



# Earth Negotiations Bulletin

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## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN THURSDAY, 14 SEPTEMBER 1995

Delegates to the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) met formally in the Main Committee during afternoon and early morning sessions. Informal consultations on outstanding issues, including bracketed paragraphs in the draft Declaration, took place throughout the day.

### MAIN COMMITTEE

The Main Committee met for two sessions on Thursday. It was first called to order at 5:15 pm to begin consideration of recommendations from the Working Groups on text for the Platform for Action and Beijing Declaration. Chair Patricia Licuanan (Philippines) introduced the documents on paragraphs for which agreement had been reached.

Technical corrections were offered for Sections A (poverty), B (education), D (violence), for which all brackets had been removed, as noted in Non-Papers 5, 6, 8 and corrections to the Non-Papers. The Sections were adopted.

The Chair presented Section E (armed conflict), Non-Paper 9 and its corrections, for adoption. A few technical corrections were made, and the section was adopted. Syria expressed a reservation on **145(g)** concerning the production and marketing of traditional conventional weapons, without reference to nuclear weapons.

There were no outstanding issues in Section F (economic structures). Non-Papers 11 and 12 and corrections were adopted for Section G (power sharing) and Section H (mechanisms). In Section I (human rights), paragraphs **226** and **232(f)** and **(h)** (sexual orientation and sexual rights) were still outstanding. Corrections were tabled for Section J (mass media) in Non-Paper 14. Revised texts were read by the Chair of Working Group I for agreements reached Wednesday in **239(h)** (media involvement in social issues), **242(d)** (indigenous forms of media) and **245(b)** (media material on role models). Non-Paper 14 was adopted.

The Chair presented Non-Paper 15, regarding Section K (environment), and its corrections, which were adopted. The Russian Federation made an interpretive statement on **258(c)** (hazardous and radioactive wastes), saying that his country would interpret this paragraph as applying only to transboundary movement of such wastes.

In Chapter V (Institutional Mechanisms), the chair of Working Group I read changes agreed to Wednesday in **291** (national, sub/regional and international institutions) and **343** (international financial institutions). The EU noted agreements reached on **290** (internal dynamics of institutions), **319** (CSW monitoring) and **321** (CSW work programme). The Chapter was approved as corrected. There were no outstanding issues in Chapter VI (Financial Arrangements).

Chair Licuanan presented Non-Paper 19 containing the results of an informal group on section titles in the draft Platform for Action. A number of corrections were introduced in paragraph **48** (introduction to Chapter IV) and in Section L (girl child). The US introduced changes in keeping with agreements reached by Working Group II on foreign occupation: paragraph **46** (effects of armed conflict on women) "including" those living under foreign occupation; and Strategic Objective E.I, "situations of armed and other conflicts or under foreign occupation." The document was approved.

The US issued an interpretive statement, noting reservations on any implication that foreign occupation is a human rights violation *per se*. The Russian Federation issued an interpretive statement on **193(c)** (political agenda), saying that he understood it to mean that political parties themselves determine the introduction of gender issues into their policies and that the State plays no role. In **207(b)** (review national policies), such reviews will be conducted in accordance with current Russian national legislation. Malta noted it would make reservations at a later stage. The Chair recessed the Main Committee at 6:45 pm for one hour, however the Main Committee reconvened at 1:45 am.

Chair Licuanan presented delegates with the results of informal negotiations on **9** (cultural and religious background). The text notes that the full realization of all human rights of all women is essential for the empowerment of women, that implementation is a sovereign responsibility and that respect for religious and cultural backgrounds should contribute to full enjoyment of human rights. Delegates accepted the text. The Chair noted that text in **9** was similar to bracketed text in **46** and the footnote to Section C.1. The Holy See, Iran, Egypt and others supported the footnote. The G77/China, EU, Canada, Namibia and others supported deletion. Most speakers stressed the compromises they made in drafting **9**. Egypt proposed a brief cross reference, and suggested that there might be fewer reservations during the final Plenary. The Chair deferred consideration until after other issues were resolved.

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The Chair of Contact Group II, Olga Pellicer (Mexico), introduced Non-Paper 20 (Declaration) and Chair Licuanan presented amendments to paragraphs 23, 30, 35, 36 and 37. Non-Paper 20 was adopted as amended.

Discussion was then opened on paragraph **48** (diversity). A long debate ensued, in which Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and others proposed retaining the reference to barriers based on "sexual orientation," stating that discrimination on any grounds should be prohibited. Egypt, Iran, and many others opposed the use of the term "sexual orientation," stating that it would contradict their religious and cultural values, and noting that no international precedent exists for using the term. Belize and others suggested that this issue was irrelevant to this conference. Delegates called on the Chair to make a decision. She noted that this was the first time the topic has been aired in the UN, and ruled in favor of the majority to delete the reference to sexual orientation throughout the document. Canada, New Zealand, Latvia, Israel, Jamaica, South Africa, Norway and the Cook Islands issued interpretive statements on **48**, noting that they understand the term "other status" to include discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. Slovenia interpreted **232(f)** as including the right to be free from discrimination, violence and coercion on the basis of sexual orientation. The US will submit a written interpretive statement, and noted that the US government has a firm policy of non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. The EU issued an interpretive statement, noting that this issue was one of discrimination.

The Chair then ran through a number of paragraphs for which approval was recommended and agreed. Paragraphs **60(o)** (special programmes) and **62(f)** (develop agriculture and fishing sectors) were deleted. Paragraph **167(e)** (rights to resources) was revised. The bracketed text in **180(b)** (discrimination) and **201** (strengthen regional bodies) was deleted. New text for **232(f)** (reproductive rights) was read. Paragraphs **208(c)** and **(d)** (legal reforms) were combined. The bracketed text in **226** (disadvantaged groups) was deleted. Paragraph **232(h)** (discrimination) was deleted. The Holy See and Sudan noted they would address concerns with **232(f)** in the Plenary.

The Chair then returned to **9**. She noted that the text had been carefully negotiated, and ruled in favor of having paragraph **9** and no cross-referencing footnote in Section C.

The G77/China proposed text from Copenhagen paragraph 6 to add to Chapter I (Mission Statement) on broad-based economic growth in the context of sustainable development, which was accepted.

Delegates then commented on the entire document. Paraguay said it will submit an interpretive statement. The US said it will submit statements on two paragraphs of the Declaration and on paragraph **5** (resources) and Chapter **4(h)** (institutional mechanisms). Morocco, Jordan, Mauritania, Sudan, Iraq, Syria, Oman, Tunisia and Yemen reserved on **97** (sexual rights) and **232(f)** (sexual and reproductive rights). Morocco, Mauritania, Oman and Yemen also reserved on **107(k)** (review laws on abortion). Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia reserved on **5** because economies in transition are marginalized.

Chair Licuanan adjourned the meeting at 4:45 am.

### **IN THE CORRIDORS I**

Thursday's sessions of the informal high-level group formed to deal with the outstanding issues at the FWCW were compared by one observer to an "anthropology class." Created this week, the high-level group was originally meant to include a small

number of delegates to address procedural questions. The group expanded, however, and took on the form of a contact group to address some of the most intractable issues in the Declaration, including sexual rights. The special group included heads of delegations and other representatives. The discussions were described as frank and open as delegations exchanged perspectives on contested language in an effort to facilitate a consensus by, at best, reaching agreement and, at least, producing an understanding which might permit dissenting delegations to propose language containing sufficient ambiguity to provide an escape clause.

### **IN THE CORRIDORS II**

While female delegates have begun to describe the Platform proposals for mainstreaming gender as "potentially revolutionary," some male delegates have been offering their own perspectives. One spoke of the advancement of women as a necessary but not sufficient condition for the economic development of his country. Another was committed to mainstreaming because "it is essential that men and women share responsibility." One man from the developed world said mainstreaming was now taken for granted in his society. He questioned the "radical" focus on issues that would not serve the interests of the vast majority of "normal women", namely sexual orientation, reproductive health, and sexual rights. He attributed the "radical focus" to advocates of the "wilder shores of the gender bender agenda."

### **IN THE CORRIDORS III**

As delegates move towards final adoption of the Platform for Action, many are evaluating the gains and losses that this newest UN conference document represents in the ongoing international discussion on issues related to development, equality and peace. NGOs applaud some of the language related to the macro-economic environment, especially the acknowledgment of multilateral debt problems outside the least developing countries and of the negative impacts of Structural Adjustment Programmes. The text that was agreed on Wednesday regarding accounting of unremunerated work was viewed as an improvement over Copenhagen language, calling for "full visibility of the type, extent and distribution" of this work. Human rights references, however, are said to be weaker in some respects than those in Vienna. The language related to respect for cultural and religious values is seen by many as weakening the assertions of the universality of human rights. New recognition of the need to protect human rights activists, by contrast, has been welcomed as an advance on Vienna commitments.

## **THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY**

**PLENARY:** The Plenary will meet during morning and afternoon sessions in Hall No. 1. The morning speakers include Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland (Norway) and President Alberto Fujimori (Peru). The afternoon session is expected to include final adoption of the Platform for Action and Beijing Declaration as well as a closing ceremony.

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