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MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NAIROBI FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Second review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

II. CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN

G. Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels

1. A number of changes have occurred since 1990 which have affected trends in the sharing of power and decision-making by women at all levels. The world-wide movement for democratization and the demise of centralized communist and socialist systems have created conditions for greater political participation but have also led to a decline in the number of top decision-making positions held by women. A related trend has been the widespread economic liberalization which has been promoted by the advanced industrialized States and multilateral lending institutions, particularly in the form of structural adjustment. The forced reduction of governmental bureaucracies and budgets has led to the elimination of ministries, programmes and resources which have been supportive of women's issues and needs. Countering these trends has been the continued rise of the global women's movement which has sustained pressure on Governments and international organizations to increase women's participation in decision-making.

* E/CN.6/1995/1.

2. Global recession and international economic restructuring in the face of external debt have forced many developing nation Governments to focus on short-term economic problems, often to the neglect of longer-term development issues, and this has had a direct and negative bearing on the advancement of women. Simultaneously, pre-existing conditions of inequality in participation and in decision-making at all levels between women and men have sometimes been exacerbated by both the economic crises and the policies which Governments have adopted to cope with them.

3. The Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women contain numerous recommendations 1/ for ensuring equality of participation by women in all national and local legislative bodies and for achieving equity in the appointment, election and promotion of women to high-level posts in the executive, legislative and judicial branches in those bodies.

4. At the Expert Group Meeting on Equality in Political Participation and Decision-making (Vienna, 18-22 September 1989), it was concluded that women in all countries confront a common problem: they are not full participants in the public choices that affect their lives; and they are grossly underrepresented in politics and in the civil service, especially at decision-making levels. 2/

5. As was noted at the Expert Group Meeting, the advancement of women in other areas will be jeopardized if equality in political participation and decision-making is not achieved. Reference was also made to the close reciprocal relationship between the general advancement of women and the participation of women in politics, noting that the political participation of women was facilitated by social and economic support structures and by an absence of legal discrimination and stereotyping of women in education and in the media. Therefore, the advancement of women should be considered a priority in terms of national decision-making, and women should participate as full partners in those decisions. 3/

6. The first review and appraisal of the implementation of the Strategies provides a baseline upon which to evaluate current trends in the progress or lack of progress made towards increased decision-making power by women.

7. Despite the fact that most countries in 1990 used democratic methods in selecting political leaders and making policy choices and although women made up half of the electorate, it was found that relatively few women reached the top levels of political participation and even fewer reached major decision-making positions. On average, women represented only 10 per cent of legislators, and only 3.5 per cent of ministerial level decision makers in 1990. In all forums where policy decisions were proposed and made, but especially those dealing with decisions affecting women's daily lives at the national, international and local levels, women were largely absent.

8. It was found in 1990 that the absence of women in the leadership of political parties and other organizations and their concomitant absence as candidates for political office were a major cause of women's underrepresentation in legislatures and decision-making. Informal barriers, or "glass ceilings", prevented women civil servants from rising through the ranks into top level administrative positions.

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9. Notwithstanding that issues related to the advancement of women have gained greater visibility since the World Conference in 1985, it was found in 1990 that within the United Nations system women were seriously underrepresented at senior management levels. It was observed in 1990 that the issue of women's representation was receiving a lower priority in the work of many organizations. It was also noted that resource levels in real terms for activities related to the advancement of women had not increased, despite the upsurge in activities at the international level and the increasing need for resources by developing countries. During periods of retrenchment, women's programmes have been subject to the same reductions as other programmes. Therefore, much of the work related to the advancement of women continued to depend on extrabudgetary funding.

10. In 1990, recession and economic restructuring were already forcing Governments to neglect long-term programmes for the advancement of women. Pre-existing inequalities were exacerbated by the crisis and by the policies adopted to cope with the recession.

11. In 1990, there were very few women in the politics of African countries. Though democratization was giving women the right to vote in larger numbers, this did not translate into decision-making power for women. In 1990, women in Asia and the Pacific were becoming visible in political life. However, women still represented a very small percentage of public office holders. Women in Latin America participated only minimally in the executive and legislative organs of their countries in 1990. Most of the women were in lower party echelons. By contrast, the position of women in the Caribbean was most significant, with substantial numbers of female legislators, ministers and administrators in most countries.

12. The first review and appraisal made no mention of women in decision-making in Western Asia, which was a reflection of their virtual exclusion from politics and government. Mention of cultural values which called for women to return to their reproductive and nurturing roles while relinquishing their other societal participatory roles and of the resistance of Arab States to the advancement of women indicate that the problem of women's participation in decision-making remains most acute in this region.

13. The first review and appraisal also recommended that the number of women in decision-making positions in intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations should be increased.

14. According to recommendation VI of the recommendations and conclusions arising from the review and appraisal, 4/ all civil service regulations should have clear statements on practices of recruitment, appointment, promotion, leave entitlement, training and development, and other conditions of service.

15. Governments, political parties, trade unions, professional and other representative groups should each aim at targets to increase the proportion of women in leadership positions to at least 30 per cent by 1995 with a view to achieving equal representation between women and men by the year 2000 and should institute recruitment and training programmes to prepare women for those positions.

16. Government, political parties, trade unions and women's organizations should be encouraged to establish a list of qualified women which could be used to fill vacant positions. The importance of training women in the skills necessary for political and administrative careers should also be recognized.

17. Articles 7 and 8 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) 5/ also refer to the subject of political decision-making. Article 7 requires State parties to the Convention to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life and, in particular, to ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right to vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies; to participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government; to participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with political and public life.

18. Article 8 requires State parties to the Convention to take all appropriate measures to ensure to women, on equal terms to men and without discrimination, the opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations.

1. Main trends

19. The main trend for the foreseeable future is the continuing lack of equitable participation by women in political decision-making. It deprives women of important rights and responsibilities as citizens. Therefore, women's interests and perspectives cannot influence key decisions, which has consequences for society as a whole and for future generations - for example, on national budgets and major reforms or socio-economic models to be followed. This situation is not only discriminatory to women but is also disadvantageous to society, which is deprived of women's skills and their distinct perspectives.

20. Existing research indicates a more encouraging trend. If women are represented in sufficiently large numbers in the decision-making arena (constituting what has been termed a "critical mass", estimated at a level of at least 30-35 per cent in decision-making bodies), they have a visible impact on the style and content of political decisions. For example, in the Nordic countries, the only region where women have achieved a critical mass at the policy-making level, owing to pressure exerted by women, issues that have long been ignored, such as equal rights, women's control over their own bodies, child care and protection against sexual violence, have gradually been incorporated into public agendas and reflected in national budgets. Evidence for this has been documented in a number of United Nations studies and reports of the Secretary-General on the priority themes. 6/

a. Women's participation in governmental decision-making bodies

21. Since 1987 the percentage of women in parliament has actually declined. Most of the decrease in the global average can be attributed to the political changes in Eastern Europe, while improvements have been registered in Western Europe and Africa. In Eastern Europe the decline reflects a change in the role

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of parliament, from a body which merely rubber-stamped political decisions and was hand-picked by the ruling party to one which is more active in government decision-making and which is more freely selected, reflecting the unequal status of women in those societies.

22. After the Second World War, Eastern European parliaments were supposed to reflect national demographics in terms of class, age and gender; however, they had no real political power. Since the institution of democratic reforms and economic liberalization, these parliaments have come to more accurately mirror the actual political and economic power within society, to the virtual exclusion of women.

23. The Nordic region is an exception to the global trend of fewer women in legislatures. In 1993, the proportion of women in parliament averaged 33.7 per cent. This figure can be attributed to many factors, including a time-lagged effect of educational equality. However, it is also the result of a conscious effort by women voters to determine electoral results, at the margin, by supporting women candidates. For example, in 1993 Norway had 39.4 per cent women in parliament, representing an increase from 15 per cent in 1975. Concerned about their exclusion from power, women in one set of municipal elections systematically voted for female candidates and increased the proportion of women in municipal councils by 50 per cent.

24. Despite the fact that women comprise, in almost all countries, a majority of the electorate, the proportion of women in parliament remains relatively low (see table II.G.1). In 1993 the average percentage of women in lower houses of parliament world wide was only 8.8 per cent. There were no women in parliament in 11 countries. In only five countries did the proportion of female parliamentarians exceed the goal of 30 per cent set by the Economic and Social Council in 1990.

Table II.G.1. Average percentage of women in parliament, 1975-1993, by region

Region	1975	1987	1993
Africa	4.6	6.7	8.0
Latin America and the Caribbean	6.0	8.0	7.6
Western Europe and others	7.0	13.4	16.4
Asia and the Pacific	5.2	7.6	5.8
Eastern Europe	19.9	21.8	6.5
World	6.8	9.7	8.8

25. Women have the right to vote and hold office in almost every country of the world. Despite the fact that women have exercised these rights, on average, for 40 years and do vote at approximately the same rate as men, relatively few women have been elected in the democratic process to national legislatures and even fewer have reached top executive posts. Earlier United Nations studies have suggested that, to a certain extent, countries in which women have been able to stand for election for a longer period of time are somewhat more likely to have more women in parliament.

26. There are recent indications that in some countries women are beginning to vote differently than men and, in close elections, determine the outcome. Argentina, Colombia, the Nordic countries, Austria, Germany and Poland are cases in point. In all these countries women, at least on some occasions, voted differently and expressed clear preference for those parties that put forward female candidates or candidates clearly representing women's interests and perspectives, especially with regard to reproductive rights, social support services and/or participation in decision-making.

27. Competition for votes between political parties has forced many to promote women within their ranks and nominate them as candidates in order to gain the support and votes of the female electorate. This tactic, pursued in some parties, has forced others to join the competition and place women in visible positions. For example, the introduction of a quota system by a number of political parties in the 1980s in all five Nordic countries induced other parties to promote women candidates. Some years later quotas were established by a number of political parties in Austria and Germany. For example, in 1986 the German Greens incorporated a provision in their constitution according to which at least half of the representation of all bodies and organs of the federal association of the party must be women. Similarly, in 1988 the German Social Democratic Party changed its organizational statutes so that at least 40 per cent of either sex must be represented in the offices and functions of the party.

28. The principal reason why women are not elected to office is that women are not put forward as candidates. Indeed, in those countries where women do succeed in becoming candidates, they are more likely to be elected than men. One reason more female candidates are not put forward for election is the fact that they are not well represented in terms of numbers in the executive leadership of political parties. Even though women are substantially represented in the membership of parties in most countries, few women reach the top party leadership positions. There is usually a higher percentage of women in parliaments than in party decision-making bodies.

29. In parliamentary systems of government, ministers are generally selected from members of parliament, while in presidential regimes and other types of regimes, the top levels of decision makers are recruited from a variety of sources. In parliamentary systems, the proportion of female ministers is directly related to the proportion of women in parliament and to their tenure, while the proportion of women decision makers is somewhat lower in presidential systems. Regardless, the proportion of women at the ministerial level remains very low, lower indeed than their representation in parliament. On average only 6.2 per cent of ministerial-level officials are women, and in 62 countries there

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are no women ministers at all. However, in the countries of Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand and other developed democracies, the proportion of women ministers is significantly higher. This differentiation can largely be attributed to the Nordic countries, where women comprise an average of 22 per cent of the ministers.

30. In the more industrial countries, there continue to be small, but significant, increases in the number of women in decision-making positions and in legislatures. In general, there has been progress made in all regions except Eastern Europe since 1987. Of particular interest is the increase in Western Europe. In the Nordic countries, the average percentage of women ministers increased from 16 per cent to 22 per cent; thus, the critical mass of women in political decision-making is now being approached.

31. The data in table II.G.2 are encouraging because the 15 countries with the most women decision makers have significantly higher percentages in 1994 than in 1987. The Nordic, Caribbean and non-European developed democratic States have made impressive strides, adding approximately 10 per cent more women decision makers. By 1994, three countries had passed the 30 per cent critical mass threshold, with five other States approaching the threshold. However, these progressive countries represent less than 10 per cent of the total. Most countries have made little or no progress in promoting women decision makers.

32. Women ministers are more likely to hold portfolios in social affairs than in other areas. On average 10.8 per cent of social affairs portfolios are held by women. Very few portfolios in the economic, political and judicial areas are held by women. However, women are beginning to be named as defence, foreign affairs and finance ministers in several regions (see table II.G.3). Women have been making breakthroughs in law and justice ministries in countries of the Western Europe and other group and in the Caribbean. In the Western Europe and other group, women have made advances in economic ministries. Only in the Nordic countries have women made significant strides in political ministries, including defence.

33. Government decision-making occurs not only at the ministerial level. Key decision makers are also located at the subministerial level, often as permanent civil servants who have risen to their positions by career appointments. Such positions include vice-minister, permanent undersecretary, deputy secretary and director. In these categories, women are only slightly more represented, on average, than at the ministerial level (see table II.G.4). Only 7.1 per cent of these positions are held by females. In 56 countries there were no women at all in these positions at the subministerial level. In three countries (Bahamas, Dominica and Norway), over 30 per cent of subministerial officials were women. In four other countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Finland, San Marino and the United States), the proportion exceeded 25 per cent. Clearly, the proportions in any country, at any given point in time, reflect political changes. In the group of Western Europe and other developed democracies, the proportion of women in ministerial positions is higher than that at lower levels, indicating obstacles to the career advancement of women in the civil service.

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Table II.G.2. Countries with the highest proportion of women among government decision makers, 1987 and 1994

(Percentage)

1987		1994	
Dominica	25.6	Norway	45.2
Bahamas	24.0	Bahamas	32.4
Norway	20.3	Dominica	31.3
Finland	19.4	Finland	26.8
Barbados	17.9	San Marino	26.3
Trinidad and Tobago	14.9	Antigua and Barbuda	25.9
Grenada	14.7	United States of America	25.2
Seychelles	14.6	Seychelles	23.9
Romania	13.9	Australia	20.2
United Republic of Tanzania	13.6	Canada	18.9
Burkina Faso	12.9	Guyana	18.0
Senegal	12.0	Sweden	17.5
United States of America	11.7	Honduras	16.7
Cameroon	11.1	Netherlands	16.1
Philippines	11.1	Trinidad and Tobago	15.3

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Table II.G.3. Average percentage of women in governmental decision-making positions, by region and sector, 1994

	Office of Presidents or Prime Minister	Economic	Law and justice	Social	Political	Total
<u>Region</u>						
Africa	2.1	3.0	4.1	10.6	3.6	5.4
Latin America and the Caribbean	4.9	5.1	10.0	10.9	3.4	7.5
Western Europe and other developed democracies	10.8	10.7	23.2	25.0	7.5	15.2
Asia and the Pacific	1.6	2.0	0.0	6.1	2.8	2.9
Eastern Europe	3.2	1.9	0.0	5.4	0.0	2.6
World	3.7	4.1	6.0	10.8	3.6	6.2
<u>Subregion</u>						
Nordic countries	30.0	19.2	75.0	39.0	27.3	22.0
Caribbean	4.9	4.1	16.7	14.1	3.3	14.1
Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United States	12.5	12.0	25.0	20.2	0.0	19.8
East and South-East Asia	0.0	0.6	0.0	4.2	0.0	2.5

Source: Division for the Advancement of Women, derived from Worldwide Government Directory, 1994 (Washington, D.C., Belmont Publs.).

Table II.G.4. Average percentage of women among government decision makers by region, 1987 and 1994

Region	1987			1994		
	Ministerial	Subminis- terial	Total	Ministerial	Subminis- terial	Total
Africa	2.9	5.0	4.0	5.4	6.8	6.3
Latin America and the Caribbean	3.1	8.2	7.3	7.5	11.4	10.4
Western Europe and other developed democracies	7.1	7.8	9.6	15.2	12.3	13.0
Asia and the Pacific	1.8	3.1	3.0	2.9	2.6	2.9
Eastern Europe	3.0	3.9	3.5	2.6	6.1	5.0
World	3.4	5.7	5.4	6.2	7.1	6.8

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b. Obstacles preventing women from participating in decision-making and policy-making

34. In order to strengthen the participation of women in political parties and, consequently, in political decision-making bodies like parliaments, specific measures such as targets, quota systems and/or reserved seats have been introduced in a number of countries. Political parties in a number of countries have adopted quota systems for women (Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Israel, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden and Venezuela). These quotas were designed to ensure that a minimum percentage of women (varying from 20 per cent to 50 per cent) were members of various political bodies, including their leadership and/or lists of candidates for elections. For example, Sweden, which was the first country to introduce such a quota system for women in 1972 has now achieved 50-50 parity. Another type of reserved seats system is found in Bangladesh.

35. In some countries (Cameroon, Canada, Finland, Gabon, Japan, Mexico, Republic of Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe), political parties created separate women's leagues, committees or organizations within their structures. Their main role is to provide more training opportunities for women and improved forums for the discussion and articulation of women's issues, strategies and goals. Some observers note the important role of separate women's structures within political parties but suggest that they may contribute to the alienation of women from mainstream party politics and thus detract from women's principal objective of empowerment.

36. Some countries have centres of power based upon unbroken political traditions. Others have had more dysfunctional experiences. Other countries are struggling to cope with the tensions resulting from a shift from authoritarian rule to systems with more liberal social relations in the political arena. Different political environments influence the factors which can either promote or undermine the equal participation of women in decision-making. Some of these factors are:

(a) An historical philosophy and experience of politics as an interaction and competition between men, along with the conscious and subconscious perception, held by both women and men, of men as the rational political actors, and of masculine characteristics of leadership;

(b) The lack of a well-developed body of intellectual opinion and literature advocating women's participation in decision-making;

(c) Evidence of institutionalized gender discrimination in public policy in terms of taxation, social security regulations, banking and financial law, the right to citizenship, family law and age discrimination;

(d) Implicit discrimination within the dominant male culture of established political parties, institutions or organizations;

(e) The absence of women's perspectives and positive contributions to society in the media;

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(f) The pervasive use of sexist language in all forms of communication;

(g) Traditionally male-oriented assumptions regarding the nature and role of policy and decision makers in terms of the selection system, electoral system and/or size of the constituency, timing, duration and location of meetings;

(h) The use of networking as a patronage system;

(i) The perception of politics as irrelevant or divorced from daily life;

(j) Women's dual roles;

(k) Sexual harassment.

37. Numerous obstacles, mentioned in the national reports, are discussed below, by region.

38. In Africa, in former one-party States, the situation is similar to that in Eastern Europe. Under one-party rule, the women's affairs committee of the ruling party in one country regularly addressed women's issues. With the transition to a more pluralistic political system, the same women's affairs committee no longer has the power effectively to articulate women's issues and concerns.

39. In a relatively developed State, featuring a multi-party system with a dominant ruling party, women's participation in national legislative bodies is largely determined by male-dominated political party structures and processes. In local elections for mayor and deputy mayor in large municipalities, women have had little chance of overcoming male-dominated structures and getting onto party tickets. Given prevailing societal attitudes, women have even less of a chance of being elected as independents. Constraints include lack of self-confidence, inhibitive party structure, lack of support by other women and husbands, negative social environment and costly campaigns.

40. In a highly advanced Asian democracy, it was reported that societal prejudices about the abilities and aptitudes of women and gender-stereotyped roles remain deeply rooted in everyday life.

41. In a Caribbean democracy, a 1992 study suggests that even though women are actively involved in grass-roots politics and despite the fact that all parties have a women's wing, women are not usually called upon to be leaders of the party.

42. In a Southern European democracy, it was reported that patriarchal attitudes and structures within political parties and society as a whole were obstacles to the advancement of women. The lack of women in parties and high-level positions was attributed to the unequal division of labour within the household and absence of adequate social structures to support family responsibilities.

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43. In a newly democratic Eastern European country, the lack of a women's lobby - a result of the former system - was mentioned as an obstacle. Various political parties and the Roman Catholic Church were said to be trying to force women to return to their traditional roles as mothers and wives. Political tensions contribute to pushing women away from politics. Women are often not elected in village-level politics due to their lower level of education.

44. In a newly independent Eastern European State, deepening economic and political crises, the subordination of women and the paradox of their former status under the Communist system has resulted in a decline of the political participation of women compared to their active involvement earlier.

c. Affirmative actions that have been taken to promote greater participation of women in power structures and decision-making at all levels

45. Some of the affirmative actions cited in national reports are outlined below.

46. In Sudan the Government established a 10 per cent minimum quota level for women's representation in all positions in local, municipal and state government. If the 10 per cent percentage cannot be attained through elections, women will be appointed.

47. In Uganda, affirmative action has been taken by the Government deliberately to recruit more women into high-level posts.

48. In 1992 the United Republic of Tanzania passed a law requiring that at least 15 per cent of all members of Parliament be female.

49. The Government of Ethiopia has created technical women's departments in government agencies.

50. An affirmative action programme exists in the civil service in Zimbabwe. In January 1992 a government circular was issued to advance women's participation in management. Its goal is to have 33 per cent of the senior public service positions occupied by women by the year 2000.

51. Bangladesh attributes the increase of women in the civil service - from 17 per cent of officers in the Secretariat in 1987 to 25.7 per cent in 1991 and from 7.1 per cent of officers in the Directorates in 1987 to 19.6 per cent in 1991 - to the introduction of a quota system.

52. Since 1985 China has set up national organizations to promote the advancement of women. In 1991 a division for women's concerns was established in the Ministry of Social Affairs of the Population and Employment Bureau.

53. The Government of the Philippines plans to ensure the appointment of women sectoral representatives in Congress and at all levels of policy-making bodies, based on a quota not lower than the United Nations quota of 30 per cent.

54. Japan has drawn up a new national plan of action to the year 2000.

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55. Antigua/Barbuda has set itself a goal of electing a minimum of seven women to Parliament by 1999.

56. In November 1991 under law No. 24.012 1991, Argentina established a participation quota in the list of political parties to guarantee a minimum of 30 per cent women. No party list that does not fulfil this requirement will be approved. In March 1993 the law was implemented, emphasizing that 30 per cent was a minimum figure, bearing in mind the overall goal of 50 per cent representation by women.

57. In 1988 the Government of Sweden adopted a three-year programme to increase female representation in decision-making bodies in the public sector. It was approved by Parliament with three steps: to make the absence of women visible by presenting statistics to Parliament so it could be followed up annually; to establish concrete time-specific targets for increasing the proportion of women; and to pursue measures that help achieve these goals. The Government decided to set up the following targets: by 1992 women's representation on public administration boards and committee should be increased to 30 per cent. By 1995 the proportion of women represented on these boards and committees should be increased further to 40 per cent. The final target is that all governmental authority boards and official committees of inquiry should have equal representation. According to the Government, this should occur within a decade - i.e., by 1998.

58. The women's political party triggered an intense internal debate within Swedish political parties to take into account women's issues more seriously. In 1989 it was decided on a target of 20 per cent of executive positions within various ministries in Cabinet offices; in 1990, the target was reached.

59. The Government of Finland has proposed an amendment to the Equality Act to increase women's representation in decision-making positions in state committees, advisory boards, municipal and executive bodies comprised of elected officials within governmental offices, institutions and private companies. Unfortunately, no data or statistics accompanied the report.

60. Since the mid-1970s, existing rules have been applied pursuant to the Equal Status Act and the Local Government Act in Norway. They require that public authorities ensure 40 per cent female representation. In 1981 a provision relating to the gender-quota system for publicly appointed boards, councils and committees was incorporated into the Equal Status Act, with the requirement that there be at least two members of each sex represented on any public body. Similarly, the Norwegian diplomatic service is establishing concrete statistical goals for the year 2000, including a requirement that 40 per cent of mid-level executive positions be held by women.

61. In the United States, in 1986 Iowa became the first state to require equal appointment of women. Since then, six other states have adopted gender-balance laws. Currently, in Iowa women comprise 47.6 per cent of all appointments to state boards and commissions.

62. Canada has given high priority to improving the status of women in international organizations and ensuring that more women are appointed to senior decision-making positions in international bodies.

63. In 1988 the Coordinating Committee of Women's Organizations and Women's Sections of Political Parties in Greece was established, with a main goal of promoting equal participation of women in decision-making, especially in political positions throughout the system. In 1990 the Social Democrat Populist party introduced a 25 per cent quota system in provincial and municipal administrative structures.

64. In October 1991, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom announced a governmental objective to increase the percentage of women in the civil service to 25 per cent and to 50 per cent by 1996. A goal of 15 per cent was established for the most senior posts by the year 2000.

65. The leaders of both the Radical Democratic Party and the largest agrarian party in Romania are women.

2. Increasing the participation of rural women in decision-making

66. The establishment or strengthening of women's national machinery is an essential component of rural development strategies and of amplifying the voices of rural women so that their contributions, needs and concerns are effectively assessed and incorporated into policies, legislation, programmes and projects. This process must be coupled with the provision of sufficient human, technical and financial resources to enable national machinery to play a catalytic and strategic role in the development of country-wide networks of organizations and groups of rural women to facilitate the implementation of food and agricultural development programmes.

67. The strategic interventions that women's national machinery can make on behalf of rural women include coordination with international organizations on measures to execute, coordinate and apply research on rural women's reproductive and productive roles and to improve the availability and quality of gender-disaggregated data on agriculture and rural development which addresses the multiple roles of women. Women's national machinery might, for example, lobby Governments to process the existing small, but significant, volume of gender-disaggregated data relating to agriculture and rural development to allow for its analysis by gender. 7/

68. The liaison and collaborative role of women's national machinery with international organizations and both national and international non-governmental organizations cannot be understated. Women's national machinery has a potentially large role to play in collecting and disseminating information about the needs and activities of rural women at all levels. Such machinery could channel the concerns of rural women to governmental, regional and international organizations. This role can be strengthened through technical and financial assistance by international donors which must, at one and the same time, provide assistance and play a catalytic role in the establishment of more collaborative relationships. The establishment of such linkages is particularly important in facilitating the flow of resources to targeted populations of rural women and in

overcoming the traditionally low status of women's national machinery among other governmental agencies and the isolation of women's units from programmes and field activities of sectoral ministries.

69. The facilitative role of women's national machinery is critical to the growth and development of community development organizations. Increasing the participation of rural women requires action in three main areas:

(a) Promotion of the establishment of women's and mixed-gender local organizations such as cooperatives, farmer's self-help associations, and credit and savings unions established for production, political, advocacy, social and economic goals;

(b) Promotion of training programmes for women's associations and enhancement of their capacity for dialogue and negotiation;

(c) Encouragement of women leaders to undertake community action and collective initiatives, particularly in agriculture, forestry and communal fish farming.

70. Involvement in community development organizations is an effective method of increasing rural women's role in decision-making and ensuring recognition of their participation in the community. Women's integration must be reinforced by an examination of the causes of gender imbalances, incorporate the provision of technical training and address male opposition to women's involvement. Such participation increases women's visibility, enables them to learn management skills and methods for earning and saving income and enhances their bargaining power when seeking access to land, credit, agricultural services, extension courses or training.

71. Groups offer women the benefits of pooled resources and ideas, greater access to knowledge - related, for example, to the acquisition of management skills and methods for earning and saving income - and information, and the solidarity and confidence that can develop with a like-minded group of people. Group membership can help break through the social constraints on women's access to resources. This can be of particular value in societies where women are not free to express themselves openly in public or have not developed the skill or the willingness to do so. Groups offer greater access to training and credit since the institutions supplying these resources will often choose groups as a delivery mechanism in order to raise their own cost-effectiveness of delivery.

72. There are benefits to be derived from membership in all women's or mixed groups. The principal advantages rural women derive from all-women's groups are the openness of membership, greater freedom to participate in management and develop leadership experience, a greater comfort level for self-expression in societies where men and women do not mix easily in political structures, and the possibility to generate income and to participate in decisions regarding group expenditures. Mixed groups, on the other hand, offer greater access to the infrastructure and services of mainstream rural development. However, rural women have often found access to these groups difficult. They are often excluded from mixed farmer's groups by membership criteria which specify land ownership, illiteracy or low levels of education, or opposition from husbands

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(for example, to paying additional fees for a wife's membership). Women may be reluctant to join because their heavy productive and reproductive workloads leave no time for such activities or because they can derive no benefits from membership if groups do not address women's productive activities.

H. Insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women

73. The Forward-looking Strategies recommended that appropriate governmental machinery for monitoring and improving the status of women should be established where it is lacking. To be effective, this machinery should be established at a high level of government and should be ensured adequate resources, commitment and authority to advise on the impact on women of all governmental policies. Such machinery can play a vital role in enhancing the status of women, inter alia, through the dissemination of information to women on their rights and entitlements, through collaborative action with various ministries and other governmental agencies, and also with non-governmental organizations and indigenous women's societies and groups.

74. Several reviews and appraisals of national machineries have been undertaken by the United Nations. In 1989, a directory was presented to the Commission; 8/ in the 1990 review and appraisal of the implementation of the Strategies, a chapter dealt with national machineries; 9/ and in 1991, a questionnaire was sent to the member States asking for more detailed information. Another directory was published in 1993. 10/ More qualitative information was furnished by the Seminar on National Machinery for Monitoring and Improving the Status of Women (Vienna, 28 September-2 October 1987) and the Regional Seminar on the Impact of Economic and Political Reform on the Status on Women in Eastern Europe and the USSR (Vienna, 8-12 April 1991).

75. In the response of the Economic and Social Council to the 1990 review and appraisal, several recommendations were made regarding the importance of national machinery for the advancement of women in promoting the integration of women's needs and concerns into government policies and programmes, in mobilizing grass-roots support and in providing information at the national and international levels. 4/

1. General trends

76. The process of establishing national machineries for women at the governmental level began in the late 1970s. In addition to that, efforts have been made to strengthen their policies, to create different machineries at the national, regional and local level and to redefine the functions. From 1985 member States created machineries where they did not exist. More machineries at the national, regional and local level have been created where a strong national governmental machinery existed.

77. The Directory presented to the Commission in 1989 8/ gave detailed information on 91 units, and the existence of another 37 was reported. In the 1991 directory, information on 127 units was presented. 10/ The 1993 directory

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gives information about 128 States with national machineries. 11/ In preparation for the World Conference, 106 national committees have been created.

a. Governmental or non-governmental basis

78. Many of the member States have national machineries located in the Government, although a large number of them still have non-governmental organizations as national machineries.

79. Nearly all the countries in Western Europe have governmental national machineries (excepting the United Kingdom, which is mixed). The same trend is noted in Latin America, where most are located in the Government, with the exception of Bolivia, Cuba and Panama. The same trend appears in Africa. A smaller number of machineries is located in Government in Asia, and the largest number of non-governmental organization-based machineries appears in Central and Eastern European countries.

80. Non-governmental organizations and national committees created for the Fourth World Conference are developing programmes and activities for women. Estimation on data from the 1992 directory and on the new machineries carrying out activities for the Conference suggests that the number of focal points for women has increased.

b. Location

81. Some member States have ministers of women's affairs (Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Canada, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Indonesia, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Uganda). Others include women's affairs in the title of the ministers reporting to the Cabinet - for example, in ministries of youth, social affairs, employment, culture, education or law (Belgium, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Germany, Lesotho, Mauritius, the Netherlands and Niger).

82. Another group of member States has agencies on women's issues located in a shared portfolio (Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Barbados, Philippines and Spain), the Minister in charge reporting to the Cabinet.

83. A weak situation occurs when the national machinery for women is included only as a focal point in ministries with other responsibilities.

84. The location of the national machinery has no relation to a particular region or particular political context. National machineries attached to the Cabinet can be found in every region.

c. Other structures

85. A trend emerging over the past decade is the creation of extra-national machineries at the national level, such as councils for equality, ombuds for women, advisory groups on women's issues and parliamentary commissions. Many developed countries have other structures located in the ministry of labour.

86. Nordic countries have councils for equality and ombuds for women, and many Western European countries develop their activities along with equality structures created in other ministries or at other governmental or political levels, such as parliamentary commissions for women's rights. Canada and Australia have advisory councils. Many Asian and African countries have focal points in other ministries with a very different degree of responsibility.

87. Focal points have been also created at the local level, but the degree of support and responsibility varies.

d. Mandates

88. Mandates drawn from law or legal rules give clear signals to civil servants, political parties and other agents and make public the commitment of the Government to women's issues.

89. Extra machineries at the national, regional and local levels are most successful when they are backed by law and legal rules. At the regional level, between 1985 and 1994, certain countries set up equality bodies under laws or resolutions adopted by regional governments. Their duties are expressly indicated in the instrument creating them, and they are all created along the lines of the national machinery.

90. Many countries have developed national ministerial plans of actions for improving the situation of women. This kind of commitment by the Government and by other ministries has been very useful.

91. When mainstreaming is used, the clear responsibilities of the different ministries or agents is crucial for the success of the public policies for women.

92. The Canadian report cites three elements of the national machinery: the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, the Office of the Status of Women and the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women. Canada's experience demonstrates that other factors are essential for developing a strong national machinery: expressed political commitment at the highest level to improve women's social, economic, legal and cultural situation; recognition of the role and contribution of women's groups; policy research and an assessment of the impact of policies on women; sex-desegregated data and information on the situation of women and research on issues of concern to women.

e. Staff and internal structures

93. Very few countries provided information on staff, internal structures or financial resources (Canada, Indonesia, the Netherlands and Uganda). Most, however, reported problems in these areas.

94. Indonesia's report shows that, although many institutions have been created for the advancement of women, their effectiveness remains limited. The State Ministry for the Role of Women, which is responsible for representing the interests and concerns of women, is comparatively small. It lacks both staff and funds adequately to monitor and evaluate the implementation of programmes on

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women in development. Practical commitment in the form of resources has also been limited. The Ministry has no separate budget, because special projects for women are funded through sectoral departments.

95. The lack of statistical indicators on women partly accounts for the lack of recognition of the need to incorporate women into specific development activities and provides a practical obstacle to efforts. Future efforts will be directed towards the integration of women into mainstream sectoral programmes. Funding for special projects for women, which do reflect women's interests and concerns, comprises only a very small proportion of the total departmental budgets.

f. Relations with other ministries

96. Many member States report that national machineries have formal links across the Government. In some cases there are focal points, mainly in other ministries or interministerial committees. The status can vary considerably, between high-level executive committees and intermediate-level or advisory committees.

97. The effectiveness of the interministerial committees depends on the level of the officials and the monitoring and assessment of the activities reporting to the Cabinet.

98. In developing regions where the goal is development programmes, some interministerial committees include ministries of agriculture, food, planning and trade, development and food.

99. For effectiveness, the machinery should involve the Presidency and the finance ministry. The Uganda reports show that, although interdepartmental collaboration among ministries is one of the success factors, a major constraint to the implementation of the women's programmes is the lack of their own budgets.

2. Regional perspectives

100. The Nordic countries - Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden - developed steps to promote equal opportunity policies long ago. The main areas are employment, social welfare and the family, education, housing and social planning, and participation in politics at all levels.

101. In many countries action plans have been adopted. The measures to be implemented concentrate on themes like women's role in the economy, combining family life with a job outside the home, violence and political participation. Developing countries have focused their programmes on development, education and health.

102. Nearly all of the Latin American countries have national machineries for women. Their structures, budgets and the government support for them vary. The establishment of agencies like Chile's Servicio Nacional de la Mujer, the National Council for Women in Argentina, or Instituto de la Mujer in Uruguay have instituted broad kinds of programmes. The agency in Chile is attached

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directly to the Presidency, with a minister in charge of women's affairs. The equal opportunity plan coordinates with different ministries and different levels of government. It also cooperates with non-governmental organizations.

103. Although national machineries existed in Latin America before 1985, the new organs have strengthened the oldest structures or redefined objectives in accord with public policies on equal opportunity for women (Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Uruguay, Venezuela). Recently some of them were established by law.

104. In Africa, most of the national machineries existed before 1985. After the Nairobi Conference, the region saw an increase in the number of organs at the governmental level. Most of the African States report that their national machineries develop activities related to women and development. In some African countries, the national machineries are headed by a government minister coordinating other structures. The national machinery is linked to the Cabinet within the organizational structure of government, and it coordinates policies and activities on the advancement of women.

105. Several Governments in Africa are committed to the establishment of viable national machineries for women, as institutional frameworks that coordinate and enhance the participation of women at the national level. Governments declare that national machineries are necessary for the positive integration of women into the mainstream linked to development processes.

106. As in many developing countries, the major constraint facing the governmental machineries in Africa is the minimal funding. For example, in Uganda, between 1988 and 1990, the average development budget for the Department of Women in Development was only 0.09 per cent of the total government development budget. That percentage recently rose to 2.3 per cent.

107. Very few national reports updated the information on national machineries in Asia and the Pacific.

108. Indonesia was one of the first countries in the region to establish a special ministry for women in government. A wide range of special organizations and groups are actively involved in promoting the advancement of women in various fields of development and at all levels of government. The major institutions of government also include provisions to promote the advancement of women by increasing women's participation in development. The State Minister for the Role of Women has responsibility for policy formulation, coordination and advocacy, and her mandate is to make policy recommendations to the Government and coordinate development projects for women, implemented by sectorial agencies. Other structures at the governmental level are also involved in the advancement of women, with functions including evaluation and monitoring of public policies on the situation of women. The structures for the advancement of women also include provincial and district management teams.

109. Institutional arrangements for policy formulation, implementation, monitoring, review and appraisal or initiatives to incorporate women into development have been established to enable the State Minister to function effectively. As a member of the Cabinet, the State Minister interacts with

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other ministers and members of the Cabinet. Monthly consultative meetings are held with governmental agencies.

110. In 1992 the Bureau of Planning in each department was designated as the focal point for women in development activities. This marked both recognition of the need to incorporate a gender dimension in the total work programme of departments and an increase in the priority given to women in development issues.

111. The Indonesian report indicates that, in spite of the institutional development for the promotion of the advancement of women, much still needs to be done, by modifying the broader institutional context.

112. During the period of transition of Eastern and Central European countries to market economies, old national mechanisms for the status of women have disintegrated. After the establishment of new Governments, non-governmental agencies have been set up to take responsibility for the status of women. But the old structures have not yet been dismantled in many countries.

113. Women's organizations have taken action without official support. Although they are achieving results in many countries, no national machinery exists to deal with issues relating to the status of women.

114. The national committees set up in preparation of the World Conference might be transformed into national machineries.

115. During the period of socio-economic and political restructuring, all of the Central and Eastern European countries have changed their policy on women. State policies on women and the family have been formulated in the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Russian Federation and Slovakia.

116. According to the national reports, new Governments focus on policies concerning the reproductive role of women (health, child-care facilities and maternity leave). Public policies on women should also deal with equal rights, employment, decision-making and cooperation, and support to women's organizations.

117. In some of the countries in transition, the governmental equal rights agencies have been replaced by women's caucuses in parliaments and women's organizations. There is a lack of financial support for these activities. In Poland the office of the government plenipotentiary for women's affairs, established in 1986 by the Council of Ministers in implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, is the only national machinery for the advancement of women in Central and Eastern Europe. It adopted a plan of action to be implemented in the period 1987-1990, with central and local organs of the administration responsible for its implementation. The national report notes that in Poland the women's movement and the Parliamentary Caucus of Women are leading the process.

118. The 1994 national report from Bulgaria explains that, in view of the economic and financial situation, the priorities of the Government since 1989 have been structural reform of the economy and the alleviation of its negative

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effects on the population, especially socially vulnerable groups (old people and invalids). There is no special policy with respect to safeguarding the rights of women, owing to financial constraints. It is not realistic to finance programmes entirely devoted to the problems of women, although there is an understanding of the need for such programmes, especially with respect to the most vulnerable categories of women, such as the elderly, rural women and young women. The report notes the need for support from international governmental and non-governmental organizations.

3. Conclusions

119. The following conclusions can be drawn from the national reports on the success of national machinery:

(a) The mechanisms should have a clear identity and a well-formulated mandate which defines the independent role of the mechanism in policy development and implementation as well as in monitoring and influencing policy-making in the administration from a gender perspective;

(b) The mechanism should have political support from the highest level and a place in the hierarchy of the organization;

(c) The national machinery should be able to mobilize and maintain adequate financial and human resources;

(d) It should be in the position to collect relevant information on policy-making processes and it should have this information at an early stage in order to have an impact on policy development;

(e) The staff should be recruited on the basis of their expertise on women's issues and in applying gender-impact analyses to any policy;

(f) The machinery should cooperate with non-governmental organizations and women's groups, taking into account the independent role of non-governmental organizations vis-à-vis government responsibilities.

If the machineries for advancement of women are a complex of different bodies, the respective functions and responsibilities should be clearly defined and their mutual cooperation ensured. The national machinery should liaise with focal points in all relevant government departments and agencies.

Notes

1/ Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A, paras. 15, 78-79, 86-92, 107, 116, 126, 313, 315, 356, 358 and 365.

2/ EGM/EPPDM/1989/1, para. 5.

3/ Ibid., para. 6.

4/ Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/15, annex, para. 7.

5/ General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex.

6/ "Equality: Equality in political participation and decision-making" (E/CN.6/1990/2); "Peace: Equal participation in all efforts to promote international cooperation, peace and disarmament" (E.CN.6/1992/10); Women in Politics and Decision-making in the Late Twentieth Century (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.91.IV.3).

7/ FAO, Report of the Inter-agency Consultation on Statistics and Data Bases on Gender in Agriculture and Rural Development, Rome, 24-26 September 1991, pp. 12-13.

8/ Directory on National Mechanisms for Monitoring and Improving the Status of Women (United Nations, Vienna, 1989).

9/ United Nations, Vienna, 1990.

10/ Directory of National Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women (United Nations, Vienna, 1991).

11/ Ibid. (United Nations, Vienna, 1993).
