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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 21st MEETING

Chairman: Ms. ZINDOGA (Zimbabwe)
later: Ms. COOMBS (New Zealand)

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

AGENDA ITEM 101: ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

(continued) (A/45/3, chap. V, sect. B, A/45/38, 202, 222, 225, 230, 254, 264, 265, 269, 270, 426; A/C.3/45/5)

AGENDA ITEM 102: FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN TO THE YEAR 2000 (continued) (A/45/3, chap. V, sect. B, A/45/347, 489, 548; A/C.3/45/5)

1. Mr. AHMAD (Malaysia) said the Government of Malaysia remained committed to the enhancement of the status of women and fully supported the recommendations and conclusions adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women after its first review and appraisal of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, which were annexed to Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/15. It also supported the recommendation in Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/12 that the next world conference on women should be held in 1995. During the preparations for that conference, account should be taken of the need to keep its costs as low as possible. He also noted the Commission's recommendations regarding national machinery for the advancement of women as contained in Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/14, which his country fully supported. Malaysia had created its own national machinery, including the National Advisory Council on Integration of Women in Development, an advisory body directly responsible to the Prime Minister, and the Secretariat for Women's Affairs, located in the Prime Minister's department. Malaysia supported the recommendation that national machinery should be established in every State by 1995 and agreed that the United Nations system should support national machinery by all possible means in order to ensure the optimization of effort and to avoid duplication.

2. The national policy on women in Malaysia was aimed at ensuring equality in participation and development for both men and women and at integrating women in all sectors of national development. It provided guidelines for the Government on ways to achieve full and active participation of women in development. Malaysia endorsed the priority themes for the period 1993-1996 identified by the Commission (equality, development and peace), attaching particular importance to the role of women in development and the integration of women's concerns in national development planning. It also believed that the impact of the drug problem on women and children merited greater attention and supported the call for national machinery to exchange information, bilaterally or multilaterally, on issues of mutual concern.

3. In connection with the priority theme of equality, his delegation was of the view that special emphasis should be placed on disadvantaged women in the rural areas and the agricultural sector. It also firmly believed that women should be given an equal opportunity for education at a very young age in order to promote their understanding of their rights in society. In Malaysia, action was being taken to upgrade the standard of education at all levels and to facilitate the participation of women in their fields of interest. Primary education was free in

(Mr. Ahmad, Malaysia)

Malaysia, and since 1979 there had been a marked increase in the proportion of literate women, although the literacy rate for women still lagged behind that of men.

4. Ms. BOUKADOUM (Algeria) said that in 1990, after five years of implementation of the Nairobi Strategies, the international community was in a position to be objective concerning the action which had been taken in support of women and to draw the first conclusions in that regard. The Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-fourth session had identified the considerable obstacles in the way of the success of the Strategies. It had concluded that the implementation of the Strategies was lagging behind and there was a danger of failing to realize the objectives set for the end of the century. Women were still suffering the effects of inequality at all levels. The resistance to women's realizing their full potential had slowed the momentum achieved at Nairobi, with the result that the status of women had not improved.

5. The situation was even worse in the developing countries where women were the victims of famine, illiteracy, poor health and poverty, in addition to which the large majority of them had suffered the crushing impact of the economic crisis of the 1980s. The economic community must take urgent action to meet their pressing needs. The case of the Palestinian women struggling courageously against the denial of their basic human rights was another area where constant vigilance was called for from the international community.

6. One third of the time allowed for the implementation of the Nairobi Strategies had already elapsed. Although the results achieved may have been disappointing in some respects, they had provided an opportunity to appraise the difficulties and find ways of overcoming them. Thus, appropriate action had been identified in the recommendations made by the Commission on the Status of Women and later adopted by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1990/15, which provided the international community with a suitable framework for future action. She stressed the importance of the preparations being made for the world conference for women recommended for 1995; such a conference, if properly prepared, could spur on the world community to give practical effect to the ideal proclaimed in the Charter concerning the equality of women and men, for the well-being of all humanity.

7. Ms. AL-HAMAMI (Yemen) said that Yemeni women had succeeded in bringing about a number of positive changes which were consistent with their society's religion, values and development objectives. The State, meanwhile, offered the facilities required to enable women to take their place alongside men as equal partners in society.

8. The first and most important such facility was education, since women had traditionally been unable to assume any responsibility outside the family context. Legislation, inspired by the Constitution of the newly united country, provided for political, economic, social and cultural equality between men and women. Such legislation reflected her Government's belief that innovation and progress was impossible without equal opportunities for all. Women had already made their mark

(Ms. Al-Hamami, Yemen)

in the sphere of administration, were entitled both to vote and to present themselves as candidates in political elections, occupied leading positions in the State legislative and executive bodies and had formed their own women's union. Through education and employment, they had thus already risen to some of the country's development challenges.

9. Women in her country were regarded as full and active partners in the process of economic and social development and were accorded priority in some areas such as social security, health care and family planning. Her Government considered the provision of those services, as well as education and training, to be a vital part of its continuing effort to ensure the elimination of discrimination against women and to facilitate the advancement of their status.

10. Mrs. SINHA (India) noted that fully one half of all humanity remained in a position of inequality and were frequently the victims of double and triple disadvantages both at work and at home, where, in addition, their unending labour often went unrecognized. The documents before the Committee testified to various disabilities of which women continued to be the victim; however, they also demonstrated the commitment that all countries had made nationally and within the context of the United Nations to do away with inequality between women and men. The causes of inequality were both structural and attitudinal. As long as the access of women to the means of production, to property and hence to power was circumscribed, real progress would not be possible. At the attitudinal level, the assumption that women constituted the weaker sex limited their options by undermining their confidence in themselves.

11. In India, greater emphasis was being laid on programmes aimed at removing gender disparities and at providing a suitable infrastructure for ensuring the health and overall development of girls. Stress was being laid on education for girls and women under the national human resource development strategy for the purpose of strengthening women's economic status and promoting self-reliance, especially by developing training skills and providing employment. Of India's 12 million economically active women who lived below the poverty line in rural areas, about 1.5 million had been provided with income-generating activities under government programmes. A national perspective plan for women up to the year 2000 had been drawn up, and a national resource centre had also been established.

12. Her Government was concerned at the finding by the Commission on the Status of Women that throughout the world women were over-represented among the poor and that the number of women living in extreme poverty had increased in the past five years. It was already implementing some of the Commission's recommendations regarding the implementation of the Nairobi Strategies. Her delegation felt that unless the women's issue was regarded as being central to the debate on development, women would be marginalized, whereas it was incumbent on the international community to ensure that they were equal participants in all aspects of life.

(Mrs. Sinha, India)

13. In India some very innovative work had been done to improve the status of women. As a result of initiatives undertaken by women themselves, institutions had been established for providing credit to women in the informal sector of the economy who did not qualify for conventional banking services. The Government of India had recently commissioned a report which showed that a large number of households in the informal sector were headed by women whose contribution to the economy had gone unrecognized, and a project was under way to ensure that the forthcoming census was gender-sensitive.

14. Her Government supported the priority themes of equality, development and peace which the Commission on the Status of Women would examine in the period 1993-1996. It also supported the suggestion that the Commission should be responsible for monitoring those aspects of the international development strategy which pertained to women, and looked forward to participating in the preparations for the next global conference on women. With regard to the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), she said India was currently chairing the Consultative Committee of UNIFEM, which continued to implement its mandate of ensuring that women were involved in the mainstream of development.

15. Ms. BACHTOUJI (Tunisia) said that her country had taken a forward-looking position in connection with the advancement of women. That position had been confirmed at the dawning of a new era in her country three years earlier, when the President had expressed his determination to safeguard women's place in society. The policies followed since independence had borne fruit in that today the women of Tunisia were more assured of their rights and duties, were better integrated into the economy and constituted a stronger presence in decision-taking and political life. They had contributed to the growth of such vital sectors as manufacturing, agriculture and services. As in most developing countries, however, much remained to be done, especially in the rural areas, where women needed better access to modern agricultural technology and to aid and credit.

16. In that connection, her delegation wished to commend UNIFEM for its sustained support of developing countries aimed at integrating women in development, and was gratified to see from the Secretary-General's report (A/45/347) that UNIFEM intended to continue assistance to Africa in food technology and the financing of micro-enterprises. It also supported UNIFEM's investment plan for Africa and looked forward to Tunisia's benefiting from such programmes.

17. Although the international community had been paying increasing attention to the advancement of women since 1985, not much tangible progress had been made in that the priority and complementary objectives of the Forward-looking Strategies had not been attained. Indeed, as noted in the Secretary-General's report (A/45/489), at its thirty-fourth session the Commission on the Status of Women had reached the conclusion that the achievement of the objectives agreed upon at Nairobi was at risk owing to the combined effects of certain economic and political factors. It was therefore urgent to attack all obstacles to the implementation of the Strategies. At its thirty-fifth session, the Commission would also face some tremendously important issues such as those relating to the position of women in

(Ms. Bachtobji, Tunisia)

vulnerable groups, the strengthening of the role of national machinery for the advancement of women and the preparations for the proposed world conference on women in 1995. Her delegation was convinced that the conference would strengthen the bonds of co-operation with regard to the advancement of women throughout the entire international community and within the United Nations system, and welcomed the holding of an interregional consultation on the role of women in public life at Vienna in 1991.

18. Mr. AL-HASSAN (Jordan) said that efforts to advance the status of women must involve the enactment of legislation assuring equality of rights for men and women, as well as the heightening of women's own consciousness of their role as fully-fledged participants in society. Such efforts must be linked to each country's overall development process.

19. In his country, the advancement of women had always been an inseparable element of development. Its Constitution and laws provided for equality between men and women and prohibited any discrimination on the basis of sex. In elections, men and women enjoyed equal rights both as voters and as candidates. The promotion of such equality, which was a natural extension of the country's religious and cultural heritage, had become a permanent feature of its successive development plans. Overall responsibility for national planning in that context had since 1976 been lodged with a special Department for Women.

20. His delegation was appreciative of the efforts undertaken by UNIFEM on behalf of women in developing countries, and particularly of projects undertaken in his own country. Those projects had included assistance to the Noor al-Hussein Institute in encouraging the profitable commercialization of goods produced by women, as well as assistance to the Arab Women and Development Association in establishing a network of experts to enhance decision-makers' awareness of women's affairs and their role in national and regional development.

21. As all must be aware, Palestinian women in the occupied Palestinian territories were unable to achieve the objectives of equality, development and peace because the Israeli occupation authorities denied them the most basic human rights enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the fourth Geneva Convention. The Commission on the Status of Women must therefore devote more attention to the problems of Palestinian women under Israeli occupation.

22. Miss AYE (Myanmar) said that, in view of the emerging new world order, the time was ripe to ensure the advancement of women on a global scale. Her delegation hoped that the objectives of the Forward-looking Strategies would be achieved. She welcomed the recommendation in Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/15 on increasing the proportion of women in leadership positions to at least 30 per cent by 1995 and supported the convening of a world conference on women that year. Special attention should be given to the question of women and the environment so that the international community could benefit from their experience and knowledge.

(Miss Aye, Myanmar)

23. In Myanmar, women had always occupied a privileged and independent position in society and had always enjoyed legal and economic rights. In matters concerning marriage, divorce and inheritance, the rights of Myanmar women were equal to those of men. It was encouraging to note that throughout the world the ingrained prejudice against the holding of jobs by women was decreasing. That was a clear manifestation of the ever-growing role of women in society. Although there had been considerable progress in improving the status of women at both the national and international level, much remained to be done. At the current propitious moment in history, countries must redouble their efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.

24. Ms. COOMBS (New Zealand) said that her country had in many respects been at the vanguard of the women's movement. New Zealand had been the first country where women had obtained the right to vote and one of the first to establish an autonomous government department for the advancement of women. Nevertheless, gender remained a critical determinant in such areas as employment, economic status, wealth and the holding of public office. In addition to many deeply rooted barriers in society, women also faced new difficulties resulting from economic hardship.

25. New Zealand attached great importance to a strategic approach to bring about change. The approach adopted in the Forward-looking Strategies was an excellent one because it combined a practical orientation with a system of review and appraisal. It was clear from the Secretary-General's report (A/45/489) that there had been a loss of momentum and that the achievement of the objectives of the Strategies was at risk. The review had identified the major obstacles to women's equality and set out practical steps to overcome them. Those recommendations and conclusions provided a compelling agenda for action for the next few years and must be given the attention they deserved.

26. Statistics showed that the situation of women in New Zealand had generally improved. Women's life expectancy had increased and they made up half of university enrolments. Women's income relative to that of men had improved and there were fewer women among the underemployed. Nevertheless, much remained to be done and many potentially desirable developments had had only a minimal effect because of slow economic growth. Furthermore, while women were taking on more public responsibilities, there had not been a parallel reallocation of responsibilities within private households.

27. Her delegation set great store on the statistical work carried out by the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). Taking account of the contribution by women in official statistics was an effective way of changing attitudes and policies. Her Government was undertaking a survey of how women in New Zealand spent their time in order to ensure that unpaid work was taken into consideration. The consequences of such recognition for future economic and social policies were potentially radical. The review and appraisal of the Nairobi Strategies had also underscored the importance of women's unpaid work. All Governments should take concrete steps to measure the

(Ms. Coombs, New Zealand)

economic value of such work with a view to taking it into account in national policies by 1995. New Zealand had identified primary areas on which it needed to focus for the next few years. The situation of Maori and Pacific Island women was of special concern.

28. Economic and political power was of vital importance to women. It was particularly disappointing that progress in promoting the economic equality of women had been so slow. In her country, the availability of high-quality support services for unpaid women was limited and their cost put them beyond the reach of many. Furthermore, the remaining barriers to quality education and training in New Zealand must be removed in order to ensure that women enjoyed the benefits of paid employment. In order to overcome the gap between women's and men's pay rates, her Government had just enacted legislation requiring all employers with 50 or more workers to set up equal employment opportunity programmes.

29. The interregional consultation on women in public life to take place in 1991 would potentially be of great importance and should be attended by representatives of all spheres of public life in order to ensure political participation in the very broadest sense. New Zealand looked forward to the world conference on women in 1995 and hoped that agreement would be reached on a venue which would give the conference the special character that had marked previous such conferences. The Commission on the Status of Women could make a recommendation in that regard.

30. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was another powerful force for change. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), however, faced serious obstacles which should be given careful consideration. The forthcoming tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention would be a good opportunity to consider ways of putting it on a more equal footing with the other human rights instruments. CEDAW had already done much to streamline and rationalize its methods of work. Her country particularly welcomed its recently established practice of holding pre-sessional working groups. That body must be given the staff and resources that it required. CEDAW had recently carried out important work on violence against women in the family and on traditional practices affecting the health of women and children - female circumcision, female infibulation and women and AIDS. Her delegation welcomed the attention given to such distressing practices affecting the rights of women and called on Member States to heed the recommendations that had been made.

31. Ms. PRINCE-AGBODJAN (Togo) said that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Forward-looking Strategies were inextricably linked and formed the basic foundations for the achievements of the goals of the United Nations Decade for Women: equality, development and peace. Those objectives could not be attained without co-ordinated efforts at the regional, national and international levels.

32. While awareness had grown regarding the importance of the role of women in development, progress towards achieving equality between men and women had been

(Ms. Prince-Agbodjan, Togo)

slow. It was therefore vital to take measures to overcome the obstacles to equality, which existed mainly at the national level. In that connection, the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies (A/45/489), by identifying groups of vulnerable women, provided an excellent basis for studying the variety of problems confronting women and for finding solutions. Her delegation wished to stress the importance and soundness of the report's conclusion that awareness of gender-based problems was the first stage in formulating policies to promote full integration of vulnerable groups of women in development.

33. In order that women might begin to emerge from their vulnerable situation, special attention should be paid to young women, handicapped women and female heads of household. Such efforts should be designed to ensure equal opportunities for girls and boys, so that young women could achieve stable lifestyles; to encourage the adoption of measures serving to integrate handicapped women in economic and social life; and to ensure the necessary material and financial support for female heads of households, so that they could meet their responsibilities. Such efforts would naturally benefit elderly women as well.

34. While efforts to increase the percentage of women working in the United Nations system were encouraging and should continue, her delegation was concerned by the very low proportion of African women in the Secretariat. Special emphasis should be placed on rectifying that situation.

35. According to the Secretary-General's report (A/45/489), the percentage of women elected to hold public office had declined dramatically over the past two years. It was therefore important to study ways in which women's participation in political life could be increased.

36. Her delegation welcomed the fact that development strategies were placing new emphasis on the integration of women in development. On the initiative of her Government, and backed by UNIFEM funding, meetings on strategies for the integration of women in development had been held in Togo in 1988 and 1989. Those meetings had made an important contribution to the formulation of development policies and strategies and to the establishment of bilateral and multilateral co-operation projects. A seminar on the relationship between the status of women and demographics in French-speaking Africa had been held in Togo in June 1990, resulting in a wider appreciation of the demographic aspect of national policies for the promotion of women.

37. The Togolese Government had made the participation of women in development a national priority. To that end, it had established the Union Nationale des Femmes as a way of bringing together various women's organizations. The women of Togo also held periodic political and civic training seminars and women's days.

38. Women and men in her country received equal pay for equal work. There were women in every political and administrative institution and in government service. In addition, a vast restructuring programme had been implemented to increase

(Ms. Prince-Agbodjan, Togo)

production by introducing new methods in the areas of agriculture, stock breeding and craft industries. Togolese women were also the main beneficiaries of the Government's adult literacy programme.

39. Togo had signed and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It had also revised its family code in an effort to achieve the Government's objective of promoting the rights of each member of the family.

40. Togo had created information centres to help women gain more awareness of their rights and responsibilities and of the role they could play in national policy-making. Public education programmes for women included discussions of the medical and social consequences of child-rearing and the repercussions of adolescent pregnancy. Computerized data systems for the collection and analysis of social statistics had been introduced in Togo.

41. Mr. MOK (Singapore) said that women's issues were part of the national agenda in Singapore and were the concern of all levels and sectors of society.

42. In recent years, important advances had been made in the struggle to gain equality for women and to eliminate sexual discrimination. However, while they enjoyed de jure rights in many areas, women were still subject to discrimination in practice. That was due both to women's lack of awareness of their rights and to legal and social barriers. It was therefore highly ironic that the United Nations should be the one place where change was most needed. The Secretary-General's report (A/45/548) painted a dismal picture of gender inequality in the Secretariat's system of recruitment and promotion. It was clear that further affirmative action was needed.

43. In his country, the right to vote had been granted simultaneously to men and women. Since that time, the Government had made efforts to promote the role of women in development. It advocated a policy of equal opportunity in all economic sectors and incorporated that policy in its planning and programmes. In 1961, the Government had enacted a Women's Charter, which sought to improve the status of women in matters relating to marriage, divorce and property rights. Those rights had become a part of the social values of his country. For example, in 1988 Singapore had signed the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Declaration on the Advancement of Women and in 1987, it had endorsed the Commonwealth Plan of Action on Women and Development.

44. His country had implemented a policy of equal educational opportunities for males and females, resulting in equal enrolment in elementary and secondary schools and an increase in the number of females in institutions of higher education. More women were also entering fields previously dominated by men, such as law and medicine.

45. Singapore's Employment Act prohibited discrimination in the recruitment, promotion and terms of employment of women. The new generation in Singapore had become accustomed to the idea of women working in positions of equal or superior

(Mr. Mok, Singapore)

status to their male co-workers. Women and men received equal pay for equal work in both the public and private sectors. In addition, his Government had enacted special provisions to protect women in the workplace. The number of women in the work-force had increased steadily over the years, as had the number of women employed in administrative and managerial positions. Opportunities for upgrading skills or education were equally available to men and women.

46. The emancipation of women in politics had not been as rapid. Nevertheless, advances had been made in the past few years and were expected to continue. Singapore currently had four female Members of Parliament, out of a total of 81, and would soon have two female Ministers of State.

47. Changes in women's status and role had brought about changes in various social phenomena. The younger generation in particular was growing increasingly aware of the need for men to be more flexible and more realistic in the demands they placed on their spouses. Another important social phenomenon was the declining marriage and birth rate. As a small country, with people as its only natural resource, Singapore was concerned about that trend and was taking appropriate measures to enable women to raise children and still remain in the work-force.

48. Ms. Coombs (New Zealand) took the Chair.

49. Mrs. BARGHOUTI (Observer for Palestine) expressed her appreciation for the Secretary-General's report on the situation of Palestinian women in the occupied territories (E/CN.6/1990/10). She regretted, however, that the Israeli authorities had refused to allow a mission of experts to travel to occupied Palestine.

50. Although noting the role played by Palestinian women in engineering social change, the report also detailed the detrimental effects of the occupation on the Palestinian family. The authorities' policy of closing educational institutions, and thus denying Palestinians their right to education, was entirely incompatible with international principles. Expulsion and deportation, meanwhile, caused Palestinian families to be dispersed. Many Palestinian women had been killed, or had suffered miscarriages, in the course of their struggle for freedom and independence. Children too had been among those killed and wounded.

51. While Israel continued to tighten its iron grip, Palestinian women were struggling to end the occupation, playing a full part in decision-making through associations, unions and committees. They had set up committees to distribute foodstuffs and clothing to those suffering the effects of Israeli oppression, initiated literacy, hygiene and vocational training courses, and opened day-care centres for the children of working women. They were playing an ever greater role in trade unions but the lack of a national authority often made it impossible to meet workers' demands.

52. His delegation endorsed all the comments and suggestions contained in the Secretary-General's report and hoped that the international community would take due note of them. It also hoped that United Nations agencies would exert pressure

(Mrs. Barghouti, Observer, Palestine)

on Israel with a view to alleviating the sufferings of the Palestinian people and noted that it would be impossible to fulfil the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women in Palestine until the occupation was ended and the Palestinian people was allowed to exercise its legitimate rights. In that context, attempts to examine the living conditions of women and children in Palestine should be maintained. In conclusion, his delegation called on women throughout the world to join in implementing the Forward-looking Strategies, in the light of its belief that a stable community free of all forms of oppression, discrimination and foreign domination could be achieved only if all helped each other to that end.

53. Ms. LASSIDINI (Uruguay) said that, despite the enormous advances of the twentieth century, women continued to be viewed in a stereotyped manner, which often limited them to family-oriented roles and ignored their real or potential contributions as agents of development. Such stereotyping was due in part to entrenched cultural prejudices.

54. In developing countries, women's role in development continued to be of particular significance. Women played a major role in the production, processing and sale of foodstuffs. At the same time, the fact that a growing number of women were heads of households forced them to seek supplementary income in the unstructured sector of the economy, making them easy targets for exploitation and discrimination. All that had led to the "feminization of poverty".

55. It was therefore imperative to provide support for poor women in developing countries. In that connection, UNIFEM's regional strategies represented a highly efficient approach. Her delegation also endorsed efforts by UNIFEM to offer women greater access to new technologies related to the food cycle and to assist women in launching private enterprises.

56. It was discouraging that many women were doubly vulnerable: first, because of their status as women and secondly because of their health condition, socio-economic standing or age. Education was fundamental to resolving that problem; from an early age, females should be made aware of their rights so that as adults they could actively claim those rights. Her delegation was in favour of educational programmes and seminars which dealt with the various obstacles facing women. Of particular interest in that connection was a meeting, to be held in Vienna in November 1990, which would examine and seek ways to eliminate the factors underlying the vulnerability of women.

57. Noteworthy in the field of public information was the production of radio programmes which focused on women's issues. United Nations broadcasts of that type played an important role in raising public awareness regarding discrimination against women. For that reason, it was particularly worrisome that such programmes were broadcast weekly in English but only once a month in other languages. To reach the widest possible audience, equal broadcast time should be provided for all the official languages of the United Nations.

(Ms. Lissidini, Uruguay)

58. It was a matter of concern that, five years after the formulation of the Forward-looking Strategies, there were still so many obstacles to their implementation. Her delegation endorsed the conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women regarding the need to adopt measures to ensure equal access to education for women; to ensure equal pay for equal work; and to promote women's participation in leadership positions. The latter aspect would benefit greatly from the interregional consultation on women in public life to be held at Vienna in 1991. The world conference on women in 1995 would provide a forum for the consideration of progress to date and the formulation of approaches to overcoming the remaining obstacles to the implementation of the Strategies.

59. Her delegation welcomed the rise in the number of women employed and the increased opportunities for women to obtain higher-level posts in the United Nations Secretariat. Such a trend should be encouraged and, in that connection, she supported the request by the Economic and Social Council that the Secretary-General should take the necessary measures to achieve by 1995 an overall participation rate for women of 35 per cent of the total number employed in the United Nations system. That target should in no way compromise the provisions of Article 101 of the Charter, aimed at securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity within the Organization. The active participation of women in recent United Nations peace-keeping missions demonstrated their abilities to fulfil such tasks and should be encouraged in the future.

60. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was the human rights treaty with the broadest scope that had been elaborated with regard to women. For that reason, her Government urged those countries which had not yet done so to accede to the Convention as soon as possible.

61. Ms. Zindoga (Zimbabwe) resumed the Chair.

62. Mrs. EJIRI (Japan) said that her country was proud to be a State party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and that her delegation commended the efforts of CEDAW to ensure its implementation. It attached special importance to the dialogue between the Committee and the States parties and supported the idea of consolidated guidelines to help States parties to submit their reports more promptly.

63. Japan had made progress in ensuring de jure as well as de facto equality between men and women by providing equal employment opportunities that had resulted in an increase in the number of women in professional, managerial and technical occupations.

64. The Commission on the Status of Women had a central role to play in advancing the cause of women. Her delegation commended the Commission for the recommendations and conclusions it had adopted after a comprehensive review of progress and obstacles that remained to be overcome, but stressed that the implementation of those recommendations and conclusions depended upon the efforts of Member States. Her own country had given those recommendations and conclusions wide publicity in order to promote the advancement of women at home and abroad.

(Mrs. Ejiri, Japan)

65. Her Government greatly appreciated the activities of UNIFEM in promoting women's participation in development and had increased its contribution to the Fund. It would also continue to provide technical co-operation, training and seminars designed to help women in developing countries.

66. Ms. JUNEJO (Pakistan) said that her delegation supported the steps recommended by the Commission on the Status of Women concerning the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies. Meaningful progress in the implementation of the Strategies, however, could be achieved only in favourable socio-economic conditions. Underdevelopment, poverty, hunger and disease adversely affected the advancement of women in developing societies and required special emphasis. The integration of women in development was a global objective and depended heavily on international efforts. The first step should be to analyse existing international policies and procedures for assisting and co-ordinating national efforts. National machinery for integrating women in development must be strengthened in order to achieve the objectives of the Strategies.

67. In accordance with the precepts of Islam, which gave equal rights and status to men and women, the Constitution of Pakistan safeguarded the rights of women and provided protection to ensure their social, economic, legal and political status. One of the main functions of the Pakistan Ministry of Women's Development was to ensure that the interests and needs of women were adequately taken into account in public policy formulation by various government bodies. The Pakistan Commission on the Status of Women had the task of making recommendations to the Government to safeguard the rights of women. The Ministry of Women's Development followed up on those recommendations with the provincial governments and non-governmental organizations. In order to ensure the participation of women in national development, her Government had recently approved the formation of a federal women's police force to investigate women-related crimes and the establishment of legal-aid centres for needy women, a statistical information centre on women and community development centres in rural areas for women.

68. Among its tasks, the Ministry of Women's Development organized seminars on women and development, promoted the participation of women in international forums and supported non-governmental organizations and government institutions dealing with women's affairs. A recent ministerial meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation had put forward 20 recommendations on the question of women in development, which would improve the plight of women in the member countries.

69. Although Pakistan generally supported the objectives of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, it was not in favour of attempts to use the Convention as an instrument for exerting pressure on developing countries, especially Islamic countries. Her Government attached particular importance to the question of women refugees and displaced women. Pakistan was faced with the formidable task of providing assistance to over 3 million refugees, most of whom were women, children and the aged. Despite its limited resources, her country was doing its best to care for those refugees as part of its humanitarian

(Ms. Junejo, Pakistan)

duty, with the help of international organizations and friendly Governments. The international community must take steps to facilitate the voluntary return of the refugees to their homeland in safety and honour. In that connection, her delegation had taken note of the expert group meeting convened in July 1990 by the Division for the Advancement of Women with the co-operation of UNHCR and the financial support of UNIFEM. She hoped that similar meetings would adequately deal with the problems faced by women refugees in Pakistan. Lastly, she expressed her Government's appreciation for the wonderful work carried out by UNIFEM and INSTRAW in improving the status of women.

70. Miss ENKHTSETSEG (Mongolia) said that her country supported United Nations efforts to promote the advancement of women, particularly through implementation of the Nairobi Strategies. It commended the work of the Commission on the Status of Women and its efforts to link the Nairobi Strategies with its social programmes and to streamline its agenda, especially by identifying priorities. Her delegation supported the Commission's recommendations annexed to Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/15 and urged the General Assembly to adopt them.

71. Her Government encouraged the participation of women in all areas of social life, and equal rights for women were anchored in the country's legislation, which included specific women's rights provisions proposed by women's organizations. Much remained to be done, however, to ensure equality in practice, and that would be achieved through progress in social and economic development. There was now greater recognition in Mongolia of such previously neglected problems as working and living conditions, high maternal- and child-mortality rates, family problems, shortage of child-care facilities and disparities between the living standards of urban and rural women. Legislative action had already been taken to remedy those problems despite the country's difficult economic situation. In recognition of the importance of education and literacy in enabling women to participate in development, Mongolia had promoted access of women to higher education and had been the main sponsor of the International Literacy Year. With two thirds of the world's illiterates being women, her delegation also supported the draft resolution on women and literacy.

72. Her delegation endorsed the recommendation to hold a world conference on women in 1995 in order to keep the problem of women high on the international agenda. Her Government was proud to be one of the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and was grateful to CEDAW for its valuable ideas and recommendations expressed in conjunction with Mongolia's second periodic report. Her Government had decided to withdraw the reservations it had made upon accession to certain international legal instruments, including the Convention. She urged those countries that had not yet become parties to do so.

73. She commended the work of UNIFEM, whose recent mission to her country had established useful contacts with the organs responsible for women's issues in Mongolia. The steps projected by UNIFEM were commendably responsive to the country's national economic and social development needs and augured well for future co-operation between Mongolia and UNIFEM.

74. Mrs. SIMHA (Israel) said that in a social climate that was changing all over the world, women were taking their destiny into their own hands. They demanded respect not because they were women but because of their essential contribution to society. Greater efforts must be made to acknowledge the achievements of women in all areas of social and cultural life in order to encourage them to overcome the obstacles to equality. One obstacle was underrepresentation in public life. They did not want to be elected to senior posts just because they were women, nor should they be. Their aspirations and ambitions were commensurate with their skills, qualifications and contributions. They wanted equal opportunity to participate in decision-making because their contribution was needed: the advancement of women was important to all humankind. She commended the measures adopted at the international and national levels in recent years to achieve legal equality between the sexes, but noted the need for vigilance in ensuring their implementation.

75. Certain groups of women required special attention. Young women suffered not only from sexual discrimination but also professional discrimination and career disruption because of motherhood, family responsibilities and unequally shared household duties. The years of professional advancement coincided with the years of marriage, child-bearing and building a family, which consumed far more of women's time than men's. Those obstacles must be minimized through day care and other facilities to enable young women to work outside the home. It was increasingly common for single women to become heads of households, and that also created a need for special benefits, such as shorter working hours for single parents, subsidized day care and household help.

76. The advancement of women was predicated upon their social and economic development, and special attention must be paid to the 40,000 children who died every year of malnutrition, preventable disease and adequate sanitation, as well as to the half-million mothers who died each year from causes related to childbirth. The rate of illiteracy among women was extremely high and its reduction was essential to promote the advancement of women. Better education for women must be accompanied by access to greater decision-making power so that they could utilize their skills and potential to help improve their own welfare. Another matter meriting special attention was family violence because it jeopardized not only the immediate victims but also society as a whole.

77. Lastly, she fully agreed about the importance of consultation of women in public life and that such consultation must include senior women officials from government, political parties, unions and non-governmental organizations, as well as parliamentarians and those responsible for women's affairs.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.