



CSW-44 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 6 MARCH 2000

On Monday, 6 March 2000, delegates met in a morning Plenary session to hear a panel presentation on gender equality, development and peace beyond the year 2000, followed by dialogue. In the afternoon, delegates met in two Working Groups and adjourned early to allow for consultations.

PLENARY

In an opening statement, Mary Robinson, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said that while steps have been taken to ensure women's rights, much work remains. She highlighted aspects of violence against women, including domestic violence, violence in armed conflict, and exploitation of vulnerable women. Stating that the rights of millions of women continue to be denied, she pointed to: continued existence of laws that perpetuate discrimination; the denial of reproductive rights; the lack of property, land and inheritance rights; and discriminatory law enforcement. She identified landmark events in the development of women's human rights, including the Beijing Conference, the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development, and the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development. She emphasized the importance of the Optional Protocol to CEDAW allowing women to register individual complaints. She described the review of PFA implementation as an opportunity to strengthen language and positions on women's human rights, and noted the importance of developing systematic performance standards to measure government progress toward implementation.

The INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN called for concrete action in addressing, *inter alia*, women's literacy, lack of access to primary education, and the coercion of women into the commercial sex market. She said the UN must be a multisectoral and multifaceted conductor for change, and should safeguard women's rights by monitoring Member States. The CENTER FOR WOMEN'S GLOBAL LEADERSHIP emphasized that equality, development and peace are fundamental to women's rights. She noted that the PFA is a comprehensive articulation of government commitment that needs to be reaffirmed. She lamented the lack of targets and timelines in the

PFA, and called for reallocation of existing resources as well as disbursement of new resources to encourage full integration of gender perspectives into all human rights policies.

PANEL PRESENTATION: Opening the panel presentation, Professor Yoriko Meguro, Sophia University of Tokyo, defined gender equality as both an analytical and ideological concept, said current demographic changes offer good opportunities for engendering new social systems, and mentioned the lack of gender-disaggregated data as an obstacle to fully understanding the dimensions of women's lives. She identified two strategies for the empowerment of women: by-product analyses, whereby non-gender policies contribute to the enhancement of gender equality; and identifying women's bargaining power to negotiate.

Rosa Alba Todaro Cavallero, Economic Adviser, Servicio Nacional de la Mujer (Chile), discussed gender aspects of globalization and poverty, defining globalization as simultaneous processes successfully operating in real time, whose components include, *inter alia*, trade liberalization, structural adjustment programmes, and privatization. She pointed to misaligned macroeconomic formulas put forth by the World Bank, the IMF, and the WTO as responsible for reductions in spending on health and social services, resulting in increasing gaps between rich and poor and rising poverty. She emphasized women are traditionally more vulnerable in spheres of labor and do not benefit equally from the advantages of globalization. In response, she called for compensatory policies to ensure that women do not suffer adverse effects from economic restructuring.

Carolyn McAskie, Emergency Relief Coordinator, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, discussed ways in which gender issues in humanitarian assistance are being addressed through an Inter-Agency Standing Committee dealing with disaster relief and funding. She noted that 80% of refugees and internally displaced people are women and children, and underscored the lack of attention given to rape and its effects as a result of armed conflict. She called for, *inter alia*, increased input from female refugees in building structures to deal with problems faced by displaced people, vocational training for women in refugee camps, and equal gender representation in peace processes.

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Krisztina Morvai, Assistant Professor, Eötvös Loránd University of Budapest, maintained that most actors responsible for PFA implementation, such as local authorities, are not aware of its existence. Pointing out that most international agreements are signed by foreign ministries, and noting that gender equality is multisectoral, she called for stronger channels of communication within governments and clearer assignation of responsibilities. She emphasized examining context, as in the case of Eastern European resistance to gender equality as a hold-over from the centralized approaches of socialist regimes. She called for sustained efforts by the UN to raise government awareness of women's rights.

In response, the DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO stated that the international community has overlooked the conflicts in Africa and called for supporting civil society efforts to promote peace and tolerance. CROATIA said the transition to democracy has resulted in a decline of women's political participation. POLAND further noted market-oriented employment policies have maintained gender inequalities in the division of labor and wages and said the lack of responsibility-sharing is a serious constraint on the advancement of women in the public and political spheres. BANGLADESH suggested the establishment of civil punishment for war crimes, including rape. The CAUCUS ON ARMED CONFLICT said war is the greatest obstacle to PFA implementation, outlining five steps to divert military expenditures to development and to involve women equitably in relief, conflict resolution and peace-building efforts.

WORKING GROUP I

Working Group I Chair Kristen Mlacak (Canada) invited delegates to discuss bracketed text contained in the introduction of the proposed outcome document on further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and PFA (E/CN.6/2000/PC/L.1/Rev.1). She called for efficient and expeditious work and invited general comments.

The EU submitted a redraft compilation document, hoping it would accurately represent delegates' positions and serve as a basis for negotiation. The text notes: governments have reaffirmed their commitment to, but not fully implemented, the Beijing Declaration and PFA, and have agreed upon further actions and initiatives at global, national and local levels to accelerate implementation; the CSW has reviewed progress in the 12 areas of concern and adopted conclusions and recommendations as a basis for further progress and accountability toward women's advancement; and the primary responsibility for implementing the PFA lies with governments.

The G-77/CHINA regretted the text did not reflect their original proposals, including a reference to follow-up mechanisms. JUSCANZ welcomed the EU proposal as a basis for negotiation. MEXICO introduced new text attempting to combine the EU and G-77/China proposals. She said references to both the CSW review and to work done in regional meetings should be mentioned as well as a clear reference to CEDAW. The G-77/CHINA asked for more time to discuss text proposals and the Working Group was adjourned to allow for closed consultations.

WORKING GROUP III

Editors' Note: Respecting the confidential nature of this meeting, the Bulletin will not be using the names of countries and/or regional groups in its reports of this Working Group.

Working Group III, chaired by Rasa Ostrauskaite (Lithuania), met briefly to discuss the draft provisional agenda and organizational matters (E/CN.6/2000/PC.8) and the list of speakers (E/CN.6/2000/

PC.9) for Beijing +5 in June 2000.

Regarding the agenda, Chair Ostrauskaite clarified that the draft political declaration would be discussed under agenda items 8 and 9 on the review and appraisal of progress made in the implementation of the 12 areas of concern and on further actions and initiatives for overcoming obstacles to PFA implementation.

She then invited comments on organizational arrangements and outlined a proposal from the PrepCom Bureau to include two additions under the list of speakers: the Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in the Plenary, and high level representatives of, *inter alia*, UN programmes, specialized agencies in the Plenary and the *Ad Hoc* Committee of the Whole. Delegates requested time to discuss this with their delegations, and deliberation of the proposal was postponed to allow for consultations. Some delegates then asked for clarification on the order of speakers before the General Assembly, including what rank would be accorded to First Ladies, and the UN Secretariat agreed to investigate the issue in more detail and report back at the next session. A delegate suggested that the *Ad Hoc* Committee of the Whole devote four sessions to panel discussions profiling best practices on gender equality from around the world. She added these would allow for the participation of, *inter alia*, governments, NGOs and the private sector. Other delegates questioned regularity of panel discussions under GA rules. Another delegate suggested the panels be held as parallel events. Chair Ostrauskaite requested the delegation present a draft proposal on this issue to the Group in the next session.

One delegate questioned the equitable representation of NGOs, and asked that unequal financial means and technical aspects linked to travel be given due consideration. In response to a concern about participation and the scope of "high political level," delegates were informed it was for each state to decide. Regarding the issue of a seven-minute time limit for statements, a delegate asked that the rule be made flexible. The Chair said text on NGO participation submitted during the PrepCom opening Plenary session would be reviewed once the GA has approved it, and invited discussion on the establishment of the list of speakers for the debate in Plenary (E/CN.6/2000/PC/9). One delegate asked whether more time could be allowed before finalizing the list. The UN Secretariat said four to five weeks should prove sufficient, but that late responses could be accommodated. Another delegate asked for clarification of "entities" invited to participate as observers. Discussions were adjourned to allow for consultations.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Frustration grew when delegations realized how slowly negotiations are dragging on both in and outside the Working Groups due to the difficulties some regional groups are facing in reaching compromise on text proposals. Globalization undercuts many of the most contentious points. One delegate questioned the usefulness of the talks if old issues are just rehashed and fundamental questions about economic structures are avoided.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY:

WORKING GROUPS: Working Group I will reconvene at 10:00 am and 3:00 pm in Conference Room 1 to continue negotiation of bracketed text in the proposed outcome document. Working Group III will meet in Conference Room 6 to finish discussion of the Beijing +5 organizational matters and list of speakers.