the objectives of the Nairobi Strategies had stagnated as a result of the economic crisis.

59. Her delegation had studied with great interest the reports of the Secretary-General on the advancement of women and the role of women in development. It lent its unqualified support to the work of the United Nations bodies relating to women and supported the efforts made to allow women to participate effectively in the development of their countries.

60. The Malaysian Government, for its part, was making every effort to attain that objective through its National Advisory Council on the Integration of Women in Development (NACIWID), which, in co-operation with women's organizations and various NGOs, had embarked on a number of programmes and activities relating to women. Malaysia was fully aware of the potential which women represented, and of the fact that they constituted one of the country's greatest assets. While the socio-economic advancement of Malaysian women was a source of pride, it must not obscure the fact that more must be done in that area.

61. Currently in Malaysia the legal status of women, both married and unmarried, was substantially that of men in many respects (including contractual rights and duties, and the acquisition, ownership and transfer of property). Criminal law treated men and women equally. Women had the same opportunities as men in political, social and economic terms.

62. With respect to the protection of women, Parliament had recently passed an Act to amend the provisions of the Penal Code relating to rape. The minimum sentence for rape was now five years' imprisonment. In addition, the sale and distribution of publications and other related materials which might encourage sexual offences were banned. Malaysia had taken many measures to accelerate the integration of women into national development programmes. Women were encouraged to participate in socio-economic development activities in both rural and urban areas. The Government's policies in the fields of health, education and employment were

(Mrs. Ling, Malaysia)

reflected in an improved quality of life, particularly in rural areas. Accordingly, the situation regarding maternal and infant mortality and the life expectancy of women had improved. The current life expectancy of Malaysian women was 73 years.

63. In addition to the Government, many women's organizations were promoting public awareness of the important role played by women in development, particularly in disseminating information relating to health, education, nutrition, childbearing and the enhancement of the socio-economic status of women. The Government's community development programme had also proved to be effective in improving the well-being of women in rural areas. Rural women were encouraged to participate in educational and social activities carried out within the framework of well-co-ordinated campaigns, seminars and programmes. In general terms, women had substantially benefited from the country's socio-economic programmes.

64. Apart from playing an increasing role in their country's development, Malaysian women were also concerned with problems relating to peace throughout the world. They were closely following the international situation, and were anxious to contribute to efforts aimed at maintaining world peace. It was in that spirit that a voluntary medical team comprising women doctors and nurses had provided assistance to the victims of violence in Lebanon.

65. Her Government fully associated itself with the objectives of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, and was currently preparing a national policy for women which would provide clear guidelines for all future activities relating to women.

66. The Heads of Government of the Commonwealth countries had met in Kuala Lumpur from 18 to 24 October 1989. On that occasion, they had examined a report on women and structural adjustment. They had acknowledged that the already disadvantaged position of women had been aggravated by the economic problems and adjustment difficulties faced by several countries. They had also stressed that policies must be adopted to ensure the full participation of women in the public and private sectors. They had considered it a matter of urgency to redress the socio-economic inequalities from which women suffered and to provide them with access to education, training, credit, land and employment. She believed that the concerns of the Heads of Government of 46 countries representing all regions of the world should serve as an inspiration to the Third Committee in its deliberations.

67. Malaysia, which continued to attach great importance to the activities of the United Nations system throughout the world on behalf of women, felt that the decision to expand the Commission on the Status of Women was appropriate. It would enable a greater number of countries to join in the discussions on issues relating to women.

68. Ms. STAPHORST (Suriname) said that, by recognizing that women could improve their position by participating fully in development, the international community was making such participation one of its special objectives.

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(Ms. Staphorat, Suriname)

69. The implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies had been hampered in developing countries by the effects of the world economic crisis, which had severely affected women. Long-standing inequalities and discrimination had made women more vulnerable to the crisis. Four years after the Nairobi Conference, various Governments were still having difficulty in effectively carrying out the arduous task of integrating women into the development process. Only measures at the international and national levels would enable those Governments to overcome such barriers.

70. The world economic crisis of the 1980s had had serious effects on the economy of Suriname and on the position of women in particular. In low-income brackets, women, many of whom were heads of families, had proved very resourceful, creating their own employment in the informal sector in order at least to maintain a decent standard of living. Her Government encouraged such activities by facilitating access to the necessary skills and means of production, and access to credit.

71. In that connection, her Government would welcome any assistance from United Nations agencies. It would hope, in particular, that the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) might consider increasing its support for income-generating activities, such as the fruit-processing plant in Suriname. Such initiatives would assist the Government in embarking on a development process by and for women.

72. Her Government's national policy with regard to women was also aimed at stimulating their participation in policy-making and in democratic structures, and at increasing their access to education and health, social welfare and legal services. A national centre for women's affairs had been set up in order to implement the programme, in close co-operation with non-governmental women's organizations and other institutions. Her Government recognized the need to widen the scope of the centre in order to facilitate the integration of women into all national development activities.

73. Her Government expressed appreciation to the Commission on the Status of Women and to intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations for their tireless efforts to implement the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.