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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN TUESDAY, 12 SEPTEMBER 1995

Delegates to the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) resolved a number of the remaining bracketed texts in the draft Platform for Action and Declaration during Working Groups and informal consultations, and approved texts from four Sections of the Platform during a meeting of the Main Committee. Working Group I met during morning and evening sessions. Working Group II met in an informal session during the morning and during the evening. The Contact Group of Working Group II continued to deliberate on the Beijing Declaration throughout the day. The Plenary continued to hear statements.

MAIN COMMITTEE

The third meeting of the Main Committee, chaired by Patricia Licuana, convened to adopt the agreed text contained in Non-Papers. Sections were available in all UN languages. Many delegations noted inaccurate translations, and many objected to adopting paragraphs containing brackets. The Secretariat explained the importance of accepting all cleared text, even in paragraphs containing brackets, so that the whole document could be translated in time for Plenary.

SECTION E (armed conflict): The Chair of Working Group II, Irene Freudenschuss, introduced Non-Paper 9. Argentina, Guatemala, the Holy See, Malta, Peru, and Syria said they would make reservations when they had an accurate translation of the full document. Kuwait reserved on all bracketed text. The Main Committee approved all unbracketed text.

SECTION A (poverty): In introducing Non-Paper 5, Chair Freudenschuss noted that Egypt had requested a deferral of paragraphs **62 (f)** (mobilization) and **63 (b)** (legislative reforms) pending the outcome of informal negotiations on inheritance rights. Agreed paragraphs were approved for recommendation for adoption by the Plenary. Pakistan asked for postponement of **61(c)** pending the outcome of negotiations on resources in an informal group convened by Working Group I.

CHAPTER V (Institutional Arrangements): Nana Amma Yeboaa (Ghana), Chair of Working Group I, presented Non-Paper 17. The outstanding issues are **291** (mandates and resources for national, subregional/regional and international

institutions) and **343** (international financial institutions). Chair Licuana called delegates' attention to the statement on budget implications of the Platform for Action (A/CONF.177/L.6). The US stated that, with regard to the reference to commitments in 293 (conference of commitment), her country would not interpret the Platform as legally binding. Delegates then adopted the cleared text.

CHAPTER VI (Financial Arrangements): Chair Amma Yeboaa then presented Non-Paper 18. The outstanding issue is in **362** (mobilization of resources from within the UN). The US noted that, with respect to **354** (adequate financial resources) and its mention of 0.7% GNP ODA, her country has not accepted an ODA target and that national governments have the primary responsibility for development. The Non-Paper was not translated into all UN languages, however, so final adoption was postponed.

SECTION J (mass media): Chair Yeboaa introduced Non-Paper 14 and noted that agreement had been reached on **245(b)** (disseminate media materials on role models). The issues still subject to informal negotiations were **239 (h)** (freedom of media) and **242 (d)** (indigenous media development), the latter being handled by Working Group II. The US noted that the Platform proposals constitute recommendations and would not impinge on the freedom of the press. The agreed paragraphs were recommended for adoption by the Plenary.

WORKING GROUP I

Working Group I, chaired by Nana Amma Yeboaa (Ghana), examined Section L (girl child), Chapter III (Critical Areas of Concern), a report from the Contact Group on health, and outstanding issues from other sections during a morning session.

SECTION L (girl child): In **282(b)** (minimum employment age), delegates called for defining the minimum age for child admission to employment in national legislation, in conformity with international labor standards and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Brackets were then lifted from **282(c)(i)** (minimum age for admission to employment), **283(a)** (safety of girls) and **283(c)** (gender sensitization training). In **283(d)** (protection from violence), delegates agreed to: a reference to female infanticide and prenatal sex selection; retain "safe and confidential;" add "social" and retain "medical and psychological;" and delete the reference to parental responsibility. In **285(a)** (policies to help the family), Guatemala, Benin and others supported "family" but the EU and others

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supported “families” or “in its various forms.” Delegates agreed to “the family, as described in paragraph 30.” The same formulation was used in **285(b)** (strengthen the family). Also in **285(b)**, delegates called for measures that protect, respect and promote the potential of the girl child. In **285(c)** (educate parents and care givers), delegates agreed to “educate and encourage” care givers to “treat girls and boys equally.”

CHAPTER III (Critical Areas of Concern): Delegates deleted the reference to respect for women’s innate dignity in **43** (advancement of women) and retained the reference to “a matter of human rights and a condition for” social justice.

CONTACT GROUP I (health): Chair Mervat Tallawy introduced the final package on parental language, and noted that the Contact Group had accomplished a major breakthrough and removed all of the brackets from Section C (health). Delegates agreed to recommend the final outcome to the Main Committee.

OUTSTANDING ISSUES: In **17** (movement towards democratization), delegates adopted the Central and Eastern European nations’ reformulation of the reference to their countries, which notes that transition has given rise to a variety of experiences and has been mostly peaceful, but in some countries has been hindered by armed conflict. The Group continued its work during an evening session.

WORKING GROUP II

An informal session of Working Group II met Tuesday morning to discuss proposals for outstanding text. In **230 (f)** (strengthen human rights institutions), the word “independent” was removed from brackets. In **231 (h)** (implementation of Convention on Discrimination), delegates agreed to a compromise formulation that called for effective cooperation between the UNHCHR, the UNHCR and other relevant bodies, taking into account the link between violations of human rights.

In **226** (disadvantaged or marginalized groups), delegates could not agree on a reference to “sexual orientation.” Some countries noted that the paragraph is merely a statement of fact and does not create any new rights. Others noted that this is the first time this term has appeared in a UN document and asked for a definition. The language remains bracketed pending the outcome of informal consultations. In **232(f)** (ensure women’s reproductive rights), a proposal to use agreed language from paragraph 97 (sexual rights) was discussed, but many delegations felt that paragraph 97 is descriptive, whereas paragraph 232(f) is action oriented, and that the language should be amended to reflect this difference. One delegate proposed adding: “Any measures or changes related to abortion can only be determined at the national or local level according to the national legislative process.” A decision was deferred pending the results of an informal contact group.

In **223** (human rights), a proposal was made to reference the ICPD Programme of Action and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and note that the FWCW reaffirms that reproductive rights rest on recognizing the right to decide the number, the spacing and timing of children and to have the information and means to do so. One delegate preferred to refer to conferences rather than the programmes. Discussion was deferred pending informal negotiation. The Working Group continued consideration of outstanding issues during an evening meeting.

CONTACT GROUP OF WORKING GROUP II

The Contact Group on the draft Beijing Declaration, chaired by Olga Pellicer (Mexico), met all day. The Group approved text

negotiated in its informal drafting group and attempted to remove brackets from remaining disputed paragraphs. Delegates accepted nine paragraphs agreed Monday by the informal drafting group chaired by Canada. Three were in the preamble: acknowledging the voices of women and their diversity and roles; recognizing the effects of increasing poverty; and addressing obstacles to women’s advancement and empowerment. Delegates agreed to a paragraph affirming commitments to equal rights and inherent human dignity in several international human rights instruments and one to ensure implementation of human rights.

The paragraph stating that “women’s rights are human rights” was accepted with several delegations expressing reservations. Delegates agreed to the paragraph on equal rights, opportunities and access to resources as critical to men and women’s well being, their families and to the consolidation of democracy. A paragraph on eradication of poverty was accepted with one delegation objecting to a reference to sustained economic growth.

The bracketed paragraph on respect for spiritual and moral values was replaced. The new paragraph reaffirms a commitment to empowerment and advancement of women including the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief as contributing to moral, ethical, spiritual and intellectual needs. Further informal negotiations were required for: a paragraph recognizing the right of women to control their health, in particular their own fertility; a paragraph on peace, disarmament and support for negotiations toward a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty; and text on sexual and reproductive rights. One suggestion combined that paragraph with one on barriers to human rights but omitted sexual and reproductive rights. Another amended the paragraph to ensure the right to control and decide freely on matters of sexuality including sexual and reproductive rights free from coercion. Informal consultations resumed on the paragraph.

IN THE CORRIDORS

NGOs unfurled a “Conference of Commitments” banner in a hallway of the BICC during the first week of the FWCW, and on Tuesday they released their compilation of government commitments made to date. A group of NGOs have read the statements of all speakers and identified government commitments. As of Monday evening, 150 statements had been made, with 65 speakers identified as having announced commitments. NGOs have also independently evaluated their own nation’s commitments, and report that, while the commitments look good on paper, in reality some do not meet NGO expectations.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: The general exchange of views will continue during a morning session of the Plenary in Hall No. 1.

MAIN COMMITTEE: The Main Committee is expected to meet during a night sessions in Hall No. 16 from 7:00 pm to 1:00 am to adopt the results of the Working Groups.

WORKING GROUP I: Working Group I is expected to meet during morning and afternoon sessions in Hall No. 16 to resolve all outstanding brackets.

WORKING GROUP II: Working Group II is expected to meet during morning and afternoon sessions in Hall No. 15 to resolve all outstanding brackets.

CONTACT GROUP OF WORKING GROUP II: The Contact Group of Working Group II is expected to meet during morning and afternoon sessions in Hall No. 10 to continue negotiating the Declaration.