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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 17th MEETING

Chairman:

Mr. AL-SHAALI

(United Arab Emirates)

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ORGANIZATION OF WORK

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 95: **ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued)** (A/46/3 (chap. VI, sect. D), 38, 77, 325, 344, 377, 439, 462, 491, 501/Rev.1)

1. **Mr. URTAZUN** (Spain) stressed the need to strengthen cooperation by the United Nations system with the Commission on the Status of Women on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. The holding of annual inter-agency meetings was an appropriate way to conduct preparatory work for the Commission's sessions and the 1995 World Conference on Women. The question of disabled women had been dealt with effectively by the Commission, the Economic and Social Council and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The question of refugee women and children and migrant women required special attention and should be considered as a major agenda item at the World Conference in view of the large number of refugee and displaced women.
2. The strategy to be adopted on cooperation for development must take into consideration its impact on women. The basic objective of social integration programmes in developing countries should be to promote greater social tolerance and respect for cultural pluralism in order to eradicate behaviour based on racism and xenophobia. The needs of migrant, refugee and displaced women should also be taken into account in drawing up policies in that field. Lastly, he stressed the important commitment undertaken by the United Nations in approving the convening of the 1995 World Conference on Women. Strong support by all concerned was needed in order to give further impetus to the implementation of the Nairobi Strategies.
3. **Mr. KALPAGÉ** (Sri Lanka) said that by the year 2090, the number of women in the world was expected to be just over 3 billion, almost 80 per cent of whom would be in developing countries. Women would contribute increasingly to economic growth and should be given all possible assistance to become equal partners with men. Before full equality was achieved, however, a whole range of socio-cultural and economic barriers must be overcome. Such changes would not occur unless it was widely understood that failure to promote the advancement of women was unproductive as well as unjust. Trade unions, media organizations and educational institutions could play an effective role in ensuring that women had broad access to education, training and health services.
4. Sri Lanka had been focusing increased attention on the situation of women. A Ministry of Women's Affairs and a Women's Bureau had been established to initiate and coordinate programmes for the further advancement of women, and a number of non-governmental organizations were engaged in promoting the interests of women. Owing to measures taken to provide free education and health services, scholar-chips and food programmes, educational and health indicators showed that gender disparities in Sri Lanka were minimal. In fact, existing inequalities were due more to socio-economic factors than to gender.

(Mr. Kalpaqué, Sri Lanka)

5. Health services had been extended throughout the country in the past four decades through a network of maternal and child health-care centres and hospitals. Demographic data indicated that gender disparities were not significant in mortality rates. Sri Lankan women, who had traditionally been co-producers in agriculture and domestic industries, had been integrated into the economy. The emancipation of women had begun with the granting of universal adult franchise in 1931, followed by fundamental changes in education. Sri Lankan women held high positions in administration as well as in social and political fields.

6. The Constitution guaranteed equality of opportunity to all citizens, irrespective of gender. His country had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and submitted periodic reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The Centre for Women's Research in Sri Lanka carried out extensive research and training for women and disseminated information for the advancement of women.

7. The country's poverty-alleviation programme sought to provide assistance to women in the poorest sector of the population. Extensive housing programmes had improved the status of women and the quality of family life. Numerous changes had been made in the law in order to accelerate the advancement of women. The full participation of women could be achieved primarily by promoting their advancement in the rural sector, which accounted for 75 per cent of the total population and included the most disadvantaged groups. Accordingly, national efforts currently focused on providing health and education services to the poorer sectors with special emphasis on less developed regions. A charter for women was being drafted in order to lay down national policy directives on women's employment, health care and education. A national commission for women would be established to monitor the implementation of those directives.

8. Ms. RAYMOND (Canada) said that the publication The World's Women: 1970-1990, which provided a wealth of statistics designed to show how conditions were changing for women, underscored the sad reality that women had not attained full equality with men anywhere in the world. Her delegation remained concerned about the large number of reservations to the Convention. Canada, like many States parties, had expressed a reservation, which dealt with equal pay for work of equal value. Her Government, however, had recently reviewed that reservation and would soon be in a position to withdraw it. She hoped that other States parties would consider doing likewise in order to strengthen the effectiveness of the Convention.

9. Canada continued to attach importance to improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat and believed that the United Nations must be a leader in the recruitment and appointment of women to decision-making positions. She welcomed the initial research carried out in evaluating the obstacles to the improvement of the status of women called for under General Assembly

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(Ms. Raymond, Canada)

resolution 45/125 and looked forward to receiving the final report on that question at the forty-seventh session.

10. She emphasized her country's strong support for UNIFEM, which should be commended for improving its programme-delivery rate in the past year. Effective national machinery was essential for achieving equality for women. The action called for under Economic and Social Council resolution 1991122 provided practical approaches to strengthening national machinery and would result in concrete gains for women around the world. Canada welcomed the adoption of Council resolution 1991118, on violence against women in all its forms. That problem was so widespread that steps must be taken to safeguard under international law the right of women to live free from fear of violence,

11. The elimination of violence against women was a priority issue for Canada. Her Government had recently set up a special panel to promote a national dialogue on that subject. The panel would examine all aspects of the question in order to heighten public awareness and seek solutions to the root causes of the problem, focusing on preventive measures.

12. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 would be a major international event and women must play a *key* role in the holding of and follow-up to the Conference. *Women* had a unique and vital perspective on strategies for achieving sustainable development and must be given every opportunity to participate fully in policy formulation and decision-making. Their economic, social and environmental contributions to sustainable development should be addressed as a distinct topic at the Conference.

13. The World Conference on Women to be held in 1995 would give further impetus to the implementation of the Strategies. Accordingly, it was important to develop effective mechanisms for reporting on and measuring progress made. She hoped that the Commission on the Status of Women would address that question in its preparations for the Conference. Canada also attached great importance to a non-governmental organization forum related to the Conference. Lastly, she pointed out that the Commission had many important issues before it and work on them must not slacken as preparations for the Conference intensified.

14. Mr. GHAREKHAN (India) said that his Government was carrying out a basic strategy for the advancement of women that included economic empowerment by teaching skills, integrating health and educational services for women, and enhancing awareness of women's rights among women's groups and in governmental and non-governmental organizations. India considered women's employment essential to improving their status and sought to make women aware of their rights and provide them with income-generating skills. Specific self-employment programmes had been devised and quotas for women existed in all major employment schemes in the country.

(Mr. Gharekhan, India)

15. His country's programmes for the economic empowerment of women aimed at improving their access to training and credit, extending market support to self-employed women and reserving quotas for women in major employment-generation schemes. India had increased its expenditures on employment programmes for women throughout its seventh five-year plan, which had ended in 1990. In 1992 his Government's allocation for creating employment opportunities would increase by almost 35 per cent. One district in each state in India had been identified for establishing integrated women's development projects. The National Commission on Women had been set up in 1990 to act as a court of inquiry to ensure justice for women and monitor the Government's performance in that regard. His country was keenly aware of the entrenched nature of the problem and was determined to enhance awareness of it.

16. The report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Strategies (A/46/439) referred to the integration of women in development. His delegation felt that further consideration should be given to the implications of evaluating the different approaches in terms of their success from the perspective of both donors and developing-country recipients. The report also made reference to a seminar to be held in Vienna in December 1991 to evaluate the concept of women in development and define new challenges. He wished to know whether any Governments of developing countries would participate in that exercise. If not, a crucial perspective would be missing. India had doubts about the advisability of a gender perspective on issues related to the environment since it was somewhat difficult to make automatic assumptions about gender-differentiated decision-making on environmental issues. In that connection, he stressed the importance of ensuring that the perspective of women was fully integrated into macro-level planning. Lastly, his Government commended the work of UNIFEM and would continue to support its activities.

17. Mrs. ALVAREZ (Dominican Republic) said that the position of elderly women, which was both precarious and rarely addressed in most societies, would probably become more perilous in the near future. All demographic projections indicated that the proportion of women would increase in the coming decades, especially in the developing countries, and the small proportion of resources at the disposal of elderly women was therefore alarming.

18. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women did not specifically mention older women, since the issue had not yet been recognized at the time of the adoption of the Convention, and the United Nations had adopted only one resolution on that important social group. Among the many recommendations to improve the status of women set forth in the Nairobi Strategies, only one touched even superficially on elderly women. The inadequacy of previous inquiries into their situation had been recognized by INSTRAW.

19. According to United Nations projections, the percentage of women over 60 living in the third world would increase from about 50 per cent to 70 per cent

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(Mrs. Alvarez. Dominican Republic)

by the year 2025. In turn, 70 per cent of such elderly third-world women would live in poverty in rural areas. Currently, the vast majority of older women in developing countries were illiterate, poor, socially dependent and lacking in personal resources to cope with changing social conditions. That situation often resulted from a tendency to devote scarce resources primarily to the health, nutrition and education of boys and men, who were seen as the productive members of the family.

20. There was a high proportion of widows and unmarried women in the developing nations, especially in Africa and Asia. Moreover, the increasing migration to the cities and the breakdown of the extended family was depriving older women of their traditional support. Yet social-security systems in the third world were grossly inadequate. Consensual unions prevalent in many countries deprived elderly unmarried women from government benefits which they might otherwise have received through husbands. Pensions were not available to workers in the rural and informal sectors, which employed more women than men.

21. Older women should be viewed not as recipients of welfare but as agents of development for themselves and for society. A recent meeting of experts in Vienna on ageing women and development had yielded ample evidence that older women could contribute to development, and its conclusions and recommendations would be used as background documents at the 1992 session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Although women's needs would represent an ever-increasing part of the problem of ageing, the immediate adoption of realistic measures to help older women help themselves and society would allow them to become an ever-increasing part of the solution.

22. Mr. SIDDIQUI (Bangladesh) said that the decline of ideological conflict had made it possible to focus on the human dimension of global development strategy, of which the advancement of women was unquestionably a primary component. However, despite the importance of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and of the Nairobi Strategies, they could not be meaningful without a political commitment to implement their recommendations.

23. Efforts to promote women's advancement must address the fact that two thirds of the world's illiterate population were women, that traditional social customs and myths often kept them confined to the household, that national statistics underrepresented or omitted their contributions to the economy, particularly in rural areas of developing countries, and that the nutritional and health-care needs of many women in developing countries were given low priority. Also essential were effective and well coordinated planned-parenthood programmes that promoted an awareness of shared responsibility in men and women, particularly in countries where overpopulation hindered development. While Governments were responsible for strengthening national machinery to fight discrimination against women, which was accentuated by the adverse economic conditions in developing countries, the effective implementation of programmes in such countries largely depended on international assistance in both funding and training.

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(Mr. Siddiqui, Bangladesh)

24. Until they were fully integrated into the mainstream of society, women must be given special and even preferential guarantees. National laws concerning violence against women should be strengthened and their application ensured; abandoned women and unmarried mothers should be given special assistance and access to legal aid so that they could seek redress for any wrongs against them; and trafficking in women, which was on the rise in many developing countries, should be combated through international cooperation.

25. Although the general status of women in Bangladesh was not ideal, he was proud to note that the country's Prime Minister was a woman, chosen in a free election. The Prime Minister had established a task force under the Ministry for Women's Affairs to elaborate a comprehensive plan for women's advancement, and her personal commitment to the issue heralded a brighter future for the women of Bangladesh.

26. The country's multisectoral approach sought to reduce gender imbalances in such sectors as education, health, family planning and employment, with particular attention to the needs of disabled, destitute, widowed, elderly and socially handicapped women and female heads of households. Under the country's current five-year plan, the proportion of women employed in the public sector was to be increased from 6 per cent to 15 per cent, inter alia, through the establishment of employment quotas, child-care centres and training centres; female literacy raised from 15 per cent to 30 per cent; and women's nutrition and access to medical services improved.

27. Since most women in Bangladesh lived in rural areas, its rural development programmes focused on the welfare of rural women. With the support of non-governmental organizations, the Government was trying to integrate women into rural development as both active agents and beneficiaries, inter alia, by facilitating their access to education, credit and training.

28. Legal reforms to improve their status included measures to combat oppression and violence against women, as well as the reservation of 30 seats in Parliament for women, the remaining seats being open to female candidates in elections. However, there was still a large gap between de jure and de facto equality. The Government was therefore using the mass media and educational materials to project positive images of women, and had set up legal aid units to provide free legal advice to poor women.

29. For the integration of women in development, enhanced cooperation was needed between Governments and United Nations funding agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNIFEM. The research and training facilities of INSTRAW would also be of value. Women should also play a central role in environmental activities, and studies on that subject should focus on the poverty and population aspects of environmental degradation and pollution.

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(Mr. Siddiqui, Bangladesh)

30. In view of the current world-wide trend towards democratization, the involvement of women in promoting international cooperation, peace and disarmament was particularly important. Women could no longer be relegated to arbitrarily defined women's issues. Therefore, women's concerns should be integrated into forthcoming international conferences, such as the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights and the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, all of which would provide valuable inputs for the 1995 World Conference on Women.

31. Mr. RALERITSO (Lesotho) said that, since the advancement of women encountered similar obstacles throughout the developing world, a concerted effort by the developing nations was necessary. Lesotho had signed the Convention in 1980, and was about to ratify it. In addition, legal measures had been enacted to ensure equal opportunity in education, employment and economic, social and cultural life. A private organization known as the Federation of Women Lawyers had been established to inform women of their legal rights in such areas as marriage, property and land. However, the equal opportunity enjoyed by women in the public sector was not yet a reality in the private sector, although Lesotho had attempted to redress that situation through legislation on wage structure, maternity leave and pensions. The access of women to decision-making positions also remained a problem. In that regard, he thanked UNIFEM for its financial and technical support for the training of Lesotho women in agriculture, marketing, nutrition and other fields, and hoped that UNIFEM, along with INSTRAW, UNDP, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and other organizations, would increase its assistance to Lesotho.

32. The possibility for women in Lesotho with viable project proposals to obtain, in their own right, land and commercial-bank loans, was a step towards legal equality. However, some provisions in both statutory and customary law still adversely affected women and therefore needed reform. In that regard, he endorsed the recommendation of the Commission on the Status of Women that Governments, together with non-governmental organizations, should promote awareness of women's rights through formal and informal education and the mass media. Governments should also promote the training of teachers on gender issues to combat stereotyping.

33. He was concerned that, on average, only 3.5 per cent of the ministerial positions in Governments were held by women. To remedy that situation, women's qualifications should be enhanced through confidence-building measures and the provision of flexible working conditions, including the review of job specifications, so that women would be adequately represented at all levels of the administrative hierarchy of governmental and non-governmental organizations.

34. The integration of women in development depended largely on joint international efforts and the sharing of experiences. He appreciated the work

(Mr. Ralebitso, Lesotho)

of the Division for the Advancement of Women and UNIFEM in that area. In developing countries, the economic crisis and many of the structural-adjustment policies designed to redress it had particularly affected women, as existing inequalities were exacerbated by unbalanced socio-economic structures. The Lesotho Government had taken measures to modify its economic and social structure with a view to enhancing women's recovery and sustaining their advancement in those areas, as a precondition for sound development. Women must be seen not as of development but as principal agents in that process.

35. His delegation looked forward to the 1995 World Conference on Women and reaffirmed its support for China's invitation to host the Conference. He trusted that the Conference would give new impetus to the implementation of the Nairobi Strategies.

36. Mr. BLACKMAN (Barbados) said that his delegation supported the priority themes of equality, development and peace as the major focus of the work of the latest session of the Commission on the Status of Women. While advances had been made towards eliminating legal discrimination against women, it continued in practice in all countries, regardless of level of development, and the Commission must therefore continue to focus on de facto inequality.

37. Development and the advancement of women were inextricably linked, and the integration of women in development was essential to implementing the Strategies. In that regard, his delegation welcomed the convening of a seminar to be held in Vienna in December 1991 to evaluate the concept of women in development. .

38. Concerning the report on the operational activities for development and the advancement of women (A/46/491), his delegation commended UNIFEM for its work in the Participatory Action Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean, designed to stimulate participation by Caribbean women in development, particularly at the grass-roots level. Barbados also supported the global programmes and initiatives of UNIFEM, in particular the consultative visits involving Governments, non-governmental organizations and women's organizations, and hoped that the programme could be extended to the countries of the Caribbean.

39. His Government had always regarded the role of INSTRAW as pivotal to the improvement of the status of women. Concerning the Institute's report (A/46/325), his delegation supported country-specific research, particularly concerning women in the informal sector. It applauded the convening of the consultative meeting on a "Macro-economic Policy Analysis of Women's Participation in the Informal Sector" and supported the collaborative project between INSTRAW and the regional commissions on women's involvement in the informal sector. In that context, it was to be hoped that the interregional consultation on women in public life, postponed from September 1991, would be rescheduled in the near future. His delegation regarded the INSTRAW programme

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(Mr. Blackman, Barbados)

of integrating gender and development issues in university curricula as an important initiative for promoting gender sensitivity in future development planning.

40. Barbados had ratified the Convention, and its combined first and second periodic reports would be considered by CEDAW at its next session. His Government supported general recommendations 16, 17 and, in particular, 18 (A/46/38, para. 1). The Committee and similar monitoring bodies must receive the requisite resources to function, and Barbados therefore welcomed the Secretary-General's review of resources to ensure adequate support of that Committee and effective implementation of all other aspects of the programme on the advancement of women, as called for in General Assembly resolution 45/129; it was to be hoped that the provision in the proposed programme budget for 1992-1993 would strengthen support for the Committee. His delegation awaited the formulation of a system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for the period 1996-2001, with particular attention to the strengthening of national machinery for the advancement of women and to specific sectoral themes that cut across the three objectives, equality, development and peace.

41. The information in tables 1 and 2 of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Nairobi Strategies (A/46/439) was disappointing. The targets for the recruitment of women to senior posts were still attainable, and the Secretary-General must continue his efforts to fulfil the mandate in General Assembly resolution 45/129 and Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/17, giving special attention to female candidates from unrepresented and underrepresented developing countries.

42. Mrs. BANGOURA (Guinea) said that her Government attached great importance to the advancement of women, an issue which was closely linked to economic growth, and in that regard it welcomed the report of CEDAW (A/46/38). Her delegation was also pleased that a growing number of States had become parties to the Convention. Guinea supported the United Nations programme for the 1992-1993 biennium, which called for the holding of regional or subregional seminars on the Convention.

43. Legislation had been adopted in Guinea to ensure the equality of sexes. Women in Guinea were subject to no discrimination with regard to access to private property, social security, education, employment, the civil service or private enterprise. Many women's groups had been created within cooperative, commercial and industrial organizations. Together with UNICEF and UNDP, in September 1991 her Government had held a meeting to consider the creation of national mechanisms for the integration of women in the democratization and development of Guinea. Two national institutions had been established: the General Directorate for the Promotion of Women and Children and the Federation of Women's Associations of Guinea.

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(Mrs. Bangoura, Guinea)

44. Her delegation was concerned that the Convention was not being fully implemented. Furthermore, economic and social crises continued to affect women more than men.
45. Her delegation was disturbed about the obstacles to implementation and follow-up of the Nairobi Strategies, as set out in document A/46/439. The objectives must be treated as a matter of priority. Inequalities remained in the areas of education, working conditions and access to the means of production and decision-making bodies, regardless of the level of development of the country concerned. Development being one of the objectives of the Strategies, it was essential to combat malnutrition, the high birth rate and illiteracy and to broaden access to social services, particularly health care for children.
46. For the full integration of women in development, Governments must create conditions to incorporate women's activities in investment plans. To that end, activities for women must envisage appropriate financing. Women also had an important role to play in averting armed conflicts, because they could teach their children tolerance and understanding.
47. Her delegation welcomed the decision to hold the 1995 World Conference on Women. It was to be hoped that the Conference would take decisions on further promoting the advancement of women. Guinea also appreciated the report of INSTRAW (A/46/325) and supported the programmes planned with regard to the work of women in the informal sector, particularly in rural areas. In the view of her delegation, one persistent problem was that women, and African women in particular, had no access to credit. Guinea praised the efforts of UNIFEM, which made a direct contribution to women in rural areas and women living in poverty.
48. Her delegation approved the recommendations on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat and hoped that particular attention would be paid to the underrepresentation of women from developing countries, and African women in particular, at the senior level.
49. Mr. WAN HANAFIAH (Malaysia) said that his Government was committed to mobilizing the participation of women in all aspects of development. To that end, a national policy for women had been formulated to ensure equitable sharing of resources and information as well as access to development opportunities and benefits for both men and women and to integrate women in all sectors of national development, so as to improve the quality of life and eradicate poverty and illiteracy.
50. Malaysian women's participation rate in the labour force had increased markedly, from 37 per cent in 1970 to 46 per cent in 1990. In manufacturing, women had accounted for 24 per cent of the total female employment in 1990 as compared to a mere 8 per cent in 1970. In the services sector, female employment had increased from 16 per cent in 1970 to 21 per cent in 1990. The

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(Mr. Wan Hanafiah, Malaysia)

same pattern could be found in **all other sectors, except for agriculture, which had seen a sharp decline of female employment, a clear sign of the absorption of women into the mainstream of economic activities.**

51. **Any effort to integrate women in development must begin by improving literacy, and equal opportunity in education for women was firmly anchored in Malaysia's national policy. The efforts made had resulted in a marked increase in the proportion of women who had attained a desirable literacy level and who had received university-level professional and technical training,**

52. He noted from **the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the Nairobi Strategies (A/46/439)** that **considerable progress had been made in eradicating discrimination against women, but all countries must step up their efforts.** In Malaysia, the **principle of equal rights for women was anchored in the Constitution, and legislation had been adopted in many areas to guarantee women's rights.**

53. Malaysia shared the concern **expressed by the Commission on the Status of Women on the slow progress made in implementing the Strategies, and it was to be hoped that the 1995 World Conference on Women would help remedy that situation.** To that end, it was essential to involve Member States and the **relevant United Nations and other international bodies in preparing the Conference. Regional meetings should be a part of such efforts, with the participation of both public and private sectors, including the relevant non-governmental organizations.**

54. Malaysia fully appreciated the **plight of rural women; although instrumental in food production in the developing countries, they were often denied credit and technical assistance simply because they were not officially classified as agents of production.** That misconception must be **corrected.**

55. Malaysia had recently **hosted a regional consultation with a view to raising global awareness of the significant economic contributions of poor rural women to national output, household food security and the economic well-being of the family.** A series of recommendations and a plan of action had been drawn up **for submission to the Summit on the Economic Advancement of Rural Women, to be held in Brussels in February 1992 (Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/64).**

56. **His delegation appreciated the Secretary-General's report on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/46/377) and looked forward to the action programme for 1991-1995.**

57. **Mr. Jong Moo CHOI (Republic of Korea) said that the status of women had changed little in many regions of the world. It was a cause for disappointment that some of the Forward-looking Strategies had yet to be implemented. Achieving equality for women in all areas of society would**

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(Mr. Jong Moo Choi, Republic of Korea)

require changes not only in legal instruments, but in daily practices as well. The lot of women depended to a large degree on national culture and attitudes, some of them deeply ingrained. Although over 100 States had acceded to the Convention, women's rights had only partially become a reality in the daily lives of women in many countries. Women must therefore be made aware of their rights through public information campaigns. He hoped that the Commission on the Status of Women would continue to identify specific areas of divergence between de jure and de facto treatment of women.

58. His country had supported Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/18, which had addressed the problem of domestic violence. He stressed the importance of education in that regard. In the Republic of Korea, the ratio of secondary-school leavers entering university had increased to 31 per cent by 1990. Thus, Korean women could realize their potential and participate even more actively in the social and political development of their country. Experience had shown that, with the proper education, women could acquire the means of social advancement.

59. General Assembly resolution 45/126 highlighted the fundamental need for women's literacy and education, which would facilitate their expanded involvement in development. It was also necessary to intensify women's electoral influence on political structures, which were sometimes indifferent to their needs. Democracy had given new meaning to the individual's vote, and women therefore constituted a powerful political force. In the Republic of Korea, after decades of persistence, the influence of women on political and electoral bodies had resulted in major advances,

60. His Government also looked forward to increased participation of women in such bodies as the Commission on the Status of Women and the United Nations Secretariat in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/17. In compliance with General Assembly resolution 45/129, his Government had already enacted various measures in implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies. To integrate women into national development, a women's sector had been included in the current five-year development plan. His Government would continue to cooperate with the international community in fulfilling the goal of a world of equality, development and peace for women.

61. Ms. RAYNATOU (Niger) said that the advancement of women was now recognized as essential to the development of society as a whole. The Niger had welcomed the Forward-looking Strategies, but noted that equality between men and women was still far from a reality, and in many countries women had few options besides marriage and motherhood.

62. A high proportion of women in the Niger were young and/or illiterate. In addition to educating children and maintaining traditions, they were active in farming, handicrafts, the fight against desertification and trade. Nevertheless, because of numerous taboos and social prejudices, their true importance went unrecognized. In an effort to integrate women into

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(Ms. Raynatou, Niger)

development, her Government had established a number of specialized institutions for the advancement of women. Its 1987-1991 development plan provided for women's more active participation in economic, political and social life. Yet, despite the Government's efforts, supported by United Nations assistance and bilateral cooperation, women remained confined to menial work, particularly in rural areas, and were largely uninvolved in decision-making.

63. Despite women's significant contribution in agriculture, they lacked access to land and other means of production, credit and training. In support of women's economic activities, her Government had encouraged women's associations and income-generating projects. But women were underrepresented in all modern sectors of the economy, and social security was also inadequate. Despite significant efforts to improve the health of women and children by expanding the number of clinics and launching vaccination and family-planning campaigns, their situation remained precarious and was further affected by difficult socio-economic conditions. Desertification and the resulting mass exodus of men from rural areas had greatly increased women's social and economic burdens.

64. In general, the basic domestic law of the Niger and the international instruments it had ratified guaranteed women the full enjoyment of their rights, but many obstacles remained in practice. Most sources of law, such as the civil code, Islamic law and customary law, blocked the full enjoyment of their rights. In the political area, women had made some gains in representation in recent years, however.

65. In implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies, the Government had recently formulated a policy for the advancement which recognized the important role of women in development, full enjoyment of their rights, access to means of production, information and education and removal of any obstacles hindering their contribution to development. The policy was based on equality and equal opportunity, non-discrimination and respect for the rights of women both as citizens and partners in development. Increased assistance from international organizations would be needed to put that policy on a solid footing.

66. Current international economic relations were, in themselves, a serious obstacle to the more effective use of material and human resources necessary for more rapid improvement of the quality of life in developing countries, particularly in remedying women's lack of progress in relation to men. The United Nations should stress that resources freed from the arms race must be devoted to the economic and social development of developing countries.

67. Mrs. OGUNLEYE (Nigeria) said that the status of women could not be fully enhanced nor their integration into development achieved if the gap between discrimination in law and in practice was not closed. But unless the level of women's awareness and education was not significantly raised, discrimination

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(Mrs. Ogunleye, Nigeria)

against women in practice could not be eradicated by the enactment of non-discriminatory laws. She hoped that the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights would accord priority to the vulnerability of women in practical discrimination and to violence against women.

68. The advancement of women also had a moral component emphasizing their vulnerability. Their unwitting implication in criminal activities deserved serious attention: unless they achieved sufficient advancement, the temptation to succumb to such activities as drug abuse and drug trafficking would always be there. Women should be made aware of their vital role in the preservation of the family. More awareness programmes for women to supplement the efforts of UNIFEM and INSTRAW were needed at the national level.

69. It was surprising that the Secretary-General's report on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/46/399) showed that progress to date had been imperceptible. Her delegation was hopeful, however, that greater efforts would be made to meet the 1995 projections for the participation rate of women in positions of high responsibility.

70. In anticipation of the next session of the Commission on the Status of Women and the 1995 World Conference on Women, it should be borne in mind that the achievement of gender equality, the reduction of the gap between de jure and de facto discrimination, greater integration of women in development and respect for their moral status should continue to be issues of global concern.

71. Ms. de MIRANDA (Suriname) said that her Government was of the view that full and equal participation of women was of great importance to the country's economic and social development; but owing to the adverse economic situation, the majority of women still could not fully participate in that process. The new Government would do its utmost to promote the social emancipation of women and would formulate a balanced women's policy. Many women heading households had been forced to create their own employment in the informal sector, but the Government had realized that their efforts could be more productive if channelled into the rehabilitation of the national economy. It intended to provide them access to necessary skills and means of production and credit, and would welcome any assistance from relevant United Nations agencies.

72. Her Government was firmly committed to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, and the Constitution contained provisions to that effect. Suriname was not yet party to the Convention, but was taking steps to achieve the necessary standards for accession in the near future.

73. The deadline for implementation of the Nairobi Strategies was fast approaching, and it was regrettable that, despite some progress, many obstacles remained. Her delegation welcomed the scheduled 1995 World Conference on Women, which would provide an opportunity to review and appraise the goals of the Strategies and would again focus global attention on the situation of women. The intervening period must therefore be used for setting standards to further promote the advancement of women.

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(Ms. de Miranda, Suriname)

74. With regard to the priority areas identified by the Commission on the Status of Women - equality, development and peace - her delegation was focusing on equality by attempting to eliminate de jure and de facto discrimination against women. It regretted that the interregional consultation on women in public life had been postponed for lack of funds, since it would have provided an opportunity to address the current disparity between men and women in the political system.

75. For the purposes of economic development and progress, utilization of women's full potential in all areas of society should be a basic objective. Her Government had realized that improvement of women's literacy, technical skills, health care and access to economic resources would greatly advance their contribution. A National Centre for Women's Affairs had been established to facilitate their integration into all mainstream development activities.

76. The recent world-wide movement towards democratic forms of government offered hope that the goal of peace would finally be achieved. Democracy also offered the best chance for men and women to develop their full potential, as it encouraged respect for human rights.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

77. Mr. KRENKEL (Austria) said that he spoke on behalf of the 20 States which had sponsored Economic and Social Council resolution 1991116, adopted by consensus. The only operative paragraph of that resolution had requested the Secretary-General to add specific recommendations, within the overall level of the budget of the Organization, to the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 to strengthen and rationalize the resources of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. At that time, the Secretary-General had not commented on the request, and had said that it fell under the mandate of the Fifth Committee through the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ). CPC had discussed the issue at its thirty-first session, and had submitted the necessary proposals to the Secretariat.

78. To date, however, no report from the Secretary-General containing proposals or recommendations had been received. Policy and resource questions could not be separated, since they were mutually dependent. Therefore, he wondered whether the Secretariat had prepared a report offering specific recommendations, and if so, when it would be available. He would also like to know to which Committee it would be submitted and the reason for its late issuance.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.