

# The Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women : Excerpt

Adopted by the 3rd World Conference to review and appraise the achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, held in Nairobi, Kenya, 15–26 July 1985.

## Introduction

### A. Historical background

6. The Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women during the Period from 1986 to the Year 2000 set forth in the present document present concrete measures to overcome the obstacles to the Decade's goals and objectives for the advancement of women. Building on principles of equality also espoused in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 3/ the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 4/ the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 5/ the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 6/ and the Declaration on the Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Co-operation, 7/ the Forward-looking Strategies reaffirm the international concern regarding the status of women and provide a framework for renewed commitment by the international community to the advancement of women and the elimination of gender-based discrimination. The efforts for the integration of women in the development process should be strengthened and should take into account the objectives of a new international economic order and the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade.

7. The Nairobi World Conference is taking place at a critical moment for the developing countries. Ten years ago, when the Decade was launched, there was hope that accelerated economic growth, sustained by growing international trade, financial flow and technological developments, would allow the increased participation of women in the economic and social development of those countries. These hopes have been belied owing to the persistence and, in some cases, the aggravation of an economic crisis in the develop-

ing countries, which has been an important obstacle that endangers not only the pursuance of new programmes in support of women but also the maintenance of those that were already under way.

8. The critical international economic situation since the end of the 1970s has particularly adversely affected developing countries and, most acutely, the women of those countries. The overall picture for the developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, the drought-stricken and famine-stricken areas of Africa, the debt-ridden countries and the low-income countries, has reached a critical point as a result of structural imbalances and the continuing critical international economic situation. The situation calls for an increased commitment to improving and promoting national policies and multilateral co-operation for development in support of national programmes, bearing in mind that each country is responsible for its own development policy. The gap between the developed and developing countries, particularly the least developed among them, instead of narrowing, is widening further. In order to stem such negative trends and mitigate the current difficulties of the developing countries, which affect women the most, one of the primary tasks of the international community is to pursue with all vigour the efforts directed towards the establishment of a New International Economic Order founded on equity, sovereign equality, interdependence and common interest.

### D. Basic approach to the formulation of the forward-looking strategies

37. It is necessary to reiterate the unity, inseparability and interdependence of the objectives of the Decade - equality, development and peace - as regards the advancement of women and their full integration in economic, political, social and

cultural development, for which purpose the objectives should remain in effect in the operational strategies for the advancement of women to the year 2000.

38. The Forward-looking Strategies are intended to provide a practical and effective guide for global action on a long-term basis and within the context of the broader goals and objectives of a new international economic order. Measures are designed for immediate action, with monitoring and evaluation occurring every five years, depending on the decision of the General Assembly. Since countries are at various stages of development, they should have the option to set their own priorities based on their own development policies and resource capabilities. What may be possible for immediate action in one country may require more long-range planning in another, and even more so in respect of countries which are still under colonialism, domination and foreign occupation. The exact methods and procedures of implementing measures will depend upon the nature of the political process and the administrative capabilities of each country.

42. Although addressed primarily to Governments, international and regional organizations, and non-governmental organizations, an appeal is made to all women and men in a spirit of solidarity. In particular, it is addressed to those women and men who now enjoy certain improvements in their material circumstances and who have achieved positions where they may influence policy-making, development priorities and public opinion to change the current inferior and exploited condition of the majority of women in order to serve the goals of equality for all women, their full participation in development, and the achievement and strengthening of peace.

## I. Equality

### A. Obstacles

43. One of the objectives of the Decade entails the full observance of the equal rights of women and the elimination of de jure and de facto discrimination. This is a critical first step towards human resource development. In developing countries inequality is, to a great extent, the result of underdevelopment and its various manifestations, which in turn are aggravated by the unjust distribution of the benefits of the international economy. The United Nations systems, particularly the Commission on the Status of Women, has worked for four decades to establish international standards and to identify and propose measures to prevent discrimination on the basis of sex. Although much progress has been made in legislation, measures are necessary for effective implementation and enforcement. Legislative enactment is only one element in the struggle for equality, but an essential one as it provides the legitimate basis for action and acts as a catalyst for societal change.

44. 10a/ The inequality of women in most countries stems to a very large extent from mass poverty and the general backwardness of the majority of the world's population caused by underdevelopment, which is a product of imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, apartheid, racism, racial discrimination and of unjust international economic relations. The unfavourable status of women is aggravated in many countries, developed and underdeveloped, by de facto discrimination on the grounds of sex.

45. One of the fundamental obstacles to women's equality is that de facto discrimination and inequality in the status of women and men derive from larger social, economic, political and cultural factors that have been justified on the basis of physiological differences. Although there is no physiological basis for regarding the household and family as essentially the domain of women, for the devaluation of domestic work and for regarding the capacities of women as inferior to those of men, the belief that such a basis exists perpetuates inequality and inhibits the structural and attitudinal changes necessary to eliminate such inequality.

46. Women, by virtue of their gender, experience discrimination in terms of denial of equal access to the power structure that controls society and determines de-

velopment issues and peace initiatives. Additional differences, such as race, colour and ethnicity, may have even more serious implications in some countries, since such factors can be used as justification for compound discrimination.

47. Fundamental resistance creates obstacles, which have wide-ranging implications for the objectives of the Decade. Discrimination promotes an uneconomic use of women's talents and wastes the valuable human resources necessary for development and for the strengthening of peace. Ultimately, society is the loser if the talents of women are under-utilized as a result of discrimination.

48. The sharp contrasts between legislative changes and effective implementation of these changes are a major obstacle to the full participation of women in society. De facto and indirect discrimination, particularly by reference to marital or family status, often persists despite legislative action. The law as a recourse does not automatically benefit all women equally, owing to the socio-economic inequalities determining women's knowledge of and access to the law, as well as their ability to exercise their full legal rights without fear of recrimination or intimidation. The lack or inadequacy of the dissemination of information on women's rights and the available recourse to justice has hampered, in many instances, the achievement of expected results.

49. Some legislative changes are made without a thorough understanding of the relationship between existing legal systems. In practice, however, certain aspects of the law - for instance, customary provisions - may be in operation in societies with multiple and conflicting legal systems. Emerging and potential obstacles resulting from possible contradictions should be anticipated so that preventive measures can be taken. When passing new legislation, whatever its subject-matter, all possible care should be taken to ensure that it implies no direct or indirect discrimination so that women's right to equality is fully respected in law.

50. In some countries, discriminatory legislative provisions in the social, economic and political spheres still exist, including civil, penal and commercial codes and certain administrative rules and regulations. Civil codes in some instances have not yet been adequately studied to determine action for repealing those laws that still discriminate against women and for

determining, on the basis of equality, the legal capacity and status of women, married women in particular, in terms of nationality, inheritance, ownership and control of property, freedom of movement and the custody and nationality of children. Above all, there is still a deeply rooted resistance on the part of conservative elements in society to the change in attitude necessary for a total ban on discriminatory practices against women at the family, local, national and international levels.

### B. Basic strategies

51. The political commitment to establish, modify, expand or enforce a comprehensive legal base for the equality of women and men and on the basis of human dignity must be strengthened. Legislative changes are most effective when made within a supportive framework promoting simultaneous changes in the economic, social, political and cultural spheres, which can help bring about a social transformation. For true equality to become a reality for women, the sharing of power on equal terms with men must be a major strategy.

52. Governments should take the relevant steps to ensure that both men and women enjoy equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities so as to guarantee the development of their individual aptitudes and capacities and enable women to participate as beneficiaries and active agents in development.

53. Changes in social and economic structures should be promoted which would make possible the full equality of women and their free access to all types of development as active agents and beneficiaries, without discrimination of any kind, and to all types of education, training and employment. Special attention should be paid to implementing this right to the maximum extent possible for young women.

54. In order to promote equality of women and men, governments should ensure, for both women and men, equality before the law, the provision of facilities for equality of educational opportunities and training, health services, equality in conditions and opportunities of employment, including remuneration, and adequate social security. Governments should recognize and undertake measures to implement the right of men and women to employment on equal conditions, regardless of marital status, and their equal access to the whole range of economic activities.

55. Effective institutions and procedures must be established or strengthened to monitor the situation of women comprehensively and identify the causes, both traditional and new, of discrimination and to help formulate new policies and effectively carry out strategies and measures to end discrimination. These arrangements and procedures must be integrated within a coherent policy for development but cannot wait indefinitely for such a policy to be formulated and implemented.

56. The obstacles to the equality of women created by stereotypes, perceptions of and attitudes towards women should be totally removed. Elimination of these obstacles will require, in addition to legislation, education of the population at large through formal and informal channels, including the media, non-governmental organizations, political party platforms and executive action.

57. Appropriate governmental machinery for monitoring and improving the status of women should be established where it is lacking. To be effective, this machinery should be established at a high level of government and should be ensured adequate resources, commitment and authority to advise on the impact on women of all government policies. Such machinery can play a vital role in enhancing the status of women, inter alia, through the dissemination of information to women on their rights and entitlements, through collaborative action with various ministries and other government agencies and with non-governmental organizations and indigenous women's societies and groups.

58. Timely and reliable statistics on the situation of women have an important role to play in the elimination of stereotypes and the movement towards full equality. Governments should help collect statistics and make periodic assessment in identifying stereotypes and inequalities, in providing concrete evidence concerning many of the harmful consequences of unequal laws and practices and in measuring progress in the elimination of inequities.

59. The sharing of domestic responsibilities by all members of the family and equal recognition of women's informal and invisible economic contributions in the mainstream of society should be developed as complementary strategies for the

elimination of women's secondary status, which has fostered discrimination.

### III. Peace

#### A. Obstacles

232. The threat to peace resulting from continuing international tension and violations of the United Nations Charter, resulting in the unabated arms race, in particular in the nuclear field, as well as wars, armed conflicts, external domination, foreign occupation, acquisition of land by force, aggression, imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, apartheid, gross violation of human rights, terrorism, repression, the disappearance of persons and discrimination on the basis of sex are major obstacles to human progress, specifically to the advancement of women.

233. Such obstacles, some of which occur with increasing frequency, continually reinforce and are reinforced by historically established hostile attitudes, ignorance and bigotry between countries, ethnic groups, races, sexes, socio-economic groups and by lack of tolerance and respect for different cultures and traditions. Their negative effects are increased by poverty, tensions in international economic and political relations which are often aggravated, as well as by the arms race, both nuclear and conventional. The arms race in particular diverts resources which could be used for developmental and humanitarian purposes, hinders national and international development efforts and further handicaps the well-being of the poorest nations and the most disadvantaged segments of the population.

234. Despite the achievements of the Decade, women's involvement in governmental and non-governmental activities, decision-making processes related to peace, mobilization efforts for peace, education for peace and peace research remains limited. Their participation in the struggle to eradicate colonialism, neo-colonialism, imperialism, totalitarianism including fascism and similar ideologies, alien occupation, foreign domination, aggression, racism, racial discrimination, apartheid and other violations of human rights has often gone unnoticed.

235. Universal and durable peace cannot be attained without the full and equal participation of women in international relations, particularly in decision-making concerning peace, including the processes

envisaged for the peaceful settlement of disputes under the Charter of the United Nations nor without overcoming the obstacles mentioned in 232.

236. Full equality between women and men is severely hampered by the threats to international peace and security, lack of satisfying progress in the field of disarmament, including the spread of the arms race to outer space, violation of the principle of the right of peoples under alien and colonial domination and foreign occupation to self-determination and independence and respect for the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of States as well as justice, equality and mutual benefit in international relations.

237. It is evident that women all over the world have manifested their love for peace and their wish to play a greater role in international co-operation, amity and peace among different nations. All obstacles at national and international levels in the way of women's participation in promoting international peace and co-operation should be removed as soon as possible.

238. It is equally important to increase women's understanding and awareness of constructive negotiations aimed at reaching positive results for international peace and security. Governments should take measures to encourage the full and effective participation of women in negotiations on international peace and security. The rejection of the use of force or of the threat of the use of force and foreign interference and intervention should become widespread.

#### B. Basic strategies

239. The main principles and directions for women's activities aimed at strengthening peace and formulated in the Declaration on the Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Co-operation 7/ should be put into practice. The Declaration calls for governments, the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations, relevant institutions and individuals to strengthen women's participation in this sphere and it provides the overall framework for such activities.

240. Women and men have an equal right and the same vital interest in contributing to international peace and co-operation. Women should participate fully in all efforts to strengthen and maintain international peace and security and to pro-

mote international co-operation, diplomacy, the process of détente, disarmament in the nuclear field in particular, and respect for the principle of the Charter of the United Nations, including respect for the sovereign rights of States, guarantees of fundamental freedoms and human rights, such as recognition of the dignity of the individual and self-determination, and freedom of thought, conscience, expression, association, assembly, communication and movement without distinction as to race, sex, political and religious beliefs, language or ethnic origin. The commitment to remove the obstacles to women's participation in the promotion of peace should be strengthened.

241. In view of the fact that women are still very inadequately represented in national and international political processes dealing with peace and conflict settlement, it is essential that women support and encourage each other in their initiatives and action relating either to universal issues, such as disarmament and the development of confidence-building measures between nations and people, or to specific conflict situations between or within States.

242. There exist situations in several regions of the world where the violation of principles of non-use of force, non-intervention, non-interference, non-aggression and the right to self-determination endangers international peace and security and creates massive humanitarian problems which constitute an impediment to the advancement of women and hence to the full implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies. In regard to these situations strict adherence to and respect for the cardinal principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and implementation of relevant resolutions consistent with the principles of the Charter are an imperative requirement with a view to seeking solutions to such problems, thereby ensuring a secure and better future for the people affected, most of whom are invariably women and children.

243. Since women are one of the most vulnerable groups in the regions affected by armed conflicts, special attention has to be drawn to the need to eliminate obstacles to the fulfillment of the objectives of equality, development and peace and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

244. One of the important obstacles to achieving international peace is the per-

sistent violation of the principles and objectives of the Charter of the United Nations and the lack of political will of governments of such countries to promote constructive negotiations aimed at decreasing international tension on the issues that seriously threaten the maintenance of international peace and security. For this reason, the strategies in this field should include the mobilization of women in favour of all acts and actions that tend to promote peace, in particular, the elimination of wars and danger of nuclear war.

245. Immediate and special priority should be given to the promotion and the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to sex, the full application of the rights of peoples to self-determination and the elimination of colonialism, neo-colonialism, apartheid, of all forms of racism and racial discrimination, oppression and aggression, foreign occupation, as well as domestic violence and violence against women.

248. Women have played and continue to play an important role in the self-determination of peoples, including through national liberation, in accordance with the United Nations Charter. Their efforts should be recognized and commended and used as one basis for their full participation in the construction of their countries, and in the creation of humane and just social and political systems. Women's contribution in this area should be ensured by their equal access to political power and their full participation in the decision-making process.

249. Strategies at the national, regional and the global levels should be based on a clear recognition that peace and security, self-determination and national independence are fundamental for the attainment of the three objectives of the Decade: equality, development and peace.

250. Safeguarding world peace and averting a nuclear catastrophe is one of the most important tasks today in which women have an essential role to play, especially by supporting actively the halting of the arms race followed by arms reduction and the attainment of a general and complete disarmament under effective international control, and thus contributing to the improvement of their economic position. Irrespective of their socio-economic system, the States should strive to avoid confrontation and to build

friendly relations instead, which should be also supported by women.

251. Peace requires the participation of all members of society, women and men alike, in rejecting any type of intervention in the domestic affairs of States, whether it is openly or covertly carried out by other States or by transnational corporations. Peace also requires that women and men alike should promote respect for the sovereign right of a State to establish its own economic, social and political system without undergoing political and economic pressures or coercion of any type.

252. There exists a relationship between the world economic situation, development and the strengthening of international peace and security, disarmament and the relaxation of international tension. All efforts should be made to reduce global expenditures on armaments and to reach an agreement on the internationally agreed disarmament goals in order to prevent the waste of immense material and human resources, some part of which might otherwise be used for development, especially of the developing countries, as well as for the improvement of standards of living and well-being of people in each country. In this context, particular attention should be given to the advancement of women, including to the participation of women in the promotion of international peace and co-operation and the protection of mothers and children who represent a disproportionate share of the most vulnerable group, the poorest of the poor.

253. Women's equal role in decision-making with respect to peace and related issues should be seen as one of their basic human rights and as such should be enhanced and encouraged at the national, regional and international levels. In accordance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, all existing impediments to the achievement by women of equality with men should be removed. To this end, efforts should be intensified at all levels to overcome prejudices, stereotyped thinking, denial to women of career prospects and appropriate educational possibilities, and resistance by decision-makers to the changes that are necessary to enable equal participation of women with men in the international and diplomatic service.

254. Mankind is confronted with a choice: to halt the arms race and proceed to dis-

armament or face annihilation. The growing opposition of women to the danger of war, especially a nuclear war, which will lead to a nuclear holocaust, and their support for disarmament must be respected. States should be encouraged to ensure unhindered flow and access to information, including to women, with regard to various aspects of disarmament to avoid dissemination of false and tendentious information concerning armaments and to concentrate on the danger of the escalation of the arms race and on the need for general and complete disarmament under effective international control. The resources released as a result of disarmament measures should be used to help promote the well-being of all peoples and improve the economic and social conditions of the developing countries. Under such conditions, States should pay increased attention to the urgent need to improve the situation of women.

255. Peace education should be established for all members of society, particularly children and young people. Values, such as tolerance, racial and sexual equality, respect for and understanding of others, and good-neighbourliness should be developed, promoted and strengthened.

256. Women of the world, together with men, should, as informal educators and socialization agents, play a special role in the process of bringing up younger generations in an atmosphere of compassion, tolerance, mutual concern and trust, with an awareness that all people belong to the same world community. Such education should be part of all formal and informal educational processes as well as of communications, information and mass-media systems.

257. Further action should be taken at family and neighbourhood levels, as well as at national and international levels, to achieve a peaceful social environment compatible with human dignity. The questions of women and peace and the meaning of peace for women cannot be separated from the broader question of relationships between women and men in all spheres of life and in the family. Discriminatory practices and negative attitudes towards women should be eliminated and traditional gender norms changed to enhance women's participation in peace.

258. Violence against women exists in various forms in everyday life in all societies. Women are beaten, mutilated, burned, sexually abused and raped. Such violence

is a major obstacle to the achievement of peace and the other objectives of the Decade and should be given special attention. Women victims of violence should be given particular attention and comprehensive assistance. To this end, legal measures should be formulated to prevent violence and to assist women victims. National machinery should be established in order to deal with the question of violence against women within the family and society. Preventive policies should be elaborated, and institutionalized forms of assistance to women victims provided.

#### **E. Women in areas affected by armed conflicts, foreign intervention and threats to peace**

261. Armed conflicts and emergency situations impose a serious threat to the lives of women and children, causing constant fear, danger of displacement, destruction, devastation, physical abuse, social and family disruption, and abandonment. Sometimes these result in complete denial of access to adequate health and educational services, loss of job opportunities and overall worsening of material conditions.

262. International instruments, ongoing negotiations and international discussions aimed at the limitation of armed conflicts, such as the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and the First Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, adopted in 1977, provide a general framework for the protection of civilians in times of hostilities and the basis of provisions of humanitarian assistance and protection to women and children. Measures proposed in the 1974 Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict (General Assembly resolution 3318 (XXIX)) should be taken into account by Governments.

#### **IV. Areas of special concern**

277. There is an increasing number of categories of women who, because of their special characteristics, are experiencing not only the common problems indicated under the separate themes but also specific difficulties due to their socio-economic and health condition, age, minority status or a combination of these factors. Moreover, in many countries increasing demographic pressure, deteriorating rural conditions, curtailment of subsistence agriculture and difficult political conditions have been exacerbated by the

current economic recession, leading to the dislocation of large sections of populations. In this process women experience particular difficulties and are often the more vulnerable because of their traditional lack of access to development opportunities.

278. The special groups of women identified below are extremely diverse, and their problems vary tremendously from one country to another. No single strategy or set of measures can apply adequately to all cases, and the present document is therefore limited to highlighting their special circumstances and the need for each country, as well as the international community, to give these issues the necessary attention. The basic strategy must remain one of fundamentally changing the economic conditions that produce such deprivation and of upgrading women's low status in society, which accounts for their extreme vulnerability to such conditions, especially to poverty. This is aggravated by the increase in drug-dependence, which adversely affects all sectors of society, including women. Building an organizational base for such change is a crucial strategy that can provide a rallying point for solidarity among women. Measures needed to provide immediate emergency assistance should be supplemented by longer-term efforts to enable women to break out of these situations. In many cases, permanent solutions to these issues can only be found through the broader efforts directed towards the reallocation of resources and decision-making power and towards the elimination of inequality and injustice.

279. There is a need to recognize the survival mechanisms already developed by these women as basic strategies in their own right and to build on them. A first priority would be to strengthen their organization capabilities by providing physical, financial and human resources, as well as education and training. Also of extreme importance is the need to revitalize these women's aspirations in order to eliminate the chronic despair that characterizes their daily lives.

280. The economic, social, cultural and political conditions of those groups of women should be improved basically by the implementation of the measures proposed for the attainment of equality, development and peace for women in general. Additional efforts should be directed towards ensuring the gainful and produc-

tive inclusion of these women in mainstream development and in political activities. Priority emphasis should be placed upon income-generating opportunities and for the independent and sustained improvement of their condition and by the full integration and active participation of women as agents and beneficiaries of development.

281. Policies, programmes and projects aimed at or incorporating especially vulnerable and underprivileged groups of women should recognize the particular difficulties of removing the multiple obstacles facing such groups and should place equal emphasis on addressing the social, economic and human dimensions of their vulnerability and their underprivileged positions. Measures needed to provide them with immediate assistance should be supplemented by comprehensive long-term plans to achieve lasting solutions to their problems. These will usually necessitate global efforts in resolving the special problems of vulnerable groups, of which women are a significant part.

282. Basic to all efforts to improve the condition of these women should be the identification of their needs and hence the gathering of gender-specific data and economic indicators sensitive to conditions of extreme poverty and oppression. Such data should contain spatial, socio-economic and longitudinal characteristics and should be designed specifically for use in policy, programme and project formulation and implementation. Monitoring efforts at national, subregional, regional and international levels should be intensified.

#### **A. Women in areas affected by drought**

283. During the Decade, the phenomenon of drought and desertification grew and developed incessantly, no longer affecting merely some localities in a single country but several entire countries. The scale and persistence of drought constitutes a grave threat, particularly for the countries of the Sahel, in which famine and a far-reaching deterioration of the environment set in as a result of the desertification process. Hence, despite the considerable efforts of the international community, the living conditions of the peoples, particularly those of women and children, which were already precarious, have become particularly miserable.

In view of that situation steps should be taken to promote concerted programmes between the countries concerned for combating drought and desertification. Efforts should be intensified for the formulation and implementation of programmes aimed at food security and self-sufficiency, in particular by the optimum control and exploitation of hydro-geological resources.

A distinction should be made between emergency aid and productive activities. Emergency aid should be intensified when necessary and as far as ever possible directed towards development aid.

Measures should be adopted to take into account women's contribution to production, involve them more closely in the design, implementation and evaluation of the programmes envisaged and ensure ample access for them to the means of production and processing and preservation techniques.

#### **B. Urban poor women**

284. Urbanization has been one of the major socio-economic trends over the past few decades and is expected to continue at an accelerating rate. Although the situation varies considerably from one region to another, it can generally be expected that by the year 2000 close to half the number of women in the world will be living in urban areas. In developing countries, the number of urban women could nearly double by the year 2000, and it is envisaged that there could be a considerable increase in the number of poor women among them.

285. To deal effectively with the issue, governments should organize multi-sectoral programmes with emphasis on economic activities, elimination of discrimination and the provision of supportive services and, inter alia, adequate child-care facilities and, where necessary, workplace canteens to enable women to gain access to economic, social and educational opportunities on an equal basis with men. Particular attention should be devoted to the informal sector, which constitutes a major outlet for employment of a considerable number of urban poor women.

#### **C. Elderly women**

286. The International Plan of Action on Aging adopted by the World Assembly on Aging in 1982<sup>19</sup> emphasized both the humanitarian and developmental aspects of aging. The recommendations of the

Plan of Action are applicable to women and men with a view to providing them with protection and care, and ensuring their involvement and participation in social life and development. However, the Plan of Action recognizes a number of specific areas of concern for elderly women since their longer life expectancy frequently means an old age aggravated by economic need and isolation for both unmarried women and widows, possibly with little or no prospect of paid employment. This applies particularly to those women whose lifetimes were spent in unpaid and unrecognized work in the home with little or no access to a pension. If women have an income, it is generally lower than men's, partly because their former employment status has in the majority of cases been broken by maternity and family responsibilities. For this reason, the Plan of Action also noted the need for long-term policies directed towards providing social insurance for women in their own right. Governments and non-governmental organizations should, in addition to the measures recommended, explore the possibilities of employing elderly women in productive and creative ways and encouraging their participation in social and recreational activities.

It is also recommended that the care of elderly persons, including women, should go beyond disease orientation and should include their total well-being. Further efforts, in particular primary health care, health services and suitable accommodation and housing as strategies should be directed at enabling elderly women to lead a meaningful life as long as possible, in their own home and family and in the community.

Women should be prepared early in life, both psychologically and socially, to face the consequences of longer life expectancy. Although, while getting older, professional and family roles of women are undergoing fundamental changes, aging, at a stage of development, is a challenge for women. In this period of life, women should be enabled to cope in a creative way with new opportunities. The social consequences arising from the stereotyping of elderly women should be recognized and eliminated. The media should assist by presenting positive images of women, particularly emphasizing the need for respect because of their past and continuing contributions to society.

Attention should be given to studying and treating the health problems of aging, particularly in women. Research should also be directed towards the investigation and slowing down of the process of premature aging due to a lifetime of stress, excessive work-load, malnutrition and repeated pregnancy.

#### **D. Young women**

287. Initiatives begun for the 1985 International Youth Year should be extended and expanded so that young women are protected from abuse and exploitation and assisted to develop their full potential. Girls and boys must be provided with equal access to health, education and employment to equip them for adult life. Both girls and boys should be educated to accept equal responsibilities for parenthood.

Urgent attention should be paid to the educational and vocational training of young women in all fields of occupation, giving particular emphasis to those who are socially and economically disadvantaged. Self-employed young women and girls should be assisted to organize co-operatives and ongoing training programmes to improve their skills in production, marketing and management techniques. Special retraining programmes should also be developed for teenage mothers and girls who have dropped out of school and are ill equipped to enter productive employment.

Steps should be taken to eliminate exploitative treatment of young women at work in line with ILO Convention No. 111 concerning discrimination in respect of employment and occupation, 1958 and ILO Convention No. 122 concerning employment policy, 1964. Legislative measures guaranteeing young women their rights should be enforced.

Governments should recognize and enforce the rights of young women to be free from sexual violence, sexual harassment and sexual exploitation. In particular, governments should recognize that many young women are victims of incest and sexual abuse in the family, and should take steps to assist the victims and to prevent such abuse by education, by improving the status of women and by appropriate action against offenders. Young women should be educated to assert their rights. Particular attention should also be given to sexual harassment and exploita-

tion in employment, especially those areas of employment such as domestic service, where sexual harassment and exploitation are most prevalent.

Governments must also recognize their obligation to provide housing for young women who because of unemployment and low incomes suffer special problems in obtaining housing. Homeless young women are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

In the year 2000 women aged 15-24 will constitute over 8 per cent of both rural and urban populations in developing countries. The great majority of these women will be out of school and in search of jobs. For those employed, frequent exploitation, long working hours and stress have serious implications for their health. Low nutritional levels and unplanned and repeated pregnancies are also aggravating factors.

#### **E. Abused women**

288. Gender-specific violence is increasing and Governments must affirm the dignity of women, as a priority action. Governments should therefore intensify efforts to establish or strengthen forms of assistance to victims of such violence through the provision of shelter, support, legal and other services.

In addition to immediate assistance to victims of violence against women in the family and in society, Governments should undertake to increase public awareness of violence against women as a societal problem, establish policies and legislative measures to ascertain its causes and prevent and eliminate such violence in particular by suppressing degrading images and representations of women in society, and finally encourage the development of educational and re-educational measures for offenders.

#### **F. Destitute women**

289. Destitution is an extreme form of poverty. It is estimated that its effects on large segments of the population in developing and developed countries are on the increase. Forward-looking Strategies to promote the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace at the national and international levels are the basis for dealing with this problem. In addition strategies already specified for the implementation of the International Development

Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade and the new international economic order are suggested in these recommendations. Governments should therefore ensure that the special needs and concerns of destitute women are given priority in the above-mentioned strategies. Moreover, efforts being undertaken for the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless (1987) should focus attention on the particular situation of women commensurate with their relative needs.

#### **G. Women victims of trafficking and involuntary prostitution**

290. Forced prostitution is a form of slavery imposed on women by procurers. It is, inter alia, a result of economic degradation that alienates women's labour through processes of rapid urbanization and migration resulting in underemployment and unemployment. It also stems from women's dependence on men. Social and political pressures produce refugees and missing persons. Often these include vulnerable groups of women who are victimized by procurers. Sex tourism, forced prostitution and pornography reduce women to mere sex objects and marketable commodities.

291. States Parties to the United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others should implement the provisions dealing with the exploitation of women as prostitutes. Urgent consideration should also be given to the improvement of international measures to combat trafficking in women for the purposes of prostitution. Resources for the prevention of prostitution and assistance in the professional, personal and social reintegration of prostitutes should be directed towards providing economic opportunities, including training, employment, self-employment and health facilities for women and children. Governments should also endeavour to co-operate with non-governmental organizations to create wider employment possibilities for women. Strict enforcement provisions must also be taken at all levels to stem the rising tide of violence, drug abuse and crime related to prostitution. The complex and serious problems of the exploitation of and violence against women associated with prostitution call for increased and co-ordinated efforts by police agencies internationally.

## H. Women deprived of their traditional means of livelihood

292. The excessive and inappropriate exploitation of land by any party for any purpose, inter alia, by transnational corporations, as well as natural and man-made disasters are among the predominant causes of deprivation of traditional means of livelihood. Droughts, floods, hurricanes and other forms of environmental hazards, such as erosion, desertification and deforestation, have already pushed poor women into marginal environments. At present the pressures are greatest in drought-afflicted arid and semi-arid areas. Urban slums and squatter settlements are also seriously affected. Critically low levels of water supplies, shortage of fuel, over-utilization of grazing and arable lands, and population density are all factors that deprive women of their livelihood.

293. National and international emphasis on ecosystem management should be strengthened, environmental degradation should be controlled and options provided for alternative means of livelihood. Measures should be established to draw up national conservation strategies aimed at incorporating women's development programmes, among which are irrigation and tree planting and also orientation in the area of agriculture, with women constituting a substantial part of the wage-earning labour force for those programmes.

## I. Women who are the sole supporters of families

294. Recent studies have shown that the number of families in which women are the sole supporters is on the increase. Owing to the particular difficulties (social, economic and legal) which they face, many such women are among the poorest people concentrated in urban informal labour markets and they constitute large numbers of the rural unemployed and marginally employed. Those with very little economic, social and moral support face serious difficulties in supporting themselves as well as in bringing up their children alone. This has serious repercussions for society in terms of the quality, character, productivity and human resource capabilities of its present and future citizenry.

295. The assumptions that underlie a large part of the relevant legislation, regulations and household surveys that confine the

role of supporter and head of household to men hinder women's access to credit, loans and material and non-material resources. Changes are needed in these areas to secure for women equal access to resources. There is a need to eliminate terms such as head of household and introduce others that are comprehensive enough to reflect women's role appropriately in legal documents and household surveys to guarantee the rights of these women. In the provision of social services, special attention has to be given to the needs of these women. Governments are urged to ensure that women with sole responsibility for their families receive a level of income and social support sufficient to enable them to attain or maintain economic independence and to participate effectively in society. To this end, the assumptions that underlie policies, including research used in policy development, and legislation that confines the role of supporter or head of household to men should be identified and eliminated. Special attention, such as accessible, quality child care, should be given to assisting those women in discharging their domestic responsibilities and to enabling them to participate in and benefit from education, training programmes and employment. The putative father should be made to assist in the maintenance and education of those children born out of wedlock.

## J. Women with physical and mental disabilities

296. It is generally accepted that women constitute a significant number of the estimated 500 million people who are disabled as a consequence of mental, physical or sensory impairment. Many factors contribute to the rising numbers of disabled persons, including war and other forms of violence, poverty, hunger, nutritional deficiencies, epidemics and work-related accidents. The recognition of their human dignity and human rights and the full participation by disabled persons in society is still limited, and this presents additional problems for women who may have domestic and other responsibilities. It is recommended that governments should adopt the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons (1975) and the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (1982) which provide an overall framework for action and also refer to problems specific to women that have not been fully appreciated by soci-

ety because they are still not well known or understood. Community-based occupational and social rehabilitation measures, support services to help them with their domestic responsibilities, as well as opportunities for the participation of such women in all aspects of life should be provided. The rights of intellectually disabled women to obtain health information and advice and to consent to or refuse medical treatment should be respected similarly, the rights of intellectually disabled minors should be respected.

## K. Women in detention and subject to penal law

297. One of the major areas of current concern in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice is the need for equal treatment of women by the criminal justice system. In the context of changing socioeconomic and cultural conditions some improvements have taken place but more need to be made. The number of women in detention has increased over the Decade and this trend is expected to continue. Women deprived of freedom are exposed to various forms of physical violence, sexual and moral harassment. The conditions of their detention are often below acceptable hygienic standards and their children are deprived of maternal care. The recommendations of the Sixth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, held at Caracas, in 1980, 20/ and the principles of the Caracas Declaration with special reference to the fair and equal treatment of women, should be taken into account in designing and implementing concrete measures at the national and international levels. The proportions of indigenous women imprisoned in some countries is a matter of concern.

## L. Refugee and displaced women and children

298. The international community recognizes a humanitarian responsibility to protect and assist refugees and displaced persons. In many cases refugee and displaced women are exposed to a variety of difficult situations affecting their physical and legal protection as well as their psychological and material well-being. Problems of physical debility, physical safety, emotional stress and socio-psychological effects of separation or death in the family, as well as changes in women's roles, together with limitations often found in the new environment including

lack of adequate food, shelter, health care and social services call for specialized and enlarged assistance. Special attention has to be offered to women with special needs. Furthermore, the potential and capacities of refugee and displaced women should be recognized and enhanced.

299. It is recognized that a lasting solution to the problems of refugees and displaced women and children should be sought in the elimination of the root causes of the flow of refugees and durable solutions should be found leading to their voluntary return to their homes in conditions of safety and honour and their full integration in the economic, social and cultural life of their country of origin in the immediate future. Until such solutions are achieved, the international community, in an expression of international solidarity and burden-sharing, should continue providing relief assistance and also launching special relief programmes taking into account the specific needs of refugee women and children in countries of first asylum. Similarly, relief assistance and special relief programmes should also continue to be provided to returnees and displaced women and children. Legal, educational, social, humanitarian and moral assistance should be offered as well as opportunities for their voluntary repatriation, return or resettlement. Steps should also be taken to promote accession by governments to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and to implement, on a basis of equity for all refugees, provisions contained in this Convention and its 1967 Protocol.

### **M. Migrant women**

300. The Decade has witnessed the increasing involvement of women in all forms of migration, including rural-rural, rural-urban and international movements of a temporary, seasonal or permanent nature. In addition to their lack of adequate education, skills and resources, migrant women may also face severe adjustment problems due to differences in religion, language, nationality, and socialization as well as separation from their original families. Such problems are often accentuated for international migrants as a result of the openly-expressed prejudices and hostilities, including vio-

lation of human rights in host countries. Thus recommendations of the World Population Plan of Action and the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women pertaining to migrant women should be implemented and expanded in view of the anticipated increase in the scope of the problem. It is also urgent to conclude the elaboration of the draft International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families, as agreed by the General Assembly in the relevant resolutions.

301. The situation of migrant women, who are subject to double discrimination as women and as migrants, should be given special attention by the governments of host countries, particularly with respect to protection and maintenance of family unity, employment opportunities and equal pay, equal conditions of work, health care, benefits to be provided in accordance with the existing social security rights in the host country, and racial and other forms of discrimination. Particular attention should also be given to the second generation of migrant women, especially with regard to education and professional training, to allow them to integrate themselves in their countries of adoption and to work according to their education and skills. In this process, loss of cultural values of their countries of origin should be avoided.

### **N. Minority and 'indigenous' women**

302. Some women are oppressed as a result of belonging to minority groups or populations which have historically been subjected to domination and suffered dispossession and dispersal. These women suffer the full burden of discrimination based on race, colour, descent, ethnic and national origin and the majority experienced serious economic deprivation. As women, they are therefore doubly disadvantaged. Measures should be taken by governments in countries in which there are minority and indigenous populations to respect, preserve and promote all of their human rights, their dignity, ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic identity and their full participation in societal change.

303. Governments should ensure that the fundamental human rights and freedoms as enshrined in relevant international instruments are fully guaranteed also to women belonging to minority groups and indigenous populations. Governments in countries in which there are indigenous and minority populations should ensure respect for the economic, social and cultural rights of these women and assist them in the fulfillment of their family and parental responsibilities. Specific measures should address dietary deficiencies, high levels of infant and maternal mortality and other health problems, lack of education, housing and child care. Vocational, technical, professional and other training should be provided to enable these women to secure employment or to participate in income-generating activities and projects, and to secure adequate wages, occupational health and safety and their other rights as workers. As far as possible, governments should ensure that these women have access to all services in their own languages.

304. Women belonging to minority groups or indigenous populations should be fully consulted and should participate in the development and implementation of programmes affecting them. The governments of countries where minorities and indigenous populations exist should take proper account of the work of bodies such as the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, in particular its Working Group which is developing a set of international standards to protect the rights of indigenous populations. The General Assembly should consider the advisability of designating an international year of indigenous and traditional cultures in order to promote international understanding and to emphasize the distinctive role of women in sustaining the identity of their people.

### **Note**

10a/ The United States reserved its position on 44 because it did not agree that the obstacles listed should be considered the main reasons for the inequality of women in most countries.



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