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**REPORT OF THE FIFTH AFRICAN REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN (1994)
PREPARATORY TO THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE
ON WOMEN (1995)**

Dakar, Senegal, 21-23 November 1994

A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. The fifth African Regional Conference on Women (1994) preparatory to the fourth World Conference on Women (1995), which was organized jointly by the Government of Senegal and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, was held at the International Trade Fair Centre in Dakar, Senegal from 21 to 23 November 1994. The meeting was formally opened and presided over by His Excellency Abdou Diouf, President of the Republic of Senegal. Opening statements at the conference were made by Her Excellency Mrs. Maryam Abacha, First Lady of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Chairperson of the fourth African Regional Conference on Women; Her Majesty Queen Fabiola of Belgium; Mrs. Gertrude Mongella, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and Secretary-General of the fourth World Conference on Women; Mr. Pascal Gayama, Assistant Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU); Mr. Babacar N'Diaye, President of the African Development Bank (ADB); and Mr. Layashi Yaker, United Nations Under Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ECA.

2. Representatives of the following 52 member States of the Commission attended the meeting: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, the Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, the Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, the Sudan, Swaziland, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zaire, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

3. The Conference was attended by 12 observers of the following Member States of the United Nations: Belgium, Canada, Peoples' Republic of China, Denmark, Finland, France, Haiti, Italy, Iran, the Netherlands, Norway, Philippines, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. The Holy See, not a Member of the United Nations, attended as an observer.

4. Representatives of the following United Nations bodies and specialized agencies attended as observers: Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (DPCSD), Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis (DISIPA), United Nations Centre for Human Rights, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Volunteers (UNV), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), International Trade Centre (ITC-UNCTAD/GATT), World Food Programme (WFP), International Labour Organisation (ILO), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Health Organization (WHO), World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

5. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the African Development Bank (ADB) attended as observers.

6. The meeting was attended by observers from the following international and regional organizations: African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS), African Regional Centre for Technology (ARCT), African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development (ACORD), Amnesty International, Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD), Association of African Women Entrepreneurs (AFWE), Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD), Baha'i International Community, Caritas Internationalis, Commonwealth Medical Association (CMA), Commonwealth Secretariat, Development Alternative for Women Network (DAWN), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Environment Development Action in the Third World (ENDA), Ford Foundation, Forum of African Voluntary Development Organisations (FAVDO), Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), Global Coalition for Africa (GCA),

Global Coalition for Environment and Development, Habitat International Coalition (HIC), International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), International Council of Women (ICW), International Federation of Business and Professional Women (IFBPW), International Federation of University Women (IFUW), International Human Rights Law Group, Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Institute for Women, Law and Development (IWLD), Organization of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU), Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern African States (PTA), Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF), Women's Environment and Development Organizations (WEDO), World Association of Girls Guides and Girls Scouts (WAGGGS), World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations (WUCWO) and World Young Women's Christian Association (World YWCA).

7. There were over 100 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) represented.

B. OPENING OF THE MEETING

Opening addresses

8. His Excellency Mr. Abdou Diouf, President of the Republic of Senegal in his opening address wished participants a pleasant stay and thanked ECA, member States and international development partners for their contribution towards the holding of the Conference in Dakar. Given the urgency and relevance of the theme of the Conference, he said that he expected participants to map out a strategy for the advancement of women within the framework of respect of African values and democratic principles.

9. He observed that women were calling for greater participation in the decision-making process at all levels of society than was presently the case. Such demands should be based on constitutional and legal provisions and be seen as a partnership between men and women in various fields, including management of population and natural resources; the transmission and preservation of social, philosophical, linguistic and cultural values; among others.

10. The President noted that women had a crucial role to play in the peace process and this should naturally lead to the establishment of a greater equilibrium in the relationship between men and women. Additionally, the harnessing of the potentials of women as farmers, entrepreneurs and traders should contribute greatly towards economic development in the region. To attain these economic objectives, other inputs should be access to credit, modern technology and training, which are the vital link between the supported and expanded role of women.

11. He underlined that an estimated two-thirds of the illiterate population of Africa were women and stressed that necessary resources should be provided for their education in the interest of all concerned. The availability of expanded educational opportunities to women would be a viable economic undertaking as well as serve to strengthen capacity building for sustainable development. Education of women should be at the heart of the development efforts of African Governments and their development partners.

12. President Diouf said that the fifth African Regional Conference on Women was taking place at a time when Africa was going through social, economic and political crises. To this effect, he said that Africa was mourning its sisters and brothers who were victims of the Rwanda crisis. He underlined that the demands made by women for peace were very legitimate and opportune and that women should be given their rightful roles in peace making and conflict resolution activities. He expressed the wish that women would continue to increase their pressure on the United Nations and on the Organization of African Unity for the preservation of peace among nations.

13. President Diouf wished the Conference every success with the hope that its recommendations would be translated into concrete actions by governments and all development actors. He finally declared the Conference open.

14. In her opening statement, H.E. Maryam Abacha, First Lady of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, observed that the purpose of the Conference was to discuss the problems of women and ways of solving them in preparation for the fourth World Conference on Women to be convened in Beijing, China, in 1995. She accordingly urged the Conference to adopt the African Platform for Action for the objective of accelerating actions for the advancement of women in Africa.

15. The Chairperson of the fourth Regional Conference on Women said that the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies remained relevant to Africa and that the current Conference together with the forthcoming Beijing Conference on Women should renew commitment and determination to redress areas where there had been little progress and consolidate areas of success in the Nairobi Strategies.

16. She pointed out that the slow progress in the advancement of women in Africa caused by such factors as socio-economic and cultural reasons should provide the impetus to mobilize women for participation at the decision and policy-making levels of the public and private sectors. In this regard, she urged OAU to call on its member States to adopt affirmative action for women to effect these requirements.

17. She proposed that as member States prepared for Beijing, emphasis should be directed towards incorporating the gender perspective into national, regional and global development efforts in order to avail development opportunities to all.

18. In view of the widening gap between the rich and the poor nations, she called on the United Nations and its agencies to implement policies that would globalize prosperity instead of poverty which tends to create conditions for instability and violence. In this respect, she called on the United Nations to call for a moratorium on debt repayments or outright cancellation. She also urged the United Nations to declare a Decade for Growth in the Third World during which the issue of debt repayment would be put on hold at no cost to the debtors.

19. In her capacity as a member of the advisory group established by Boutros Boutros-Ghali, United Nations Secretary-General and in view of the Beijing Conference in September 1995, Her Majesty Queen Fabiola of Belgium stated that, in spite of their vital contribution to the well-being of their families and their community and the crucial role they play in the production process, rural women are not as well nourished as men; they work for lower wages or for none at all; and they receive less education and less health care. In addition, they are hampered by obstacles and traditions which for centuries have kept them in a position of inferiority.

20. As was perfectly expressed in the draft African Platform for Action, she stated the following:

(a) There should be greater effort to eliminate old and new forms of discrimination as well as cultural, social, economic and technical obstacles which prevent women from improving their living conditions and which are at the heart of the feminization of poverty which undermines the dignity of the human person. These can be achieved through:

- (i) promotion of access for rural women to education and training, health services, land-ownership and credit facilities by changing legislation and customs so often discriminatory with regard to them;
- (ii) elimination of the ancestral division of work which reserves external activities for men, and for women those that are not remunerated and more difficult to quantify;

- (iii) abolition of the abusive chores which prevent young girls from a very early age onwards from receiving the regular education to which boys have unlimited access;
- (b) Women and children are the first victims of violence; and they experience enormous suffering in wartime and numerous forms of maltreatment in times of peace, as well as being victims of trade which force them into prostitution and make them victims of AIDS;
- (c) The creation of women's associations should be encouraged to help women take up responsibilities in their families, communities and countries, providing them the means, through these associations, to participate directly in the development projects that concern them.

21. She proposed that with regard to development cooperation, there are a number of areas where the international community could sustain Africa's efforts. These would include :

- (a) Collecting gender-differentiated statistics, both at national and international levels and utilizing them in all development projects in order to take fully into account, from the beginning, the specific characteristics of men and women;
- (b) Concentrating on sustainable rural development by creating income-earning opportunities so that people can become self-reliant and invest in services which will produce spin-offs and multiple effects for the short, medium and long term, both for women and men;
- (c) Involving women systematically in national and international strategies that concern them since they know best their specific needs and the most appropriate means of responding to them. It must be avoided in any event that women should be obliged to accept action plans imposed by international organizations and in which they would not recognize themselves;
- (d) Not giving preference to emergency aid at the risk of neglecting a strategy of sustainable development; and
- (e) Increasing and coordinating the financial resources allocated to projects aimed at the promotion of rural women and women in general, at national as well as international level and at governmental as well as non-governmental level.

22. She concluded by underlining the importance of acknowledging the dignity of all human beings in their diversity and their complementarity in order to establish real peace and equality and hoped that where these qualities have ceased to exist in the African region, they soon should be restored.

23. Mrs. Gertrude Mongella, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and Secretary-General of the fourth World Conference on Women expressed gratitude to the Government and people of Senegal and ECA for their work in preparing for the Conference. She stated that the Conference concluded the series of wide-ranging consultations in all five regions of the world which were essential to the preparatory process of the World Conference.

24. She informed the meeting that the fifth African Regional Conference on Women was expected to provide a Platform for Action in Africa, which would clearly spell out the actions needed to bring about the advancement of the African continent in which women and men were recognized as equal partners. She underlined that the African woman must be given access to resources such as land, capital and technology in order to increase her productive capacity. She further needed basic education including training in the skills which she needed to improve the quality of her life. Moreover, women needed to be given opportunities for decision making at all levels of public and private life.

25. She stressed that all the preparations for the Beijing Conference are geared for action to change the situation of women in the world, based on the following principles :

(a) The holistic and life-cycle approach which recognizes that every stage of a woman's life from childhood to old age is important, has its own needs and is interlinked with the others;

(b) Women's issues should be viewed as societal issues not as women's affairs to be dealt with by women alone. Therefore, men and women have to work together to avoid creating a situation where the women are of today and the men of yesterday; and

(c) Commitment and accountability by governments, NGOs and individuals to the advancement of women based on nationally and internationally agreed action.

26. Mr. Pascal Gayama, Assistant Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity noted that before the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies on the empowerment of women, Senegal had proposed the establishment of a bicameral African institution where women would manage public affairs in an all-female assembly with similar privileges like all-male assemblies. He proposed that the Platform for Action under consideration should determine priorities, programmes and modalities for their implementation as well as access to resources and the exercise of the related freedoms.

27. He observed that the implementation of the Nairobi Strategies had not produced the expected results due to the lack of commitment among African countries. He further underlined that structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) had introduced hardships as they did not take into consideration the human and social dimensions of development.

28. The OAU Assistant Secretary-General proposed in this context that Africa should establish appropriate mechanisms to translate into concrete action the need for a growing interdependence between States and peoples in order to reduce the overdependence of African economies on external factors. He recalled that this objective was included in the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community which was a framework for the development of subregional and regional trade and integration. A special protocol would be included in the Treaty to highlight the concerns of women. In conclusion, he stated that OAU would be associated with all efforts intended to implement various development strategies, including the African Platform for Action.

29. Mr. Babacar N'Diaye, President of the ADB Group, noted that the Conference formed part of a series of meetings and consultations which had led to the conclusion that while many African Governments had officially adopted the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies with the aim of improving the lot of women, much still remained to be done to effect a significant, qualitative change in the lives of African women. Indeed, despite the contribution of women to production, they barely obtained 10 per cent of the revenue and only one per cent of the assets.

30. He further observed that SAPs had achieved some progress in certain countries but essentially higher economic growth rates would be required to secure tangible results in the struggle to combat poverty in Africa. Accordingly, he urged the Conference to determine ways of tackling this problem which affected women most in the continent. He informed the Conference regarding ADB's initiatives in promoting the economic empowerment of women. He urged other financing institutions to take concerted action along the same lines if tangible results were to be achieved. He further suggested that effective cooperative mechanisms among these institutions should be established in order to promote the welfare of African women.

31. He expressed hope that the Dakar Conference would provide a solid launching pad for qualitative lift-off in Beijing. ADB stood prepared to work with all concerned institutions and organizations in giving

shape to the initiatives that would be the outcome of the Conference. Banking on African women was investing in the equitable and lasting future development of the continent.

32. Mr. Layashi Yaker, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ECA, thanked H.E. President Diouf and the people of Senegal for hosting the fifth African Regional Conference on Women. He also thanked the Government and people of Senegal for the warm hospitality accorded to all the participants. He paid tribute to Senegal's role in the liberation of Africa, in the advancement of women, as well as its support for and collaboration on United Nations initiatives.

33. Mr. Yaker observed that the eminent persons present at the Conference were an indication of the importance women's matters had assumed at the highest levels of government in Africa. He welcomed the presence of the women of Eritrea, Namibia and South Africa at the Conference and paid tribute to their participation in the struggle to liberate their respective countries.

34. He said that the objective of the Conference was to re-examine the conditions of women thirty years after the independence of many countries, ten years after Nairobi and five years after Abuja. During this period, awareness had been raised among legislators and policy makers on the need to improve women's condition. Obstacles to women's development had been identified, and remedies to ensure their participation in development proposed. Now was the time to articulate actionable programmes and measures underlying medium- and long-term objectives together in addition to finding ways and means for their implementation.

35. Mr. Yaker emphasized that peace was a precondition for development; however, he noted that peace and development could not be attained if women who were part of the population were marginalized, impoverished and disenfranchised. Equity was therefore the requirement for true development and it was imperative to forge solidarity between men and women to enable them to meet the common goals of development.

36. With regard to human rights, he exhorted women to be in the forefront in the search for strategies for building confidence in and among themselves with a view to promoting their human and civil rights as well as increasing their participation in the political arena.

37. He drew the attention of the Conference to the draft African Platform for Action prepared by the Technical Committee of the Conference for consideration and adoption by the Ministers. The Platform prescribed strategies to be pursued by all development agents, including governments and NGOs, bilateral and multilateral development organizations and other international organizations in their efforts to promote the economic and social empowerment of women. He urged all development actors to commit themselves to the successful implementation of the programmes and strategies of the Platform. He similarly urged women themselves to be in the forefront in efforts required to implement the Platform for Action.

Election of officers (agenda item 2)

38. The Conference elected the following members of the Bureau:

Chairperson:	Senegal
First Vice-Chairperson:	Tunisia
Second Vice-Chairperson:	Ethiopia
Third Vice-Chairperson:	Botswana
Rapporteur:	Cameroon

39. In order to facilitate the work of the Rapporteur, the Ministers elected five "friends of the rapporteur", namely Gabon, Guinea, Kenya, Mauritania and Namibia to assist her.

C. AGENDA

40. On 21 November 1994, the Conference adopted the following agenda:
1. Opening ceremony.
 2. Election of officers.
 3. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work.
 4. General debate on the assessment of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward- looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (NFLS).
 5. Consideration and adoption of the Report of the Meeting of Experts and the amended draft African Platform for Action and resolution.
 6. Any other business.
 7. Adoption of the report.
 8. Closure of the meeting

D. ACCOUNT OF PROCEEDINGS

Messages by invited eminent persons

41. After the opening of the Conference by H.E. President Diouf, statements were made by five eminent persons: H.E. Mrs. Nana Konadu Rawlings, WHO Global Commission on Women's Health; H.E. Mrs. L. Ndadaye, former First Lady of Burundi; the Honourable Mrs Winnie Mandela, MP, Deputy Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology of South Africa; Mrs. Ellen Sirleaf Johnson, UNDP Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for Africa; and Dr. Achola Pala Okeyo, Chief, Africa Section of UNIFEM.

42. H.E. Mrs. Nana Konadu Rawlings, First Lady of the Republic of Ghana and President of the 31st December Women's Movement, spoke on behalf of the WHO Global Commission on Women's Health. Referring to the status of the social and economic welfare of African women, she said that concern for the victims of social inequity should go beyond mere data collection and problem identification. Given the conditionality of health for development, preventive health care should focus on the cases of teenage marriages, teenage pregnancies and teenage maternal deaths. It was time that governments and international and national authorities found the means, either through legislation or otherwise, to stop the practice of teenage marriages as girls lacked the level of mental and physical development and education to cope with the demands of married life. The fight against HIV/AIDS should also receive priority. As the report from Ghana indicated, 71 per cent of AIDS cases in Ghana were women driven into prostitution to make ends meet. The Conference should propose effective programmes for decreasing the spread of AIDS and protecting women and society against the scourge. She further pointed out that most African health services were male-dominated at top professional and administrative levels and were thus in the hands of persons who were not at the same level of health risks and who did not always appreciate the dynamics of the problems and the solutions. She called on the Conference to formulate policies and programmes by which African women's medical training could be facilitated to create the necessary gender balance in health care.

43. She further stated that virtually all African countries accepted structural adjustment policies and their attendant conditionalities without proper appraisal of the negative social costs impacting on the poor and on

women. In the particularly topical case of women's health, the proposals to be submitted at Beijing should include planning data on basic health statistics such as infant and maternal mortality rates, teenage pregnancy rates, data on family planning services and usage, and data on breast cancer, AIDS, and other communicable and fatal diseases. Just as the WHO had used globally coordinated programmes to successfully combat killer diseases such as smallpox, globally coordinated programmes on women's health could be instituted for similar results.

44. Referring to the impact of modern life on health, she pointed out that as Africa acquired and consumed the products of modernization, health afflictions from water and environmental pollution, cholesterol, other cardiac problems and diabetes were being added to old ones such as malaria, dysentery and typhoid. She emphasized that genuine improvements in the world's treatment of the issue of women's health could be expected only where and when women became direct participants in the formulation and implementation of the policies and programmes affecting them. Projects for providing safe drinking water, basic education, primary health care and family planning had to be implemented at the micro-community or grass-roots level. Participation in such programmes provided women with the opportunity to express their views and feelings, and to influence the problem-solving process not merely as beneficiaries but as managers. It also boosted their confidence in their own ability to improve their life-styles and socio-economic welfare. Both the Regional Conference and the Beijing Conference should be seen as expressions of the current democratization trend. Health-care democracy meant that the most affected social group (women) had equal participation in decision making.

45. In conclusion, she stressed that men had nothing to fear from such democratic trends. It was her hope that professional and more qualified participants would formulate scientific proposals on the issues she had raised.

46. H.E. Mrs. Ndadaye stated that the theme of the Conference, "Equality, Development and Peace", was timely in view of the situation prevailing in Africa, namely various socio-political conflicts, a general state of under-development and the existence of traditional practices against women. Politicians are being requested to integrate projects for the improvement of the status of women in development programmes. Women should demonstrate greater determination in overcoming these obstacles and should convince men about the need to be granted equal status.

47. She also made reference to the experience of Burundi regarding the ability of women in the peace process. She stated that the first woman prime minister in Africa, Mrs. Sylvie Kinigi, demonstrated a shining example in the restoration of peace, tolerance and confidence between all strata of Burundi society involved in the civil conflict during her tenure of office as Prime Minister. In that respect, increasing numbers of women's associations in Burundi are calling for peace, democracy, unity and development. Indeed, the problems besetting Africa required women to show greater unity and a sense of the real and potential contributions they could make to the resolution of those problems.

48. African women should maintain extensive contacts to discuss their common problems. They possess a formidable moral authority which should enable them to achieve integration in all spheres of decision making, together with the support of women's associations and of African and global solidarity. She thanked the international community, religious bodies, personalities and civil organizations for their constant support to countries in distress, especially their support for the most adversely affected population.

49. She concluded by thanking the Government and people of Senegal, the Executive Secretary of ECA, the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Women as well as the organizers of the Dakar Conference for their material and intellectual contribution to the organization of the Conference.

50. In her statement, the Honourable Winnie Mandela, MP, Deputy Minister of Arts, Culture and Science and Technology of South Africa, noted that while racial discrimination might have been motivated

by political and economic greed, gender oppression had no rationale at all. Excessively spoilt men routinely expected the comfort and support of their women. The chronic arrogance, blind selfishness and prolific insolence that had been nurtured in the African man from birth were complicated by the fact that women had a dual struggle with race and gender.

51. There was a lack of consensus on the severity of gender discrimination and its attendant repressions. An intricate dilemma, which was peculiar to Africa, was that its own race was undergoing a rapid and somewhat uncontrolled cultural transition, wherein traditional values and norms were constantly changing. The reference points for conduct and behaviour were consequently elusive. It was a failure on the part of women not to have taken up the responsibility to determine and lead this transition. Women were the principal custodians of family and societal values and norms. It was therefore incumbent upon them to set the rules and to manage and control this change.

52. African political party structures had created, copied or introduced the women's leagues in which aspiring candidates for senior party positions invariably tried to secure a constituency. Almost invariably, whenever the league provided them with the backing, they got the vote and ran. From this, it was clear that some of women's misery were partly self-inflicted and partly due to naivety.

53. The few women that ever make it to cabinet were usually assigned to the lesser tasks of welfare, community development, culture, cooperatives, while portfolios like defence, industry, commerce, foreign affairs, economic planning and finance were usually considered the preserve of male ministers.

54. In the international agencies and institutions such as United Nations organizations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and others, there was a growing sense of guilt if not insecurity, about the situation of women in development and particularly the impact of gender attitudes in the socio-economic development process. Rarely do these institutions consider the appointment of women to manage the key socio-economic development process itself, which would help achieve the empowerment of women.

55. The prospects for women in business would continue to pose as the most difficult challenge facing society. The attitudes were impervious to pressure or influence. When regard was taken of the fact that women account for the higher proportion of consumer spending, when the culture of resistance developed into boycotts of departments and businesses, women were found to command a formidable weapon in the form of purchasing power.

56. Hon. Mandela concluded by observing that with mass sensitization and education of women about the tools and opportunities available to them at all the formative stages of attitudes and prejudices, they could nip the undesirable traits in the male version of the species homo sapiens.

57. Mrs. Ellen Sirleaf Johnson, UNDP Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for Africa, stressed that most of the problems besetting women in Africa were increasing the "feminization of poverty". Women were assuming the responsibility of being the sole income earner and contributed more than men to the income of their households. Yet, such women were often bypassed by the extension services and lacked the inputs crucial to their primary source of income.

58. She observed that African women worked longer hours on lower paying jobs than men and were unemployed at a higher rate. Moreover, women's level of formal education was lower than men and most women lacked adequate health services. They also faced a biased legal system and were largely bypassed by financial and other services. Cultural practices reinforced this deeply rooted gender-based discrimination in Africa.

59. She informed the Conference that UNDP, in full partnership with African women, was promoting a new development approach that was a paradigm which placed people at the centre of development and

which needed women as full partners in the development of their countries. Defined as sustainable human development (SHD), it reflected the Conference themes of equality, development and peace and its pillars reflected the critical areas of concern identified in the African Platform for Action. It sought to promote a clear balance between the needs of present and future generations so that investments in human and natural resources could ensure the fulfilment of tomorrow's needs. She pointed out, however, that for SHD to become a viable strategy, dramatic changes were needed in the existing patterns of income distribution within and between countries, as well as in current patterns of consumption and production, social behaviour and political will.

60. In opening up economic opportunities for women, UNDP had thus adopted a gender-in-development approach in all programmes and activities for mainstreaming women into social and economic development, through the small-holder agricultural sector and non-farm, income-generating micro- and small-scale enterprises.

61. Support services included credit schemes and improved availability of energy, safe drinking water and sanitation. To promote capacity building and programme development, UNDP formed partnerships with African policy-oriented research and training institutions and with NGOs in economic and development planning at the sectoral, country and inter-country levels, so they could in turn provide services to governments and organizations.

62. UNDP staff were being trained to use gender analysis as an analytical tool and framework. In addition, as a precursor to the Beijing Conference, UNDP's Human Development Report would be devoted to issues on women.

63. Legal and social limitations which prevented women from owning and inheriting property, access to credit and from receiving full protection under the law had to be lifted, largely through women's own efforts in influencing their governments and with programme support from donor agencies. Social norms, cultural traditions and attitudes had to be addressed in the home and family, by individuals and by constituencies.

64. In conclusion, she pointed out that the root causes of the problems besetting women in Africa were known but now specific actions had to be formulated. She invited participants to examine how relevant and useful UNDP's strategy was for achieving the goals identified.

65. In her statement, Dr. Achola Pala Okeyo, Chief, Africa Section of UNIFEM, said that the fifth African Regional Conference on Women was both historic and strategic, in that it was an "end-of-century" opportunity to formulate a development agenda for the twenty-first century, as well as an opportunity to define strategies for Beijing and beyond. She pointed out that the African Platform for Action coming out of Dakar had to be both visionary and prospective, from the point of view of women.

66. Deploring the number of deaths and displaced people, wars and conflicts in Africa, she said that women had taken a stand against the militarization of Africa at the expense of development and wanted conflict-resolution and peace-building, accountability, partnership, leadership and good governance. In highlighting her organization's role, she stated that UNIFEM's sole mandate was to provide technical assistance to women and advocate for gender equality. Gender issues were also being given increasing importance in national and international policy making and programming, as women claimed their rights as human beings and citizens. Gender should no longer pose a barrier to women or to development. Both grass-roots women's groups, networks and professional women's associations were now combating socio-economic and environmental crises, as well as seeking law reforms and other fundamental changes for promoting development.

67. Referring to solutions to the problems identified at the Conference, she urged African governments to strengthen women's work in the informal sector which, in reality, was Africa's private sector, and which had to point the way to privatization on Africa's terms. Technology, information and finance should support artisans and the processors of local African food products. Democracy and commitment to implementation of international covenants and conventions should guarantee gender equity and economic empowerment at the national level. In conclusion, she reaffirmed that UNIFEM stood ready to support implementation of the African Platform for Action.

General debate on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (NFLS) (agenda item 4)

68. During the debate on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (NFLS), the Conference noted that the three themes of the fourth World Conference on Women, that is "Action for Equality, Development and Peace", should be interpreted and implemented within the African context. Equality should be implemented within the context of stability and harmony of the couple and the family unit which is the societal base; development, on the other hand, should be promoted within the framework of respect for African values. Peace must be promoted not only at international and national levels, but also at the level of individuals, both men and women on whom its promotion is based. The Conference also noted the importance of women and men working together for the sustainable achievement of women's advancement and development in general.

69. The fifth African Regional Conference on Women was viewed as an important opportunity for African nations to share experiences. As the Conference considered the implementation of the NFLS, it noted that in some countries progress had been made in such social areas as increased enrolment of girls, achievement of higher literacy rates for women, rise in the rate of employment of women in the formal sector, liberalization of the freedom of the press and association with the introduction of the multi-party system, as well as sensitization of women to the importance of political participation. Unfortunately, it was also noted that in most countries the rate of maternal and child mortality had increased, as well as family instability as manifested by high divorce rates and single-parent households, inadequate access to resources and political participation and lack of comprehensive national strategies for the promotion of women.

70. Education and training for women were considered to be strongly correlated with global sustainable development. They also facilitate access to all other fundamental rights which are one of the critical areas in the African Platform for Action. Education is an indispensable tool in the development of human resources and access to new technologies that promote the development process. Increased access to education and training for women must therefore be incorporated in national policies and plans.

71. It is also necessary that quality education be directed towards youth in order to prepare them for future leadership. In this respect, their educational programmes should be creative and forward-looking, focusing not only on the most current issues, but also preparing them for the competitive global world of high technology before they become immersed in it. In particular, the potential role of youth in peace making in their communities, as well as in the general community and national development programmes, should be promoted.

72. The Conference noted that the promotion of gender equality in the entire life cycle of the woman is an important objective in the context of the advancement of women. In addition, girls and women's health needs, as well as protection of young girls from violence against their bodies or armed conflicts, should be a preoccupation of all actors in development. Their high drop-out rates must also be contained through measures that address the root causes of the low priority accorded to their education. Thus, sociological and cultural stereotypes that limit the development of the girl-child must be eliminated and more resources allocated for the improvement of her status. The Conference stressed the need to follow up the implementation

of the goals adopted at the World Summit for Children and the International Conference for Assistance to African Children.

73. With regard to health, the Conference noted that both men and women should be sensitized on family planning and AIDS both of which had serious implications on women's welfare. Noting the high cost of health maintenance, the Conference recommended the creation of mutual aid groups to alleviate the situation.

74. With reference to the issue of poverty, food security and women, the Conference stressed the importance of access to food relief and to rehabilitation of the population in crises, and its integration into the development process. This is an objective that is emphasized in the African Platform for Action. Women's role of providing and managing food resources as well as their access to employment opportunities and appropriate knowledge and technology were also emphasized.

75. To alleviate the general social situation of women, the 20/20 initiative whereby donor governments should commit 20 per cent of their development assistance to basic social services and developing countries 20 per cent of their GDP to education, primary health care, family planning, water and sanitation was recommended.

76. The Conference supported the idea of creating a follow-up mechanism for the implementation of the African Platform for Action which would emanate from member States' recommendations. Thus, the Platform itself contained the framework within which national strategies and national machineries could organize to coordinate, monitor and evaluate implementation. Such an action-oriented mechanism included not only member States but also various regional organizations and should also have the mandate to mobilize funds for implementation.

77. This mechanism should be a valuable institution for facilitating permanent consultations among African leaders involved with promotion of solidarity among African women and should be free of sectarian influence. Various countries expressed the need for a coordinated approach in order to profit from each other's experiences, and for commitment of human, financial and technical resources.

78. One country suggested the setting up of an African women's watch-dog association or committee to assist with follow-up at the national and regional level. The role of NGOs and of youth should not be neglected and the importance of effective information dissemination and networking was also emphasized.

79. The Conference also suggested that task forces, or committees of concerned individuals and organizations should operate at the national and subregional levels. Several countries pointed out the need for a clear focus on issues and methods in order to avoid vague or diffused efforts.

80. Various United Nations specialized agencies and other multilateral bodies pledged to support a follow-up mechanism. The Conference also noted that where national machineries were weak from lack of human and financial resources, assistance should be given for full national participation in and implementation of the African Platform for Action.

81. The Conference highlighted the emergence of the African Economic Community and the priority to develop complementarity in order to be viable partners with other regional blocs. This is contingent on agreement of the international community on improving terms of trade, improvement in the debt situation and finally, flow from North to South. In addition, common strategies of development are required to balance stability, democracy and development. Within this context, women should be encouraged to participate fully in the economy.

82. The Conference called for socio-economic cooperation within the subregions in agriculture and industry and the necessity to exchange produce, goods, expertise and ideas in order to develop complementarity.

83. The Conference repeatedly called for debt cancellation as a prerequisite to sustainable development and cited the negative social and economic impact of SAPs. The effect of SAPs on women has resulted in unemployment, poverty and marginalization.

84. The Conference called for the planning of resource mobilization to operationalize the Platform through meetings of ministers, OAU, United Nations institutions and partners in development, to discuss modalities of a follow-up mechanism. Within this context, the establishment of a credit system for women and youth should also be discussed.

Consideration and adoption of the Report of the Meeting of Experts and the draft African Platform for Action and resolution (agenda item 5)

85. The Conference considered the Report of the Meeting of Experts (document E/ECA/ACW/RC.V/EXP/7) and adopted it with minor amendments.

86. The Ministers debated at length on the draft African Platform for Action and made several amendments to the document. The Nigerian delegation expressed its reservation on paragraph 13. Subsequently, the document was adopted together with the resolution for its implementation. The adopted African Platform for Action bears reference number E/ECA/ACW/RC.V/CM/3.

Any other business (agenda item 6)

87. Under this agenda item, no other business was raised.

Adoption of the report (agenda item 7)

88. The Rapporteur, Madam Yaou Issatou, Minister for Social and Women Affairs of Cameroon, presented the report of the meeting for adoption by the Ministers. The report was adopted without amendment.

Closure of the meeting (agenda item 8)

89. Under this agenda item, statements were made by the Executive Secretary of ECA, the Assistant Secretary-General of OAU and the representative of ADB. They all thanked and congratulated the participants for working tirelessly and with dedication to make the fifth African Regional Conference on Women a success. They urged the participants to spare no efforts in the implementation of the African Platform for Action adopted by the Conference.

90. On behalf of the participants, the Hon. Anna Makinda, Minister for Community Development, Women Affairs and Children of the United Republic of Tanzania, moved a vote of thanks to H.E. President Diouf, the Government and people of Senegal, for their warm reception and the support that had been given to all participants to ensure the success of the Conference.

91. H.E. Dr. Ndioro Ndiaye, Minister for Women, Children and Family Affairs of Senegal, thanked all participants for their exceptional attendance and their active participation in the deliberations of the Conference. She wished all participants a safe return journey to their respective countries.

92. She then declared the fifth African Regional Conference on Women officially closed.