Item 11 of the provisional agenda

WORLD PLAN OF ACTION

Statement submitted by International Council on Social Welfare (Category I)

The Secretary-General has received the following statement to be distributed to the World Conference of the International Women's Year in conformity with rule 54 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Conference.
STATEMENT TO THE WORLD CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR

The International Council on Social Welfare is a non-governmental organization enjoying consultative status in Category I with the Economic and Social Council. It has 73 national committees distributed among all continents of the globe. Each of these committees is concerned with the total health, well-being and individual self-realization of the men, women and children in the countries in which they operate. That being their raison d'être, they are almost by definition deeply involved in promoting the welfare of the half of their populations which contributes most intimately to the physical and emotional health of all, namely the women and female children.

The ICSW endorses the concept of diversified national programmes tailored to the situation and the needs in each national and geographical area. We urge that within this framework the World Conference of the International Women's Year mobilize world-wide action to ensure that women enjoy, on an equal basis with men, food sufficient in quantity and quality to maintain life and promote health; both environmental and individual health services; education; and equality of opportunity and compensation in employment. These four are fundamental to positive and satisfying life for women and men. Where they are not provided equally to both, efforts further to improve the lot of women will be meaningless.

1. **Food**

In some countries of the world women may eat only after men and boy children are fed. As a result, the highest goal they can have in life is mere survival. This can be fatal to many women in conditions of food shortage and famine. At the same time, the women who are the last to be fed play a major role in producing food. In its statement to the World Food Conference, the ICSW emphasized the important role of the peasant woman as a food producer and the great need to support programmes directed toward relieving her burden as a farmer as well as a mother, housewife and educator, while improving her capacity as a food producer.

2. **Health services**

Women in developing countries are the major victims of unhealthful environments as well as of the lack of personal health care. Village women, for instance, may be able to get water only by carrying it long distances even though they may be sick and disabled at times. The water they bring home is often polluted and brings to the children sicknesses which result in lifetime disabilities, such as blindness, or even death. Wells, clean water and sanitary sewage disposal are necessary for all people, but their lack falls most heavily on women. In personal health care, also, women are least likely to be served even though the preservation of their strength is necessary for the health of whole families and communities. There is little to be gained by making available facilities for education of girls and women when they have neither the time nor the strength to take advantage of them.

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3. **Education**

To expand their understanding and knowledge of even such basic matters as what to feed their children to give them the greatest benefit from what is available, how to avoid contamination in an unsanitary environment and how to care for themselves during pregnancy and child birth, women need to be able to read and write. Educators estimate that there are 800 million illiterates in the world and of these 500 million are women, and this despite the fact that women bear a large responsibility for the education of children of both sexes. Learning to read and write are essential before women can achieve their potentials as equals with men in development of their countries, controlling the size of their families and valuing their own worth as human beings. Education therefore ranks with adequate food and health care as a foundation stone on which all other efforts to improve the status of women must be built.

4. **Equal opportunity in employment**

The ICSW endorses the goal set forth in the World Plan of Action which seeks to achieve equality of opportunity and treatment for women workers and their integration into the labour force. Women should not receive less pay and less consideration for advancement than men for work of equal value. Equality in employment presupposes equality in training and in economic opportunity for both sexes. We urge a sustained effort to achieve equal access to training, equal pay for equal work and equal conditions of work and advancement.

The International Council on Social Welfare urges the World Conference of the International Women's Year to provide leadership in ensuring that at least these basic essentials to self-realization be provided to women throughout the world.