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FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: YEAR-END UPDATE

Although the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) has come and gone, important work remains to be done to implement the Platform for Action adopted by the Conference on 15 September 1995. In this regard, the 50th United Nations General Assembly reviewed the outcome of the Conference and adopted a number of resolutions that endorse the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and address Conference follow-up, the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat, and related issues on the advancement of women.

This special year-end issue of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* will summarize the results of the General Assembly's consideration of the Conference and highlight upcoming events. This issue of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* is published as part of a series of year-end issues intended to summarize the current state of play in the various sustainable development conferences and negotiations reported on by the *Bulletin* in 1995.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CONFERENCE

In resolution 45/129, the UN General Assembly endorsed resolution 1990/12 of the Economic and Social Council, which called for a world conference on women to be held in 1995, and requested that the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) serve as the preparatory committee for the conference. At its 37th session, the CSW requested, in resolution 37/7, that the Secretary-General prepare a draft Platform for Action for its 38th session. Following that meeting, the CSW requested, in resolution 38/10, that the Secretary-General further develop the draft Platform, taking into account the results of regional group meetings.

THE 39th SESSION OF THE CSW

The 39th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which met in New York from 15 March - 7 April 1995, served as the third and final preparatory meeting for the Conference. This session presented the first opportunity for delegates to examine and negotiate the draft Platform for Action. Due to the number of amendments to the draft Platform and the lack of agreement on numerous issues, negotiations moved to informal sessions early in the meeting and delegates agreed to extend the CSW by three days

in order to complete examination of the draft text.

Two key debates marked the session. A small group of delegations objected to some sections of the draft that reaffirmed commitments adopted at previous UN conferences, notably the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo. Secondly, a number of delegations objected to the use of the term "gender" in the Platform and proposed that it be bracketed throughout the text. A Contact Group was set up to report on this question to the FWCW.

Mindful of modest resource commitments, and with a view to pressing for an action-oriented Conference in Beijing, the meeting also focused on two initiatives: an Australian call for a "Conference of Commitments," and a proposal to install an ombudswoman in the office of the Secretary-General. At the close of the CSW, 40 percent of the draft Platform remained in brackets.

INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS

Due to the large number of outstanding issues in the draft Platform for Action, ECOSOC mandated an additional week of informal consultations, which were held from 31 July - 4 August 1995, at UN Headquarters in New York. Delegates established the ground rule that agreements made in New York would be respected in Beijing. Two working groups were formed to address disputed text by issue area, aided by an informal note prepared by the Secretariat that grouped bracketed text into issue "clusters." Working Group I, chaired by Patricia Licuanan (Philippines),

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addressed issues related to the macro-economic framework, resources and the institutional framework. Working Group II, chaired by Irene Freudenschuss (Austria), addressed issues related to human rights and diversity. Progress was made in removing brackets from references to a number of economic and human rights issues, including structural adjustment programmes, sustainable development, international human rights instruments and economic rights. Other issues, such as references to the concepts of equity/equitable, proved more difficult and remained bracketed. All issues related to health were held over for discussion in Beijing. The product of the informal consultations (A/CONF.177/L.3), which noted all text successfully negotiated during the informal consultations and reduced the bracketed text by one-third, was transmitted to the FWCW for adoption.

THE BEIJING CONFERENCE

The Fourth World Conference on Women met in Beijing, China, from 4 - 15 September 1995. Delegates discussed and adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. They also heard Plenary statements and commitments from Member States regarding the actions they would take to promote equality, development and peace for and with the women of the world.

Four official negotiating groups — two Working Groups and two Contact Groups — and numerous informal groups were formed at the FWCW to reach agreement on the draft Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration. Work progressed at a slow but steady pace throughout the negotiations. Night and weekend sessions were necessary to provide adequate time for consultation, and agreement was reached on all but three of the outstanding issues by Thursday, 14 September. Two of the outstanding issues — a footnote reference to implementation in accordance with religious and cultural values, and references to non-discrimination based on “sexual orientation” — were decided by rulings from the Chair during a late night session of the Main Committee on 14 September.

Delegates to the largest UN conference ever held emerged from the FWCW with a 38-paragraph Declaration and 345-paragraph Platform for Action. Several dozen countries made reservations, but all nations joined the consensus to adopt and implement most, if not all, of the document, which calls for action to achieve equality, development and peace.

The 38-paragraph Beijing Declaration summarizes the positions and proposed actions agreed upon in the Platform for Action. The Declaration recognizes that the status of women has advanced, but inequalities and obstacles remain. It reaffirms commitments to: equal rights in a number of existing agreements; ensuring full implementation of human rights of women and the girl child; and empowerment and advancement of women, including the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief. Delegates stated their conviction that: women’s empowerment and full participation are fundamental to equality, development and peace; equal rights and responsibilities are critical to families; women’s involvement is required to eradicate poverty; peace is linked to the advancement of women; and gender-sensitive policies are essential to foster women’s empowerment and advancement. Governments are determined to: intensify efforts to achieve goals from the Nairobi strategies; ensure the full enjoyment by women and the girl child of human rights; eliminate discrimination and remove obstacles to equality; encourage men to participate in actions towards equality; promote women’s economic independence; promote sustainable development and education; prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls; ensure full participation; and ensure equal access to economic resources.

The Platform for Action contains six chapters: Chapter I — Mission Statement; Chapter II — Global Framework; Chapter III — Critical Areas of Concern; Chapter IV — Strategic Objectives and Actions; Chapter V — Institutional Arrangements; and Chapter VI — Financial Arrangements. Chapter IV contains twelve sections that diagnose the critical areas of concern and propose concrete actions. The twelve areas are: poverty; education; health; violence against women; armed conflict; inequality in women’s access to and participation in the definition of economic structures; decision-making; insufficient mechanisms for the advancement of women; human rights; mass media; women and the environment; and the girl child.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY HIGHLIGHTS

The Third Committee of the UN General Assembly addressed Agenda Item 165, implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women, from 14-17 November 1995. Delegates had before them the report of the Conference (A/CONF.177/20), in addition to the Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of the outcome of the Conference (A/50/744), a report on the merger of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) with the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) (A/50/747) and other reports associated with Agenda Item 107, Advancement of Women, which was considered at the same time.

During the course of the four-day debate, almost all delegates stressed the importance of implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at the local, national, regional and international levels. While some delegates focused their statements on national-level activities, others focused on the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Beijing Conference. Many did not support the Secretary-General’s proposal to establish a high-level advisory board, but preferred the Platform’s recommendation to establish a post in the Office of the Secretary-General to advise him on gender issues. A number of delegates did not support the proposed merger of INSTRAW and UNIFEM. Others stressed the importance of strengthening the Division for the Advancement of Women and reviewing the mandate of the Commission on the Status of Women.

The following is a summary of the Third Committee’s debate.

TUESDAY, 14 NOVEMBER 1995

In her introduction, **Gertrude Mongella, Secretary-General of the Fourth World Conference on Women**, noted that any delay in the implementation of the Platform means an increase in women’s illiteracy, more women dying in childbirth, more women becoming victims of armed conflicts, and more women subject to violence and oppression. The lack of resources cannot be used as an excuse not to address women’s issues. In the follow-up to the Conference, governments, NGOs, the UN system and civil society are called upon to work at different levels and in different capacities. Changing the structures, management cultures and people’s mentalities must be part and parcel of the implementation of the Platform for Action.

Under-Secretary-General Nitin Desai introduced the Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of the Conference (A/50/744). The report contains three parts: a brief introduction, providing the genesis of the Conference process; a section on follow-up, which sets out the Secretary-General’s response to the Conference recommendations; and a section suggesting possible action by the General Assembly. The Secretary-General believes that effective harmonization of the work of the various intergovernmental bodies concerned is a crucial prerequisite for the development of an enhanced framework for

international cooperation on gender issues. The Secretary-General will request all UN departments and offices to review their programmes with a view to determining how they can contribute to the implementation of the Conference outcome.

MARSHALL ISLANDS: Neijon R. Edwards expressed hope that the international community will pledge the necessary financial and technical resources to implement the objectives of the Conference. She noted commitments of the Government of the Marshall Islands and stressed the importance of education. She also noted that the leading cause of death among Marshallese women is cancer of the reproductive system linked to radiation exposure.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: Amb. Julia Tavares de Alvarez said that the proposed institutional reforms of all UN bodies that deal with the advancement of women should be an integral part of the general UN reform, including the Secretariat, ECOSOC and other arms of the organization. She expressed concern about the manner in which the Secretariat has chosen to deal with the proposed merger of INSTRAW and UNIFEM. The lack of transparency and the complete disregard for the mandates given by Member States is of grave concern.

NEW ZEALAND: Denise Almao noted that while the target of 35% women in the UN Secretariat has almost been achieved, the UN is nowhere near the target of 25% of women in senior posts. She urged that the issue of women in the Secretariat continue as an item for the Committee's consideration.

ALGERIA: Amina Mesdoua noted that as part of Algeria's efforts to improve the situation of women, free and compulsory universal education has been established, as well as equal pay for equal work.

SPAIN: Marina Subirats, on behalf of the EU, Cyprus, Bulgaria, Poland, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Romania, said that by 1996 governments should develop comprehensive strategies or plans of action, including time-bound targets and benchmarks for monitoring and implementing the Platform. NGOs, the regional commissions and the international financial organizations all have an important role to play. Those countries committed to the 20:20 initiative should integrate a gender perspective into its implementation. The CSW should develop a multi-year work programme for the period 1996-2000 in order to review the implementation of the Platform.

EGYPT: Karim Wissa said that Egypt is expanding participation of women at all levels and finding ways to make women economically independent. States, NGOs and other organizations need to work together to implement the outcomes of the various global conferences.

MALAYSIA: Nafisah Mohamed said that education plays a major role in addressing the "feminization of poverty." Malaysia is not inclined towards any new institutional mechanism for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and would prefer the use of existing mechanisms. UNIFEM could concentrate on the operational aspects, while the Division for the Advancement of Women could focus on policy issues.

CÔTE D'IVOIRE: Dienebou Kaba Camara expressed concern at the "international fatigue" that seemed present after the Beijing Conference. The advancement of women to high-level posts in the Secretariat has not progressed. UN agencies have a major role to play in the advancement of women, but they need adequate financial resources to continue their work.

MEXICO: Amb. Gustavo Albin said that the UN system must be consistent in its approach to women's issues. Both the Declaration and the Platform for Action must be widely disseminated in all languages. Mexico is in the process of

establishing a national programme for women, which would facilitate the participation of women in all aspects of society.

CHINA: Feng Cui said that the enhancement of international cooperation is essential to the effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The relevant organs of the UN system should adjust their programmes to reflect the Platform. To improve the status of women in China, the government has identified seven priority areas: employment, poverty alleviation, access to education, improved healthcare, protection of women's rights, increasing the number of women participating in political affairs, and strengthening institutions.

UNICEF: Deputy Executive Director Karin Sham Poo said that UNICEF has identified three key areas for priority action in implementing the Platform for Action: girls' education; adolescent girls' and women's health; and children's and women's rights.

WEDNESDAY, 15 NOVEMBER 1995

DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA: Ri Song Il said that his delegation believes that the women's "problem" can be solved only through an integral process of implementing all strategies aimed at establishing equitable international, political and economic relations. Each country must legally guarantee women's equal rights with men.

REPUBLIC OF KOREA: Kwang-Jae Lee said that achieving gender equality through women's empowerment at all levels is one of the top priorities in the implementation of the Platform. He described the measures being taken by his government to implement the Platform. On the international level, one of the critical areas of concern is the eradication of poverty among women. Mechanisms for the advancement of women within the UN system should be strengthened.

CANADA: Kerry Buck said that the mandates of the CSW and the Division for the Advancement of Women must be reviewed and strengthened. The Commission must play a central role in monitoring implementation of the Platform and assisting ECOSOC in monitoring implementation within the UN system. Canada supports the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a fourth goal-oriented inter-agency task force on the empowerment and advancement of women.

UNITED STATES: Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe said that the UN should focus on three critical actions in implementing the Platform: mainstreaming a gender perspective throughout its work; coordinating the implementation of all recent UN conferences and summits; and monitoring implementation of the Platform. She supported the CSW's review of its work programme and the establishment of a high-level post in the Office of the Secretary-General to act as an adviser on gender issues and help ensure implementation of the Platform.

SLOVAKIA: Karol Mistrik said that the transformation process in his country has had some negative impacts on the social position of women, including an increase in unemployment and crimes committed against women. Although 13 percent of the deputies in parliament are women and three women hold ministerial positions in the Government cabinet, much remains to be done to widely employ women in the sphere of responsible and managerial positions. The outcome of the Beijing Conference confirms that the rights of women represent an indivisible part of human rights.

NETHERLANDS: Lily Hutjes outlined the achievements of Beijing and added that specific measures must be taken to speed up the process of acquiring equal rights for women. The Netherlands Government has agreed to incorporate the Beijing recommendations into a new equal rights policy document.

POLAND: Anna Raduchowska-Brochwicz called for closer cooperation among governments at the regional level to give more consistency to the process of implementing the Beijing Platform for Action. Strengthening or, where appropriate, establishing focal points on women in the regional commissions should serve the same purpose. The future role of UNIFEM in Eastern Europe should be strengthened.

AUSTRALIA: Kathy Wong said that Australia looks forward to reviewing the mandate and the development of a multi-year work programme for the CSW and improving the Commission's capacity to undertake a central role in monitoring the system-wide implementation of the Platform. ECOSOC must ensure effective coordination of the follow-up to recent world conferences. All UN funds and agencies should review and revise policies and procedures to meet the priorities identified in the Platform. She described how Australia is implementing the Platform.

ZAMBIA: Mwila G.B. Chigaga noted that a number of the proposals in the Secretary-General's report do not point in the direction of an integrated, effective follow-up to the Beijing conference. One of the reasons why the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategy by the UN system was not very successful may be due to a lack of a focal point within the system for policy and operations. The Division for the Advancement of Women's focus has been on substantive servicing of the CSW, with minimal involvement in operational activities. The proposed inter-agency task force may not be sufficient. Integrating the functions of the adviser on gender issues into the portfolio of one of the senior advisers in the Secretary-General's office will lead to continued marginalization of gender issues.

ISRAEL: Dr. Daphna Sharfman noted several factors that threaten the effective implementation of the Platform for Action: women continue to be locked out of the halls of political power; gender discrimination, often rooted in cultural, religious, traditional and conservative perceptions; and the actual recognition of women's rights as human rights.

PALESTINE: Somaia Barghouti said that what is required from the international community to meet the new challenges facing women today is the sincere will and the mobilization of new and adequate resources to speed up the advancement of women in all fields and the protection of their rights. Among the priorities of the Palestinian women is to adopt a declaration of principles on the rights of women and translate its stipulations into laws to be drawn up by the Palestinian National Authority.

WORLD BANK: Judy Grayson said that the World Bank plans to allocate US\$900 million a year in lending to girls' education, at both the primary and secondary levels. The Bank will also work on reproductive health and population activities, primary healthcare and HIV/AIDS prevention. The Bank is also developing a leadership fund that will help to facilitate the role of women as agents of change in both the public and private sectors.

UNESCO: Anita Amorim said that prior to the Beijing Conference, UNESCO set up an agenda for gender equality. The Agenda calls for promotion of education, equal access to knowledge in all fields, and recognition of women's capacity for leadership and their contributions to non-violent conflict resolution. UNESCO's medium-term strategy also focuses on ensuring that women can enjoy their rights and strengthen their equal and effective participation in all aspects of social life.

UNHCR: Ann Howarth Wiles described the UNHCR's Policy and Guidelines for Refugee Women. The UNHCR will be implementing the Beijing Platform with a renewed emphasis on the participation and integration of refugee women in all aspects of its protection and assistance programmes. Four new field staff will provide advice and monitor progress at the regional level. A

recruitment policy aimed at ensuring greater representation of women, particularly in senior positions, is already in place.

BOTSWANA: Pholile E. Legwaila spoke on behalf of the SADC countries (Angola, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana). The SADC countries cannot endorse the Secretary-General's recommendations because the general thrust of his report is at variance with the Platform for Action. Implementation should be at two complementary levels: national and international. The mandate of the CSW must be reviewed and strengthened to ensure that its central role of mainstreaming gender concerns into the work of the UN will be successful. ECOSOC should dedicate one high-level segment in the next two years to the advancement of women and the implementation of the Platform for Action.

BURKINA FASO: Awa Ouedraogo noted the actions taken by her government to support rural women, such as providing them with loans and improving health and educational services. She did not support the merging of INSTRAW and UNIFEM.

PARAGUAY: Ana María Biairdi Quesnel said increased education could change the existing inequalities between men and women. In Paraguay, a programme for equal opportunities for women in education has been established, which seeks a non-sexist educational system and promotes education for all.

VENEZUELA: Lyda Aponte de Zacklin said that in order to bring about the changes recommended in the Platform for Action, there is a need for intense collaboration between governments, the Secretariat, organizations in the UN system, intergovernmental organizations and NGOs. The Government of Venezuela has concentrated its activities in areas that deserve immediate attention: poverty and the eradication of violence against women.

CUBA: Dulce María Buergo said that the success of the Beijing Conference will be measured by the fulfillment of the promises made there. Conference follow-up must take an integrated approach and the Platform must be implemented throughout the UN system. She was not pleased with the late submission of the report of the Secretary-General that says, under the pretext of a lack of resources, that he cannot establish the high-level post for the integration of a gender perspective in the work of the UN.

IRAQ: Khaled S.H. Al-Hitti described the progress that Iraq has made in increasing the participation of women in politics and the workforce. Even so, the cumulative effects of the embargo have reached catastrophic levels and have affected the most vulnerable segments of society.

ROMANIA: Victoria Sandru described the actions taken in Romania that are improving the status of women, including a special programme on women in development; appropriate measures to fight women's unemployment; active social protection; a programme for elderly women; and upgrading women to senior management and decision-making positions. She recalled two Romanian proposals made in Beijing — to set up an international NGO center for countries with economies in transition in Bucharest, and to organize a regional meeting for assessing the outcome of the Beijing Conference.

INDONESIA: Hamid al-Hadad said that the efforts of the international community to place people at the center of development must also include the equality of rights between women and men as a fundamental principle. Indonesia is concerned about the constraints under which the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women operates, and the backlog of its consideration of country reports. While the status of women in the Secretariat has improved modestly, the target of 35% has yet to be reached.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: Azra Kalajdzisalihovic said that the future for the women in Bosnia and Herzegovina faces many challenges in light of all the problems that the country is now facing in the political, economic, social and cultural fields. The direct participation of women in rebuilding society, reconstruction, restoration of the rule of law and reconciliation is essential.

MALI: Coulibally Sira Cisse said that the emergence of a multiparty system in Mali has allowed many women to contribute to Mali's development. She welcomed the creation of the post of special rapporteur on violence against women and urged the international community to support the activities of INSTRAW.

JORDAN: Manar Dabbas said that poverty and unemployment is still a major obstacle in the advancement of women. In this regard, the Jordanian National Committee for Women was established in 1992. The Committee formulated a national consensus, which was adopted by the government, that defines the needs and priorities of women in key areas such as education, health, employment and legislation.

NIGERIA: Sam Otuyelo stressed the importance of UNIFEM and INSTRAW and called for international support for both organizations. The Secretary-General's proposal to establish a high-level advisory board on gender issues is not satisfactory and many would prefer the post of a senior adviser to the Secretary-General, as proposed in Beijing.

UKRAINE: Nina Kovalska described the activities taken in Ukraine to prepare for the Beijing Conference and noted the large number of Ukrainian NGOs that participated in the Forum. The major task of national policy at this stage is to disseminate information about Beijing and involve grassroots organizations in the process of discussing and elaborating a national programme.

NEPAL: Sushama Acharya said that the newly formed government in Nepal has initiated several programmes to promote the status of women, such as the promotion of education of the girl child and the provision of a financial allowance to widows over 60 years of age and to all men and women over 75. She welcomed the Secretary-General's recommendation to review the implementation of the Platform on a biennial basis and for ECOSOC to review and strengthen the mandate of the CSW.

THURSDAY, 16 NOVEMBER 1995

ARGENTINA: Amb. Zelmira Regazzoli said that education and capacity building of women is a natural priority for incorporating women into society. She described Argentina's activities to advance the status of women and to increase female participation in decision-making. Argentina has set up a national commission to follow-up on the Beijing Conference, which will involve national and provincial leaders, NGOs and the academic sector.

CHILE: Fidel Coloma said that Chile has focused on problems women face, such as poverty, education, unemployment and the lack of political participation. In the follow-up to Beijing, interagency cooperation is essential and the Commission on the Status of Women should be strengthened. The Secretary-General's proposal to create a high-level board of advisers on gender perspectives needs further study.

KAZAKSTAN: Amb. Akmaral Kh. Arystanbekova said that the successful implementation of the Platform for Action requires action at all levels. The situation of women in countries with economies in transition needs particular attention, as do women in areas where nuclear testing has been carried out.

ETHIOPIA: Fesseha A. Tessema noted that among the critical areas of concern identified in the Platform for Action, the elimination of poverty is important for Ethiopia. Access to credit

for poor women and access to land and other resources will be accorded prime importance in implementing the Platform. The other critical area of concern is the fact that African women have suffered disproportionately as a result of persistent armed conflicts.

BRAZIL: Edgard Telles Ribeiro supported the work of INSTRAW and UNIFEM and stressed the importance of strengthening the role of women in the economic and social fields. The Brazilian Government is sponsoring a policy to support credit for marginalized segments of the population, improving access to education and providing healthcare and reproductive rights.

AZERBAIJAN: Fikret M. Pashayev said that his country's problems with a transition economy, war, occupation and refugees have an unfavorable impact on the status of women. He called for the release of women hostages held in captivity by the Armenians.

BANGLADESH: Prof. M. Rezaul Karim called for the concerted and collective efforts of the international community and societies at large to live up to the commitments made in Beijing. He called for reconsideration of the proposed merger of UNIFEM and INSTRAW and requested that the Secretary-General reconsider the recommendation of the Conference for the designation of a high-level post to serve as an adviser on gender issues.

TUNISIA: Chedlia Boukhchina said that education programmes for increasing the literacy rate for women have been created in Tunisia and that women and children receive free health services. Tunisia is actively implementing the Platform for Action, but more solidarity at the regional and international levels is needed.

SYRIA: Dr. Fayssal Mekdad said that education is one of the first measures that should be undertaken in the advancement and empowerment of women. In Syria, education is free, illiteracy has drastically decreased and the fertility level and maternal and child mortality rates have dropped. The Government is modernizing legislation to ensure that the rights of women are secured.

BAHAMAS: Amb. Harcourt L. Turnquest, on behalf of the Caribbean Community, said that many Caricom countries have formulated or nearly completed national plans for the implementation of the Platform for Action. A subregional follow-up meeting was convened in Trinidad and Tobago in October. At the international level, coordination within the Secretariat and throughout the UN system must ensure the proper incorporation of gender concerns in policies and programmes.

LEBANON: Hassan Kassem Najem said that the civil war in Lebanon, which lasted from 1975 to 1990, greatly affected the well-being of women. Today, a national plan of action for improving the situation of women has been created, and seeks the full equality of women in all political institutions and increases their level of participation in economic activities.

THE GAMBIA: Fatou Marenah-Jammeh said that the international community should fulfill the commitments undertaken in Beijing to improve the lot of women, particularly in developing countries, by mobilizing new and additional resources to promote and ensure the advancement of women. In The Gambia, four out of 14 Cabinet Ministers are women.

FRANCE: Claire Aubin said that the Platform for Action reaffirmed that equality cannot be questioned or addressed in relative terms. In the implementation of the Platform for Action, it is necessary to ensure that the equality of men and women is taken into account. France has established an observatory body on equality between men and women, attached to the office of the Prime Minister, which is empowered to collect and analyze information relating to women and men in all fields.

TURKEY: Ahmet Arda said that Turkey strongly believes that in a possible merger with UNIFEM, the role and functions of INSTRAW should be protected. The current policy and

programmes for improvement of the status of women in Turkey are strongly focused on enhancement of the participation and representation of women in political life, while also paying attention to improved education, employment, health and professional opportunities.

PANAMA: Amb. Mary Morgan-Moss, on behalf of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama, announced an agreement to establish a Technical Secretariat on regional and extraregional cooperation in social affairs based in Panama City. She supported the proposal to create a senior advisory post on gender issues in the Office of the Secretary-General. Such a post must be filled by a woman.

PERU: Amb. Fernando Guillen noted Peru's efforts to ensure follow-up and implementation of the Platform for Action, including establishment of a special commission on women. Through the Platform for Action for Gender Equity 1995-2000, Peru is advancing equality for women and access to healthcare, education and the labor market.

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES: Rashim Ahluwalia raised the issue of violence against women in conflict situations and the deterioration of women's and children's health in many areas of the world. The international community and national governments must undertake additional measures to eliminate the root causes of poverty and violence, including disregard or abuse of human rights.

INDIA: MP Kamaluddin Ahmed said that affirmative action has been used by the Indian Government to enable both political and economic empowerment of women. The eradication and feminization of poverty must be addressed both nationally and internationally. India has drawn up a National Policy on Women and has allocated six percent of the GNP for education.

KENYA: Adam Adawa called on the international community, the multilateral financial institutions and the UN system to speed up the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. He did not support the proposed merger of INSTRAW and UNIFEM or the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a high-level advisory board to advise him on Conference follow-up. Instead, existing organizations should be strengthened and a high-level post in the Office of the Secretary-General should be established.

COLOMBIA: Clara Ines Vargas de Losada noted the advancements that women in Colombia have made, including higher levels of education, contributions to the labor market, and reduction of the population growth rate. Colombia has a policy for the equity and participation of women, which will enable it to honor the commitments of Beijing.

LIECHTENSTEIN: Amb. Claudia Fritsche announced that Liechtenstein will be in a position to deposit its instrument of accession to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women by the end of the year. Liechtenstein has also decided to create a focal point for all issues related to equality of women and men. Much more needs to be done within the UN Secretariat with regard to the advancement of women, particularly regarding sexual harassment.

JAMAICA: Cheryl Gordon said that Jamaica's National Plan for the implementation of the Beijing Platform focuses mainly on poverty, violence against women and children, education and training, employment and inequality in power-sharing and decision-making. Jamaica does not support the merging of UNIFEM and INSTRAW, since each has a distinct role to play.

HOLY SEE: Archbishop Renato Martino endorsed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, but expressed disagreement and disappointment with certain aspects of the document, including the failure to recognize the importance of human dignity, failure to

address a broad range of health concerns, and the endorsement of certain sexual and reproductive practices.

PAKISTAN: Samiya Waheed Junejo said that the UN strategy for the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform must be based on system-wide coordination. The CSW must be strengthened. The overall costs and benefits of the proposals for either a high-level adviser or a high-level board should be examined closely. INSTRAW and UNIFEM should be strengthened, not merged.

JAPAN: Dr. Yoriko Meguro said that to ensure effective implementation of the Platform, Japan attaches great importance to mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes at the community, national, regional and international levels. Within the UN system, gender issues should be addressed by all UN organs. There is a need for synergy between the CSW and other functional commissions. The number of women in senior posts needs to be increased.

GHANA: Amb. George Lamptey said that there are certain proposals in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the Conference that create doubts as to the mode and manner the Secretary-General intends to use to ensure the implementation of the Beijing recommendations. These include a lack of additional funds in the budget for the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a high-level advisory board, as opposed to a high-level post.

MALTA: Victor Pace said that equality of rights between women and men is achieved when it permeates three broad areas: employment and income; marriage and family life; and community decision-making.

BELARUS: Igar Gubarevich encouraged strengthening the role of the Commission on the Status of Women. He also suggested extending UNIFEM's role to countries with economies in transition. The creation of a comprehensive programme of action to help women in countries with economies in transition is imperative.

IRAN: Frouzandeh Vadiati noted that violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace. She emphasized Iran's advances with regard to education and increasing the number of women government employees.

LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC: Southam Sakonhnhom said that sustainable development could only be achieved if men and women work together on an equal footing. He said that the Union of Lao Women is the only women's organization in his country and it assists the government in improving women's quality of life. The Union has set up a strategic programme for Beijing follow-up.

ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY: Amb. Ibrahima Sy said civil wars and political instability in Africa, as well as their disproportionate impact on women, continue to be of great concern. He called for the eradication of existing cultural practices that discriminate against girls and women in Africa. Even though Africa remains committed to implementation of the Platform for Action, meaningful action by the international community on the African debt problem is urgently needed.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION: Stafford Mousky said that an issue of particular concern is trafficking in women. IOM has given priority to the issue of protecting and assisting these victims of trafficking and related abuse.

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FIJI: Graham Leung said that immediate priorities for Fiji include: the development of economic projects for women; addressing the issue of violence against women; a review of legislation that discriminates against women; increasing the participation of women in decision-making; and the mainstreaming of gender concerns into sectoral policies. He called for greater coordination between UN bodies dealing with women's issues.

SLOVENIA: Eva Tomic said that the role of the Division for the Advancement of Women will have to be reassessed and strengthened. The CSW should be the central intergovernmental body for follow-up and monitoring of the Beijing Platform and ECOSOC should coordinate follow-up to all the recent UN conferences in the socio-economic fields.

SUDAN: Shahira H.A. Wahbi said that Sudanese women enjoy the equal right to work, receive equal wages for equal work and have full political rights. The Sudan also provides paid leave following childbirth and allows women to have a separate financial identity. UNIFEM and INSTRAW have important roles to play and should be consolidated to carry out their mandates. Implementation of the Platform for Action should take into account the cultural and religious differences of the various countries.

LIBYA: Jamal Hamida said that the advancement of women cannot be achieved in isolation of the advancement of communities. He called attention to the negative impact of economic sanctions on women and children. Economic sanctions lead to great suffering, since they result in a lack of medicine, food and other essential items.

NEW ZEALAND: Denise Almao welcomed the Secretary-General's intention to create a stronger, better coordinated UN programme for the advancement of women. New Zealand supports the proposed review of the mandate of the CSW and the functions of the Division for the Advancement of Women. One important area of focus for New Zealand is the protection and enhancement of the position of indigenous women.

URUGUAY: Imelda Smolcic noted several areas where Uruguay is working for the advancement of women, including poverty alleviation, education, universal access to health services, respect for fundamental human rights, and increased participation in all levels of the workforce and government.

TANZANIA: Radhia Msuya said that Tanzania has problems with three key proposals of the Secretary-General: the proposed inter-agency task force; the proposed appointment of a senior adviser in the Office of the Secretary-General; and the proposed high-level advisory board of 15-20 eminent persons. Tanzania does not want these proposals to lead to a cumbersome bureaucracy.

RUSSIAN FEDERATION: Ivan V. Khryskov said a special coordinating body has been created in his country to implement the Platform for Action. Russian women try to balance their professional and family commitments, but the road to a market economy has created new obstacles. In addition, crimes against women have recently increased. Countries with economies in transition need assistance from the international community to overcome their temporary economic problems.

LATVIA: Ingrida Karina said that integrating women into all aspects of social, economic and political life demonstrates the universal recognition that women's rights are an inalienable and indivisible part of human rights. Latvia's National Preparatory Committee for Beijing is now drafting recommendations for a national gender equality policy for submission to the Cabinet. Close cooperation is continuing among Nordic and Baltic countries on gender equality issues.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES: Ahmad Muhammad Sheweireb said that his country is disappointed with the deterioration of the situation in many countries, particularly the developing countries, as a result of conflict. Women and children are usually the primary victims in areas of conflict. Sustainable development is only possible with the full and effective participation of women.

PHILIPPINES: Ruth D. Samonte-Limjuco, on behalf of the G-77 and China, said the most important factor in the full implementation of the Platform for Action is the mobilization of new and additional resources. She requested the Secretary-General to submit, no later than March 1996, a report with a detailed plan on the human and financial resources required for the implementation of the Platform. She called for the separate but coordinated strengthening of UNIFEM and INSTRAW.

GUINEA: Amb. Camara Mahawa Bangoura called for adequate human and financial resources for the Commission on the Status of Women and expressed Guinea's support for a new high-level post to advise the Secretary-General on women. She called for abandonment of the proposal to merge INSTRAW and UNIFEM. Mobilization of adequate resources is a precondition for effective implementation of the Beijing Platform.

NORWAY: Marianne Loe said there is a need for a coordinated, integrated and system-wide approach to the follow-up and implementation of the outcomes of major UN conferences in the economic, social and related fields. She supported the proposed merger of UNIFEM and INSTRAW.

NIGER: Hassane Maiga Harouna said the Beijing Conference demonstrated that there are still existing inequalities between men and women. He hoped adequate resources would be allocated to United Nations bodies that directly deal with the advancement of women. In Niger, many programmes have already been created to aid women, such as literacy programmes for rural women.

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION: David Freedman said that the ILO is developing a policy for follow-up action based on three major principles: realizing the goals of addressing inequalities and inadequacies related to employment policies, training and occupational safety; linking the follow-up to the Beijing Conference with the follow-up to the Copenhagen Summit in the field of employment; and providing the technical expertise to facilitate implementation at the national level.

WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME: Douglas Casson Coutts said that the WFP would focus on ensuring that refugees and displaced women and girls have direct access to food and services provided. WFP will also improve women's access to longer term assets and increase women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.

Angela King, Deputy to the Assistant Secretary-General of the Office of Human Resources Management, said pressure should be maintained to meet the targets set for improving the situation of women in the UN Secretariat and such pressure should be extended to other secretariats. The percentage of women in posts, subject to geographical distribution, has increased from 34.1% in June to 34.4% in October. The percentage of women in posts at the D-1 level and above has increased from 17.1% to 17.6% as of 30 October. Governments need to give their candidatures to women.

In her closing statement, **Conference Secretary-General Gertrude Mongella** said that the Platform for Action of the Conference belongs to the governments of the Member States and it is up to them to make sure that it is implemented. The United Nations should give further thought to the Platform for Action, so that the implementation starts off on the right foot.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS

The Third Committee of the General Assembly adopted a draft resolution submitted by the Chair on "Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action" (A/C.3/50/L.64) on Wednesday, 13 December 1995. The operative part of the resolution takes note of the report of the Conference and endorses the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as adopted by the Conference. The resolution calls upon States, the UN system and all other actors to implement the Platform for Action, particularly by promoting an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective at all levels. It stresses that governments have the primary responsibility for implementing the Platform for Action and should develop comprehensive implementation strategies or plans of action no later than 1996. States, with the assistance of NGOs, are called on to disseminate widely the Beijing Declaration and Platform. NGOs are encouraged to contribute to the design and implementation of strategies and national plans of action.

The resolution also:

- invites ECOSOC to consider reviewing the institutional capacity of the UN regional commissions to deal with gender-related issues in the light of the Platform for Action;
- reaffirms that adequate financial resources should be committed at the international level for the implementation of the Platform in developing countries and in countries with economies in transition;
- calls upon those States committed to the 20:20 initiative to integrate a gender perspective fully into its implementation;
- decides that the General Assembly, ECOSOC and the CSW shall constitute a three-tiered intergovernmental mechanism that will play the primary role in the overall policy-making and follow-up to the Conference;
- invites ECOSOC to consider devoting one high-level segment, one coordination segment and one operational segment, before the year 2000, to implementation of the outcomes of the Conference as well as to review and strengthen the mandate of the Commission on the Status of Women; and
- requests the CSW to develop its multi-year programme of work for the period 1996-2000 at its fortieth session so that it can review the critical areas of concern in the Platform and consider how to integrate the follow-up of the Conference into its programme of work.

The resolution requests the Secretary-General to do the following:

- assume responsibility for the coordination of policy within the UN system for the implementation of the Platform for Action;
- disseminate the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as widely as possible;
- report to the General Assembly on ways to enhance the capacity of the UN system to support follow-up to the Conference;
- ensure the more effective functioning of the Division for the Advancement of Women;
- cooperate with the Administrator of UNDP to ask the resident coordinators to apply a gender perspective in integrating the follow-up to the FWCW into coordinated follow-up to recent global UN conferences.

Finally, the resolution: requests the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women to take into account the Platform for Action when considering reports submitted by States Parties; requests the international financial institutions to review and revise their policies, procedures and staffing to ensure that investments and programmes benefit women; and invites the

World Trade Organization to consider how it might contribute to the implementation of the Programme for Action.

RELATED RESOLUTIONS

FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: The General Assembly adopted resolution 50/42 on 8 December 1995. This resolution expresses gratitude to the Chinese Government for hosting the Conference, takes note of the report of the Conference, endorses the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, and calls upon all States and all bodies of the UN system and other international organizations, as well as NGOs, to take action for the effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

IMPROVEMENT OF THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE SECRETARIAT: On 30 November 1995, the Third Committee adopted this draft resolution on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/C.3/50/L.23). The resolution calls upon the Secretary-General to ensure full and urgent implementation of the strategic plan to achieve the goal contained in the Beijing Platform for Action for overall gender equality, particularly at the professional level and above, by the year 2000. The Secretary-General should also fulfill the target of having women hold 50% of managerial and decision-making positions by the year 2000. The Secretary-General is urged to increase flexibility to remove discrimination against staff members with family responsibilities and increase the number of women in the Secretariat from developing countries. The Secretary-General is also requested to enable, from within existing resources, the focal point for women within the Secretariat to effectively monitor and facilitate progress in the implementation of the strategic plan.

PROPOSED MERGER OF INSTRAW AND UNIFEM: A draft resolution on proposed merger of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (A/C.3/50/L.21/Rev.1), sponsored by the Philippines, on behalf of the G-77 and China, was adopted by the Third Committee on 13 December. The resolution regrets that, owing to the absence of sufficient information on the legal, technical and administrative implications of the proposed merger, the General Assembly is currently unable to decide on the proposed merger. It also recommends that any proposal dealing with the institutional structure and the mandates of the different UN bodies dealing with the advancement of women must be considered part of the general UN restructuring exercise.

OTHER RESOLUTIONS: Other resolutions adopted by the Third Committee under Agenda Item 107, Advancement of Women, include: traffic in women and girls (A/C.3/50/L.26/Rev.1), violence against women migrant workers (A/C.3/50/L.27), an amendment to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (A/C.3/50/L.63), improvement of the situation of rural women (A/C.3/50/L.24), and the role of UNIFEM in eliminating violence against women (A/C.3/50/L.25/Rev.1).

These resolutions are expected to be adopted by the General Assembly Plenary just before Christmas.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR IN 1996

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN: The 40th session of the CSW will take place from 11-22 March 1996 in New York. One of the principle topics to be considered will be the follow-up to the Beijing Conference.