

AFRICAN WOMEN



DEVELOPMENT

*Selected
statements by
ADEBAYO ADEDEJI*

**ECAC
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S4645**



**UNITED NATIONS
Economic Commission
for Africa
1989**

23020

AFRICAN WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

SELECTED STATEMENTS

BY

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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA



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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA
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PREFACE

The issue of women in African development has been a permanent item on the agenda of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) since 1975. This is in recognition of the fact that by virtue of their constituting more than half of the total African population and their making tremendous contributions to agriculture, particularly food production, women should have a pivotal influence in formulating and implementing decisions of today and determining directions for the future of the continent. Yet, the reality is that they have, in many African societies, been marginalized. Their pre-eminent role in economy and society has not been recognized, particularly in terms of access to the benefits of development, however little of this there has been.

Women in Africa, both in themselves and in the various functions they perform, have been plagued with many and varied problems which must be squarely and urgently addressed. ECA has, through discrete and concrete actions, attempted to do this. Dispersed programme elements relating to women were consolidated and assigned to the African Training and Research Centre for Women (ATRCW), established in 1975 as the focal point for women activities in the secretariat. The Africa Regional Co-ordinating Committee for the Integration of Women in Development (ARCC), together with the subregional organs for women-in-development in the five ECA Multinational Programming and Operational Centres (MULPOCs) subregions have, within the scope of their various mandates, supported the activities of ATRCW. The sum total of these efforts has been an increasing awareness of women's issues at the regional, subregional and national levels and the launching of projects and similar actions for the improvement of the conditions of women in Africa. These initiatives are beginning to bear fruit although a great deal still remains to be done to achieve full integration of women in the development process and to give them their rightful place in our society.

This volume contains a selection of speeches on the subject of women-in-development delivered by the ECA Executive Secretary, Professor Adebayo Adedeji, from 1977 to date. They provide, first, historical perspectives on the evolution of the involvement by ECA in activities related to women, within the framework of other activities undertaken. Second, they discuss the situation of women in Africa in its many dimensions, particularly problem-areas which require organized attention. Third, they reveal the thinking of Professor Adedeji, over time, on what should be done to enhance the position of women in African society. Finally, they provide guidelines for future actions by the

increasing number of international, governmental and non-governmental organizations and bodies working in this field, bearing in mind the changing contexts and environment within which programmes should be developed.

Given the above, it is timely for this collection to be issued during the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of ARCC - which is itself the result of one of the many initiatives taken by ECA in establishing a co-ordinating mechanism for the monitoring of ECA's programme of work on women-in-development. Members of ARCC - all of whom are women - are drawn from all the different regions of Africa. It is hoped that this publication will be of use to policy makers and practitioners, researchers and the general reader alike.

CHAPTER ONE

REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGIONAL PLAN OF ACTION ON THE INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

STATEMENT TO THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND WORLD PLANS
OF ACTION FOR THE INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

27 SEPTEMBER 1977
NOUAKCHOTT, MAURITANIA

When the year 1975 was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly as the International Women's Year, it was the expectation of that world assembly, that the Year would be devoted to an intensified action, by all member States of the United Nations, the specialized agencies and other organs of the United Nations, as well as by intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, towards ensuring the full integration of women in the total development effort. It was the expectation that this goal would be achieved especially by emphasizing women's responsibilities and their important roles in economic, social and cultural development - at the national, regional and international levels - particularly during the second United Nations Development Decade.

It was also the expectation that the regional economic commissions, in concert with their respective member States, would develop and elaborate concrete plans and programmes of action towards the achievement of the objectives set out in the proclamation of the General Assembly for the commemoration of the International Women's Year.

It is a well-known fact in international circles that the Declaration on International Women's Year was very well received by all Governments in the African region, without exception. Many African countries undertook special projects in observance of the Year. Most African Heads of State made proclamations including practical actions to be undertaken at the national and local levels. According to the latest information on hand, no less than 25 national commissions, bureaux, committees or councils on women and development have since been established. What is more, national women's organizations and governments have held many seminars and training courses, from local through national levels, in order to stimulate awareness of and participation in the activities of the national commissions, bureaux and councils. In some countries, policies and projects for the promotion of women employed in the private and traditional sectors and in the civil service have been established and are vigorously being implemented.

Some other countries have made special efforts to encourage women to enter into political and decision-making positions in government, by appointing women as ministers, party executives, ambassadors, members of parliament and so on. A review of legislation is being undertaken in a number of African countries, in order to eliminate those which discriminate against women and to emphasize those which recognize any special needs of women and children.

It is also very gratifying for me to note that research and action programmes are progressively being directed by our African Governments to

women in our rural areas, towards the upgrading of their economic and social tasks. This is being done through various aided self-help schemes which include the provision of improved water supplies, appropriate village technology, functional education and training, especially in agriculture, co-operatives and handicrafts and in small businesses. Programmes for literacy and adult education, as well as those for increased enrollment of girls in formal education are being intensified by many African Governments. In all African countries, without any exception, information and mass education programmes have been arranged through radio, television and the press, and/or through grass-root level village workers and animators.

These activities of African Governments and of women's organizations within our region have undoubtedly stimulated a general awareness and some specific actions within the different countries of the region. On the international level, the impact of the various regional and international activities has equally been very significant. To begin with, the year 1971 saw the establishment in ECA of a very modest Women's Programme Unit within the Human Resources Development Division, with the assistance of the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). And, when in 1972, the twenty-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 1975 as International Women's Year, my secretariat intensified its activities for the promotion of women's full integration in the development of their countries and of the African region.

The African Training and Research Centre for Women (ATRCW) was inaugurated in March 1975, as a long range effort to assist our member States of the Commission in meeting the crucial needs of women. Our plan to establish a Women's Centre had earlier been endorsed in a resolution by the ECA Conference of Ministers, meeting in Nairobi, in February 1975. The establishment of the Centre, during International Women's Year, was very significant as it constituted one of the Commission's major activities for the Year, and brought to reality a need long expressed by African women themselves, for a regional centre to cater for the needs of women. The Centre was established as a co-operative venture, in close partnership with the United Nations Headquarters Center for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, FAO, UNICEF and ILO, as well as with the material assistance of a number of bilateral donor and voluntary agencies.

I do not wish to cause any embarrassment to any one here present, but I seek your indulgence to specify further that the donor government and voluntary agencies include the Governments of Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands, the Danish International Development Agency,

the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), USAID, the Rockefeller Foundation, the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), ZONTA International, the Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG), the Ford Foundation and the International Women's Year Committee of Finland. The funds so generously donated are increasingly being put into projects identified by countries themselves.

The activities of the Centre, which have greatly expanded over the past two and a half years include: in-service training and apprenticeship facilities; organization of the African Women's Development Task Force; applied research, production and dissemination of information and resource materials for promoting the advancement of women in all sectors of the society. Among the subject-areas included in the activities of the Centre the following feature very prominently: food and nutrition, including nutritional policy and programmes, food distribution, storage and preservation; family size in relation to the quality of life; small-scale businesses and industries; management of family resources, village technology and application of labour-saving and improved devices for the farm, market and home; up-grading of wage-employed women and promotion of communication and organizational skills.

In response to the recommendations of the ECA/FAO/SIDA Regional Seminar on Home Economics Development Planning, held in Addis Ababa in March 1969, the Centre has also been sponsoring national training workshops for trainers in programmes to improve the quality of rural life.

These workshops are intended to assist member States and voluntary agencies in the development of qualified teaching staff in the fields of home economics and other family and rural-oriented programmes including national planning, nutrition, co-operatives, agriculture, handicrafts, small-scale industries and other income-generating activities, village technology, child spacing, home management, family life education and communication. FAO, UNICEF and the Governments of Belgium and the Federal Republic of Germany, provided most of the support for the workshops, together with substantial inputs from the host countries.

In response to recommendations of various regional and international meetings on the role of women and Africa's Plan of Action, on the need to establish government machinery to ensure the full participation of women in national development and international co-operation, the Centre has conducted three-day seminars in several individual member States. The seminars are intended to bring together representatives of governments, national women's organizations, as well as voluntary and private agencies, to consider the

significance and role of national commissions and women's bureaux, and the possibility of establishing them in the individual countries.

A very significant feature of the Centre's programme is the establishment of the African Women's Development Volunteer Task Force. The Task Force is a volunteer corps of African women who have the relevant skills and experiences, and who are willing to offer their services to their needy sisters in other countries of the region. The Centre is responsible for stimulating interest in the project, identifying needs and potential volunteers to meet these needs, and for the overall co-ordination of the project.

The achievements which I have just enumerated, though not exhaustive, are impressive indeed. I am, however, the first to admit that what we have so far succeeded in achieving is merely intended to scratch the surface and stimulate awareness of some general and specific needs. Very much more remains to be done; for example, hunger, malnutrition, illiteracy, lack of health facilities and necessary supportive services are still the rule in the majority of our rural areas. School enrollments are far lower for girls than for boys and opportunities for vocational and on-the-job training for girls are still very few both in the traditional and in the modern sectors. In the employment sector, the bulk of women are still engaged in marginal self-employment because of lack of education and training while the majority of those in wage employment occupy low-paid and low-status jobs. Despite the existence of equality in law, African women still suffer under the pretext of traditions, both in the family and in the public sectors. In those countries still under minority rule, African women are doubly disadvantaged - they are discriminated against because of their race and because they are women.

Furthermore, in most parts of our region, the tasks which the rural woman is expected to carry out, and the skills for these tasks, are very many; yet she receives very little help, if any at all, to acquire the necessary skills. For example, she is expected to eliminate malnutrition from her family, through increasing the output and diversification of food crops on the farm, so to improve the value of food on the family table; but agricultural extension services, credit and marketing assistance frequently do not reach her.

She is expected to supply the family fuel and water, as well as convey farm produce to market; but there are few potorage devices to help her, or programmes to bring water and fuel within her reach.

She is expected to store and process surplus food for hungry seasons; but because of lack of appropriate knowledge, her methods perforce remain primitive and inefficient, resulting in heavy losses.

She is expected to obtain the best prices and bargains in the local market; but she does not often have access to producer or consumer co-operatives, nor does she have any access to government marketing schemes or consumer education. And, in many instances, she is expected to take complete responsibility for the economic and social welfare of the family, and for the management of the farm as well, in cases where the husband is absent or dead; but she has little or no training for this task.

Thus, while rural women in general have the major responsibility for lifting their families out of their poverty, yet they themselves are often deprived of access to pertinent knowledge and the tools of development.

But African societies are changing; and African Governments are actively seeking and planning purposeful economic and social change. Through development plans, they are endeavouring to provide increasing opportunities to all people for better life. To raise levels of living, they have all formulated national policies and programmes for education, vocational and technical training, employment, health, nutrition, housing and so on. And changes are beginning to filter down to the masses of people who live in the rural areas, at the mercy of nature, and who have in the past constituted the class of the underprivileged majority.

All of us realize that we are only at the beginning of a long struggle, since attitudes of societies die hard and cannot be changed in a day. It is with the objective of assessing critically any progress made in the implementation of our plans and to plan more realistically for the future that we have come together at this Conference.

I can assure you at this final juncture that the Economic Commission for Africa stands ready and willing, as the regional arm of the United Nations, to back up and assist its member States in their endeavours. ECA can offer a variety of services concerned with the creation of national machinery for the further integration of women in the development process. We can offer technical assistance in the training of key personnel at the national and subregional levels. We can assist with project design, with training activities, with the organization of pilot projects and with the provision of technical information.

I do sincerely trust that I also voice the sentiments of our friends in the international community, both governmental and non-governmental, that they too will continue to back us up and support our endeavours at the regional and national levels.

This Conference can be an important step towards a new era for women in Africa, towards a new economic order and towards a better life for our people in general. I should like to conclude by adding my own personal conviction that such goals can indeed be achieved through the devotion and dedication of the participants here, today, and of their fellow women and men at home who are actively joining in the contemporary struggle for development and the advancement of women in Africa and everywhere, in concert with men.

CHAPTER TWO

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE AFRICA REGIONAL CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR THE INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT: FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS TO THE NOUAKCHOTT REGIONAL CONFERENCE

STATEMENT AT THE INAUGURAL SESSION OF THE AFRICA REGIONAL
CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR THE INTEGRATION OF WOMEN
IN DEVELOPMENT

RABAT, MOROCCO
14 MARCH 1979

In many ways this meeting is of historic significance. It is taking place during the twenty-first anniversary of ECA's founding. It is also the year in which the ECA programme for women is attaining its full institutional maturity, culminating in the establishment of this important regional body to plan and guide its work. It has taken many years of hard work on the part of my secretariat to realize this objective. Thanks to the vision and support given by the women of the region at various meetings, this regional summit structure has finally been achieved. At this stage, I should also like to pay a special tribute to the many energetic daughters of Africa whose guidance and perseverance have facilitated the formulation of operational programmes of varied activities at the national, subregional and regional levels, under the auspices of ECA. It is my expectation that, at this meeting, the chairpersons of the five MULPOC-based subregional committees for women and development, will be afforded the chance of elaborating upon the problems and the rationale behind the programmes formulated in their respective subregions.

Many of you will recall the Mauritania Regional Conference on Women and Development, which was held in Nouakchott, in September/October 1977, and which resolved the establishment of this regional body. The Conference discussed, among other things, the importance of national, subregional and regional machineries in the promotion of integration of women in development. In particular, it envisaged the strengthening of field activities being carried out by ATRCW; it envisaged the decentralization of the activities of ATRCW to the subregional and national levels; and it envisaged the creation of a three-tiered machinery - national, subregional and regional and its integration into the administrative system of ECA, at all levels of operations. The rather short period between the end of the Nouakchott Conference and the establishment of this Regional Co-ordinating Committee has been a very hectic one for most of us; and I am happy to report that all the African Governments concerned and the relevant organizations in the region have unfailingly supported our initiatives. In particular, ECA is very grateful for the generous hospitality and excellent arrangements provided by the Governments of Zambia, Cameroon, Niger and Rwanda in hosting the inaugural meetings of the Subregional Committees on Women and Development which were set up during the past year, within the four MULPOCs. Increased efforts have been made to promote effective multidisciplinary and multisectoral national machineries concerned with women's affairs, and training programmes for women leaders both at national and village levels. A series of research work has been completed and others are in the process of being completed; and the field operational programmes in village technology for farm and home, the African Women's Task Force, and development of handicrafts and small-scale industries, have all been intensified.

ECA, in its endeavour to provide and implement a viable programme for women, however, has still many difficulties to overcome. In spite of the key role played by women in food production, food storage and processing and in petty trade and commerce in the region, they continue to be ignored and seldom are specific projects launched to alleviate their burden. The health and the condition of their children is a matter of concern. The number of countries which have consciously been committed, in terms of resources to assist women in their needs and promote their further integration in development, is still small.

The ECA African Training and Research Centre for Women can only act as a catalytic agent as it is expected that the major efforts to improve the situation of women should come from the member States themselves. Equally, the effectiveness of the Centre is in direct proportion to the co-operation and support that the member States in the subregions give to it. I wish to point out here that ATRCW is a young institution, only four years old, and we acknowledge that there are deficiencies in its conception and in the direction of some of its activities. It also operates under various constraints including inadequate material and human resources, poor communication and lack of institutions and infrastructures in the region. It needs, therefore, more than ever, your understanding, co-operation and support in its efforts and in its endeavours. On the whole, however, the credibility of the Centre has been established and its work is now being diffused in the various programmes of ECA.

Seven specific tasks were assigned to this Regional Co-ordinating Committee by the Nouakchott Conference. I shall dwell on only three, at this stage. The first is to assist and advise ECA in its activities directed towards the integration of women in development in relation to those of governments and other agencies in the region, and to co-ordinate the activities of the Subregional Committees. Secondly, this Committee is expected to co-operate with the international, regional, intergovernmental agencies which are actively engaged in programmes for women in the region. In this connection, I would particularly like to urge that you find the time to consider, in some detail, the nature of relationship which should exist between this Committee and the Regional Inter-agency Committee on Women and Development which was inaugurated in March last year. And thirdly, this Committee is expected to give broad guidelines on research priorities, training programmes and promotional activities which are deemed necessary to accelerate improvements in the situation of women.

An important exercise undertaken in 1978 was the work of the Review Mission on the activities of ATRCW. This Committee is expected to examine the recommendations of the Review Mission which reviewed the entire ECA programme for women over the last five years and made important recommendations for strengthening the field activities involved. ECA welcomed their views and has already begun implementing most of the recommendations. I should like, however, to comment on some of them.

Firstly, let me say that the question of providing regular posts for ATRCW has been pursued vigorously by my colleagues and myself. In July 1978, the matter was taken up in New York and I have every hope that an increase in the regular United Nations posts available to ATRCW will materialize in due course. Meanwhile, I have initiated negotiations with UNDP, a new donor to ATRCW, to consider filling the gap in the interim, by providing for two core senior staff of the Centre and five senior posts in the subregions, within the framework of the MULPOCs.

Secondly, ATRCW activities are increasingly being integrated with the other divisions of ECA, and joint projects are being undertaken with the ECA Divisions of Agriculture, Industry, Public Administration and Manpower, Population and Trade. Outside ECA, ATRCW is increasingly collaborating with existing institutions of learning in the region, with a view to securing their support in research and training programmes, as well as co-ordinating their activities with those of other United Nations agencies operating in the region.

Thirdly, a scholarship and internship programme is being pursued and it promises to be very rewarding. A special effort is being made to assist the women and girls of Southern Africa and the newly independent countries, by offering them further training and by enabling them to study in appropriate institutions.

Women's programmes are increasingly engaging the interest of United Nations agencies and other international organizations. ECA feels that a concerted and co-ordinated effort would be more beneficial and would avoid dissipation of efforts. The goodwill and common concern of these international organizations was instrumental in enabling us to establish the United Nations Inter-agency Working Group on Women and Development a year ago. Its work promises to be very fruitful.

I now wish to refer to the World Conference on Women and Development which has been planned for 1980. As has been recommended by ECOSOC, all regional commissions need to hold meetings this year in preparation for the

World Conference. This Committee will, therefore, be expected to consider the agenda for the second Regional Conference in Africa, which is scheduled to take place in Lusaka later this year, in preparation for the World Conference next year. This important global Conference will be expected to take stock of all activities undertaken so far and will make recommendations on the work for the second half of the United Nations Decade for Women.

May I conclude by emphasizing that a major objective of this meeting is to give an opportunity to the representatives of the subregions to examine the special problems facing the women of their respective subregions and to elaborate on the nature of strategies, policies and programmes to meet priority needs.

As a special privilege, I have arranged that the Chairperson, whom you will elect for this Committee, will have the opportunity of presenting the report of your meeting together with its recommendations to the Conference of Ministers, at an appropriate time during its current session. I also hope that most of you, if not all of you, will remain in Rabat to participate in the meeting of the Conference of Ministers taking place from 20 to 28 March. If you all do, it will be the first time that our conference will be blessed with the presence of so many distinguished ladies from different parts of Africa. Not only will this have a civilizing effect on us, the men, but it will be a practical way of achieving real integration because it will enable all of you to join hands with the menfolk in determining the policies and programmes of ECA during the next biennium.

CHAPTER THREE

REVIEW OF PROGRESS IN THE INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

**STATEMENT AT THE SECOND MEETING OF THE AFRICA REGIONAL
CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR THE INTEGRATION OF WOMEN
IN DEVELOPMENT**

**ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
12 MARCH 1981**

We are meeting today to take stock of the efforts made in each subregion of our continent and to chart a comprehensive programme for 1981, 1982 and 1983. I have been very impressed by the work done at the subregional level by the subregional machineries that have been established in our MULPOCs. Studying the progress reports made in each of them, covering the period 1979 and 1980, the following facts emerge:

(a) Thanks to the generous assistance given to us by UNDP, four out of the five MULPOCs have appointed co-ordinators for Women's Programmes as full-fledged members of the MULPOC teams. The co-ordinators act also as rapporteurs whenever meetings of subregional committees are held. At least two such meetings have now been held in each MULPOC. We have reasons to believe that North Africa will soon have such an officer appointed to serve the women of the subregion;

(b) The effective role provided by the subregional committees has ensured the adoption of the subregional projects and programmes for the advancement of women, by the MULPOC Committee of Officials and the Council of Ministers in the respective subregions;

(c) A considerable number of training workshops, national seminars and study tours designed to enhance the capacity of women have been carried out, together with specific studies on the situation of women in agriculture, law, development planning and mass media; and

(d) Fact-finding missions have been undertaken to many countries in each subregion to review the situation of women and assess their critical needs.

When we consider the 1981-1982-1983 subregional work programmes proposed, I find that what I said in 1977 at the Mauritania Regional Conference has been fully justified. I said then that the rationale for the creation of the regional and subregional machineries was to ensure that the ECA Women's Programme would not be an imposition on member States but would arise from the felt needs of women in the Africa region. I must extend my congratulations to all of you who have worked so hard to articulate so succinctly the priority needs of your subregions in the proposed programmes and activities of 1981, 1982 and 1983 found in your respective reports. These have been carefully analyzed by the secretariat and I am sure that in the course of your meeting they will be further enriched by the fruitful discussions that will ensue.

However, there are three major reasons why we must not be complacent concerning this subject-matter, and why our joint endeavours must intensify and

double in future years on behalf of the 50.5 per cent of the population of Africa who are women. Africa is confronted during this decade with a set of economic, social and political problems that are staggering and need to be taken with the utmost seriousness by all of us. We are witnessing rapidly deteriorating African economic conditions. The world prices for the region's export commodities are falling very sharply and severe limitations are being placed on the imports of manufactured goods from the third world. The shortfall in food production, an area intimately connected with African rural women, accompanied by high levels of post-harvest losses and severe periodic shortages have led to rapidly increasing dependence on food imports (estimated at \$US 5.6 billion in 1980 alone). This has resulted in a drain of foreign exchange resources which seriously limit our capacity to implement our development programmes. The import bill of non-oil exporting countries has reached \$US 7.4 billion in 1980. These, together with our external debt-service charges, leave little of our hard currencies for imports of goods and services that we need.

The prevailing mass poverty, disease, malnutrition and poor environmental conditions act as serious constraints on national development. Due to increasing tensions the ever-growing number of African refugees, most of whom are women and children, have alarmed the international community. While it is understood that our predicament has its roots in the colonial past of the African continent, every effort must be made to pursue a policy of economic liberation as we did in the political field. Our objective is the establishment of self-sustaining development and economic growth, based on collective self-reliance, with a view to improving the standards of living of the masses of the African people and reducing unemployment. In this endeavour women have a vital role to play and this has been recognized by all African Governments. It has been articulated in the Lagos Plan of Action which stresses that, as a consequence of the need for increased self-reliance, Africa must mobilize its entire human and material resources for development and calls for greater effort by African Governments to increase the role of women in development.

The second important event that has occurred since the first meeting of ARCC is the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, which took place in Copenhagen in July 1980. Its report eventually led to General Assembly resolution 35/136. This resolution endorsed the Copenhagen Programme of Action for the second half of the United Nations Decade for Women and urged governments to implement it and the other decisions of the Conference.

The resolution has important implications for the African region in terms of programmes, resources and strategies. It is my hope that careful consideration will be given to it by this Committee with a view to recommending, as clearly as possible, to the ECA Conference of Ministers next month actions to be taken at national, subregional and regional levels for the implementation of this resolution.

The third important event since your Rabat inaugural meeting is the adoption by the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session of the International Strategy for the third United Nations Development Decade (IDS).

The International Development Strategy (1980-1990) has been described as a "triumph for women". For the first time, it is said, the strategy explicitly includes women, not just as an afterthought isolated in the pages involved with social development, but as an integral part of the main body of the strategy - in the areas dealing with industrialization, food and agriculture, science and technology and social development. In line with the findings of Copenhagen, however, the strategy recognizes that there is a need for "profound social and economic changes to eliminate women's disadvantages". Appropriate measures to be taken include women's greater access to nutrition, health services, education, training and employment and financial resources. It is recommended too that women should participate in the planning and decision-making, implementation and evaluation of development. Countries are asked to ensure women's equal participation and active role in all areas of the development process. Since the new IDS covers a period which goes beyond the United Nations Decade for Women which ends in 1985, I thought it is important to bring this strategy to your attention as a basic document to be considered in your deliberations, along with the Lagos Plan of Action.

It is incumbent on an illustrious body such as yours to meet these challenges and to reflect and deliberate on these broad issues that affect the wellbeing of our continent. It is the responsibility of women leaders to sensitize their respective constituencies and governments, as well as the women of the region as a whole, of the critical role they are expected to play. This is in line with the resolution adopted by the ECA Conference of Ministers at its sixth meeting which called upon all governments to examine, as a matter of urgency, ways and means for achieving better socio-economic conditions for all people, based on the realization of the full and equal partnership of men and women in the development of society, both de jure and de facto.

Finally, let me end by assuring you that we at ECA agree entirely with the Brandt Commission on North/South Co-operation when it says that "Any

definition of development is incomplete if it fails to comprehend the contributions of women to development and the consequences of development in the lives of women". Your recommendations and ideas in this respect will certainly help us to sharpen our focus and further strengthen our programme for the benefit of our member States.

CHAPTER FOUR

WOMEN AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LAGOS PLAN OF ACTION

**STATEMENT AT THE THIRD MEETING OF THE AFRICA REGIONAL
CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR THE INTEGRATION OF WOMEN
IN DEVELOPMENT**

**DOUALA, CAMEROON
15 MARCH 1982**

In assessing the events that have taken place since the Africa Regional Coordinating Committee for the Integration of Women in Development (ARCC) meeting last March in Addis Ababa, I feel encouraged by the growing recognition of the international community as well as African member States, of the fact that in the acceleration of the process of development the full exploitation of the human resources potential is a matter of increasing urgency, especially if the goal of self-reliance is to be achieved. Thus the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session last year endorsed the Secretary-General's proposal for a comprehensive multisectoral and multidisciplinary survey on the role of women in development and invited the Secretary-General "in preparing the survey, to give due attention to the problems and requirements of women in every region and to all contributions of women to the achievement of goals of self-reliance and to economic and technical co-operation among developing countries".

Equally, ARCC is increasingly making its voice heard by the African policy makers. It is due to its effort that the ECA Conference of Ministers, in Freetown last year, passed resolution 407 (XVI) which reaffirmed "the necessity of member States with governmental and non-governmental organizations and agencies of the United Nations system, to provide resources to the national, subregional and regional programmes for the advancement of women". I was pleasantly surprised to note that right after the African member States passed this resolution, some governments made concrete financial pledges during the Pledging Conference to support the women's programme of ECA. As a result of the above resolution, ECA has been able to obtain substantial resources for the women's programme in the MULPOCs from UNDP. Thus, despite growing global budgetary constraints in external aid, UNDP has given a grant of \$US 3 million for the women's programme in the MULPOCs for the cycle 1982-1986. In fact, the other programmes of the MULPOCs have not been as fortunate; it is only the women's programme which has been assured of resources until 1986.

The acquisition of more resources will, however, not by itself answer our quest for formulating a more relevant programme that will meet the pressing need of the African continent.

The ECA women's programme, though considered to be one of the most original in the United Nations system has, in the last six years, acquired sufficient experience to formulate new strategies designed to give women greater participation in tackling some of the issues of our time. These past six years have been enriched by the effective collaboration of member States who have

responded well to the challenges that were before them. The ground-work has been laid.

However, it has become increasingly clear that the sluggish economic growth of the continent demands a more intensified effort on our part. The economic performance of African member States in 1981, on the basis of available information, grew only by 3 per cent which is almost the same as that of population growth. Our conclusion, therefore, is that there has been no real improvement in the living conditions of the people. Unlike 1980, the poor economic performance of 1981 struck equally both oil exporting and non-oil exporting African countries. Agricultural and food production, which is of special relevance to women, grew only by 1.7 per cent. The food import bill grew from \$US 6 billion in 1980 to \$US 7 billion in 1981. It is because of this that I want the ECA/ATRCW to intensify its effort for the millions of African women engaged in farming and agro-allied industry with a view to increasing their efficiency in food production. ECA's effort alone, however, will not suffice. It is the policy and action of the member States that will make the difference. I hope, therefore, that your Committee will come forward with concrete recommendations to member States. However, the agriculture field is not the only area in which governments and international organizations must intensify their efforts to assist women. Women must play an equally active part in all other sectors of human endeavour.

In our interpretation of the Lagos Plan of Action and in our effort to accelerate the implementation of the Plan, we have come to the conclusion that the full development and utilization of women, as a large component of national human resources potential, is a necessary condition for the full implementation of the Plan. We must therefore envisage a wide and diversified role for our women. We have to accelerate the industrial development of the region and this requires among other things the mobilization of all resources. Women's industrial involvement might take various forms ranging from participation in large-scale industrial firms to running cottage industries. Therefore, we have now revised the text on the implementation of the Lagos Plan of Action whereby we solicit governments to exploit women's potential for industrial entrepreneurship, management, marketing and institutional services such as banking, insurance, shipping, civil aviation, business consultancy, tourism etc. There is no reason why women should not participate in these activities. The exploitation of all human resources is a matter of increasing urgency if the goal of self-reliance is to be achieved and if the present and expected costs of imported services by African governments are to be reduced.

It therefore becomes imperative to review women's access to education and science and technology with a view to enabling them to participate fully in the process of industrial development. The Africa Regional Co-ordinating Committee (ARCC) should encourage national governments to review the incentive system appropriate for encouraging women and girls to take full advantage of opportunities for self-improving education and training and the upgrading of existing skills. Appropriate strategies must be worked out for the realization of these objectives. The role of national machineries should be reviewed for the purpose of attaining these objectives. An effective tool that could be used in this regard is the mass media which must be exploited to transform traditional attitudes into a more positive view of the role of women in society.

The participation of women in the industrial development process has already been well described in the Lima Declaration and Plan of Action which recommends among other things:

(a) The promotion in rural areas of the processing of agricultural products and manufacturing industries particularly small-scale industries, which will provide regular employment for women in such areas;

(b) Ensuring the fullest possible use of available resources by incorporating women into training activities linked to industrial development at all levels and for all professional specializations from management to shop floor; and

(c) The importance of securing for women, regardless of their marital status, the same opportunities as are available to men for gainful employment, and the importance of the economic independence derived from such employment for the promotion of women's status in society.

These ideas are some that ECA is currently developing in its continuous search to find ways and means of accelerating the implementation of the Lagos Plan of Action. It is my hope that ARCC will endorse the strategies that have been proposed.

CHAPTER FIVE

WOMEN IN THE LABOUR FORCE AND IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

**STATEMENT AT THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE AFRICA REGIONAL
CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR THE INTEGRATION OF WOMEN
IN DEVELOPMENT**

**ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
11 APRIL 1983**

The Africa Regional Co-ordinating Committee for the Integration of Women in Development (ARCC) has come to represent a very important organ in our region as an instrument for harmonizing and co-ordinating policies and programmes related to women who have long been recognized as vital human resources for the development of the region. The views and recommendations of ARCC have been presented and discussed at every meeting of the Commission which, in turn, has presented its views to ECOSOC and the United Nations General Assembly. The unique structures that now exist in our region, comprising national, subregional and regional bodies on programmes for women, have become important forums for formulating effective strategies for the advancement of women. At this particular meeting you will be considering a comprehensive constitutional framework concerning the nature and relationships between the different structures set up for the advancement of African women. As you have requested this study, we look forward to your deliberations and decisions on the subject.

I cannot overemphasize the significance and importance that the ECA secretariat attaches to the views expressed by the different structures and especially by ARCC. The support the ECA Women's Programme has received from member States and the international community is in direct proportion to the support you women leaders have given to the programme in different meetings. I am sure, therefore, that the distinguished members of ARCC realize the high responsibility accorded to them by way of shaping and giving direction to the programme to make it truly responsive to the needs of women in Africa so that adequate resources can be obtained for its implementation. Whatever resources are obtained in these difficult times, they must be devoted to overcome critical bottlenecks impeding the advancement of women at national and regional levels.

This meeting of ARCC is especially crucial as it is taking place towards the end of the United Nations Decade for Women, and on the eve of the Regional Preparatory Conference which will be held in 1984 and which will assess the progress made in improving the situation of women during the Decade. Africa's achievements and outlook for the future are to be reported to the World Conference on the United Nations Decade for Women that will take place in Nairobi in 1985.

The past year has seen major efforts on the part of ECA towards improving the well-being of women of the region. You will be able to note the scope and depth of the programme when you consider the reports on the activities of the past year. One of the major undertakings was the holding of the Regional Seminar on National Machineries in Addis Ababa in November

1982. It is gratifying to note the interest with which the programme of national machineries was viewed by all concerned. Increasingly, national machineries are becoming the major focal points in so far as women are concerned, and many of them are setting up technical units to examine manpower planning and the place of women in the labour force.

Although we are told from the latest ILO estimates that women account for 32.4 per cent of the total economically active population in Africa we know that this figure is well below reality. The definition of what constitutes economic activity and statistical methods for its calculation have often excluded millions of women from being considered among the economically active population. The ATRCW is collaborating with relevant institutions to evolve true indicators on the activity of women. In so far as future trends are concerned projections indicate that during the last quarter of this century, the female labour force is likely to grow faster in almost all African States than during the previous 25 years (1950-1975). Women will continue to dominate the agricultural sector - though increasingly women are entering the industrial sector - while the percentage of women in the service sector remains very high. Though these facts are familiar to you, greater effort must be made by governments to calculate accurately the true contribution of women to the national economy so that their claim for a greater share of the fruits of development can be met.

Development strategies are increasingly being recognized as "tight rope acts" because the development process is a complexity of economic, political, social, demographic and cultural factors which interact to produce growth and change in any given society. Consequently, despite attempts by governments at introducing effective economic policies, the African situation continues to be unsatisfactory. The social and economic conditions of Africa continue to deteriorate in the context of grave world economic recession. The human potential in Africa is being seriously affected by the prevailing conditions of women and children.

Tradition seems to be still strong in Africa, and one of the salient features of child-bearing in Africa is its high rates, which derive from a combination of factors underlying which is a strong child-value orientation in society. Second, the timing of entry into the motherhood substantially affects fertility patterns of women, their health and the socio-economic roles they may occupy during their lives. The median age at first marriage in Africa is less than 20 years of age. It is also known that early child-bearing is incompatible with school attendance and wage-earning employment outside the home. There is also evidence of increased fertility among teenagers, creating serious problems in our

societies. Africa has the greatest birth rate (46 per thousand) and, though declining, death rates are also highest in Africa. Children under five are the greatest victims.

The above demographic situation has significant implications for the development process of the region in general and to women's participation in development in particular. For example, the high annual population growth rate (2.9 per cent) and low life expectancy have resulted in a population structure which is young, creating a heavy dependency burden on the working population.

Women must be concerned with these facts. But, to effectively participate in the shaping of development policies and programmes they must also have an effective voice in decision-making. Unfortunately, this is not the case in many of our countries, due to the legacy of our educational development which, until recently, put more emphasis on the provision of educational facilities for boys at the expense of girls. The cumulative effect of this discriminatory practice is that in half of the countries in Africa, for instance, women engaged in professional, technical and related fields make up only 10 per cent of the total economically active female population. In the administrative/management class, they make up only 20 per cent of the total active female population. It is therefore necessary that our governments continue to redouble their efforts to provide equal opportunities for both boys and girls, and to assist women to acquire the necessary skills and experience so that they can play an increasingly effective role in decision-making in government and in the professions. In ECA the fact that the African Training and Research Centre has now moved to the Cabinet Office of the Executive Secretary is to bring it nearer to the decision-making process.

Since 1980, the ECA programme for women, guided by the Copenhagen Programme of Action and the Lagos Plan of Action, has intensified its efforts in proposing appropriate strategies and measures to overcome those factors that continue to inhibit the integration of women in the development process. Judging by the increasing demand made on the ECA Women's Centre, the support given by external agencies and member States, I can say that the ECA programme for women has been able to contribute towards the clarification of concepts and strategies that are needed for an effective programme directed to women; it has heightened the awareness among governments and women themselves of their legitimate roles in the destiny of the African continent; and has facilitated follow-up actions on the recommendations made by the programme. Despite the gloomy financial climate, the programme has been given a major boost by significant assistance in 1982-1983 from UNDP, SIDA,

VFDW and USAID in particular. ECA is indeed most grateful to all these donors. However, as you will see in the next two days the period of 1984-1985 bears all the marks of difficult times, which means that unless additional assistance is forthcoming from the world community and member States the programme will seriously suffer. It is therefore imperative that serious thought should be given by ARCC to ways and means of obtaining the required support.

Finally, we need to consider seriously the 1985 World Conference on the United Nations Decade for Women. There is general consensus now that the Conference should, first and foremost, carry out a critical review and appraisal of progress achieved and obstacles encountered in attaining the goals and objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace. It is also believed that this exercise will provide the necessary basis for suggesting actions at national, regional and global levels for the years to come. This was certainly the view of the preparatory body of the World Conference which met in Vienna from 23 February to 4 March 1983. Since the World Conference is taking place on African soil, in the Republic of Kenya, we are all determined to ensure its success. While the logistics need not worry us, because of the excellent conference facilities available in Kenya, the substantive outcomes of the conference continue to preoccupy us. The ECA Third Regional Conference due to be held in the Republic of the Sudan, will have to reflect on some of these issues. The Vienna meeting, for instance, could not reach a consensus on two items of the provisional agenda which dealt with international peace and security, colonialism, racism, the situation of Palestine women and women under apartheid in South Africa. There is no doubt that these issues will not be resolved easily. Africa's position must be made clear. The place of non-governmental organizations and how we can benefit from their ideas and views must also be resolved within the context of Africa's interest.

CHAPTER SIX

A TEN-YEAR REVIEW OF PROGRESS AND PROBLEMS

**STATEMENT AT THE FIFTH MEETING OF THE AFRICA REGIONAL
CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR THE INTEGRATION OF WOMEN
IN DEVELOPMENT**

**ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
14 MAY 1984**

The Africa Regional Co-ordinating Committee for the Integration of Women in Development (ARCC) has established itself as an important and powerful voice on African women's issues since it was born in Nouakchott in 1977. At that time, there was trepidation and hesitation as to whether the new-born baby would grow up healthy and strong. ECA is gratified to see that the seriousness and dedication of the members of ARCC, especially their Presidents, have established a dynamic organization responsive to the changing situation of African women.

This fifth meeting of the Committee is of particular importance as it will be reviewing the preparations for the ECA Third Regional Conference to be held in Arusha, Tanzania, 16 to 20 September 1984, which will bring together all the member States of Africa. As you probably know, the Arusha Conference is the regional preparatory meeting for the World Conference in Nairobi, which will review and appraise the achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women and, as such, the guidance you will give to the preparatory activities is of crucial importance.

First of all, you will be reviewing the substantive work being undertaken by the Women's Centre in ECA for the Regional and World Conferences. Most of the studies that you will be considering adopt a forward-looking approach and are based on two principles: first, to inform, enlighten and sensitize African member States and the international community on the issue at hand and, secondly, to offer practical guidelines for policy and action beyond the Decade. An attempt is being made to break new ground and to adopt a new approach to the problems faced by African women. This, certainly, will be characteristic of the study of women under apartheid and of refugee and displaced women.

Following closely the Lagos Plan of Action, our analysis and proposals concerning the role of women in alleviating the food crisis and their participation in the Industrial Development Decade for Africa will need your careful study many years to come given the necessity of relating them to the special situations of the specific countries. Here I would like to reiterate that the Lagos Plan of Action has, once and for all, changed our perception from considering women as peripheral to development to accepting them as an integral part of all development strategies. This is a challenge that we must all meet and it requires concerted action by all concerned.

With regard to the food crisis in Africa, it is disconcerting that despite the increasingly well-documented fact that women farmers are Africa's primary food producers, problems faced by them are not being addressed as seriously as they should. If we are to feed the peasants and the workers of Africa, the

powerful constraints of technology, lack of marketing facilities and patriarchal traditions, which reveal themselves in women's lack of access to land, must be removed. Since it is increasingly realized that the food problem must be met primarily from the village-based food production sector, focus on the cultivators must be much stronger than at present.

Closely linked to the critical shortage of food is the problem of drought which has hit the African continent: rainfall amounts have decreased in sub-Saharan Africa in the last 15 years. The drought which began in the Sahel in 1968 has not yet ended in 1984. Experts estimate that the usable extent of arid and semi-arid pastoral areas of Africa have been reduced by 25 per cent since the outset of the 1968 drought. Food and agricultural production have deteriorated in the last two decades, and currently the situation is severe in 24 countries in Africa. Approximately 150 million people are facing famine and malnutrition. The mix of dry spell and meteorological drought, the period when the amount of precipitation is less than the designated percentage, have been worsened by the pressure of population, both human and livestock. What is more, many affected countries are least developed countries (LDCs) which are the least able to deal with the additional problem of drought.

In addition, the limitations of our scientific knowledge are such that we cannot reliably predict the continuation, cessation or recurrence of drought. All aspects of the general circulation dynamics of the atmosphere and the oceans which cause drought in Africa, from time to time, are not understood so that accurate forecasts are not yet feasible.

Interestingly enough, the experts also say that rainmaking has not been convincingly demonstrated as a method for alleviating drought. They believe that better use of existing weather and climatic information can significantly improve operational practices in agriculture, water management and energy use, areas in which women are heavily involved. It is my belief that those most affected by the impact of drought are the most vulnerable groups, i.e. women and children - but I also believe that women, the majority of whom are cultivators of food, can be mobilized to participate in the short-, medium- and long-term plans that the experts have outlined to combat the drought phenomenon.

In the short term, women could be both beneficiaries and participants in the distribution and effective use of food aid, seeds, fertilizers, vaccines and provision of animal feed. It is, however, as regards medium-term measures that women can play a principal role. These include measures to reduce post-harvest

losses, use of technology for increasing production, increasing areas under cultivation, changing food habits and participation in training programmes.

Long-term strategies proposed are interdisciplinary research programmes for various agro-climatic situations and inventory of physical and biological resources. I believe that national machineries for the integration of women in development should increasingly be drawn into emergency national programmes dealing with disaster conditions. Their participation should be an active one. I hope that you will come up with some innovative recommendations on the subject. Our continent now requires, more than at any time in its history, the full use of its human resources to transcend this crisis period.

The research project on women and the industrialization decade in Africa was the subject of ECA Conference of Ministers resolution 447 (XVII). The ultimate aim of this study is to help ensure the equitable participation of women in the industrialization process in Africa. Issues to be considered are how to guard against the adverse effects which technology transfer or redeployment might have on women, the need to develop and upgrade technologies to alleviate the burden of women's work in the field and at home, and to analyze the cultural, social and economic constraints which limit women's full participation in the industrialization process. It is our hope that these efforts will result in proposals and positive strategies for the participation of women in the Industrial Development Decade for Africa which will be considered by the Ministers of Industry in the region. The focus of the study will be on key industries such as agro-industries, textiles, forestry, construction, metallurgy, chemical and packing material industries: all these areas are deemed to be of concern to women in the Lagos Plan of Action. It is our hope that these efforts will launch new possibilities for women's employment in the future.

But what about the future of African women? For the period beyond the Decade, the study on "Women in Africa to the Year 2000" raises food for thought. The principle adopted in this study is, first, the recognition of the heterogeneity of women's situation and, second, the fact that women are an integral part of the historical processes that have affected the region. It is ECA's conviction that the future situation of women in Africa will depend, to a large extent, on the capacity of the system to integrate human resources, particularly women, more effectively and more positively into the development efforts in our countries. This is an objective which can be accomplished through many development strategies, and each country has to work out the most suitable mix. What constitutes a better future for the region as a whole has already been made explicit in the Lagos Plan of Action.

Finally, there are two matters I wish to bring to your attention. The first is the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. Ninety countries have signed the Convention which came into force on 12 April 1982: out of these, 23 are African governments. However, only eight of these 23 have ratified or acceded to the Convention. This Convention, which condemns discrimination against women in all its forms, is viewed as the sine qua non for the full participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields of human endeavour. As ARCC members you should encourage your governments to become State parties to the Convention, and help make individual women aware of their rights under the Convention. The need to sign and ratify the Convention was also urged by the Second African Population Conference held in Arusha 9-13 January 1984. The Conference gave, incidentally, considerable attention to the changing role of women as mothers and workers in all sectors of the economy and urged governments to develop programmes which would have an impact on demographic and development variables. Key areas of intervention suggested were in health, level of fertility and migration which often leave women in rural areas with an intolerable burden and are detrimental to the improvement of agriculture.

The second and equally important issue I wish to raise is the forthcoming World Conference in Nairobi which will review and appraise the achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women. I am aware that many of you are involved in its preparation and are busy reviewing the successes and the obstacles that the Decade has met in your countries. No one denies that a surge in activities related to women has taken place in many countries, and that there is a new awareness concerning women's needs. However, women are still the first victims of any economic crisis as well as the first to suffer in conflicts within and between States. The end of the Decade should spur intensified activities for the future, based on the many lessons that have been learnt during the last 10 years.

The role of African women in the forthcoming World Conference is a crucial one, to which you must devote a great deal of thought. Your participation should be at the highest level and should be affective. Since Africa is hosting the World Conference we should not find ourselves in disarray nor be taken by surprise on any issues that may come up in the Conference. In each member State, adequate preparations must be made to follow closely the evolution and development of the Conference.

CHAPTER SEVEN

EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE FOR THE INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT*

STATEMENT AT THE REGIONAL INTERGOVERNMENTAL PREPARATORY
MEETING FOR THE WORLD CONFERENCE TO REVIEW AND APPRAISE
THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR
WOMEN: EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE, AND
THIRD AFRICAN REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE
INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

ARUSHA, TANZANIA
8 OCTOBER 1984

*This statement has also been published in Adebayo Adedeji,
Towards a Dynamic African Economy: Selected Speeches and Lectures
1975-1986, compiled and arranged by Jeggan C. Senghor,
London: Frank Cass. 1989, pp.654-659.

Almost 10 years ago, in June/July 1975, a world conference on the integration of women in the development process was held in Mexico. That Conference, for the first time, attempted an overall analysis of the global economic and social situation of women and laid the foundation for a comprehensive 10-year plan identifying the priority areas to be tackled in order to promote the full utilization of women both as contributors to and beneficiaries of development efforts.

We are gathered here today to take stock of the past 10 years and, more importantly, to design a programme for the future based on the lessons we have learnt. Indeed, it is most appropriate that our review and appraisal of the 10-year African Regional Plan for the Integration of Women in Development is taking place in Arusha, Tanzania, where the avowed aim of the Party and Government has been to give equal opportunity to all men and women irrespective of race, religion and status. As early as 1968, well before the Mexico Conference, President Mwalimu Nyerere wrote: "By virtue of their sex, women suffered from inequality which had nothing to do with contribution to the family welfare. If we want our country (Tanzania) to make full and quick progress now, it is essential that our women live on terms of full equality with their fellow citizens who are men. The basis of rural life in Tanzania must be the picture of co-operation in its widest sense - in living, in working and in distribution and all with an acceptance of absolute equality of all men and women".

Not all countries in Africa had such a conducive setting for the acceleration of women's integration in the development process. The significance of this Conference is to review the progress made since 1975, to identify those factors that have continued to persist as obstacles to progress; and, to discuss alternative scenarios whereby impediments are removed and equality of opportunity becomes a reality, enabling women to fully use their potential. This is no longer a cliché or rhetoric - all international strategies, including the Lagos Plan of Action, have come to accept the integration of women as a major strategy objective. Thus, in his address to the International Conference on Population in Mexico City on 13 August 1984, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Perez de Cuéllar, stressed that the improvement in the status of women must be an important goal in itself, since it is a determining factor in dealing with population problems. "It is essential", he said "to involve women on an equal basis with men in all phases of the socio-economic development process, including planning, policy-making and decision-making. This necessarily involves equal access to education, training and employment of women". The Kilimanjaro Programme of Action on Population and Self-reliance which was adopted in this very hall at the end of

the ECA Conference on Population held in January 1984 is also along similar lines

Although the poor performance of the African economy during most of the Decade has no doubt affected progress in achieving the objectives of the Decade, nevertheless the review of the past 10 years shows that some important gains have been made which should be used as a springboard for future action. The ECA review of the implementation of the Ten-year African Regional Plan of Action for the Integration of Women in Development shows that African women, though enduring the adverse consequences of a dependent economy, often unwise in its management of scarce resources, have managed to articulate clearly their unequal status in society, the crucial role they play in development, and the need for appropriate action and strategies on the part of governments to correct the situation. Thus the Decade has fulfilled the important functions of preparing the ground for more effective action.

African Governments have no doubt made, at various levels, efforts to improve the status of women and to guarantee them equal access to available opportunities. Such efforts can be seen in the ratification of the United Nations conventions on women by different countries, in national legislation on employment, maternity protection, marriage, inheritance and property, and in generous provision of education for girls. Most African countries have enshrined in their constitutions the principles of political, economic, social and civil rights for all their citizenry - men and women. It is realized, however, that if in theory the written laws and constitutional positions do not discriminate against women, in the practice and implementation of these laws, we do meet here and there discriminatory practices.

The achievement of the Decade would have been higher, despite the development problems of the region, if women's access to the development resources and decision-making levels had not been restricted and the social and economic realms which they may enter been narrowed significantly.

The worst case is, of course, apartheid South Africa where discrimination is total and affects every minute of the daily life of women. The apartheid state stands opposed to the major goals of the United Nations Decade for Women which are equality, development and peace. The United Nations has pressed resolution after resolution condemning apartheid and its ramifications. Our study of the problem concludes that the greatest assistance that we all can give to the women of South Africa and Namibia would be to desist from giving economic and diplomatic support to apartheid. Everything else would flow from this position. Our efforts must be intensified in this regard.

For the rest of Africa, the Decade has, first and foremost, brought an unprecedented number of studies, programmes, and meetings on the situation of women, highlighting the visibility of women and increasing their self-confidence and awareness.

The picture of the female population in the region, which is estimated at 237 million, is a mosaic. The majority struggle for survival in the rural areas, marginal urban areas or in isolated arid regions like the Sahel where overwork, poor nutrition for themselves and their families and declining quality of life are the norms. Others are on the path to development with the capacity to improve somewhat the economic, nutritional, educational and sanitary situation of themselves and their families. Thus, as a result of disparities in income, environment and access to resources, different patterns of living have evolved. The challenge for the future is to ameliorate the harsh living conditions of such women.

Secondly, the review of the Decade indicates further that African governments have directed considerable amount of resources and energy to expanding educational opportunities. In many cases, the share of females in total enrolment at the first and second levels has increased at a more rapid rate than that of males. Gender parity, at least at first level, is likely to be achieved in the foreseeable future. And, in the health sector, many countries in the region, while striving to meet the health needs of their populations have given preferential treatment to women who have thus benefitted from health and medical services provided, especially in rural areas. Family planning and nutritional programmes have been directed largely to women and children. Much emphasis has been laid on the importance of clean water supply, and many governments are taking measures for the supply of water to the people in rural areas as well as urban areas where population growth has outstripped the capacity of existing facilities. Yet much remains to be done in this field.

Thirdly, the response of African governments to the call of the Plan of Action for the establishment of national commissions on women and development, supported by technical units for research and planning, has been particularly encouraging and positive. Women's bureaux, commissions, ministries, units within sectoral ministries or wings of national political parties have been established in most countries in the region. Acting as focal points, these machineries have helped to mobilize women, initiate projects, collect data, and act as pressure groups for policy change and action.

Fourthly, ECA established, at the regional level, the African Training and Research Centre for Women (ATRCW) in 1975 to assist member States in the formulation of policy, research and for enhancing the capacity of women. The ECA Africa Regional Co-ordinating Committee for the Integration of Women in Development (ARCC) was inaugurated in March 1979 as an advisory body on the women's programme at regional level. Since then it has played an active role in all ECA programmes. At subregional level ECA established Multinational Programming and Operational Centres (MULPOCs) in 1979 to promote inter-country co-operation. A network of five subregional committees for the integration of women in development has been organized to work through these MULPOCs with the objective of decentralizing and strengthening field activities of the women's programme.

Finally, a plethora of non-governmental organizations, credit associations, banking facilities, technology centres, and professional associations of women have sprung up in the region during the Decade, enhancing women's position and opportunities.

Despite the above gains, however, the economically active female population is still heavily concentrated in traditional agriculture and associated activities in the rural areas and in the amorphously mixed bag of survival known as the informal sector in urban areas. The more organized sectors of employment such as modern agriculture, manufacturing, commerce and services are still thought of as proper male fiefdoms.

ECA's thought for the future of our efforts towards the advancement of African women rests on the following considerations. Firstly, unless the deteriorating economic situation in the Africa region is reversed, the population at large, and the vulnerable groups, particularly women, will not have access to sufficient resources in order to improve their living conditions. In the best of times, we know, women are at the periphery of considerations, and in crisis situations women and children are likely to suffer the most.

Here we face a vicious circle. As the bulk of human capital in Africa consists of the female population, are they not also the very agents to reverse the downward economic trends that the region is undergoing? Who is most likely to play a dominant role, for instance, in resolving the food crisis facing sub-Saharan Africa if not the women? Do they not also determine the quantity and the quality of the labour force required for the development of the region? Clearly, by virtue of their socio-economic status, women must play a more forceful and active role than in the past in determining national priorities and in challenging assumptions on the nature of women's work which focus

exclusively on women's domestic functions. Harnessing fully the economic potentials of women will go a very long way in contributing to the solution of our current crisis.

It is true that women's silent submission to traditional religious and cultural practices, particularly in the rural areas and among illiterate women, is an obstacle to be reckoned with. However, leaders of national machineries like yourselves must redouble your efforts in attacking traditional and customary values and beliefs which deny women equal access to opportunities and prevent them from fully developing their potential.

Governments must intensify their efforts at integrating women in their plans and strategies at all levels. Women should not only be given recognition in time of crisis like wars for independence or disaster situations but the process must be continuous. As I stated before, the future situation of women in Africa will depend to a large extent on the capacity of the system to integrate our women more effectively into development efforts.

As Africa has a young population of over 44 per cent below the age of 15, greater attention than in the past must be given to young women and girls, for they are the adult women of tomorrow. Furthermore, this group of young people have been born in our independent nations free from the stigma of colonial domination. They have not suffered the abrupt transition of our generation. The young population of Africa are likely to be, therefore, more flexible and innovative in facing the future than our aging generation.

One of the great benefits of the Decade has been the generation of vast resources externally and internally to finance projects directly and indirectly affecting women. ECA strongly endorses the view that impact analysis on women is essential to improve the effectiveness of aid projects. Furthermore, both the donor and the recipient countries are equally responsible for removing any obstacles which impede the full utilization of assistance. Efforts should be made to develop more sophisticated measurement tools and improved methodology for maximum impact. Greater attention should also be given to large development projects which directly or indirectly affect the lives of women, especially in the rural areas.

The above reflection on the past Decade lead us to conclude that actions dealing simply with women's situation and divorced from the rest of society would have minimal impacts. The only genuine possibility of a better future for the majority of women in Africa will come in the context of a self-reliant and self-sustained development, which is the thesis of the Lagos Plan of Action,

where women fully participate in all structures and decisions of society. Governments, international bodies, NGOs and other organizations are major instruments for achieving this goal. The translation of this lofty goal into practical plans and actions also awaits our intensified efforts, and I have every hope that with determination and sustained action we can achieve it substantially by the turn of the century.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE END OF THE WOMEN'S DECADE AND THE DAWN OF A NEW ERA

**STATEMENT AT THE SIXTH MEETING OF THE AFRICA REGIONAL
CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE ON THE INTEGRATION OF WOMEN
IN DEVELOPMENT**

**ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
15 APRIL 1985**

For six years now, this Committee has been an important instrument for initiating actions, promoting new ideas, co-ordinating the programme for women at MULPOC level and supporting and guiding the efforts of the ECA secretariat. Those of you who are new to the work of ARCC will find a valuable source of information on its nature, function and relationship with other organs of the Commission in the document entitled "Second Revised Note on the Institutional Framework Governing Relations between the Various Organs Established to Promote the Integration of Women in Development." This document, which you have already discussed at the subregional level, will, I hope once and for all, clarify the place of ARCC vis-à-vis the ECA structure and institutions. More important to my mind is ensuring the support of your governments for the continued functioning of ARCC now that UNDP assistance is phasing out. Your presence here, in fact, testifies that you have already been successful in this respect.

You are meeting today at the end of the United Nations Decade for Women and on the threshold of a new era for the advancement of Africa women. Those of you who participated in the Regional Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting in Arusha 8-12 October 1984, will recall that we carried out a review and appraisal of the Decade at all levels, and mapped out the future plan in the Arusha Strategies for the Advancement of Women Beyond the Decade. In that meeting, we identified major causes which give rise to discrimination and subjugation of women. We realized that the causes are related to factors going beyond the scope of a single discipline. Attitudes generated by socio-cultural factors have proven to be a constraint to the acceptance of women as critical factors to mainstream development. Women's perceptions of themselves often reinforce such attitudes. Colonialism in many ways relegated women to household duties, ignoring their long standing contribution to African economies, particularly in agriculture and trade. Imperfect economic and social indicators continue to undermine women's contribution. The World Survey on the Role of Women in Development which has just been completed indicates that women's work is especially under-evaluated in agriculture, though it is known that in sub-Saharan Africa women constitute the predominant labour force in this sector. It is estimated that the number of women actually working in agriculture may be twice as high as that registered. Yet the female labour force in 1985, as a percentage of total labour force, is given only as 32.0 per cent.

On the whole, however, the estimates and projections of the World Survey show that in the last three decades (1950-1980) more and more women were seeking employment in most parts of the world. The high level of female

participation is not transitional; the interplay of various factors is bringing more women to the world of work, especially in the industrialized countries.

New challenges will soon catch up with us. Technological improvements which are vital to development are affecting women who work in the modern sector. Micro-electronic technology is replacing secretarial work generally performed by women. Thus, in the United Kingdom it has been estimated that by 1990, 170,000 secretarial jobs will be lost to new electronic technology. In the Federal Republic of Germany 25 per cent of office jobs in the private sector and 36 per cent in the public sector will have become superfluous.

For the immediate future, however, our attention must be drawn to the plight of rural women and to women in drought-stricken countries in Africa where the last decade has "not only been the Decade of Women, but the Decade of Drought", in the words of the Tanzanian delegate to the Preparatory Committee in Vienna. Women must walk further and further to get water and fuel; they are the ones suffering most from malnutrition. The encroachment of the Sahara is changing the patterns of living of millions of people. Now weak women and children must wait for their men to return from towns with food supplies. Nutrition education is increasingly becoming irrelevant because the options are simply not there. The search for food and water is keeping whole populations on the move, thus disrupting their way of life and destroying patterns of civilization. Resettlement schemes bring with them a host of readjustment problems, some of which we cannot grasp. Survival has become the keynote.

It is now realized that over 60 per cent of the countries of Africa are subject to the effects of adverse climatic conditions and persistent drought and desertification. Desertification, which results from a continuation of drought, human and livestock population pressure as well as poor management of land resources, is a difficult and very slow process to reverse once it has been allowed to begin. We know that deserts in Africa have been encroaching on useful agricultural land at the rate of 60,000 to 70,000 square kilometres per year.

Rural women, the majority of the rural population, have an important role to play in combating this hostile environment. The paper on the implementation of the Arusha Strategies before you emphasizes the need to disseminate information to rural women, involving them in training programmes which include management of water and afforestation programmes. It is also essential that governments reallocate land resources with priority to food production. The encroachment of cash crops such as coffee, cotton and cocoa

on land previously growing millet, sorghum and maize must be prevented and slowed down. Rural women must also be made aware of the need to reduce post harvest food losses and be taught better methods of preservation and conservation of food products. Through your efforts, these ideas must infiltrate policy and action programmes of sectoral ministries. At the international level, General Assembly resolution 39/165 on the Critical Situation of Food and Agriculture in Africa urges the international community to sustain and increase their assistance to Africa.

The Five Year Plan for the Implementation of the Arusha Strategies is a document that should be translated into action programmes as soon as possible by all governments in Africa. One particular field given priority by the Strategies is the participation of women and incorporation of their needs in development planning and policy making. It has come to light, in the World Survey, that with the exception of a handful of countries, it was impossible to "identify any country in which national strategies have generally benefitted women's role in agriculture primarily because no country has yet incorporated issues relating to women farmers, their needs and potentials, into its overall national agricultural planning".

While it is true that very small agriculture projects have proliferated, their resources do not allow, however, the hiring of qualified personnel, nor the carrying out of effective market research activities etc. National machineries, though they have increased awareness of women's needs and potential, have lacked the technical expertise to implement women's agricultural projects or to facilitate the integration of women into on-going or envisaged agricultural programmes. These are areas that await sustained and increased efforts from all of us.

Another important function called for the Arusha Strategies is the monitoring responsibility of focal units responsible for women's question on all matters concerning women, not only those for which they are responsible. Women leaders like yourselves must monitor progress all the time in all spheres. To assist in this task, the ECA solicits your co-operation in a study which it is initiating on the extent to which the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination is being implemented in the Africa region. It is my hope that this study will bring to light facts that will enable you to effectively carry out your responsibilities.

A major document that has emerged, at the end of the Decade, relevant to our discussion is the "Interorganizational Assessment of Women's Participation in Development". This exercise was carried out by UNDP. Analyzing the work

of United Nations organizations which are involved in technical co-operation programmes over the last 10 years, it concludes that not only were the total funds allocated meagre but the heaviest concentration of projects was in projects that affect women but for which no provision was made for their participation. In terms of resources, 78 per cent of the total package in technical co-operation programmes was concentrated in these projects. This is a conclusion that those of us who are involved in the delivery of these projects must carefully consider, because we know that men and women will normally benefit in different ways from the same project due to their different roles in the local division of labour.

Member States must, therefore, be alerted to ensure, by supplying relevant data and documentation, that women's actual and projected roles in the area of activities under discussion are made visible in all programming exercises of technical assistance.

As we approach the Nairobi Conference we must keep in our minds what our participation is going to be and what we want to achieve at this global forum. I am very happy to note that African women are presenting a united front to the world. This was evidenced both at the Arusha Regional Conference last October and the Third Preparatory Meeting held in Vienna 4-13 March 1985. It is obvious from the Vienna meeting, however, that the Nairobi Conference will be faced with conflicting interests and powerful lobbies. As you know, the meeting in Vienna was inconclusive and appealed for further discussion in the spirit of co-operation, goodwill and understanding. Since the Conference is taking place in Africa, it is my sincere hope that African women will act as a bridge on which divergent views can meet. It means that we shall have to work very hard as from now. Furthermore, the ECA and OAU hope to arrange a pre-Conference orientation day to disseminate information to African delegations on the technicalities of a World Conference. You, no doubt, are aware that procedural tactics can often make or break a World Conference. To arrange such a programme, the ECA intends to send a special mission to Kenya to discuss with the Kenyan Government the modalities of mounting such a programme.

The information and exchange of views on the World Conference that will take place at the ARCC meeting must be disseminated to all concerned by you when you return home. Members of ARCC are not only representing their countries but their subregions as well; as such, it is essential that the recommendations and resolutions passed by ARCC and the ECA Conference of Ministers reach all the countries of your subregion through you. This is the

only way to ensure the effective participation of African delegates at the World Conference in Nairobi.

CHAPTER NINE

**WOMEN AND THE CRITICAL ECONOMIC
SITUATION IN AFRICA**

STATEMENT AT THE SEVENTH MEETING OF THE AFRICA REGIONAL
CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR THE INTEGRATION OF WOMEN
IN DEVELOPMENT

YAOUNDE, CAMEROON
3 APRIL 1986

It is with a sense of satisfaction that we meet for the first time since the World Conference of Nairobi which reviewed the achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women. A year ago, in my statement, noting the difficulties met in the preparatory activities of the World Conference, I pointed out the special responsibility of African women for the success of the Nairobi Conference. I am grateful to you that, together with women of other regions, you were able to achieve success, through consensus, in Nairobi. This consensus, you may recall, had eluded both the Mexico Conference in 1975 and the Copenhagen World Conference in 1980. It is primarily due to the maturity of its women and the traditional wisdom of Africa that these successes should be attributed.

Despite the obstacles encountered at various stages, the United Nations Decade for Women was very important in stimulating thought and action. Now, it has given birth to the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women. Like the Arusha Strategies, the Nairobi ones confirm the fact that the situation of women cannot be viewed outside the context of overall development. Women issues are no longer viewed as separate issues. Women have begun to view their condition in wider terms: "The hunger in Africa was being linked with the landlessness of African women, growing militarization with the growing violence against women, the ever-increasing debt burden with the unpaid workload of Latin American Women", as noted in the report of the Nairobi NGO Forum.

Two other messages have emerged from the Conference. The first is the continued desire of women to have an equal share in guiding the development efforts of the different regions of the world. Though major obstacles still exist in the realization of this quest, it is believed that they can be removed if there is the political will and if there are attitudinal changes among national decision-making elites.

Secondly, the Nairobi conference stressed the need for women to better equip themselves for a greater role in society. This requires greater commitment to the acquisition of new knowledge, skills and techniques for promoting the structural and technological transformations required if real progress and development is to take place in our continent.

The role of women in agricultural production is a subject that deserves sustained attention, given the new concern among our Heads of State and Governments about the centrality of the agricultural sector in the rehabilitation of the African economy. I am happy to state that the outlook for food supply in 1986 appears to be good, thanks to the rains in 1985. Since over 50 per

cent of the labour force in agriculture is made up of women it is of concern that the conditions under which the rural woman works as food producer still remains very primitive. Intensified efforts must be made to promote access to technology, to training, to credit facilities, and to drastically improve the general social and physical environment if her productivity is to increase.

Furthermore, we cannot enhance women's role in agriculture without adequately sensitizing the authorities who control the resources. They decide who grows the food, where and how it should be produced, and how it is to be distributed. Whilst rural women are the major victims of the food crisis, therefore, I only want to re-emphasize that they are also producers, sellers and processors of food. In other words, they are the very agents who can reverse the food situation in Africa.

I am happy to say that within the context of discussions on the Special Session of the General Assembly on the Critical Economic Situation in Africa, 27-31 May 1986, this same subject has been receiving attention. Specifically, I understand that at the meeting on the status of women held in Vienna from 24 February to 5 March 1986, it was noted that the view that food security in Africa cannot effectively be improved unless due attention is given to women food farmers is being presented vigorously by organizations such as FAO, United Nations Development Fund for Women and the Commonwealth Secretariat. As you are the principal party concerned, I suggest that during this your meeting you consider this matter and discuss the strategies required for the unequivocal recognition of the role of women in solving Africa's food crisis.

With the debates in the Nairobi Conference still in mind you may wonder how you can have greater say in the planning process of your country. It is, after all, the plan that determines the allocation of scarce resources. As most women operate in the informal sector their needs and potentials are often neglected in these plans. There may be genuine methodological problems confronting the planner. However, it is obvious that the economic aspects of development requires expansion, in order to incorporate the human productive and reproductive activities existing within the informal sectors of the economy. It is important that you as women establish a dialogue with the planning agencies of your countries so that you can be active participants in the planning process.

The lack of information on women's activities is often given as a reason for their neglect in the planning process. However, it is our assessment that even when the information is available there is insufficient use made of it. For instance, the ECA Women's Programme series of Annotated Bibliographies on

Women in Development in Africa focusing on Tanzania, Cameroon, Nigeria, Mali, Ethiopia, Zambia and Zimbabwe is ample proof that a rich literature exists on women. On the whole I tend to subscribe to the view that the research results of the United Nations Decade have not yet been adequately analyzed to provide inputs to policy formulation and policy implementation.

At this point, I should add that national efforts and resources need to be supplemented by external resources. As UNDP enters into consultations in the process of preparing its programme for Africa under the Fourth Cycle (1987-1991), it is my hope that you will make a strong case for UNDP assistance to the MULPOC programme for women, to ARCC, and for regional training programmes, taking into consideration the lessons learnt in the last five years. It is with pride that I state that UNDP assistance has enabled us to be the only regional commission to set up structures at regional and subregional levels for the advancement of women. We must not loose sight of this achievement.

CHAPTER TEN

TRADITIONAL PRACTICES AFFECTING THE HEALTH OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN

**STATEMENT AT THE FIRST REGIONAL SEMINAR OF THE
INTER-AFRICAN COMMITTEE ON TRADITIONAL PRACTICES
AFFECTING THE HEALTH OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN**

**ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
6 APRIL 1987**

Cognizant of the important work carried out by the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children, the ECA has been happy to enter into a co-operative arrangement with the Committee in order to promote the health and welfare of African women and children. Non-governmental organizations such as yours have played a significant role in the transfer of resources and technical know-how to the developing world; in creating opportunities for the involvement of women at the national, regional and international levels; in raising global consciousness about such issues as equality of women, development and peace. In this capacity, NGOs have earned the respect and recognition from governments and United Nations bodies alike. As a young regional African NGO, the Inter-African Committee has a tremendous responsibility. You have set yourself a dual task. First, the promotion of our African heritage, those traditions and customs that strengthen African community life and, second, the eradication of those that are harmful to the health of women and children.

Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) have also been very instrumental in strengthening ECA's activities directed at the advancement of African women. If at present most African countries have established focal points or organizations for the advancement of women in our region, it is due to the pioneering work done by NGOs. Most of the national machineries for the advancement of women have developed from the pioneering work of voluntary women's group.

The Economic Commission for Africa believes that in terms of economic development of our region, the health of the population has a major bearing on development possibilities and prospects. This is particularly so for our women, since women affect directly not only the quantity but also the quality of the labour force. Women shape the attitudes, creativeness and ingenuity of the young, qualities crucial for development. The health status of women is of paramount importance. The ECA has been alarmed, for instance, by the high maternal mortality rates in Africa. It has been estimated that this is 200-600 per 100,000 live births, whilst that of Denmark, for instance, is 10 per 100,000 live births. It is our view that socio-economic factors have a direct bearing on this situation and that poverty constitutes a high risk factor in the survival of women. What is tragic is the fact that if only basic and elementary health care could be provided, over 80 per cent of these maternal deaths would be avoided. Furthermore, the poorer women are the more vulnerable to harmful traditional practices with which this meeting is concerned. Thus, it seems to me that health and economics are inextricably linked together.

Cultural factors constitute another dimension to be considered. As you all know, Africa is a continent rich in traditions, traditions that have survived the so-called modernizing forces of the twentieth century; traditions that have helped sustain our people during the harshest oppressive experiences of the colonial era and the subsequent dislocations of family and social systems; traditions that have continued to shape our unique identity and personality.

We must admit, though, that some of these traditions and customs, which may have once appeared to serve the needs of our societies, are no longer relevant. We must recognize that some cultural beliefs and traditional norms number among the major factors that hinder women from fully enjoying their educational, political and social rights. The situation warrants a willingness to closely and critically examine our value structures and a readiness to disregard those practices which we find to be harmful to the health and well-being of individuals in our society while, at the same time, treasure the richer aspects of our culture which enhance and strengthen our communities.

Not only economic constraints, inadequate infrastructures, lack of awareness but also socio-cultural and religious factors continue to hamper women's access to health services. Where there is poverty and illiteracy, where the contributions of women in production is unrecognized, women suffer the worst effects of traditional practices from infancy through adulthood. In Africa, the female child usually gets a lesser portion than the male children in the allocation of family food resources, with consequences that are detrimental to her physical and psycho-social development. She is often denied educational opportunities. She marries younger and starts having children too early and too frequently for her physical and emotional maturity. Furthermore, the lack of adequate nutrition for African women is compounded by nutritional taboos. Her frail body is subjected to the severest types of traditional practices such as excision and infibulation. All these contribute to the high rate of infant and maternal morbidity and mortality in Africa, which represent a high social and economic cost to society. It is clear that the health and well-being of women and the health and well-being of a nation are closely intertwined; the problem of women therefore cannot be divorced from the problem of society as a whole.

Attitudes passed on from one generation to the next have been powerful obstacles to the active participation of women in mainstream development. And, for too long, women's own beliefs have often surfaced as important barriers and their role in the transmission of cultural and traditional values has contributed to the perpetuation of various harmful practices. Thus, overcoming such traditional practices depends as much on women's integration into development as it does on changing societal value-structures and attitudes.

The Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women adopted in 1985 unequivocally states that "health education should be geared towards changing those attitudes and values and actions that are discriminatory and detrimental to women's and girls' health". The Strategies further emphasize the importance of creating and strengthening the necessary infrastructures to facilitate access to promotive, preventive and curative health measures.

Finally, let me inform you that soon after your meeting, representatives of African governments will be meeting in ECA to consider the future of the ECA Women's Programme. The participants of the Africa Regional Co-ordinating Committee for the Integration of Women in Development will be considering your recommendations and I can assure you that that body will lend its fullest support to your endeavours.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CHANGING DEMANDS FOR IMPROVING THE STATUS OF WOMEN

**STATEMENT AT THE NINTH MEETING OF THE AFRICA REGIONAL
CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR THE INTEGRATION OF WOMEN
IN DEVELOPMENT**

**NIAMEY, NIGER
3 APRIL 1988**

At a time when ECA is celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of its establishment it is my particular pleasure to welcome you all to the ninth meeting of the Africa Regional Co-ordinating Committee for the Integration of Women in Development (ARCC). The ARCC is primarily responsible for monitoring the socio-economic changes taking place in the region and their effects on women. As representatives of women's machineries from your respective countries you are aware that African governments have endeavoured to adopt policies for improved economic performance since the adoption of the African Priority Programme for Economic Recovery (APPER) in 1985 and the United Nations Programme of Action for Africa's Economic Recovery and Development (UN-PAAERD) in 1986. Acknowledgement of these efforts needs to be made as we plan for further advances in the status of women and in their participation in development.

National women's machineries today are instrumental in many African countries in sensitizing governments, non-governmental bodies, institutions, groups and individuals on the role of women in development. National policies on women's roles and status in society are being adopted in many African countries and there are deliberate attempts to better the conditions of women in key economic sectors such as agriculture. Attention is increasingly being given to the informal sector in which, in some countries, women make up as much as 60-80 of the labour force. Efforts in this area are intended to improve working conditions, skills and access to credit which, in the long run, will improve the living conditions and quality of life of all the labour force but particularly women.

In spite of these efforts, recent assessments of the socio-economic progress made by African women show that a great deal more needs to be done to attain a total integration of women in the development process. Early last month, an international conference on the Human Dimension of Africa's Economic Recovery and Development held in Khartoum, the Sudan, noted that some recovery measures had excluded human concerns and needs. Among the groups most affected are women. Women's programmes and women's machineries are affected by reduction of financial support from governments faced with tough structural adjustment programmes. World Bank estimates show that as high as 65 per cent of rural populations, most of whom, as we know, are women, live below the poverty line. They are confronted with limited assets such as land, adverse environmental conditions, limited access to means of production and social services such as health and education. Measures that focus on export crops have promoted the allocation of land to cash crops which are predominantly produced by men. This is reducing land available for food production and thus reduces nutritional intakes for families and incomes for

women food producers. This leads to reduced control by women over household incomes.

In the face of the difficulties being experienced by our countries in promoting recovery we must, without wasting any more precious time, resources and human life, take seriously the question of integrating women in development. In view of the critical role of women in agriculture, the special needs of agricultural producers must continue to be catered for. We now know that to increase producer prices alone is not enough incentive for increased productivity in agriculture. Other incentives such as appropriate infrastructures, human resources development, essential inputs and adequate marketing opportunities, are needed. Basic services of health, water, sanitation, education and transportation have to be part of the recovery package and not be seen as an end result of the recovery programme. They are basic and essential for recovery.

For longer term development of rural people, particularly women, and for the improvement of their roles there is need to do the following:

- serious consideration of policies that will promote not only short term economic recovery but also long term sustainable development;
- research into technologies that can truly lighten the burdens of women in production, processing, storage and distribution of their produce, and households tasks;
- development of research methodologies that are relevant to Africa with a gender bias to provide information for planning and decision-making;
- strengthening of national women's machineries, including the establishment of data banks for storage and dissemination of badly needed data on women in Africa;
- support to African NGOs that promote women's participation in Africa's economic recovery and development.

As your agenda is heavy I do not wish to take too much of your time. But I would like to mention two positive developments since your last meeting:

First, last year during the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of Ministers we discussed the situation of women in the United Nations

Secretariat. The commitment of the United Nations Secretary-General to the advancement of women has been amply demonstrated by the steps he has taken to increase the number of women professionals in the ECA. I am happy to report that the problem of ensuring permanency to the Women Centre at ECA has now been solved. As a result, in terms of post, and as compared to the other four regional commissions, ECA now has the strongest focal point for the advancement of women.

In this connection, ARCC has been concerned about the programme of women in the MULPOCs. As you can see in the evaluation report, the subregional women's programme in the MULPOCs was successful and needs to be continued. For this purpose a major project at the MULPOC level has been presented to UNDP for funding which embraces activities that can meet the subregional concerns of women and we are optimistic about the outcome of this proposal. However, the success of the programme requires the full support of member States. In these difficult times mobilization of resources has to be a combined effort of all concerned, and the role your governments can play in the Governing Council of UNDP and other decision-making bodies is crucial for our success.

The second point to which I wish to draw your attention is the report of the regional workshop on the integration of African Women in Trade and Commerce which took place here in Niamey last week. A dynamic and organized system of domestic trade is a key element in boosting production, creating employment and a better distribution of income. As women represent approximately 50 per cent of the labour force engaged in this sector, public authorities must fully support them with enlightened policies and incentives, better transport and storage facilities, credit, access to information etc. As leaders in your various countries it is your responsibility to pressure governments to implement these and other recommendations of the workshop.

CHAPTER TWELVE

REQUIREMENTS FOR A BETTER FUTURE FOR WOMEN IN AFRICA

**STATEMENT AT THE TENTH MEETING OF THE AFRICA REGIONAL
CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR THE INTEGRATION OF WOMEN
IN DEVELOPMENT**

**ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
23 MARCH 1989**

Looking at the situation of African women at the end of the 1980s we find both positive and negative developments. There is no question that a wide range of activities have been undertaken, by the United Nations family, by non-governmental organizations and by governments, for the advancement of women since the Nairobi and Arusha Conferences. Some of the documents before you refer to the activities undertaken since the last ARCC meeting. They show that, in many countries, there are efforts to strengthen the women's national machineries and women's affairs units by locating them in strategic positions. In the employment sector, there is a noticeable tendency for women to move into the professional categories which were, until only recently, occupied almost exclusively by men. In education and training there has been an increase of girls' enrolment at all levels of educational systems. Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland are reported to have the highest female enrolment at both primary and secondary levels in Africa. At decision-making levels some governments such as Senegal, Tanzania, Mauritius, Gabon and Uganda have established measures to increase the participation of women in key responsible positions both in the public and private sectors. Another positive development is that there is increasing inter-agency co-operation, both at national and regional levels, in the formulation and implementation of programmes dealing with women.

Against these positive developments, we have to recognize that women have been adversely affected by the crisis still confronting African economies. Despite the fact that in the agriculture and food sectors there was some progress, because other sectors showed poor performance, because of falling oil prices and production levels, unfavourable demand and price conditions for exports, and the foreign exchange crunch, the growth rate in overall output is still below the growth rate in population. Furthermore, there is a trend of capital decumulation and capital consumption thus jeopardizing future economic growth on the continent.

Members of ARCC are surely aware of the debate on Africa's external debt and the debt servicing situation which are steadily worsening. The total external debt of the region now stands at US\$ 230 billion, with a debt service ratio of over 40 per cent, on average. What it means in human terms is that the African populations have less access to basic commodities and services such as food and primary health care, less opportunities for employment and a general decrease in the standard of living.

The burden on women is increasing instead of decreasing, infant mortality is rising, more and more babies are born underweight and women are working harder than ever before in order to keep life going. Structural adjustment

policies are often gender biased since they ignore the unpaid labour of women. There is also evidence to show that women are increasingly joining the informal sector to compensate for declining family incomes. We see an increase in the number of women-headed households both in urban and rural areas.

The full impact of the African economic and social crisis on women has not, however, been fully revealed since there is lack of empirical data and analysis. In many existing research on the subject, women's concerns are often neglected mainly because the studies are prepared by economists within a frame of thinking and analysis which traditionally makes no direct reference to the human situation of the people involved. In your respective countries you may wish to pursue this matter and promote studies that reflect women conditions in the context of economic stagnation and decline. We in ECA will, of course, continue to monitor different aspects of this subject.

The United Nations, in its effort to give greater prominence to women issues, has now elevated the status of the women's programme in the Medium-Term Plan, 1992 to 1997, by making it stand on its own as Advancement of Women, instead of as one element in Social Development. In fact, ECOSOC resolution 1988/59 of 27 July 1988 requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations to initiate the formulation of a system-wide Medium-Term Plan for the Advancement of Women, directed towards the objectives of equality, development and peace, for the period 1996-2001. This recommendation demonstrates that the United Nations is as committed as ever to improving the status of women.

Finally, I wish to impress upon you the responsibility you have as planners of the Fourth Regional Conference on the Implementation of Arusha Strategies which will be held in Nigeria in 1989. As you well know, all African member States will be participating. It is my hope that we can utilize the Conference to develop programmes and activities that will genuinely empower women to play a major role in the development of our continent. In this respect we have still a long way to go. For instance, as of September 1987, only 49 per cent of African states have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women. National machineries for women should play a greater role in seeing that their governments not only ratify the Convention, but that its provisions are implemented. In ECA, we also need your collaboration in providing the Secretariat with data to enrich our programme so that it can respond to your needs.

ARCC is celebrating its tenth year this year and I know that in your meeting you will be discussing the programme for celebrating this landmark during the Fourth Regional Conference. I think it will be a unique opportunity for all of us to publicize the work of this Committee. ARCC is now an established institution and as such we must ensure its permanency and its strengthening in the future.

In conclusion, may I say that I look forward to your deliberations at this meeting as well as your participation in TEPCOW and the Conference of Ministers. Since the theme of the Conference of Ministers is "Search for an African Alternative to STructural Adjustment Programmes" I am sure that you will have much to contribute to the discussions.