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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN MONDAY, 11 SEPTEMBER 1995

Delegates to the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) continued negotiations on the draft Platform for Action and Declaration. The Main Committee briefly met during the afternoon. Working Group I considered issues related to health and the girl child. The Contact Group of Working Group I met to consider final outstanding issues. Working Group II considered issues related to Section D (violence), and the Contact Group of Working Group II deliberated on the Beijing Declaration. The Plenary continued to hear country and NGO statements.

MAIN COMMITTEE

The second meeting of the Main Committee, chaired by Patricia Licuanan, was convened during an afternoon session to review the results of the Working Groups, as contained in non-papers prepared by the Secretariat. The Chair urged delegations to make their reservations in the Main Committee, which would be included in the final report presented to the Plenary on Friday. Upon approval by the Main Committee, the text and corrigenda would be issued in all UN languages. She then invited the Committee to consider Chapter IV, Section E (armed conflict).

Several delegates, including Mauritius, on behalf of all francophone delegations, the EU, France, Benin, Tunisia, and Paraguay expressed concern that the non-papers were only prepared in English. The Secretariat proposed reading the new language so that delegates could hear through the interpreters exactly what they were adopting. The Chair, however, noted the general consensus that without text in all UN languages there could be no progress, and adjourned the meeting until Tuesday.

WORKING GROUP I

Working Group I met during a morning session, chaired by Nana Amma Yeboaa (Ghana), to hear a report from the Contact Group on health, to discuss the section on the girl child, and to consider work by informal groups.

The chair of the Contact Group on health, Mervat Tallawy, announced that agreement had been reached on paragraphs **97** (sexual rights) and **107(k)** (review punitive measures for illegal

abortions). The Working Group adopted the amendments, following which several nations noted the reservations they would make. Japan reserved on 107(k). Iran emphasized their understanding that the paragraphs fell under the issue of health and in the framework of marriage. Sudan reserved on the word sexuality. Venezuela, Yemen, Argentina, Jordan, Libya, Malta, Iraq, the Holy See, Syria, Ecuador, Bangladesh and the Philippines also announced reservations.

SECTION L (girl child): In **269** (sexual violence and STDs), the Chair noted the health group's agreement to "unprotected and premature sexual relations," which was adopted for this paragraph. Canada, supported by India, the US and others, proposed deleting the reference to trafficking in human organs and tissue. The EU preferred keeping the reference. Yemen proposed a reference to illegal adoption of children. In **270** (girls with disabilities), delegates adopted an Australian redraft noting the need to ensure non-discrimination and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. New Zealand proposed acceptance of the reference to enabling girls "in all their diversity" in **272** (eliminate barriers), but Benin preferred "without exception," which the Group adopted.

In **273** (mainstream gender perspective), Mexico proposed encouraging analysis to assess gender-sensitive impacts, but a number of delegations preferred the original call for analysis before decisions are taken, which was accepted. In **274(d)** (succession and inheritance), Egypt explained that countries of Islamic faith could not accept "equal inheritance." Norway noted that countries with different systems could not accept "equitable," and suggested using reservations.

Delegates then reviewed and adopted text from an informal group on **30** (women and family), **31** (religion, spirituality and belief) (which will become 25bis), and **245(b)** (media materials on role models). The bracketed text in 245(b) will be replaced with a reference to experiences of balancing work and family responsibilities, as mothers and as professionals. The Working Group continued consideration of the section on the girl child during an evening session.

CONTACT GROUP OF WORKING GROUP I

Contact Group I of Working Group I met Monday evening to hear a report from the informal group convened to resolve outstanding Platform brackets on parental rights and responsibilities. A comprehensive textual reference for inclusion in paragraph **108 (e)** of Section C (health) and in paragraph **267**

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(ICPD) of Section L (girl child) was presented and agreed: “Taking into account the rights of the child to access to information, privacy, confidentiality, respect and informed consent as well as the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents and legal guardians to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognized in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and in conformity with the CEDAW. In all actions concerning children the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.” In addition, paragraphs **108 (g)** (adolescents) and **109 (l)** (programmes for boys) in the health section will refer to the comprehensive text. Paragraphs **262** (gender stereotyping), **281 (d)** (peer formation), **(e)** (physiology of reproduction), and **(g)** (services and counseling) will also include appropriate references to the comprehensive text.

In Section B (education) bracketed language on parental rights in paragraph **76** (curricula) was deleted. In **85(b)** (training educators), brackets were removed. The language was reformulated in **85 (l)** (integrated services). Paragraph **82 (f)** (enrollment) was deemed not to be a parental rights concern.

WORKING GROUP II

The Working Group, chaired by Irene Freudenschuss (Austria), met during a morning session to discuss Section D (violence). Informal consultations were held during the evening to review outstanding issues.

In **113** (description), delegates agreed to leave the sentences in their current order and to unbracket [all] societies. Paragraph **115** (acts of violence) is pending the results of the contact group on health. In **118** (acts/threats of violence), “equity” was deleted. In **119** (historical and cultural origins of violence), delegates agreed that media images of violence “are” contributory factors.

In **122** (training of officials), the G77/China proposed lifting the brackets. Azerbaijan, supported by India, proposed a reference to women hostages in areas of armed conflict. The EU, supported by Australia, the Holy See and Canada, proposed deleting the bracketed text. The G77/China proposed forming a group to ensure all elements in the paragraph were covered elsewhere in the document before deleting them. In **123** (trafficking in women and girls), brackets were lifted from “unwanted pregnancy.”

In **125(a)** (compliance with Declaration on Elimination of Violence against Women), Canada amended the reference to the Declaration with the phrase “as set out in.” In **125 (d)** (review legislation), “compensation for” was replaced by “access to just and effective remedies including compensation and indemnification.” In paragraph **125 (e)** (human rights instruments), the G77/China and Canada reformulated the bracketed language to read “work actively to ratify and/or implement all international human rights norms and instruments as they relate to violence against women.” In **125(j)** (national and local plans of action), the G77/China proposed lifting the brackets. The EU, supported by the US, proposed “national and/or local” or “at all appropriate levels of government.” In **125 (p)** (mobilization of resources), “at all appropriate” levels was added. In **126 (f)** (intermediate institutions and abuse related services), brackets were removed from “family planning centers” and “existing school health services.”

In **126 (g)** (education and training on effects of violence), Norway, supported by the EU and G77/China, introduced an amendment on sensitization programmes on the effects of violence and non-violent communication and training for protection. In **126 (j)** (media and stereotypes), existing brackets

were removed and bracketed texts were introduced: “consistent with freedom of expression” (US) and a reference to the need for freedom of information not to justify stereotyping (Cuba).

In **130 (d)** (stereotypes in the media), the G77/China proposed lifting the brackets. The EU preferred “which in some cases may foster,” but accepted lifting the brackets. In **131(d)** (healing for victims of trafficking), the EU lifted the brackets around the paragraph.

The informal evening session discussed a proposal to resolve the approximately twenty bracketed sections regarding “universal” human rights. An additional paragraph would be added to **213** (introduction to human rights section), noting that the promotion and protection of human rights must be considered as a priority objective of the UN, that they are legitimate concerns of the international community, and that the international community must treat human rights globally, in a fair and equal manner. In addition to that resolution, brackets would be removed from **12** (World Conference on Human Rights) and the bracketed phrase regarding universal human rights removed from **11** (human rights of women and girls) with the remaining text unbracketed. Delegates would also remove the bracketed reference to “universal” from paragraphs 2, 4, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 33, 46, 113, 132, 223, 274(f), and 326.

CONTACT GROUP OF WORKING GROUP II

The informal drafting group of the Contact Group on the Beijing Declaration met all day Monday and into the evening to deal with bracketed text. Delegates settled most disputed paragraphs in the preambular sections. They deleted one paragraph regarding protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination when disagreements could not be resolved.

IN THE CORRIDORS

As NGO Forum participants accustomed to rain and mud in Huairou adjust to the “pristine” Beijing International Conference Center (BICC), delegates at the BICC are adjusting to the new influx of NGO representatives. Observers noted relatively crowded rooms in the morning briefing and open meetings, and conference officials reported that the remainder of some 4000 pre-registered credentials for NGO participants were being claimed in large numbers. It was unclear what the impact would be as the Conference moves toward decisions on critical and controversial issues, mostly in informal meetings inaccessible to NGOs. Observers noted that strategic NGOs have been participating in the FWCW since it opened but that the new arrivals could provide additional energy and leg work to the dozens of organized issue caucuses.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: The Plenary will continue to hear statements under Agenda Item 8, General Exchange of Views, in Hall No. 1.

MAIN COMMITTEE: The Main Committee is expected to meet during afternoon and evening sessions in Hall No. 16.

WORKING GROUP I: The Working Group is expected to meet during the morning and after the Main Committee in the afternoon and evening in Hall No. 16.

WORKING GROUP II: The Working Group is expected to meet in the morning and after the Main Committee in the afternoon and evening in Hall No. 15.

CONTACT GROUP OF WORKING GROUP II: The Contact Group is expected to meet in the morning and after the Main Committee in the afternoon and evening in Hall No. 10.