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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 38th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 25 July 2006, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. MÉRORÈS (Haiti)
(Vice-President)

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In the absence of Mr. Hachani (Tunisia), Mr. Mérorès (Haiti),
Vice-President, took the Chair

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS (continued)

- (h) INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN TAX MATTERS (E/2005/45 and E/2006/L.12)

Draft resolution E/2006/L.12: Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters

Mr. OOSTHUIZEN (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, introduced the draft resolution, which was aimed at achieving the goals, agreed upon during the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development, of strengthening international tax cooperation through enhanced dialogue among national tax authorities, achieving greater coordination of the work of multilateral bodies and regional organizations and giving special attention to the needs of developing countries. He hoped it would be supported by a majority of members of the Council.

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- (e) MAINSTREAMING A GENDER PERSPECTIVE INTO ALL POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES IN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM (E/2006/65, E/2006/83)

ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS (continued)

- (l) WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT (E/2006/27)

SOCIAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS (continued)

- (a) ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (E/2006/27 and Corr.1, E/2006/65, E/2006/80 and E/2006/CRP.4)

Ms. MANANJA (Assistant Secretary-General, Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women) said that since the 2005 World Summit, intensive efforts had been undertaken both at the intergovernmental and inter-agency levels to translate the Summit consensus into reality and build on women's gains in the past five years while confronting the attempts to roll back the achievements made so far. At its most recent session, the Commission

on the Status of Women had continued with the reform of its working methods designed to achieve those very purposes. The implementation of the 2005 World Summit outcome and of the Beijing Platform for Action required financing, yet an insignificant portion of total official development assistance was earmarked for gender equality - only 3.6 per cent in 2003.

Capacity-building was one of the critical elements of the system-wide policy and strategy for gender mainstreaming established through inter-agency consultations in February 2006. The policy and strategy were consistent with intergovernmental mandates, including the Economic and Social Council's agreed conclusions 1997/2 and its resolution 2005/31, and were not meant to be a substitute for entity-specific policies and strategies, which were critically essential. At the system level, they were expected to strengthen gender mainstreaming through a more coherent approach; enhanced system-wide capacity and accountability; system-wide minimum standards; systematic knowledge sharing; joint initiatives; monitoring and reporting; peer reviews of gender mainstreaming efforts; and provision of commensurate financial and human resources.

The 2005 World Summit had generated a new momentum and strong quest for concrete action on gender equality. The international community should rededicate itself constructively to achieving the Beijing Platform for Action and the 2005 World Summit consensus; she pledged the full cooperation of her Office and of the Division for the Advancement of Women in that endeavour.

Ms. HANNAN (Director, Division for the Advancement of Women), introducing the report of the Secretary-General in document E/2006/65, said it provided an overview of training for gender mainstreaming in the United Nations system and information on training provided by United Nations entities at national level.

The report recognized that training was a critical tool for increasing the awareness, knowledge, commitment and capacity of staff for gender mainstreaming but that training alone was insufficient: it must be part of a comprehensive entity-wide strategy, with explicit management support. Experience had shown that the approach taken was critical: training had to be tailored to specific sectors and issues and must explicitly address the various types of work carried out by different categories of staff. Throughout the United Nations system, more diverse, action-oriented programmes were being put in place and a range of learning processes was being

initiated. The Internet was also being used creatively. A critical factor for successful training outcomes was commitment and support by senior management and by human resource management offices.

The recommendations in the report aimed to address some of the remaining gaps and challenges, in particular the need to further develop innovative approaches, including through use of the Internet; provide training for all categories of staff, including gender specialists; ensure integration of gender perspectives in all existing training programmes; increase follow-up, accountability and monitoring and evaluation of impact; enhance the leadership role of managers; increase resources available in training budgets; and intensify efforts at national level, in particular the role of resident coordinators and country teams.

Ms. MTSHALI (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that all the components of gender mainstreaming must be taken into account within the United Nations system, including the principle of 50/50 gender balance with full respect for equitable geographic distribution of women. While the entities of the United Nations system were indeed making efforts to increase the awareness and capacity of staff to integrate a gender perspective in their respective fields, a large gap still remained between policy and practice. It was true that adequate human and financial resources for such training should be provided, but not at the expense of other training priorities within the United Nations system. The Group of 77 and China supported the continued efforts of all relevant United Nations entities to incorporate a gender perspective within the United Nations system by means of awareness-raising and gender training.

Mr. MACEDO RIBA (Mexico) said that while significant steps had been taken worldwide to involve women in political and economic life and create national legal frameworks to criminalize acts of violence against them, women continued to be subjected systematically to discrimination, lack of access to health, education and equitable working conditions and to acts of sexual and psychological violence, most of which went unpunished. Mexico viewed fulfilment of the Beijing Platform of Action as essential to ensure that efforts to attain development, democracy, the consolidation of peace and other priorities of the United Nations did not remain half-measures. It had incorporated action to promote gender equality in its

legislation, policies and budgetary provisions. The National Women's Institute was working to enhance women's integration on an equal footing with men in all spheres of society.

At the international level, Mexico was committed to full application of the international treaties enshrining the human rights of women. It supported the Council's draft resolution on the future organization and methods of work of the Commission on the Status of Women, which would enable the Commission to follow up the implementation of its decisions and thereby permit States to identify obstacles and undertake concerted action to overcome them in an efficient and comprehensive manner. The international community already had a broad range of tools and guidelines for tangible efforts to ensure gender equality, but that objective could not be achieved through isolated and fragmented efforts. An integrated and coordinated policy was urgently needed. His delegation was therefore concerned over efforts to elevate some institutions that dealt with gender issues over others. Each of those institutions should have clear mandates and well-defined responsibilities.

Mr. BEREZNOY (Russian Federation) said that despite tangible progress towards guaranteeing women's rights, there was still a long way to go before women were protected from all forms of violence, sexual discrimination was abolished and real gender equality was achieved. His delegation endorsed the conclusions in the reports on those subjects that were before the Council. The Russian Federation had developed a gender strategy proposing steps to improve the status of women. It valued the work of the Commission on the Status of Women and considered it important for the Commission to modernize and move with the times. In that connection, he recalled the Secretary-General's proposals for biennial consideration of priority themes, an approach that had already proved useful in the work of other functional commissions of the Council.

The political course pursued in the Russian Federation over the past five years had yielded macroeconomic stability and the beginnings of economic growth accompanied by better employment opportunities for women. Women's employment had risen at faster rates than that of men from 2001 to 2005. In the large-scale reforms in social policy being carried out, gender perspectives were accorded particular importance. His country welcomed international cooperation in all areas connected with the implementation of women's rights and was prepared to carry on an open dialogue on that score with all interested partners.

Ms. SINURAT (Indonesia) said her delegation was heartened by the efforts aimed at shifting the mindset of United Nations personnel through various types of training. The report of the Secretary-General in document E/2006/65 identified critical elements for conducting successful and efficient training and provided examples that would promote best practices in the future training activities of national authorities. Sustained, targeted and monitored training using innovative approaches would lead to shifts of mindset and behaviour within United Nations bodies. Regular assessments and evaluation were needed to measure effectiveness and progress as well as indicate gaps and challenges. Her delegation welcomed the efforts of the bodies that had put in place innovative training programmes, particularly at field level.

In Indonesia, the advancement and empowerment of women had become a national priority and gender mainstreaming had been promulgated in all aspects of development and civic life. Various efforts to raise awareness among government officials had been carried out. Although some progress had been achieved, the huge number of officials involved, budget constraints and geographic characteristics of the country remained challenges to be addressed.

Concerning the gender dimensions of international migration, she said that both countries of origin and countries of destination should share responsibility for the welfare of migrant women. Adequate attention needed to be given to women migrant workers employed in the informal sectors: they were the most vulnerable, yet enjoyed the least international legal protection. Creative thinking needed to be used to find innovative ways of providing them with protection. The living and working conditions of both legal and undocumented migrant women workers needed to be examined further, the forms of mistreatment and abuse inflicted on them identified and awareness of the contributions made by women migrants in destination countries enhanced.

Ms. GONZALEZ (Observer for the Dominican Republic) said that as the headquarters of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), her country welcomed the high level of achievement it had sustained for several decades. An autonomous institution operating within the framework of the United Nations, it relied exclusively on voluntary contributions for its financing - with all the uncertainty that that entailed. It had been an innocent victim in the struggle for funding that had been going on within the United Nations for many years and had intensified recently.

Despite its financial difficulties, the Institute was of great value as one of the principal instruments enabling the United Nations to carry through on its commitment to equality of rights between men and women. It must continue fulfilling its mandate, yet only Member States could ensure that it remained active and grew. Her country appealed to all delegations to take the necessary decisions so that adequate human and financial resources could be provided to an institution that served as a catalyst for initiatives aimed at the full integration of women in development.

Ms. MORENO (Director, United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)) said that as the Council met, women and children were suffering from the violence caused by conflicts throughout the world. Since 1997, when the Economic and Social Council had adopted its agreed conclusions on gender mainstreaming, their importance had been validated many times over. The Council now had a crucial responsibility to ensure that the gender architecture of the United Nations was strengthened. The approach to gender issues needed to be strong and commensurate with the needs and priorities of the world's women. Whatever architecture was chosen, it needed the full political support of all stakeholders and sufficient and certain functioning resources.

INSTRAW offered its support in that endeavour. Its groundbreaking research on the gender dimensions of remittance flows had demonstrated the significant potential of women's migration and economic empowerment to transform household gender relations, community well-being and economic growth. INSTRAW had initiated a series of case studies with the aim of analysing the gender dimensions of the use of remittances as a basis for bringing to light the economic contributions of migrant women and developing recommendations for public policies and programmes that included women in the quest for sustainable development. The first of the case studies had been carried out in the Dominican Republic, focusing specifically on female migration to Spain. INSTRAW had also launched a three-year project to promote women's rights, gender equality and the political participation of women in planning and management at the local level. Using funding from Spain and Mexico, it would be implemented initially in Central America, Mexico and the Andean region and could be expanded to other countries when additional funding became available.

But neither economic nor political empowerment meant anything without basic human security. The physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence perpetrated against women on a daily basis throughout the world still constituted the most significant obstacle to gender equality. Building on the experiences of several pioneering countries, INSTRAW had produced a manual to facilitate the formulation and execution of national action plans to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security.

She thanked those countries that had contributed financing to the Institute and asked those that had not to analyse its work and its potential, which had grown significantly since it had begun its revitalization process, and to consider the possibility of supporting INSTRAW at that crucial moment of transition.

Ms. BAYARMAA (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)) said her organization welcomed the focus on training activities in the reports of the Secretary-General (E/2006/65 and 83) and fully supported the recommendations to improve the impact of capacity-building in gender mainstreaming. Gender-based vulnerabilities could not be addressed without enhanced awareness, knowledge, commitment and capacity. Since 2001, IFRC had run a scholarship scheme to provide senior managers of its national societies with the opportunity to obtain gender analysis skills. It was currently looking for ways to scale up competence and skills for gender analysis, particularly among senior managers involved in disaster preparedness, response and recovery.

The advancement of women would not be achieved without concrete measures by Governments and other actors to address women's access to basic education, health services and employment opportunities. The importance of those issues and other gender-based vulnerabilities became even more visible in post-crisis and disaster situations. Empowering women would likewise protect them, and help them protect themselves, from gender-based violence, HIV/AIDS, trafficking, disease, discrimination and the differential impact of disasters. A recent study in southern Asia had revealed several key barriers preventing women from volunteering for work with IFRC: gender-segregated roles as childbearers and homemakers; education systems that perpetuated discrimination against girls and led to illiteracy; lack of time due to heavy household responsibilities; and practical constraints such as irregular and late hours and travel and safety concerns.

Those findings should come as no surprise. The challenge was how to address them, and her organization would continue to seek ways to do so.

Action on recommendations contained in the report of the Commission on the Status of Women (E/2006/27 and Corr.1)

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to take action on the recommendations contained in the report of the Commission on the Status of Women. Chapter 1, Section A, of the report contained a summary by the Commission's Chairperson for transmission to the General Assembly at its upcoming high-level dialogue on international migration and development. In the absence of any objections, he took it that the Council wished to transmit the summary to the General Assembly.

It was so decided.

Draft resolution I: Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan

Draft resolution I was adopted.

Draft resolution II: Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

Mr. MILLER (United States of America) called for a vote to be taken on the draft resolution.

The vote was taken by roll-call.

Albania, having been drawn by lot by the President, was called upon to vote first.

In favour: Albania, Angola, Austria, Belgium, Belize, Benin, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Guyana, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Madagascar, Mauritania, Mexico, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Against: Australia, United States of America.

Abstention: Haiti.

The draft resolution was adopted by 38 votes to 2, with 1 abstention.

Mr. MILLER (United States of America), speaking in explanation of vote, said his country was highly concerned about the situation of Palestinian women and provided millions of dollars a year to help them. Unfortunately, the resolution just adopted presented a very inaccurate assessment, both of the causes of the plight of Palestinian women and of potential actions to improve their situation. It was for that reason that his delegation had voted against it.

Mr. O'BRIEN (Australia) said his country remained concerned about the humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territories, including that of women. Total aid flows from Australia to the Palestinian territories and Palestinian refugees in surrounding countries had been around US\$ 16 million in 2005 and 2006. Australia had voted against the draft resolution on the grounds that it was unbalanced and politicized humanitarian concerns in an unhelpful manner.

Draft resolution III: Future organization and methods of work of the Commission on the Status of Women

Draft resolution III was adopted.

Draft decision: Report of the Commission on the Status of Women on its fiftieth session and provisional agenda and documentation for the fifty-first session of the Commission

The draft decision was adopted.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.