A DAILY REPORT ON THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN WEDNESDAY, 6 SEPTEMBER 1995

Delegates met for their second day of negotiations on the draft Platform for Action and Declaration during the third day of the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW). By the end of the day, four official bodies had been formed to examine specific sections of the texts. Working Group I examined the chapter on institutional arrangements. Working Group II examined the sections on human rights and violence, and conducted a first reading of the draft Declaration. In addition, each working group has formed a contact group, one to examine the section on health and one to examine the Declaration. The Plenary, meeting in three sessions, continued to hear statements under Agenda Item 8, General Exchange of Views.

WORKING GROUP I

Working Group I was unable to meet during the morning due to technical difficulties with the sound system. Chair Nana Ama Yeboa (Ghana) chaired the afternoon discussion of Chapter V (Institutional Arrangements). In paragraph **290** (institutional and behavioural change), the EU agreed to remove the brackets, subject to the removal of a reference to "treatment of women as sex objects." The G77/China concurred. A number of alternatives to the bracketed section of paragraph **293** (conference of commitments) were discussed, including an Australian proposal that governments report national priorities to the Conference Secretariat. The EU offered a counter proposal, excluding the requirement to report to the Secretariat. In paragraphs **295** (group participation) and **298** (NGOs), brackets were removed from the term "feminist groups." In paragraph **300** (human rights), Canada, the EU, the US, and the G77/China agreed to remove brackets from "human rights." In paragraph **305** (Platform and UN system), the G77/China replaced bracketed text with a call for the UN Agendas for Peace and Development to take account of the FWCW Platform. Benin said the UN General Assembly deferred a corresponding decision until the FWCW. The EU concurred.

Delegates engaged in a lengthy debate over paragraph **309** (post in office of the S-G). The EU proposed moving the concept to paragraph 327, which deals with action by the S-G, and proposed changing the text to invite the S-G to consider "designating" a high-level official in his office to advise on gender issues. Others agreed to move it, but many joined Benin's objection that it was too weak and preferred calling for the "creation" of the post. The US and Norway supported the EU proposal, with slight amendments. The EU stated that it would agree to call for the S-G to consider "establishing" the post, but Benin requested further informal consultations. In paragraph **310** (UN agency resources for Platform), the G77/China, supported by the EU, removed brackets from "resources and support."

CONTACT GROUP OF WORKING GROUP I

The Contact Group working on Chapter IV, Section C (health) continued work on Tuesday evening and Wednesday. In paragraph **94** (women's right to health and equality), a compromise formula was agreed, asserting the right of all women to control all aspects of their health, "in particular" their own fertility. In paragraph **95** (discrimination against girls), an informal group was formed to discuss the reference to parental responsibility. Brackets were removed from [unwanted] pregnancy and [unsafe abortions], and [women's self determination]. In paragraph **96** (reproductive health defined), a proposal was made to replace the entire paragraph with paragraphs 7.2 and 7.3 of the ICPD Agreement. In paragraph **97** (sexual rights), a proposal was made for deletion. The paragraph was the subject of further negotiations. Negotiations resumed in the evening.

WORKING GROUP II

Working Group II continued its consideration of the section on human rights, under Chair Irene Freudenschuss (Austria). The G77/China accepted Mexico's proposal for paragraph **230 (l)** (optional protocol on CEDAW), and proposed a reformulation of **230 (h)** (implementation of CEDAW), deleting a reference to the revision of non-conforming laws, policies and practices. Both paragraphs are now bracket-free.

In paragraph **232(o)** (rights of human rights activists), the Holy See proposed a reference to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), but the EU expressed doubts. Brazil, supported by Sri Lanka and G77/China, proposed a reference to other human rights instruments. Cuba suggested using language from the Vienna Declaration for the reference to national law. Delegates accepted the new formulation with references to: the UDHR and other human rights instruments; the protection of national laws; NGOs and their members; and various rights.

In the chapeau of **233** (actions to be taken), delegates agreed to call for action by governments and NGOs. In **233(g)**

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(promoting education on legal and human rights), text was amended so that education would be promoted "including" programmes in the most widely used language.

Delegates next conducted a first reading of the draft **Beijing Declaration** and identified their priorities. The EU submitted amendments to the G77/China proposal, and stressed the human rights of girl children and women, full participation in decision making, and equality of women in all policies. The G77/China, supported by many countries, proposed that its draft serve as the basis of negotiation. Russia supported the EU language regarding protection of all human rights and respect for ethnic differences. Sudan said the EU draft introduced new rights not agreed at Cairo, including sexual rights. India stressed power sharing, resource commitments and poverty eradication. Cyprus said all proposed texts fall short on the issue of peace.

Senegal supported rights of women "from conception." Slovenia said the Declaration should enlarge and recognize women and girls' sexual and reproductive health rights. Iran said the EU draft surpasses guidelines and that sexual and reproductive rights do not appeal to a wide range of audiences. The United Arab Emirate said the family should be the main nucleus with an accent on cultural rights of women. Nicaragua and Haiti emphasized women in poverty. Australia said the Declaration should mark the Conference as one of national commitments.

The Chair noted general agreement to use the G77/China language as the basis for negotiations and established a Contact Group under Amb. Olga Pellicer (Mexico). The Contact Group met Wednesday afternoon and agreed to resume Thursday after the G77/China considers the EU and other suggested amendments to its draft.

Delegates considered **Chapter IV, Section E (armed conflict)** during the afternoon session. The EU proposed a reformulation of paragraph **132** (description of armed conflict). The G77/China proposed lifting the brackets on references to mutual respect of territorial integrity and sovereignty, foreign occupation, and the violation of human rights by all parties in conflict, and deleting references to "universal" human rights and "other types" of conflict. Cyprus suggested quoting the Vienna Programme for Action for this paragraph. Ecuador suggested removing the brackets around a reference to mutual respect of territorial integrity and sovereignty, and deleting the reference to "all" parties in conflicts. Malta retained brackets around the reference to forced pregnancy. Sudan suggested adding the language from paragraph 30 of the Vienna document. The G77/China proposed deleting references to all parties in armed conflict and to the consequences of armed conflict. The Holy See suggested replacing a reference to results of armed conflict with language from paragraph 38 of the Vienna document. Canada supported the EU proposal, but stressed that women and children bear the brunt of rights violations in armed conflict.

In paragraph **134** (effects of armed conflict), the EU suggested deleting the reference to the violation of international humanitarian law. It was agreed. In paragraph **135** (cooperative approaches to peace and security), the EU proposed deleting the brackets on a reference to implementing cooperative approaches to peace and security, and replacing "the perspective of women" with "the participation of women." Cuba preferred "the perspective of women." Namibia emphasized the participation of women in the resolution of armed conflict. In paragraph **136** (consequences of armed conflict on women), the G77/China proposed removing brackets around references to foreign occupation and alien domination and the consequences of armed conflict. The EU could accept all other bracketed text upon deletion of the reference to alien domination. Malta retained brackets on the reference to forced pregnancy. References to alien domination and foreign occupation remain bracketed. Canada bracketed a reference to the consequences of rape, pending the decision on the reference to forced pregnancy. In paragraph **139** (military expenditure), Yemen proposed a reference to lack of necessary social services. The EU preferred "conflict" to "military spending." Namibia retained the reference to military spending. Nicaragua, supported by Cuba, proposed keeping both references, which were accepted. Canada's proposal to use language from paragraph 21 of the Social Summit for a reference to excessive military spending was accepted. The EU proposed removing brackets from a reference to peace as "an important factor" for economic growth. Cuba preferred the wording "is essential." Only the last sentence, referring to the relationship between national security and peace and economic growth, development and the empowerment of women, remains bracketed.

In paragraph **140** (international stability), Russia proposed references to "forced" mass migration and negative implications of instability. Mexico, supported by the EU, suggested deleting the paragraph. Canada proposed replacing the reference to peace and security as "a prerequisite" with "as important factors." In paragraph **141** (role of women in times of conflict), the EU proposed a reference to the contribution women make to "their" families. The Holy See added a reference to "their" societies. Both proposals were accepted. In **144(a)** (promote equal participation), Namibia added equitable geographical distribution and India added participation at all levels to an EU proposal, which was accepted with the condition that geographical distribution would be in accordance with the UN Charter.

IN THE CORRIDORS

If the FWCW is to represent a transition from an analysis laden to action-oriented international agenda for the advancement of women, responses to the Australian initiative for a "conference of commitments" are likely to become the key indicators of substance. There is some dismay at the resistance to the initiative from some quarters, but with eighty delegations already promising to weigh in with fresh initiatives, the Australian delegation and NGOs are cautiously optimistic. Plaudits are going to Pakistan and the UK for removing reservations to CEDAW, and Australia is leading by example with commitments in six of the Platform's critical areas of concern. One NGO participant underlined the importance of the commitments with the comment that "the real work is bringing Beijing home."

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: The general exchange of views will continue in the Plenary, which is meeting in Hall No. 1 during morning and afternoon sessions.

WORKING GROUP I: The Working Group is expected to meet during an afternoon session in Hall No. 16.

CONTACT GROUP OF WORKING GROUP I: The Contact Group will meet in Hall No. 16 during a morning session to continue discussion on the section on health.

WORKING GROUP II: The Working Group is expected to meet during morning and afternoon sessions in Hall No. 15. It will commence with continued discussion of the section on armed conflict.

CONTACT GROUP OF WORKING GROUP II: The Contact Group will meet in Hall No. 10 from 7:00 to 10:00 pm to begin its consideration of the draft Declaration. Look for possible amendments from the US and others to circulate during the day.