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Item 7 (f) of the provisional agenda

REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING
FOR

1980 WORLD CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR WOMEN

(Note of the Executive Secretary)

80-3078

As a follow-up to the 1975 World Conference for International Women's Year, ECWA organized a regional meeting held in Amman 29 May - 4 June 1978 to finalize the Regional Plan of Action for the Integration of Women in Development, which was adopted by the Commission at its fifth session, Amman, October 1978.

As a result of the 1975 World Conference, the General Assembly adopted resolution 30/3520 of 15 December 1975 calling for a world conference in 1980 to review and appraise the developments of the first five years of the United Nations Decade for Women, with special emphasis on employment, health and education. General Assembly resolution 33/189 further called on the regional preparatory meetings to adopt regional programmes of action containing practical activities and projects based on the priorities of the region.

In implementing this resolution, ECWA, in co-operation with the secretariat of the 1980 world conference, organized a regional preparatory meeting, which was hosted by the Government of Syria, from 10-13 December 1979. Thirty-four delegates participated from the following ECWA countries: Bahrain, Democratic Yemen, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, PLO, Syria, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen Arab Republic. In addition, representatives from the Arab League, its specialized agencies, and United Nations and international organizations attended the meeting.

The agenda of the meeting was based on four basic documents. The first document "Recent Changes and Trends in the Situation of Women in the ECWA Region" (E/ECWA/SDHS/CONF.4/3) reviewed progress achieved in the integration of women in development. The paper concentrated on the sectors of education, employment, and health. It also contained sections on rural and Bedouin women and it described programmes and activities undertaken by the countries of the region in the above fields. (Agenda item 4: Review and Appraisal of Progress made and obstacles encountered in the integration of women in development in Western Asia).

The discussions pointed out 3 major trends. The first trend deals with the development of programmes of women for small-scale, scattered efforts to systematic and well-organized cross-sectoral programming which integrated the objective of women's participation into the framework of comprehensive national development plans. The second trend dealt with the experiences in some countries

in moving away from traditional domestic women activities towards making them an important element in human resource development. A third trend emphasized the importance of the family and mother-child care.

The discussions also pointed to the lack of data and the need for clarifying and unifying concepts and terminologies so that comparative efforts can truly take place. The main impact of the discussion centred around the need to identify practical measures that would achieve women's increased integration and participation in development.

The Regional Preparatory Meeting also reviewed a second document entitled "Regional Programme of Action for Western Asia for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development, Peace, 1981-1985" (E/ECWA/SDHS/CONF.4/2/Rev.2). It constitutes a detailed complement to the Regional Plan of Action for the Integration of Women in Development in Western Asia. The document delineated specific programmes, activities, and projects in various fields, relevant to the integration of women in development, and in particular, in education, health, employment, for implementation during the period 1981-1985.

The third and fourth documents dealt with Palestinian women. In implementing a decision of the 2nd Preparatory Committee of the 1980 World Conference and in fulfillment of General Assembly resolution 34/160 on introducing an agenda item in the 1980 World Conference entitled "The effects of Israeli occupation on the Palestinian Women Inside and Outside the Occupied Territories", ECWA prepared two documents. The first document, entitled "The Social and Economic Conditions of the Palestinian Women Inside and Outside the Occupied Territories" (E/ECWA/SDHS/CONF.4/6) presents detailed information on the conditions of the Palestinian women in lands occupied in 1948, in 1967 and in refugee camps in the host countries. The second document "Special Measures of Assistance to the Palestinian Women" (E/ECWA/SDHS/CONF.4/5/Rev.2) proposes specific activities to assist in improving the conditions of the Palestinian women, with special emphasis on education, employment, and health.

The programme of action and special measures of assistance were adopted by ECWA at the regional preparatory meeting and they were submitted to the preparatory committee of the 1980 world conference as part of its documents.

The Preparatory Meeting also reviewed the activities of ECWA in its work programme on women, with special emphasis on the 19 technical assistance projects that are supported by the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women.

The Regional Preparatory Meeting closed with recommendations to the 1980 World Conference dealing with (1) supporting the endeavours for a New International Economic Order; (2) endorsing technical co-operation for enhancing the self-development and human resources mobilization of the developing countries; (3) organizing international and regional seminars on the participation of women in political action and liberation movements; (4) calling on United Nations organizations to undertake comprehensive study for identifying needs of Palestinian women in the Occupied Territories and to formulate the appropriate programme; (5) calling of United Nations agencies to direct attention to the needs of the Lebanese women in general and women in Southern Lebanon in particular; (6) organizing in 1985 an international conference to review and evaluate conditions of women.

The Regional Preparatory Meeting further recommended to the Preparatory Committee of the 1980 World Conference to adopt Arabic as one of the official working languages of the global conference.

ECWA is in the process of contacting governments to initiate the process of forming their delegations to the 1980 World Conference, to be held in July 1980 in Copenhagen. It is further investigating the holding of a meeting for the delegations prior to the 1980 World Conference in order to examine the Agenda, to study its documents, and to co-ordinate Arab efforts in Copenhagen.
