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President: Mr. OLMAYE (Djibouti)
(Vice President)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS (continued) (E/1998/82 and Add.1)

The PRESIDENT drew the Council's attention to the report of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations contained in document E/1998/82, in which the Committee had recommended that the organizations listed should be heard under the agenda items indicated. He also drew the Council's attention to document E/1998/82/Add.1, which contained requests from non-governmental organizations for hearings additional to those recommended by the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations at its meeting on 26 June 1998. The Bureau confirmed that all those organizations were in consultative status with the Council. He took it that the Council agreed to hear statements by the non-governmental organizations listed in those documents.

It was so decided.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION:

- (a) ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION AND THE ROLE OF OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES IN PROMOTING, IN PARTICULAR, CAPACITY-BUILDING AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION FOR ENHANCING THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT (E/1998/10, E/1998/54 and Corr.1; E/CN.6/1998/3)

The PRESIDENT drew the Council's attention to the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Advancement of Women: implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the role of operational activities in promoting, in particular, capacity-building and resource mobilization for enhancing the participation of women in development" (E/1998/54) and the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the revised system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001 (E/1998/10).

Mr. DESAI (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) said that one of the most important functions of the Council was to provide a sense of direction for the operational work of the United Nations on development. The Council's past guidance in that area had tended to emphasize

issues of process, but it now confronted a unique opportunity to start playing an important role in substantive guidance as well, a role which, in fact, had been envisaged for the Council since its inception. One area of particular importance in that regard was the link between the conference process and operational activities for development, as the credibility of the entire conference process depended on ensuring that development work was guided by its outcomes. The Council's current theme of gender in development was an example of a major cross-cutting priority emerging from the conference process that had to be reflected in the operational work of the Organization, and the Council had an opportunity to provide substantive policy guidance to that end.

Another important area of consideration for the Council was that of the impact evaluations of United Nations development programmes, which provided a valuable view of the effectiveness of the United Nations system's work at the country level in terms of substantive outcomes, especially with regard to capacity-building. They constituted a further opportunity for the Council to focus on the substantive impact of the Organization's work.

A third important issue for the Council's consideration stemmed from the previous year's major reform in the operational activities for development. The resulting Secretariat structure involved stronger coordination at the headquarters level and, through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), at the country level. As a result, the Council had an opportunity to provide more precise and definite policy guidance to United Nations funds and programmes.

In conclusion, he stressed that the Council should act as the bridge between the policy development processes of the United Nations and the work of the United Nations in operational activities for development. Despite strenuous efforts to make improvements at both the headquarters and field levels, there was a continuing erosion of the resources available for essential development programmes, an issue which the Council would also have to address.

Ms. KING (Assistant Secretary-General, Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women), introducing the report of the Secretary-General in document E/1998/54, said that the reform proposals of the Secretary-General had emphasized the importance of mainstreaming gender in all policies and programmes. The Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (IACWGE) of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), the

Commission on the Status of Women and the Third Committee of the General Assembly had worked in their respective spheres to enhance the effectiveness of current guidelines on the subject.

The report had been prepared in cooperation with and based on input from United Nations agencies and units, Governments, and resident coordinators and covered the themes of capacity-building and resource mobilization. It highlighted the activities of such institutional structures supporting the advancement and empowerment of women as IACWGE, which increasingly was providing a forum for linking normative, analytical and operational activities, and the increasing attention paid by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) to the gender perspective in analysing its activities, practices and procedures.

The report noted the work done by the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) and several agencies to develop explicit guidelines for gender mainstreaming. It pointed to the need to further strengthen the expertise available through the gender focal point system and to ensure that the effectiveness of the gender focal points was seen as part of senior management's responsibility. There had already been some successful interagency coordination in support of gender mainstreaming, but IACWGE planned to conduct a thorough review of the gender focal point function in the United Nations system.

In examining strategic frameworks and programming, the report noted that the level of Government readiness for assistance in gender programming varied considerably and drew attention to the 1997 Inter-Agency Workshop on Field-level Follow-up to Global Conferences, whose recommendations were subsequently converted into an ACC gender guidance note for all United Nations system country teams and other agency representatives. The ACC had underlined the importance of fully integrating gender issues into the strategic framework process for countries in crisis.

She drew particular attention to the report's discussion of gender and UNDAF and its relationship to the common country assessment. The report identified strategic opportunities for integrating gender considerations into those documents and demonstrated the potential effectiveness of gender theme groups in the process. It also addressed the need for greater accountability at all levels to ensure effective gender mainstreaming, an issue that continued to

deserve further attention. While most agencies had programmes in place to support gender mainstreaming at the national level, staff training remained an essential element in the process.

As stated in part III of the report, relatively little progress had been made in mobilizing resources for gender mainstreaming, even though several agencies had begun work in that area. On the other hand, much progress had been made since Beijing in the development of national budgets sensitive to gender.

She urged the Council to view the report in the context of the overall triennial policy review of operational activities and to use it as a tool to ensure that gender mainstreaming and operational activities for the advancement of women were fully integrated into the work of the United Nations system at the intergovernmental as well as at the country level. It showed what the system had done to date in terms of formulating a broad conceptual framework and identifying what had to be done at the national and regional levels to translate that framework into action. Much work remained, however, particularly in the areas of gender mainstreaming training, which, with some exceptions in the system, was not yet compulsory at either the headquarters or the field level; evaluation and follow-up, which were not yet fully in place; and accountability, which was still in an infant stage. Commitment and leadership were of vital importance, and far more precision was needed in allocation of resources in the area of gender. If the system was to work, and if delegations were accurately to track expenditures on programmes to promote gender equality, the full backing, expertise and collaboration of agency planning and budgeting heads were required.

Ms. HARTONO (Observer for Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that gender mainstreaming and the advancement of women in the context of the operational activities of the United Nations system was a positive step because it meant progress within the system and at the national level, with a central role for the Beijing Platform for Action.

The operational activities of the United Nations system were an important source of assistance for developing countries' national policies and programmes in the area of follow-up to the various international conferences. The developing countries must be given that country-level operational support because the lasting changes would be at the national and local levels.

She expressed regret that the international community often vouchsafed expressions of commitment to achieving progress in economic and social development more enthusiastically than they disbursed the necessary funding. She therefore appealed both for the Council to express its firm commitment to supporting the developing countries in achieving their conference goals and for clear indications of the ways and means that would be made available to them.

The efforts to ensure gender mainstreaming should be guided by the Council's agreed conclusions 1997/2, as they were a good framework for ensuring coherence of policy within the system and better coordination of programming; also, through those agreed conclusions the Council had urged the whole United Nations system to apply a gender perspective in the follow-up to the various conferences.

The common framework of guidelines and directives for gender mainstreaming and the advancement of women within United Nations system policies and programmes was commendable, although a more systematic assessment of field activities was needed. Similarly, the pilot phase of UNDAF was recent enough for a definitive appraisal to be premature. Given that UNDAF was starting with only 18 countries, additional capacity-building system-wide would obviously be needed to support programmes for the advancement of women, particularly because funding for similar programmes had always been scarce.

The Group of 77 and China supported the recommendation that the United Nations system should continue developing institutional directives for gender mainstreaming and women's equality (E/1998/54, para. 25) and suggested that all bodies in the system should draw up specific programmes for using the available mechanisms and funding to target poor women and girls as a contribution to eradicating poverty.

The Group of 77 and China agreed with the conclusion in the report that United Nations system support was possible only where there was a national policy environment for the advancement of women (E/1998/54, para. 42). Also, the United Nations system's operational activities should indeed be guided by national plans and priorities in keeping with the country-driven approach decided upon in General Assembly resolutions 50/120 and 52/203. Although the system of resident coordinators was evolving as the main way into countries for United Nations activities, the Group of 77 and China believed that the responsibility for conference follow-up must lie with Governments. Thus, policy

must be determined and initiated by them, with assistance from the United Nations system through its strategic and programming framework.

The United Nations system would need resources to assist Member States, particularly the developing countries, in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action. Mobilizing the needed resources was the task of the Council, but the allocation by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) of a percentage of its global programme budget to gender mainstreaming was welcome, as were similar initiatives by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other United Nations entities.

Even so, there must be accountability for gender mainstreaming activities to the relevant governing bodies so as to ensure that financial resources were optimally deployed. The Group of 77 and China therefore supported the recommendation that the governing bodies of United Nations entities should follow up earmarking of funds for gender mainstreaming (E/1998/54, para. 84).

The Group of 77 and China disagreed with the exact terms of the recommendation on providing financial support to non-governmental organizations and national machineries for women working on post-conference strategies (E/1998/54, para. 47): such financial support should be made available to Governments, not non-governmental organizations, because the responsibility for national budgets lay with Governments. Additional information about the recommendation in question was needed, because financial resources should be provided directly to national machineries to assist them in conference follow-up activities.

Mr. LENNKH (Observer for Austria), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associate countries of Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia and, in addition, Iceland, said that gender equality was central to the development process but that only recently had States begun to acknowledge the overall gains from investing in women. Women spent their earnings getting their families out of poverty, so an investment in women became an investment in human development.

Women's efforts to overcome poverty were, however, further constrained by discrimination against them in their access to and control over economic resources, a fact that had to be recognized in empowering poor people. The European Union therefore supported the rights-based approach to women's

empowerment adopted by an increasing number of United Nations development agencies.

In that connection, the European Union had recently adopted a regulation integrating gender issues into its development cooperation and including an allocation of specific resources; also, the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) had recently adopted guidelines for gender equality and women's empowerment in development cooperation which made clear that gender equality and women's empowerment were central to the shift from a welfare-oriented to a more sustainable approach.

The Council's agreed conclusions 1997/2 were critically important and needed to be fully implemented. The United Nations bodies with general development mandates, although most had gender mainstreaming policies, still seemed to have a poor understanding of gender issues: more must be done to integrate those issues into programming and day-to-day planning. Accountability for gender issues should rest with senior management, and the European Union believed it was time for the executive boards of funds and programmes to demand reports on the implementation of gender mainstreaming in programming and planning and establish systems to monitor and assess the impact.

The European Union supported the recommendations in the report, but the impact of existing mainstreaming activities had either not been assessed or had proved limited, as with gender focal points. The problems with the focal points must be addressed: senior management must ensure that they operated effectively.

The European Union supported UNDAFs, but believed that gender equality must be included in their guidelines because it was a cross-cutting issue. For evaluating UNDAFs, it would be necessary to collect sex- and age-disaggregated data. Also, gender indicators must be included in common country assessments, while gender analysis must also become an integral part of development planning.

The European Union believed that the role of the resident coordinator was crucial for mobilizing the United Nations system to introduce gender mainstreaming in a coordinated manner at the country level, but the gender perspective must also be fully integrated into work at the field level. Also, capacity-building for gender mainstreaming in operational activities required that the United Nations system should collaborate with national machineries for

the advancement of women and with non-governmental organizations and should develop partnerships with them.

The European Union was aware that the estimated 15 per cent of development resources which reached women fell far short of matching their responsibilities in society. Moreover, systematic evidence that funds earmarked for gender mainstreaming actually benefited women was lacking. The work on gender-sensitive budgeting must therefore be followed up within the United Nations system: development agencies should be able to tell whether resources were being allocated with a gender perspective and to develop "genderized" budgets, and they should indicate clearly whether projects, policies or programmes had integrated gender equality fully or whether they were specific to women.

United Nations development entities set up specifically to help empower women always had small budgets, often too small to enable them to ensure that United Nations development programmes became gender-sensitive. The limited resources should therefore be used strategically - particularly through the United Nations Development Group and UNDAFs - and another look should be taken at the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to see if it had enough resources to carry out its mandate.

Several conferences had now called for the gender gap in primary and secondary education to be closed by 2005. As investment in education for girls had repeatedly been shown to be a key determinant for development with positive implications for all other measures of progress and a measure of both fairness and efficiency, the European Union believed that the Council should reaffirm its commitment to that goal at the current session.

Ms. TARR-WHELAN (United States of America) said that the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing had tried to build a framework that would change the way the United Nations, Governments and non-governmental organizations worked to advance the status of women. That status could not be discussed in isolation. It cross-cut United Nations operational activities, gender mainstreaming, follow-up to conferences, human rights and humanitarian assistance, and improving it effectively and sustainably required long-range changes in policies, programmes and operations if it was to become an integral part of the everyday way of doing business.

Her Government commended the reform efforts of the Secretary-General to mainstream gender in the policies and programmes of the United Nations system;

the efforts of IACWGE on accountability, developing gender-sensitive indicators and budgeting methods and collecting best practices for use at the community level had been particularly laudable.

Her Government welcomed the collaboration between the Division for the Advancement of Women and UNHCHR because it shared the view that denial of women's rights perpetuated women's poverty, stymied their contribution to the economic and social development of societies, and deprived communities and countries of their ideas and commitment to peace and progress (E/1998/54, para. 12). However, the development agencies in the United Nations system could do more to coordinate their support for women's rights and should improve the way they worked to eliminate violence against women.

Despite its support for the recommendations in the report, her Government wished to make it clear that, first, the success of gender mainstreaming was closely linked to institutional commitment and support from the highest political level in each organization; second, as action at the country level was paramount, gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment must be incorporated into country strategy notes, common country assessments and UNDAFS; third, entities in the United Nations system should develop mainstreaming directives, because discretionary guidelines were not sufficient; fourth, gender units and focal points should be valued within the United Nations system as catalysts for mainstreaming because it would be contrary to the Beijing Platform for Action if they were marginalized into final repositories for all gender issues; and fifth, the success of mainstreaming also required training, technical support, monitoring, evaluation and accountability.

Her Government strongly supported the emphasis in the United Nations reform process on an integrated and coordinated follow-up to conferences, believing that such an approach could break new ground in achieving women's equality. It supported also the system of resident coordinators as crucial for mobilizing the United Nations system to introduce gender mainstreaming in a coordinated manner at the country level and down into the field, and in that connection welcomed steps, such as the triennial comprehensive policy review, towards identifying where problems still existed in coordinating the work of the various bodies on assisting countries' implementation of conference commitments.

Her Government was pleased that the United Nations system was on the right road to putting the Beijing Platform for Action into practice because the

system's operational agencies had a crucial role to play in enabling developing countries to take the lead in managing their own development processes while the funds and programmes were important vehicles for improving cooperation for development and advancing the status of women.

Mr. NIELSON (Observer for Denmark) welcomed the decision to hold a special session of the General Assembly in June 2000 to assess the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. As over 70 per cent of the world's absolute poor were women, no effort should be spared to achieve the objectives of the Platform. Gender mainstreaming, because it had to do with the empowerment of women - releasing their potential and improving their lives by providing equal opportunities, joint responsibilities and common endeavours - would therefore be fundamental in achieving the Beijing objectives.

There were two tracks in the discussion on gender mainstreaming: institutional mainstreaming within the United Nations system and mainstreaming at the country level. At the United Nations system level, although the policy and broad strategies for mainstreaming were in place, continued effort was still needed because according to document E/1998/54, results were uneven and mainstreaming was still not integrated into the system's daily work. Clear administrative procedures needed to be introduced, and every programme submitted to the system's governing bodies must have gender mainstreaming included, with the necessary institutional and statistical backing of monitoring systems and disaggregated indicators.

At the country level mainstreaming posed a much greater challenge. It must become an integral part of UNDAF: in cooperation with Governments, the UNDAF resident coordinators must become its patrons. Tactics could include the deliberate redefinition of some kinds of labour as "jobs for women" and the relatively small investments that could make an enormous difference in women's lives by giving them access, through training and micro-credit, to control over economic resources and improved status in society.

However, unequal power structures, old or new, died hard, and Governments and international agencies had a particular responsibility to change legal systems, including customary law, that prevented women from playing their rightful role in societies. In that connection, non-governmental organizations could have a part to play, and she adduced the example of a women's network in

southern Africa whose legal research and activism had improved women's legal status in the areas of inheritance, family law and property rights.

Women were often particularly vulnerable and marginalized, and even more so in times of dire need; therefore, the gender dimension must never be forgotten, so that women were not disfavoured, including in the amount of emergency assistance they received as compared to men. She recalled that in recent years, emergency assistance to Rwanda had systematically disfavoured women, although women recipients had outnumbered men two to one.

The major challenge in ensuring gender equality in international cooperation lay in sector programme design; while her Government supported that form of cooperation as an efficient and effective way of putting ownership in the hands of poor people, gender mainstreaming could not be just a political add-on to such programmes; to effect sustainable social change, they had to be a necessary and integral component.

Ms. FISCHER-VOLIO (Observer for Costa Rica) said that although the Government of Costa Rica had recognized the rights and the special needs of women and had committed itself to programmes and policies to eradicate discrimination against women in its various forms, still women remained discriminated against, excluded and "invisible". To combat the problem, it was taking a number of steps pursuant to the Beijing Platform for Action to go beyond just assisting women to achieve sex equality and overall human development. The information system it was setting up would provide specific indicators for continuous follow-up to women's human development.

The President of Costa Rica had been promoting a broad-based national process, covering many subjects, to define State policy, which would include, inter alia, action towards development for women and mobilizing the needed resources. Also, there had been major progress consequent on the pre- and post-Beijing process: legislation had undergone fundamental change in favour of women; the Electoral Code had been altered to ensure that women formed, by law, 40 per cent of the party structure and held 40 per cent of all other posts for which candidates were elected by popular vote; in the field of health a law had been passed to promote breast-feeding; the Labour Code had been amended to guarantee paid maternity leave including in cases of adoption; de facto unions were being recognized; and a law had been passed to pay benefits to people with disabilities and minors dependent on them.

A law had recently been passed converting the National Centre for the Development of Women and the Family into the National Institute for Women, which could now participate fully in the governmental decision-making process. More resources had been allocated to it, its administration had been bolstered and a female Minister for the Status of Women had been appointed.

The Government hoped to put a network of women's bureaux into operation in municipalities throughout the country to provide women with advice and assistance on their rights and the special protection they enjoyed. The Government was aware that an intensive training process was required to change discriminatory practices in the various institutions of State and to eliminate the attitudes, myths and beliefs that had adversely affected the development of Costa Rican women.

The new Government of Costa Rica, under President Rodríguez, was firmly committed to the purposes and principles of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Mr. BAALI (Algeria) said that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action were proof of the international community's commitment to redressing the structural inequities imposed on women by centuries of prejudice at a time when major world events sometimes hindered their enjoyment of their basic rights. While it was too soon to measure the true impact of actions taken to implement the Platform, it was important to ensure that measures taken in that regard were effective and appropriate.

Both Governments and the United Nations, were responsible for promoting international cooperation in all fields, including those related to the economic and social development of women. His delegation welcomed United Nations endeavours to mainstream a gender perspective into its programmes and policies and into the operational activities of its funds and programmes. However, operational activities must be carried out in cooperation with the countries concerned and, if their Governments so desired, in support of their national plans and priorities.

Women, particularly in developing countries, had enormous needs in the areas of education, health, training and finance, which must be met before they could exercise their rights and take a more active role in decision-making and in the political, economic, social and cultural life of their countries. In that regard, his delegation had doubts concerning the tendency of an increasing

number of United Nations bodies, particularly those involved in operational activities, to take a different development approach and was concerned at the appointment, under the resident coordinator system, of gender advisers in certain countries. The report did not state how those countries were selected, who was responsible for selecting them or which criteria were used in evaluating "commitment on the part of government and civil society to the Beijing Platform for Action" (E/1998/54, para. 36). Moreover, that programme was to be financed by resources over and above those which were allocated to development and which had been decreasing at an alarming rate for years; thus, the international community was being asked to provide additional funding in implementation of the development objectives established at Beijing.

Algeria's Constitution and legislation guaranteed gender equality in the fields of education, training, health and freedom of association, and government agencies focused on women as a key element in the family, which was the basic unit of society. His Government had established a permanent committee, composed of representatives of development ministries and non-governmental organizations, in order to implement the recommendations made at Beijing. It had also created a national women's council as a framework for cooperation with the women's movement and had implemented programmes to benefit rural women.

Ms. ACHOURI (Tunisia) said that Tunisia welcomed the establishment of institutional structures by bodies of the United Nations system to incorporate gender into the integrated follow-up to major United Nations conferences. The recommendations made in the report of the Secretary-General (E/1998/54) should be put into effect. Her delegation welcomed the decision taken by UNDP to devote 20 per cent of its resources to gender mainstreaming in its global programmes.

With regard to the mid-term review of the implementation of the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, her delegation felt that particular support should be given to action in the fields of women and poverty, education and training of women, women and the economy, and women and the environment.

Her Government accorded priority to the participation of women in development and provided women with the necessary mechanisms to consolidate their presence on the national scene as agents of production, decision-making and development on an equal footing with men. The main activities in that

sphere focused particularly on equality of opportunity and were backed by a set of institutional mechanisms. The right to work had been reaffirmed for all women, as well as the principle of non-discrimination between men and women in the workplace. The Tunisian authorities were focusing on education, health and family planning, with a view to protecting human rights, women's health and women's role in the family. That policy had led to a qualitative change in women's economic contribution to Tunisia's development; women's participation in the workplace was constantly increasing, and women had also made progress in parliamentary and municipal structures. However, national efforts should be backed by adequate international support, as stressed in General Assembly resolution 50/104.

Mr. VALLE (Brazil) said that his delegation supported the recommendations made in the report of the Secretary-General (E/1998/54).

Field operations in Brazil illustrated the benefits of genuine partnership between the Government, local authorities, civil society, the specialized agencies and United Nations funds and programmes in promoting capacity-building and resource mobilization for the enhancement of the participation of women in development. In many instances, those efforts also involved the participation of the Inter-American Development Bank. UNIFEM was playing a leading role in Brazil in addressing women's needs and promoting gender awareness. In a recent initiative UNIFEM and the National Council on Women's Rights had held seminars on the participation of women in the Common Market of the Southern Cone (MERCOSUR) integration process. At the regional level, the Latin American and Caribbean inter-agency campaign to combat violence against women and girls was strengthening the participation of civil society in the prevention and eradication of violence and the promotion of a culture of non-violence.

His Government was deeply concerned about the decline in contributions to the core resources for development activities of the United Nations system and welcomed the ongoing initiatives aimed at identifying new fund-raising mechanisms and the mobilization of additional resources through increased partnership with the Bretton Woods institutions. However, there was an urgent need to re-establish the level of core resources. Two related issues also required priority attention: raising the level of efficiency in the use of resources for technical cooperation in terms of both programme delivery and

capacity-building; and ensuring that programmes and projects had a clear impact on development and poverty eradication.

In order to preserve their relevance and impact on development, the activities of the United Nations system for development cooperation would have to be constantly adapted to the changing requirements and priorities of programme countries. Project activities in Brazil were under constant evaluation and were having a huge impact on capacity-building and poverty eradication. Given the modest level of core resources, implementation relied heavily on cost-sharing; the level of resources Brazil devoted to cost-sharing - over \$200 million a year - illustrated its commitment to multilateral cooperation and to the United Nations system of operational activities.

His Government firmly believed that access to multilateral loans should not exclude eligibility for international cooperation through the operational activities of the United Nations. For a middle-income country, the importance of the United Nations system as a source of international cooperation was based much more on technical than on financial considerations. Continuous access to core resources played a vital role both in allowing for the presence of United Nations system organizations at the country level and as leverage in the mobilization of resources for development projects. The accumulated experience of the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes was extremely important for all programme countries regardless of their level of development.

The national execution of projects was a powerful instrument to promote capacity-building; it led to greater involvement of the beneficiaries and helped countries gain full ownership of international cooperation projects. It should continue to be applied in a flexible manner, adapted to national circumstances.

Mr. KARLSSON (Sweden) said that the expansion of opportunities for girls was essential to development. It was not a question of reducing poverty to help women, but of empowering women in order to eradicate poverty. Women needed to have their full share of control over resources, rights to land, and access to credit. Economic reform policies which did not take women's choices into account would not succeed. In the area of political rights, it was not a question of increased democracy leading to the empowerment of women; when women became organized and secured their human rights, a new democratic culture would emerge.

It was crucial to women's and girls' human rights that there should be a political focus on issues of protecting the integrity of their bodies, allowing the exercise of reproductive choice, ending female genital mutilation, sexual abuse, and violence in the home and on the streets, and reducing the threat of HIV; the taboos around those issues must be removed. Furthermore, women should not have to waste intellectual and emotional energy on men in their lives who did not take full family responsibility.

Women were changing the nature of politics in many societies. However, there was still a need for a coherent strategy for gender mainstreaming in the United Nations system. The report (E/1998/54) was very honest in pointing out some of the obstacles. It was essential to take firm action to counteract the attitudes that were described. The United Nations should present a coherent strategic approach for mainstreaming a gender perspective in all United Nations activities; the system must be engaged, from the senior management all the way down. The review of the implementation of the Platform for Action in the year 2000 must be used to make that strategic approach clear and concrete. Sweden was prepared to provide extra funding to the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women to help establish a coherent system for gender mainstreaming. However, mainstreaming was by definition not an additional activity but an enhancement of the quality and efficiency of what was already being done.

Sweden's capacity for mainstreaming an effective gender strategy in its development cooperation had been examined and had been found seriously lacking. Accordingly, an ambitious educational project, with a broad range of action-oriented seminars, had been launched. In the second phase, Government departments had set up their own action plans. In the third phase, a manual on mainstreaming had been produced and would be made available in five of the official languages of the United Nations.

At the same time, there was a need to bear in mind the insecurity felt by boys and young men in the many societies which were undergoing transformation. In extreme cases, that insecurity led them to engage in violence, petty crime, or even full-scale war. More attention also needed to be devoted to the new challenges to the identity and life choices of boys and young men growing up in poverty. Thus gender issues were concerned with security, conflict management, humanitarian action, and, ultimately, democratic culture. It was to be hoped

that in the next century women would enjoy full equality with men and there would be true partnership between women and men.

Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh) said that the United Nations operational activities for development played a major role in assisting developing countries implement the Beijing Platform for Action. His delegation was pleased to note the directives issued by UNDP and UNFPA for gender mainstreaming and drew attention to the comprehensive recommendations in the Council's agreed conclusions 1997/2, many of which applied directly to operational activities. It urged the Council to take a decision reiterating the need for a study of the role of gender units and focal points.

His Government had taken important national and regional initiatives with a view to the elimination of violence against women, and welcomed the innovative projects funded by the Trust Fund on Violence against Women set up by UNIFEM. It strongly believed that women's human rights also required more focused and innovative attention in the operational activities of the United Nations.

It was important to establish methodologies for the effective tracking of resources by United Nations organizations. United Nations bodies should earmark funds for gender-specific activities in their areas of competence. The report made scant reference to the need for new and additional resources for gender mainstreaming: additional funds must be made available for the developing countries, particularly the least developed and African countries. His delegation agreed with the Secretary-General's recommendation that the Council should encourage financial support to be provided to national machineries and non-governmental organizations that were developing gender-sensitive budgets (E/1998/54, para. 84).

The new system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for the period 2002-2005 should pay particular attention to the problem of insufficiency of resources for operational activities for development, which could seriously affect the implementation of commitments under the Beijing Platform for Action.

Mr. ALBIN (Mexico) said that much remained to be done to implement the Platform for Action, as there were still financial, institutional and cultural obstacles, not to mention a lack of political will at times. There had been significant progress on various fronts, however, including the decision by UNDP to devote at least 20 per cent of its resources in its global programmes to gender mainstreaming, a decision which should be emulated by other agencies of

the United Nations system. Evaluation systems needed to be adopted to verify the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in cooperation projects on the basis of the system designed by the World Bank. Support needed to be given for general training for Government officials with responsibilities in the areas of gender and public policies, in accordance with the needs or priorities decided on by each State. His Government agreed that the ratification and full implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women should be promoted. International cooperation was invaluable in that respect and could help in designing methodologies and systems to improve and harmonize the preparation of reports of States parties. Mexico attached particular importance to effective inter-agency coordination and technical cooperation of the United Nations in defining and developing activities for the application of the Beijing agreements and recommendations.

Mexico was participating in successful inter-agency technical cooperation relating to the advancement of women and girls, technical cooperation among institutions and bodies providing support to rural women, the development of a system of indicators to follow up the status of women, technical cooperation with the International Labour Organization (ILO), a national campaign to combat violence against women, and projects in such areas as population and responsible paternity, and the situation of the girl child. A programme for the development of small businesses was being developed with UNDP and would significantly increase women's access to credit, self-employment, and integration in the economy.

Those efforts illustrated the importance and value of inter-agency coordination and cooperation at the field level. The coordinating role of the Council must be strengthened to impart coherence to the activities of the system and at the same time ensure the efficient use of the resources of international cooperation, as an indispensable complement to efforts and investment at the national level.

Mr. FUST (Observer for Switzerland) said that the promotion of women and of gender equality were key factors in sustainable development. In that regard, Switzerland had participated in activities of the United Nations and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and had mainstreamed a gender perspective in its own development activities, with particular emphasis on the establishment of guidelines for its cooperation

programmes in the field. UNDAF was of great importance to the current reform process and should ensure better follow-up to the major conferences and the promotion of women and gender equality, which were key issues for sustainable development.

Although the report emphasized the importance of capacity-building for United Nations system staff responsible for development activities, the organizations must also build the capacities of their partners in the countries in which their programmes were implemented. He hoped that future reports would provide more information in that regard. It was clear that certain activities for the promotion of women and gender equality, particularly those of UNIFEM, would require additional resources. More broadly focused organizations should endeavour to mainstream a gender perspective in the earliest stages of their cooperation activities. A gender perspective must also be taken into consideration in structural adjustment programmes, emergency operations and policy dialogues.

Mr. MABILANGAN (Observer for the Philippines) said that, while the establishment of a system-wide institutional infrastructure was an important first step in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action, operational activities for development were also of great importance if gender mainstreaming was to achieve concrete results at the country level. The gender perspective must be mainstreamed in every country strategy note and country cooperation framework and, where applicable, in UNDAF. The resident coordinator system, working under the guidance of Governments, should help to ensure the coherent mainstreaming of a gender perspective at the country level. To that end, the Council should consider asking the General Assembly to include mainstreaming as an element in the resident coordinator's report in connection with the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development.

A key factor for success in gender mainstreaming was a stronger system of accountability at all levels, particularly that of senior management. The Council should call on the governing bodies of the funds, programmes and specialized agencies to establish well-defined, time-bound targets for gender mainstreaming. In that regard, he welcomed the efforts of IACWGE in strengthening accountability measures for the United Nations system as a whole.

At the country level, the major challenge for the United Nations system was that of assisting Governments with capacity-building and, in particular, with

the collection of gender-disaggregated data. He urged Governments to avail themselves of United Nations expertise in that regard and suggested that the Council should ask the funds, programmes and specialized agencies in the field to cooperate in ensuring that age- and gender-disaggregated data and research were taken into account in the preparation of common country assessments and country strategy notes so that programmes could be formulated with a gender perspective in mind.

The gender focal point system had been significantly weakened by a lack of adequate staff dedicated to gender mainstreaming. He therefore welcomed the resource mobilization efforts made by UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNICEF and urged other United Nations agencies to take similar action. However, in the long run, the reallocation of existing resources would not suffice and donor countries must provide additional funding if the goals established at Beijing were to be achieved.

There was a need for strict accountability in the use of resources, and he supported the recommendation that the Council should request the funds and programmes to include in their reports to their governing bodies information concerning the use of the funds allocated to them. His delegation looked forward to receiving the results of the work of the IACWGE task force on budget codes/markers and financial monitoring systems for gender mainstreaming. It also hoped to receive information on Government experience with gender-sensitive budgeting, and it found the recommendation that national institutions should be provided with financial support to be used in developing such budgets both timely and appropriate.

Ms. BERTINI (World Food Programme) said that hunger affected women and their young children far more than men. Those who gathered, prepared and served food were the last to consume it. Even pregnant and breastfeeding women in prosperous households often ate only after feeding their husbands and children. For that reason, the World Food Programme (WFP) had changed its approach to food distribution and had signed memorandums of understanding with its major non-governmental organization partners and with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in order to establish new guidelines for involving women in needs assessment and the distribution of food to households. Because hunger was a cycle that was often perpetuated from generation to generation, and the impact of starvation during the prenatal period and early

childhood could be lifelong, WFP was increasing and strengthening its development and emergency projects for expectant mothers and young children.

An increase in literacy among women was accompanied by a decrease in fertility rates, improved health and nutrition and greater economic capacity. WFP required school food programmes to ensure that girls received at least 50 per cent of the resources allocated, although there was considerable resistance to that requirement. In some projects, food was used as an incentive for families which did not believe in educating their daughters; any girl who attended school for 30 days was given a five-litre can of oil, which represented half the monthly income of many of the fathers. Not surprisingly, girls' enrolment in those schools had doubled.

WFP had adopted a new operational strategy which included the introduction of a system of gender focal points throughout the organization; the preparation of training modules and holding of regional workshops to train its staff in the inclusion of gender perspective in project planning, implementation and evaluation; the review of all projects and programmes to ensure that poor women were given a leading role in managing food aid; and the establishment of gender-sensitive guidelines for school food programmes, mother and child health projects and overall project planning. It had also increased the percentage of its women staff members at all levels and begun to rate all of its managers on their efforts to achieve the Secretary-General's goals for the hiring of women.

In poor communities throughout the world, women who received adequate food supplies had the energy that they needed to escape from poverty, improve their families' lives and save their children from a life of weakness, illness and poverty. If hunger had a face, it would be that of a woman, and it was women, too, who were best equipped to put an end to hunger.

Mr. KONISHI (Japan) said that the second Tokyo International Conference on African Development, to be held in the autumn of the current year, would address gender mainstreaming and the participation of women in development within the framework of the Agenda for Action for African Development. He welcomed the role played by the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and IACWGE in mainstreaming a gender perspective in United Nations policies and programmes.

His Government had taken steps to promote the concept of gender and address the issue of women in development within the framework of its official

development assistance (ODA) and had implemented programmes involving the construction of vocational training centres for women, the development of cooperation in the field of maternal and child health care and family planning and the creation of programmes to train women for government posts. The United States and Japan had adopted a common agenda which included the promotion of girls' education and the extension of microcredit to women. Japan had also helped to fund capacity-building programmes for women in developing countries through United Nations bodies such as the Division for the Advancement of Women, INSTRAW and UNIFEM.

Ms. ŠIMONOVIĆ (Observer for Croatia) said that in implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action her Government had established a National Commission for Equality and a National Policy of Equality. The latter included an analysis of the situation of women in Croatia and established strategic objectives for their political, economic and social advancement, while the former worked in cooperation with national non-governmental organizations.

Until recently, it had been generally believed that Croatian women enjoyed the same rights as men, but that perception had been changed as the Committee for Equality and numerous non-governmental organizations had begun to call for more proportionate representation of women in high-level and other political posts. As in many Central and Eastern European countries, the percentage of women in such posts had declined since the transition to a market economy. However, that trend had begun to reverse in Croatia, and women currently accounted for 20 per cent of government posts at the sub-ministerial level.

Her Government supported further United Nations action to enhance the role of women in development and to mainstream a gender perspective in all the Organization's activities.

The meeting rose at 1:10 p.m.