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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN WEDNESDAY, 13 SEPTEMBER 1995

On the "final" day of negotiations, delegates to the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) met in the two Working Groups to consider outstanding issues, in a Contact Group to negotiate the Beijing Declaration, and in the Main Committee to adopt the work of the Groups.

MAIN COMMITTEE

The Main Committee, chaired by Patricia Licuanan (Philippines), met through the night to consider agreements reached by the working groups and hear reservations.

Working Group I Chair Amma Yeboaa (Ghana) introduced Chapter I (Mission Statement), as contained in Non-Paper 1. The G77/China proposed a new sentence and Latvia requested a review of resource issues. The Chair ruled that changes could not be accepted for agreed text, but adoption was postponed.

Chair Amma Yeboaa presented Non-Paper 2 on Chapter II (Global Framework). The text was adopted. The Chair also presented Non-Paper 3 on Chapter III (Critical Areas of Concern), which was adopted.

Working Group II Chair, Irene Freudenschuss, reported on the cleared paragraphs in Non-Paper 6, Section B (education). The Russian Federation issued an interpretation on **85 (b)** (mutual respect and equality). The document was recommended for adoption.

Chair Amma Yeboaa presented Non-Paper 7, Section C (health), and noted corrections to the text. Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Bahrain, Japan and Iran stated their intention to submit interpretive notes. Many countries reserved the right to reserve, depending on the fate of a footnote referencing implementation with respect for cultural and religious values. The following delegations reserved the right to reserve: Venezuela; Malta; Mauritania; Libya; Ecuador; Sudan; Morocco; Yemen; Iran; UAE; Kuwait; Syria; Tunisia; Bangladesh; and Indonesia. Oman reserved on 97 and 107k. Kuwait reserved on 95, 96, 97 and 107k. The Chair declared the paper adopted.

Chair Freudenschuss introduced the cleared paragraphs in Sections D (violence), I (human rights) F (economic structures), and K (environment) as contained in Non-Papers 8, 13 (plus

corrections), 10 (plus corrections), and 15, respectively. All were adopted as corrected.

The Committee then considered approved text in Section L (girl child) in Non-Paper 16 from Working Group I. A number of Islamic States, including Syria, the United Arab Emirates and Iran, expressed difficulties in accepting **274(d)** (inheritance rights).

The Committee then considered and adopted corrections to Section A (poverty) in Non-Paper 5. Amendments to Chapter VI (Financial Arrangements), in Non Paper 18, were introduced by Chair Amma Yeboaa and adopted. The Chair of Working Group II presented Non-Paper 12 and corrections to the Main Committee, which adopted them.

The US made interpretive statements on **19** (radical transformation of the relationship between women and men), **27** (NGOs), **97** (sexual rights) and **168 (I)** (workers' rights). Nepal made an interpretive statement on **25(bis)** (freedom of religion).

WORKING GROUP I

The Working Group considered outstanding paragraphs during morning and afternoon sessions. In **41** (development of girls), delegates accepted "spiritual, intellectual and material needs" for survival, agreed that discrimination begins "at the earliest stage of life" and included "female infanticide and prenatal sex selection," "forced prostitution," "sale of their organs and tissues" and "early marriage" in the list of harmful practices. In **42** (youth population), the G77/China stated that, with the reservation of Iran, they could delete "equity," which was agreed for **42** and **43** (advancement of women).

In **4** (immediate and concerted action), delegates unbracketed an "equitable" world. The references to "universal" human rights and "equity" for all were deleted, although Yemen and Sudan objected. In **291** (national and international institutions), the same solution to "equity" was applied. The EU, Bolivia, Turkey and others supported deleting the reference to respect for cultural values of nations. Iran, Malta, the Russian Federation and others preferred retaining the text, which was sent to an informal group.

In **242(d)** (indigenous forms of media), delegates agreed with New Zealand to retain "reflecting their cultures," although Yemen, Jordan and others supported "reflecting their moral, ethical and religious" values. In **5** (commitment), delegates called for "adequate mobilization of resources at national and international levels as well as new and additional resources to developing countries from all available funding mechanisms..." In **343** (international financial institutions), the institutions "are encouraged" to review policies and to increase the number of

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别谈
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women in high-level positions and the Bretton Woods and UN institutions should establish substantive dialogues. In **362** (efficiency of UN), delegates noted that “allocation” of additional resources from the UN budget “will also be necessary.”

Delegates added “consistent with freedom of expression” to **239(h)** (media involvement in social issues). Paragraph **35** (global communication) was resolved by referring to the potential of the media to promote the advancement of women through non-stereotypical, balanced portrayals. In **274(d)** (equal succession and inheritance), delegates called for the elimination of obstacles to inheritance faced by the girl child, inter alia enacting, as appropriate, legislation that ensures the equal right to inherit regardless of sex. Libya, Iraq and Iran reserved.

WORKING GROUP II

Working Group II considered a number of outstanding issues during morning and afternoon sessions. The EU amended **74** (education environment) to call for equal treatment. In **82(f)** (increase enrolment), brackets were removed from freedom of conscience and belief. In **85(k)** (barriers), the Group adopted an ICPD formulation on removal of barriers, “where appropriate.”

In **246** (environmental situation), delegates accepted a formulation based on Agenda 21, including references to the link between poverty and environmental degradation and unsustainable consumption. In **247** (environmental degradation), delegates retained a reference to urban and low income areas and deleted the reference to the link between poverty and environmental degradation. In **252** (mainstreaming), delegates accepted a US proposal to amend the bracketed text to read “including, as appropriate, an analysis of the effects on women and men respectively before decisions are taken.” In **253(c)** (indigenous knowledge), Australia added references to national legislation and international law. Canada added “maintained” to keep the language consistent with other paragraphs. The US added “in addition” before a sentence referring to safeguarding intellectual property rights, from which the brackets were removed. The amended text was accepted.

In **183** (democracy), delegates adopted a reformulation identifying equal participation as a prerequisite to providing balanced representation. In **189** (affirmative action), an EU amendment included “equality in decision making is essential to the empowerment of women.” Paragraph **192(b)** (party representation) addresses measures, where appropriate, in electoral systems. In **193(c)** (political leadership), the bracketed text was replaced by text on measures for equal participation in party leadership. In **195(a)** (gender and employment), “parity” was replaced by “equality.”

In **115** (armed conflict), brackets were removed from “forced pregnancy,” “forced abortion,” and “pre-natal sex selection and female infanticide.” Delegates created **116 (bis)** from the second and third sentences of **115**. In **125(i)** (legislate against violent practices), brackets were removed from “prenatal sex selection.” In **126 (j)** (media and stereotypes), brackets were removed from “freedom of expression” and “voluntary” codes of conduct was added.

Delegates discussed **9, 46** and the footnote to **Strategic Objective C.1**, all of which reference implementation in conformity with international law and respect for different cultural backgrounds, together. Namibia, supported by China, the EU and others proposed a reformulation based on Vienna language. Sudan, on behalf of the Arab Group, proposed using Cairo or Copenhagen language and retained the reference to religious and ethical values. No final decision was taken.

The informal group considering references to foreign occupation and alien domination based its proposals on **147**, an unbracketed text based on Copenhagen and Vienna language.

References in paragraphs **13, 46, 116/117, 132, 136, E.1, 144(c), 144(d), 225** and **247** were amended based on this language. Paragraphs **116, 117** and **122** (vulnerable groups) were combined, with the amendment that women “may be vulnerable.”

A reformulated **132** (an environment for world peace) was amended to include “rape including systematic rape” and “terrorism and hostage taking.” A call for an effective response was moved to **133**. In **145(e)** (land mines), a reference to NGOs was added and brackets removed. In **145(f)** (weapons of mass destruction), New Zealand presented a new formulation. The EU introduced an amendment on nuclear testing. In **147(b)** (encourage diplomacy), “preventive diplomacy” was deleted. In **149(n)** (support services for displaced women), brackets were removed. Paragraph **223** (reproductive rights) reaffirms that reproductive rights rest on the recognition of the basic right to free and responsible decision making and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. “Forced pregnancy” was removed from brackets in **136** (impact of armed conflict), **144 (d)** (training for judiciary) and **13** (armed conflicts).

A reformulation of **207(e)** (ministries), giving ministries the mandate to review policies and programmes, was accepted. A reformulation of **258(e)** (hazardous waste) referring to unsafe movements of hazardous waste and various international instruments was accepted, over Panama’s objections. Brackets were lifted from **209(i)** (gender analysis in research). Belize added a reference to natural disasters in **247** (poverty and environment).

CONTACT GROUP OF WORKING GROUP II

The Contact Group on the draft Beijing Declaration met three times Wednesday but adjourned with four remaining bracketed paragraphs. A revised paragraph regarding women’s sexual and reproductive rights was proposed adding “respect for cultural particularity” as a condition. The paragraph remains bracketed, as does the paragraph regarding sexual and reproductive health.

In the paragraph on barriers to protection of women’s empowerment, delegates agreed to the language from **48** of the Platform for Action, which includes “factors such as their race, age, language, ethnicity, culture, religion, or disability, or because they are indigenous people.” A reservation was expressed. A paragraph on access to technology and an alternative were bracketed together. A paragraph on peace, disarmament and a nuclear test ban treaty was agreed. Delegates reached no agreement on a paragraph on resources; the bracketed alternatives are based on **5** of the draft Platform.

IN THE CORRIDORS

As the Contact Group struggled unsuccessfully to reach agreement on the draft Beijing Declaration, the possibility of no declaration was discussed elsewhere. NGOs and some delegations say they prefer no declaration to the one that has been drafted so far. They feel that the need to accommodate various views has left the declaration long and unfocused. In the more contentious areas like sexual and reproductive rights, NGOs in particular fear that the Declaration could adopt weaker language than the Platform of Action, undermining the FWCW’s outcome. The host government, however, is said to support a declaration. Other delegates say although neither the Nairobi women’s conference nor ICPD produced a declaration, participants will eventually embrace the one drafted in Beijing.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

MAIN COMMITTEE: The Main Committee is expected to meet during an afternoon meeting in Hall No. 16.