



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 32nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. HAMER (Netherlands)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 92: UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR WOMEN: EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE (continued) (A/40/3, 188, 239 and Add.1, 365, 703 and Corr.1, 727; A/CONF.116/28 and Corr.1)

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AGENDA ITEM 100: ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (continued) (A/40/3, 45, 623)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (continued)
- (b) STATUS OF THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

1. Mr. DIRAR (Sudan) said that, in the Sudan, the movement for the advancement of women had developed hand-in-hand with the independence movement and that the 30 years since the achievement of independence in 1956 had been very important for women. Today women enjoyed full political rights, were treated on an equal footing with men in the areas of education and employment and had reached positions of leadership at all levels of Sudanese life. At the international level, the Sudan, which was a member of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Board of Trustees of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, was gratified by the success of the Nairobi Conference as manifested by the adoption of the Forward-looking Strategies.

2. As one of the least developed countries, the Sudan felt that the implementation of the Strategies, far from being a luxury, was a pressing need given the massive challenge of development. The importance of the role of women in development, both as contributors and beneficiaries, could not be overemphasized. The Sudan knew from experience that education was the most important factor in the advancement of women. It was regrettable, therefore, that current economic difficulties made access to education increasingly difficult for large numbers of young women. Moreover, as pointed out in the Strategies, the plight of urban and rural poor women and refugee and displaced women, among other particularly vulnerable groups, deserved particular attention. The Sudan, as an African country

(Mr. Dirar, Sudan)

confronted by a critical economic situation and the problems resulting from the presence on its soil of large numbers of refugees, was pleased that the Forward-looking Strategies attached great importance to those groups. The United Nations should envisage a periodic appraisal of the implementation of the Strategies in order to evaluate the results and identify the difficulties encountered.

3. His delegation noted with satisfaction the catalytic role played by the United Nations Development Fund for Women, as well as the increase in the Fund's programmes. Initiatives such as the Africa Investment Plan, the food cycle technologies global project and the Participatory Action Plan for Latin America and the Caribbean deserved particular commendation. In collaboration with the Fund, the Sudan was looking forward to establishing a women's documentation centre which would play an important role at the national and regional levels. To enable the Fund to perform its important tasks, it must of course be able to draw on adequate resources. His delegation also welcomed the research and training activities undertaken by the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women.

4. Lastly, he said that his statement would not be complete without mentioning the sad predicament of the women living under the racist apartheid régime in South Africa and Namibia and under the yoke of the Zionist entity in Palestine and the occupied Arab territories. The policies and practices applied in those two cases represented the very negation of the objectives of the Decade for Women, and their continuation would be a mockery of the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the year 2000.

5. Mrs. ALMUTAWA (United Arab Emirates) said that the various documents adopted during the United Nations Decade for Women, the latest of which was the one containing the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the year 2000, represented important milestones in women's struggle for equality and strengthened their role in all fields. The Strategies, in particular, demonstrated the will of the international community to attain the objectives of the Decade - equality, development and peace.

6. The first of those objectives was entirely compatible with the Islamic precepts in force in the United Arab Emirates. Indeed, Islam honoured women and recognized their important place in society. The Koran recognized the equality of men and women and considered merit to be dependent not upon being of one or the other sex but upon respect for Islamic law. According to the teachings of the Prophet, women had a role to play in commerce; they had the right to inherit and they could be called upon to give an opinion on affairs of State. Equality with men before the law was guaranteed by the Constitution, which stipulated that any wealth produced must benefit everyone, and that each person - man or woman without distinction - had the right to work. If, despite those provisions, women did not participate in development to the full extent of their abilities, it was because they suffered more harshly than men from the repercussions of the economic crisis. Indeed, the prevailing unjust international order had particularly devastating consequences for women.

(Mrs. Almutawa, United Arab Emirates)

7. Peace, conceived of as the realization of the right to self-determination and national independence in accordance with relevant international instruments - in other words, peace based on justice - was the goal of the United Arab Emirates. For that reason it could not fail to mention the plight of women suffering under colonial domination or occupation, particularly the women living in Namibia, South Africa and the Golan Heights. In that regard, her delegation called upon the United Nations Development Fund for Women, to which the United Arab Emirates contributed, to use its resources to mitigate the plight of Palestinian women.

8. Since her country had acceded to independence, the social status of women had risen considerably. As growing numbers of women held jobs, they participated increasingly in the country's development. Free medical care, available to all on an equal basis, was guaranteed by article 19 of the Constitution. Moreover, the number of doctors, in particular pediatricians and gynecologists, had increased significantly. Progress had also been made in education, which was free to all. Approximately seven years earlier, fewer than 200 young women were enrolled in universities; by 1985, their number had increased to 3,475. The Constitution provided for a whole range of social services for women, and the State was directly assisting divorced or abandoned women, who received a benefit of between \$250 and \$800. The State had also done a great deal in the field of housing. New housing units with potable water and electricity had been built.

9. The United Arab Emirates attached a great deal of importance to the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies adopted at Nairobi and supported the appeal to Governments to implement the recommendations contained in the document; it shared the hope of other delegations that the document would be adopted at the current General Assembly session.

10. Mr. AL-MUKHAINI (Oman) said that the Forward-looking Strategies adopted at Nairobi constituted a very comprehensive and ambitious document which identified the problems confronting women in the world today and suggested measures to be taken by Governments and international organizations to solve them. All the situations affecting women today were taken into consideration in that document, particularly the critical situation of women in the occupied Arab territories. In that connection, his delegation welcomed the appeal to the international community in paragraph 260 of the Strategies to undertake projects aimed at assisting Palestinian women in all ways. His delegation had accordingly joined in the consensus on the Strategies at Nairobi, even though it had some reservations regarding paragraphs of the document that did not conform to the Islamic Shariah.

11. The Sultanate of Oman, supported in its efforts by United Nations bodies, had undertaken projects aimed at enabling women to acquire the skills necessary to fulfil their role more effectively, particularly within the home. The activities undertaken within the framework of national programmes for the development of local communities had benefited 135 villages. Many centres for the advancement of rural women had been established with a view, inter alia, to improving the health of women.

(Mr. Al-Mukhaini, Oman)

12. A genuine breakthrough had been made in education, the cornerstone of development, with a substantial increase in the number of women attending school. Besides, the Ministry of Education and Youth had established adult education centres to assist women to broaden their knowledge in various fields such as home economics, religion and culture. On the other hand, thanks to the Institute of Medical Sciences which trained managerial staff, women were able to acquire the training necessary to become nurses in hospitals and even doctors. Generally speaking, Omani women were taking an increasingly active part in different sectors of daily life. They were many, in particular, in the education sector where they worked as school teachers and they also held important posts in the private sector. That change had been recognized by the United Nations Development Fund for Women, which had granted a prize to a woman from Oman at the Nairobi Conference.

13. Mrs. NAJJAR (Jordan) said that the Nairobi Conference had achieved great success in two areas: review and appraisal of the achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women and the elaboration of the Forward-looking Strategies. That success was a result of perseverance in implementing the principles adopted at the Mexico City (1975) and Copenhagen (1980) Conferences.

14. The elaboration of the Strategies had permitted a clear definition of the content of the objectives of the Decade, namely, equality, development and peace. Equality between men and women was henceforth an undisputable principle. For the Jordanian Government, to establish equality was to grant women the rights of which they had always been deprived.

15. With respect to development, the objective was to provide women with the means that would enable them to participate fully in the political, economic, social and cultural life of their countries, because the advancement of women was a condition sine qua non for the building of a society.

16. The establishment of peace was another prerequisite for the improvement of the status of women. However, there could be no peace without recognition of the legitimate right of all peoples to self-determination and independence. In that respect, the essential conditions for the achievement of the objectives of the Decade were far from being fulfilled. Citing a case with which she was familiar, that of Palestinian women in the occupied Arab territories, she deplored the fact that the Decade for Women had passed without ending the oppression to which they were being subjected. The confiscation of Arab lands, the establishment of settlements, the displacement of individuals and communities, arrests and torture, the closing of hospitals and educational establishments were among the many practices which prevented the Palestinian women from working for the achievement of the objectives of the Decade. The oppression imposed on the Palestinian people would cease only when Israel withdrew from the occupied Arab territories and conformed to the resolutions of the United Nations which guaranteed the Palestinian people the right to decide their future in their homeland.

17. In other regions of the world, the situation of women was also deplorable. That was particularly true in South Africa, where women continued to struggle against the oppression which was the corollary of the policy of apartheid and racial discrimination pursued by that Government.

(Mrs. Najjar, Jordan)

18. Despite those obstacles, many countries had succeeded in improving the status of women. Thus, in Jordan, the proclamation of the Decade for Women had led the Jordanian Government to examine the status of women and to work for equality between the sexes in many fields.
19. In order to associate women with the building of the nation, the Jordanian Government had organized many national symposia; the most important, devoted to the role of Jordanian women, had been held in April 1976. That symposium had, inter alia, helped to increase the participation of women in the work force and to change their traditional image in the society. In 1976, 2 per cent of Jordanian women worked. The percentage rose to 40 per cent in 1980. That mass entry of women into the workforce had had positive repercussions in the area of training and education. Throughout the 1970s, the rate of increase in the number of women working in educational establishments had been higher than that of men. Similarly, more women than men went to study abroad each year. The change in the image of women in the society had been demonstrated by the appointment of two women to ministerial posts. Today, a number of women sat in the National Assembly and municipal councils. The Jordanian press had done much to emphasize the new status of women, a status which added a new dimension to their traditional role as wives and mothers.
20. Jordan reaffirmed its firm intention to work unceasingly for the advancement of women, to take practical steps to implement the resolutions of the Nairobi Conference and to be guided by the recommendations in the Forward-looking Strategies.
21. Her delegation believed that the interest being taken in the problems of women should go beyond the year 2000. A vast programme of co-operation should be launched to support the projects for the advancement of women materially and technically. In that connection, the Jordanian Government attached great importance to the activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women. Jordan had already had the opportunity of using the services of the Fund in a project for the maintenance of electrical appliances. That project had helped women living in a traditional environment to learn modern techniques.
22. With respect to the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, Jordan fully supported the Institute's approach, which was not to dissociate the problems of women from those in the rest of the society. It also supported the idea of preparing specific programmes and strengthening, through the United Nations and its affiliated agencies, co-operation between Governments, non-governmental organizations and research institutes.
23. Mr. BROWNE (Fiji) said that the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women - equality, development and peace - formed an indissoluble whole. At the Nairobi Conference, it had been possible to consider the progress made in achieving those objectives and to draw up measures to improve the condition of women throughout the world. The establishment of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women had been milestones of the Decade.

(Mr. Browne, Fiji)

24. Fiji had long recognized the vital role which women had to play in development. Under the Constitution, women in Fiji had the same rights as men. Any differences in the way in which men's and women's roles were perceived in society were due to the diversity of culture and tradition on which the society of Fiji was built. At present, however, there was a trend towards uniformity. The Government was also trying to promote economic and social development and put the country on the road to progress so that all the people, men and women alike, could enjoy general prosperity. For that reason, Fiji would spare no efforts, despite its limited resources, to implement the Forward-looking Strategies adopted at Nairobi.
25. Mr. OLSVOY (Mongolia), speaking on items 92 and 99, said that the Nairobi Conference had shown that, despite some positive results, the fundamental objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women had still not been achieved in many parts of the world, particularly in capitalist countries. Women and children were the main victims of the expansion of transnational corporations, United States aggression and State terrorism.
26. In Mongolia, equal rights for women were a reality. Owing to the radical socio-economic transformation of the country, Mongolian women of today knew nothing of unemployment, inequality, exploitation, sexual discrimination or poverty. They were active in all fields - culture, education, arts and sciences - and participated on a large scale in public affairs and the political life of the country. In Mongolia, many measures had been taken to guarantee the protection of mothers and children.
27. Mongolian women also played an active part in national and international efforts to consolidate the peace and security of peoples and to bring about disarmament. Several seminars and conferences, bringing together women from Asia, the Far East and Africa, had been organized in the country. Mongolia had also submitted for the consideration of the participants in the Nairobi Conference a draft resolution on the role of women in the preparation of societies for life in peace, which was annexed to the report of the Conference (A/CONF.116/28).
28. Mongolia had been one of the first States to become a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It called upon States which had not yet done so to sign and ratify the Convention.
29. The improvement of the status of women in rural areas was of great importance, particularly for developing countries. His delegation considered it vital that the United Nations should continue its efforts in that field, and for that reason, among others, it supported the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, adopted at Nairobi.
30. Mr. JATIVA (Ecuador) noted that the Nairobi Conference had achieved its twofold objective, to evaluate the results achieved during the Decade and to plan future activities. The adoption by consensus of the detailed Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women gave reason to hope that the crucial role of women in society and their participation in development would be increasingly

(Mr. Jativa, Ecuador)

recognized. The Strategies provided practical and effective guidelines which reaffirmed the interdependence of the three themes of the Decade, without prejudicing the right of every country to set its own priorities on the basis of its development policy and resources.

31. Some years before, the Government of Ecuador had set up the National Women's Bureau, whose task was to encourage growing participation of the Ecuadorian women in the formulation of government policies and political life in general by allowing them access to high-level posts. In addition, since 1979, women workers who had paid social-security contributions for 25 years had the right to a pension, regardless of their age.

32. At Nairobi, the importance of regional and international co-operation had been stressed as an indispensable means of encouraging the development and self-sufficiency of women. The Strategies called upon the Commission on the Status of Women to carry out a periodic review of the progress made and the measures adopted in that area. The Commission should, therefore, study ways and means of fully executing its mandate as a matter of priority, and should inform the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, of the results of its work. It could also consider follow-up action on the very useful suggestions contained in the 105 draft resolutions submitted to the Conference. Finally, greater support should be given to all the bodies of the United Nations system which dealt with women's issues; it was important to ensure maximum co-ordination of activities and encourage the participation of interested non-governmental organizations.

33. His delegation had noted with satisfaction the activities of INSTRAW. The Institute had a decisive role to play in the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies by extending its research and training activities on the integration of women in development. His delegation hoped that the Institute would receive generous contributions from Member States. His delegation unreservedly supported the objectives of the United Nations Development Fund for Women and was particularly pleased that in 1985 the Fund had approved a project for agricultural development in Ecuador. His delegation also welcomed the launching of the plan of action to encourage the participation of women in Latin America and the Caribbean.

34. Finally, his delegation had noted with satisfaction that the number of States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had risen to 80 and it appealed to countries which had not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Convention. Ecuador hoped to enter into a beneficial dialogue with the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, established under article 17 of the Convention, when it submitted its first report.

35. Mrs. FLORES PRIDA (Cuba) noted that the Decade had boosted awareness of women's problems at the international level and had directed public opinion to the real causes of the deplorable conditions under which most women continued to live. Although there was now good will and a desire to work together, the Forward-looking Strategies just adopted would be necessary to ensure the implementation of the three interdependent objectives of the Decade: equality, development and peace.



(Mrs. Flores Prida, Cuba)

36. As the Cuban delegation had said in Nairobi, it was essential to conduct an in-depth study of the reasons why women and their children were the main victims of aggression, armed conflict and the current unprecedented world economic crisis. When talking about living conditions of African women, mention should be made of the suffering they underwent because of the odious apartheid policy, and the devastating affects of famine, drought and underdevelopment, which were the result of centuries of colonial exploitation. It was equally impossible to remain unaware of the conditions of life of Palestinian and Lebanese women, who were victims of Israeli aggression and military occupation. Mention must also be made of the fate of Latin American women, who lived in a continent undergoing an agonizing economic crisis, as well as the tense situation in Central America, where the danger of intervention by the United States continued. Everywhere, the status of women was inextricably linked to the political and social situation of the country in which they lived. That status would not improve so long as peoples could not exercise their most elementary rights in particular their right to self-determination - so long as the arms race continued, and so long as the peoples of Latin America had to suffer hunger and poverty in order to meet the interest payments of an excessive foreign debt.

37. At the Nairobi Conference, the representatives of the countries of the Group of 77, the socialist countries and certain developed countries, had shown understanding of the problems of women in the developing world and solidarity with them. It was the stubbornness of a single country which had prevented the Conference from reaching consensus on some essential passages of the final document that concerned, among other things, the situation of women under the apartheid régime. It was important for the General Assembly, during the current session, to give expression to the just aspirations reflected in that document, and to adopt the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women until the year 2000.

38. Throughout the Decade, the Commission on the Status of Women had played a very important role, which would become even more pronounced when the Forward-looking Strategies began to be implemented. The Commission should also orient its activities towards the establishment of a new international economic order in order to ensure the effective integration and participation of women in the economic, political and social development of their country. Moreover, the composition of the Commission, to make it really representative, should be modelled on the United Nations. In Nairobi, Cuba had submitted a draft resolution in that regard which many countries had supported.

39. Since the beginning of the Decade, her Government had given concrete support to the implementation of its objectives. Cuban delegations had actively participated in the conferences in Mexico City, Copenhagen and Nairobi as well as in a whole series of meetings, some of which had taken place in Havana. In 1985, her country had been the venue for the meeting of the Board of Management of INSTRAW. It was also determined to contribute to the implementation of the Strategies adopted in Nairobi.

40. Miss AL-TURAIHI (Iraq) said that the World Conference held in Africa, a venue which Iraq applauded because of its own ancient bonds with the continent, was an historic event of the first order because it had led to the adoption of a document

(Miss Al-Turaihi, Iraq)

of major importance, the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women. Those Strategies, which were the result of long negotiations in which all the regional groups had taken part, had made it possible to define the main problems that currently faced women, and to propose solutions. It was clearly impossible in one decade to eliminate discrimination against women, and to establish total equality between the sexes. The United Nations Decade for Women had, nevertheless, allowed the removal of the main obstacles to that equality and to lay the foundations for it.

41. In Iraq, the World Conference had been preceded by intense preparation. Seminars and symposia on the status of Iraqi women had been organized, questionnaires distributed, and a national strategy defined for the advancement of Iraqi women until the year 2000. Considerable progress had been made during the Decade, and women already played a much more active role in Iraqi society. For example, 33 of the 250 members of the National Council were women. The meeting in Baghdad, which had been organized to harmonize points of view before the World Conference, had asserted, in its final document, the importance of solidarity among women the world over, for the implementation of the objectives of the Decade. Her country has also taken part in the Ministerial Conference of Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries on the Role of Women in Development, held in New Delhi in April 1985.

42. The participants in the Nairobi Conference, by adopting by consensus its report, had shown that they could confront all women's problems with wisdom and determination. It was, however, regrettable that several delegations had expressed reservations concerning certain particularly important paragraphs of that report. In paragraph 35, the Conference confirmed the validity of instruments in favour of women adopted so far, and stressed that they formed the basis for the Forward-looking Strategies. Iraq fully agreed with those observations, and with those concerning the need to evaluate every five years the results of implementing the Strategies. Her delegation again welcomed the fact that it was the non-aligned countries which had taken the initiative for those periodic evaluations, which should be dealt with at meetings to be held not only at the international but also at the regional and national levels.

43. With regard to the chapter of the Strategies concerned with equality, it was interesting to note the link which it established between inequality, poverty and underdevelopment. As the report indicated, the inequality at the international relations level was responsible for underdevelopment, and as a result, for the inequality in the countries of the third world. Moreover, it was true that there was some contradiction between the principles adopted at the international level and national traditions and local customs, but it should not be forgotten that equality between men and women did not mean that they should be identical. The main issue was to change the negative image of women projected by, among others, the media. Women the world over should redouble their efforts to change that image, which favoured discrimination against them.

(Miss Al-Turaihi, Iraq)

44. With regard to development, her delegation drew attention to paragraph 98 of the Strategies, which underscored the lack of political will of certain developed countries in that field. It was not at all clear how the countries of the third world could assure their development, given their foreign debt - not to mention regional problems such as the drought and famine afflicting millions of people in Africa. How could one talk about employment, health and development when most regions of Asia, Africa and Latin America were suffering from hunger or malnutrition? The developing countries accounted for almost a third of the world's population and most of their population lived in rural areas where women played a very active role. Efforts must therefore be made in the coming years to come to improve the situation of rural women, and that required finding global solutions and improving social services as a whole, particularly in the areas of health, education, water supply and energy.

45. The problem of disarmament was particularly important in that regard. It was a well known fact that a tiny fraction of the money spent on weapons would make it possible to solve the problems confronting the developing countries. Peace and security were therefore essential conditions for social progress and development. The conflict in which Iraq had been engaged for over six years, a period of time unprecedented in modern history, had not only paralysed that country's development but also imposed an additional burden on women. Iraq could only renew its appeal for a rapid and peaceful end to that tragic conflict.

46. The international political situation had also been considered at Nairobi, as the decisions reproduced in the report demonstrated. In the Arab region, where the Palestinian people was still unable to exercise its right of self-determination, Palestinian women suffered numerous hardships: Israeli occupation, forced displacement, confiscation of property, dispersion and deplorable living conditions in the refugee camps, not to mention the tragedies of Sabra and Shatila. On the African continent, South African and Namibian women were the victims of discrimination and repression. There could be no doubt, as paragraphs 259 and 260 of the report indicated, that the situation prevailing in those two regions seriously threatened international peace and security.

47. In conclusion, she stressed that the Final Document adopted at Nairobi reflected the views of the majority of participants at the Conference. The international community must therefore accept the Strategies and endeavour to ensure their implementation.

48. Mr. HISSEIN-MI (Chad), speaking on agenda item 92, said that he was forced to note that the progress made in the advancement of women had been slow, particularly in developing countries. In Africa, economic crisis, natural disasters and local armed conflicts made it difficult to achieve the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women.

49. In Chad, women had always participated actively in the political liberation of the country and in its socio-economic development. There were many women in the army fighting against the foreign occupation troops. His Government, aware of the decisive role played by women in all areas of the life of the country, had taken

(Mr. Hissein-Mi, Chad)

special measures to facilitate their access to education and to jobs traditionally reserved for men and to encourage their initiatives in rural areas.

50. The situation of Chadian women displaced by the war and by drought was very alarming. The fate of those in occupied areas was even worse. His delegation reiterated its appeal to the international community to help Chad find a speedy, just and lasting solution to the current conflict, which was the only way to put an end to that tragic situation.

51. The main cause of the crisis in Chad was the occupation of part of the country by its northern neighbour. That situation prevented any attempt at national reconciliation among Chadians and seriously undermined the Government's efforts to promote economic recovery and thereby improve the situation of Chadian women.

52. Mr. WIJEWARDENE (Sri Lanka) said that the Forward-looking Strategies adopted at Nairobi were the most important guidelines ever drafted for the advancement of women. The task now was to ensure their implementation, something which required that all Member States show the necessary political will in order to create a climate propitious to their implementation. In the case of the developing countries, such implementation posed a problem of resources and called for a special effort of co-operation on the part of the international community. That effort was moreover imperative for the establishment of a new international economic order and for world peace and security.

53. In Sri Lanka, as a result of 25 centuries of Buddhist tradition, kindness and compassion for all fellow beings were deeply rooted in the hearts and minds of the population. Furthermore, universal adult suffrage, which had existed since 1931, had strengthened the notion of equality of the sexes. Sri Lanka's new Constitution, had also recognized that there could not be discrimination against women on grounds of sex. Women in Sri Lanka now occupied high-ranking positions in the Government. As a result of the free education system introduced in 1943, the literacy rate had reached approximately 85 per cent or more, and women currently represented 50 per cent of students enrolled in universities. Sri Lanka's labour laws contained provisions to protect women against discrimination and to ensure just and fair development at all levels.

54. With regard to training, the Buddhist temples in every village had by tradition always been not only places of worship but also centres of learning and craftsmanship. Temples were supported by the villagers and there was a very close relationship between the latter and the Buddhist monks. While they attended school in the temple, mothers looked after their children and their own small community through organizations which protected them against all negative external influences. Those non-governmental organizations had through the centuries not only exerted a very strong influence on the character of children and adults but also prepared the ground for development strategies. During the second half of the nineteenth century, however, colonialism and the problems of industrialization and urbanization had had a negative impact on that way of life and the moral integrity of the population. Since independence, strong emphasis had again been placed on the importance of religious and moral values in society, a task to which

(Mr. Wijewardene, Sri Lanka)

non-governmental organizations such as the Lanka Mahila Samiti devoted themselves. The Government also dealt severely with anyone found guilty of trafficking in prostitutes and looked after the victims of prostitution by rehabilitating them so that they could re-enter society.

55. The United Nations Decade for Women had been marked by two important events in Sri Lanka: the creation of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, which was directed by a woman Minister, and the establishment of the Women's Bureau of Sri Lanka. Those two bodies were entrusted with improving rural living conditions through the medium of women. The Bureau had given high priority to programmes in favour of rural women and low-income groups in urban areas. His delegation was confident that the Forward-looking Strategies adopted at Nairobi would lend impetus to new programmes of activities and broaden existing projects for the advancement of women in Sri Lanka.

56. His delegation noted with satisfaction that the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women had made progress in carrying out its mandate. It hoped that the Institute would continue to contribute, at the international, national and regional levels, to the implementation of the Strategies adopted at the Nairobi Conference.

57. Lastly, Sri Lanka was pleased to note that the number of Member States which had acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had increased to 80 and hoped that those States which had not yet done so would ratify the Convention in the near future. His delegation was pleased to announce that the initial report of Sri Lanka was now being forwarded to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

58. Mr. GLAIEL (Syrian Arab Republic) said that, since women constituted an integral part of society, it was impossible to deal with questions which concerned them in isolation, without reference to the political, economic and social position of the remainder of the population. In fact, the surest way for women to achieve their liberation was to fight alongside their own people. In Syria, the position of women had evolved in parallel with the course of national history. During times of occupation, women had been forced to live in a cloistered manner not only by the occupiers but also by the men of their own country. With the advent of the twentieth century, a reformist feminist movement had emerged. Syrian women had taken part in the struggle for liberation and in the celebration of independence in 1946. The Syrian Constitution guaranteed equal employment opportunities to women, thereby permitting them to play a role in the political, economic and social affairs of the country and to contribute to the building of a new society enjoying greater freedom and justice. Syrian women had made remarkable progress in education, political affairs and production.

59. The Syrian delegation had been pleased by the satisfactory conclusion of the Nairobi Conference but recalled that many women had been disappointed by the fact that it had been impossible to adopt by consensus texts relating to certain questions, such as those concerning women under apartheid, Palestinian women or Syrian women in the Israeli-occupied Golan, as a result of the opposition of

(Mr. Glaiel, Syrian Arab Republic)

certain countries, including the United States of America. It was absurd to claim that such questions were not relevant because they were of a political nature, for the decision to exclude them was in itself a political decision. The position of certain countries with regard to that issue was not surprising and did not in any way diminish the rights of women in question.

60. Referring to the letter dated 19 March 1985 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Israel addressed to the Secretary-General (A/40/188), he noted that, according to Zionist logic, anything which was not accepted by Israel must be considered to be censurable, anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli. It was dishonest to state, as Israel had done in paragraph 2 of the document, that in order to examine the situation of Palestinian Arab women under Israeli administration, it would be necessary to compare their current position with their position prior to 1967, on the one hand, and with the status of women in the Arab world generally, on the other hand. According to the logic of such an argument, the Namibian people should be grateful to the apartheid régime for having occupied Namibia, and all peoples formerly under colonial rule should renounce their independence and beg the colonialists to return, thus implying that the salvation of developing countries was to be found in colonialism. Such was the logic of zionism. If Israel wished to refute the information contained in the report of the Secretary-General A/CONF.116/6, it should authorize the various organs of the United Nations to make on-the-spot inquiries and to observe for themselves the "Israeli paradise" in which Arab women lived. The women of the Golan, for their part, were all ready to give up the paradise of occupation in order to live among their own Syrian people.

61. Syria would do its best to implement the Forward-looking Strategies of implementation, in the hope that it might be able, in the year 2000, to say that some progress had been achieved.

62. Mrs. UMANA (Colombia) paid tribute to African women, who, by uniting their efforts in order to ensure the success of the Nairobi Conference, had given the world an example of solidarity which transcended political divisions. The Conference had provided an opportunity to identify the remaining obstacles to realization of the objectives set out in the final document of the Conference. Women were now faced with the immense task of putting into practice the Forward-looking Strategies of implementation for the Advancement of Women to the year 2000, which had been drawn up at Nairobi.

63. Colombia had been in the vanguard of the movement for the advancement of women as essential agents of development. The Colombian Government had shown that it recognized the importance of the role of women, not only by means of its laws, but through concrete actions. Two ministries were currently headed by women; 10 women held the rank of Deputy Minister and two women held positions as Governors. The National Social Insurance Fund, the Colombian Institute of Culture and the National Institute of Natural Resources, to mention only a few, were headed by women. Women played a role in business, in enterprises and in industry, and a large part of Colombia's national product was the result of work by women, particularly in the two export-oriented sectors of production, namely coffee and flower growing. The

(Mrs. Umana, Colombia)

essential role played by Colombian women, despite their manifold obligations and the conditions of malnutrition and exploitation which they were often obliged to endure, as well as the enormous potential which they represented for development, had been recognized by the United Nations Development Fund for Women since its establishment. The Fund continued to finance projects undertaken by small firms, in association with national institutions such as the National Apprenticeship Centre and the Federation of Coffee Producers. The goal of such projects was to increase the participation of women in the development of the country. However, much remained to be done in that area and it was for that reason that new prospects must be provided for women. The world would gain much if it were to be managed by men and women at the same time. With regard to that point, it was the duty of the United Nations to provide an example itself by appointing a larger number of women to administrative posts at all levels.

64. The most important point to emerge from the Nairobi debates was the need to struggle harder than ever to establish equality and justice, which were synonymous with development and peace.

65. Mrs. SEDDOH (Togo) said that, in response to the wishes expressed by a large number of delegations, the Nairobi Conference had carried out an exhaustive evaluation of activities undertaken during the Decade and had defined their future orientation. The Decade had been of great benefit in making the world aware of the need to improve the status of women and in informing Governments and women themselves of the essential role played by women in society. Women today insisted on being represented at all levels of decision-making in their countries.

66. In Togo, the position of women had improved considerably in the course of the Decade, thanks to the personal action of the Head of State and to the institutions created by him, particularly the Togo National Union of Women. Togolese women were today represented in all administration and Government bodies and were very active in economic life and in business. The majority of women living in rural areas were no longer enslaved by the need to fetch water and could devote themselves to other more creative tasks, such as the management of agricultural co-operatives.

67. Although there was reason to be pleased with the results attained in the course of the Decade, much remained to be done, both in developed and in developing countries. In the latter countries in particular, women were still considered to be second-class citizens and were victims of de facto discrimination, relegated to marginal sectors of the economy, where their work was poorly remunerated and where security of employment was not always guaranteed. The situation was attributable, on the one hand, to the deterioration of the economic situation in developing countries as a result of the international economic crisis, which in most cases obliged Governments to give up social programmes, and on the other hand, to the persistence, despite the adoption of pertinent laws, of discriminatory practices and prejudices, by virtue of which motherhood, rather than being valued, was viewed as sufficient reason for the exclusion of women from certain areas of employment. It was therefore important to redouble efforts to achieve true equality between men and women.

(Mrs. Seddoh, Togo)

68. The adoption by consensus of the Forward-looking Strategies of implementation for the Advancement of Women constituted, for the Togolese delegation, the major success of the Nairobi Conference. The Strategies, which identified the obstacles and proposed consistent measures to overcome them to Governments and non-governmental organizations, would, if applied in their entirety, permit the full realization of the objectives of the Decade. It fell to all States to take the necessary measures to propagate those Strategies and to ensure that the national departments responsible for questions concerning women applied them more effectively. It was also necessary to arrange for a follow-up mechanism at the international level, with a view to evaluating the efforts of Governments at regular intervals and to suggesting new orientations or corrective measures if necessary. The Togolese delegation therefore favoured the idea of convening a world conference every five years, with the task of following up the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies. The International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and the United Nations Development Fund for Women had played a considerable role in the realization of the objectives of the Decade and could still contribute in a decisive manner to the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies of implementation, particularly if all Governments, especially those of the developed countries, continued to support their activities.

69. The Togolese delegation noted with concern that a number of draft resolutions which were clearly of relevance for women had neither been examined nor formed the subject of a decision at Nairobi. Since the Third Committee would not have the time to reopen the debate on that subject, the Togolese delegation proposed that those draft resolutions should be referred to the Commission on the Status of Women, enlarged if necessary to incorporate all interested States for examination, decision thereon and the submission of a report to the General Assembly at a subsequent session.

70. Mrs. BASNYAT (Nepal) said that the Nairobi Conference had given the women of the world an opportunity to evaluate the progress which had been made in the last 10 years and to establish future trends. The reports of the Secretary-General on the subject had been a valuable contribution to that exercise. Nepal welcomed the fact that the Final Document of the Nairobi Conference had been adopted by consensus. The implementation of the Strategies which it contained called for co-ordination between national, regional and international bodies. Her delegation believed that without effective national plans, overall global policies could have little impact. Specific measures must be taken to implement the recommendations of the Programme of Action and, in particular, to expand technical co-operation activities.

71. Nepal had undertaken wide-ranging activities and achievements during the Decade had been extensive. Ten years ago, Nepal had for the first time formulated projects dealing with women's education, income-generating activities and legal status. Those issues were currently an important component of national development plans, which promoted the participation of women in all sectors of national development, as well as their participation in the building of the Nepalese nation, under the auspices of the Social Service National Co-ordination Council. Over the



(Mrs. Basnyat, Nepal)

next five years, Nepal aimed to mobilize training for women in rural development activities (agricultural extension, drinking water supply, forestry and health projects), in continuation of the work undertaken during the Decade which had enabled Nepalese women to make valuable contributions in traditionally male-dominated fields or posts. Nepalese women were more numerous in the labour force and in professional and technical activities. They held responsible posts in administration and the national legislature. Women took part in all agricultural activities (except for ploughing) and livestock-raising - tasks which were in addition to their household chores - and therefore played a crucial role in Nepalese agriculture. Nepal planned to develop income-generating activities which would provide women with new opportunities to fulfil their basic needs. Added financial independence would improve their economic and social status and would give them a greater voice in decision-making with regard to farming.

72. Nepal must resolve the many problems which beset women, namely illiteracy, poor health, poverty and technical backwardness. Nepal must therefore set up family-planning and maternal and child health services, as well as drinking water facilities - those were the prerequisites for improving the social and economic status of women. Since it had not been able to generate adequate resources, Nepal had profited from co-operation with bilateral and multilateral agencies which had enabled it to take significant strides in giving Nepalese women faith in the future. Her delegation hoped that the United Nations Development Fund for Women would contribute to the improvement of the status of women, in particular in the rural areas of the least developed countries. Nepal congratulated the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women for the work that it had accomplished, and believed that the awareness that it had promoted would give women self-esteem and would raise their social status. Much remained to be done in attaining a better quality of life, eliminating poverty and establishing social justice, but great changes had already begun.

73. Mrs. ASHTON (Bolivia) said that the document adopted by consensus at the Nairobi Conference after difficult negotiations, expressed the concerns which had been voiced throughout the whole Decade. In order to keep those promises, the international community should become fully aware of the situation of women under apartheid, and of the problems of women who had been resettled, or whose rights had been violated, or who lived in occupied territories or under colonial domination, including Palestinian women.

74. Although some progress had been made and certain countries had adopted laws which guaranteed a certain degree of equal rights between men and women, some stubborn prejudices still remained. Those prejudices should be eliminated, and the necessary measures should be taken to ensure the equality of the sexes. The reports on the role of women in development and the Forward-looking Strategies reflected the concerns, contradictions and divergent opinions which existed in that area as well as the tasks which remained.

75. Women living in rural areas of the developing countries were traditionally burdened with the most arduous tasks and were relegated to the most humble - so-called "invisible" - lowest-paying jobs. Statistical data did not accurately

(Mrs. Ashton, Bolivia)

reflect the importance of women in the work-force. Certain studies indicated that modernization did not favour equality between the sexes, nor the productivity or independence of women but, on the contrary, it led to a new form of inequality, the devaluation of the work of women, and economic dependence. When women retained their traditional role in the sale of agricultural products, that contribution did not provide them with sufficient incomes to meet the needs of their families. Moreover, other studies indicated that economic development programmes aimed at introducing the values of modern societies had not only not attained the desired results but, in many cases, had reduced the economic independence of women. In such such conditions, women living in rural areas had turned to manual activities and crafts as a supplementary source of income. Those activities determined their subsequent professional orientation.

76. Bolivia was a vast, underpopulated country and had a large female work-force both in mining and in agriculture. Women in rural Bolivia played an important and dynamic role in the production and marketing process, but their role in decision-making was still negligible. There was therefore a contradiction between the importance of their economic contribution and the inferiority of their social status. Confronted daily with the problem of inflation and unemployment which resulted from the economic crisis in Bolivia, women were more and more willing to take an active part in social struggles. Bolivian women's organizations had, in recent years, registered a qualitative and quantitative change which, it was to be hoped, would result in an awareness of the importance of women in development. Based on communal experience and traditions of participation of the rural population of Bolivia, the strategies and development programmes in Bolivia favoured the active participation of women in local, regional and national affairs, promoted women's interests and sought to eliminate all forms of discrimination based on sex. The establishment in rural areas of mothers' clubs and housewives' associations showed that it was possible to mobilize the creativity of women in order to initiate structural changes which would benefit not only women but the whole society.

77. Her delegation shared the objective of the Forward-looking Strategies, namely the strengthening of relations among the institutions responsible for improving the status of women and ensuring their integration in development, and hoped that all necessary action would be taken to achieve an equitable balance between men and women within the United Nations system. The consideration of issues of interest to women, which had begun in 1935 in the League of Nations, at the initiative of 10 Latin American countries, was continuing today. That consideration showed that the interest of the developing countries, whether in Africa, Asia or Latin America, were the same and that their efforts to liberate women coincided with those which they were making in order to achieve the economic, political and social liberation of their peoples.

The meeting rose at 6.40 p.m.