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**Building on Beijing:
United States NGOs Shape a**



**Women's National
Action Agenda**

Published by
The Stanley Foundation

In cooperation with
American Association of University Women
Church Women United
National Association of Commissions for Women
Women's Environment and Development Association



File
Women
2000

August 22, 2000

Melanne Verveer
Office of the First Lady
Old Executive Office Building
Room 100
Washington, DC 20500

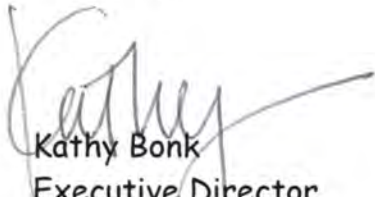
Dear Melanne:

About a year ago, we began working with the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (CONGO) and the US Host Committee on Women 2000 on plans for the Beijing + 5 UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS). Our goal was modest: to facilitate a coordinated communications strategy for UNGASS that would achieve maximum impact to advance the goals of the conference. Our primary objectives were to coordinate media activities with a firm commitment to diversity, collaboration and openness; and to facilitate a process of media relations that would give women from around the world the ability to tell their stories in their own voices.

We are very pleased with the results. Enclosed are a full clip book with more than 150 individual articles, many of which ran in different publications, and a commemorative copy of the Women 2000 press kit. In addition, we have a tape of more than three hours of Women 2000 network news broadcasts and can make these video clips available in the near future.

Media coverage of Women 2000 is a result of the collective efforts of dozens of committed professionals and volunteers from the NGO community, UN agencies and supportive governments. It shows what can be accomplished when we all work together.

Sincerely,

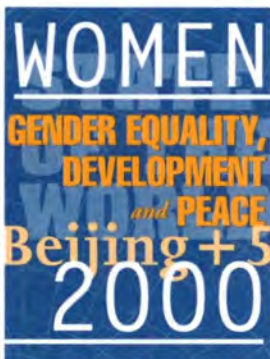


Kathy Bonk
Executive Director
Communications
Consortium Media Center



Emily Tynes
Senior Vice President
Communications
Consortium Media Center

Enclosed:
Women 2000 press kit
Clip Book



Gender Equality,
Development and Peace
for the 21st Century

Women 2000/Beijing+5

News Coverage

*Coverage of the
United Nations General Assembly
Special Session (UNGASS)
June 2000*

The New York Times

SATURDAY, JUNE 3, 2000

Measuring the Progress of Women

Next week at the United Nations, representatives of nearly every country and thousands of non-governmental groups are meeting to talk about what the world has done to improve the lives of women. The delegates will evaluate what has happened since the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing, when 187 nations endorsed a wide range of goals and promised specific actions.

The subject of women's needs is, of course, a broad one, encompassing poverty — 70 percent of the poor are female — health, domestic violence, armed conflict, political representation and other issues. One achievement of the Beijing conference was its acknowledgment that women need to be heard in debates on just about every kind of policy.

The Beijing conference was the fourth U.N. conference on women, but more than the others it established concrete targets — such as abolishing laws that discriminate against women economically or increasing the number of women in public administration — and set timetables for measuring progress. Activists have found these benchmarks crucial to holding governments accountable.

In 1998 the Women's Environment and Development Organization, a New York-based network of groups, did a survey of progress. It found that most of the governments represented at Beijing had drawn up plans to keep their promises, and 64 countries had changed laws. The growth of local

women's groups has been the most important reason for these advances. Some 30,000 activists attended the Beijing conference, and they have used its platform to organize women and to press governments to keep their commitments.

But most of what governments call action is still just lofty talk, and is not yet affecting women. The inaction stems partly from cultural resistance and partly from lack of money to finance new programs. Governments argue, persuasively, that they are overwhelmed by AIDS, debt payments and budget cuts demanded by the International Monetary Fund. But women's issues have never been a priority, even when progress, as with educating girls, would benefit the nation as a whole.

In addition, many governments are not even changing egregious laws, which costs nothing. In several countries women may not inherit property. In much of Latin America, a rapist goes free if he marries the victim. In several Islamic countries, a man may kill a female relative who has disgraced the family. In Pakistan, women's testimony has no value in rape cases. In Kuwait, women still may not vote. "We have prepared people to ask their government: 'Did you do what you said you would do?'" says Litha Musyimi-Ogana, a Kenyan activist, who could be speaking for women's groups everywhere. This is a big achievement, but the answer in too many places is "no."

NATIONAL COVERAGE

U.N. reports more girls in school but epidemic of domestic violence

By EDITH M. LEDERER, Associated Press Writer

In an assessment of women's progress toward equality, the United Nations reported Wednesday that more girls are attending school - but that all females still confront "a global epidemic" of violence.

The mixed snapshot for women five years after a major international women's conference in Beijing shows they comprise an increasing share of the world's labor force but are making no headway in cracking the top echelons of business and government.

The U.N. reports show women generally marrying later, having fewer children, and living longer, but still comprising two-thirds of the world's illiterates and almost half the victims of HIV and AIDS.

A 180-page report on "The World's **Women 2000**" produced by the U.N. Statistics Division and a 21-page report by the U.N. Children's Fund on "Domestic Violence Against Women and Girls" were released separately Wednesday, five days before the start of a major U.N. women's conference.

Ministers from 188 nations will meet for five days starting Monday - shadowed by thousands of women from grassroots organizations - to review progress toward implementing the wide-ranging platform of action adopted at the 1995 U.N. women's conference in Beijing. With the goal of achieving full gender equality, the platform called on governments to revise laws to ensure women's equal rights, to provide equal education for girls and to ensure the right of women to decide matters of sexual and reproductive health. It also urged governments and businesses to put women in top decision-making positions and called for the elimination of violence against women.

The UNICEF report said most data on violence against women is believed to be "not only conservative, but unreliable." Nonetheless, it concluded that physical violence against women is prevalent and that 20 percent to 50 percent of women have experienced domestic violence. UNICEF said too few nations have moved to stop violence against women, ranging from infanticide to spousal abuse to honor-killings.

The U.N. Statistics Division report also concluded that physical and sexual abuse affects millions of girls and women worldwide - and remains underreported. Presenting the report at a news conference, U.N. Undersecretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Nitan Desai said that "available data show that women are making gains, but persistent disparities exist between women and men." The gender gap in schooling for youngsters is closing, he said, but will not be closed by the target date of 2005 which was set in 1995. The report found that at least one-third of women are part of the work force in all regions except northern Africa and western Asia.

But it also concluded that "women remain at the lower end of a segregated labor market and continue to be concentrated in a few occupations, to hold positions of little or no authority and to receive less pay than men." In the five years since Beijing, the report said women's participation in the top levels of government and business "has not markedly increased."

Women remain underpaid, under-represented and under threat

By EDITH M. LEDERER, Associated Press Writer

Five years after a major international conference pledged to seek full equality of the sexes, more women are working and more girls are going to school - but women remain underpaid, under-represented in governments and under threat of physical and sexual abuse.

Two U.N. reports released Wednesday painted a mixed picture of progress since the 1995 U.N. conference in Beijing, concluding that equality for women remains a distant goal on issues ranging from the workplace to education, health, human rights and political decision-making. "Available data show that women are making gains, but persistent disparities exist between men and women," said U.N. Undersecretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Nitan Desai.

A 180-page report on "The World's **Women 2000**" produced by the U.N. Statistics Division and a 21-page report by the U.N. Children's Fund on "Domestic Violence Against Women and Girls" were released before a five-day ministerial conference opening Monday to review progress on implementing the ambitious platform for action adopted in Beijing.

It called on governments to revise laws to ensure women's equal rights, to provide equal education for girls and ensure the right of women to decide matters of sexual and reproductive health. It also urged governments and businesses to put women in top decision-making positions and called for the elimination of violence against women.

But five years later, the UNICEF report said, "violence against women and girls continues to be a global epidemic that kills, tortures, and maims - physically, psychologically, sexually and economically." And it said too few nations have moved to stop violence against women, ranging from infanticide to spousal abuse to honor killings. UNICEF said most data on violence against women is believed to be "not only conservative, but unreliable." Nonetheless, it concluded that "a growing body of research studies confirms the prevalence of physical violence in all parts of the globe, including the estimates of 20 to 50 percent of women from country to country who have experienced domestic violence."

The U.N. Statistics Division report also concluded that physical and sexual abuse affects millions of girls and women worldwide - and remains under-reported. In education, school enrollment figures show the gender gap closing in primary and secondary schooling. But the report said the gap is still wide in 22 African countries and nine Asian countries where enrollment for girls is less than 80 percent of the enrollment for boys. "It is unlikely this gap will be closed by the target date of 2005," Desai said.

While the statistical report showed women generally marrying later, having fewer children, and living longer, it also found that they comprise two-thirds of the world's illiterates and almost half the victims of HIV and AIDS. When it comes to work, the study found that at least one-third of women are part of the work force in all regions except northern Africa and western Asia. But it also concluded that "women remain at the lower end of a segregated labor market and continue to be concentrated in a few occupations, to hold positions of little or no authority and to receive less pay than men."

In the five years since Beijing, the report said, "women's participation in the top levels of government and business has not markedly increased."

UN wants greater political will, more money for women issues

By HARMONIE TOROS, Associated Press Writer

Five years after most of the world's nations pledged in Beijing to push for women's equality, a lack of money and political will have largely thwarted progress toward the goal, the president of the U.N. General Assembly said Friday.

Theo-Ben Gurirab spoke ahead of Monday's opening of a five-day conference to review progress on the platform for action adopted at the 1995 U.N. women's conference in Beijing, which laid out a roadmap for achieving equality for women. "If there had been political will we would have gone a long way toward meeting the goals and objectives set in Beijing," said Gurirab, who is expected to be elected president of next week's special session of the General Assembly to assess progress since the Beijing conference.

The platform of action, adopted by consensus by 189 countries, called on governments to revise laws to ensure equal rights for women, equal education for girls, and to ensure the right of women to decide matters of sexual and reproductive health. It also urged governments and businesses to put women in top decision-making positions and called for the elimination of violence against women.

Gurirab, who is also Namibia's foreign minister, said that a "failure to provide the necessary financial resources to implement the agreed commitments" also contributed to the failure to reach the Beijing goals.

At next week's conference, ministers from 188 countries are expected to debate, and possibly adopt, a new action plan to speed up implementation of the **Beijing** platform. U.N. officials are expecting 10,000 men and women to attend the conference.

In two reports published this week, the United Nations said that although progress could be noted in several fields - including education, health, and the participation of women in politics - there remains much to be done.

"Women still are among the most illiterate, they are certainly the largest proportion of the poor and the hungry, they suffer from dislocation, violence, poor nutrition and ill-health," said Angela King, special adviser to the U.N. Secretary-General on gender issues and the advancement of women. "They still lag behind men in virtually all aspects of life," she said.

There is still serious disagreement over the final document to be adopted when the conference ends next Friday, especially on issues of health and family, said Christine Kapalata, chairwoman of the conference preparatory committee. "You have different social systems, you have different religious dispensations, and to have a common position on these issues at first sight is not very easy," Kapalata said.

Nations work to hasten progress on equality

By EDITH M. LEDERER
Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — Five years ago, the biggest global gathering of women in history helped spur 189 countries to adopt an ambitious plan to achieve equality of the sexes. Still very far from that goal, the same nations meet tomorrow to try to agree on an accelerated roadmap toward equality for women.

But the Vatican and a group of Islamic countries are objecting to the same proposals they did in Beijing in 1995 — including sexual and reproductive rights for women, adolescent sex education and the definition of the family — as well as some new ones.

"It's becoming very, very clear that there are a few countries that are trying to stand in the way of progress," said Linda Tarr-Whelan, the U.S. ambassador to the Commission on the Status of Women.

Tarr-Whelan pointed to Algeria, Sudan, Libya, Iran and to a lesser extent the Vatican, saying there has been a "backlash" against the progress that has been made since Beijing.

"These are folks who like it the way they have it and are trying to slow the whole process down," she said.

The final document outlining initiatives to spur implementation of the 150-page Beijing platform was supposed to have been completed this past week. But the ideological divide over a range of issues was likely to keep negotiators working through much of the five-day conference to try to reach consensus before it ends Friday.

At the same time, delegates are celebrating the first successes after Beijing.

The Beijing platform runs the gamut from promoting women's inheritance rights to condemning rape in wartime and alleviating the increasing poverty of women. For the first time, a U.N. document declared that women have the right to decide freely all matters related to their sexuality and childbearing.

THE PLATFORM also calls on governments to revise laws to ensure women's equal rights, to pro-

The final document outlining initiatives to spur implementation of the 150-page Beijing platform was supposed to have been completed this past week. But the ideological divide over a range of issues was likely to keep negotiators working through much of the five-day conference to try to reach consensus.

vide equal education for girls, and to put women in top decision-making positions in business and government.

Over the past five years, U.N. surveys show more girls are going to school and more women are working and receiving health care. There's also been "a tremendous amount of women's rights and anti-discrimination legislation" though not all of it has been implemented, said Assistant Secretary-General Angela King, the top U.N. adviser on women.

First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton will speak here tomorrow about expanding the use of small loans to help poor women escape poverty — an issue she promoted at the Beijing conference, where it was endorsed.

The biggest achievement since Beijing "is that women are really on the agenda," said Charlotte Bunch, director of the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University in New Jersey.

But women remain underpaid, underrepresented in governments, and under threat of physical and sexual abuse — and three-quarters of the world's poorest are women and children.

In the face of conservative opposition, Susana Galdos, a member of the Peruvian delegation, said she fears this week's conference could reverse the gains of Beijing.

Even though the new document reaffirms the 189 nations' commitment to the Beijing platform, every reference in it to sexual rights is still bracketed — signifying disagreement among delegates.

Developing nations are trying to soften the Beijing platform's strong affirmation that countries have a "duty" to protect human rights "regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems." They have proposed language saying countries can implement the platform "with full respect" to religious or cultural backgrounds.

THE VATICAN and conservatives object to the Beijing platform's reference to nontraditional families, which they view as an implied blessing of homosexual unions, single parents and couples living together out of wedlock.

Delegates also remain divided on newer issues, including the effects of globalization on women and how to educate young people about the dangers of HIV/AIDS.

And a reference in the new document to legal measures in a growing number of countries "to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation" also remains bracketed. At Beijing, lesbian rights were dropped from the final draft.

Organizers estimate that 10,000 delegates and grass-roots activists will attend the conference — compared to at least 40,000 in Beijing. And on the eve of the opening session, nobody is certain what the final document will say.

"There's a backlash against women's visibility," said Bunch, of Rutgers. "There's a backlash against women pushing the boundaries of the issues. And that's what we're seeing in this process now — the backlash."

Nonetheless, she said, delegates have already agreed to the most important provision — the reaffirmation of the Beijing platform for the next decade.

Yakin Erturk, director of the U.N. Division for the Advancement of Women, said the United Nations hopes the final document will go further and call on member states to set deadlines to achieve progress toward equality for women.

Tarr-Whelan, the U.S. ambassador, said her pessimism has turned to optimism that the final document "will be the next roadmap to give more concrete steps for action for achieving women's equality."

'To be beaten, raped, forced into prostitution'

TRENTON (AP) — The day before the United Nations convenes a weeklong session on the international movement to enhance women's human rights, a host of nongovernmental organizations will gather to discuss strategies to meet the goals set forth in Beijing five years ago.

"We often hear about the problems," said Charlotte Bunch, executive director for the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University, who cited examples such as sexual trafficking in the Far East and genital mutilation in Africa.

"What we don't hear is what's being done about them," said Bunch, an international women's rights activist who helped cultivate the idea that women's rights are human rights.

The women's leadership center is co-sponsoring "Women 2000: A Symposium on Future Directions for Human Rights," which will be held today at Columbia University. The symposium is free and open to the public.

"The symposium will feature some of the best examples from around the world to illustrate what works and what doesn't," said Roxanna Carrillo, human rights adviser for the United Nations Development Fund for Women.

The development fund provided seed money for two organizations that will speak today. One collects data on the growing accounts of domestic violence in the Balkans, and has created sensitivity training programs for police officers and physicians dealing with those victims. The other was for a Palestinian-based group that established the first hot line to address honor killings in the West Bank and Gaza.

The groups are examples of how women are taking U.N. declarations

Discussion targets women's abuse

on human rights and applying them to secure their own rights, Carrillo said.

Other organizations scheduled to speak will discuss how they used U.N. declarations, for example, to obtain inheritance rights for women in Nepal and end the forced sterilization of poor women in Peru.

"(The declarations) aren't just pieces of paper. We really can organize around them and make change," said Bunch.

THE CONCEPT of women's rights as human rights gained momentum in the late 1980s. Bunch, who was then teaching a global feminism course at Douglass College, said the idea developed in various parts of the world.

The center, which was created in 1990 to serve as an international resource for leadership training and grass-roots organizing, came to serve as a catalyst for activists who are part of a global women's movement.

The United Nations' Vienna tribunal in 1993 was the turning point in the movement, said Bunch.

"This was critical because it makes understandable the seriousness of women's rights" and clearly articulates that human rights are fundamental, Bunch said.

"To be beaten daily in your home, raped in the streets, forced into prostitution," is a violation of human rights, she said.

Amy Bain took a break from work on a master's degree in women's studies to help organize the event, which is expected to draw more than 500 people. She is looking forward to meeting activists who have crafted programs to protect women who are not equally protected under

the laws of their respective countries.

"This is something I'll always take with me, no matter what career I choose," said Bain, 27. "Talking about women's human rights will always be a part of my life."

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, outlined fundamental freedoms for all persons, regardless of sex, race or class.

The United Nations, however, did not begin to address how those freedoms were being denied to women until it held its first women's conference in Mexico City in 1975. Although there were two other conferences in Copenhagen in 1980 and in Nairobi in 1985, the notion of women's human rights was not recognized until the 1993 Vienna tribunal, where a litany of testimony about abuses against women was heard.

Tomorrow, the United Nations General Assembly will convene a special session, known as Beijing Plus Five, to review progress since the 1995 World Conference on Women. That conference produced a "platform for action" that seeks to hold governments accountable when they do not ensure women their education, health care and reproduction rights in addition to freedom from violence and poverty.

"I believe that something has shifted in the lives of women around the world," said Bunch. "They will bring changes in this century that we cannot anticipate. Ultimately, this is unstoppable."

On the Net:

www.cwgl.rutgers.edu

www.un.org/womenwatch/followup/beijing5/index.html

UN human rights chief fears conference may reverse women's gains

By EDITH M. LEDERER, Associated Press Writer

On the eve of a U.N. conference to assess progress toward equality of the sexes, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights accused some countries of trying to reverse the gains won by women at a global gathering five years ago.

Mary Robinson declined to name the countries, but Amnesty International's Secretary-General Pierre Sane said Algeria, Libya, Iran, Pakistan and the Vatican were playing "a very destructive role" in negotiations on a final forward-looking document. Other delegates included Sudan on the list. Those who support the plan outlined in the 150-page platform drafted at the 1995 **Beijing women's conference** should start pressuring governments to send a message "that we're not regrouping, or retrenching, or going backwards," Robinson said. "We need to fight," Sane echoed. "We know that in previous world conferences, advances have been made because of the pressure."

The Beijing platform runs the gamut from promoting women's inheritance rights to calling on governments to provide equal education and employment and demanding that business and government put women in top decision-making posts.

Robinson stressed the importance of the platform to millions of women and girls who still faced huge inequalities in jobs, education and living standards, and who were victims of sexual and racial discrimination, domestic violence and prostitution. The fact that the Beijing platform was being reviewed was worrying, she said before speaking to about 1,000 women at a human rights symposium at Columbia University. She said she would like the final document to ensure "no dilution" of Beijing, to affirm that states must assume primary responsibility for ensuring women's equal rights, and to send a message that "national, cultural, religious and historical considerations ... can never be allowed to be used as justifications for the infringement of women's human rights."

In ground breaking provisions adopted at Beijing, delegates stated for the first time in a U.N. document that women have the right to decide freely all matters related to their sexuality and child-bearing.

Organizers estimated that 10,000 delegates and grassroots activists would attend the conference - compared to about 40,000 in Beijing, which was the biggest global gathering of women in history. Ministers from 188 nations were expected to speak at open plenary sessions this week, while work on the final document would be going on in closed-door sessions.

Objections by the Vatican and some Islamic countries to many of the same issues they raised in Beijing - including sexual and reproductive rights for women and adolescent sex education - are expected to keep negotiators working until Friday's close to try to reach consensus.

Negotiations have agreed on wording in the final document's political declaration which reaffirms the commitment of governments to implement the Beijing platform, said Charlotte Bunch, director of the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University in New Jersey, which sponsored Sunday's symposium. At the same time, however, many governments seemed reluctant to set specific goals or commit resources to implementation, she said

Battle lines at women's conference resemble Beijing in 1995

By EDITH M. LEDERER, Associated Press Writer

Five years after adopting an ambitious plan to achieve women's equality, 188 nations are meeting to assess progress, and the battle lines look very familiar: Women's activists and many democracies versus the Vatican and a handful of Islamic countries - just like Beijing in 1995.

The conference, which starts today, is supposed to come up with innovative, practical ways to accelerate implementation of the 150-page platform for action adopted during the first meeting in Beijing. But human rights groups, women's organizations, a U.S. ambassador and most recently the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights have expressed concern that it might reverse the gains from that first conference.

"I think this review is ... worrying because we're having difficulty holding on to the **platform of Beijing**, never mind moving much, much further as we need to," Human Rights Commissioner Mary Robinson said Sunday. "I think the few (states) that don't want progress are very effective, and that's a problem." While Robinson wouldn't name the recalcitrant countries, Amnesty International Secretary-General Pierre Sane accused Algeria, Libya, Iran, Pakistan and the Vatican of playing "a very destructive role" in negotiations on a final forward-looking document. Other delegates included Sudan on the list. Both Robinson and Sane urged supporters of the **Beijing platform** to start pressuring governments to move forward.

At Beijing, governments committed themselves to a platform that runs the gamut from promoting women's inheritance rights to calling on governments to provide equal education and employment. The platform demanded that business and government put women in top decision-making posts. In groundbreaking provisions, delegates also stated for the first time in a U.N. document that women have the right to decide freely all matters related to their sexuality and childbearing.

This week's special session of the U.N. General Assembly is scheduled to hear over 200 speeches starting this morning. Parallel sessions for thousands of representatives of grassroots groups will cover topics ranging from the effects of globalization on women to the role of men in ending gender-based violence. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, who went to Beijing in 1995, is scheduled to speak this afternoon on one of the issues she touted there - small loans to help poor women escape poverty.

But the most important work will be going on behind closed doors, where negotiators will try to reach consensus on the final document. The Vatican and some Islamic countries object to many of the same issues they raised in Beijing in 1995, including sexual and reproductive rights for women, adolescent sex education and the definition of the family.

Negotiators have agreed on wording in the final document's political declaration which reaffirms governments' commitment to the **Beijing platform**. At the same time, however, many governments seem reluctant to set specific goals or commit resources to implementation, and a handful are trying to "water down" Beijing's commitments, said Charlotte Bunch, director of the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University in New Jersey. She blamed a backlash against the increasing visibility of women - most blatantly by religious fundamentalists.

Robinson said she would like the final document to ensure "no dilution" of Beijing, to affirm that states must assume primary responsibility for ensuring women's equal rights, and to send a message that "national, cultural, religious and historical considerations ... can never be allowed to be used as justifications for the infringement of women's human rights."

U.N. chief, Hillary, activists demand equality for women

By EDITH M. LEDERER
Associated Press Writer



Associated Press

Singer Judy Collins huddles with U.N. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke Monday during the Women 2000 conference at the United Nations.

UNITED NATIONS — From all corners of the globe, high-ranking ministers and ordinary women joined the U.N. secretary-general and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton on Monday to demand that equality of the sexes become a reality at the start of the 21st century.

Five years after the biggest global gathering of women in history adopted an ambitious platform to achieve women's equality, nearly 180 nations met at a special General Assembly session to review progress. The initial report card found this answer: too little.

Speaker after speaker declared that the achievements since the 1995 Beijing conference are far outweighed by the remaining inequalities and persistent discrimination against women. "Much remains to be done," said Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

"We come here because for all of the progress we can point to our work is far from done," echoed the first lady, now a candidate for U.S. Senate from New York. "When girls are doused with gasoline, set on fire and burned to death because their marriage dowries are too small and when 'honor killings' continue to be tolerated, our work is far from done."

As they did in Beijing, thousands of women from grass-roots organizations around the world came to New York to lobby the delegates. Their colorful opening ceremony across the street from U.N. headquarters included speeches by Annan, Queen Noor of Jordan and U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson and entertainment by singer Judy Collins.

Japanese women, who are running a workshop to increase women's participation in politics, wore sashes reading "Don't be a Nobody." Members of the Indonesian Women's Forum for Democracy, wearing T-shirts saying "Democracy is Not Enough, We Need Gender Justice," were selling textiles and jewelry made by women.

The conference is supposed to come up with innovative, practical ways to accelerate implementation of the 150-page plan of action adopted in Beijing.

It called on governments to provide equal education and employment, demanded that business and government put women in top decision-making posts, and stated for the first time in a U.N. document that women have the right to decide freely all matters related to their sexuality and childbearing.

But human rights and women's activists are concerned that the conference may roll back the gains from Beijing because of opposition from the Vatican and a few Islamic countries including Algeria, Iran, Libya, Pakistan and Sudan.

"There must be no going back on the commitments," Robinson said. "The whole platform of action must not only be maintained but must be reinvigorated and given practical impetus around the world."

At Beijing, Clinton took center stage, attacking China's human rights record and demanding that women become equal partners in building a better world — a demand she echoed at a panel on one of the issues she promoted in 1995, small loans to help poor women escape poverty.

"Let us not just mark, but celebrate, a new century in which women's rights are once and for all treated as human rights, fully respected in every country in the world," she said.

In his speech, Annan cited progress in women's health and education, in making violence against women illegal, and above all in having more countries understand "that women's equality is a prerequisite for development."

Cheers for Clinton

By **BETH J. HARPAZ**

The Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — Hillary Rodham Clinton on Monday saluted the success of a loan program that "transforms lives" by turning millions of poor women around the world into entrepreneurs.

But in a reprise of a historic speech she gave at a United Nations women's conference in Beijing five years ago, Clinton said that violent abuses and discrimination against women remain rampant across the globe.

"When girls are doused with gasoline, set on fire, and burned to death because their marriage dowries are too small ... our work is far from done," Clinton said in remarks that sometimes echoed word for word her 1995 speech in China.

"When millions of girls are still kept out of school, often by their own families, our work is far from done. When babies are still denied food, drowned, and abandoned, simply because they are girls, our work is far from done."

Clinton's speech to the U.N. Conference on Women 2000 was frequently interrupted by applause from the standing-room-only crowd of 1,500.

The first lady's speech in Beijing — which included the line "Women's rights are human rights and human rights are women's rights" — is considered one of the highlights of her career. She stunned her hosts with a fierce condemnation of infanticide and

The first lady gives moving talk on women

other abuses at a time when the U.S. government was downplaying criticism of Chinese human rights violations.

"She has been a great advocate and a great role model and she was there with you in Beijing," U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said Monday.

The Beijing conference also launched a decade-long effort to bring microcredit — small cash loans usually issued by not-for-profit institutions or government agencies — to 100 million of the world's poorest families.

The New York meeting was designed to assess "what we have achieved, what more we need to do, and how we go forward," Annan said. "The revolution is not over."

Clinton said that despite continuing abuses, there also has been progress — such as laws passed in various countries raising the legal age for marriage, banning female genital mutilation, criminalizing domestic violence, and recognizing rape as a war crime.

Clinton also said that microcredit now reaches 20 million people, the majority of them women who open small businesses such as restaurants, bakeries, and sewing

shops. "I've met so many of these women whose lives were transformed," she said.

She gave as an example a woman in Chile who used her loan to buy a sewing machine. "The sewing machine meant so much to her she couldn't stop kissing it," Clinton said.

Microcredit programs also exist in the United States. Beulah Williams of Olney, Md., a single mother and grandmother, said she didn't qualify for a commercial bank loan but got a \$2,000 microcredit loan and opened a clothing business. "I'm empowered," she said.

Clinton recalled that when she met with women in India who got microcredit loans, they serenaded her with "We Shall Overcome," an anthem of the U.S. civil rights movement.

Those who heard Clinton on Monday were similarly moved. After she finished speaking, hundreds of women spontaneously began singing "We Shall Overcome," and the first lady joined in.

Afterward, many women said they wished Clinton success in her own historic run for the U.S. Senate. She is the first wife of a U.S. president to run for public office.

"She's fighting for us women and we have to support her," said Kadiatou Ossen of Benin. "Please let her go to the Senate."

"Every woman can really understand what Mrs. Clinton is saying," said Mazidah Zakaria of Malaysia.

Women's rights cited

U.N. delegates told much inequality remains



The Associated Press

U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan welcomes first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton to the Women 2000 conference panel Monday in New York.

UNITED NATIONS — Declaring that “much remains to be done” to achieve equality for women, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan yesterday challenged a conference reviewing progress since the landmark 1995 women’s gathering in Beijing to press for further results.

Five years ago, he said, delegates from 189 nations and thousands of women went to Beijing “to right wrongs and promote rights.” He expressed hope that this week’s conference “will put the world on notice that not only do women belong on this planet, but that the future of this planet depends on women.”

Human rights and women’s activists are concerned, however, that the conference may roll back the gains from Beijing instead of moving forward. And the battle lines are looking very familiar to those who attended the 1995 Beijing conference: women’s activists and many democracies versus the Vatican and a handful of Islamic countries.

The conference is supposed to come up with innovative, practical ways to accelerate implementation of the 150-page platform for action adopted in Beijing. But U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson worried that the

current review might weaken the agenda approved in Beijing.

“I think this review is . . . worrying because we’re having difficulty holding on to the platform of Beijing, never mind moving much, much further as we need to,” she said Sunday before speaking to about 1,000 women at a human-rights symposium Sunday at Columbia University.

“I think the few (states) that don’t want progress are very effective, and that’s a problem,” she said.

At yesterday’s opening of the special General Assembly session, Annan cited progress in women’s health and education, in making violence against women illegal, and above all in having more countries understand “that women’s equality is a prerequisite for development.”

“But at the same time, much remains to be done,” Annan said, citing the widening gap between the earnings of men and women, the denial of women’s inheritance rights, increasing violence against women despite legislation, and “a worldwide plague” of trafficking of women and children.

Noting that girls account for two-thirds of the 110 million children who are not in school, he declared that education is the key to equality because it “is both the entry

point into the global economy and the best defense against its pitfalls.”

At Beijing, governments committed themselves to a platform that ran the gamut from promoting women’s inheritance rights to calling on governments to provide equal education and employment and demanding that business and government put women in top decision-making posts.

In groundbreaking provisions, delegates also stated for the first time in a U.N. document that women have the right to decide freely all matters related to their sexuality and childbearing.

Amnesty International’s Secretary-General Pierre Sane accused Algeria, Libya, Iran, Pakistan and the Vatican of playing “a very destructive role” in negotiations on a final forward-looking document. Other delegates included Sudan on the list.

Both Robinson, the human-rights commissioner, and Sane urged supporters of the Beijing platform to start pressuring governments to move forward.

The Vatican and some Islamic countries object to the same proposals they did in Beijing in 1995 — including sexual and reproductive rights for women, adolescent sex education and the definition of the family.

U.S. optimistic of strong women's equality document, but obstacles remain

BYLINE: By EDITH M. LEDERER, Associated Press Writer

The U.S. delegation expressed optimism that this week's U.N. conference on women will produce a strong final document to accelerate progress toward equality of the sexes.

But the U.N. human rights chief and women's activists remain worried: They fear that some of the nearly 180 countries reviewing progress toward women's equality since a landmark 1995 **Beijing women's conference** will try to water down that meeting's ambitious 150-page platform for action.

During months of closed-door negotiations on the final document, delegates said the Vatican and a handful of Islamic countries including Algeria, Iran, Libya, Pakistan and Sudan held up action on key issues. For cultural or religious reasons, these countries favor the status quo and have opposed references to reproductive and sexual rights for women, adolescent sex education and nontraditional families.

On the second day of the conference today, the focus shifted to the link between economic progress and progress toward women's equality.

"Unless the global economic system promotes growth in least developed countries, important development program such as the **Beijing platform** for action can only realize minimal results," said Zambia's vice president, Lt. Gen. Christon Tembo, who noted that about 70 percent of Zambians live below the poverty line.

Vilma Espin Guillois, president of the Cuban Women's Federation, said the widening economic gap between industrialized and developing countries has hurt women.

"Women have seen, in these past five years, how they are excluded from opportunities to gain access to a dignified job, an adequate professional and technical training, health care and the guarantees of social security," she said.

Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers said the United States would push for greater international

assistance to combat AIDS and for debt relief for the world's 40 poorest countries during an upcoming economic summit this July in Okinawa, Japan.

Washington will also seek to boost World Bank spending on education in poor nations, especially for women, he said.

As the follow-up meeting began Monday, leading participants spoke out against attempts to retreat from Beijing's goals.

"There must be no going back on the commitments," U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson warned during the opening ceremony of a parallel conference of grass roots activists. "The whole platform of action must not only be maintained but must be reinvigorated and given practical impetus around the world."

This message was echoed by U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, First Lady Hillary Clinton, ministers and ordinary women, who demanded that equality of the sexes become a reality at the start of the 21st century.

"We come here because for all of the progress we can point to our work is far from done," said Clinton, now a candidate for a U.S. Senate seat from New York. "When girls are doused with gasoline, set on fire and burned to death because their marriage dowries are too small and when 'honor killings' continue to be tolerated, our work is far from done."

During Monday's session, Annan cited progress in women's health and education. But he also reported that the gap between the salaries of men and women is widening, that violence against women is increasing despite legislation and that "a worldwide plague" of trafficking of women and children has erupted.

Linda Tarr-Whelan, the U.S. ambassador to the Commission on the Status of Women and deputy chair of the U.S. delegation, said serious differences remain on economic issues and on how far governments want to go to criminalize violence against women. But she also said Monday she was encouraged by "a lot more consensus" on thorny issues.

"There is a new sense of people wanting to have a good document out of this meeting," she said. "I'm optimistic. I think we will have a good document by the end of this week. I would not have said that last week because it felt very glued up last week."

She cited agreement Monday on a declaration that there has been "insufficient recognition" of reproductive rights for women and girls since Beijing.

In a groundbreaking move, the **Beijing platform** stated for the first time in a U.N. document that women have the right to decide freely all matters related to their sexuality and childbearing. But sexual and reproductive health care for women is far from universally available.

Trafficking women for sex and growth in female AIDS are top women's issues at U.N.

BYLINE: By EDITH M. LEDERER, Associated Press Writer

Trafficking in women and the devastating impact of AIDS on women and girls have become the hottest new challenges for 180 nations trying to accelerate an international agenda to achieve women's equality.

Women's rights activists spoke about the two problems at a U.N. meeting this week aimed at reviewing progress since the 1995 **Beijing** women's conference and producing a strong final document that pushes things forward.

The women at the conference said a key problem in negotiating the final document is linking these two global scourges.

"The issue we are dealing with right now is whether or not these governments are going to recognize that both the epidemic and trafficking are driven by men's demands for sex," said Adrienne Germain, president of the International Women's Health Coalition.

"If we're going to deal with that issue we have to deal with both ends of the equation, namely we have to recommit ourselves as we did in Beijing to recognizing women's sexual rights and men's responsible sexual behavior," she said.

The new challenges posed by trafficking and AIDS got some high-level visibility at Monday's opening sessions.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan called trafficking "a worldwide plague" and said he will ask world leaders at the Millennium Summit in September to launch an international campaign to reverse the spread of AIDS, which is killing tens of thousands of young mothers, especially in southern Africa.

First lady Hillary Clinton declared that "the face of AIDS today is increasingly female," creating a generation of AIDS orphans. And she said it was time to speak out "on behalf of the one million trafficking victims who, every year, are being bought and sold into modern slavery."

U.S. Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers said during a forum Tuesday that the United States would be pushing at the Group of Eight economic summit in Okinawa, Japan, in July for greater international assistance to combat AIDS.

Both AIDS and trafficking were mentioned at Beijing, but not prominently.

"In 1995, we knew that the HIV epidemic was progressing, but we tended to see it largely as an issue of homosexuality and gay people," Germain said, "and while women had recognized the problem of trafficking for a long time, it didn't really figure on the Beijing screen."

Theresa Loar, director of President Clinton's Interagency Council on Women, said the explosion in trafficking is largely the result of open borders and the economic situations that countries in transition have faced.

"The root cause of it is economic desperation of women and girls and their families that makes them very susceptible to the lure of traffickers," she said.

Peter Piot, executive director of the Joint U.N. Program on HIV/AIDS, said gender inequality - including women's economic dependence on men - is a fundamental driving force of the AIDS epidemic.

"Slowing down the spread of HIV means important changes are needed in relationships between men and women," Piot said. "Men have a crucial role to play in bringing about this kind of radical change."

In the face of the HIV epidemic, Germain said, the conference needs to agree on specific actions to protect and promote women's sexual rights, which were recognized in the **Beijing platform**.

She said men are not acting responsibly in regards to sex, and that in Africa older men who have sexually transmitted diseases - including AIDS - go to young virgins for sex because they believe it will cure them.

In Africa, women infected with the HIV virus now outnumber men, she said, "and that's not because women are promiscuous, and it's not because they're ignorant of the disease or what have you, it's because men have sex with any number of women - and they bring it back to their wives."

Conference on women tackles issue of men

By HARMONIE TOROS, Associated Press Writer

Thousands of women activists have gathered to work toward ending gender-based violence, reaching equality between the sexes and assuring reproductive rights to all. Many, though, have found that men can't be left out of the process.

The role of men in women's issues is one of the key points that the United Nations wants to raise in this week's meetings to review the progress made toward women's equality since the 1995 U.N. conference of women in Beijing. "We have to challenge the boys to understand the issue of consent, as well as challenging girls to understand that they have the right to say no," Noeleen Heyzer, executive director of the U.N. Development Fund for Women, said Tuesday at a panel on "Men and Boys Preventing Violence Against Women."

Heyzer believes that including men in women's issues has become more pressing since the **Beijing conference**. "After **Beijing**, we were able to launch all these campaigns and put them into action. We realized how important it was to include men," she said.

The U.N. Development Fund for Women has recently launched several projects addressing men and boys, including campaigns in schools and in police stations. Involving men is necessary because often men will not listen to women, said Norman Tjombe, who organized a meeting of hundreds of men in Namibia to discuss violence against women.

The meeting had an effect. "A week later, we saw a large demonstration of men wanting to prevent a suspect accused of rape from getting out on bail," Tjombe said.

But there are still few men to be seen at the conference, and actually getting men involved in women's issues may be more difficult.

Michael Kaufman, international director of the White Ribbon Campaign, says one way is to launch positive campaigns for men. Kaufman's Canada-based group urges men to wear a white ribbon as a "public pledge never to commit violence against women, never to condone it, and never to remain silent." "It's not an anti-male campaign," said Kaufman, adding that "positive campaigns" also may stop a backlash from men who feel excluded from the women's movement. "It says very clearly to men that we must be allied to women."

Another argument to involve men is that improving women's situation is beneficial to all. Violence is "debilitating to both parts of society," said Guy Hewitt of the gender affairs department of the Commonwealth Secretariat, the administrative body for the 54-nation group of Britain and its former colonies.

Women have learned from experience to include men in their battle for equality, said Sreelakshmi Gururaja, senior adviser on gender and development at UNICEF. "We found in the 1980s that we could increase the power of women, but the relationship (between men and women) did not change," Gururaja said. "If we want transformation, we need transformation in both men and women."

Poll: Cooperation not competition

More American women than men would emphasize diplomacy over fighting

By HARMONIE TOROS

Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — More American women than men believe in emphasizing international cooperation and diplomacy over military action, a nationwide poll revealed Monday.

Sixty-nine percent of American women surveyed in the poll believe global problems make it necessary for the United States to work with other countries through international institutions like the United Nations, compared to 61 percent of American men.

Furthermore, nearly 10 percent more women than men — 43 percent to 34 percent — believe the United States should emphasize diplomacy over military action in international policy, the poll reported. And half the women surveyed believe the United States should increase or maintain the attention it devotes to international issues.

The poll, carried out by Belden Russonello and Stewart, was sponsored by A Women's Lens on Global Issues, a project of the Aspen

Institute. The polling firm interviewed 1,500 women and 701 men by telephone. The margin of error was 2.2 percentage points.

"What this poll tells us is that American women are aware and interested and recognize that the safety of their home or hearth is intimately connected to what happens in other countries," said Joan Dunlop, director of the project.

"Women's concept of security is based on cooperation, not conflict, and on international agreement, not aggression," she said.

The results of the poll were announced at the United Nations on the first day of a U.N. General Assembly special session to review progress in seeking women's equality worldwide. The session is a follow-up to the 1995 U.N. conference on women in Beijing.

The poll asked respondents to choose areas of U.S. action in the world. It said a majority of women would give priority to preventing child diseases, while close to half would push for equal education for girls and making birth control available.

Women's rights and anti-abortion activists spar over final document

BYLINE: By EDITH M. LEDERER, Associated Press Writer

Women's rights activists accused the Vatican and some Islamic and Catholic countries of blocking consensus on a U.N. document to accelerate the drive for equality of the sexes.

A coalition of anti-abortion and religious activists countered that they had far more support for their conservative approach to women's rights and blamed rich Western states for pushing "radical language" on sexual rights, homosexual rights and abortion for stalling negotiations.

The group released a letter signed by 23 members of the U.S. Congress expressing "great alarm" that the U.S. delegation to this week's conference is calling for increased access to abortions and mandatory training to perform them - and is promoting "a new and dangerous term, 'sexual rights.'"

"It will mean not just special rights for homosexuals but could mean the right to sexual expression for children. Moreover, it may allow for the spread of prostitution," said the letter, which was addressed to all 188 U.N. member states.

The charge and counter-charge came just two days before the end of the week-long meeting to review progress toward women's equality since the landmark U.N. women's **conference in Beijing five** years ago.

Delegates were meeting in small groups into the night trying to meet a self-imposed deadline of Thursday afternoon to reach consensus on a final text.

During months of closed-door negotiations on the final document before the conference began Monday, delegates said the Vatican and a handful of Islamic countries including Algeria, Iran, Libya, Pakistan and Sudan held up action on key issues.

This week, human rights and women's activists and U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson warned against attempts to roll back the gains from Beijing. And governments from South Africa to China demanded that the conference adopt a forward-looking plan to implement the 150-

page **Beijing platform** for action, which calls for equality in health, education and jobs and an end to the increasing poverty of women.

Gita Sen, a professor at the Indian Institute of Management who heads a grassroots women's organization, told a news conference Wednesday there is "strong and growing support" from Latin America, Africa, Turkey, India, Mexico and many other countries for a final document that will reaffirm and move forward the **Beijing platform**.

But she said at the top of the list of states stalling final agreement were the Vatican, Nicaragua, Libya, Sudan and Iraq.

"We hope this hard core will move," she said.

If they don't, Sen said, the conference should adopt the final document by consensus "so that the tyranny of this miniscule minority can be ended." She said nations opposed to the document could still express reservations, just as they did at Beijing.

For the first time Wednesday, a coalition of conservative anti-abortion and religious groups held a news conference to counter what they claimed was "political spin" by the West that only a few countries were holding up negotiations.

"That is a lie," said Austin Ruse, president of the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute. He said the coalition's position had broad support, though none of its members named any other countries who backed its positions.

He blamed the impasse on "radical language being pushed by the rich Western states."

Ruse accused the those countries of engaging in "sexual colonialism" which attempts "to spread through the developing world the kind of personal immorality that has utterly failed the rich West."

Mary Ellen Glynn, spokeswoman for the U.S. Mission to the United Nations, countered that the United States believes that access to family planning and reproductive health information will lead to fewer abortions in the world - "which we support."

She noted that the **Beijing platform** recognized for the first time that human rights include the right of women to control their own sexuality without "coercion, discrimination and violence."

Activists at women's conference clash over reproductive issues

By EDITH M. LEDERER, Associated Press Writer

Halfway through a U.N. conference on women's rights, the debate is echoing the dissension that marked its landmark predecessor five years ago over reproductive and sexual issues.

A coalition of anti-abortion and religious activists blamed rich Western nations for pushing "radical language" on abortion, sexual rights and homosexual rights that have stalled negotiations. More liberal women's activists accused the Vatican and some Islamic and Catholic countries of blocking consensus on a U.N. document to accelerate progress toward equality for women. The two sides traded charges as delegates from about 180 nations reviewing progress since the 1995 **Beijing women's conference** met behind closed doors into the night Wednesday - trying to reach agreement on a final text by this afternoon.

While negotiators have been concentrating on the final document - which is supposed to give new impetus to the 150-page platform of action adopted at Beijing - ministers have been addressing an open plenary session on progress toward women's equality. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright was to speak on the U.S. position this morning.

The clash over reproductive and sexual rights highlighted the most contentious unresolved issues - similar to those that held up final consensus until the last minute in Beijing. Gita Sen, a professor at the Indian Institute of Management who heads a grass-roots women's organization, put the Vatican, Nicaragua, Libya, Sudan and Iraq at the top of the list of countries blocking a consensus. Sen called for an end to "the tyranny of this minuscule minority." If these countries don't budge, Sen said, the conference should adopt the final document by consensus and let them express reservations about issues they oppose - just as they did at Beijing.

A coalition of conservative and religious groups claimed Wednesday that they represent the mainstream of the international community, and dismissed Western charges that only a few countries back their views as "political spin" and "lies." None, however, named any other countries backing their position.

The coalition released a letter signed by 23 members of Congress expressing "great alarm" that the American delegation is calling for increased access to abortions and mandatory training to perform them.

Austin Ruse, president of the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute, said the final text isn't finished because rich Western states are attempting to spread "immorality" to the developing world in a new kind of "sexual colonialism."

Mary Ellen Glynn, spokeswoman for the U.S. Mission to the United Nations, said the United States believes access to family planning and reproductive health information will lead to fewer abortions in the world - "which we support." She noted the Beijing platform recognized for the first time that human rights include the right of women to control their own sexuality without "coercion, discrimination and violence." "The U.S. believes that the definition of sexual rights is consistent with that language," she said.

U.N. women's forum focuses on economics



Dinah Mahlangu (center) of the Ndebele tribe from South Africa, touches the hair of Pauline Fan (left) of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, as Marley Maria Mahlangu, also of the Ndebele tribe, looks on Tuesday at the United Nations. The three were in town for the U.N. women's conference. The Africans are dressed in tribal costumes.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK (AP) — As the daughter of migrant farm workers in the late 1960s, Irasema Garza watched her mother grapple with two competing interests: picking strawberries to make ends meet and tending to the cleaning and cooking at home.

Today, Garza is the director of the Women's Bureau at the U.S. Department of Labor and is once again witnessing the ways in which poor women strive to achieve economic security without sacrificing their families.

"Things were bad then, and they're bad now," she said.

Garza was among the policy-makers and women's activists gathered Tuesday at the U.N.-sponsored Women 2000 Economic Empowerment Forum, which highlighted economic struggles that women around the world must overcome, from unequal pay to a lack of political representation to, at times, their own lack of self-confidence. But while such problems seemingly carry with them a specific prescription, leaders say the overall agenda of "empowering women" will require a shift in society's mindset.

As Linda Tarr-Whelan, U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women, summed it up: "We have to make the case that economies cannot thrive without women as full partners."

Tuesday's forum coincided with the five-year anniversary of the U.N.'s Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 in Beijing, where governments from around the world outlined proposals to improve the lives of women.

Since then, some progress has been made in the United States. The Washington, D.C.-based Center for Policy Alternatives released a report Tuesday lauding recent efforts at the state level to

expand the 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act, to introduce equal pay legislation and to finance "micro-enterprise" programs for low-income women and those coming off the welfare rolls.

Political and civic action at the state level has been "the fuel for American women's economic progress," the report said.

More than two-thirds of states have introduced some form of equal pay legislation and more than a third of all state legislatures are in the midst of paid family leave debates, according to the report.

More than half the states have set up savings mechanisms to fund micro-enterprise programs, which use public and private funds to help low- and middle-income women save money toward homeownership, education or, increasingly, owning their own businesses.

"All of these trends show us that states are where the action is to increase women's economic security," Tarr-Whelan said.

Still, worldwide progress remains elusive.

Whether urging political change, scrutinizing corporate inequity, or nudging women to demand more for themselves, speakers at Tuesday's forum kept coming back to two statistics: women make up 70 percent of the world's poor, and, on average, women worldwide earn 74 cents for each dollar earned by men. Over the span of a year, that adds up to roughly \$4,000 in wages.

"In economic terms, the gender divide is still widening. Women earn less, are more often unemployed, and generally are poorer than men," U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said Monday. "Women's work is still largely part-time, informal, unregulated and unstable. The fact that they have

productive as well as reproductive roles is still all too rarely recognized."

Economic initiatives cannot take root in Third World nations until adequate education, nutrition and health care are widely available there, said U.S. Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers, who begins a weeklong visit to Africa on Saturday.

"Primary education for girls is very likely the highest return investment in the developing world today," Summers said.

On Monday, first lady Hillary Clinton said the work begun in Beijing in 1995 must not be left to fall by the wayside. She stressed the benefit of small business loans for women and the need to ensure that women are paid fairly in the workplace.

"Let us provide the child care, health care and family leave policies that parents need to succeed both at home and at work," Mrs. Clinton said.

Toward that end, Gail Shaffer, CEO of Business and Professional Women/USA in Washington, D.C., is scheduled to testify before Congress later this week on two bills aimed at boosting enforcement of the 1963 Equal Pay Act, which says that men and women performing the same job must receive the same wage.

Another form of wage discrimination, Shaffer said, exists when "female dominated jobs are undervalued." For example, she said, teachers, who are commonly women, have been found to be paid less than bus drivers, who are commonly men.

Garza of the labor department's Women's Bureau stressed that what world leaders need to understand is that when women are underpaid, entire economies ultimately suffer.

Women seek repeal of bias-based laws

Demand that nations end discrimination

By **NICOLE WINFIELD**

The Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — Women's rights activists demanded Tuesday that countries which have promised to promote equality between the sexes repeal laws that discriminate against women, including those that allow rapists to escape punishment by marrying their victims.

Equality Now, a non-profit organization, has launched a campaign to abolish the dozens of laws in penal codes and constitutions "which are fundamentally inconsistent with the basic human right to equality," said Monique Widyono, the New York-based organization's co-director.

At a news conference, she and a half-dozen women activists from around the world detailed some of the laws that were supposed to have been revoked according to a platform of action adopted at the landmark women's conference in Beijing in 1995.

The legislation includes restrictions on women's rights to own property in Nepal, their right to pass on citizenship to their husbands in Kenya, and the ban on women voting in Kuwait.

Equality Now and a host of grass-roots organizations are calling on governments attending a conference reviewing the progress since Beijing to set a date of 2005 to finally repeal the legislation.

"Elimination of discriminatory laws does not require the alloca-

tion of financial resources — it merely requires political will," Widyono said.

Susan Chiarotti, regional coordinator for the Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights, said several Latin American governments, including those of Peru and Costa Rica, had recently repealed legislation that would allow rapists to avoid serving jail time if they offered to marry their victims or actually did so.

But still others have the legislation on the books, even if it isn't necessarily enforced.

"It is very difficult to provide for penalization of sexual violence of marital rape if the law consents to the foundation of a family upon a crime like rape, abduction, or sexual abuse," Chiarotti said.

She said countries including Brazil, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Uruguay, and Venezuela have such laws, which are rooted in religious norms written 3,000 years ago dictating that a father of a rape victim could ask for money from the perpetrator and oblige him to marry his daughter.

"She was considered a damaged object and the person who spoiled it had to keep it," Chiarotti said.

Another form of discriminatory legislation is laws that condone "honor killings," allowing men to escape punishment for killing a female relative who has shamed the family.

Women's activists give U.S. failing grades

■ Group gives government an 'F' for attempts to reduce poverty in mixed-results report.

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Women's rights activists issued a report card Wednesday on the U.S. government's efforts to improve equality for women in America — and the results were mixed.

The United States got an "F" for its attempts to reduce poverty among American women but scored a "B" — its best grade — for progress in appointing women to important decision-making positions.

The report card was compiled by U.S. Women Connect, a non-profit advocacy group, and released at this week's women's conference at the United Nations. The gathering is aimed at reviewing what progress has been made toward implementing a plan to attain equality between the sexes that the United States and 188 other states adopted at a landmark 1995 meeting in Beijing.

The Beijing platform identified critical areas of concern for governments and grass-roots organizations to urgently address that touched on improving women's access to education, jobs, health care and economic services, curbing violence against women and helping them escape poverty.

Organizers said the failing grade for the United States in reducing poverty was largely a result of the 1996 Welfare Reform Act, which has cut welfare case-loads by nearly half by requiring recipients to work.

Recent studies have corroborated claims by advocates for the poor that welfare reform has actually driven the poorest American families deeper into poverty, while only slightly raising the incomes of those who are a little better off.

The report card justified its "F" by citing federal statistics that showed while the national poverty rate has decreased in the past five years, the rate of women in poverty has increased. This is because

the bulk of the 35 million Americans living in poverty are women and children, said a U.S. Women Connect official.

The United States also got a "D" for its efforts to promote the rights of girls, primarily because of its failure to ratify the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child — the only country in the world that hasn't done so except for Somalia.

Kit Cosby, the treasurer of U.S. Women Connect, said the report was compiled using statistics from two major studies — one by the federal government on its own achievements since Beijing and another one by the Women's Environment and Development Organization, a grass-roots group which analyzed the main gains in U.S. policy ahead of this week's review conference.

In granting the United States a "B," the report card saluted the administration's appointment of women — more than any other administration in U.S. history. Progress, however, was "sorely lacking in the legislative branch at every level of government," the report said.

Women want in on peace talks

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Women don't have a say in most wars. But as the primary victims of war, they are demanding a right to sit by the fighters in negotiating peace.

Women should be included in all stages of peacemaking — from the peace talks to confidence-building measures to the re-establishment of democracy, said participants at a panel Wednesday that was part of this week's women's conference at the United Nations.

"There is no reason why if ... those who make war are at the peace table, that (women) who sustain peace are not at the peace table. We have every right to be at the peace table," said Noeleen Heyzer, executive director of the U.N. Development Fund for Women.

Strengthening women's role in peace processes was one of the goals set at the 1995 U.N. conference on women's equality in Beijing, which is being reviewed by delegates of 188 countries and thousands of activists gathered at U.N. headquarters.

Women and children constitute the majority of war refugees and have recently become strategic

targets for warring factions in several of the world's conflicts, panelists said. Recent research has also shown that some women have actively supported violent organizations and uprisings.

Including women in settlements to end those wars is not only a question of fairness. "Women and men can experience conflicts differently" and both perspectives must be included in the peace-building process, said Angela King, U.N. special adviser on gender issues.

For example, most women in Sierra Leone were opposed to the amnesty granted to Foday Sankoh and his rebels in the peace agreement signed in Lome, Togo, last year, said Amy Smythe, former minister of gender and children's affairs in Sierra Leone.

"One wonders whether the rape, sex slavery, mutilations, amputations ... that women have suffered will all be swept under the table," Smythe said. "Amnesty cannot be a foregone conclusion."

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On the Net:

U.N. Development Fund for Women:
<http://www.unifem.undp.org>

Activists: More women must enter political arena

By HARMONIE TOROS

The Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS— Women must not only convince governments of the need for greater representation in politics, they must also convince other women to enter politics, activists said Thursday at the launch of a campaign for gender equality in government by 2005.

More than 180 nations pledged to increase women's representation in decision-making at the 1995 conference on women in Beijing, but female participation in national legislatures has only increased from 10 to 13 percent in five years, said the Women's Environment and Development Organization.

"If that's the rate we go with, it'll probably be the next millennium before we reach 30 percent," said June Zeitlin, executive director of WEDO, an international grassroots women's organization.

When U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright addressed the special General Assembly session to review

progress since Beijing on Thursday, she said she was delighted to be speaking after Mongolia's foreign minister, Mrs. Nyam-Osor Tuya.

She "is part of a small but growing group of women foreign ministers — there are now 14 of us," Albright said.

The first election of a woman president came in Argentina in 1974; only 17 states have elected a woman president since. Women have been prime ministers in 22 countries.

WEDO, which launched the "50-50 by 2005: Get the Balance Right!" campaign, has been in the forefront of keeping tabs on what governments are — and are not — doing to carry out the 150-page action plan adopted in Beijing to promote equality, development and peace.

Zeitlin said governments had refused to set time-bound goals in the final document to be approved today at the end of this week's U.N. General Assembly special session to review progress since Beijing.

"We feel that if governments won't commit, the women

will and we're going to hold them to it," Zeitlin said.

But more women have to be convinced to run for office, activists said.

"The barriers of women's leadership are therefore not only rooted in our society and in cultural institutions, but also in women themselves," said Maj Britt Theorin, member of the European and Swedish parliament.

Baleka Mbete, deputy speaker of South Africa's National Assembly, admitted that when elections were called in 1994 she didn't want to run for parliament.

"I never thought of myself as a member of parliament," Mbete said, adding that she feared neglecting her children. A colleague convinced her that if she, who had been fighting for women's rights for years, did not run for parliament, very few women would.

In a report on progress of the world's women since the mid-1980s, the U.N. Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) said only eight countries have achieved the goal of 30 percent of representation of women in parliament — seven in northern Europe and South Africa.

Albright addresses U.N. assembly on women



ASSOCIATED PRESS
U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright tells U.N. General Assembly session on women Thursday women have 'long journey' to equality

By EDITH M. LEDERER

UNITED NATIONS — U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan urged 180 nations Thursday to accelerate progress toward equality for women as concern mounted that a few countries might succeed in rolling back the landmark 1995 Beijing agreement on women's rights.

With the five-day special session of the U.N. General Assembly set to end today, negotiators meeting behind closed doors were still arguing about many of the issues that dominated the Beijing debate — reproductive and sexual health, sexual rights, inheritance, adolescent sex education, and safe abortions.

In an unusual intervention, reflecting his concern at the outcome of the conference, Annan noted major parts of the final document remain unresolved and called on delegates to work together "to ensure that the gains made by women in Beijing five years ago are consolidated, protected and advanced further," U.N. spokesman Fred Eckhard said.

Declaring "many of our sisters still live surrounded by the four walls of poverty and exploitation, discrimination and conflict," Albright said the conference must "chart a path that will lead to ever-more rapid progress in the new century."

"It is no longer possible, after Beijing, to deny that women's rights are human rights, and are indivisible from the universal rights of every human being," she said, to applause from the crowd.

"Our movement to recognize and support women's rights is one of the most revolutionary and uplifting forces now shaping the world," Albright said. "And it is still young, still blossoming, still only beginning to spread the good news of opportunity and equality for women."

Albright's speech touched on many issues in the 150-page Beijing platform for action: advancing development to eliminate poverty which affects mainly women and children, ending discrimination, and exploitation of women.

Trafficking in human beings is a rapidly growing global criminal enterprise that

distorts economies, endangers neighborhoods and robs millions — mostly women and children — "of their dreams," she said, urging all nations to join in "a multi-year, multinational effort to win the fight against trafficking."

Theresa Loar, director of U.S. President Bill Clinton's Interagency Council on Women, said one million people are trafficked every year, including 50,000 into the United States.

The debate on the final document is echoing the dissent that marked Beijing over reproductive and sexual issues.

A coalition of anti-abortion and religious activists blamed rich Western nations for pushing "radical language" on abortion, sexual rights and homosexual rights.

Women's activists and several delegates accused the Vatican and a handful of Islamic and Catholic countries — including Libya, Algeria, Iran, Sudan and Nicaragua — of blocking consensus on the final document.

The Vatican and conservatives also object to the Beijing platform's reference to nontraditional families, which they

view as an implied blessing of homosexual unions, single parents and couples living together out of wedlock.

Albright, who attended the Beijing conference, referred indirectly to some Islamic and developing countries that insist cultural traditions and practices must take precedence over the Beijing platform.

"It is no longer possible, after Beijing, to argue that abuses against women are merely cultural and that there is nothing any of us can do about them," she said.

As women's conference nears end, sexual rights still unresolved

By EDITH M. LEDERER, Associated Press Writer

With leaders demanding faster progress toward women's equality and a deadline looming, delegates at the U.N. women's conference here worked to resolve issues that have divided them, including sexual rights and abortion.

Negotiators met through the night Thursday and after a short break resumed talks this morning to try to wrap up a final document before the special U.N. General Assembly session ends at midnight tonight. Delegates reported progress, saying about 90 percent of the document is finished.

But tough negotiations continued into the afternoon in a final attempt to reach consensus on many of the same reproductive and sexual health issues that dominated the landmark 1995 U.N. women's conference in Beijing. The United States also remained at odds with Iraq and Cuba over a plank on the detrimental effects of sanctions on women, delegates said.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan and U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright voiced concern Thursday that the final document might retreat from the ambitious 150-page platform adopted in Beijing. But even before the final text was complete, U.N. officials and delegates were saying today there would be no rollback from Beijing.

"There is no evidence in the text that seems likely to be adopted that there is any backward movement on any of the Beijing language, and in certain areas we are very heartened to see a strengthening of the **Beijing** language," said U.N. Assistant Secretary-General Angela King, a special adviser on the advancement of women. She cited tougher action to address the trafficking of women and girls and the impact of AIDS on women, calls on governments to set target dates to eradicate illiteracy and ensure education for all girls, and measures to address new issues including the impact of globalization on women.

Many Western nations have crossed swords with the Vatican and a handful of Islamic and Catholic countries - including Libya, Algeria, Iran, Sudan and Nicaragua - over parts of the agenda. The Vatican and a number of conservative countries object to the Beijing platform's reference to nontraditional families, which they view as an implied blessing of homosexual unions, single parents and couples living together out of wedlock. And a coalition of anti-abortion and religious activists have blamed rich Western nations for pushing "radical language" on abortion, sexual rights and homosexual rights.

Meanwhile, pro-Beijing activists have accused the Vatican and the handful of Islamic and Catholic countries of blocking consensus on the final document.

Adrienne Germain, president of the International Women's Health Coalition and a member of the U.S. delegation to Beijing, said important unresolved issues include adolescents' access to reproductive and sexual health services, and women's rights to have access to safe abortions in countries where it is legal. References to sexual rights and sexuality also remain bracketed, indicating disputed language.

On a positive note, delegates have agreed on strong planks calling for AIDS education programs for adolescents, education programs to enable men to practice safe, responsible sexual behavior and greater focus on reducing maternal deaths. Activists said the follow-up document also calls for prosecution of all forms of domestic violence, now including marital rape, and asks governments to consider gender-related persecution and violence as grounds for asylum.

Albright calls for rights drive

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Declaring that women still have a "long journey" to equality, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright called yesterday for a global campaign against human trafficking which robs millions of women and children of their dreams.

And she called for the benefits of globalization to be shared equally by all people in every country, quoting U.S. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton's statement Monday that "when it comes to women, globalization should not mean marginalization."

The effects of globalization and trafficking on women are two major issues at a week-long special General Assembly session to review progress since the landmark 1995 Beijing women's conference where 189 nations adopted an ambitious 150-page platform of action to achieve equality of the sexes.

The conference is expected to adopt new plans to accelerate the drive for women's equality, but a day before it closes, delegates have still not reached agreement on many issues including sexual and reproductive rights, inheritance and globalization and references to abortion and marital rape.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan said yesterday it was important that the final document "maintains in full all of the commitments in the Beijing declaration" and expressed hope that it will maintain the tradition "of forward movement," U.N. spokesman Fred Eckhard said.

Albright echoed many other ministers and women's rights activists in demanding that there must be no retreat from Beijing.

"This historic meeting marks another milestone in our long journey upward to justice ... and obliges us to chart a path that will lead to ever-more rapid progress in the new century," she said.

"Our movement to recognize and support women's rights is one of the most revolutionary and uplifting forces now shaping the world," Albright said. "And it is still young, still blossoming, still only beginning to spread the good news of opportunity and equality for women."

"It is no longer possible, after Beijing, to deny that women's rights are human rights, and are indivisible from the universal rights of every human being," she said.

Albright, who attended the Beijing conference, also said it was no longer possible to conceive of development without including women — or to argue that beating women is "cultural" because it is criminal "and no government after Beijing can deny its responsibility to stop these crimes."

Some Islamic and developing countries accept wife-beating as acceptable in their cultures.

Calling trafficking in human beings — mainly women and children — a rapidly-growing global criminal enterprise, she invited delegates from some 180 nations to join the Clinton-Gore administration "to join in a multi-year, multi-national effort to win the fight against trafficking."

"Our movement to recognize and support women's rights is one of the most revolutionary and uplifting forces now shaping the world."

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT
SECRETARY OF STATE

"If we are divided we have no hope, but together, we will prevail. And what a gift to the future that will be," Albright said.

The debate on the final document is echoing the dissension that marked Beijing over reproductive and sexual issues.

A coalition of anti-abortion and religious activists blamed rich Western nations for pushing "radical language" on abortion, sexual rights and homosexual rights that have stalled negotiations.

More liberal women's activists accused the Vatican and some Islamic and Catholic countries of blocking consensus on a U.N. document to accelerate progress toward equality for women.

Gita Sen, a professor at the Indian Institute of Management who heads a grassroots women's organization, on Wednesday put the Vatican, Nicaragua, Libya, Sudan and Iraq at the top of the list of countries blocking a consensus and called for an end to "the tyranny of this minuscule minority."

Other delegates previously had included Algeria, Iran and Pakistan as well.

If these countries don't budge, Sen said, the conference should adopt the final document by consensus and let them express reservations about issues they oppose — just as they did at Beijing.

Rape, abductions, forced pregnancy: women as war targets

By HARMONIE TOROS, Associated Press Writer

Even though few women engage in combat, many are targeted in war: They are raped, abducted, forced to become pregnant and used as slaves to cook and clean for fighters across the world.

"The woman's body has become the battlefield," said Sanam Anderlini of the British-based group International Alert, which tries to focus world attention on the effects of war.

On the last day of a U.N. conference to accelerate progress toward women's equality, activists denounced the lack of concrete action to help innocent women caught in armed conflicts - even though a landmark gathering in **Beijing** five years ago identified women in conflicts as one of the main areas of concern.

Amy Smythe, former minister of gender and women's affairs in Sierra Leone, said Friday that women in the west African country wracked by civil war are often "abducted as sex slaves, or as cooks or carriers of luggage." During eight years of fighting, rebel forces led by Foday Sankoh have killed tens of thousands of civilians and systematically maimed many more, including women and children. The rebels attack women "to fragment the community," said Isha Diafan of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

Although recent research shows that some women have actively supported violent organizations and uprisings, women and children make up 80 percent of refugees and displaced people. With ethnic, religious and tribal identities playing a key role in many of today's conflicts, activists say women have become strategic targets. "You rape them, you force them into pregnancy, you totally dishonor them ... you are breaking up the fabric of a family, so you are going right to the heart and soul of a community," Anderlini said, citing the use of rape in the Bosnian war and in Sierra Leone.

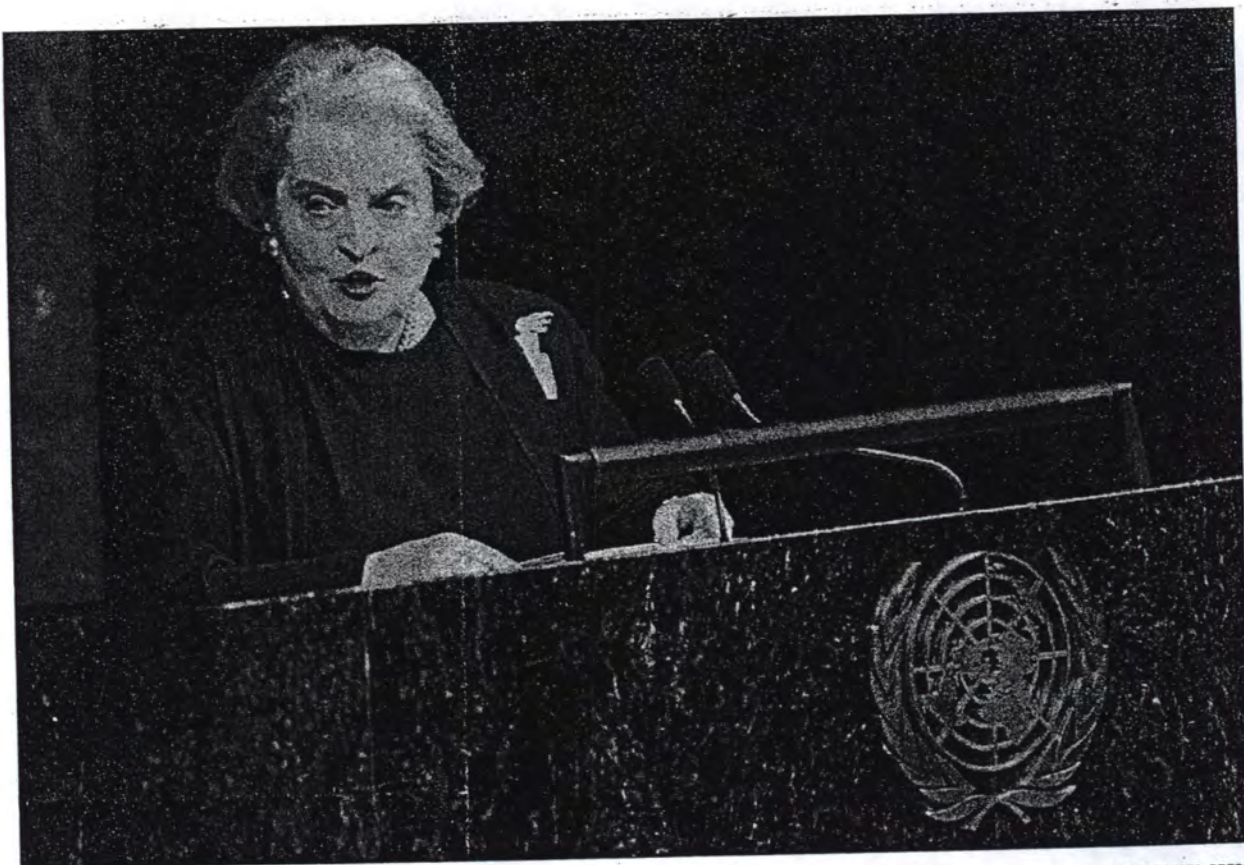
Gender-based violence also is used to terrorize the general population, grass-roots groups said. Bhutanese women who fled to Nepal said they were raped in Bhutan in front of their families "to create fear" and force the population to flee, said Anjana Shakya, a member of the South Asia **Beijing Plus Five** Committee. Nearly 100,000 people of Nepalese origin were evicted or encouraged to emigrate from Bhutan in the early 1990s when the kingdom's ethnic Drukpas cracked down on what they called illegal immigrants.

Women also are at the mercy of whichever side takes over their territory, as is the case in Afghanistan. Under the strict Islamic rule of the Taliban militia that controls 90 percent of the country, women are not allowed to work, girls older than 8 may not attend school and women in public must wear a burqa, or a head-to-toe shroud that covers their body. State officials roam the streets looking for women violating the edicts and they are publicly beaten.

The U.S.-based Feminist Majority Foundation urged world leaders - in particular U.S. and U.N. officials - to put more pressure on the Taliban and nations supporting them to abolish the restrictions imposed on women. The foundation also called on the United States and other countries to increase their asylum quotas for women from Afghanistan.

U.N. pact on women is elusive

Delegates struggle
to reach consensus
on AIDS, sex, abuse



U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright tells U.N. General Assembly session on women Thursday women have 'long journey' to equality

ASSOCIATED PRESS

UNITED NATIONS — Delegates struggled yesterday to come up with an agreement to promote equality for women and push for tougher measures to combat AIDS, trafficking of women and domestic violence.

But with a midnight deadline looming, representatives from more than 180 nations were still meeting behind closed doors, trying to reach consensus on many of the same reproductive and sexual health issues that dominated the landmark 1995 U.N. women's conference in Beijing.

It was unclear whether the deep divisions on issues including sexual rights, sexual orientation, abortion, and adolescents' access to reproductive and sexual health services and education would be resolved.

Senior U.N. officials said they were not expecting the final document to go much beyond the Beijing platform for action on sexual and reproductive matters.

After a lengthy fight in Beijing, references to sexual orientation — which the Vatican and conservative Islamic and Catholic countries vehemently oppose — were dropped. The term "sexual rights" was never included though the platform does state that women have the right to "decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality ... free of coercion, discrimination and violence."

The United States also remained at odds with Cuba over a plank on the detrimental effects of sanctions on women, which delegates said Iraq also supports. Washington maintains embargoes against both Cuba and Iraq.

A U.S. official said the language the Cuban delegation wants in the document is not relevant to the issues facing women. "Furthermore, it is language Washington can't live with, and is an attempt by Cuba to dictate policies on another country," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Many Western nations have been at odds with the Vatican and a handful of Islamic and

Catholic countries — including Libya, Algeria, Iran, Sudan and Nicaragua — over parts of the agenda.

The Vatican and a number of conservative countries object to the Beijing platform's reference to nontraditional families, which they view as an implied blessing of homosexual unions, single parents and couples living together out of wedlock. And a coalition of anti-abortion and religious activists have blamed rich Western nations for pushing "radical language" on abortion, sexual rights and homosexual rights.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan and U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright voiced con-

cern Thursday that the final document might retreat from the ambitious 150-page platform adopted in Beijing.

But even before the final text was complete, U.N. officials and delegates were saying there would be no rollback of the Beijing agreement.

"There is no evidence in the text that seems likely to be adopted that there is any backward movement on any of the Beijing language, and in certain areas we are very heartened to see a strengthening of the Beijing language," said U.N. Assistant Secretary-General Angela King, a special adviser on the advancement of women.

She cited tougher action to address the trafficking of women and girls, the impact of AIDS on women including AIDS education programs for women, calls on governments to set target dates to eradicate illiteracy and ensure education for all girls and education programs to enable men to engage in safe, responsible sex.

Negotiators have also agreed on strong planks calling for prosecution of all forms of domestic violence, now including marital rape, and for the first time in an international consensus document, the traditional practices of forced marriage and so-called honor killings are addressed.

Delegates reach agreement on new plan to achieve women's equality

BYLINE: By EDITH M. LEDERER, Associated Press Writer

Delegates from 180 countries reached agreement this morning on a new U.N. plan to accelerate progress toward women's equality after an all-night debate over abortion, sexual rights and other key issues.

"It was absolutely worth it," said U.N. Assistant Secretary-General Angela King, a special adviser on the advancement of women. "I feel that all those millions of women who are looking at us are totally vindicated, and they have something to grasp to assist them for their battles for equality."

The new document reaffirms the 150-page platform for action adopted at a landmark 1995 U.N. women's conference and moves forward with tougher measures to combat domestic violence and trafficking in women, and tackle the impact on women of HIV/AIDS and globalization.

But attempts to move beyond Beijing on the contentious issues of abortion failed - and proposed references to sexual rights and sexual orientation were dropped from the final text by delegates meeting in committee.

The final text maintains language from Beijing on women's reproductive and sexual health.

"I'm very happy that the dire predictions that there would be a rollback of Beijing have proven false," King said. "Instead for all the world to see, we have a very strong document which not only reaffirms Beijing and other relevant conferences on human rights and social development but also moves forward."

The agreement was reached shortly after 5 a.m. and delegates were told to return two hours later to wrap up the conference. But when they arrived - many not having slept - U.N. officials informed them that the General Assembly session to formally approve the document by consensus was delayed further because translators needed more time.

During the night, several issues were resolved - including a dispute between the United States and

Cuba over the effect of U.S. sanctions against the communist island nation on Cuban women.

The final text calls on governments to set a target date of 2005 to eliminate the gender gap in primary and secondary education. It also moves "substantially beyond Beijing in the roles men and boys can play to achieve gender equality," King said.

Delegates also agreed on strong planks calling for prosecution of all forms of domestic violence, now including marital rape. The traditional practices of forced marriage and honor killings are addressed for the first time in an international consensus document, with the draft text calling for laws to eradicate these human rights violations.

Many of the issues that stalled negotiations here also dominated the **Beijing conference** - sexual rights, sexual orientation, abortion, sex education for adolescents and family values.

After a lengthy fight in Beijing, references to sexual orientation - which the Vatican and several Islamic and Catholic countries vehemently oppose - were dropped from the platform.

The term "sexual rights" was never included in the **Beijing platform**, though it does state that women have the right to "decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality ... free of coercion, discrimination and violence."

Conservative activists fear that sexual rights could be broadly interpreted as condoning homosexuality.

The battle lines for the current **conference** - known as **Beijing Plus Five** - mirrored those at Beijing: the Vatican and a handful of Islamic and Catholic countries against the West and hundreds of pro-Beijing women's rights activists.

Cuba and the United States, meanwhile, clashed for days over Havana's insistence on referring to the negative effect of U.S. sanctions, especially on women and girls.

King said the dispute was settled early today when both countries agreed to compromise language taken from a previous U.N. conference. It notes that "in some countries, advancement of women is adversely affected by unilateral measures not in accordance with international law ... that create obstacles to trade relations among states."

Several organizations issued a joint statement registering disappointment with the final document but reaffirming their commitment to work for implementation of the **Beijing platform**.

"We regret that there was not enough political will on the part of some governments and the U.N. system to agree on a stronger document with more concrete benchmarks, numerical goals, time-bound targets, indicators, and resources aimed at implementing the **Beijing platform**," said the statement, which was issued by the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University and the Women's Environment and Development Organization.

500 Tanzania widows killed as 'witches'

UNITED NATIONS — In Tanzania, at least 500 widows were stoned to death or otherwise killed as suspected witches over the past year, women's activists say, while in parts of Nigeria widows are not allowed to wash for an entire year after their husband's death to prove they did not kill him.

These are just two examples of the harrowing plight of widows denounced by grass-roots groups at a panel Thursday on the myths and realities of widowhood.

Women in Africa and south Asia face a kind of "social death" when their husbands die: They are disinherited, rejected, even raped or killed, according to activists at the U.N. women's conference.

"At a time when they are most vulnerable, in the shock of losing their husbands, they are systematically hounded from their homes, robbed of their household possessions, and forced into destitution by male

relatives, usually on the husband's side," said Margaret Owen of Empowering Widows in Development, a London-based group that tries to create networks of widows to improve their status.

In Bangladesh, for example, only 25 percent of widows actually receive any share of their husband's estate, said Owen, the author of a study on widowhood across the world.

In certain areas of Africa, the widows themselves are seen as part of their husband's inheritance, said Eleonor Nwadinobi, president of the Nigeria-based Widows Development Organization.

"Widows have no succession rights to their husband's property because they are chattels to be inherited along with land and household property by the deceased's brother," said Nwadinobi, describing the results of case studies in southeastern Nigeria.

In some cases, even the custody of a wid-

ow's children is transferred to her husband's family, said Joanna Foster, regional coordinator of the Zimbabwe-based Women in Law and Development in Africa.

In Nigeria, a widow may be forced to sit on the floor — at times half naked — for 28 days, said Nwadinobi. She will then be forced to wear black clothes for a year and not allowed to bathe. After that time, women are brought to a river to be purified and their clothes are burned.

Widows have been left off the agenda at this week's U.N. General Assembly special session to accelerate progress toward women's equality, attended by ministers from more 180 countries, advocates said Thursday.

"Widows are noticeable only by their absence" from the 150-page platform for action adopted at the 1995 U.N. women's conference in Beijing, and from the final document that will emerge from this week's follow-up session, Owen said.

"There is a silence about the number of women who are murdered because they are widows," she said.

In Tanzania last year, Owen noted, at least 500 widows "accused of being witches were stoned to death or killed in other terrible ways."

Widows are targets because they are suspected of having killed their husbands, or because they have already experienced sex but are no longer linked to a man, Owen said.

The lack of attention means there are few statistics relating to widows, but the numbers appear to be growing as AIDS and wars sweep through Africa, activists said.

"In a number of countries in South Asia and Africa, in particular those affected by the AIDS pandemic or armed conflict and ethnic cleansing, as many as 70 percent of all adult women may be widows," Owen said. ■

Deadlock on abortion and other issues - just like Beijing 1995

BYLINE: By EDITH M. LEDERER, Associated Press Writer

After missing a midnight deadline, delegates from 180 countries were deadlocked early today over abortion and other key issues in a U.N. plan to accelerate progress toward women's equality.

But several contentious issues were resolved - including a dispute between the United States and Cuba over the effect of U.S. sanctions against the communist island nation on Cuban women.

Exhausted delegates continued to go paragraph by paragraph through a long list of planks that a small group of negotiators could not agree on - ranging from references to sexual rights and diversity to strengthening the traditional family unit.

"We're heading toward the finish line and when we get there, the world will not be disappointed," U.N. Assistant Secretary-General Angela King, a special adviser on the advancement of women, said early today.

The weeklong special session of the General Assembly has been trying to agree on practical measures to speed up implementation of the landmark platform of action to achieve equality of the sexes that was approved at the 1995 U.N. women's **conference in Beijing**.

Once the delegates finish going through the final document in committee, they are expected to move to the General Assembly chamber to formally approve the new action plan by consensus. Countries that have reservations about specific paragraphs will then be able to state them for the record.

"I'm very happy that the dire predictions that there would be a rollback of Beijing have proven false," King said. "Instead, for all the world to see, we have a very strong document which not only reaffirms Beijing and other relevant conferences on human rights and social development but also move forward."

Senior U.N. officials said they were not expecting the final document to go much beyond the **Beijing platform** on sexual and reproductive matters.

But King said the recommended action at the national and international level cover much more substantive areas: tougher measures to combat domestic violence and trafficking in women, and tackle the impact of HIV/AIDS and globalization on women. The final document also moves "substantially beyond Beijing in the roles men and boys can play to achieve gender equality," she said.

The proposed final text calls on governments to set a target date of 2005 to eliminate the gender gap in primary and secondary education, King said.

Negotiators also have agreed on strong planks calling for prosecution of all forms of domestic violence, now including marital rape. For the first time in an international consensus document, the traditional practices of forced marriage and honor killings are addressed. The draft text calls for laws to eradicate these human rights violations.

Many of the reproductive and sexual health issues stalling negotiations also dominated the **Beijing conference** - sexual rights, sexual orientation, abortion, sex education for adolescents and family values.

After a lengthy fight in Beijing, references to sexual orientation - which the Vatican and several Islamic and Catholic countries vehemently oppose - were dropped from the platform. They were also expected to be dropped from the follow-up document.

The term "sexual rights" was never included in the **Beijing platform**, though it does state that women have the right to "decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality ... free of coercion, discrimination and violence."

Conservative activists fear that agreeing to defend sexual rights could be interpreted as condoning homosexuality.

Delegates said the battle lines for the current **conference** - known as **Beijing Plus Five** - mirrored those at Beijing: the Vatican and a handful of Islamic and Catholic countries against the West and hundreds of pro-Beijing women's rights activists.

Cuba and the United States clashed for days over Havana's insistence on referring to the negative effect of U.S. sanctions, especially on women and girls. King said the dispute was settled early today when both countries agreed to compromise language.

Several organizations issued a joint statement registering disappointment with the final document but reaffirming their commitment to work for implementation of the **Beijing platform**.

"We regret that there was not enough political will on the part of some governments and the U.N. system to agree on a stronger document with more concrete benchmarks, numerical goals, time-bound targets, indicators, and resources aimed at implementing the **Beijing platform**," said the statement, which was issued by the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University and the Women's Environment and Development Organization.

Cierra Conferencia Mundial de la Mujer

Con algunos avances y algo de desilusión
concluyó ayer el foro en las Naciones Unidas

NUEVA YORK (AFP). — Mujeres de todo el mundo que participaron en la Conferencia sobre la mujer se declararon “decepcionadas” con el documento adoptado por 188 países, aunque reconocieron que se han dado “algunos pasos importantes”, principalmente en el campo de la salud.

Tras intensas negociaciones, los 188 Estados miembros de la ONU adoptaron en la madrugada de ayer sábado una declaración que define metas de acción para el próximo quinquenio, entre ellas el establecimiento de cuotas y otras medidas para aumentar la participación de las mujeres en los parlamentos y en los partidos políticos.

La Conferencia “Pekín + 5”, que se abrió el lunes y se clausuró en la madrugada de ayer sábado con la

adopción de una declaración, hizo una revisión de la aplicación de la Plataforma de Acción para la igualdad de la mujer, adoptada en la capital china en 1995.

El mayor conflicto se registró nuevamente sobre “los derechos sexuales de la mujer” y el aborto.

Por falta de consenso, numerosos párrafos de la Plataforma de Acción, que atañen a este tema, fueron renovados sin modificación. Además, otros que se habían tratado de introducir, principalmente por las delegaciones europeas, en relación a estos derechos “sexuales” de las mujeres, fueron suprimidos.

Las activistas de los derechos de las mujeres culparon de la falta de avance en este campo a la alianza que se produjo, una vez más, entre algunos países católicos —Polonia,

Nicaragua— y musulmanes, como Sudán, Irán, Libia, Argelia, Egipto y Pakistán.

El Vaticano —que en calidad de observador permanente en la ONU puede intervenir en los debates, aunque no cuenta con derecho a voto— presionó fuertemente durante toda la semana a algunas delegaciones, entre ellas las latinoamericanas, para que exigieran que se suprimiera del documento cualquier texto que incluyera los “derechos sexuales” de las mujeres.

LOS AVANCES

Entre los avances logrados en esta conferencia, las mujeres latinoamericanas destacan principalmente algunos progresos en el campo de la salud y en la afirmación de los derechos específicos de

las mujeres indígenas.

En el campo de la salud, organizaciones de mujeres reagrupadas en la Red Latinoamericana, se congratularon que la declaración estipule la necesidad de hacer de la mortalidad materna una prioridad en el sector de salud, y que prediga la necesidad de aplicar programas educativos para que los hombres practiquen sexo seguro.

Asimismo, las mujeres subrayan que la declaración —que no es coercitiva, y que fue suscrita por consenso por los 188 Estados miembros de la ONU— reconoce que la globalización de la economía ha tenido, y tiene, un impacto negativo en millones de mujeres pobres del mundo, principalmente en los países pobres, que están aplastados por las deudas internacionales.

Destacan, además, que el texto reconoce asimismo, con un lenguaje fortalecido, las necesidades y derechos específicos de las mujeres indígenas, que es clave para la región.

El documento de la ONU afirma también aspectos legales, como el derecho a la propiedad y el derecho a heredar, derechos de las que son aún privadas millones de mujeres en algunas regiones del mundo.

En el campo de la violencia contra las mujeres, llama a los gobiernos a adoptar una legislación más fuerte para tratar todas las formas de violencia doméstica y a implementar mecanismos para castigar la agresión contra la mujer.

Además, el texto trata por primera vez en un documento internacional suscrito por consenso los llamados "delitos de honor" y el ma-

trimonio forzado, y pide a los gobiernos medidas para eliminar toda violencia relacionada con la dote.

Las activistas "lamentan" sin embargo "la falta de voluntad política por parte de algunos de los gobiernos" para acordar un documento "más fuerte", con "metas cuantitativas, plazos, indicadores y recursos concretos", para la implementación de la Plataforma de Pekín.

"Las mujeres de América Latina y el Caribe seguiremos luchando por derechos, justicia y democracia", resumió la peruana Gina Vargas, coordinadora de la Red de Mujeres Latinoamericanas, que tomó la palabra ante la Asamblea General del foro mundial, para reafirmar el compromiso de las latinoamericanas con el combate de las mujeres por una vida mejor.

U.N. nations agree to speed women's rights

By **EDITH M. LEDERER**

The Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — Five years after a landmark U.N. conference set women's equality as an achievable goal, more than 180 nations agreed Saturday on measures to accelerate the international campaign to reach it.

But women's rights activists said governments didn't go far enough with the 150-page platform, adopted in Beijing in 1995.

Delegates to the special session of the General Assembly approved by consensus the new plan to advance the Beijing agenda — as well as an accompanying political declaration — after listening to about two dozen speeches, many expressing reservations on specific issues.

Deputy U.S. ambassador Betty King called the final document “an important milestone in the international community's efforts to promote the advancement of women.”

Despite fears that delegates would chip away at the Beijing platform, the weeklong U.N. Women's Conference ended Saturday with no backtracking. The new document included tougher measures to combat domestic violence and sex trafficking, and to tackle the impact of HIV/AIDS and globalization on women.

But despite an all-night session, virtually no progress was made on the most contentious issues — including access to safe abortion, sexual rights, sexual orientation, and equal rights of inheritance.

That disappointed grass-roots groups, which had been lobbying for more specific goals and stronger action, especially on issues regarding sexuality and reproductive health.

“We regret that there was not enough political will on the part of some governments and the U.N. system to agree on a stronger document with more concrete benchmarks, numerical goals, time-bound targets, indicators, and resources aimed at implementing the Beijing platform,” said a statement by the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University and the Women's Environment and Development Organization.

But Angela King, an assistant secretary-general and a special adviser on the advancement of women, said she was encouraged by the progress.

“It was absolutely worth it,” she said, after the delegates reached agreement after 5 a.m. “All those millions of women who are looking at us are totally vindicated, and they have something to grasp to assist them for their battles for equality.”

“We have a very strong document which not only reaffirms Beijing and other relevant conferences on human rights and social development, but also moves for-

ward," she said.

The conference brought together about 2,300 international delegates and 2,000 representatives of grass-roots organizations. Aside from closed-door negotiations on the final document, dozens of panel discussions were held on subjects ranging from women gaining access to technology to rituals of widowhood.

The first U.N. women's conference, in Mexico City in 1975, launched a movement toward women's equality that was still gaining momentum, King said, adding there would be another progress review in 2005.

The battle lines for the current conference — known as Beijing Plus Five — mirrored those at Beijing: the Vatican and a handful of Islamic and Catholic countries — including Libya, Algeria, Iran, Sudan, and Nicaragua — against the West and hundreds of women's rights activists.

Unlike in Beijing, where the Vatican was very vocal, the only conservatives to speak out were from a coalition of antiabortion and religious groups, who blamed rich Western nations for pushing "radical language" on abortion, sexual rights, and homosexual rights.

Jyoti Shankar Singh, executive coordinator of this weekend's General Assembly session, said issues relating to sex and reproduction did not have the same intensity they had at the 1994 population conference in Cairo or the 1995 Beijing conference.

"People were concerned with a lot of other issues — violence against women, trafficking, HIV/AIDS, the impact of globalization, women's human rights, and how much power they hold or share in the economy and politics," he said, and this is reflected in the final document.

Although attempts for stronger language on access to abortions failed and references to sexual rights and sexual orientation were dropped, the platform does say women have the right to "decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality . . . free of coercion, discrimination, and violence."

Women's rights advocates said this constituted sexual rights, but conservative activists feared the term could be interpreted as condoning homosexuality and other practices they regard as deviant.

A dispute between the United States and Cuba over Havana's insistence on referring to the negative effect of U.S. sanctions was also resolved early Saturday.

King said both countries agreed to compromise language.

The document also calls for implementation and increased international cooperation to eliminate "commercial sexual exploitation," as well as economic exploitation, including sex trafficking.

The time for action

Participants in U.N. women's conference return home — with a plan

By EDITH M. LEDERER

UNITED NATIONS — Armed with renewed backing from more than 180 nations and an updated plan to achieve equality of the sexes, thousands of participants are returning home from a U.N. women's conference determined to stop making speeches and start taking action.

Five years after the largest global gathering of women in history, the nations of the world met to review the landmark 150-page platform for action that they adopted in Beijing. They not only gave it a thumbs up but added some tougher measures.

"Member states in the United Nations system now have a clearly defined roadmap for the continuing journey toward gender equality," Assistant Secretary-General Angela King, the U.N. special adviser on gender issues, said Monday. "The will to act was demonstrated by governments."

She pointed to new measures to combat domestic violence, sex trafficking and the impact of globalization on women. "The women of the world now have a tool to assist them in achieving their goals," she said.

Getting more than 180 nations to reach consensus on an updated roadmap was a long and difficult process. The weeklong special session of the General Assembly, scheduled to end Friday, didn't finish until Saturday night.

There was relief from Secretary-General Kofi Annan and dozens of governments, including the United States, which feared that the conference would backtrack on Beijing's gains for women.

"The most wonderful thing is that there's no sliding back," said Noeleen Heyzer, executive director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women. "It is extremely important now that we go from words into action."

She called for greater accountability to achieve equality in education, jobs and decision-making. She urged governments and the private sector to earmark more money to implement the Beijing platform. And she said the U.N. agency "will support as many governments as possible" in reviewing laws that discriminate against women by 2005, as called for by

last week's conference.

The new document notes that the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women — the legal cornerstone of women's equality — has been signed by 165 nations but failed to achieve the goal of universal ratification by 2000.

During the conference, Saudi Arabia announced that it would sign the convention and U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said the Clinton administration had intensified efforts to get the Senate to ratify it.

The battle lines for last week's conference — known as Beijing Plus Five — mirrored those at Beijing: the Vatican and a handful of Islamic and Catholic countries — including Libya, Algeria, Iran, Sudan and Nicaragua — against the West and thousands of women's rights activists.

As at Beijing, the most contentious issues dealt with sexual and reproductive issues.

Adrienne Germain, president of the International Women's Health Coalition and a member of the U.S. delegation to Beijing, said Monday that one major achievement last week was "a real obstruction of the right-wing effort to take us backward."

She pointed to the follow-up document's support for education programs and services on reproductive and sexual health for adolescents and a restatement of language urging governments to review laws that punish women for having abortions and its references to sexuality.

"So it's clear now that sexuality, like gender, is an issue that governments cannot deny or ignore," she said.

What voluntary organizations are committed to now, Germain said, "is developing innovative projects that can show governments how to change policies."

Delegates from embattled Sierra Leone and Congo said they were missing the key prerequisite to implement the Beijing platform: peace. Africans spoke of the AIDS pandemic destroying the social fabric of the continent. Asians spoke about the financial crisis leaving women without enough to eat and an upsurge in trafficking, forced prostitution and so-called honor killings.

Some woman fear Hillary will win

By ANN McFEATTERS
Block News Alliance

NEW YORK — When Hillary Rodham Clinton (the first lady, not the candidate) addressed the United Nations conference on women here a few days ago, not unsurprisingly saying that gender equality has not yet been achieved, her audience broke into "We Shall Overcome" when she finished.

Wearing her trademark uniform, pink blouse and black pants suit, she tentatively looked around, assessing the situation. The crowd was hers; the song was being sung quietly and melodically, not provocatively. Her opponent (as a candidate, not first lady) would not be able to make any political use of the scene against her. She sprang to her feet and began to clap and sing along.

A few blocks away a big bookstore on Fifth Avenue was rearranging its shelves of brand new non-fiction books. Two of them are anti-Hillary tomes both written by women.

There is a new poll showing that Hillary Clinton, candidate for U.S. Senate, is running exactly even against Republican Rep. Rick Lazio, who just three weeks ago got into the race when New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani decided not to run. Lazio's first big brush with publicity after joining the race came when he fell in a Memorial Day parade.

Odds are now that Clinton will be the next senator from New York, partly because she is married to a man who has raised more money for his party than anyone else in history. Money is not going to be a problem for her

campaign.

But becoming a senator is not going to be a cakewalk for the first lady; they were wrong, those who thought Lazio, a young and energetic but relatively unknown congressman, would be blown out of the water by going up against a sitting first lady. The Republican Party is eager to defeat her and will pour money into Lazio's campaign.

One reason for Lazio's strong showing is that Hillary still has a woman problem. Despite the joyous excitement of hundreds of women from around the world who cheered for Hillary at the United Nations, she still is viewed with great suspicion by many women in New York. A startlingly high 39 percent of New Yorkers say they have an "unfavorable" opinion of her compared with 8 percent who say that about Lazio. (Do they even know who he is?) Fifty-one percent of independent voters say they'll vote for him.

Why? Peggy Noonan, a speechwriter for former President Reagan and political analyst who once wrote that Bill Clinton would never be a two-term president, is one of the New Yorkers who has written a book against Hillary, "The Case Against Hillary." Dedicating her book to "Eleanor Roosevelt," (a calculated snub against Hillary who has said Mrs. Roosevelt is her heroine), Noonan does not trust, like or admire the first lady. The point of her book is to urge New Yorkers to vote against her: "The great thing about democracy is that before she gets to decide your fate, you get to decide hers," she wrote.



Associated Press

First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton joins in singing 'We Shall Overcome' with delegates to the Women 2000 conference at the U.N. June 5.

Laura Ingraham, a former lawyer who now is a Republican political commentator on television, also has written a book, "The Hillary Trap." She argues that the first lady is "the ultimate feminist of convenience" and wrote, "I see her mired hopelessly in the stale, outmoded [ideas] of her youth," still pushing "the nanny state." Ingraham angrily contends that Hillary Clinton is able to run for the Senate only because her husband is president. "For all her feminism, Hillary has never learned to stand on her own." Neither Noonan nor Ingraham has actually interviewed or talked with Hillary Clinton but they find her too liberal, too calculating, too ambitious, too facile, too puzzling. And they are both passionate in those beliefs.

Not coincidentally, all three women are successful, stunningly ambitious, well known, attractive and blonde.

But the visceral anger Noonan and Ingraham feel toward Hillary Clinton does not seem to be born of jealousy. Rather, it seems

born of a belief that without her husband, she would not be one of the most admired women in the world — a woman lionized by U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, who said nobody's star power equaled hers. He did not, however, stay after introducing her to hear her speech.

Mazidah Zakaria of Malaysia was one of those who heard the first lady speak at the United Nations. "She could be the first woman president of the United States," she said eagerly.

In her speech, as in Beijing five years ago, Clinton said, "Women's rights are human rights, and human rights are women's rights." To many men, the response to her phrase is: Duh.

Maybe that's really why Noonan and Ingraham and many other women are uncomfortable with Hillary Clinton — they are not sure how much "there" there is there, and they are convinced she wants to be the first woman to be U.S. president. They fear she WILL overcome.

When it comes to sex, power struggles can be deadly

Dr. Robert Hatcher is recognized worldwide as an expert in family planning and population control, but back home at Emory University his medical students just call him Captain Condom.



Hatcher

In a week when the Vatican and Muslim nations tried mightily at the U.N. meeting in New York to weaken the reproductive rights goal of the 1995 Beijing conference on women, Hatcher, a professor of obstetrics and gynecology, offered insights on the volatile issue. They are based on a lifetime of research and experience with real-life situations around the world. One of his books, "The Essentials of Contraceptive Technology," published by Johns Hopkins University Press and translated in many languages, is distributed by the United Nations to health care professionals worldwide.

Modern medical technology and the availability of contraceptives, even in developing nations, should make unwanted pregnancies and abortions rare, Hatcher says. But male attitudes, cultural mores and religious views still are obstacles. The solution hinges on improving the status of women.

"Let's face it," he says, "men don't want to relinquish this important [sexual] power over women."

Hatcher tells two stories to illustrate his point:



MARTHA EZZARD

Our Sunday Reader columnist
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In the Congolese capital of Kinshasa, Dr. Manzila Tarande, a gynecologist with the Centers for Disease Control in Africa, counseled a man who was HIV-positive and his spouse who was not. He advised the couple of the risk to the woman and instructed them on how to use condoms. Two weeks later, the woman returned with an eye swollen, her body bruised and cut. "See what your condom advice got me," she said. She later died of AIDS.

"This woman didn't die because of a lack of access to contraceptives or of a lack of understanding about how to use them," Hatcher says. "She died because of the status of women."

Even in America, where women have led the way in improving their status and choices, there are underlying problems of power and control in relationships. For example, a woman who worked in the OB-GYN department at Grady Hospital decided after her fifth child she wanted to be sterilized, but her husband objected. And for religious reasons, he also rejected contraceptive use. Soon after the woman became pregnant with her sixth child, she

died of a self-induced abortion.

"She didn't die because she had no access to contraceptives or legal abortion," Hatcher says. "She died because of her lack of power. She died because of the status of women."

Still, Hatcher is encouraged that the education of women and the availability of contraceptives through the U.N. and other world health organizations has helped decrease the average family size in many nations. In Kenya, for example, the birth rate between 1976 and 1999 dropped from 8.4 children per family to 5.4. In Peru, from 6.7 to 3.5.

In the United States, teenage pregnancy is down, but not by enough. Studies show 93 percent of young people engage in premarital sex, most while still in high school, Hatcher says.

Although he preaches abstinence to teens and believes strongly sex education should be taught in a framework of moral values, he also believes in offering the safety net of education about contraception. But much of American society is not ready for that, he says. "If I suggested such to some [parent] groups I speak to," he says, "I wouldn't be asked back."

The Beijing goal of reproductive rights for women and sex education for girls must be more than just a women's effort. Hatcher says: "Improving the status of women has to include men — husbands, boyfriends, physicians and political leaders."

COX NEWS

Women's meeting can lift standards

Martha Ezzard

While families throughout the Western world are happily attending graduation ceremonies for relatives who have completed milestones in their educational careers, some 110 million of the world's children have nothing to celebrate because they never entered school this year. Two-thirds of those uneducated children are girls.

That's one reason why the United Nations meeting on women this week, a follow-up to the 1995 **Beijing conference**, is so important. Giving educational opportunity to girls and women has proven to be the key to lifting living standards and strengthening families. And that includes sex education for young girls.

The purpose of the follow-up conference is to expedite action on the goals agreed upon by 189 nations. The most important of those are education for women and girls, ending sexual exploitation and violence against women, providing access to medical care and enhancing job opportunities. To most of us in the Western world, those goals seem innocuous enough.

But the Vatican and some conservative Muslim nations have continued to work for removal of the crucial landmark declaration that women have sexual rights independent of men. In closed door meetings in New York, representatives of Algeria, Iran, Libya and Pakistan _ countries with the fewest educational opportunities for women _ tried to weaken the commitment to sexual rights for women and sex education for adolescent girls. You'd think they would be focusing instead on the worldwide prostitution trade that preys on young women from developing nations _ and that is on the rise.

Fortunately, it is unlikely those benighted voices will prevail. There is a new generation of women leaders from Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia who are insisting on their fundamental human rights. Calling for an end to the tedious debates over what "access to health care" means in relation to abortion, Joana Foster, a Zimbabwean who heads Women in Law and Development in Africa, said, "African women think debates over nuances and language are a waste of time." She pointed to women's political gains in Namibia where 44 percent local government system is now comprised of women and new laws have been enacted against female genital mutilation.

Her message is right on. Speeding up implementation of the Beijing agenda may be the most effective worldwide human rights effort in which the United States can engage.

The Hotline

IN WOMENCONNECT POLITICS DAILY: WORLD WATCH WEDNESDAY!

In today's issue, as women gather to review the process made from the UN's **Beijing conference**, Mexico tries to capture the female vote with male strippers and a Russian TV station gets interviews with politicians by using topless female reporters.

- o IN THE STATES: Women in NY are threatening to "purge" 170 words from the state constitution.

- o NAMES IN THE NEWS: What do a "Just Shoot Me" co-star and Tipper have in common?

- o BACK PAGE: What's this about "Sex In The City" affecting marriages?

For these and other stories on women and politics, click WomenconnectPolitics Daily, an online briefing from The Hotline and womenCONNECT.com, free on the web at <http://www.womenCONNECT.com>, weekdays at 1pm.

Knight Ridder/Tribune News Service

The global fight for women's equality is impossible without reproductive rights

By Anika Rahman

This week, the U.N. General Assembly is finishing up its meeting in New York to review the progress since the 1995 **Beijing** women's conference.

Unfortunately, the situation for women in many parts of the world is still dire. Five years ago, delegates from 188 governments and a vast array of women's groups met in Beijing to draft a visionary plan for improving the lives of the world's women.

The Beijing proposal addressed issues of poverty, education, human rights, health and violence, among others. It also acknowledged that reproductive rights are essential to women's equality, health, economic advancement and social development.

When girls are forced to marry young and drop out of school, it becomes difficult to free them from poverty and enable them to become equal participants in society. If women are restricted to domestic work and childbearing, education and jobs aren't accessible to them.

Unless they are able to participate in the workforce, they aren't likely to participate in government. Current statistics demonstrate the need to improve women's reproductive health and rights.

Each year, 200 million women around the world _ almost as many women as the entire population of the United States _ become pregnant. But 80 million of these pregnancies are unplanned, according to the Safe Motherhood Initiative. More than one-third of women of reproductive age in low and middle-income countries do not have access to modern, safe and acceptable family planning methods, according to the U.N. Population Fund.

According to the World Health Organization, pregnancy-related causes kill 585,000 women annually, and unsafe abortions result in nearly 80,000 deaths each year. About 130 million girls have been subjected to female circumcision/female genital mutilation, according to WHO and UNICEF.

And, throughout the world, women are contracting AIDS as a result of their inequality in sexual matters. Too many women lack the power to require their partners to use a condom, or don't have access to female condoms. These women don't have the power to say "no," and to have that "no" respected.

If their condition is to improve, women need information about the full range of safe and appropriate contraception. They need access to safe abortions and quality prenatal and postnatal care. They need education and services to prevent and treat sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS.

Yet, in almost every region of the world, fundamentalist religious forces continue to block family planning and other reproductive health services. Some extremists go so far as to oppose condoms to reduce the transmission of HIV/AIDS.

The good news is that in every region of the world, women are defending and promoting their sexual and reproductive rights. In Peru, women have been raped and abused within the health-care system.

But advocates brought this to the attention of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. As a result, the Peruvian government accepted responsibility for the rape of an indigenous woman by her doctor, and agreed to provide the victim with psychological and material reparations. In Sierra Leone and Kosovo, systematic rape has been used as a weapon of war.

In response to such atrocities, the global women's movement played a key role in establishing the International Criminal Court. Now they are pressing for the court to address these atrocities. In Chile, women have been imprisoned for terminating any pregnancy _ even if those abortions were necessary to save women's lives. Chilean women's groups continue to press for liberalization of this law.

In Senegal, women have successfully lobbied for a law that criminalizes female circumcision/female genital mutilation.

While the **Beijing Conference** was undoubtedly a catalyst for global change, it is only through efforts like these that the Beijing principles are being translated into solid legislative and policy reforms.

No matter the outcome this week at the United Nations, women around the world won't stop working for equality and justice. The only real question is whether or not governments will join us half-heartedly or with enthusiasm.

ABOUT THE WRITER

Anika Rahman is the director of the international program at the Center for Reproductive Law and Policy. CRLP works to secure women's reproductive rights throughout the world and in the United States with litigation, policy advocacy, research and public education. She can be reached at [pmproj \(AT\)progressive.org](mailto:pmproj(AT)progressive.org), or by writing to Progressive Media Project, 409 East Main St., Madison, Wis. 53703.

LADIES' HOME
JOURNAL
Never Underestimate the Power of a Woman®

HILLARY NOW; an interview with Hillary Rodham Clinton

BERKMAN, MEREDITH

IN THIS EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW, THE FIRST LADY TALKS ABOUT THE CHALLENGES OF BEING A MOTHER, THE SURPRISES SHE DISCOVERED IN HER NEW HOME, AND WHY SHE'S REALLY RUNNING FOR THE SENATE

"This is one of the great things about living in the White House," Hillary Rodham Clinton says a bit wistfully, indicating an enormous spray of yellow roses and chrysanthemums in the "East Sitting Hall." Later, walking through "The Center Hall," the long, elegantly decorated main hallway of the Clintons' private residence, we stop to admire a Mary Cassatt painting of a woman and two young children.

"Isn't it wonderful to live with that?" Clinton asks, smiling. "When we go to our house in New York [where the Clintons recently bought a \$ 1.7 million Dutch Colonial in the wealthy Westchester suburb of Chappaqua], we take out our things and I think, 'Doesn't that look nice?' And then I come back here--and there's the Mary Cassatt."

Though her husband will remain in office until the end of January, Clinton is in a unique emotional limbo. She is prematurely nostalgic about her eight years at the White House because her post-presidential life is already under way: Last February, she formally announced she was running for the Senate from New York.

Clinton, who is waging a fierce campaign against New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, has been a cultural lightning rod for almost a decade, infuriating people on all points of the political spectrum. She has been criticized for putting her own political aspirations on hold to advance those of her husband. She's been demonized for functioning as a "co-president" with her ultimately failed attempt to overhaul the health-care system. She was publicly humiliated by her husband's affair with Monica Lewinsky. (Ironically, her approval ratings soared after the scandal broke, suggesting that Americans loved her when she seemed to be a victim.)

Now, she's being accused of using her high profile as First Lady to an unfair advantage in the Senate race. Her supporters counter that this is Hillary Clinton's time; she's finally stepping out from her husband's shadow.

And yet the woman who enters the sitting room for her Ladies' Home Journal photo shoot seems remarkably relaxed and down-to-earth. With her short blond hair and piercing blue eyes, Clinton is prettier and more feminine in person than she usually appears in photographs or on television. She's also oddly hokey. When the photographer asks her to shift positions, she chirps "Okey-dokey," an expression she uses several times.

Clinton seems to enjoy being primed for the photos. But by the time we sit down to talk, she appears tired and a little wary. Her style is elegant, tailored and simple. Her neatly manicured nails are coated with clear polish, and the only jewelry she wears is a thickly braided gold-and-diamond band on her left hand.

Clinton has granted this interview to coincide with the fifth anniversary of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women. Held in Beijing, China, in September 1995, the event drew thousands of women from dozens of countries around the world and produced the Platform for Action, a strong policy statement demanding equal rights for women in economic, social, political and legal matters. From June 5 through June 9, the United Nations will hold a special session of the General Assembly to review the progress that's been made since the conference and mark "**Beijing Plus Five.**" As First Lady, Clinton has traveled widely overseas, providing support to thousands of women struggling to transform their lives.

LHJ: What has changed for women as a result of the **Beijing Conference**?

HRC: There's been extraordinary progress in the last five years, both internationally and in specific countries where laws and attitudes have changed, from Asia to Latin America. When I first went to Senegal, I went to a village that was working very hard with a nonprofit organization to end the practice of female genital [mutilation]. They voted in the village to ban it, overturning this centuries-old tradition. And they sent out people from their village to talk with people in other villages. They persuaded the president of Senegal to denounce the practice, and later it was made illegal. It was all because of women finding their voices and speaking out and learning how to work the democratic system.

LHJ: What do you think are the most urgent issues facing women today?

HRC: It really depends on what region of the world you're looking at. We still have places where women are brutally oppressed, like Afghanistan. We have places where women cannot vote, like Kuwait or Saudi Arabia. We have places where women are trafficked into prostitution or servitude. We have places where girls are still denied medical care and die at a much higher rate than boys.

LHJ: What are the most important issues facing women in the U.S.?

HRC: Although we enjoy all of the rights that make us equal under the law to men, we have a lot of challenges balancing family and work responsibilities, and providing support for one another in the choices we make.

LHJ: Are we providing the right support?

HRC: At the same time we tell girls they can do anything and be anything, we tell them, "You'd better be really thin. And you'd better be tall. And you'd better be super organized so you can do a million things at once." We give all of these messages that undermine individuality, instead of saying, "Be the best person you can be." In a lot of advanced economies, girls are getting trapped in different kinds of mind-sets. They can go to the greatest schools in the world and get jobs in the Fortune 500, but many are still beset by these culturally induced anxieties.

LHJ: How did you guard against that with Chelsea?

HRC: In my book *It Takes a Village: And Other Lessons Children Teach Us*, I described what I think are the basic rules of child rearing: Provide the right balance of discipline and love and guidance. Be authoritative and not authoritarian. And invest time in your child. It's really old-fashioned stuff.

LHJ: What's the biggest challenge of motherhood?

HRC: It's a delicate balance to be the worrier but also to recognize that you can't control everything. You can't even control everything in a ten-week-old's life, let alone a twenty-year-old's life. But I can't imagine not having been a mother--the things I've learned about myself, and the kind of person I am. You see yourself reflected in your child as she grows through different stages. And you have to be constantly aware of what your strong feelings are without smothering this little person. I think in some ways it's harder now.

LHJ: Why do you think that is?

HRC: I've talked to my mother and my mother's friends. They had a lot of work to do around the house. They didn't have a lot of time to sit around and worry about their child's IQ.

We now live in a time where being a mother and raising a child can be a separate task, because so much else [around the house] is taken care of by labor-saving devices or by delegation. We put so much effort and worry into our children that many of the difficulties a lot of us feel are because [being a mother] is so consuming now.

LHJ: Do you think you have changed the "office" of First Lady? What achievements are you most proud of?

HRC: This is the most unusual position. It is not really written down anywhere what you're supposed to do. Each person has to mold it to fit her needs and desires. Some of my predecessors have been totally devoted to their husbands and their families. Some have been very active in the public arena. Some have tried to balance a little bit of both.

I've been very grateful that I've been involved in extending health care to children and changing the system, making it easier for people who lose their jobs to keep their health insurance.

And I've been very pleased that I've had a role in helping to change the adoption and foster care system. It's something I've worked on ever since I was a law student. We're trying to speed up the process, provide more tax incentives for adoption and help kids who age out of foster care--keeping the support system in place so they're not left out on their own.

LHJ: Do you have any regrets? Is there any particular issue you wish you had tackled but didn't?

HRC: There are only so many hours in the day! We still have a lot of work to do. Our public schools are not where they should be. Our health-care system doesn't take care of everyone. We still have too many guns and they fall into the hands of criminals and children.

LHJ: Why did you decide to run for senator from New York?

HRC: I'm more convinced than ever that it matters who votes in the Senate. The economic plan in 1993 passed by only one vote, and it made a huge difference in the quality of life for many of us. The Family and Medical Leave Act was vetoed twice before it was passed and signed into law. The crime bill was passed by a very small margin. So when people from New York invited me to consider this, I was very surprised, but I listened.

LHJ: You're not from New York. What do you say to people who call you a carpetbagger?

HRC: I've always wanted to live in New York. I had hoped and planned to live there after the White House.

LHJ: There have been news reports and polls showing that you've had trouble with female voters. Why do you think that is?

HRC: I think I have to earn the vote of every New Yorker. I respect people who say, "I want to make sure that she's doing it for the right reasons. That she cares about people like me, that she

understands what my life is like and that she'll fight for me and my family in the U.S. Senate."

LHJ: What will you do if you don't win?

HRC: I'll probably be connected with a foundation or academic institution in some way. I'll support the same issues--raising the minimum wage, expanding the earned income-tax credit for poor working people and putting more teachers into the classroom to lower class size in our public schools.

LHJ: You and your husband have lived in public housing since 1983, when he was elected governor of Arkansas the first time. What were the most meaningful objects you unpacked after so many years when you moved into your new home?

HRC: I don't even know where to start. Old rocking chairs, old tables, old clocks, just everything. We have been going through twenty-five years of marriage, finding gifts that were given to us when we were first married. There were a lot of old pictures we hadn't seen for a while, a lot of knick-knacks, memorabilia.

LHJ: It must feel good to finally have your own place.

HRC: It's nice having our own house, and having our things around us. The challenge is fitting everything in. We've accumulated a lot of things. We're both pack rats.

As our conversation ends, Clinton suddenly asks me my newborn daughter's name. She's just spoken by phone to twenty-year-old Chelsea, who was in India accompanying her father on a tour of Southeast Asia. "You won't believe how fast [childhood] goes," she tells me sadly. "Each stage is great."

Clinton graciously escorts me to the elevator and wishes me good luck in my role as new mom. Then Hillary Rodham Clinton, one of the most controversial women of our time, walks back alone through her soon-to-be former home.

Meredith Berkman is a columnist for the New York Post.

marie claire **REPORT**

Women of the world update



Women students protest in Turkey, 1998.

Take a look at how far we've come in the five years since the United Nations' Beijing Conference on Women—and how far we still have to go

BY NURITH AIZENMAN

In September 1995, some 6000 delegates from 189 nations gathered at the United Nations' fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, to adopt a groundbreaking document. The "Beijing Declaration" and its "Platform for Action" identified 12 critical areas where the rights of women around the world were being violated, and outlined a road map of steps that governments should take to remedy the problem. But getting governments to talk the talk is only a start. What really matters is whether they walk the walk.

Last month, almost five years later, the United Nations held a special "Beijing Plus Five" session in New York to determine how well governments are living up to their commitments. Here, a sampling of the progress (or lack thereof) made in three key areas of concern identified at Beijing.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The World Health Organization estimates that violence against women causes more death and disability among women aged 15 to 44 than cancer, malaria, traffic accidents and war. Indeed, new statistics show that one in three women around the world has been beaten or sexually abused in her lifetime. Often the abusers are family members.

THE GOOD NEWS:

Egypt repealed a law that allowed rapists to go free if they marry their victims; Peru amended a similar law. Bangladesh passed a law increasing the penalties for abusing women. Turkey passed a law criminalizing spousal abuse.



Activists demand more seats for women in India's parliament, 1998.

THE BAD NEWS:

In Jordan, Morocco and Syria women who commit adultery can legally be killed by their husbands. Ethiopia, Lebanon and Uruguay have laws protecting a rapist from prosecution if he decides to marry his victim. India, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and Serbia still have laws allowing for marital rape.

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC STATUS

THE GOOD NEWS:

South Africa has changed its system of land distribution from a household to an individual basis, making it easier for a woman to be economically self-sufficient. Nigeria now allows women to inherit property from their husbands. In Brunei, women can now apply for housing and land in their own names.

THE BAD NEWS:

The Bahamas and Nepal still have laws stating that male descendants take precedence over females in inheriting property. In Chile, the law specifies that a married woman's property should be administered by her husband. In Cameroon, the law allows a husband to prevent his wife from working outside the home.

WOMEN'S PERSONAL AND POLITICAL FREEDOMS

THE GOOD NEWS:

In Venezuela, a new constitution allows women to transfer their citizenship to foreign-born husbands. Senegal, the Ivory Coast and Egypt have legally banned female genital mutilation. The Ivory Coast outlawed forced marriage and sexual harassment.

THE BAD NEWS:

In Kuwait, the National Assembly voted twice against granting women the right to vote. In Algeria, Sudan and Yemen, the law still requires women to obey their husbands. In Pakistan, there must be four male eyewitnesses to prove that a rape has occurred. In Afghanistan, women cannot leave their homes unless covered from head to toe, and are denied equal access to education, employment and healthcare.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Contact the following organizations for more information:

- **Human Rights Watch, Women's Rights Division;** 1630 Connecticut Ave. N.W., Ste. 500, Washington, D.C. 20009; 202-612-4321 or www.hrw.org
- **Equality Now;** P.O. Box 20646, Columbus Circle Station, New York, NY 10023; 212-586-0906 or www.equalitynow.org
- **National Organization for Women;** 733 15th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005; 202-628-8669 or www.now.org
- **International Women's Democracy Center;** 1730 Rhode Island Ave. N.W., Ste. 715, Washington, D.C. 20036; 202-530-0563 or www.iwdc.org

The Nation.

Women: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back? U.N. General Assembly meets to evaluate implementation internationally of rights for women

POLLITT, KATHA

Five years ago, the United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing produced a remarkable Declaration and Platform for Action. Adopted unanimously, the documents link women's rights to human rights for the first time in UN history and lay out detailed and ambitious plans for the advancement of girls and women on twelve fronts, including health, political decision-making, education and economic opportunity. The platform calls for universal access to family planning, sex education, equal inheritance rights, and the prevention and punishment of rape and domestic violence, and it condemns job discrimination, forced marriage, coercion in family planning and population programs, female infanticide, female genital mutilation, unsafe **abortion** (although the right to **abortion** itself is not mentioned), dowry-related violence and other harmful and unjust practices. It connects women's rights to poverty, environmental degradation, global inequality, warfare and various evils that affect women disparately. The declaration and platform are just pieces of paper--there is no real enforcement mechanism--but as such things go they are pretty strong, and where women have been able to hold their governments' feet to the fire, they have made a difference. Bear in mind too that the Beijing documents represent a consensus produced in the teeth of stern opposition by a handful of reactionary Muslim and Roman **Catholic** countries. The resistance was orchestrated by the Vatican, which (unlike any other religious organization in the world) holds permanent-observer status, entitling it to participate in negotiations, although not to vote.

As I write, the UN is meeting in a General Assembly special session in New York to assess the implementation of the Beijing agreements. As in Beijing, thousands of women representing hundreds of nongovernmental organizations have come from all around the world to lobby, compare notes and share information on everything from grassroots radio to globalization. A panel attacking religious fundamentalism was crowded with women in veils, chadors, African dress and office wear. I hung around afterward and eavesdropped on a meeting of African women strategizing against sexism in their Protestant churches back home while a member of Ecumenical Women, a Presbyterian group, filled me in on the denomination's growing antifeminist contingent here in the States.

If at Beijing the dominant mood was one of excitement at the prospects for mainstreaming global feminism, in New York it's mostly wariness. The latest UN statistics show some bright patches--most

regions have seen declines in early marriage and childbearing; the number of female legislators has increased dramatically in India, Argentina and other countries with gender set-asides and quotas; the gender gap in primary and secondary education is slowly closing. But the overall picture, in that and other studies, is not a happy one: staggering rates of poverty, domestic violence, suicide. Particularly depressing to me was the confirmation of a disconnection between education and income levels: In numerous countries--Jamaica, the Philippines, some Latin American nations--women are better educated than men. But nowhere does that fact result in on-the-job equality.

Some of the major forces threatening women's progress--the widening gap between rich and poor, the shredding of social safety nets to service debts, the explosion in forced trafficking and sexual slavery, the burgeoning AIDS crisis, war--are complex, intractable, hugely costly to solve. That makes it all the more reprehensible that governments have dragged their feet on legal reforms that cost no money, only political will: changing marriage laws that mandate wifely obedience and divorce laws that permit men, but not women, to dissolve the union at will or whim; removing restrictions on basic freedoms, like the right to travel, study or work without permission of a male "guardian." Nigeria permits husbands to "correct" their wives through physical punishment; Costa Rica and at least five other countries allow rapists to avoid prosecution if they marry their victim. In Saudi Arabia women still can't drive. In Kuwait they still can't vote.

Our own government's record is nothing to crow about. The feminist group US Women Connect issued a Platform for Action report card giving this country mostly Bs, Cs and Ds with a big fat F for welfare reform. Underscoring the spotty performance of governments is the threat to the conference itself, which comes from the same fundamentalists and zealots who impede women's progress in their home countries. Once again the Vatican has teamed up with a handful of states--Algeria, Iran, Pakistan, Sudan, Libya--to weaken the language of the Beijing documents. This time around, the US religious right, which has historically opposed the UN's very existence, is joining the fray. That supposedly Christian organizations seem to have more in common with Muslim countries where women are stoned for "adultery" and beaten by police for showing a strand of hair than with the liberal members of their own denominations speaks volumes about their priorities. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, must women still fight the battles of the seventeenth? The way Beijing Plus Five turns out will tell us part of the answer to that question.

What can you do? Join the 541 women's and human rights groups that support the See Change campaign of Catholics for a Free Choice. Attempting to pander to the Catholic vote after his disastrous Bob Jones University visit, George W. Bush has attacked See Change as a bigoted attempt to kick the church out of the UN. In fact, it merely seeks to deprive the Holy See of its permanent-observer status, which is based on the fiction that Vatican City is an actual functioning country and not a tiny masculine enclave like San Quentin or the Knicks. The Catholic Church should be welcome to apply for NGO status and lobby to its heart's content but not to sit at the negotiating table and endlessly stall and shred the delicate consensus process. Contact Catholics for a Free Choice at 1436 U Street NW, Suite 301, Washington, DC 20009.

Newsweek

Raising Women's Voices

At a fractious United Nations meeting in New York, delegates from 180 countries struggled last week to put into action the accord reached five years ago at the **Beijing conference** on women's rights. In the end, the accord was strengthened, making domestic violence a crime, for instance, and calling on men to take more responsibility for practicing safe sex. Among the 10,000 women attending was Nana Konadu Rawlings, the first lady of Ghana. Since 1979, when her husband, Jerry Rawlings, took power in a coup, she has used her platform to champion the rights of women. She founded the 31 December Women's Movement, which has grown to more than 2 million members. She spoke to **NEWSWEEK's** Tom Masland by telephone from New York. Excerpts:

MASLAND: What should have happened at the meeting?

RAWLINGS: Implementation of the platform we talked about in 1995: poverty alleviation, economic structures, the general education of women and especially the girl child, health, environment, power sharing, decision making. But some of us have already started implementing the platform for action and are working feverishly on it.

Do you think that people accept that empowering women is the best route to addressing the population explosion and other problems of the developing world?

People feel that empowering women is a good thing. But whether they let their words translate into deeds is another thing. At home, if a [male] minister or somebody placed in a high position starts going on about how important it is to empower women, my first question is: "How empowered is your wife? Do you allow her to work?" Sometimes they just laugh; sometimes they get embarrassed, and then I know that they're just talking. But it is clear that if a country's women are empowered, then the economic indices also are moving up, because it is the women who take care of their children, health, education. If you leave the women far behind, no matter how high you push the men up, the indices will remain at the bottom.

I understand that your struggle against regressive African traditions regarding women has been especially difficult.

Women whose husbands died were subjected to all kinds of inhuman treatment. They were thrown out of their homes as soon as their husbands died. [In Ghana] we've got a law now to protect women from those things, and we've got an inheritance law. Then of course we had the female genital mutilation, and now it's a criminal offense to perform these cultural practices.

You also have addressed a practice akin to female slavery.

They take the women into custody and make them work for crimes [ranging from murder to theft] that were supposed to have been committed by their families. We passed a law against that two years ago.

How do people from other parts of the world react to your philosophy?

There are contradictions. In these meetings we see that some of the Arab countries are hard on the fact that women should not inherit property, they are hard on violence against women, they don't want it in the document. They are hard-liners on rape. At the same time they are saying that the women in their countries are feminists. And they have had female presidents: in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India. I have a problem with that.

Has your 31 December movement been copied around the world?

A lot of countries, including the United States, have asked us how we have gone about it. I always say that if you educate a woman and she's not economically empowered, you've given her a quarter of what you should give her. If you empower her economically and she's not educated about her health, political, social and cultural issues, you have still not done your work properly. If you want women to stand on their feet, then they should also be in decision-making areas, so we educate them on policies of state. Their voices must be heard. We don't have to grow beards before we can be political.

Some people thought you would run to succeed your husband in the December presidential election. It's not going to happen. But if I want to run as president of the country, I will speak out for myself. Nobody else will do it for me.

You met Hillary Clinton in New York. How was that?

She's a friend, and I've encouraged her to get to the highest heights. Why not? She's capable, and I think she can do it. This issue of people always wanting to equate our own abilities with the position of our husband is unfortunate. I don't think I was any less capable when [my husband] was not a head of state.

What message would you like to leave people with after this special U.N. session?

The international community must recommit itself to the agreements that were reached in Beijing. Women's issues should cut across boundaries. The empowerment of women is the empowerment of humanity.

Attempts to weaken rights manifesto fail at women's summit

By Barbara Crossette

Five years after a watershed conference in Beijing articulated what more than 180 nations agreed were universal rights of women, a week-long follow-up meeting ended Saturday at the United Nations with no significant victories for opponents who have tried to reverse those gains.

An all-night session Friday into Saturday, capping a week of heated arguments, preserved a variety of women's rights including the most contentious, that "women have the right to decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality" and should be able to do so without "coercion, discrimination and violence."

Around the world, this can mean something as basic as choosing a spouse or avoiding customs of genital mutilation.

"I'm very happy that the dire predictions that there would be a roll-back have proved false," said Angela King, the UN official in charge of women's advancement.

"We were determined to get a strong document that did not in any way diminish the gains women had achieved in Beijing. We were also determined to go beyond Beijing, and we did, despite the efforts of countries that made the process such an arduous one."

Although some Western and international women's groups failed to expand definitions in the Beijing document to include more explicit homosexual rights, broad definitions of "family" and more clearly stated support for safe and readily available abortions, other issues were advanced.

Delegations from 180 nations, urged by representatives of about 1,200 non-governmental organizations, took strong stands on the trafficking of women and girls, who are sold or lured across borders by the sex trade or for domestic or industrial work that often amounts to wage slavery.

Delegates also agreed on principles that call for punishment of domestic violence, including marital rape, which some delegations had argued was essentially a private matter not recognized as a crime in many nations.

There were also calls to outlaw the killings of women whose families claim have shamed them, so-called honor killings that have drawn attention to countries like Jordan and Pakistan.

UN officials and women's rights advocates say that this is the first time an international document has characterized these activities as crimes. Although the final agreement of the conference does not have the force of law anywhere, it may be used by women as a statement of international norms when trying to change laws.

The meeting's final declaration also demanded more attention to the HIV-AIDS epidemic, which in the five years since the Fourth World Conference on Women in

Beijing has begun to infect many more women, especially in Africa. There, women's organizations say, the sexual rights of women are a matter of life and death, when traditions within extended families or clans may force girls and women into sexual arrangements they cannot avoid with men whom they may know to be infected with HIV, which causes AIDS.

As is almost inevitably the case when sensitive social issues are exposed to international debate, battle lines were drawn between con-

servative countries, largely Islamic or Roman Catholic, and more secular nations, though there was no fixed geographical pattern.

Poland and Nicaragua, for example, have often been reticent on certain women's rights, although Europe and Latin America in general take a much more liberal stand, even on contraception and abortion.

Among Islamic nations, delegates said, Algeria, Iran, Libya, Pakistan and Sudan were most reluctant to advance women's rights.

The opposition lobby got strong support from the Vatican.

Among the organizations that expressed disappointment Saturday about results from the conference were the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University, and the Women's Environment and Development Organization in New York.

They issued a statement regretting the failure to agree to a stronger document.

Anna Diamantopoulou, a Greek politician who is the European

Union's commissioner for employment and social affairs, said she was not concerned that the conference did not push too hard on the limits of what the majority of societies could accept.

She warned of the danger of provoking a backlash against women's groups in many countries if they returned with a declaration that could be interpreted as a call to upset the social order. "When they go home, they want to be waving the document, not apologizing for it," she said.

Much carping, few solutions

BYLINE: BONNIE ERBE

There's a saying: If you're not part of the solution you're part of the problem. Last week's United Nations women's rights conference brought that saying to life full-swing, with forces for action (if not progress) in one corner, battling forces for no action in the other.

Consider the lead paragraph in The Washington Post's coverage of the conclusion of this massive international gathering. This report summarized seven days of meetings among thousands of delegates and leaders of non-governmental organizations (or NGOs) who convened in New York to assess the progress women have made since the U.N. Summit on women's rights in Beijing in 1995:

"A long-festering dispute between women's groups in the West and religious conservatives from Catholic and Islamic countries broke out this week in a rancorous debate over women's sexual and reproductive rights."

The fighting wasn't limited to such sizzingly controversial issues as sexual orientation and abortion. It also tarred agreement on more basic issues -economic and legal progress for women in countries where those commodities are scarce, an end to the practice of forced marriage, a ban on international trafficking in women for forced prostitution and so on.

Most of the delegates came with concrete proposals on how to improve women's lives. Countries are supposed to consider these suggestions and possibly enact them into law, as part of an international effort to improve the lot of women the world over. Whether one agrees with these suggestions or not is another question (I am not in complete agreement with everything contained in the **Beijing Platform** for Action), but at least the progressive delegates offered solutions.

Not so for the conservative delegates. As reported by The Washington Post, delegates from entities including the Vatican, Nicaragua, Libya, Sudan, Iraq and Iran argued against suggestions made by the progressive forces, but offered little or nothing by way of counter-solutions of their own.

The feminist movement has been widely criticized for everything from lacking a sense of humor to being on the radical fringe. Some of those criticisms are valid, but they overlook the enormous good the movement has produced. Let me state clearly, I am not a feminist. I avoid that and all other labels because no label can possibly convey an accurate and complete description of my political beliefs. While I wholeheartedly support women's rights, I part company with women's rights advocates who

lump gay rights and women's rights together. They are two separate issues and should be decided separately. That does not mean I do not support legal protections for gay women (and men) - I do. But I agree with conservatives who argue such protections do not belong in the **Beijing Platform** for Action.

That aside, I'd like to see conservative states that attend these meetings for (seemingly) the mere pleasure of caterwauling at proposals made by progressives offer up some solutions of their own. Instead of just battling the progress liberal groups are proposing, why aren't Libya, Sudan, the Vatican, et al., coming up with counterproposals on how to lift women out of poverty and end the practice of forced marriage? Why are they running a strictly offensive action? They risk losing all credibility if they reduce themselves to a carping group of harpies, camping out at each U.N. Women's Summit for the sadistic pleasure of haranguing and attacking the other delegates who are working toward concrete accomplishments.

A pitched battle continues between the Vatican and Catholics for A Free Choice, a Washington, D.C.-based group that represents the multitudes of cafeteria Catholics who don't follow church teachings on abortion. Even though there could not be a deeper, more emotional philosophical chasm between two entities (one much larger than the other, of course) Catholics for A Free Choice had kind words to say about U.S. bishops, who stood up for the rights of American women to achieve full and equal employment in a 1998 statement issued in this country. Could not the Vatican, in turn, say something nice about Catholics for A Free Choice? And then, just maybe, the Vatican could offer a counterproposal on the rights of women to be fully and equally employed worldwide? Perhaps then, instead of a carp-fest, we'd have a real dialogue going.

(Bonnie Erbe, host of the PBS program "To the Contrary," writes this column for Scripps Howard News Service. E-mail [bonnieerbe\(at\)CompuServe.com](mailto:bonnieerbe(at)CompuServe.com).)



REBELS SEEK OUSTER OF VATICAN FROM U.N.;

GROUP RUNS INTO BACKLASH

By KEVIN ECKSTROM; RELIGION NEWS SERVICE

Frances Kissling is under no illusions that her latest campaign will endear her to the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy. She knows the harder she pushes for abortion rights, the harder the church pushes back.

As head of the independent Catholics for a Free Choice, Kissling says she realizes she's fighting a 2,000-year-old institution with friends in high places. So when she launched her "See Change Campaign" to oust the Vatican from the United Nations, Kissling expected a long fight and a scowl from church leaders.

She got both.

But even she couldn't foresee the strength of the backlash, in which she was labeled an anti-Catholic bigot by the National Council of Catholic Bishops.

"That was like a punch in the stomach," she said. "It was dishonest, and it certainly was un-Christian."

If Kissling has her way, the Vatican would lose its observer status, a diplomatic distinction accorded only to the Vatican and Switzerland, and remain in the United Nations as a nongovernmental organization with no official capacity.

Kissling's critics - and there are many - dismiss her campaign as a backward attempt to find a platform within a church that has never welcomed her views.

"We as Catholics are concerned that the vision of the church that we think is most appropriate ... is one in which religion is best served by acting as a religion, not a state," Kissling said. "We don't think it's good for the Roman Catholic Church to see itself and project itself as a state power."

As a permanent observer, the Vatican has no vote in the United Nations but can join debates and participate in U.N. conferences. The Vatican's status is a few steps above organizations such as the World Council of Churches, the Red Cross or the World Bank. Catholicism is the only major world religion to have an official U.N. presence.

But diplomatic nuances aside, what Kissling objects to is the church's stance on abortion and birth control. Ever since the U.N. 1995 **Beijing conference** on women, the Vatican has used its U.N. presence to speak out against family planning and abortion around the world.

Now, as the United Nations prepares to take a long look back at the **Beijing conference** this summer, Kissling is stepping up the rhetoric and vowing to oust the Holy See if the church continues its hard-line position on women's health issues around the world.

According to Kissling, 600,000 women die each year because of pregnancy-related complications: botched abortions, sexually transmitted diseases or lack of access to family planning.

Earlier this year, the Vatican opposed the use of the "morning-after pill" emergency contraception for rape victims in Kosovo refugee camps. The church has also opposed the distribution of condoms in Africa to help stem the spread of AIDS, saying there is no proof condoms would help prevent the disease.

Kissling says the Vatican deserves no spot at the United Nations if its policies are harmful to the most vulnerable areas of the world.

"We are Catholics, and we use contraception, we have abortions, we get AIDS and we need help," Kissling said. "The church is not listening, and it's not even a case of benign neglect. This is a case where we need a church that speaks out to prevent these tragedies, and currently the church contributes to them."

Kissling's criticisms don't stop there. She says the Vatican should be represented at the United Nations not as a state but as an observing religious group like any other.

That's an argument that doesn't fly with Raymond Flynn, the conservative former U.S. ambassador to the Vatican who vociferously supports the church. Flynn said as ambassador, his discussions with the Vatican were diplomatic, not theological.

"I wasn't talking about papal indulgences or annulments," Flynn said. "I'd be talking about official matters of international concern, just as I would if I were ambassador to France."

Most officials in the church take one look at Kissling, a longtime thorn in their side, and roll their eyes. Recently, the nation's Catholic bishops dismissed Catholics for a Free Choice as a "rejection and distortion of Catholic teaching" which "merits no recognition or support as a Catholic organization."

Kissling, in turn, looks at the church hierarchy and shrugs her shoulders. She is accustomed to the cold reception. "We have no expectations that we will be welcomed with open arms. We are not looking for an invitation to sit at the bishops' dinner table," she says.

Muslim women leaders mull Internet's possibilities

By Deborah Zabarenko

NEW YORK(Reuters) - For many Muslim women, the information superhighway might as well be a country lane, but some of their leaders are starting to consider how the Internet might help their far-flung community communicate.

"It's not too late for women in Muslim societies to use the Internet and the new technology," said Asma Khader, who coordinates the group Sisterhood is Global in Jordan.

Khader said Thursday at a forum on Muslim women and cyberspace, "Women in Muslim societies need more (of) these technologies because this is the way to bridge the gap between the situation of women in different areas of the world and our societies."

About 100 women -- some wearing traditional head scarfs, some in business suits and some in sundresses on a sweltering Manhattan day -- gathered for the forum at New York University, one of dozens of events planned around next week's United Nations meeting on the global status of women.

Khader and others at the technology forum stressed the need for action, and for a will to communicate among the disparate elements of the Muslim world.

One speaker said the Internet might help in one area that has been neglected: networking.

"In Muslim countries, in our developing countries, we're not very good at building coalitions and alliances," said Thoraya Obaid, the United Nations Population Fund's director for Arab states and Europe.

In addition to using the Internet and other new technologies to reach out to younger Muslim women, who she noted can communicate in a different way than earlier generations, Obaid also said reform-minded Muslim women need to reach out to those who disagree with them.

"We should open dialogues with Muslim women who are against reform ... so at least we know how they are thinking, and what they are thinking," Obaid said.

FEARS ABOUT THE INTERNET

One questioner from the audience voiced fears about the power and influence of the Internet in the Muslim world.

~~Here we are talking about technology, computers, the~~ Internet -- fine, good," said questioner Farida Allaghi. "But on the other hand, what scares us to death ... is who is controlling today this technology, is it really going to liberate ... or is it going to widen the gap between those who have and who have not?"

She went on to call for more women to go into private business and to seek political power.

There are many in predominantly Muslim countries who have no Internet access, and the group Human Rights Watch said in a report last year that some Islamic countries are trying to block some information.

But even if access were completely unfettered, questions of cost and of infrastructure, including reliable power and telephone connections, make Internet access for some Muslim women seem like a low priority.

Muslim countries have been relatively slow to embrace the Internet, compared with Europe and North America, according to Nua Internet Surveys, which tracks global Internet usage. Nua reports can be seen at <http://www.nua.ie/surveys>.

As of March, Nua reported, 1.9 million people in the Middle East and about 2.6 million people in Africa had access to the Internet, a small fraction of the 83 million Europeans and nearly 137 million in Canada and the United States who have gone online.

Of those in the Arab countries with Internet connections, only 4 percent are women, according to the Maryland-based Women's Learning Partnership, which organized the conference. That compares to 7 percent of China's Internet users, 17 percent of South Africa's, 17 percent of Japan's and 38 percent of those in the United States, the group said.

Despite the low percentage of women Internet users in Muslim countries, conference speaker Ayo Obe said the World Wide Web still could be a useful communications tool.

"To me, the importance of the Internet is not that everybody is going to stand around, tapping into a computer, but that those who do are going to spread the word and spread the message," said Obe, president of the Civil Liberties Organization in Nigeria.

UN conference aims to promote women's rights

Conservative Islamic nations and Vatican 'stand in the way of progress,' says delegate

EVELYN LEOPOLD

United Nations -- Five years after a massive global women's conference in Beijing, more than 180 nations meet today in an uphill effort to jump-start ambitious programs to help women achieve full equality.

At the same time, at least 10,000 women of all ages and nationalities will hold parallel events in a quest to rejuvenate the loose global women's movement that drew about 30,000 activists to China.

Ministers and celebrities from around the world intend to have their views heard on a variety of topics, with Hillary Rodham Clinton speaking today about the use of small loans to help poor women set up enterprises.

As it was in Beijing, the key issues dividing governments are the lack of resources flowing to impoverished nations and conservative stands on lifestyles and sexual issues held by some Islamic nations and the Vatican.

"There are a few countries trying to stand in the way of progress, but they are very few and far between," said Linda Tarr-Whelan, the U.S. representative to the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

She and others named Algeria, Sudan, Libya, Iran, Nicaragua and, to a lesser extent, the Vatican and Pakistan as countries holding conservative views on women's issues.

"I think what we are seeing is a backlash to the fact that there is so much that has, in fact, moved ahead with the catalyst of the Beijing conference. And these are folks who like it the way they have it and are trying to slow the whole process down," Ms. Tarr-Whelan said.

The delegates are attempting to update the document negotiated at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, a platform for action complete with targets.

While such documents are non-binding, they are used by governments, lobbyists, international and regional organizations to set standards. Agreement is by consensus, with each delegation having a virtual right to veto.

Negotiations in the special ministerial UN General Assembly session, officially known as Women 2000, are expected to go until the last minute when the conference ends on Friday, on such issues as the definition of the family, inheritance rights, adolescent sex education and HIV/AIDS programs.

Controversy surrounds language on violence against women, such as marital rape, forced marriages or female circumcision, and how to define traditions or customs without turning them into a code word for the status quo.

Latin Americans in past few years have moved away from Vatican positions, with Nicaragua the only nation left in the fold. They have also broken ranks with a developing nations group because of the influence of Islamic countries.

Susana Galdos, a Peruvian delegate, said fundamentalism and a backlash against women's progress was unacceptable and "for us very difficult to understand."

But equal access to health care and education depend on whether there is any money for social services in the first place, said Noeleen Heyzer, executive director of the UN Development Fund for Women.

"In times of economic transition, when state-run businesses privatize and a market economy is ushered in, women and girls often pay the price," Dr. Heyzer said.

The 1995 Beijing action platform includes nearly every issue in the world. It maintains that women's rights are human rights, that poverty affects women disproportionately and that rape is a war crime. It also states that women have the right to decide freely how often they have children and issues relating to their sexuality.

It set timetables for abolishing laws that discriminate against women, increasing the number of women in public life and providing a basic education for girls.

BY THE NUMBERS

Fewer women die in childbirth than ever before. But an African woman's risk of dying from pregnancy-related causes is 1 in 16; in Asia it is 1 in 65; in Europe, 1 in 1,400.

In 2000, there were only nine female heads of state or government. Women represent only 11 per cent of parliamentarians worldwide, except for the Nordic countries and the Netherlands, which have more than a third.

Women comprise at least one-third of the labour force in all regions except northern Africa and western Asia, but they are concentrated in a few occupations and receive less pay than men.

Nearly two-thirds of the world's illiterate people are women, especially older ones.

The gender gap is closing in primary and secondary schools, particularly in Latin America, but is still wide in 22 African and nine Asian countries where enrolment for girls is less than 80 per cent of the enrolment for boys. *Source: UN Statistic Division*

First Lady Hailed at Rights Talk

Women's Activists Review Progress

Reuters

UNITED NATIONS, June 5—Women's activists applauded first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton's call for equality between the sexes today, standing to serenade her with the civil rights hymn, "We Shall Overcome."

"Let us not just mark but celebrate a new century in which women's rights are once and for all treated as human rights, fully respected in every country in the world," Clinton told several hundred women from grass-roots organizations.

Some 10,000 activists and delegates from more than 180 governments are in New York this week to evaluate progress on a platform of action devised at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing five years ago. They also hope to find new ways to implement economic, political and sexual rights for women.

"We come here because for all of the progress we can point to, our work is far from done," Clinton said.

"When girls are doused with gasoline, set on fire and burned to death because their marriage dowries are too small and when honor killings continue to be tolerated, our work is far from done," she said.

Clinton addressed a panel on microcredits—small loans for poor women to start enterprises around the world—which she promoted after she attended the Beijing conference. She said the global microcredits program was "on track" and noted that repayment rates of loans "would be the envy of any commercial banks" who were not used to having 94 to 98 percent repayment rates.

Microcredit programs have reached some 20 million women around the world, including in the United States, allowing women who would not qualify for bank credit to receive loans.

Prostitutes-turned-guards help combat child trafficking in Nepal

**But pervasive poverty
is the real villain,
U.N. conference hears**

REUTERS NEWS SERVICE

UNITED NATIONS — Posting ex-prostitutes as border guards in Nepal and training girls for work in hotels to prevent them from becoming sex workers in Thailand are new strategies in the fight against child trafficking, activists said Tuesday.

But those relatively small-scale solutions cannot totally succeed unless the underlying problems of poverty and pervasive debt are eased, experts on the subject said at a global U.N. meeting on the status of women.

Statistics are hard to come by, but Rima Salah, regional director for West and Central Africa, said there were about 800,000 child sex workers in India four years ago and thousands more in Thailand, the Philippines and Cambodia.

A new report by the nonprofit ActionAid agency in Pakistan said nearly 2 million children or their families were paid to be abused and trafficked globally each year.

In parts of Nepal, where many young girls are taken from villages and sent to brothels in India, teenage ex-prostitutes were an effective force of border guards on the lookout for trafficking in young girls, filmmaker and activist Ruchira Gupta told an audience of several dozen women.

"They are actually standing at the border of India and Nepal, where the agents bring the girls, give payoffs to policemen and take the girls across the border," Gupta said.

Those young women, age 17 or 18, often walk up to a suspicious-looking man or woman with a group of young girls, talk to the

girls and tell their stories of brothel life. If the girls change their minds, they are taken to transit homes along the border, given counseling, support and bus tickets back to Nepal.

"Girls actually become advocates for their own change," Gupta said.

In Thailand, she said, the government has set up a program in cooperation with the Pan-Pacific hotel chain to identify girls at high risk of being sold into prostitution, and they were given scholarships for nine to 18 months of training as hotel workers, florists and other jobs.

Housed by UNICEF during training so that counseling is available, 370 girls have gone through the program, and most have been hired as legitimate hotel workers.

In Mali, where children are trafficked to neighboring Ivory Coast, the minister of women's affairs, Diara Afoussatou Theiro, said only a regional strategy would help solve the problems.

"We have to have regulations for the movement of children, because children move between countries in the region," Theiro said.

"We have to work together, because if one country is working toward the elimination of child trafficking and the other country is doing absolutely nothing, the country that's making the effort is not going to win," she said.

She also said that desperate poverty led families and girls to prostitution, and that unless those conditions eased, the transactions would continue.

The question of violence against women has become a point of contention in negotiations over a final document to be issued at the end of the five-day U.N. meeting Friday.

Some representatives are unwilling to accept the notion that anti-woman violence — including wife-beating, so-called "honor killings" and female infanticide — is a violation of human rights that should be punished by law.

U.N. conference hears reports of child trafficking

by Deborah Zabarenko

UNITED NATIONS — Grinding poverty and a sense of duty to family can push some girls as young as 7 across national borders and into prostitution, according to Asian experts at a U.N. global women's conference.

At a discussion on trafficking of women and girls, one activist referred to these elemental forces in the case of girls taken from their homes in Nepal and into brothels in the big cities of neighboring India.

"In these circumstances [of extreme poverty], there were parents who were willing to let their daughters go, because they found that if they let one daughter go,

for three years they would sustain the rest of the family, and the daughters agreed because they wanted to be dutiful daughters," said filmmaker and activist Ruchira Gupta.

A State Department report said that between 1 and 2 million women and girls are coerced each year into prostitution, manual labor and domestic service that amounted to virtual slavery.

Gupta said 800,000 girls were forced into sex work in India, and thousands more faced the same fate in Thailand, the Philippines, Cambodia and parts of Africa.

In Mali, where children are trafficked to neighboring Ivory Coast, the minister of women's affairs, Diara Afoussatou Theiro, said only a regional strategy would help solve the problems.

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"We have to work together, because if one country is working toward the elimination of child trafficking and the other country is doing absolutely nothing, the country that's making the effort is not going to win," Theiro said.

In parts of Nepal, where many young girls are taken from villages and sent to brothels in India, teen-age ex-prostitutes have become a force of border guards on the lookout to halt trafficking in young girls, Gupta said.

"They are actually standing at the border of India and Nepal, where the agents bring the girls,

give payoffs to policemen and take the girls across the border," she added.

Those young women, aged 17 or 18, often walk up to a suspicious-looking man or woman with a group of young girls, talk to the girls and tell their stories of brothel life in Bombay, Delhi or Calcutta. If the girls change their minds, they are taken to transit homes along the border, given counseling, support and bus tickets back to Nepal.

In Thailand, she said, the government had set up a program in cooperation with the Pan-Pacific hotel chain to identify girls at high risk of being sold into prostitution, and they were given scholarships for nine to 18 months of training as hotel workers, florists and other jobs. ■

Familiar tensions rise at global women's meeting

By Evelyn Leopold

UNITED NATIONS (Reuters) - Hours before the end of a week-long U.N. meeting to review progress on women's equality, familiar tensions escalated in negotiating rooms on lifestyles, abortion, religion, the family and sexual rights in general.

Women's groups from Turkey, India and Colombia lobbying governments blamed the Vatican and some Islamic nations for stalling the talks while American abortion foes said the West was foisting "sexual colonialism" on the world.

At issue is a follow-up of the five-year old prescription for action negotiated at a landmark women's conference in Beijing five years ago, which drew over 30,000 activists and government officials from around the world. Some 10,000 grass roots groups are in New York.

A new document is to emerge by Friday but reaching agreement on some controversial paragraphs appears elusive, with many governments saying the Vatican, Algeria, Iran, Libya, Pakistan, the Sudan and Nicaragua are holding up action on approaches to key issues.

Consequently Nigeria was unable to keep together developing nations in one group, known as the G-77. Southern Africans and many Latin Americans, among others, refused to try to reach common cause with the more conservative nations.

Under arcane U.N. negotiating rules at conferences, delegates try to reach agreement on each word of a declaration by consensus rather than a vote. This means nearly every country has veto rights.

"Right now they should just stop delaying and move forward ...let the document get completed," Gita Sen, of the Indian group Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era, said at a Wednesday news conference.

Nalan Hodoglugil of the Hacettepe University Medical Facility in Turkey said language on marital rape, an important issue for Turkish women, was too vague, and could weaken some provisions agreed on in Beijing.

"The bottom line is... we have a document on men and women that says nothing," Hodoglugil said.

UNDER PRESSURE TO FALL IN LINE WITH CONSERVATIVE GROUPS

Ana Gonzalez of the Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network in Colombia said her country was under pressure to fall in line with conservative groups.

"If we don't start by identifying what the problems are, how will action be taken to reduce these problems?" Bene Madunagu, of Nigeria's Girls' Power Initiative said.

But anti-abortion advocates said at a separate news conference said that rich Western countries, including the United States and the European Union, were responsible for the delays in the document and trying to change provisions agreed on in Beijing.

"The real reason this document is not finished is because of radical language being pushed by the rich Western states," said Austin Ruse, president of the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute. "This document could have been complete last March if not for the radical nature of the Western proposals on sexual rights, homosexual rights, abortion and many others."

Ruse blamed the West for "a new kind of colonialism abroad in this world ... sexual colonialism" which "attempts to spread to the developing world a kind of personal immorality that has utterly failed the rich West."

He said this "cultural imperialism" meant smaller countries, like Nicaragua, were threatened with the loss of aid and jobs. Nicaragua is nearly the only Latin American country taking hardline positions on the document.

Ruse's group released a letter signed by 23 members of the U.S. Congress expressing "great alarm" about the U.S. delegation in New York allegedly calling for increased access to abortion and mandatory training to perform them.

U.S. officials said this distorts the delegation's position and that of the Beijing document, which says that family planning information would lead to fewer abortions. It also says abortions should be performed safely in countries where they are legal.

Albright castigates trafficking, sexual abuse
By Evelyn Leopold.

UNITED NATIONS (Reuters) — U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright called Thursday for an international campaign against trafficking in women and children, saying it robbed them of their dreams and degraded societies.

Such trafficking, she said, was "distorting economies, degrading societies, endangering neighborhoods and robbing millions, mostly women and children, of their dreams," Albright said, fresh off the plane from the trip to the Middle East.

Albright made the official U.S. speech to the U.N. General Assembly during the one-week review of a platform for action to achieve equality between the sexes, negotiated in a landmark global conference on women in Beijing five years ago.

Among the new issues since then are violence in various forms, including domestic violence, and the increase in trafficking of women and girls, which U.S. first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, who spoke Monday, called a new form of sexual slavery.

Between one and two million women and girls are coerced each year into prostitution, manual labor and domestic service, according to a State Department report. About half a million of them are from eastern and central Europe.

"This rapidly growing criminal enterprise has gone global," Albright said. I invite everyone here to join in a multi-year, multinational effort to win the fight against trafficking."

Among the disputes in crafting a document in New York this week is whether domestic violence, marital rape or so-called "honor" killings against female relatives who have "shamed" the family are violations of human rights. Some opponents contend cultural practices need to be taken into consideration.

"It is no longer possible after Beijing to argue that abuses against women are merely cultural and that there is nothing any of us can do about them," Albright said.

"When a woman is raped, beaten or mutilated it is not cultural, it is criminal. And no government after Beijing can deny its responsibility to stop these crimes," she said.

Albright said that since she attended the Beijing conference, an international women's movement has flourished, based on its core premise of choice for the individual.

"Each of us should have the knowledge and power to make our own decisions. We may make different choices about how to live, where to work, and even what to wear, but we must all have the right to decide," she said.

She stressed that international family planning is crucial to ease economic hardship, save women's lives, reduce the number of abortions and enable children to lead healthy lives.

"No society can move ahead if half its society is held back," she said.

Albright also said she would not give up on getting the U.S. Senate to approve the 20-year old international treaty on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

"Some senator would like us to give up. But we will not. because there is no weariness in a cause that is just," she said. "Have no doubt, we will be back again and again until this convention becomes the law of our land," Albright said to applause.

Albright, Annan urge action on women's rights

By Evelyn Leopold

UNITED NATIONS (Reuters) - Declaring that abuse against women can no longer be tolerated, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright called Thursday for global action against the "trafficking" of women and girls.

"This rapidly growing criminal enterprise has gone global," Albright told a week-long special General Assembly session to review progress since the landmark 1995 Beijing meeting which adopted a program of action to achieve equality of the sexes.

"I invite everyone here to join in a multi-year, multinational effort to win the fight against trafficking."

Between one and two million women and girls are coerced each year into prostitution, manual labor and domestic service, according to a State Department report. About half a million of them are from eastern and central Europe.

Trafficking, she said, was "distorting economies, degrading societies, endangering neighborhoods and robbing millions, mostly women and children, of their dreams," Albright said, fresh off the plane from the trip to the Middle East.

Governments, lobbied by about 10,000 activists from all corners of the globe, are attempting by Friday to complete a statement that would update and evaluate the Beijing program.

But hours before the end of the meeting, familiar tensions escalated in negotiating rooms on lifestyles, abortion, religion, the family and sexual rights in general.

Among the new issues are trafficking, which has not been a problem in negotiations, and violence against women, which has been controversial when domestic abuse, marital rape or "honor killings" of women who "shame" the family are included in the definition.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in a statement, expressed concern that important parts of the document were unresolved.

Responding to complaints that some states were trying to reverse gains made in Beijing, Annan said it was important that any new document "maintains in full all of the commitments" agreed on Beijing.

ANNAN: MOVE FORWARD FROM BEIJING

He said that every major U.N. event has marked some forward movement for the advance of women and he hoped this tradition would be maintained and that gains made in Beijing "are consolidated, protected and advanced further."

Albright, who attended the Beijing conference, said it was no longer possible to talk of economic development without considering women or to justify any kind of violence as a cultural tradition.

"When a woman is raped, beaten or mutilated it is not cultural, it is criminal. And no government after Beijing can deny its responsibility to stop these crimes," she said.

The debate on the final document is similar to discussions in Beijing and subsequent conferences on sexual freedoms, discrimination against homosexuals, definitions of the family and adolescent sex education.

Anti-abortion advocates and religious groups have accused rich Western countries, especially the United States and the European Union, of using radical language of abortion and other issues in an effort to foist a new "sexual colonialism" on developing countries.

More liberal activists have accused Pakistan, Libya, Algeria, Sudan, Iran and Nicaragua of blocking agreement in the new document.

Usually, developing nations have a united position. But Nigeria was unable to keep together these countries in one group, known as the G-77, after southern African and Latin American states, among others, declined to reach common cause with conservative Islamic countries.

Under arcane U.N. negotiating rules at conferences, delegates try to reach agreement on each word of a declaration by consensus rather than a vote. This means nearly every country has veto rights.

Gita Sen, a professor at the Indian Institute of Management and leader of a grassroots group on women, called for an end to "the tyranny of this minuscule minority."

"Right now they should just stop delaying and move forward ...let the document get completed," she told a Wednesday news conference.

Ana Gonzalez of the Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network in Colombia said her country was under pressure to fall in line with conservative groups.

But Austin Ruse, president of the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute, said: "This document could have been complete last March if not for the radical nature of the Western proposals on sexual rights, homosexual rights, abortion and many others."

Sexual rights for women bog down U.N. meeting

By Deborah Zabarenko

UNITED NATIONS (Reuters) - Negotiators hammering out a U.N. plan to improve women's lives wrangled over sexual rights and the handling of domestic violence Friday in the waning hours of a five-day global conference.

In an all-night debate that reminded one activist of "theater of the absurd," a coalition of women's health and rights advocates blamed the Vatican and a handful of mostly Islamic states for obstructing progress on a final document.

A U.S. official who monitored the negotiations said a range of issues were unsettled in Friday's early hours, from the treatment of those who commit violence against women to such issues of sexual freedom as adolescent sexuality to gender discrimination and abortion.

However, the official was optimistic that representatives from some 180 countries, with input from more than 1,200 activist groups, would reach consensus on a document that was to build on a previous pivotal women's conference in Beijing five years ago. The official spoke on condition of anonymity.

The Beijing gathering produced a Platform for Action, which included a list of 12 challenges for the world's women, from the feminization of poverty to treatment of girls. The current New York meeting was convened to issue specific targets, including timetables, for implementing the Beijing program.

Women's health and human rights advocates have complained throughout the current meeting that the Vatican, Pakistan, Iran, Libya, Algeria and Nicaragua have stalled progress, and even tried to erode strong language in the Beijing document.

Poland, which has clashed on women's rights with the European Union which it hopes to join, also was on the conservative side. And Kenya at times joined this group.

In response Catholic groups accused the West of trying to put radical concepts into a new document that were not contained in the Beijing platform.

With time running out, U.S. delegates said they expected the new document would repeat much of the language used in Beijing rather than trying to insert new analysis.

Under arcane U.N. procedures conference documents are devised through consensus, rather than a vote, which nearly every country can veto.

While the agreements are non-binding, they are widely used to set global standards for regional and international bodies as well as by activists lobbying their respective governments to implement legislation accordingly.

'THEATER OF THE ABSURD'

"The worst thing that has been happening this week is the sense of deja vu, that this small handful of countries consistently sought to block consensus and drop the negotiations into a sort of theater of the absurd, where basic ideas, such as the idea of women's rights as human rights, are questioned," said Amparo Claro, of the Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network in Chile.

Kathy Martinez of the New York-based Center for Reproductive Law and Policy echoed those sentiments, but also saw progress on HIV/AIDS regarding women, punishment for marital rape, and the idea of granting refugee status to women who have faced persecution because of their gender.

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, fresh from a trip to the Middle East, addressed the formal session in the General Assembly on Thursday, specifically targeting violence against women and trafficking in human beings.

Albright, who attended the Beijing conference, said it was no longer possible to justify some abuses against women as part of a cultural tradition.

"When a woman is raped, beaten or mutilated it is not cultural, it is criminal. And no government after Beijing can deny its responsibility to stop these crimes," she said.

The issue of trafficking has not generally been a problem in negotiations. But the meetings have been heated over domestic abuse, marital rape and "honor" killings of women who "shame" the family as a definition of violence.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in a statement, expressed concern that important parts of the document were unresolved.

Responding to complaints that some states were trying to reverse gains made in Beijing, Annan said it was important that any new document "maintains in full all of the commitments" agreed on Beijing.

U.N. WOMEN HAMMER OUT AGREEMENT ON ABORTION

UNITED NATIONS -- In the last hours of a U.N. women's conference, delegates from 180 nations struggled Friday to resolve issues on abortion, sexual rights and sex education for teenagers.

Thousands of female negotiators, pressured by nearly 1,300 activist groups, worked on a final document to further equality between the sexes -- a document begun in 1995 at a huge U.N. global-women's **conference in Beijing**.

The so-called **Beijing-Plus-Five** meeting, which began Monday, has been torn by charges from more liberal groups that the Vatican and some Islamic countries are trying to roll back gains for women articulated five years ago in China.

At the same time, the more conservative pro-Vatican groups say "sexual colonialism" practices by rich Western nations show disdain for cultures of developing countries.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan acknowledged this friction. "I was worried like all of them at the beginning," Annan said, referring to fears that the Beijing meeting's final document would be eroded at this conference. "But it is quite likely that, not only will they maintain the Beijing language, but there will be advances in further areas."

The language of the Beijing report on abortion -- calling for safe abortion facilities in countries where the procedure is legal -- will probably be retained, diplomats told reporters.

In addition, negotiators have agreed on a call for men to take more responsibility for preventing unwanted pregnancies and to practice safer sex to stem the spread of HIV/AIDS, the diplomats said.

Negotiators also agreed to push to make domestic violence a crime.

U.N. draft emphasizes women's health, punishment for abuse

■ Representatives from more than 180 nations hammer out a document aimed at improving the lives of women. It is intended to build on goals established at a Beijing conference five years ago.

UNITED NATIONS — A new U.N. blueprint to improve women's lives stresses health care, including

abortion, and punishment for marital rape, domestic abuse and trafficking in women and girls, a U.S. official said late Friday.

In the waning hours of a five-day global women's conference, delegates and women's activists from 180 nations hammered out the final details of a document known by the shorthand term "Beijing-Plus-Five." It referred to a pivotal U.N. forum on women held five years ago in Beijing.

Some participants, and U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, worried the final outcome might be "Beijing-Minus-Five" — a retreat

from bold goals set forth after the massive China conference in 1995. However, Annan, the U.S. official and other diplomats were confident there would be no rollback.

"I think the United States is very happy with some of the gains made on violence against women, and we feel quite good about some of the health provisions that are contained in this document," the U.S. official said, requesting anonymity. "They are actually going to improve the lives of women."

The U.N. meeting was torn by charges from more liberal groups that the Vatican and some Islamic

countries were trying to erode gains made in Beijing. At the same time, conservative pro-Vatican groups accused rich Western countries of disdaining cultures of developing countries.

The Vatican's representative at the conference, Kathryn Hoomkwap of Nigeria, said in her statement to the conference that the Holy See's positions remain unchanged on abortion and other issues.

The language of the Beijing report on abortion — calling for safe abortion facilities in countries where the procedure is legal — probably will be retained, diplo-

mats told reporters, requesting anonymity. In dispute are calls for countries to stop punishing women who have illegal abortions.

In addition, negotiators have agreed on a call for men to take more responsibility for preventing unwanted pregnancies and to practice safer sex to stem the spread of HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, the diplomats said.

On the question of domestic violence, which some have argued is a cultural phenomenon that has been tolerated in some areas, negotiators agreed to push to make this a crime.

They have also worked to broaden the discussion on violence against women, to include punishment for marital rape and so-called "honor killings" of women by male relatives who believe the women have "shamed" the family, negotiators said.

The delegates agreed that businesses, schools and other private-sector organizations should be held accountable for any discrimination or violence against women.

Strong language was put in place against trafficking of women and girls, which has burgeoned along with the global economy in the past five years, along with a call for coordinated efforts to monitor the process and stop it.

Globalization itself came under fire, with some saying that the same world-wide economic system that has created sudden fortunes disproportionately harms poor women, especially those in developing countries with crushing international debt.

The United States wrangled with Iran and Cuba -- both under U.S. economic sanctions -- over a plank about the impact of such sanctions on women and children.

Targets for education were sharpened to bring them in line with other U.N. agreements which call for 50 percent literacy by 2015, the closing of the education gender gap by 2005 and free compulsory education for all girls and boys by 2015.

The question of women's sexual rights was in doubt. Proponents of this term say that it simply means the right of women to conduct her sexual life without coercion. Opponents say it would open the door to child sex abuse and other ills.

The Vatican along with Algeria, Iran, Libya, Sudan and Nicaragua have taken aim at this issue. Poland, which has clashed on women's rights with the European Union, which it hopes to join, also was on the conservative side. And Kenya at times joined this group on abortion issues.

While the agreements are non-binding, they are widely used to set global standards for regional and international bodies as well as by activists lobbying their respective governments to implement legislation accordingly.

UN gender equality conference opens

By WILLIAM M. REILLY

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan Monday opened a special session of the General Assembly, focusing on equality for women, saying education enables women to play a deserved role in the global economy.

U.S. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton headlined the U.N. Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) "Women's Economic Status" panel, touching off an impromptu and moving chorus of the civil rights anthem "We Shall Overcome" from the hundreds attending.

Clinton set aside several hours from her New York State campaign for a U.S. Senate seat to speak on micro-credit and participate on the panel in the packed basement conference room.

Some 188 nations and 1,250 non-governmental organizations are represented at the 23rd Special Session, a week of meetings, panels and discussion groups both on the U.N. main campus and in U.N. and non-U.N. buildings on the East Side of Manhattan. There was no immediate tally of the number of people attending, most of whom are women.

The object is to review progress on women's issues since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China five years ago and is officially, "**Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century.**" Member States and NGOs are reviewing and appraising the progress made towards implementing the Platform for Action adopted at the Beijing summit. So, the nickname is "**Beijing +5.**"

Annan said in his opening remarks there had been progress, but "above all, more countries have understood that women's equality is a prerequisite for development."

Much remains to be done, he said, adding that the remaining challenges could be met only if women were enabled to build on the best "this new world" has to offer.

"That means, above all, that women must be educated and enabled to play their part in the global economy," he said. "Education, in other words is both the entry point into the global economy and the best defense against its pitfalls."

The secretary-general was among the guests at an NGO Host Committee ceremony in nearby Dag

Hammar-skjöld Plaza under gray skies. The gathering also featured Queen Noor of Jordan, U.S. Lt. Gen. Claudia Kennedy and the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Richard Holbrooke.

Annan escorted Clinton to the dais of the downstairs economic session to cheers and rousing applause.

"This is exciting, Hillary. You are the only one who can bring such energy to the United Nations," said Annan, who introduced her as "a great advocate and role model" who in **Beijing** five years earlier "moved from government to the NGO side and really pulled everyone together."

Clinton acknowledged progress in her remarks: "Women's rights are human rights and Human rights are Women's rights," she said. "No country today will get ahead if half of its citizens are left behind." "Women have to continue "to stand out and speak up," Clinton said.

"Globalization should not mean marginalization." It was after her prepared remarks the attendees stood up and sang, clapping hands in unison.

She participated actively and knowledgeably in the ensuing discussion, concentrating on micro-credit and micro-financing. The panel was but one of several being held on various women related topics.

The **Beijing platform** defined a set of strategic objectives and spelled out actions for governments and NGOs and the private sector to take by 2000 to remove obstacles to the advancement of women.

Twelve critical areas identified in the document and now being reviewed were women and poverty, education and training of women, women and health, violence against women, women and armed conflict, women and the economy, women in power and decision making, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, human rights of women, women and the media, women and the environment and the girl child.

At the end of the special sessions Friday, governments were to adopt an outcome document containing further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing declaration.

An official at the U.S. mission to the United Nations confirmed to United Press International half of an Iranian delegation of 14 NGOs refused to be fingerprinted at John F. Kennedy International Airport by the Immigration and Naturalization Service as is the standard procedure for all non-diplomats arriving from Iran, and a few other countries, unless their capital requests a waiver. The official said a waiver was not requested by Tehran and further inquiries were directed to the State Department in Washington.

UN women's conclave advances rights

By WILLIAM M. REILLY

The U.N. women's rights conference Saturday ratified an agreement to build on gains realized in the 1995 **Beijing Conference** on Women, advocating gender mainstreaming.

The measure strengthened areas on trafficking in women for sex, health, education, human rights, poverty, debt and globalization, armed conflict, sovereignty, land and inheritance rights for women, political participation and decision making. It criminalized marital rape and domestic abuse and offered tougher measures to combat AIDS.

Globalization came under fire reputedly for the marginalization of women and allowing the increase in trafficking. But the United States said in a statement, "Most aspects of equality for women have no direct link to international economic and financial issues." It said national governments bore responsibility for marginalization.

The final document adopted by the 23rd special session of the U.N. General Assembly was approved by consensus a full day after it was to have been OK'd.

"**Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century**" or "**Beijing + 5**" as the conclave was dubbed, began Monday. It was to wind up Friday but went into the wee hours of Saturday as a working group fine-tuned and adopted 138 paragraphs for recommendation to a plenary meeting and on to the assembly for final approval, Saturday evening.

The instrument answered Secretary-General Kofi Annan's plea Thursday to maintain "in full all of the commitments in the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**" and maintain the tradition that "every major U.N. event on the advancement of women has marked some further forward movement on earlier events."

Annan said in a statement issued by his spokesman, Fred Eckhard, after the document was adopted Saturday that he was "delighted at the outcome." President Theo-Ben Gurirab of the General Assembly gavelled the session to a close shortly after passage by consensus of the outcome document and an accompanying political declaration.

"Hours of round-the-clock negotiations finally paid off," he said. "We have just adopted a document to move the global agenda for the advancement of women beyond the Platform for Action."

He said, "We can congratulate ourselves for a job well down. There was no backward movement on any of the Beijing language. There was fear during the session of a regression and the meeting would end up being called "Beijing minus five."

The objective of the gathering of representatives of more than 180 governments and 1,250 non-governmental organizations was to assess both advances and rough-sledding realized in the five years following the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. There were 2,300 delegates, not counting permanent representatives to the 188-member United Nations.

"One of the obstacles that states reported during implementation was the lack of time-bound targets and lack of monitoring mechanisms," explained Yakin Erturk, director of the U.N. Division for the Advancement of Women. She said such deadlines would give states benchmarks to measure their progress.

"The paragraphs dealing with sanctions, sovereignty issues and unilateral measures were among the problematic areas where member states needed to work further to reach an agreed language," she said. Erturk said there were also several problems for different delegations on sections dealing with women's diversity, including sexual orientation. The text on women's reproductive and sexual health was approved using language okayed in previous conferences.

The Holy See, a few Islamic countries and Nicaragua sought more conservative language than came out of Beijing. What seriously held up negotiations were reproductive and sexual health issues such as sexual rights, sexual orientation, abortion, sex education for adolescents and "family" values. Sexual rights means women are able to decide "freely and responsibly" on their sexuality. Conservatives felt that if they supported sexual rights they could be taken for endorsing homosexuality.

U.S. Ambassador Betty King said the document "represents an important milestone in the international community's efforts to promote the advancement of women." Washington submitted "a written interpretative statement" to clarify its views where diplomatic language in the consensus-approved document may have been ambiguous, she said.

"The United States understands that...any commitments referred to in the Outcome Document for further action and initiatives attributed to states are (unless such states indicate to the contrary) not legally binding, and they consist of recommendations concerning how states can and should promote the objectives of the conference," King said. Then it is only binding to states rather than organizations.

"These references to commitment constitute a general commitment to undertake meaningful implementation of the recommendations overall, rather than a specific commitment to implement each element," she told the General Assembly in what was labeled an "interpretative statement." Still, "the United States fully supports the objectives of the Outcome Document and is willing to work with others to ensure that there is a proper allocation of resources to address commitments," King said, adding that increased funding could only come at the national level as approved by individual states.

People

Fonda transforms self; world is next

Celeb working to improve lives of girls

Jane Fonda, sitting in a Manhattan office, picks up a blue water bottle labeled "Jane Fonda, health and fitness." She laughs: "Another life."

Cut to Jane Fonda in the African sun, surrounded by the bright faces of young girls in Nigeria, as she urges empowerment to change their futures. Then cut to Fonda speaking Tuesday night at the United Nations about the future of all the world's women.

Today, Fonda is back in Atlanta talking to the CNN World Report Conference, giving 200 TV journalists copies of the 15-minute film she made on her Nigerian trip last month with the International Women's Health Coalition.

"My third act?" she pondered in a chat Tuesday. We have seen many acts of Jane: daughter of a famed film family, star and sex symbol, political activist, health and fitness guru, and most recently wife of global media mogul **Ted Turner**, who is giving \$1 billion to the United Nations.

They are still living apart, she confirms, though nothing has been made legal. Fonda isn't talkative on that but chats easily about their shared interest in world issues.



News & views
By Jeannie Williams

This column appears Tuesday-Thursday.

She seems passionate about this third — fourth? — act, getting up to demonstrate how some Nigerian wives would not speak, sometimes would barely be able to enter a room where a discussion was ongoing.

She wants to reach the souls of girls early, "to allow them to become people who will say, 'No! You are not going to marry me off to somebody that I

don't love when I am 12 years old. No, I am not going to have a baby until I've gone to school. Yes, I want to learn to read!" The actress in Fonda urgently mimics those young voices.

The bottom line is that all the international aid groups have found, "lo and behold, you cannot alleviate poverty and you cannot create sustainable development if you don't improve the lives of women," Fonda says. "Suddenly the women of tomorrow are going to be very, very different people," wanting smaller families and educated children. "When half the people of the world, who are female, are suddenly to assume their rightful place in the world — that can change the world!"

Fonda was at the 1995 Beijing conference on women and the U.N. Cairo



'Fulcrum of change': Jane Fonda with young girls in Nigeria.

population meeting in 1994, "very much supported by Ted, morally and in many ways." She has worked for five years in Georgia to fight teen pregnancy. She has been busy during her life with Turner, but "people chose to see me as the spouse of, so they kind of tuned out the stuff I was doing."

What drives her?

"I'm 62, I have children and grandchildren. And I really believe that I have a purpose in life and a reason to use my celebrity to do what I can to make sure the world they're going to inherit will be safer and healthier and more peaceful.

"And I do believe that the strategic place, the fulcrum of change, is adolescent girls."

**COVERAGE FROM AROUND
THE UNITED STATES**

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

SOME NATIONS ACCUSED OF FIGHTING RIGHTS GAINS

Compiled from reports by Republic news services.

On the eve of a U.N. conference to assess progress toward equality of the sexes, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights accused some countries of trying to reverse the gains won by women at a global gathering five years ago.

Mary Robinson declined to name the countries, but Amnesty International Secretary-General Pierre Sane said Algeria, Libya, Iran, Pakistan and the Vatican were playing "a very destructive role" in negotiations on a final forward-looking document. Other delegates included Sudan on the list.

Those who support the plan outlined in the 150-page platform drafted at the 1995 **Beijing** women's conference should start pressuring governments to send a message "that we're not regrouping, or retrenching, or going backward," Robinson said.

The **Beijing platform** runs the gamut from promoting women's inheritance rights to calling on governments to provide equal education and employment and demanding that business and government put women in top decision-making posts.

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

TOO LITTLE PROGRESS SEEN IN EQUALITY OF SEXES

Compiled from Republic news services.

From all corners of the globe, high-ranking ministers and ordinary women joined the U.N. secretary-general and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton on Monday to demand that equality of the sexes become a reality at the start of the 21st century.

Five years after the biggest global gathering of women in history adopted an ambitious platform to achieve women's equality, nearly 180 nations met at a special General Assembly session to review progress. The initial report card found this answer: too little.

Speaker after speaker said that the achievements since the 1995 **Beijing conference** are far outweighed by the remaining inequalities.

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

AGREEMENT LACKING AT WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

Compiled from Republic news services.

Delegates to an international women's conference struggled Friday to come up with an agreement to promote equality for women and push for tougher measures to combat AIDS, trafficking of women and domestic violence.

But with a midnight deadline looming, representatives from more than 180 nations were still meeting behind closed doors, trying to reach consensus on many of the same reproductive and sexual health issues that dominated the landmark 1995 women's **conference** in **Beijing**.

It was unclear whether the deep divisions on issues including sexual rights, sexual orientation, abortion, and adolescents' access to reproductive and sexual health services and education would be resolved.

Los Angeles Times

U.N. REVIEWS LANDMARK DOCUMENT ON WOMEN

From Times Wire Services

Declaring "our work is far from done," First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton on Monday challenged a U.N. review of a landmark 1995 women's **conference in Beijing** to finish the work of equality between the sexes.

When she ended her speech, women's activists and U.N. officials in the audience of several hundred spontaneously sang "We Shall Overcome," the hymn of the U.S. civil rights movement that Clinton said has become a mantra for women's groups in India.

"We come here because, for all of the progress we can point to, our work is far from done," Clinton said.

"When girls are doused with gasoline, set on fire and burned to death because their marriage dowries are too small, and when honor killings continue to be tolerated, our work is far from done," she said.

Clinton addressed a panel on micro-credits--small loans for poor women to start enterprises around the world--which she promoted after she attended the **Beijing conference**, an event she called "one of the most moving and meaningful experiences in my life."

Clinton, who has spoken on women's affairs at the United Nations several times, is campaigning for the U.S. Senate from New York.

About 10,000 activists and delegates from more than 180 governments are in New York this week to evaluate progress on a platform of action devised at the Fourth World Conference on Women in **Beijing** five years ago, as well as find new ways to implement economic, political and sexual rights for women.

San Francisco Chronicle

THE VOICE OF THE WEST

Slave Trade Endures In the 21st Century

MOST AMERICANS have no idea that slavery still exists and sends workers and women into bondage. Yet just last week, the United Nations reported that the traffic in people, now the fastest-growing business of organized crime, is only exceeded by the smuggling of drugs and weapons. Pino Arlacchi, director general of the U.N. Office of Drug Control and Crime Prevention, estimates that some 200 million people may now be in the hands of traffickers.

How people are attracted, recruited and exploited is not a mystery. The global economy has lifted many of the world's workers into the middle class. But it has also widened the gulf between the rich and the poor, particularly in Africa, Eastern Europe, Russia, China, Southeast Asia and India. As local economies race to join the global economy, industrial development draws rural peasants into pollution-choked cities.

Regions that suffer flooding or desertification -- often the result of giant hydroelectric projects, the destruction of forests and natural disasters -- create desperate migrants willing go anywhere to survive. With the collapse of communism, the transition to market economies has turned millions into casualties of rapid economic change.

What traffickers offer is the promise of salvation. But those who seek a better life have no idea they will end up as virtual slaves -- if, that is, they survive the passage. The recent deaths of 58 Chinese migrants trying to reach Britain is just the latest example of the many people who have died in their attempt to escape grinding poverty.

Make no mistake; this is real slavery. When ships filled with human cargo arrive in the United States, people are sold into sweatshop labor until

they are able to repay the debt -- sometimes as high as \$20,000 -- they owe for transportation. Meanwhile, they are crammed into company-owned housing and, like sharecroppers in the post-slavery American South, forever in debt to their owners for everything they need. As illegal immigrants, moreover, they have no rights and rarely risk deportation by contacting local officials.

The traffic in women and girls, also fueled by the poverty and despair of the dispossessed, often involves prostitution. Traffickers prey upon starving families, particularly in Asia, who are unable to feed or provide a dowry for a daughter. According to a recent CIA report, they buy a female child from unwitting families -- for less than the price of a toaster -- by promising to educate the child in a distant city. Like workers, the girls are held captive, permanently in debt to their owners. Even when a girl manages to escape, she cannot return to her village and dishonor her family. By then, her best chance is to sell herself as a prostitute.

Within the last decade, more than 30 million women and children have been sold within and from Southeast Asia for sweatshop labor or sexual purposes. In Nepal, a land devastated by ecological and economic catastrophe, thousands of girls have been kidnapped and sold to brothels in India.

Many traffickers also target young women from Russia and Eastern Europe who are lured by promises of marriage or a job in a Western city. In Ukraine and Russia, for example, pimps prey upon teenagers who are released from orphanages at age 16. Selma Gasi, an activist in Bosnia, describes how pimps scour war-devastated villages, pretending to look for maids or baby sitters. Yasmina Dimiskovska of the Union of Women in Macedonia confirms that traffickers routinely bring Russian and Ukrainian women through her country on their way to Italy. When they arrive, traffickers seize their passports, sell them to brothels and threaten them with violence. Without money, official identity papers, knowledge of the language or the region, the young women are trapped.

The conference, which starts today, aims to come up with innovative ways to accelerate implementation of the 150-page document for action adopted in Beijing.

But rights groups, women's organizations, a U.S. ambassador and, most recently, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights have expressed concern that the review could reverse some of the gains from that first conference.

Amnesty International Secretary-General Pierre Sane accused Algeria, Libya, Iran, Pakistan and the Vatican of playing "a very destructive role" in negotiations on a final forward-looking document. Other delegates included Sudan on the list.

At Beijing, governments committed themselves to a platform that runs the gamut from promoting women's inheritance rights to calling on governments to provide equal education and employment.

The Vatican and some Islamic countries continue to object to many of the same issues they raised in Beijing in 1995, including sexual and reproductive rights for women, adolescent sex education and the definition of the family.

Los Angeles Times



MICHAEL OSBUN

By Michael Osbun, Los Angeles Times Syndicate

San Francisco Chronicle

THE VOICE OF THE WEST

What Feminists Want

Editor — “Shop. Eat shrimp cocktail. Flirt. Get rescued” may be “the new definition of Having It All” to columnist Maureen Dowd (June 8), but it’s a far cry from most women’s desires, and even further from their realities. Dowd seems to believe modern women eschew feminism by prioritizing fashion and frivolity over professional success or personal power. To affirm this notion, she points to representations of women’s wants and needs in *Cosmopolitan* magazine and HBO’s “Sex and the City.”

But Dowd is confusing feminism with commercial media, with predictably muddled results. The feminist movement seeks to empower women to reach political, social and economic equity. The goal of women’s magazines is to sell products to women. In order to sell the shoes, hats and matching bags Dowd find so remarkable, these magazines promote “the new lady look” and write about how women want and need shoes, hats and matching bags. This is not new, nor is it a result (or indicator) of feminism.

If Dowd is interested in more relevant indicators of what matters to modern women, she should have visited the United Nations last week, where thousands of female activists from North America, Europe, Africa and Asia participated in Beijing+5/ Women 2000, to discuss ways to ensure women’s health, equality and success throughout the world.

JENNIFER L. POZNER
Women’s Desk Director
FAIR — Fairness & Accuracy
in Reporting
New York City

San Francisco Chronicle

THE VOICE OF THE WEST

FIVE YEARS AGO, some 30,000 women left the United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing exhilarated by their agreement on the Platform for Action, a document that redefined women's rights as human rights.

Last week, New York hosted the U.N.'s Beijing Plus Five Conference to assess the progress that each of 180 nations had made toward these goals.

Struggles for women's rights almost always produces strong backlashes. In this case, conservative opponents from orthodox religious groups and nations tried but failed to roll back a woman's right to make decisions about her own body "without coercion, discrimination and violence," a stance protected in the Beijing document.

In addition to stemming a fierce backlash, women activists also made some important gains. For the first time, delegates detailed their opposition to domestic violence, marital rape, the international traffic in women for sexual slavery, and honor deaths (the killing of women whose families claim they have shamed them). They also demanded that the world give immediate attention to the HIV-AIDS epidemic in Africa, where some traditions force girls and women into marital arrangements with men known to be infected with the HIV virus.

Some women's groups, including the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University and the Women's Environment and Development Organization in New York, were disappointed that the final document that emerged from the Beijing Plus Five Conference did not go far enough in advancing women's rights. True enough.

Even after 25 years of activism, the global effort to redefine women's rights as human rights is still in its infancy. But as Anna Diamantopoulou, the European Union's commissioner for employment and social affairs warned, "When they go home, (women) want to be waving the document, not apologizing for it." She, too, is right.

Every change in gender relations provokes a reaction. It is worth remembering that the global gender wars have just begun.

Without shelters, they have no place to go. And if they do escape, they are shipped home, where they often face retribution from the men who sent them abroad.

Two years ago, Attorney General Janet Reno created an interagency task force that documented the widespread traffic of women to the United States. In April, a CIA report verified that as many as 50,000 women and children from Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe are brought to the United States every year under false pretenses.

International awareness also grows. In early June, at the Beijing Plus Five meetings at the United Nations, which assessed the status of women and girls around the globe, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan called trafficking, "A worldwide plague." Hillary Clinton described how the spread of AIDS is creating a generation of orphans, who are becoming easy targets for those who traffic in children. Just a few weeks ago, the British Home Office admitted for the first time that hundreds of women from the former Yugoslavia have been sold into sexual slavery after answering phony job advertisements.

Closer to home, Bay Area residents recently witnessed a classic case of sexual slavery. Lakireddi Bali Reddy, 62, and his son, Vijay Reddy, owners of the Berkeley restaurant Pasand and a small empire of 1,000 rental units, had been allegedly smuggling young women from India. Only when one of the young women died from carbon dioxide poisoning in November 1999 -- the result of a faulty heater -- did federal officials suspect that Reddy had been trafficking in women.

Although the new slavery evokes universal condemnation, the tangle of current international and domestic laws and overlapping jurisdictions makes it difficult to prosecute slave-runners, even when they are identified. Most traffickers receive light sentences. A federal law that forbids any "sale into involuntary servitude" carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison. Yet last year, after 70 Thai laborers were held against

their will -- and forced to work 20-hour shifts in a sweatshop -- seven defendants received sentences of four to seven years. One spent only seven months in prison.

That slavery still exists in the 21st century is an international disgrace. True, the problems that give rise to the new slavery are global. But those who would run for president have a rare opportunity to prove their political leadership by focusing global attention on what the U.N. report calls "the biggest human rights violation in the world."

Activists Gather at U.N. to Review Women's Issues

By COLUM LYNCH
Special to The Washington Post

UNITED NATIONS, June 8—Since she was appointed head of the Cambodian ministry of women's and veteran's affairs in November 1998, Mu Sochua has tried to cajole or embarrass male police officers, prosecutors and judges into punishing violence against women, from domestic abuse and rape to sexual servitude and trafficking.

As her nation gears up for its first communal elections in three decades, Sochua has begun traveling from village to village in search of a new generation of female politicians. "If you don't have the power, you can try all you want," she said, "but the change will be so slow."

Sochua is one of more than 6,000 activists from around the world who have gathered at the United Nations this week to take stock of women's issues five years after the 1995 Beijing Conference on women's rights. With the world body's support, they are trying to expand the percentage of women in political office and are demanding a greater role for women in peace negotiations.

Five years after the Beijing meeting, U.N. officials estimate that almost half of the world's women endure some form of domestic abuse. Each year, more than 1 million are trafficked worldwide, including about 50,000 in the United States, according to U.S. officials.

In the political arena, only eight countries have lived up to the commitment made by 189 governments at Beijing to increase women's share of parliamentary positions to 30 percent. In the United States,

women have made substantial economic gains but have lagged in electoral politics, winning only 12.5 percent of the seats in Congress.

In Sierra Leone, where rebels and warlords have inflicted many atrocities on women, a prominent politician, Amy Smythe, fears that the perpetrators will go free. "One wonders whether the rape, sex slavery, mutilation, amputations... that we have suffered will be swept under the table," she said.

On the other hand, delegates to the conference maintain that women have broken through a number of political barriers, from the appointment of the first female U.S. secretary of state, Madeleine K. Albright—one of 14 female foreign ministers today—to the participation of women's groups in peace talks from Guatemala to Burundi.

As a result, Pakistan, Egypt, Jordan and other countries that once turned a blind eye to certain forms of violence against women—such as the "honor killings" of women accused of sexual relations outside of marriage—have begun to condemn and even, in some cases, to prosecute such acts.

"It is no longer possible, after Beijing, to deny that women's rights are human rights," Albright told delegates today at the U.N. General Assembly. "When a woman is raped, beaten or mutilated, it is not cultural, it is criminal."

The United Nations pressures warring factions around the world to allow women's groups to help fashion peace accords and ensure that women's rights are enshrined in their constitutions. The organization has asked governments to submit lists of female military and po-

lice officers who can participate in peace missions. And U.N. peacekeeping missions now include a "gender unit" that seeks to ensure that women's concerns are addressed.

"I hope that in the course of this century, we will also prove that the best strategy for conflict prevention is to expand the role of women as peacemakers," Secretary General Kofi Annan said Monday at the conference's opening session.

In Burundi, a Central African nation that has been plagued by violence between Hutu and Tutsi, the U.N. Fund for Women's Development has provided training in conflict resolution to a coalition of widows from both groups. Having lost their husbands in ethnic strife, they have crossed ethnic lines to try to change their country's land inheritance laws, which grant ownership to the next male heir.

Next month, the women will have their first opportunity to participate in the country's peace talks.

"We have many widows who have lost their land to their husband's families," said Catherine Mabobori, a Burundian who will demand that women be guaranteed 30 percent of the country's government and parliamentary posts in a new government. "It's not very easy to get your message across with men in all the key decision-making spheres."

The United Nations, meanwhile, has fallen short of the goals it set for others. Of the 189 permanent delegations in New York from member states, only 11 are headed by female diplomats; and no woman heads any of the organization's 18 far-flung peacekeeping missions.

Women's Rights Dispute Rages

Westerners, Religious Conservatives Tangle at U.N. Meeting

By COLUM LYNCH
Special to The Washington Post

UNITED NATIONS, June 9—A long-festering dispute between women's groups in the West and religious conservatives from Catholic and Islamic countries broke out this week in a rancorous debate over women's sexual and reproductive rights.

U.S. and European delegates to a U.N. women's conference pressed for resolutions endorsing broader access to sexual health services, including birth control and abortion, for women around the world. They also called for greater legal protection against various forms of violence against women, such as female genital mutilation, spousal rape and "honor killings" of women suspected of adultery or premarital sex.

They have been stymied, however, by delegates from predominantly Catholic and Islamic states—including the Vatican, Nicaragua, Libya, Sudan, Iraq and Iran—some of whom accused Western women's advocates of "sexual colonialism."

The dispute underscored the hostility that remains between the two camps five years after they squared off over many of the same

issues at a landmark women's conference in Beijing. This week's meeting was intended to assess how much progress women have made since the 1995 conference, where delegates from more than 180 countries published a 150-page document urging governments to promote equality and prevent abuses of women.

Delegates agreed in principle today on a call to "eradicate harmful customary or traditional practices" against women—including marital rape, forced marriages and the murder of brides over their dowries. In a draft document, they also called on countries to prevent sexual exploitation, including trafficking in women for forced prostitution.

Francoise Gerard, a public health expert for the International Women's Health Coalition, said there was broad consensus on the need to reduce women's deaths during childbirth, which number about 600,000 a year. But she said there was enormous resistance to language calling for access to birth control and abortion for women and girls.

"We want full and equal access of adolescents to sexual and reproductive health education and services," while the conservatives' po-

sition "is that adolescents should just say no," Gerard said.

The dispute was holding up formal agreement last night on a consensus document reporting on achievements since Beijing and laying out goals. Gita Sen, an Indian law professor, accused the conservatives of blocking consensus through a "tyranny of the minority." Catholic and Islamic delegates responded that Western industrial nations were trying to force their "cultural standards" on the rest of the world.

Some of the conservatives objected in particular to a U.S. and European proposal to condemn discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, which they view as an endorsement of homosexuality.

"I will not accept people telling me that they are more moral than us," said one Arab negotiator who requested anonymity. "They tell me that girls should have sexual rights. This is nonsense."

The diplomat added that the Western nations' focus on sexual rights was designed to distract attention from their failure to meet their previous commitments to contribute more money to development aid, education and anti-poverty programs in the developing world.

WHAT ON EARTH?

A WEEKLY LOOK AT TRENDS, PEOPLE
AND EVENTS AROUND THE WORLD
BY DITA SMITH

They've Come a Long Way, but . . .

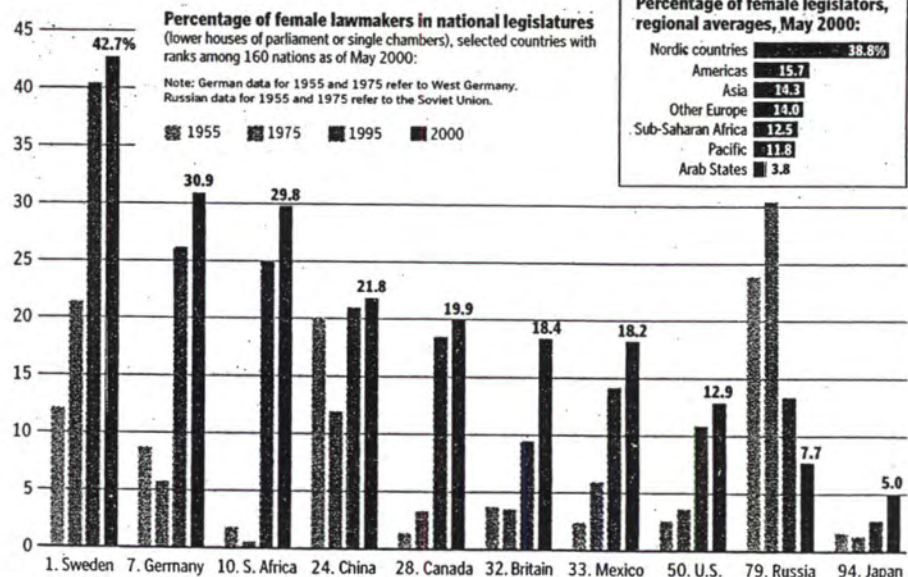
A special U.N. General Assembly meeting this week assessed progress made in furthering women's rights since the last major women's conference in Beijing in 1995. Among the many goals set in Beijing was the effort to advance participation of women in national parliaments, where they could influence legislation affecting their priorities. The percentage of female legislators has risen from 11.6 percent in 1995 to 13.9 percent, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union. That proportion represents a more than four-fold increase over 1955, when women held a mere 3 percent of legislative seats.



Female legislators elected to the Swedish parliament in 1994.

SWEDISH GOVERNMENT PHOTO

SOURCES: Inter-Parliamentary Union, Worldwatch Institute



China 'sex workers' treaty backed

Shalala does not see any clash in White House policies

By George Archibald
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The Clinton administration will push for Senate approval of a United Nations treaty used to promote legal prostitution in China, Health and Human Services Secretary Donna E. Shalala said yesterday.

A U.N. committee recently ordered China to allow women to sell their bodies as "sex workers." The order, issued by the body that will oversee the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, calls prostitution a "reproductive right" over one's body.

The treaty has 165 signatories — including China — with the United States the sole Western Hemisphere holdout.

Miss Shalala said she saw no inconsistency in the Clinton administration's efforts to overcome Senate opposition to the treaty and to end global sex trafficking.

Asked whether the United States endorsed the instruction to China by the U.N. committee that implements the treaty, Miss Shalala responded firmly, "No."

Asked why the U.N. committee issued the instruction for China to legalize prostitution, Miss Shalala said, "You'll have to ask them. We're not on the committee."

Miss Shalala seemed frustrated by questions about the U.N. CEDAW committee's instruction to China to legalize prostitution.

"Anyone want to talk about Fiji?" she asked as questions were raised.

Linda Tarr-Whelan, U.S. ambassador to the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women, said the U.N. instruction to China was just "one line in a very long report," which had no mandatory significance.

Asked whether the treaty can force China to legalize prostitution, Miss Shalala said, "It has no power to do so."

"The country has the right to reject" a U.N. order to legalize prostitution, Miss Tarr-Whelan said. The United Nations cannot supersede a country's national sovereignty, she said.

Anita K. Blair, president of the Independent Women's Forum, a conservative group that opposes treaty — known as CEDAW — said the U.N. and World Bank consistently strong-arm poor countries to adopt social policies contrary to their own traditions as a price for global monetary aid.

"We continually hear that developing countries are forced, as a practical matter, to accept conditions stemming from U.N. documents in order to obtain international loans," Miss Blair said.

"This is a form of cultural imperialism to require other countries to adopt the failed social policies of the developed world in order to finance their own development," she said. "If they are going to get roads, bridges, schools and hospitals, they need capital from the developed world. It is used as a kind of blackmail."

Miss Shalala said the Clinton administration was "quite frustrated on the inability to ratify CEDAW."

The treaty has been held up by Sen. Jesse Helms, North Carolina Republican and chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who has refused to bring it up for consideration.

"I'm not sure I want to get into

"If they are going to get roads, bridges, schools and hospitals, they need capital from the developed world. It is used as a kind of blackmail."

—Anita K. Blair

the politics of who's opposing it," Miss Shalala said when questioned about the administration's priority to get Senate approval.

Meanwhile, the health and human services secretary yesterday said 700,000 women and children are trafficked each year as part of the global sex trade and for other illicit purposes.

"Many governments have taken action to blunt an alarming increase in trafficking of women," she said. "The United States is also working to stop trafficking on several fronts, ranging from public awareness programs to specialized training for police and immigration officials."

The Independent Women's Forum publicized in its April newsletter the U.N. order to China to legalize prostitution under the CEDAW treaty.

The forum's report said the U.N.'s treaty panel appeared "to be implementing only the vague language favored by the radicals" in the CEDAW treaty.

"Even the right to sell one's body

is included in the radical interpretation of 'reproductive rights,' as China was recently instructed by the CEDAW Committee to legalize prostitution," the newsletter noted.

"Prostitutes are now referred to as 'sex workers,' connoting that prostitution is just another job."

Miss Shalala and Miss Tarr-Whelan responded to the report at a briefing at the State Department, where they outlined the administration's agenda for a fifth anniversary conference on implementation of the Platform for Action, a series of goals on women's issues, adopted in Beijing in 1995.

The meeting is set for next week at U.N. headquarters in New York. Miss Shalala will be one of the leaders of the U.S. delegation.

Miss Shalala said 3,000 official delegates and 7,000 non-government organization (NGO) delegates from 189 U.N. member nations would review country-by-country progress on promoting women's social, economic and political equality under the Beijing platform.

They conference also will announce commitments for further governmental action over the next five years.

Miss Shalala listed expanded health initiatives for women and children, preventing violence against women, economic investment initiatives to help women start small businesses and renewed action to prevent trafficking in women and children among the administration's top priorities under the U.N. women's agenda for the next five years.

Women's parley hit on lukewarm equality

NEW YORK — Although 189 countries vowed to seek equality for women, they failed to put enough political will and money behind their pledge, the president of the U.N. General Assembly said yesterday.

Theo-Ben Gurirab of Namibia spoke ahead of Monday's opening of a five-day conference to review progress on the platform for action adopted at the 1995 U.N. women's conference in Beijing, which laid out a road map to achieve equality for women.

"If there had been political will we would have gone a long way toward meeting the goals and objectives set in Beijing," said Mr. Gurirab.

Pro-family groups hit conference on women

By George Archibald
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

NEW YORK — A United Nations conference on women that opened here yesterday is blocking conservative delegates from final negotiations on an agenda to expand homosexual rights and to call for sexual rights for girls from age 10, a pro-family leader said.

The international body canceled credentials for 50 delegates of several dozen different pro-family groups after presession negotiations broke before the session, said Austin Ruse, president of the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute, a group that monitors the United Nations.

In addition, the United Nations has issued credentials for only 15 persons from the pro-family groups out of about 7,000 passes for all nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

"They make a great big deal about diversity, but there is no diversity of opinion on these issues. We told them, 'We are the diversity and you are keeping us out,'" Mr. Ruse said. "I believe they're discriminating against Christian NGOs."

Fred Eckhard, spokesman for U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, said there has been no discrimination and said the delegates must not have preregistered by March 31, as required.

"I don't believe we were being discriminatory. We are in the business not to be discriminatory," he said.

Meanwhile, first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton addressed a conference workshop around lunchtime, in which she called for equality between the sexes. Activists lining the hall stood up and



First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton joins in singing the civil rights anthem "We Shall Overcome" at the U.N.'s women's conference in New York. AP

spontaneously burst into the civil rights hymn, "We Shall Overcome."

"Let us not just mark but celebrate a new century in which women's rights are once and for all treated as human rights, fully respected in every country in the world," Mrs. Clinton told several hundred women from grass-roots organizations.

About 10,000 activists and delegates from more than 180 governments are in New York this week to evaluate progress toward a platform of action devised at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing five years ago, and to find new ways to implement economic, political and sexual rights for women.

"When girls are doused with gasoline, set on fire and burned to death because their marriage dowries are too small, and when honor killings continue to be tolerated, our work is far from done," Mrs. Clinton said.

But hundreds of the 3,000 official country delegates were forced to miss the opening ceremonies as a four-hour computer crash brought credential issuance to a halt.

Tired and angry foreign delegates — many of whom traveled several days straight to get here from Africa and Asia — fumed in tightly packed lines circling a block across from U.N. headquarters, next to the U.S. Mission.

"How is the U.N. going to solve world issues when it can't solve a queue?" said Dato Kee Phaik Cheen, a Penang, Malaysia, state assemblywoman in charge of tourism and culture for the ruling government. She had stood in line for 5½ hours without food, water or even a restroom break.

"This is pathetic. It just shows a big attitude and the way they're going to look at women's issues," said a delegate from New Delhi. "This pavement line is going to show we are going to control your agenda. In my country, I would not stand in a line like this, but here I can't say a word."

"We should get Hillary Clinton to come down here to stand with us," said Jahara Hamid, a Penang state executive councilor, who expressed annoyance that the United States, as host country, was unable to prevent U.N. mismanagement on the conference opening.

"It's just one of those things you have to apologize for," Mr. Eckhard said. Ten computer stations processing thousands of last-minute conference arrivals crashed at midmorning, just as a horde of additional media organizations requested credentials to cover Mrs. Clinton's speech, he said.

Just two female U.N. staffers were assigned to process all media credentials and had not had a break from early morning to lunch time. They were scrambling as best they could, Mr. Eckhard said.

U.S. seeks softer stance on hookers

By George Archibald
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The U.S. delegation to a United Nations Women's Conference is leading efforts to avoid condemning prostitution as a "form of abuse" of women and is attempting to weaken anti-pornography provisions.

A leading U.S. negotiator, Sharon Kotok, confirmed reports from closed-door negotiating sessions on a U.N. report being drafted this week that the Clinton administra-

Clinton-led agenda weakens porn curb

tion spearheaded the move for wealthy, developed nations.

Poorer, undeveloped nations in Africa, the Middle East and South America have strongly objected to the U.S.-European moves because of strong religious traditions.

"We [the caucus of developed nations] had agreed to drop all of these phrases," Ms. Kotok said of

the anti-prostitution provision. She attributed the move to "cleaning up" the report to avoid listing specific abuses that could be broadly labeled "sexual exploitation."

The United States wants to drop an attack on the pornography industry as an exploiter of women and simply label pornographic and obscene material as an "obstacle" to women's dignity and rights.

The provisions are part of a draft report at a conference of

*The United States wants to simply label
pornographic and obscene material as an
"obstacle" to women's dignity and rights.*

10,000 female delegates from throughout the world, five years after the 1995 Beijing women's conference. The delegates are mapping an agenda for women's advancement and empowerment over the next five years.

The United States, the European Union and wealthy, developed countries — Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and South Korea — are trying to use the report to expand homosexual rights, create new sexual rights for adolescent girls starting at age 10 and require abortion training for all health care workers.

Poorer undeveloped countries in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and South America want stronger pro-family provisions and condemnation of sexual exploitation of women through sexual promiscuity, prostitution, pornography and other abuses.

Participants in the closed-door sessions said the United States made the move to strike the prostitution provision in a section on women's migration after the Philippines delegation tried to strengthen it.

As written, the draft report noted that while global migration of women increases their earning opportunities and self-reliance, it also exposes women and children, especially girls, to inadequate working conditions, increased health risks, the risk of trafficking, economic and sexual exploitation,

forced prostitution, racism, xenophobia and other forms of abuse.

The Philippine delegation moved to drop the word "forced" so that all prostitution was labeled as an exploitative abuse. At that point, delegates said, Ms. Kotok jumped up and moved to strike any reference to prostitution, racism and xenophobia.

This was not a paragraph calling for criminalization of prostitution, thus the Clinton administration cannot contend that it was trying to protect women from prosecution for a crime in which men go unpunished, said Kathryn Balmforth, a nonovernment organization (NGO) delegate representing Family Voice of Utah.

The maneuver was simply designed to prevent voluntary prostitution from being included in a negative context.

Ms. Kotok said the United States and other countries in its caucus had agreed before the conference to push to delete the prostitution references.

"I suggested dropping this entire phrase," she said. "We were just trying to clean it up. That was a balanced sentence. We thought it [prostitution] was covered [as sexual exploitation]."

However, U.S. NGOs supporting positions of the Holy See, the Vati-

can's delegation to the U.N., and the undeveloped nations' caucus called the Group of 77, or G-77, said the administration has opposed U.N. references condemning prostitution in other negotiations.

According to published reports in the Wall Street Journal and elsewhere, in negotiations involving the U.N. Convention on Transnational Organized Crime in Vienna, the administration has supported using the phrase "forced prostitution" rather than simply "prostitution," thus placing women in the position of having to prove whether their prostitution was coerced or not.

The administration's position in Vienna this year was spearheaded by the President's Interagency Council on Women, whose honorary chairman is first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, the reports said. The President's Interagency Council on Women also is directing the U.S. delegation's positions at the U.N. women's conference, officials said.

"I am not involved in Vienna," Ms. Kotok, a State Department official assisting the U.S. delegation, said yesterday.

"It's all in brackets," she said of the prostitution section and the pornography section that the administration wants to have modified, meaning the two sections

have not been agreed to and are still under discussion.

"We are trying to condemn the entire pornography industry as an abuse; it is one of the obstacles we are dealing with," said T. Malek-Ebrahimi, a delegate for Islamic Women Institute of Iran, an NGO group.

The U.S. words referring only to pornographic materials are diluting the actual language because it does not encompass filmmakers who exploit women and children in making pornographic movies, or other aspects of the pornography trade, she said.

Pornography is the whole institution: filmmakers, magazines, sex shops and so forth. Pornographic and obscene materials are only one part of it.

Ms. Kotok says the U.S. proposal talks about products in a section dealing with women and media. "We thought it made more sense. We thought 'pornographic materials' was more appropriate," she said.

E.J. Suh, a University of Illinois college student representing World Youth Alliance, a major youth NGO group at the conference with members on five continents, said she was disappointed in the U.S.-led action.

"It doesn't make sense to me that the U.S. would loosen regulations on issues of prostitution, pornography and abortion," she said. "It is something very damaging to women physically, mentally and emotionally. As an American, I know how our society holds very dear freedom, but not freedom to do anything and everything."

U.S. move regarding sex trade draws ire

Women's groups decry U.N. agenda

By George Archibald
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

NEW YORK — Leaders of women's human rights groups say the Clinton administration is selling them out by pushing to legalize prostitution in U.N. negotiations on international agreements to counter sexual exploitation and trafficking of women and children.

Women's group leaders say the administration has pushed to decriminalize prostitution in negotiations on an international organized-crime convention in Vienna, Austria, and moved to remove condemnation of prostitution in a new U.N. women's rights agenda.

The moves angered leading feminist groups, which have joined in an unusual coalition with religious groups against the U.S. position.

"If we're renegotiating everything and haggling over what's already been decided, what's the utility of this process, and for the advancement of women's rights and human rights?" asked Jessica

Neuwirth, president of Equality NOW, an international human rights organization.

At yesterday's special session, Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright warned against a retreat from the landmark 1995 Beijing conference, where 189 nations adopted an ambitious platform of sexual equality.

"Our movement to recognize and support women's rights is one of the most revolutionary and uplifting forces now shaping the world," Mrs. Albright said. "It is no longer possible, after Beijing, to deny that women's rights are human rights, and are indivisible from the universal rights of every human being."

At issue in New York is whether prostitution, now considered criminal by the United Nations, should be sanctioned as a form of women's labor.

President Clinton, in a letter May 22 to Rep. Joseph R. Pitts, Pennsylvania Republican, stated unequivocally: "My administration does not support prostitution."

In a statement to our delegation to the Vienna negotiations in January, we reiterated our opposition to prostitution in all its forms. We would not become a party to any treaty that weakened laws against

prostitution."

But feminist leaders say U.S. negotiators have repeatedly tried to alter international sanctions to cover only "forced" prostitution, thus legalizing all prostitution not proved to be coerced.

They say the administration's first move toward legalized prostitution — in Vienna negotiations in January — was buttressed this week in negotiations for a new "Beijing+5" women's rights agenda to strike condemnation of prostitution from the document.

The move came when the Philippines delegation moved to strike the qualifying word "forced" from a paragraph on prostitution and U.S. negotiator Sharon B. Kotok moved to strike the entire reference to prostitution on grounds that "sexual exploitation" covered all abuses.

Ms. Kotok told The Washington Times the U.S. move was aimed at "cleaning up" the document by removing specified abuses such as prostitution. But she acknowledged the move was part of a calculated strategy planned beforehand by the United States in concert with Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and the European Union nations.

In a letter to Mrs. Albright June 2, Ms. Neuwirth wrote that she was told by the department's undersecretary of state for global affairs, Frank E. Loy, that "the U.S. government remains committed to the inadequate framework of force."

Ms. Neuwirth said that in addition to many developing countries, called the G-77, "we understand that objections to the 'force' framework have been voiced by many European countries, as well as the European Women's Lobby, the largest non-governmental women's organization in Europe."

Twelve major feminist groups have insisted that the United States and U.N. member nations stick with international law under a 1949 U.N. convention that requires punishment of any person who "exploits the prostitution of another person, even with the consent of that person."

Similarly, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), accepted by more than 160 countries but not ratified by the United States, requires international measures "to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women."

Legalizing consensual prostitution would leave tens of thousands of women and children in poverty vulnerable to sexual exploitation by commercial sex traffickers, Ms. Neuwirth said. "Desperation of poverty is another type of coercion that won't be reflected."

Laura J. Lederer of the Protec-

tion Project, a global-trafficking survey at Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, said the dispute between feminist groups and the administration includes "a sub-agenda whether we're going to allow prostitution as a form of labor or not."

She said the women's movement is split on the issue, with one side wanting to treat prostitution as criminal exploitation and the other wanting "the world's oldest profession" to become a legitimate form of government-regulated commercial sex labor.

Meanwhile yesterday, some delegations voiced concern that there might be no report from the U.N. special session at all because of a continuing stalemate over provisions to expand homosexual rights, introduce new "sexual rights" for children at age 10, and require abortion training for health workers throughout the world.

GLOBAL SEX TRAFFICKING

An estimated 2 million children are forced into prostitution every year, half of them in Asia.

- Children from Mexico are sold to U.S. brothels.
- Almost 200,000 girls from Nepal, many under age 14, are sexual slaves in India.
- Experts estimate 10,000 children between 6 and 14 are slaves in Sri Lankan brothels.
- 15,000 children were sold into sex slavery in Cambodia between 1991 and 1997.
- The Thai government reports that 60,000 Thai children are sold into prostitution. Nongovernmental organization experts estimate there are 800,000.
- More than 50,000 women are trafficked into the United States every year, primarily from Mexico, Russia, Asia and Africa.
- An estimated 10,000 women from the former Soviet Union have been forced into prostitution in Israel.
- Asian women are sold to North American brothels for \$16,000 each.
- 20,000 women and girls from Burma have been forced into prostitution in Thailand.
- Of 155 cases of forced prostitution brought to the court in the Netherlands, only four resulted in conviction of traffickers.

Source: The Protection Project, Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies

The Washington Times

Feminist proposals routed at conference

'Sexual orientation' is the sticking point

By George Archibald
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Conservative nations routed liberal and radical feminists at the finale of a U.N. special session on women's rights over the weekend, forcing Western powers to drop homosexual rights, sex rights for children and promotion of abortion from a new five-year U.N. agenda for women's advancement.

Christine Kapalata of Tanzania, the conference's negotiations

NEWS ANALYSIS

chairman, told feminists at the end of a week-long onslaught by Catholic and Muslim delegations, "We don't want a Beijing-minus-five document" — a reference to the session's title, "Beijing-Plus-Five."

But conservative forces, led by Poland, Nicaragua, Senegal and the Holy See, pushed back efforts to expand a Platform for Action adopted five years ago by women from 189 nations at the 1995 U.N. Fourth World Conference for Women in Beijing.

"It was a rout, it was an utter defeat for the other side," said Austin Ruse, president of the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute in New York, who helped coordinate conservative opposition to sexual rights provisions for homosexuals and children and tougher pro-abortion mandates.

The session ended with the adoption of a document reiterating, among other things, that better education and health care are key to improving women's lives. It also called for universal primary and secondary education for boys and girls within the next 15 years and a more aggressive prosecution of those who commit acts of violence against women, including employers.

But there was no agreement on the tougher issues. The turning point came in the wee hours of Thursday morning, the first of two all-night negotiating sessions, when Western nations continued insisting that expanded homosexual rights be listed among the document's accomplishments. The section noted measures taken "by a growing number of countries ... to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation."

"We cannot accept that language," said a delegate from Senegal. A Syrian delegate agreed: "There's no way we can accept a document tonight with the phrase 'sexual orientation.'" Delegates from Nicaragua and Kuwait said they could not accept "sexual orientation," an undefined term, as a human right. The term was not included in the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights nor the Beijing Platform for Action, the Kuwait delegate said.

"We need to progress and move beyond" the Platform for Action, said a New Zealand delegate, speaking for a coalition called JUSCANZ — Japan, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Patricia Flor of Germany, chairman of the negotiating session, agreed. "Should we go with a more than 50-year-old list?" she asked of the 1948 declaration.

After 45 minutes of argument on the single sentence, Ms. Flor said she would bracket the paragraph as unresolved and return to it later. Third World delegates protested that Jyoti Shankar Singh, executive coordinator of the U.N. session, had ruled that original Beijing platform language would prevail when disagreement occurred over new language, in order to move the process along.

"Translators were due to leave at 1 a.m., five minutes away, and Flor had let the debate continue long past the time limit," said Wendy Wright of Concerned Women for America, one of 2,300 non-government organization (NGO) delegates. "People were livid. But the delegates from Senegal, Pakistan, and the G-77 group of developing nations said they would continue debate without interpreters. They truly put EU and JUSCANZ to shame," she said.

Then the blowup came. Western delegations are "holding the women of the world hostage to one term, 'sexual orientation,'" when

CONSERVATIVE CREDO

Concerned Women for America, a conservative group, issued this credo at the United Nations last week to show the group's support for basic women's rights throughout the world and where it disagreed with liberal and radical feminists.

WE AGREE:

- That women should have freedom, liberty, and the right to pursue happiness and fulfillment; women should have full access to opportunity for education and basic medicinal and nutritional needs; women should be protected legally from exploitation and physical harm.
- That violence against women should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law; that countries should work together to eliminate sex trafficking; that female genital cutting and other cultural traditions that mutilate and kill women should be outlawed.
- That microeconomic opportunities should be offered to help families climb out of poverty.
- That discrimination against women in education, health care and advancement is wrong and should be eliminated.
- That girls and women should be treated fairly and with justice.

WE OBJECT:

- To sexual license — both heterosexual sex without marriage and homosexual sex in any context. Thus, we disagree with the Beijing Platform for Action when it pushes "reproductive choice" as a solution to the consequences of unmarried sex intercourse.
- To abortion and attempts to force abortion onto nations whose religious beliefs include the sanctity of life — including protecting unborn children.
- To coercion and manipulation as means of achieving ends. It is unconscionable that rich Western nations should force developing nations to adopt an agenda that conflicts with their moral values. That is colonialism at its worst.
- To vilification of people who disagree on matters of conscience and religious beliefs.
- To granting children and adolescents decision-making rights without parental knowledge and consent.

The Washington Times

their real needs are clean water and help in overcoming illiteracy, said the Pakistan delegate.

"We should just leave now," said

a G-77 delegate. "They are being stubborn on one issue that is not important to most women of the world who are illiterate" and

"Our friends were galvanized. You had almost the whole world against 'sexual orientation' and the U.S. and EU isolated in favor."

—Austin Ruse

whose basic economic and health care needs are unmet. "They need to respect people who have spoken out. They are wasting time on minor issues and not being serious about the time spent. If they're not being serious, it is better just to leave now and go back to our own countries. They need to show respect and not bog us down on this issue."

"It was then a drum-roll rejecting sexual orientation," said Mr. Ruse. "It rolled across Africa, the Middle East, demanding ouster of 'sexual orientation' from the document. The room was electric. Our friends were galvanized. You had almost the whole world against 'sexual orientation' and the U.S. and EU isolated in favor."

From then on, paragraph after paragraph giving legitimacy to homosexual rights, sexual rights for children, and expanding abortion mandates were dropped from the document, Mr. Ruse said.

The last big fight occurred during Friday's all-night session, over a paragraph proposed by JUSCANZ and Turkey requiring health service providers to be offered abortion training and equipment in countries where the procedure is legal, "and take other measures to ensure that abortion

is safe and accessible."

"On the floor that night, this was the big ball game," Mr. Ruse said. "The U.S. knew they had lost. If there was disagreement, they were to revert to the Beijing language."

On Wednesday, 24 pro-life members of Congress and several dozen members of both the Canadian and European parliaments wrote letters opposing the pro-abortion and sexual rights sections, he said.

"This was pivotal. The radical feminists really wanted to extend reproductive rights further from Beijing. And the intervention of the American Congress and the European and Canadian parliaments was very important," Mr. Ruse said. As enacted by 2,300 official country delegates, the new women's rights document included stronger measures to combat violence against women, sex exploitation, and the impact of HIV/AIDS.

"We have a very strong document which not only reaffirms Beijing and other relevant conferences on human rights and social development, but also moves forward," said Angela King, a U.N. assistant secretary and special adviser on advancement of women to Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

Responses to coverage of Beijing-Plus-Five conference

The article in The Washington Times about a U.N. committee ordering China to allow women to sell their bodies as "sex workers" inaccurately portrays the facts ("China 'sex workers' treaty backed," June 1).

The article raises the question of why the U.N. committee issued the instruction for China to legalize prostitution. A simple review of the text of the committee's recommendation to China, coupled with a study of China's report to the committee, gives the answer.

The full text of the recommendation can be found in the Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women on its 20th session (Jan. 19 through Feb. 5, 1999) Note 289: "The Committee recommends decriminalization of prostitution. Given the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the Committee also recommends that due attention be paid to health services for women in prostitution. The government is also urged to take measures for rehabilitation and reintegration of prostitutes into society."

In its periodic report, China acknowledged the problem of abduction and sale of women and children, also known as the trafficking and forced prostitution of women. As a practice, to maintain control of these women and further enslave them, the abductors threaten to report them to government officials who in turn would arrest and prosecute them. A significant majority of these women are illiterate and impoverished, and threats of arrest and prosecution paralyze them further.

In 1991, China adopted a decision to punish criminals guilty of abducting and selling women and children and a decision to severely punish

prostitution. However, the government has not done much to alleviate the persistent fear of prosecution reinforced in these women's minds. The committee's recommendation to China goes to the very heart of this issue and is a means of reducing the further victimization of these women.

While the article in The Times depicts "decriminalization" as "legalization" and interprets decriminalization as a stamp of approval for prostitution, a more thorough study of this complex issue presents it as a means of removing fear of further prosecution and taking steps to provide the necessary conditions for the safe reintegration of these embattled women into society.

LEILA R. MILANI
Washington

Leila R. Milani is a lobbyist for the Working Group on Ratification of the U.N. Women's Human Rights Treaty.

cation, the dialogue had to devolve to the legislation of sexual permissiveness.

A battle was waged over the weekend by the "Third World" nations in this conference on behalf of life, liberty and morality. The concern of these nations has been far more fundamental than for "sexual rights." Organizations such as the World Youth Alliance and the American Life League have joined these nations in concentrating on the promotion of a truly pro-life message, one that can be embraced by all civilized nations, including the United States. Thank you to The Times for bringing to light the route the feminists have taken.

MICHAEL P. MURPHY
Stafford, Va.

Michael Murphy is the press secretary for American Life League.

I would like to extend my gratitude to The Washington Times for the June 12 news analysis "Feminist proposals routed at U.N. conference."

"If [Western delegations are] not being serious, it is better just to leave now and go back to our own countries," a G-77 delegate cried.

The recent developments in the Beijing-Plus-5 conference were sober and humbling reminders of the true meaning of civility. It was deplorable that in the midst of such an opportunity for nations to communicate their needs for clean water, proper health care and edu-

Jordan Times*Women's rights*

AMMAN, Jordan — Five years after the Beijing Conference and 25 years after the first-ever U.N. conference on women's rights, 10,000 representatives of 180 countries met in New York for the so-called "Beijing Plus Five Special Session" and agreed on measures to accelerate the campaign for gender equality.

The final document reportedly addresses violence against women, including marital rape and so-called "honor crimes," HIV/AIDS, measures to increase participation in the cultural, economical and political life of a nation and the effect of globalization.

It is here that workshops promoting cultural exchange and religious dialogue really attain their importance. For we cannot take account of another's culture if we don't understand it. As much as we in the Arab world accuse the West of, at best lacking sensitivity, and at worst imposing alien values on us, it is also our duty to understand what propels Western values, to see where and how they can be accommodated and vice versa; how Arab values can be a positive influence on Western values.

This is not a process of which we should be afraid.

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Strange new 'women's rights'

Women's rights have come a long way since Susan B. Anthony fought for equal voting rights at the turn of the last century. One wonders if Anthony would feel comfortable in last month's United Nations Beijing +5 meeting for women's rights in New York. Among the topics discussed: abortion rights, lesbian rights, the right to prostitution and children's sexual rights.

If these "rights" represent liberation, women must ask themselves where their movement is headed. So it's no wonder that some human rights groups were up in arms this month when the Clinton administration pushed to decriminalize prostitution and discussed the practice as being an acceptable form of labor.

Now, the U.S. delegation to the United Nations told The Washington Times that neither the administration nor the U.S. delegation supported prostitution of any kind, and that it sought to narrow the definition of sex trafficking to protect more women. However, several human rights groups said the U.S. delegation, along with Canada and the European Union countries, led a focused effort fighting for abortion, nondiscrimination based on sexual orientation and sexual rights for those aged 10 and above at the New York meetings. "Their number one priority were these three things and they lost," said Austin Ruse of the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute in New York.

As a case in point of the anti-family agenda put

forth there, the United States pushed for more access to abortion and increased training of physicians for abortion, with no allowance for a doctor's right of conscience if he or she does not agree with the procedure, said conference attendee Kathryn Balmforth, the executive director of the World Family Policy Center.

"An enormous amount of time was spent by the U.S. pushing such things as homosexual rights, expansion of abortion and sexual rights, even for kids," she told The Washington Times. "That was certainly the major push by the U.S."

Thankfully, Africa, Asia and the Middle East were not overpowered by the Western representatives' skewed "rights" agenda. Not only did the conference not recommend increased access to abortion, but it stated it was not an acceptable form of birth control. Despite pressure to eliminate the word "prostitution" from a document negotiated at the meeting which listed abuses women should be protected against, the Philippines stood up to the opposition and at least one reference was left in the document.

In fighting for saving their own families, they were returning women's rights to a place Susan B. Anthony would be proud of: A place where every life is valid and the degradation of women and children through prostitution is unacceptable. In this place, liberation does not mean the right to participate in obscure sexual behavior, but to protect the gifts of womanhood and home God has granted.

IdahoStatesman

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Allen Marsh, Nampa

Liberal agenda

The New York **Beijing+5 Conference** is over. Mainstream media, as always, reported only the positive liberal perspective. The rich Western nations, led by the U.S., tried to resurrect the idea of "sexual rights," which was rejected at the original **Beijing conference**.

"Sexual rights" involve a variety of ideas, including abortion, legalized prostitution, homosexuality, and sexual freedom for children. Yes, they wanted girls of any age to have "full realization" of their sexuality "both in and out of school" aided by government.

Developing nations fought offensive terminology and the practice of tying population control to humanitarian aid. Pakistan's delegate protested that the West was "holding the women of the world hostage" to a radical agenda "when their real needs are clean water and help in overcoming illiteracy."

An African doctor said she didn't have sufficient medicines to combat major health risks, but she has been given a storehouse of contraceptive devices.

Chicago Sun-Times

Envoys see Fonda film on Nigerians

Jane Fonda has finished a documentary she began after visiting Nigeria to see the challenges facing adolescent girls in Africa's most populous country. "Realities of Girls' Lives: How We Can Act Now" was shown Tuesday night at the United Nations to more than 300 diplomats, activists and delegates to next week's followup meeting to the 1995 women's **conference in Beijing**. The documentary, narrated by Fonda, describes the poverty that most girls in Nigeria live with, the double standard they confront on sexual matters, the high teen pregnancy and abortion rates and abuse they face. "I work with adolescent girls in the U.S. state of Georgia," Fonda said, "and while their circumstances may be different, the problems that diminish girls there are also problems for girls everywhere in the world."

Illiteracy, AIDS continue to plague women worldwide, UN report says

Governments often ignore problems;
some progress seen in employment, education

By Patrick Cole

TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

NEW YORK—Five years after a global summit on women's issues, women around the world have made strides in employment and education but still comprise half of the world's refugees, two-thirds of its illiterates and more than half of those who died from AIDS last year, according to a United Nations report released Wednesday.

The 180-page report, "The World's Women 2000: Trends and Statistics," examines progress—or lack of it—in areas such as the workplace, family issues, health, education and communication since the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 in Beijing.

The report's findings are cause for concern because women's problems are often ignored by national governments, said Angela E.V. King, assistant secretary general and special adviser on gender issues. She said she hopes governments will use the report to work toward better conditions for women.

"You just can't leave out one-half of the world's population," King said.

"This report attempts to answer the urgent but complex question of what real progress are the world's women making in their lives," said Nitin Desai, UN undersecretary for economic and social affairs.

The General Assembly will discuss these findings during a special five-day meeting next week on women, gender and equality issues in the 21st Century.

One of the most troubling findings concerns the number of women afflicted with AIDS and HIV, the virus that causes the disease. The disease "is spreading much faster among women" than among men in some parts of the world, the report said.

Women account for about 46 percent of the 32.4 million people globally living with HIV or AIDS, the study said, and women were also 46 percent of the estimated 5 million people who were infected last year.

In sub-Saharan Africa, one of the areas most ravaged by AIDS, about 55 percent of those who have the disease are women, the UN study said.

In terms of AIDS deaths, women make up half of the 12.7 million adults who have died since the epidemic began to surface about 20 years ago and 52 percent of the 2.1 million adults who died of the disease last year, the study noted.

Moreover, the study found women are "bearing an increasingly large burden of the disease—a burden made even greater by the fact that women are more likely than men to care for children who suffer from the disease."

In its more than half-century of existence, the UN periodically has examined the rights of women, beginning with a convention on political rights in 1952. The UN declared 1975 to be International Women's Year and held a conference in Mexico City. That was followed by similar women's conferences in Copenhagen in 1980 and in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1985.

In assessing human rights, the study said that while physical and sexual abuse are known to be "seriously underreported," more than half of all women and girls in some African countries have undergone genital mutilation. An estimated 100 million to 132 million females have been forced to undergo mutilation in recent years, the report said.

In addition, women and young girls make up about half of the world's refugee populations, the report said. And despite the adoption by the UN nine years ago of guidelines on the treatment of refugees, women often become estranged from their countries "as a result of violence, including sexual violence," the report said, noting that women also are forced to have sex in order to get food and other necessities.

When it comes to literacy, the report said women lag behind men, especially in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

In other areas, the report cited progress by women. They generally live longer than men, with Western European women living to age 81 compared to 75 for men, the report found. By comparison, women in southern Africa—which has a significant population of AIDS victims—have a life expectancy of 56 years compared to 52 for men, the study said.

Education is another area where women are outpacing men, the report found. The enrollment of women in higher education has risen in most regions, and in the Caribbean and western Asia, more women are enrolled in colleges than men, the study said, while in South America, the number of women attending college is equal to the number of men.

But as more women enter the workplace, they have the added challenge of balancing family responsibilities with their daily chores, the UN said. While more women are working in paying jobs, they continue to receive less pay than men. In a survey of manufacturing jobs in about 40 countries, women's wages often were 20 per-

cent to 50 percent less than those of men.

At the same time, women generally aren't faring well in attaining high positions in business and government.

Only nine women are heads of state or government leaders in the world, the survey found, and women account for only 12 percent of corporate officers in the 500 largest U.S. corporations.

Women have made strides in government in Scandinavia, the UN report said, noting that about 55 percent of Sweden's government ministers are women. Female representation in parliaments was highest in Western Europe at 21 percent.

Many women's groups believe representation in government is critical to advancing their rights worldwide. Equality Now, a New York-based women's rights group, said that one of the major obstacles to women's progress is laws that

discriminate against them.

Equality Now President Jessica Neuwirth said her organization last summer surveyed a sample of 45 nations with discriminatory laws against women, and only three of those countries have removed those laws.

"That's not the pace we need. We want 100 percent equality for women," Neuwirth said. "If governments don't have equality in law, you have no recourse. If governments don't recognize that women have equal rights as human beings, then where are we?"

Charlotte Bunch, executive director of the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University, said, "Governments must be willing to put significant resources into changing this situation."

"They must be willing to put resources into the education of girls, training women for public life, and changes in attitudes have to accompany that. It really [requires] an investment in women," she added.

Women's conference decries lack of progress since 1995

By Patrick Cole

TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

NEW YORK—When Meaza Ashenafi attended the UN Conference on Women five years ago in Beijing, she had great hopes that the government of her native Ethiopia would crack down on the abduction of and trafficking in women, and eliminate the practice of female circumcision.

Yet today those problems persist, and she wonders whether the aims of that conference were just a bundle of fragile hopes.

"The progress women are making is incremental—it's not a radical change," said Ashenafi, 36, founder of the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association. "I now realize that women everywhere have a problem, not just in my country."

Like thousands of other women from almost 180 countries, Ashenafi came to New York this week to assess the progress—or lack of it—since the 1995 conference and to discuss the daunting task of advancing women's rights in areas from health to business.

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on Thursday heightened the urgency to curb trafficking in women when she called for a global effort to eliminate the practice.

"This rapidly growing criminal enterprise has gone global," Albright said at a special session of the General Assembly held to review progress since the Beijing conference.

Trafficking, she said, was "distorting economies, degrading societies, endangering neighborhoods and robbing millions, mostly women and children, of their dreams," said Albright, who had just returned from the Middle East.

The five-day conference, called "Women 2000: Gender, Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century," was sponsored by the United Nations. It has attracted women from all walks of life and professions. Events and seminars ranged from a speech by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton condemning gender-based violence to an Academy Award-nominated docu-

mentary about Vietnamese and American widows struggling to cope after the Vietnam War.

Yet many participants have been frustrated by the tedious process of drafting a unified plan of action for women's rights, which is scheduled to be released Friday.

"The debate about language on violence against women has been difficult—there has been some disagreement about [defining] what is violence," said Susana Fried, an adviser and consultant to the UN Development Fund for Women, who attended the conference.

"People I talk to aren't happy with this meeting," said Sapana Malla, a lawyer from Nepal. "They feel that women are moving backward on many issues."

Monique Widyono, co-executive director of Equality Now, a New York-based women's rights organization, said it's a difficult struggle making governments implement many of the reforms discussed at the conference.

"What's lacking is a political will for change in governments. Here we are five years after the Beijing Conference and what has happened?" she asked.

Days before the conference, the UN released a report on the global state of women, which showed, among other things, that hundreds of thousands of women are recruited or abducted annually to work in legal or illegal businesses.

The Asian Coalition against Trafficking in Women estimates that 200,000 Bangladeshi women have been sent to Pakistan during the past 10 years. The Washington-based Center for the Study of Intelligence estimated that 45,000 to 50,000 women and children enter the U.S. annually as slave laborers or sweatshop workers.

The problem also persists in the Caribbean, as 50,000 women from the Dominican Republic work in the sex trade in Latin America and Europe, according to estimates from the International Organization for Migration. Sex work in the Dominican Republic is viewed as an "alternative for young women who were unable to find job oppor-

tunities at home," the organization said.

Ashenafi said hundreds of women are sent from Ethiopia illegally to neighboring countries and to Middle Eastern nations such as Lebanon. Ethiopia passed a law in 1998 forbidding this practice, but enforcement has been difficult.

"Once the women get there, their passports are taken away from them, and they can't get back home," she said.

As Ashenafi told her stories during a panel discussion this week, Malla listened. Malla, a Delhi University-trained lawyer, has been lobbying her government to aggressively enforce a law it enacted in 1987 that prohibits trafficking in women.

"We have strong legislation, but enforcement is weak," said Malla, the founder of the Forum for Women, Law & Development, a Katmandu-based women's rights organization.

"Trafficking [in women] operates like organized crime."

As a result, about 5,000 to 7,000 Nepalese women are sent to India annually, mostly as prostitutes, she said. The Forum for Women estimates that about 220,000 Nepalese women are living in India as a result of trafficking.

Besides trafficking, Ashenafi and other women at the conference decried female genital mutilation and circumcision, which persist in Ethiopia and other African countries.

"After I had my baby, I thought about what it would mean for her," said Ashenafi, who has a young daughter. "It's very hurtful to think of mutilating my baby like that."

An estimated 2 million women and girls undergo genital mutilation each year, and about 132 million have been mutilated in 28 African countries, according to the World Health Organization.

But Ashenafi, who will return to Ethiopia next week, is optimistic that her country will continue to eliminate discriminatory laws and practices, albeit slowly. "I am hopeful that things will be improved for my daughter," she said.



AP photo by Shawn Baldwin

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright speaks Thursday during the UN General Assembly's special session to review women's progress. She called for a global effort to eliminate trafficking in women.

Chicago Tribune

FOUNDED JUNE 10, 1847





Associated Press

Running hard

First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, bolstered by the endorsement of New York liberals, is running hard for the U.S. Senate out of New York. The Illinois native was the key speaker at a conference for women, "Women 2000," at the Hayden Planetarium in New York City Tuesday.

The Boston Globe

JUDY COLLINS

Women are reshaping the planet

A few decades of social activism can dull a person's capacity to be surprised. I came to the United Nations this week to help welcome women from around the world to the latest UN review of our condition, but I didn't expect to learn much. And the opening ceremony was the familiar sea of colorful clothing and smiling, singing faces of every shade.

The posters, banners, fliers, and demonstrations all seemed to echo women's needs and the themes that had excited me in the 1970s and had led me to become goodwill ambassador for UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, in 1994.

But as I talked with women who had traveled thousands of miles for this gathering and women who had walked over from around the corner, I began to see something new. The whole context has changed.

Women are now on the world's agenda. The controversy that surrounds everything we do is proof. Some 25 years ago, abuses such as bride-burning, female genital mutilation, human trafficking, forced marriage, and ordinary domestic violence used to be shrugged off as unavoidable, as cultural traditions, as private matters, or as too widespread to try to stop. No more.

Violence against women is now condemned rightly as the violation of human rights that it has always been. Even sexual harassment is so unacceptable in the United States today that young women find it hard to believe my tales of what life used to be like for women here, especially in the music business.



BARRIE MAGUIRE ILLUSTRATION

This is not to say that the abuses have ended. On the contrary. Our very real gains have produced a strong backlash by patriarchal and fundamentalist forces worldwide, whose perks we are challenging. Debate rages over women's demands that governments honor the commitments they made five years ago at the World Conference on Women in Beijing — for equality in the workplace, in access to education, medical care, and legal and social rights, and in decision-making. The struggle is on display for all to see in New York this week, where a few countries are trying to turn back the clock.

But reality has set in. No one speaks now of economic development without speaking of women, because investing in women and girls has proved to be the fastest boost for every indicator of progress.

Visiting Vietnam with UNICEF, I met some poor women who had used tiny loans from a micro-credit program to raise rabbits to sell. The income let them add protein to their children's diet of rice, gave them some autonomy and self-esteem, and was a lift for their whole community.

Every year of schooling for a girl is correlated to better health for her and her whole family, better care for her environment, a higher family income, and more market activity, which means community growth. Sometimes we forget that women are linked to every aspect of society, as I sang this week in the song "Bread

and Roses," by Mimi Farina and James Oppenheim: "As we go marching, marching, we battle too for men."

In 25 years of work, women have raised the consciousness of politicians and the media worldwide. We have connected to one another across lines of culture, race, income, and language so that activist women anywhere now know they are not alone in their struggle.

Legions of young women are in New York with us, and while we may see the world's 3 billion people under 25 chiefly as the future, for them the future is now. They must have the education, health care, and rights today that will let them make responsible choices about work, childbearing, and caring for each other tomorrow. Women are not only on the agenda, we have changed the agenda so that it has no boundaries of age or place. This is something really new.

What we have to do now is make the promises of Beijing a reality. We must reinforce the good work that UN agencies such as UNICEF are doing for women and children worldwide, and we must reaffirm the US commitment to international aid programs. How else will we dare to call ourselves the leaders of the world?

Women are going to reshape the planet during this century. The only question is how quickly it will happen. I expect to be surprised again soon.

Judy Collins is a folk singer and social activist.

The Boston Globe

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Idea of women's rights as human rights has arrived

NEW YORK — The good news is that there wasn't much bad news. The brakes were kept on the backsliders. The leash was yanked on the back-trackers. Even the backlash was kept in its holster.

The United Nations conference for women brought 4,500 delegates and grass-roots organizers here for a five-year checkup on the Platform for Action approved at the global meeting for women in Beijing in 1995. It was a 150-page plan that covered issues from violence to economic development.

This time, at a meeting bearing the mundane name "Beijing Plus Five," there was fear that the plan would be watered down with diplomatic phrases. So the results were greeted with relief if not celebration.

But now as the women head home, do we assess this half-decade of international women's rights as half-full or half-empty?

Half-full? The idea that women's rights are human rights has finally solidified. Some 20 years ago, it was a radical thought. Today it's an international cliché.

Honor killings and bride burnings and female genital mutilation are no longer regarded as "cultural" matters but human rights abuses. The sexual trafficking in women, which Secretary of State Madeleine Albright condemned here, isn't another spinoff of the global economy, but an international scandal.

"Women are on the agenda and in the public space in ways we weren't. Governments are being held accountable for what they said they were doing for women," says Charlotte Bunch of the Center for Women's Global Leadership.

Half-empty? The world has barely begun to implement the commitments made in Beijing. Many countries thought a token signature on a token document would get them off the hook. Others from the Vatican to Libya remain adamantly opposed to parts of the platform, especially reproductive rights.

Also, many countries have failed to meet the Beijing timetable for repealing laws that discriminate against women, such as inheritance and custody laws. And five years out, the path to progress is neither straight nor



ELLEN
GOODMAN

sure.

Consider Kuwait. Five years ago, Kuwait was the only country where men could vote and women could not. It still is.

Over breakfast one conference day, Fatima Al-Abdali, an engineer and activist, her hair covered in the traditional black scarf, intensely explained the tangled struggle for women's suffrage in Kuwait. This is a country where more than half the college graduates are women, but still can't vote or hold office.

During the 1991 invasion when women worked and fought beside men, Al-Abdali says, "women were called the sisters of men of Kuwait. That means we were equal." When the war was over, "we thought the vote would come automatically."

A year later, they were sorely disappointed. One year after the next, the Parliament turned down the women's vote. Even when the emir supported suffrage, it lost.

This year Al-Abdali, whose daughter is studying architecture in Oklahoma, became one of five women to challenge the election law as unconstitutional; one case is now headed for the constitutional court. "The thing that is bothering us is that the government is now saying women are not ready enough, not aware enough, not political enough. So many 'not enoughs.'"

When are there enough "not enoughs"? In many places, like Kuwait, the reality and the fear of a fundamentalist backlash are inhibiting the progress governments promised when they signed the plan. Today, women's rights are sometimes put on hold or bargained away to keep the fundamentalists at bay.

As Charlotte Bunch looks ahead to the next half-decade — half-full or half-empty? — she wonders not just about the out and out political battles with reactionaries but this "undertow" of resistance that may actually get worse with globalization.

"In places where people feel threatened by globalization of the economy or the culture, people try to hang on to what they can control," she worries. "They identify women and family with traditional areas to control."



So in the half-full half-decade, there is the emerging international movement toward equality. A grass-roots connection has been made by women and their male allies across the world who find support and nourishment with each other.

In the half-empty half-decade? A resistance to women's independence, especially for sexual and reproductive rights, remains strong.

At this checkup, women shored up a platform to stand on. But they don't want to stand still.



Write to Ellen Goodman, The Boston Globe, Boston, Mass. 02107 or email ellengoodman@globe.com.



FOUNDED IN 1908 BY MARY BAKER EDDY

*'First the blade, then the ear,
then the full grain in the ear.'*

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◆ THE MONITOR'S VIEW ◆

WOMEN'S PROGRESS

FIVE years after the United Nations' World Conference on Women in Beijing, delegates are gathering at the United Nations in New York this week to assess what has been accomplished. They are likely to find many signs of progress toward greater recognition of women's rights, and plenty of evidence of still unfulfilled promises by the world's nations.

The platform that emerged from the Beijing meeting had vast scope. It called for inheritance rights for women (still denied in much of the world), the condemnation and criminalization of rape during wartime; greater educational and economic opportunity for women; more political participation, such as service in legislatures; and greater choice in matters of childbearing.

It's an agenda that won deserved praise and support — and, predictably, generated controversy and opposition at the same time. Some religious groups were disturbed by the emphasis on contraceptive rights. Declarations about economic and political

rights of women met deep cultural resistance in some societies.

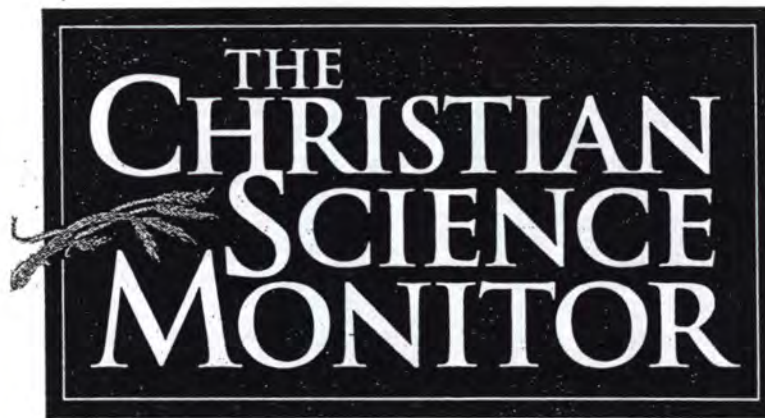
These tensions won't soon be erased. Clearly, many practices that restrict women, often tied to religious traditions, will have to give way before the inexorable rightness of affording half the human race a wider path toward self-realization.

**Restrictive
tradition will
have to give
way before
greater rights.**

But it would be wrong to assume that a fuller recognition of women's rights is necessarily at odds with religion. Enlightened religious thinking, in fact, undergirds the push for greater rights. Each individual has an inherent right to express, fully and creatively, such God-given qualities as

compassion, intelligence, resilience, and perceptiveness. Freeing women to bring their qualities of thought to communities and to the halls of government is a pillar of continued progress.

May the meeting in New York do a good job of assessing how far the world has come in five years, and of making sure the agenda set in Beijing stays vital.



World's women get — a bit — safer

■ This week, 10,000 women converge on UN to rate economic and social progress.

By Minh T. Vo
Special to The Christian Science Monitor

UNITED NATIONS — A river of brilliant saris, tailored suits, tunic dresses, and shawls flows through the corridors. The subjects of discussion are dark, and often dire. "Honor" killings. Rape. Domestic violence. Forced marriage. Dismal pay.

But the confidence and energy exuded by some 10,000 women gathered at the UN this week is palpable.

They have come from 180 nations to assess womankind's progress since a similar landmark conference in Beijing five years ago.

A thumbnail scorecard shows that awareness of such problems as violence against women has grown considerably since 1985. Many governments worldwide have revised their legal codes to treat women more equitably. All

South Asian governments, for instance, have set up commissions to look into gender crimes and inequality. Yesterday, the European Union's executive commission called for stiffer laws to end sexual

'As we [move] forward, we are also losing ground. In war ... violence against women has increased.'

— Executive director of UNIFEM

harassment in the workplace.

"These [commissions] have become a very big lobbying tool for NGOs and a pressure point for governments," says Ruchira Gupta, who runs the nonprofit On Our Own in India. "It's a very big step forward." But, she adds, these commissions lack teeth.

New laws chip away at violence against women

WOMEN *from page 1*

Indeed, while signs of progress are evident, there are also indications of new problems.

"As we are moving forward, we are also losing ground. There's more violence appearing in many countries. And in situations of war, violence against women has increased," says Noeleen Heyzer, the executive director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

Human rights activists point out that, in this era of civil wars and ethnic conflicts, combatants increasingly rape women as part of their terror campaigns.

In India, so-called dowry deaths have increased in the past five years. And around the world, 1 woman in 3 is beaten, coerced into sex, or abused during her lifetime, usually by someone she knows, according to a Johns Hopkins School of Public Health study.

But on this march forward, women advocacy organizations successfully lobbied in 1998 for the inclusion of rape as a crime against humanity in the statute for an international criminal court. Since then, both the tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia have convicted people for genocidal rape.

"In Latin America, we were surprised to have 22 governments revise their legal framework," says Ms. Heyzer. "And for the first time the InterAmerican Bank loaned Latin American governments resources to

establish new police stations."

In some cases, the new laws may be just lip service, human rights advocates say. "Even if it's lip service, we will take the lips and service," Heyzer replies. "Once words are stated, the accountability can be set in place.

Words and policies are no guarantee that things will happen, but they can be used as tools for accountability."

In South Asia, women have not received even modest window-dressing changes in the law. "There are laws against murder and assault but within the Pakistan code there are a couple of laws that allow for violence against women," says Sheila Dauer, director of the Women's Human Rights Project at Amnesty International.

"If family of the victim wants to excuse the murderer, they have the choice to do that," she says, noting that this allows family members to carry out "honor killings" against women deemed to have brought disgrace on the family. Often the sole "disgrace" was the fact that they had been raped. "So the woman's murder is not treated like other murders. Women are not equal before the law," says Ms. Dauer.

Pakistan's new military ruler, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, pledged earlier this year to outlaw honor killings, but the law has not been changed, Dauer notes.

Activists gathered here insist that con-



SAKCHAI LALIT/AP

SAFER RIDE: A Thai official welcomes girls aboard a new women-only bus service in Bangkok.

not alive."

The Beijing conference produced a 12-point platform that included pushing for progress on poverty, war, health, education, political decisionmaking, and the treatment of girls. One of the aims of this week's conference is to set concrete targets and time limits for the Beijing agenda.

tinued public outcry against these crimes and international pressure can force Pakistan to keep its promises. But they concede that it does not work everywhere.

"Some governments are very affected because they need to be seen in the community of nations as a member in good standing [to get foreign aid], and Pakistan is one of them," says Dauer. "But other countries do not care, like Afghanistan [whose Taliban government is not recognized by the UN] and is trying to uphold its own brand of Islam."

Already ostracized, the Taliban has weathered international sanctions without budging. Afghan women still can be stoned to death for not following strict dress code or travel protocol.

"Women and girls don't have any freedoms," says Giti Shams, a young Afghan woman here. She says she was beaten for failing to have a male relative escort her. Afghan women, she says, "are alive but ...

topics, such as abortion, is difficult. Amnesty International says that six "conservative" delegations — the Vatican, Iran, Pakistan, Libya, Nicaragua, and Algeria — are trying to undercut the goals of Beijing.

"It is imperative that we respect each others' views, religious beliefs and value systems," responded Zobaida Jalal, Pakistan's minister of education in remarks to the UN General Assembly. "Misplaced notions of superiority of one value system over others ... defeat the very principle of freedom of choice and the spirit of cooperation and mutual respect."

To achieve progress, activists say, campaigns to change laws must work on several fronts. "The economic side of life is extremely important to get people out of a violent situation," says Heyzer. "It's in the [mix] of vulnerability and powerlessness and a strong patriarchal society that you find the kind of violence such as dowry death and honor killing."

Women join hands in efforts to eliminate war

By Minh T. Vo
Special to The Christian Science Monitor



SAMI SALLINEN/REUTERS

WOMEN AGAINST WAR: A soldier walks past Eritrean women in Asmara protesting the Ethiopian offensive inside Eritrea. Increasingly, women are uniting to end conflicts.

■ Some 10,000 women gathered at the UN last week to discuss advances and setbacks since Beijing.

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y. - In times of war, television cameras inevitably capture images of mothers crying over their losses. But if Mary Okumu has her way, pictures of women as peacebrokers will become just as common.

Undaunted by statistics on rape, violence, and inequality, she insists that women in Sudan can do what men have failed to do by bringing an end to a half-century of civil war. And Ms. Okumu is not alone. From Colombia to Russia, virtually every conflict zone has a growing movement of mothers fighting against war.

At a discussion on women's peace initiatives last week, people packed into seats and crammed onto the steps at the United Nations' auditorium. It was a welcomed respite during a week-long session where some 10,000 women gathered at the world body's headquarters and listened to grim statistics on the setbacks and modest advances since the ground-breaking conference in Beijing five years earlier.

"There's no mistaking that women approach conflicts differently," says Jane

Holl Lute, a retired Army officer who directs Role of American Military Power. "They are engaging in different dimensions and they are having an effect. When you have a bunch of mothers and children lying across a convoy route, the convoys stop."

"[Women] have a flexibility in peace-building because they are not part of the power equation that caused the conflict in

the first place," says Mark Malloch Brown, administrator of the United Nations Development Program.

In Sudan, Okumu gathers women from various religious and ethnic groups to try to bridge their differences. As the mothers and wives of combatants, they could become a convincing force for peace.

Okumu may find reasons for optimism in similar efforts around the world. During last year's Kosovo conflict, thousands of Serbian women pounded the streets, calling on their husbands and sons to desert the Army. Activists proudly point out that Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic gave up the fight days later.

In the Middle East, mothers played a key role in Israel's pull-out from Lebanon this month by lobbying parliamentarians behind the scene, says Simona Sharoni, a professor at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Wash. "Women initially mobilized because they had sons serving in Lebanon and took it upon themselves to go and meet with every parliament member in Israel," she says.

Women banding together to lobby for peace is not a new phenomenon. In the 1960s, for instance, Women Strike for Peace played a vocal role in bringing about the nuclear test-ban treaty.

These days, however, initiatives have taken on a global dimension. In their fight to stop war and violence, some women have armed themselves with computers and Internet connections. They use cyberspace not only to inform the public about their campaigns, but also to learn about other efforts around the world.

"Women are using the internet to connect to each other so there's more ability to have a global network rather than being so isolated," says Swanee Hunt, director of the Women Waging Peace Initiative at

Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

According to the UN, women and girls account for at least 60 percent of the world's 30 million refugees and internally displaced people. In the camps or at home, they increasingly become the targets of combatants in this age of civil and ethnic conflicts. Yet women rarely can be seen at the negotiating table, activists complain.

"If you are going to have a peace agenda and a shaping of that agenda, all perspectives need to be represented," says Noeleen Heyzer, the head of the UN Development Fund for Women.

The lack of women at high-level peace talks reflects the underrepresentation of women in government. According to UNIFEM, just 7 percent of the ministers in governments worldwide are female.

In recent years, women have wedged their way into the high-level talks. The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition won a seat at the peace talks in 1996 and has received much international praise for keeping the talks alive. And this year, former South African President Nelson Mandela invited UNIFEM to the peace negotiations on Burundi.

Ironically, women's marginalization on the political landscape may be their best asset in facilitating peace.

"There are only eight countries in the world where women's share of seats in parliament is more than 30 percent. In country after country, they are a clear minority in political power," says Mr. Malloch Brown. "In conflict situations, women's lack of status gives them a flexibility to move between sides."

Women bring a clear message to the peace talks and, since they are not viewed as power-hungry, they do not threaten men, says Mu Sochua, Minister for Women's and Veterans' Affairs in Cambodia. "With women, there's no hidden agenda. All that we want is peace for our family," she says. "With men, they believe that there is one [hidden agenda]."

The Patriot Ledger

FONDA'S FILM

Jane Fonda has finished a documentary she began after visiting Nigeria to see the challenges facing adolescent girls in Africa's most populous country.

"Realities of Girls' Lives: How We Can Act Now" was shown last night to more than 300 diplomats, women's activists and delegates to next week's follow-up to the 1995 women's **conference** in **Beijing**.

Fonda said U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan encouraged her three months ago "to get involved" with the conference. She said the International Women's Health Coalition suggested she make a film about women's advocacy programs in Nigeria.

The documentary, narrated by Fonda, describes the poverty that most girls in Nigeria live with, the double-standards they confront on sexual matters, the high teen pregnancy and abortion rates and abuse they face.

The Patriot Ledger

Reviving women's message of Beijing

A gaze around the world at the condition of women is not an uplifting exercise. In too many societies, repression of women--extending even to murder--is both legal and accepted as part of the local culture.

So what difference can thousands of people coming together to support a women's agenda make? Plenty, if you stop to hear some of the positive things that have happened since the landmark United Nations Women's **Conference in Beijing** five years ago.

Women returned from Beijing to their homelands to spread the word that women could no longer be treated as chattel, that they had equal rights with men and control over their bodies. The world didn't change in five years but in many countries new laws were written giving women those rights.

This week at U.N. headquarters in New York, thousands of delegates from 180 countries have assembled to plan a continuing agenda to transform the **Beijing platform** into reality.

Some astonishing change has occurred in the undeveloped world, where women's lives are the most wretched. Joana Foster of Zimbabwe, a leader of Women in Development and Law in Africa, is a voice of optimism about what Beijing wrought. "Beijing was a catalyst for a whole lot of things," she explains. "People are getting into Parliament. Look at somewhere like Namibia, which now has 44 percent women in the local government system."

The world needs many Joana Fosters, to counter the attitudes of men in tradition-bound societies who desperately do not want change in a system which gives them all the power. And to challenge the attitudes of religious leaders who are opposed to population control measures which are central to changing women's lives.

United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan cited the growing disparity in economic opportunity between men and women as a key barrier to improving women's lives. Of 110 million children worldwide who are not schooled, two-thirds are girls, a condition which, if continued, chains women to a life of poverty and dependence. Education and economics are inextricably linked; until girls are in classrooms, they cannot gain more earning power.

There is a lot of discussion in New York about how the economic gap between industrialized countries and developing nations hinders progress for women. That's something the world's rich countries must work on. But women--and men--in developing nations are responsible for redirecting their countries' energies away from ethnic hatred and war to allow economic progress to begin.

The Baltimore Sun

Women's status still a work in progress; **Beijing+5**: Five years later, much remains to be done to bring equality to the cultures of the world.

GIRL POWER? Not exactly.

The **Beijing+5** summit on women last week found, not surprisingly, that the world has fallen short of goals outlined in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women. Addressing controversial topics from reproductive rights to political representation on a global scale often magnifies differences rather than sameness: Ideologies clash; hidden agendas are perceived.

Meanwhile, "the initial enthusiasm of Beijing has given way to disillusion," as one German delegate put it. How can it not when female infanticide and "honor killings" of women (usually seeking freedom from abusive spouses) are accepted practices? When AIDS is sweeping through the female population in Africa, and millions of African women are still subjected to the "tradition" of genital mutilation? When rape is a tool of war?

Next to those, political and earning power seem like niceties.

Still, the quest for social justice for women must not be derailed.

The single best thing every country can do to help women is educate them. Two-thirds of the 130 million children in the world not enrolled in school are girls. Ignorance breeds acceptance of the unacceptable, and it must be countered at every level.

Women in the United States are hardly immune from many of these problems. Yet delegates from other nations correctly noted that voices from our country have gone sadly quiet in recent years.

The lack of coverage of the summit in the U.S. press would seem to back their criticism. Yet American women have an opportunity, and obligation, to step up to the challenges of **Beijing+5** -- before the Fifth World Conference on Women rolls around.

The Baltimore Sun

Taliban's yoke crushes women

Under Islamic extremists controlling Afghanistan, women are denied even the most basic of human rights.

BYLINE: Lauren Goodsmith

IMAGINE A PLACE where women are forbidden to work, and where many who were once doctors and lawyers now beg in order to support their children. A place where girls are no longer allowed to attend school, and female teachers furtively hold classes for them in private homes. In this place, the windows of houses where women live are painted over, and women must wear shoes that make no sound.

It sounds like the stuff of science fiction, horrific and absurd. But such is life for the women and girls of Afghanistan under extreme Islamic fundamentalist rule. Over the past 20 years, this mountainous country has undergone one ordeal after another: a 1979 Soviet invasion, a devastating civil war that claimed millions of lives and sent masses fleeing across the border to Pakistan, and ongoing fighting between rival factions. For the women of Afghanistan, the nightmare intensified when the militia group known as the Taliban seized control in 1996. The Taliban - whose name means "students of religion" in Arabic - quickly imposed their brand of stark fundamentalism, including a series of severe restrictions on women's activities.

In the 90 percent of the country now under Taliban hold, girls are not permitted to attend schools or universities. Women are nearly universally barred from employment, and are not allowed to venture out publicly unless accompanied by a close male relative, or mahram. They must cover themselves in the enshrouding burqa, a bulky robe with a face-covering hood, or risk the ire of the special police force known as the Department for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice. These "officers" roam the streets, searching out and swiftly punishing infractions. The penalty for "immodest dress" is usually a public lashing.

Under contorted Taliban codes, a woman who has been raped may be publicly punished for adultery. Women suspected of "illicit" - pre- or extra-marital - relations can be stoned to death. At the same time, the Taliban and other militia groups have used forced marriages, abduction and sexual assault as tools of intimidation and domination.

The health status of Afghan women has plummeted. Taliban rules on separation of the sexes dictate that a woman must be treated by a female doctor in a sex-segregated medical facility. However, only a handful of women have been given special dispensation to practice medicine, usually under dismal conditions. (This in a country where formerly 40 percent of all doctors were women.) Further, if the woman seeking care is not accompanied by a male guardian or is deemed to be improperly dressed,

she will be turned away. Human Rights Watch reports that women have been denied health services even in emergency situations, dying afterwards from obstetric complications and other causes.

In addition to being victimized by gender-specific persecution, the women of Afghanistan are contending with the general legacies of war. Millions of unexploded land mines dot the country, killing an estimated 10 to 12 people each day. Many Afghan households are headed by women who lost husbands, brothers and sons to the years of conflict - Kabul alone is home to an estimated 50,000 widows. The fact that women are the chief caretakers for countless families has done nothing to shake Taliban strictures against women's employment.

As a result, the number of female beggars has grown rapidly. Many of them are former teachers and government employees, dismissed by the regime. Other women try to eke out a living for their families by washing clothes, taking up artisanal work or weaving. Some resort to prostitution.

It is little wonder that Afghanistan's women are experiencing mass trauma. In a 1998 study, the Boston-based organization Physicians for Human Rights found that 97 percent of Afghan women surveyed suffer from major depression, 42 percent show the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, and nearly a quarter often consider committing suicide.

The Taliban's extremism has been criticized by many Muslim leaders and nations as a distortion rather than a legitimate interpretation of Islam. And although the United Nations Human Rights Commission and numerous governments, as well as the U.S. State Department, have officially condemned the regime's abuses, the Taliban remain impervious.

On an overcast day in April, two silent, shrouded figures stood in the public park before the White House. Clad in blue burqas, their faces invisible through thick meshed cloth, they held a banner studded with images of ravaged Afghanistan. The occasion was a rally on the anniversary of the day in 1992 on which fundamentalist forces - the pre-Taliban Jihadis - first took control of Kabul.

The event featured two representatives of the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan, or RAWA. Founded in 1977, RAWA is a pro-democracy, anti-fundamentalist group that has since its inception promoted women's rights and participation in civic and political life. (The RAWA spokeswomen are quick to emphasize that in Pushtu, the term "revolutionary" does not carry the same connotations of armed opposition or communist ideology as in English.) Now operating from a base in Pakistan, RAWA supports schools and services for Afghan refugees, of whom there are an estimated 2.6 million. In Afghanistan itself, RAWA runs clandestine home-based classes in defiance of the Taliban's stricture against girls' education, supports mobile health teams serving women and children in remote areas, and organizes income-generating activities for thousands of house-bound women.

On this first visit to the United States, the RAWA representatives hope to spread awareness of what is being done to women in their country and generate support for their group's activities. Both use aliases to protect their identities-an understandable precaution, as RAWA members regularly receive threats and the organization's founder was assassinated at the age of 30. They do not hesitate, however, to speak out boldly.

At the Washington rally, the spokeswomen offered a timely reminder that the U.S. provided financial and military support for the anti-Soviet fighters, known as mujahedeen, from among whom the Taliban emerged. They read a series of specific requests to the U.S. government. Chief among them is that the U.S. refuse to recognize the Taliban under any condition- including possible cooperation

regarding Osama bin Ladin, the anti-U.S. terrorist suspect purportedly based in Afghanistan.

The RAWA representatives also stress that U.S. economic sanctions against the Taliban are counterproductive, harming average citizens and effectively strengthening the opposing fundamentalist faction. Instead, they urge the United States to sanction the countries that recognize the regime and support it with arms and money: Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and the United Arab Emirates.

In addition to supportive statements from Sen. Harry Reid, a Nevada Democrat, and Rep. Carolyn B. Maloney, a Democrat from New York, the rally featured strong words from Eleanor Smeal, president of the Feminist Majority Foundation.

Condemning the Taliban "reign of terror," Smeal emphasized U.S. responsibility for the group's rise to power. "We have an obligation," says Smeal, "to the young women whose lives have been ruined."

Her organization is working to fulfill this obligation in several ways: facilitating the entry of Afghan refugees to the U.S., coordinating a letter-writing campaign, funding scholarships that enable refugee women to attend college, and lobbying for a bipartisan legislative act condemning the Taliban regime. But this is not enough, Smeal insists; the issue must become a higher priority both in the U.S. and among world leaders. She points to peacekeeping actions in Kosovo and East Timor, where smaller populations were concerned; because those being victimized in Afghanistan are women, Smeal contends, "we can't get it high enough on the agenda."

To remedy this, the RAWA representatives are participating in the United Nations special session known as "**Women 2000**," a follow-up event to the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women. They are also working with Rep. Lynn Woolsey, a California Democrat, to circulate a letter in the House of Representatives advocating more direct U.S. measures in support of Afghan pro-democracy efforts. "They the Taliban don't have anything but money and weapons," says RAWA spokeswoman Sajeda Hayat. "They don't have the support of the people." After gathering House signatures, the letter will be sent to President Clinton and Secretary of State Madeline Albright.

Women in Afghanistan, says Hayat, "have lost everything in their lives: husbands, sons, fathers, jobs. They live in constant fear ... They don't even know what will happen tomorrow." As they prepare for a June 14th congressional briefing and tour the United States giving talks and interviews, the RAWA representatives hope their visit will prompt not merely sympathetic words but practical action on behalf of Afghan women, held hostage in their own homes, in their own land.

Lauren Goodsmith is a Baltimore-based health communication consul tant and trainer working chiefly in North and West Africa.

Press Herald

VIEWPOINTS

Sexism comes into our homes via many TV shows and videos;
Only alert parents can counteract Disney and other male-oriented shows.

Conversations are happening all over the world that directly affect the lives of young girls.

I read the report that came out of the **Beijing Plus Five** Conference held at the United Nations. The United States joined 189 other nations as they adopted the strongest and most comprehensive statement on women's rights ever agreed upon by the world's governments.

One women's rights issue stood out for me -- the right for women to have the media portray us in a balanced and non-stereotypical manner. It was right there alongside poverty, health care and education. Even though most people around the globe do not have the luxury of owning a television set, it was an issue that had to be addressed.

I WANTED it addressed. What has been its impact on myself and on my 8-year-old daughter?

As a child growing up, I loved watching Saturday morning children's shows. It was a wonderful way to spend a morning. I'd be in baggy pajamas and have messed-up hair. My siblings would be stretched out beside me. I watched these shows because they were funny. I knew nothing about sexism or gender roles. I did not care if they presented females as weak or dependent on men. They were just pure entertainment.

When my daughter was born, we made a decision to limit the amount of television she watched. Sesame Street was safe and harmless to females, we thought. Wasn't Big Bird gender-less? As she grew older, our parental influence lost ground to that of friends and classmates. She would come home with information and request to watch certain programs. Before we realized it, she had graduated to Disney.

She saw Sleeping Beauty, where a woman sought protection from a handsome prince named Charming, and he came to her rescue and saved the day. What message did that leave with my daughter? What do young boys internalize about this?

Then there was Cinderella, who would do just about anything, including cleaning up after others, to be able to go to the ball to meet the prince who was looking for a wife. Thank goodness, her shoe size was perfect.

This is subtle sexism. It seeps into the lives and minds of young girls and boys. It is that unwanted and

unwelcome guest that enters through the television screen. It stays after you turn the television off.

We also looked in on Ariel, the Little Mermaid, who was brave, feisty and in charge of her life and definitely showing more courage than those females who waited for a prince to come and rescue them.

And yet, Ariel did have to give up her voice to have a man.

Commercial breaks feed the stereotyped image of females. My daughter was introduced to Barbie, that middle-class, white, American female icon who wore skintight clothing that accentuated her perky breasts and hourglass waist held up by slender legs that curved down to her impossibly petite feet.

These images are pervasive and they tell me that television is not an innocuous medium.

There were numerous story lines where little sisters would tag along with big, brave brothers because they did not have minds of their own, as well as countless stories about girls who found their significance only by being with boys who were doing something important like saving the world. How about the female super-heroine, BatGirl, who would get in trouble and then be rescued by the male super-hero, Batman? And who could forget Smurfette, who showed that all one needed to be was cuddly and cute to live happily ever after?

It was all so obvious to me, but had my daughter escaped these messages or had they seeped into her consciousness?

I ASKED her to describe what she saw about girls on television. She said: "How come boys have more money than girls?"

"How come girls wear makeup?"

"How come girls cry more than boys?"

"How come girls fall down a lot?"

"What is a tom-boy?"

Clearly, she had noticed certain things about boys and girls. Yet, there was hope in the answers to the next question I asked. "If you were in charge of the television shows, what would you have girls doing?" She proclaimed: "Girls would be in charge."

"There would be a female president on television."

"Girls would be running faster than boys."

"People would not make fun of girls crying."

"Girls would not have to wear makeup."

"Men and women would be pregnant."

I smiled, knowing that the unwanted guest called sexism had decided to leave for a while. It was not welcomed in my home.

FOUNDED BY JOSEPH PULITZER, DECEMBER 12, 1878

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

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WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The longest march — still

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON was welcomed like a dear old friend when she spoke to a United Nations meeting evaluating worldwide progress on the rights of women since the Beijing conference five years ago. "We are committed to making this journey together," she told a cheering crowd in New York.

Mrs. Clinton's personal dedication is certainly not in doubt. But just how committed is the United States toward achieving the goal of women's equality — at home and abroad? That question assumes a special urgency as the Vatican and a number of Islamic countries are banding together to oppose some of the goals set forth in Beijing.

President Bill Clinton, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and the two leading presidential contenders should let their voices be heard as well since women's equality should not be a partisan issue. The United States can make its moral support of women's emancipation meaningful in several ways. It can direct foreign aid to international programs that lift women up. Programs that seek to guarantee women's equal access to education, economic opportunity, family planning and political rights have a salutary effect on society as a whole. When women fare better, their children — male and female — fare better as well.

Women still have a very long way to go

but there has been steady progress. The U.N. conferences, Vienna in 1993, Cairo in 1994 and Beijing in 1995, were instrumental in defining a global vision of women's rights as human rights. In the process, they shattered the dismissive stereotype that equality is an issue only for well-educated, Western women.

As the agenda developed by thousands of women in Beijing clearly shows, equality for women cuts across geopolitical, educational and class boundaries. One of the top priorities is education, specifically closing the gender gap in primary and secondary education by 2005 and dramatically reducing female illiteracy. Beijing also called on governments to stop violence against women, ranging from female infanticide to dowry murders and honor killings.

Of course, the most controversial element has been the demand to respect women's reproductive rights. That issue has been unfairly reduced to abortion — even though it includes what should be non-controversial calls for prenatal care, access to strictly voluntary family planning programs, a minimum age of consent and of marriage.

The Chinese have a saying: "Women hold up half the sky." A reaffirmation of the Beijing agenda will ensure that women get the help they deserve to do their part well.

Fonda does film on problems facing girls

Jane Fonda has finished a documentary she began after visiting Nigeria to see the challenges facing



Jane Fonda
women's activists and delegates to next week's follow-up meeting to the 1995 women's conference in Beijing.

Fonda said U.N. Secretary-General **Kofi Annan** encouraged her three months ago "to get involved" with the upcoming conference. She said the International Women's Health Coalition suggested she make a film about grassroots women's advocacy programs in Nigeria.

ing adolescent girls in Africa's most populous country.

"Realities of Girls' Lives: How We Can Act Now" was shown Tuesday night at the United Nations to more than 300 diplomats,

The documentary, narrated by Fonda, describes the poverty that most girls in Nigeria live with, the double-standards they confront on sexual matters, the high teen pregnancy and abortion rates and abuse they face.

"I work with adolescent girls in the U.S. state of Georgia and while their circumstances may be different, the problems that diminish girls there are also problems for girls everywhere in the world," Fonda said.

The grassroots groups, Fonda said afterwards, have been asked by the Nigerian government to develop a sex education curriculum for schools.

The Beijing platform set a goal of achieving equality between women and men. It spelled out many objectives, including ensuring women's right to decide sexual and reproductive health matters.

"At its heart, the Beijing platform is about human rights, alleviation of poverty, and better lives for all the peoples of the world," Annan told the crowd.

Women demand progress in equality

From Wire Reports

United Nations -- From all corners of the globe, high-ranking ministers and ordinary women joined the U.N. secretary-general and Hillary Rodham Clinton on Monday to demand that equality of the sexes become a reality at the start of the 21st century.

Speaker after speaker declared that the achievements since the 1995 **Beijing conference** of 180 nations are far outweighed by the remaining inequalities and persistent discrimination against women. "Much remains to be done," said Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

"We come here because for all of the progress we can point to our work is far from done," echoed Clinton, now a candidate for the U.S. Senate from New York.

U.N.: *Gender equality still a dream*

Women from around the globe joined U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton to demand that equality of the sexes become a reality in the 21st century. Nearly 180 nations met at a special General Assembly session to review progress. Speaker after speaker declared that the achievements since the 1995 Beijing conference are far outweighed by the remaining inequalities and persistent discrimination against women. "Much remains to be done," Annan said.

StarTribune Editorial

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Beijing + 5

Some progress for women, more needed

Five years ago, representatives from 180 countries gathered in Beijing to hash out a platform for improving the lives of women. Nations signing the resulting document agreed to do away with laws that discriminate against women. Last week, thousands met at the United Nations to assess the results of that historic 1995 session.

Progress was made: Three times as many girls are in school now around the world; the number of women politicians and managers has grown, and 16 African nations have passed laws banning genital cutting of girls.

Delegates smartly defeated attempts to reverse some gains outlined in the Beijing agreement. They preserved the goal that says women should make choices about their own sexuality — despite formidable challenges from social and religious conservatives. In some nations, that basic freedom would allow a woman to choose her spouse or sexual partner, practice birth control or prosecute a rapist.

Participants took wise stands in favor of punishing domestic violence and against trafficking of females, lured across borders by the sex trade or into work that is akin to slavery. And they demanded more HIV/AIDS education, a life and death issue for growing numbers of women, especially in Africa.

For several reasons — including trafficking — HIV/AIDS is infecting women and girls in some developing nations at rates three times higher than men. In the hardest-hit southern African cities, 40 percent of pregnant women are HIV-positive, 10 percent of

the children have lost their mothers to AIDS. Those governments must educate women and protect their sexual rights for their own survival.

Progress reported at the U.N. conference is commendable, but too many governments and cultures still lag behind. A baby girl born in many corners of the world still has significantly fewer options. In Nepal, her brother can inherit property but she cannot. In northern Nigeria, she can be kept home from school to make a space for her brother — or any boy, for that matter. In Brazil, a judge may give her rapist the option of marrying her to avoid prosecution. In some nations, based on a male relative's judgment, she can be legally killed for "shaming" her family.

Even here in the United States, we still battle the huge problem of violence against women and the fact that women earn about 75 cents to every dollar made by a man. That stubborn attachment to chauvinism inhibits progress and robs the world of vast reserves of human potential.

The Beijing agreement and its New York confirmation identify critical areas such as improving women's access to education, jobs, health care and economic services. The agreements also recognize the importance of curbing violence against women and helping them escape poverty. Though the documents carry no force of law, they can be used as statements of international standards when women challenge unfair laws and customs. Now the challenge is to turn the pact's principles into practice.

NEWS-RECORD

Editorial

FEMINISTS FORCED EXTREMIST AGENDA AT U.N. CONFERENCE

After reading the Associated Press' account of the women's conference just completed at the United Nations ("180 nations solidify women's rights goals," News & Record, June 11), you'd think it was about ending discrimination against women.

While that's a very laudable goal, it wasn't all that went on.

By every means possible, Western nations, including the United States, attempted to force their extreme view of women's rights on all. These efforts were aimed at diminishing family/parental control and morality in favor of a government-knows-best policy.

Although such diseases as HIV/AIDS and malaria are rampant in underdeveloped countries, most attention was given to women's sexual and reproductive health. If these terms meant improving prenatal care, reducing infant mortality or pregnancy/childbirth complications, they should be applauded.

However, in the newspeak of militant feminists, they mean abortion on demand and emergency contraception as "human rights," which they wish to give to all females, regardless of age.

In addition, if the extremists had their way, only forced prostitution would be considered abusive. They preferred focusing on "stereotypical roles" that hinder female children. Upon questioning, they said this referred to motherhood and marriage.

Countries supporting families and the traditional values of their cultures couldn't reverse the extremism voted in at the original **Beijing conference** in 1995.

Thankfully, this time their convictions did prevent more anti-family, anti-life and truly anti-woman agendas from being forced upon unwilling nations and unsuspecting citizens. Flora M. Smith Sophia

At a glance

Highlights of the final document approved at a special session of the U.N. General Assembly to review progress on women's issues since the landmark 1995 U.N. women's conference in Beijing.

- Reaffirms governments' commitments to the goals and objectives in the Beijing platform.

- Calls for legislation and swift justice to combat all forms of domestic violence including marital rape and sexual abuse.

- Calls for laws to eradicate harmful traditional practices including so-called honor killings, forced marriage and female circumcision which violate women's human rights.

- Calls for national laws and reforms to ensure that women have equal access and control over land, property rights, and the right to inheritance.

- Calls for government priority to be given to tackling diseases that have a disproportionate impact on women's health, including maternal mortality.

- Calls for accelerated action to close the gender gap in primary and secondary education by 2005; to ensure free, compulsory and universal education by 2015; to strengthen adult literacy programs.

- Encourages use of quotas or measurable goals to increase women's participation in politics.

- Calls for removing discriminatory provisions in legislation by 2005.

- Calls for increased cooperation and effective implementation of laws aimed at eliminating all forms of commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking in women and children, female infanticide, crimes of passion and racially motivated crimes.

- Calls for education programs to enable men to practice safe sex.

- Calls for access to affordable treatment and care, especially for women and girls infected by HIV/AIDS, assistance for AIDS orphans and support for women and other family members caring for AIDS victims.

The Record

REPORT SAYS WOMEN SUFFER AN 'EPIDEMIC OF VIOLENCE

FROM NEWS SERVICE REPORTS

In an assessment of women's progress toward equality, the United Nations reported Wednesday that more girls are attending school, but that all females still confront "a global epidemic" of violence.

The mixed snapshot for women five years after a major international women's **conference in Beijing** shows they comprise an increasing share of the world's labor force but are making no headway in cracking the top echelons of business and government.

The U.N. reports show women generally marrying later, having fewer children, and living longer, but still making up two-thirds of the world's illiterates and almost half the victims of HIV and AIDS.

A 180-page report on "The World's **Women 2000**" produced by the U.N. Statistics Division and a 21-page report by the U.N. Children's Fund on "Domestic Violence Against Women and Girls" were released separately Wednesday, five days before the start of a major U.N. women's conference.

Ministers from 188 nations will meet for five days starting Monday, shadowed by thousands of women from grass-roots organizations, to review progress toward implementing the wide-ranging platform of action adopted at the 1995 U.N. women's **conference in Beijing**.

With the goal of achieving full gender equality, the platform called on governments to revise laws to ensure women's equal rights, to provide equal education for girls, and to ensure the right of women to decide

matters of sexual and reproductive health. It also urged governments and businesses to put women in top decision-making positions and called for the elimination of violence against women.

The UNICEF report said most data on violence against women are believed to be "not only conservative, but unreliable."

Nonetheless, it concluded that physical violence against women is prevalent and that 20 percent to 50 percent of women have experienced domestic violence.

UNICEF said too few nations have moved to stop violence against women, ranging from infanticide to spousal abuse to honor-killings.

The U.N. Statistics Division report also concluded that physical and sexual abuse affects millions of girls and women worldwide, and remains underreported.

Presenting the report at a news conference, Nitin Desai, U.N. undersecretary general for economic and social affairs, said that "available data show that women are making gains, but persistent disparities exist between women and men."

The gender gap in schooling for youngsters is closing, Desai said, but will not be closed by the target date of 2005 which was set in 1995.

The report found that at least one-third of women are part of the work force in all regions except northern Africa and western Asia.

U.N. women's conference

A matter of important national self-interest

THOUSANDS OF WOMEN from all over the world are gathered this week at United Nations headquarters to assess their progress in the global struggle for equality and to move further ahead. The gathering at the world forum is important because evidence is increasing that women are key to economic growth in poor countries.

The U.N. conference is being held five years after a landmark gathering in Beijing that drew delegates from 189 nations and produced agreement on women's rights to education, health care, economic and legal equality, and reproductive freedom. U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said this week that some progress has been made since the Beijing conference, but that much remains to be done to convince poor countries that "women's equality is a prerequisite for development."

Mr. Annan noted that the number of girls enrolled in primary school in the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, and South Asia has doubled since 1995, and in most countries, violence against women has been declared illegal.

But many primitive and deadly conditions still exist. In South Asia and China, girls are aborted, killed after birth, or denied food and medicine because they are considered inferior to boys. In some parts of Southern Africa, 40 percent of pregnant women are HIV-positive. Sexual trafficking — the kidnapping and selling of girls and women into prostitution — is on the rise. Women constitute 70 percent of the world's poor and illiterate. And of the 110 million children around the world who are not in school, two-thirds are girls.

Perhaps the quickest way to change some of these appalling conditions is to convince leaders in developing countries that improving the lot of women will improve economic conditions overall. James Wolfensohn, president of the World Bank, said recently: "Everywhere I have been, it is so clear that if you do not deal with the question of women's education, women's opportunity, and women's rights, you simply cannot have effective development."

A new World Bank study of more than 100 countries finds that nations trying to escape poverty succeed most often where women have adequate education, legal rights, and the ability to earn and spend.

Increasing the education of girls is crucial. Girls in developing countries who stay in school longer are generally healthier. They postpone pregnancy and have fewer children, and their children tend to be more educated, better fed, and healthier. They are better able to stand up for their rights and to demand better jobs and working conditions. And women invest the money they earn in their families and communities.

Here's one of the problems, according to the World Bank study: If young women in some countries earn very little or become the property of their in-laws when they marry, why should their families invest in their education?

The goal of many U.N. programs, such as Unicef, the World Health Organization, and the World Bank, is to persuade struggling nations that it is in their own economic interests to promote the interests of girls and women. The participants in this week's conference are continuing that important effort.

The Record

BEYOND A GIRL'S DREAMS ; UNITED NATIONS FOCUSES ON WOMEN

BYLINE: ANGELA E.V. KING

AS A GIRL GROWING UP in colonial Jamaica, my dreams did not include a career in international relations in my country, let alone at the United Nations in New York. Those kinds of jobs were reserved for men.

In those days, a woman had a place and her role in life was decided by men, either a father or a husband. This was true whether you were growing up on a small Caribbean island or in Newark or in Johannesburg.

Fortunately times have changed and the way women see themselves and their roles is changing dramatically. Today, I am here in New York, working for the United Nations with some of the most committed and articulate women from every corner of the globe. Recently thousands of equally committed and articulate women came to New York for the United Nations General Assembly special session on women to send a clear message that, for women, the process of change is irrevocable.

The agenda for women in the 21st century, based on the 12 areas of concern identified in the **Beijing Platform** for Action, was discussed and agreed to at the special session. The final document, negotiated by the representatives of 188 member states, updated the platform, and they both provide clear guidelines for action on the priority issues to improve women's lives.

These issues range from the problems facing women in the industrialized countries of the North, still fighting for equal pay for equal work and being liberated from stereotypical roles, to the eradication of extreme poverty that energizes and galvanizes women in developing countries.

The gathering of women in New York proved the point that women

understand that the issues that concern them are human rights issues and that they must be tackled in a broader context.

Women's issues are not new to the international agenda. Fifty years ago the United Nations established the Commission on the Status of Women to monitor how women were treated. After four world conferences on women, and buttressed by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and its recently launched Optional Protocol, the legal framework supporting women's rights is now in place.

In fact, the optional protocol brings CEDAW in line with other human rights instruments and gives women the right to appeal to international bodies once all legal avenues in their own countries have been exhausted.

With the legal framework in place, women are now concentrating on some of the other key issues identified at Beijing and the recent special session. They don't want to continue to be the poorest of the poor even though they work hard wherever they are and whatever they do.

The burden of caring for children and the old always rests on them.

Women want action to provide education for them and their children: they don't want to continue to be denied education. And they certainly don't want their daughters, growing up in this scientific and technological millennium, to be denied the opportunities that globalization will certainly bring to even the most remote men.

We hear that female primates have two goals, they want control over their reproduction and access to resources. This resonates with today's women. Unfortunately, male primates have the same two goals and they also want control over female reproduction.

That is why access to reproductive health care was such a defining issue in the negotiations. Women from every corner of the globe, representing every culture and religion, had a strong message: We don't want our reproductive lives controlled by men, and we don't want to be told when and how many children we should have. We want an end to the horrific maternal mortality rates that occur when women are denied access to safe reproductive health care.

Action to deal with HIV/AIDS and its effects on women, particularly those in Africa, living where unsafe sex has spread the virus to pandemic proportions, received full support. For the first time there was a call for men to take responsibility for their sexual behavior and for governments to promote effective use by men of methods to prevent unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections.

Violence against women is still a major concern. Women realize that they have to change the way men view the world, so that they do not

revert to violence to settle disputes, domestic, national or otherwise.

Such formerly delicate issues as honor killings, forced marriage, marital rape, and female genital mutilation, were confronted and states have committed themselves to take comprehensive measures to end these practices.

Trafficking in women has increased greatly in recent years; there is now a determination to criminalize these activities.

The commitments made earlier this month will ensure that women will now be active participants in peacekeeping and peacemaking. Women and children have always suffered greatly from the effects of war and have suffered in silence. Now their voices calling for a peaceful world will be greatly strengthened by the commitments made by governments last week.

I am happy to let the world know that the campaign for gender equality is far from over. Activists on women's issues are more sophisticated now and understand the need to include men in this struggle for human rights and the techniques for lobbying to achieve their goals.

Despite all the obstacles, the majority of women who came to New York returned home confident that the tide is with them. They now belong to a global network. This is progress on an unimaginable scale.

And those little girls in Newark and Johannesburg? Today, they are probably planning to become president of their countries. And you know what, someday soon, they will.

Angela E. V. King is special adviser on gender issues and advancement of women to the United Nations Secretary-General.

In power shift, private sector now affects women most

By PAT SWIFT

Women aiming for gender equity are discovering that the target is shifting.

For two decades, international meetings of governments and non-governmental organizations have focused on public policy as the instrument for change in the status of women around the world. Now, the global economy is shifting some of that attention to the private sector.

An economic report issued this week by the United Nations Development Fund for Women points out that in an era of shrinking government budgets, corporations are having a greater impact on the lives of women.

Globalization "intensifies some of the existing inequalities and insecurities for poor women" at the same time that it opens new opportunities for educated and professional women, the report states. While there are more women in the paid workforce everywhere in the world, most women are in marginal, low-paying jobs that "enjoy less social protection and employment rights than men's jobs."

The accelerated development of the global economy, accompanied by the removal of any state controls on commerce, leaves women particularly vulnerable, the report adds. In times of financial crises, "women are called upon to act as the heroes of everyday life, providing the ultimate social safety net for their families."

The UN agency says women have been in the forefront of campaigns for greater corporate responsibility and the establishment of corporate codes of conduct that include recognition of workers' rights. The agency predicts women will reshape globalization through investments in "ethical equities funds" and by organizing to "challenge and change the operation of financial markets" and promote policies to ensure that the global economy meets human needs.

The agency's report is part of Women 2000, a five-year review of the Fourth World Conference on Women, which will take place at the United Nations next week. The weeklong session will examine how well nations have implemented the Platform for Action adopted at the 1995 conference in Beijing.

Very few countries have lived up to their promises, according to the report, which examines progress in educating girls, moving women into government and getting more women into paid jobs, goals set in Beijing and at previous UN women's conferences.

Among developed countries, the United States ranks highest in education and among the lowest in welcoming women into government. Of 24 Western Europe and other developed countries, the United States placed 19th in the number of seats held by women in parliamentary bodies.

The United States does have the highest share of women in private-sector administrative and managerial positions. From the mid 1980s to the late 1990s, the proportion of women in those jobs increased from 38 percent to 47 percent. In Britain, women hold 33 percent of these jobs and in Canada, 40 percent.

The UN agency proposes setting a goal to increase women's global share of management jobs to 30 percent by 2005 and 50 percent by 2015.

Despite advances for managerial women, another report generated by next week's UN session gave the U.S. a C-minus for its efforts to advance women's economic status.

US Women Connect, a network of national and grassroots women's and girls' organizations, based its grade on the country's failure to promote "fair world trade policies," the lingering gender gap in pay and proposed Social Security reforms that threaten to increase the number of elderly women living in poverty.

There are no A's on the US Women Connect's report card that looks at the 12 critical areas of concern in the action platform adopted in Beijing.

The U.S. got B's for combating violence against women, putting women into positions of power in government and encouraging government agencies to address women's issues. It rated C's for promoting equity in education, advancing health and reproductive choice, lack of leadership in dealing with violence against women and promoting human rights of women overseas and increasing women's participation in the media.

D's were given for the country's environmental policies, or lack thereof, and its failure to meet the reproductive health needs of girls.

An F was reserved for the country's treatment of the poor. The national poverty rate has decreased, the report says, but the rate of women in poverty has increased.

UN WELCOMES WORLD'S WOMEN TO...

BEIJING ♀ 5

But Caribbean Women still have a long way to go...

Notables including United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, members of the U.S. Congress and other celebrities yesterday welcomed thousands of non-governmental organization (NGO) representatives to the Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace conference at its New York headquarters.

The U.S. Host Committee Opening Ceremony outdoors at Dag Hammarskjold Plaza featured Annan, his Deputy Secretary General Louise Frechette and the heads of six UN agencies as speakers, along with Queen Noor of Jordan, U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Claudia Kennedy and Donna Shalala, secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. event included music and star performances to open five days of deliberations by a U.N. General Assembly Special Session on a report from Annan assessing the status of the

world's women.

The report outlines global progress on implementing the U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women that was held in Beijing China, in 1995. Official delegates and NGO participants in Women 2000, also called Beijing Plus Five, discussed an "Outcomes" document and recommend mid-course corrections to guide future action worldwide.

Also featured were performances, music and appearances by celebrities including singer and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador Judy Collins, actor Olympia Dukakis, Indian film director Mira Nair; Lifetime Television President Carole Black; and model, and UNFPA Goodwill Ambassador Waris Dirie, among others. The Young People's Choir of New York's Center School provided a special local welcome, while three young women from various regions of the world emphasized that the future is

Continued from cover

now for the world's young people.

Ellen Chesler, co-chair of the U.S. Host Committee presiding at the event. Other speakers in order of scheduled appearance were Linda Tarr-Whelan, U.S. ambassador to the UN Commission on the Status of Women (introducing Kofi Annan), Angela King, special advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, UN Division on Advancement of Women; Noeleen Heyzer, director UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM); Nafis Sadik, executive director, UN Population Fund (UNFPA); Carol Bellamy, executive director, UN Population Fund (UNFPA); Mark Malloch-Brown, administrator, UN Development Program (UNDP); Catherine Bertini, executive director, UN World Food Program (UNWFP); Mary Robinson, commissioner, UN Commission for Human Rights (UNCHR).

Plight of Caribbean Women

BRIDGETOWN, May 31 (IPS) — Most of the region's people are quick to acknowledge that women have made progress in the last five years, but admit that there is still a long way to go when it comes to gender equality.

"We are encouraged by the fact that with each succeeding generation we see greater level of self-confidence among women because some of the infrastructural arrangements have changed and enabled them to take advantage of what is being provided. Also there is increased access to education," says Dr. Joycelin Massiah, regional program director of the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

Massiah, however, cautions that if real change in the situation of the region's women is to be sustained then it is important that men and women be united in their efforts.

"If we are to go forward together — men and women — in a society in which we talk about justice and fair play and equity, we will have to understand each other and not try to obstruct each other," she says.

In the Dominican Republic women now make up 33 percent of the Supreme Court, a situation which many are describing as huge progress.

But although employment rates for women have been generally rising, and in at least four countries — The Bahamas, Barbados, Jamaica and St. Lucia — are approaching the rates for men, in general, female labor force participation rates across the region continue to be lower than those for men.

"They also tend to be restricted to certain occupations and to be paid less even when they have the same qualification and length of service," says one observer.

And in Trinidad and Tobago while, according to Gender Affairs Minister, Daphne Phillips gains have been made for women in the public service and in politics, there is still a significant lack of representation in financial and commercial enterprises.

Also, some still argue that women's contributions to the economy, sizable as they often are, still go underreported, unaccounted and ultimately unrecognized.

UNIFEM too has recognized the peculiarity of the regional situation and therefore plans to change its approach in dealing with gender issues.

"This means we are trying to develop more holistic programs than individual projects," says Massiah.

This holistic approach involves what is being dubbed by the United Nations organization the "ABC strategy."

"The 'A' is for advocacy, because within our programs and as an agency, we need to be out there advocating on behalf of women and women's issues," says Massiah.

"The 'B' is for brokering. We have an advantage in UNIFEM in that we have grown out of the international women's movement so we have strong links with NGOs (non-governmental organizations), as well as with governments, so our ability to bring those two groups together allows us to tap into other groups and therefore find a way of getting everyone to work together on the same issues," she adds.

Massiah notes that the "C" is for capacity building since UNIFEM must offer technical assistance and provide necessary resources, for projects which are aimed at the development of women in the region.

The idea, says Massiah, is to bring together as many countries as possible in the region to work together rather than individual countries proceeding with their own plans and programs.

She notes for example that UNIFEM was able to organize a women's human rights campaign between 1998 and 1999 which had a fair level of success throughout the region.

"It was intended to draw public attention to the issue of violence against women and persuade policy makers to adjust policies and implement new ones in order to address that problem and to encourage women to speak out about the issue and assist others facing the same issue," says Massiah.

"We were able to bring together people in all the different countries. We worked through the Ministry of Education throughout the region and crisis centers," she says.

And this area — violence against women — is one in which Massiah is only too aware that her organization still has a lot of work to do.

Although in the last five years since the Beijing conference on women many of the countries government have implemented laws which seek to address more adequately violence against women, this problem continues to be a big headache for women's groups.

In the northern Caribbean island of Jamaica, for instance, reports indicate that in 1989 just under 2,300 women were victims of rape, domestic violence and incest. By 1999 the figure had jumped to more than 6,600.

While for other Caribbean islands, the figures are not readily available, anecdotal accounts indicate that violence against women is on the rise.

"With regard to violence against women, it is not possible to get an accurate picture of the incidence in all its manifestations in the Caribbean region, nor variations over time because of underreporting and an inadequate collection and compilation of statistics," says one report from a Ministerial Conference on Women held in Trinidad and Tobago last year. "Still it appears from newspaper reports and from anecdotal evidence that violence against women, for all the attention the issue has been given in the decade of the 1990s, shows no signs of decreasing and may in fact be on the rise."

Armed with this kind of information, UNIFEM does not plan to let up in its efforts to bring about meaningful change to the condition of women in the region.

UNIFEM was created in 1976, a year after the World Conference on Women in Mexico City, considered the first loud wake-up call to the international community on gender discrimination.



"Her excellency Mrs. Angelina Muganza, Minister for Gender and Women in Development for Rwanda addresses the General Assembly at the United Nations during Beijing + 5 (also called Women 2000)."

Fifth World Conference of Women

By Shirley Osborne

There were female heads of government, female ministers of government, businesswomen and activists, female teachers and ministers of religion, female technology experts and female soldiers. Even the United States' First Lady was in attendance for the opening.

The Fifth World Conference of Women had been going on in

New York City all last week. Thousands of women from Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas and, yes, the United States of America, spent five full days working at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session, following up on the last World Conference of Women held in Beijing, China in 1995. Yet, international and mainstream media barely mentioned it.

Caribbean women losing ground on gender equality



Barbados Rwanda, SA Jamaica & Jamaica Nigeria unknown and USA

Photo by Lani Russell Lewter (c) 2000

The women of the Caribbean are losing ground in their struggle for gender equality and equity, and it is causing real hardship according to figures and reports coming out of Beijing+5, the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Women at the UN headquarters in New York last week.

At five years' distance from the last Conference's unanimous adoption of the Platform for Action (PFA) in Beijing, China, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has assessed the advancement and empowerment of women in a new biennial report *Progress of the World's Women 2000*. The general consensus, both in the book and among conference delegates and attendees, is that women have made significant and measurable strides towards gender equality, equity and empowerment in some areas of concern. They say, however, that in others of the 12 critical areas identified by the Conference as representing the main obstacles to women's advancement, the pendulum has swung back in the opposite direction, and previous gains have receded.

In the Caribbean a "reverse gender gap" exists where women have consistently outnumbered men in school enrollment and higher education. In fact, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has found that the education of boys has become a major problem in the Caribbean. Cecilia Babb of the Caribbean NGO Policy Development Centre in Barbados found that many men now feel that the system works in favor of women and is hostile to men. She writes, "They argue that girls receive better treatment at home and school..." and "find that the labour market is rife with gender bias favouring women."

Considering themselves deprived of their position of preference, and experiencing frustration, helplessness, hopelessness and insecurity, some men acquire the attitude that they are able to display power over women through the sex act. This merely compounds the problems of relationship and domestic abuse already existing due to societal attitudes of male ownership of women. Thus, even while other crime rates were falling in some territories, there was, in the words of the Hon. Portia Simpson-Miller of Jamaica, "an upsurge in violence against women".

Many infectious diseases have been successfully eradicated in the Caribbean, but the health of Caribbean women has been accorded top-priority status on the agenda of all governments. Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominican Republic, Guyana, Haiti report the highest incidences of adult HIV/AIDS in the region. The Caribbean now has the second highest adult incidence globally, and women are becoming infected at an alarming rate. The disease is transmitted to their children through pregnancy, at delivery and during the breast-feeding growth-phase.

The vulnerability of women to HIV/AIDS and other sexually-transmitted diseases is linked to their relative powerlessness in relationships with men, says the World Health Organization (WHO). Coercive relations with sexual partners is one major way in which women become infected. Also women, generally, have little or no power to apply some of the preventive measures which would offer them protection such as condom use by the men, abstinence, and mutual fidelity.

Antigua and Barbuda's Executive Director of Gender Affairs, Sheila Roseau, reports that, although women have historically contributed 'more than their share' to the political process in the English-speaking Caribbean, their involvement as voters, campaigners and supporters "has not been translated into significant and proportionate representation at the highest levels of political decision-making." Women still function very much behind the scenes and in the lower ranks of the parliaments, and in the traditionally "female" areas such as education and health, while public works, public finance, the head of government positions and such are still considered better filled by men.

The Progress 2000 research team, and most Caribbean representatives, assert that the processes of globalisation and market liberalization have further weakened the economic position of the world's women. Progress 2000 reports that World Bank research suggests that World Trade Organization (WTO) policies concentrate losses among the poorer groups and gains among the richer groups, and that 'openness to the world economy was found to be negatively correlated with income growth among the poorest 40 percent of the population, but strongly and positively correlated with growth among higher income groups.'

Given that, worldwide, women earn slightly more than 50 percent of what men earn on average, and that possibly 70 percent of the 1.5 billion poorest people in the world are women, some Caribbean nations like Barbados, for example, acknowledge that there are issues related to gender which are structurally linked to "poverty". Barbados' Minister of Social Transformation, the Hon. Hamilton Lashley reported to the UN General Assembly that his country has, therefore, identified the feminisation of poverty as a priority area for action in advancing the status of women. In attempts to remedy this situation, Barbados has established a poverty eradication fund and a Social Investment Fund with a view to developing small business entrepreneurship.

Of the 12 critical areas identified in the PFA, most Caribbean governments have, mainly for reasons of resource inadequacies, been forced to place their initial focus on the resolution of the four or five they regard as being currently most critical to the empowerment of their women. In almost all cases priority status was accorded to the issues of Women in Poverty, Violence against Women (and children), and Women and Health.

All in all, the evidence indicates that Caribbean women enjoy a high level of empowerment in certain areas, relative to women in some other countries, as in access to education, for example. The high levels of political literacy of the region's women is another. One danger for Caribbean women, therefore, lies in a potential for complacency.

Asked whether it were, perhaps, likely that Caribbean women, conscious of their gains, might have become somewhat comfortable and relaxed their struggle, Caribbean Regional Director for Women's Environment and Development Organisation (WEDO), responded, "And we're losing! The situation is getting worse in the Caribbean. We have to give up this idea of politics being dirty business. Caribbean women have to begin to look at the political space as we would any other, and get in there, into the decision-making positions, where we can have real gender-equal input in all the deliberations, planning and transformation that needs to take place.

"We, women, have to network to do that. Women, worldwide, have to create critical mass and make this thing happen. Globalisation is changing things, making things worse for a lot of us, and women have to continue to agitate and move ourselves into the positions where we can make the decisions that create sustainable change, where we can make changes that work well for women and children, too."

Fear U.N. may repeal Women's Rights affirmed at Beijing

In 1995, at a historic conference of women in Beijing, women adopted a platform which mandates that the U.N. support the responsibility of governments to guarantee equal rights for women around the world. Women, including women who live in countries led by people of color, face widespread discrimination. As a woman of color, I am disheartened that people who themselves are discriminated against and oppressed, discriminate and oppress women. As discriminated and oppressed people, people of color should be at the forefront of the movement to end inequality.

However, some men in the Third World are notorious for denying women their basic civil and human rights. Ironically, in the Western countries that have long histories of discrimination, like the United States, the record for supporting women's rights is better than in many countries where so-called 'minorities,' or people of color, are the majority and now in charge of their governments. In the United States, we have a number of laws, which support equal access for women and people of color. Although white women have been the primary beneficiaries of this legislation, these laws have led to the expansion of the American middle class to include many more Americans of color than in the past.

As a supporter of universal human and civil rights, I was encouraged by the work of the Women's Conference in Beijing. Moreover, I thought that it would be affirmed by the U.N. However, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, said that some member states of the U.N. are trying to reverse the platform adopted in Beijing. This is quite disturbing, because the U.N. is currently assessing women's equality. It is feared that some member states of the U.N. will use this opportunity to reverse the gains women have won as a result of the Beijing conference.

Many states have been reluctant to provide the necessary resources to guarantee the successful implementation of provisions of the Beijing platform. If the U.N. weakens the platform, many of these states will probably use this as a pretext to continue to deny women their basic civil and human rights. It is essential that Ms. Robinson be given support so that the platform is adopted in its entirety. The record is clear: without pressure, a progressive agenda for women will not be supported by the U.N. or the international community.

Beverly Copeland is host, *The Beverly Copeland Report*, a public access cable TV show.

Global micro-credit programs assessed in Beijing+5 panel

UNITED NATIONS, Jun. 5 (IPS) – The United Nations has begun a five-year review of a global campaign to reach 100 million of the world's poorest families, especially women, with credit for self-employment and other financial and business services.

A Micro-credit Summit Campaign report released Jun. 5, based on a survey of 1,065 micro-credit institutions, has found that "as of 31 December, 1999 micro-credit programs have reached 13.8 million of the world's poorest people, 75 percent (10.3 million) of whom are women. This represents an increase of 82 percent in the last two years, or more than 6 million of the world's poorest, most of whom are women."

Five years ago at the Fourth Women's Conference on Women in Beijing, first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and other members of a micro-credit panel launched the idea of reaching 100 million of the world's poorest families by 2005.

The goal of micro-credit is not to realize a profit, but to provide small loans at low interest rates to the poor so that they can survive the challenges of developing economies and become sustainable.

The panelists who launched the campaign in Beijing were present at the United Nations Jun. 5, to assess progress made since 1995.

These panelists include: Noeleen Heyzer, executive director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM); Muhammad Yunus, founder of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh and an outstanding leader in the field of micro-credit; and Ela Bhatt, founder of the Self-Employed Women's Association of India.

They were joined by Sam Daley-Harris, director of the Micro-Credit Summit Campaign, and Chief Bisi Ogunleye, vice president of the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) in Nigeria.

Micro-credit goes directly to the poor, creates jobs in villages and helps women develop confidence and independence the panelists emphasized, speaking on the opening day of the United Nations Conference on Women 2000.

Addressing the panel, Hillary Clinton, said that "the practice of financing small loans to individual poor people and families, has vast potential to stimulate economic growth not only in developing countries but also in poor regions of the United States.

"Although it is called micro-credit, this is a macro idea," Clinton continued. "Whether we are talking about a rural area in South Asia or an inner-city in the United States, micro-credit is an invaluable tool in alleviating poverty, promoting self-sufficiency and stimulating economic activity in some of the world's most destitute and disadvantaged communities."

Secretary-General Kofi Annan added that "micro-credit is a critical anti-poverty tool, a wise investment in human capital. When the poorest, especially women, receive credit, they become economic actors with power. Power to improve not only their own lives but, in a widening circle of impact, the lives of their families, their communities, and their nations."

"Micro-credit offered to rural women by government, financial institutions and non-governmental organizations has appreciably changed our rural socioeconomic scenario," Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said.

However, Daley-Harris explained, "There are many reasons why the poorest are excluded from micro-credit programs...They are the least likely to step forward, so identifying and motivating them brings additional costs. The small size of the borrowers' initial loans makes it more difficult for an institution to become financially self-sufficient."

Micro-credit is the only option for many who are shut out from conventional sources of capital due to stringent collateral requirements imposed by commercial banks.

The United Nations has estimated that only 0.2 percent of global commercial lending goes to the poorest one-fifth of the world's population, thus millions are denied the opportunity to test their own enterprise.

"The majority of the 1.5 billion people living on one dollar a day or less are women," according to the United Nations. "In addition, the gap between women and men has continued to widen in the past decade, a phenomenon commonly referred to as the feminization of poverty – women living in poverty are frequently denied access to critical resources such as credit, land and inheritance."

Yunus, the first micro-credit program set up by the Grameen Bank two decades ago in Bangladesh, has given 4 million borrowers there – many of them women – the capital to start small businesses and enjoy financial independence for the first time.

Grameen's repayment rate is 95 percent, better than most banks.

Clinton pointed out that "the repayment rate of micro-credit loans would be the envy of any commercial bank."

Micro-credit projects, which often organize borrowers into small clubs, use social pressure to collect the loans, and double as support groups.

Proponents say the loans have even helped curb domestic violence, since the women in the groups are empowered to resist their abusive husbands.

Grameen Bank only gives loans to groups of five or more, and if one member defaults, the entire group is blacklisted from receiving further loans.

"Micro-credit groups have become the sites for the emergence of a new sense of empowerment. They build communities of women and create the collective will, the solidarity, the trust and respect, the network of alliances, which are the elements of social capital," Heyzer emphasized in her comments.

"Where women trust each other and share a concern for the well-being of all, there one finds successful credit programs, community banks, labor exchange, shared child-minding and the flow of advice and knowledge which draw women into the world of political and economic participation," Heyzer said.

The panel also raised the need for more men to get involved with the elimination of gender inequalities and violence against women to ensure that women benefit from increases in household income.

Micro-credit crusaders have met resistance in Islamic countries, and some opponents argue that "credit" is just another word for "debt."

"What good is a loan to weave baskets if there is no market in which to sell them or no road on which to transport them?" asked Martha Brant of Newsweek.

There is a fear that loans could push the already poor deeper into poverty if socioeconomic conditions and infrastructure are not conducive to commerce. Fawzi Al-Sultan, the president of the International Fund for Agricultural Development, says that community-based micro-credit has not worked well in far-flung African villages.

Loan programs also need subsidies for at least five to 10 years, and activists worry that competition for donors may hurt other anti-poverty causes.

Women, poverty and the communications media

By Shirley Osborne

There were female heads of government, female ministers of government, businesswomen and activists, female teachers and ministers of religion, female technology experts and female soldiers. Even the United States' First Lady was in attendance for the opening.

The Fifth World Conference of Women had been going on in New York City all last week. Thousands of women from Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas and, yes, the United States of America, spent five full days working at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session, following up on the last World Conference of Women held in Beijing, China in 1995. Yet, international and mainstream media barely mentioned it.

The women discussed Peace and War, and Finance and Technology, Health and Education, Violence, Politics, Economics and Globalization, Power and Decision-making, Media, HIV and the Environment, among other things. They told stories and shared visions, asked questions, reported on research and proffered solutions. There were some men present, too. Men who consider themselves enriched rather than threatened by women in power. But the barely acknowledged any of this.

Angela E.V. King, the Assistant Secretary-General to the United Nations, expressed disappointment that the media have not done a better job over the past five years, at building awareness of gender issues and highlighting good practises. But she expressed the optimism that, New York being such a major media center would bode well for the conference, and that, therefore, the Conference itself, the women and the messages of Women 2000 would be effectively transmitted to people everywhere and finally, get the exposure and public validation they so urgently need.

Maybe; maybe not. New York City was not exactly abuzz with the goings-on this week. Even if you worked at the United Nations Headquarters, you might not necessarily have known much about the 5th World Conference on Women According to reporters for *Flamme*, the African Daily Newspaper of "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century", one UN security guard defined this conference to assess the position of the world's women as, "Just some women's rally." But one delegate from Zambia forgave him because she recognized that "ordinary women" know nothing of Beijing and what transpired there.

None of this is very surprising. After all, this is still a country where women are paid less than men and where few women serve at senior decision-making levels or on corporate boards of the media, or other, organisations. Even while the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the United Nations Development Fund for



There were female heads of government, female ministers of government, businesswomen and activists, female teachers and ministers of religion, female technology experts and female soldiers. Even the United States' First Lady was in attendance for the opening.

Photo by Lani Russell Lewter (c) 2000

Women (UNIFEM) continue to push the issue of 'gender mainstreaming', many of the men who occupy the decision-making positions continue to ignore that they, and humanity in general, need the benefits that accrue from the empowerment of women.

In the critical area of concern identified as Women and the Media in the Platform for Action of the 4th World Conference on Women, The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), acknowledges that more women are now involved in careers in the communications sector. "The reality is, however," says Noleen Heyzer of UNIFEM, "that few have attained positions at the decision-making level, or serve on governing boards and bodies that influence media policy." UNIFEM's new biennial report *Progress of the World's Women 2000* further states that, "Print and electronic media in most countries do not provide a balanced picture of women's diverse lives and contributions to society in a changing world."

WomenAction, a global information network whose long-term goal is the empowerment of women, commented on the 'conspicuous absence' of the international media at Beijing+5. Isis International-Manila initiated a Global Women's Media Team Project for Beijing+5 to train women in mainstream media coverage, and to cover the conference itself, in the absence of the mainstream media.

"Women," say the organizers of the project, "need to take control of media coverage about themselves and their lives. They need to stop being passive subjects and become active purveyors of news."

The general feeling of the Conference is, to quote one delegate, "We are now halfway through the year 2000. We survived Y2K, and we are alive, but not all well, in the 21st Century. Throughout the entire history of humankind, women have contributed at least as much as have men, by anybody's measure, to our having survived to arrive here. It should no longer be necessary, at this advanced stage, for women to have to continually remind that other segment of the world's population, in the words of the UN Secretary-General, that we (Women) are not guests on this planet. We belong here."

'Absolutely Not'

Vatican refutes claim it wants to erode U.N. support for women

By TRACY EARLY

Charges by Amnesty International that the Vatican entered into an "unholy alliance" with some U.N. members to undermine support for women's rights are absolutely false, the Vatican's U.N. nuncio said.

Archbishop Renato R. Martino said in an interview June 7 that the Vatican was "always on the side of women" and supports the view that human rights apply to women and men alike.

Amnesty International made its allegations in a statement from its London headquarters June 5 regarding a special session of the U.N. General Assembly held to review implementation of the Plan of Action adopted at the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women.

Known as Beijing +5, the special session at U.N. headquarters in Manhattan June 5-9 was arranged as one of a series to review results of recent international conferences after five years.

"The unholy alliance formed by the Holy See, Iran, Algeria, Nicaragua, Syria, Libya, Morocco and Pakistan has attempted to hold ransom women's human rights," Amnesty International charged regarding preparations for Beijing +5.

Pierre Sane, a native of Senegal who is the organization's general secretary, made similar comments in a speech June 4 at a forum at Columbia University.

He charged that the Vatican and its allies had played "a very obstructive role" in negotiations

at the United Nations and tried to renegotiate agreements reached in Beijing.

Archbishop Martino said the accusations from a human rights agency showed lack of awareness of what actually happened in the preparatory process and were surprising because the Vatican had always supported human rights "in every respect."

Differences arose when some countries tried to impose the concept that practices such as same-sex marriage or abortion are human rights, he said.

He added that pressure on those points generally came from the wealthier countries, and that in confrontations at the United Nations on economic questions such as sanctions and the right to development, the Vatican was characteristically supporting the rights of the poorer countries.

The General Assembly was expected to issue a statement at the end of the special session, but the proposed document was still under negotiation.

Archbishop Martino said Sane was operating with a predetermined idea of how the document should be written when he accused some delegates of being obstructive.

If a committee had difficulty reaching agreement on what was supposed to be a consensus document, it would be no more valid to accuse one side of "obstructive" tactics than the other, the archbishop said.

He denied that the Vatican had entered into

any special alliances. "Absolutely not," he said. "We walk on a path, and sometimes we find companions walking on the same path."

If these companions are governments subject to criticism on other points, it does not make the relationship "unholy," Archbishop Martino said.

He said that on issues such as protection of life and defense of the family, the Vatican sometimes supported language proposed by other delegations and the others sometimes supported Vatican proposals.

Archbishop Martino said charges by Amnesty International that the Vatican and governments in agreement with it were trying to renegotiate positions adopted at Beijing really applied to the other side.

At Beijing, professor Mary Ann Glendon of Harvard Law School, who chaired the Vatican delegation, said the document adopted there was flawed by "exaggerated individualism" and by giving "disproportionate attention to sexual and reproductive health."

As a result, the Vatican could accept the consensus language only in a partial way and with reservations specified in a document submitted for inclusion with her statement, she said.

However, in responding to the charges by Amnesty International, Archbishop Martino said the Vatican was not now attempting "to change anything adopted in Beijing."

On the contrary, the other side was attempting to "go beyond Beijing" and get acceptance of language not used there, he said.

—CNS

Vatican Criticizes Focus of U.N. Session on Beijing Meeting

The Vatican said that the U.N. conference reviewing progress since the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women produced a document that, like the Beijing Platform for Action, gave undue emphasis to the single issue of sexual and reproductive health.

That issue was emphasized "to the detriment of a holistic view of the health of women and their families," the Vatican said.

The statement of the Vatican's U.N. mission was delivered by Kathryn Hauwa Hoomkwap, a Nigerian who served on the Vatican delegation to the Beijing Conference.

She presented the statement June 9, the final day of a weeklong special session of the U.N. General Assembly reviewing results of Beijing and using the theme, "Women 2000: Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century."

Uying the Vatican message to the pope's appeal to "be not afraid," Ms. Hoomkwap said that she "as a wife and mother," along with "many of my sisters throughout the world," feared the effects that disease, malnutrition, war and illiteracy would have on women and their families.

Because of this concern, the Vatican delegation "strongly supports" sections of the document produced at the special session "condemning all forms of violence against women," "upholding women's rights to economic and political

empowerment" and calling for action against poverty and high mortality rates among girls and women, Ms. Hoomkwap said.

"For all of us to cease to be afraid, we must proceed with full and complete human development, not only social and economic but also spiritual," she said.

She noted that the Vatican had "participated actively in the negotiations" of the special session and considered issues raised at Beijing and in the review "of critical importance to the lives of millions of women worldwide."

In the Vatican view, she said, the "living heart" of the Beijing Platform for Action lay in the discussion of needs that "correspond to the multiplicity of services the Catholic Church has historically provided to women."

These services demonstrate in actions and words that the Church believes in giving women the education and other assistance "they need to pursue their own life and family goals," she said.

In U.N. meetings such as the Beijing Conference and the Beijing +5 review, the Vatican has characteristically fought to get as much acceptable language as possible on matters it considered most vital and then accepted the compromise results with reservations.

Some U.N. officials have interpreted its approach as an indication of a shift in Vatican positions on some of its traditional views, such as birth control. But Ms.

Hoomkwap disputed such interpretations.

"Nothing that the Holy See has done in the 'Women 2000' process should be understood as an endorsement of concepts it does not support for moral reasons," she said.

As an observer state, the Vatican, like Switzerland, was allowed to speak after all the U.N. member states. Time was then allotted for statements by a number of other international organizations, including the Knights of Malta. Mary Reiner Barnes, a Dame of Malta and daughter of the president of the American Knights of Malta, John P. Reiner, delivered remarks on behalf of the Knights.

She described many programs of the Knights in various countries focused on the needs of women, and noted that in response to a request by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, the order was helping implement programs to rehabilitate traumatized women in Bosnia.

"The 'Kosovo Women's Initiative' has placed great emphasis on socio-psychological programs entailing training courses in sewing and the opportunity to speak of traumatic experiences, since it is usually easier for these women to speak about such traumas during practical activities rather than in therapy groups," she said.

The statement emphasized that the Knights are vigorously pro-life.

—CNS

Two women here bolster U.N. effort

BY STAFF WRITER
DONNA JACKEL

When a world conference aimed at bettering the lot of women was held in Beijing in 1995, Mary Quin and Louise M. Spivack traveled thousands of miles to attend.

Today, as international dignitaries gather at a special session of the United Nations General Assembly to weigh women's progress since then, the two local women will again be front and center.

Spivack, president of the United Nations Association of Rochester, and Quin, a Xerox Corp. executive, will join an estimated 10,000 other women at the U.N. special session, titled "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-first Century" or simply Beijing Plus Five. The theme of the five-day conference: World peace is inextricably linked to women's ability to achieve economic and social parity.

Quin, a Rochester resident, will represent the Center for

Development and Population Activities, of which she is a board member. The international nonprofit group focuses on women's reproductive health, literacy and management-skills training.

"I'll be advocating for positions that CEDPA feels is important," she said. "It's exciting. I've never had a chance to see how policies develop before."

Workshops related to the conference will take place all over New York City, but Quin and Spivack are among a select group that will be admitted to the General Assembly meetings.

"You network with people from all over the world — you get to exchange information," said Spivack of Pittsford.

She said she is eager to learn what progress has occurred worldwide and what remains to be accomplished for women, who, along with children, make up three-quarters of the world's poorest.

"We want the visibility," Spivack said. "We have U.N. support right now, which is wonderful."

Quin, who in 1998 escaped from religious extremists in Yemen, who took her hostage while she was on vacation, said she has developed from her extensive travels a "strong interest in how the world works and how to get things done."

"Here's my chance to see how policy affects cultures and how women are affected at an international level by the decisions of their governments," she said. "I also feel strongly about trying to do something to improve the freedom and rights for women worldwide."

First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton will speak today about expanding the use of small loans to help poor women escape poverty — an issue she promoted at the Beijing conference, where it was endorsed.

The conference in 1995 drew 40,000 women from 189 countries — the biggest global gathering of women in history — and produced an ambitious plan to achieve equality of the sexes. This week, those attending will assess their progress and determine what needs to be done next.

The Vatican and a group of Islamic countries, meanwhile, are objecting to the same proposals they did in 1995 — including sexual and reproductive rights for women, adolescent sex education and the definition of the family.

"It's becoming very, very clear that there are a few countries that are trying to stand in the way of progress," said Linda Tarr-Whelan, the U.S. ambassador to the Commission on the Status of Women.

Tarr-Whelan pointed to Algeria, Sudan, Libya, Iran and — to a lesser extent — the Vatican, saying there has been a "backlash" against the progress made since Beijing.

Status of women

At the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, representatives from 189 countries drafted 12 initiatives to improve conditions for women worldwide. Here are some assessments five years later:

- Women's access to justice at national and international levels has improved.

- More attention is given to HIV infection among women — but the number of women contracting the disease continues to rise.

- More countries have adopted affirmative action policies, but many women have fallen deeper into poverty because of salary inequality and difficulty in climbing the career ladder.

- There has been an increase in the number of assisted childbirths and improved training for health-care providers who care for maternity patients.

- Rape is now considered a crime against humanity by the U.N. Security Council, and the U.N. has issued guidelines on the protection of refugee women.

- Progress has been made in educating girls, but a persistent gap remains between women's and men's access to education.

SOURCE: Conference host committee

The 1995 platform runs the gamut from promoting women's inheritance rights to condemning rape in wartime and alleviating the increasing poverty of women. For the first time, a U.N. document declared that women have the right to decide all matters related to their sexuality and childbearing.

The platform also calls on governments to revise laws to ensure women's equal rights, to provide equal education for girls, and to put women in top decision-making positions in business and government.

Over the past five years, U.N.

surveys show more girls are going to school and more women are working and receiving health care. There has also been "a tremendous amount of women's rights and anti-discrimination legislation," though not all of it has been implemented, said Assistant Secretary-General Angela King, the top U.N. adviser on women.

The biggest achievement since Beijing "is that women are really on the agenda," said Charlotte Bunch, director of the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University in New Jersey.

Developing nations are trying to soften the Beijing platform's strong affirmation that countries have a "duty" to protect human rights "regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems." They have proposed language saying that countries can implement the platform "with full respect" to religious or cultural backgrounds.

The Vatican and conservatives object to the Beijing platform's reference to nontraditional families, which they view as an implied blessing of homosexual unions, single parents and couples living together out of wedlock.

As a result, on the eve of this year's opening session, nobody is certain what the final document will say. But Bunch said delegates have agreed to the most important provision — the reaffirmation of the Beijing platform for the next decade.

Yakin Erturk, director of the U.N. Division for the Advancement of Women, said the United Nations hopes that the final document will go further and call on member states to set deadlines to achieve progress toward equality for women.

Tarr-Whelan said her pessimism has turned to optimism that the final document "will be the next road map to give more concrete steps for action for achieving women's equality." □

Includes reporting by The Associated Press.

Newsday

Repeat Performance Hillary reiterates UN women's rights demands

by Elizabeth Moore
Staff Writer

Repeating her declaration that women's rights are human rights, but feminists' work is "far from done," Hillary Rodham Clinton returned to her first lady role yesterday with a reprise of the blunt and confrontational address she delivered to the United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing five years ago.

"When babies are still denied food, drowned, suffocated and abandoned simply because they are born girls, our work is far from done," Clinton reminded a UN panel on microcredit, part of a five-day conference in New York to take stock of economic, social and legal gains scored by women since the Beijing conference.

Clinton's forceful 1995 speech is considered a defining moment of her years as first lady, one that marked her emergence from the blunders of the effort to overhaul health care into a better understanding of the powers of her role.

The Chinese government blacked out transmission of Clinton's remarks, the most direct by any American representative on Chinese soil, in which she criticized China for limiting open discussion and catalogued the abuses and deprivations girls and women are subjected to around the world, including forced sterilizations and abortions, practiced in China under its one-child policy.

Some gains have been scored in various places since then, Clinton told the women delegates yesterday, including laws against genital mutilation and domestic violence, laws raising the legal age for marriage and an explosion in the availability of microcredit, tiny loans given to mostly rural women to start small businesses and empower themselves.

But she repeated almost word for word much of her earlier grisly listing of horrors suffered by females, including denial of education, honor killings and sexual slavery. "What meaning can free markets have for women who, desperate for economic opportunity, are bought and sold like any other consumer product?" Clinton said.

To that litany Clinton added the growing problem of HIV, which disproportionately affects women in the Third World, and some less dramatic problems of women in the United States, including unequal pay and inadequate child care opportunities.

Clinton reminded the delegates that as first lady she has also been first lobbyist, persuading her husband to "pencil in visits" to microcredit projects when he travels.

"I'm happy about that, because where he goes, the press goes, the entourage goes, he drags treasury secretaries and other important figures along," she said recalling one White House event where she put the issue before Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan and Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates.

As she finished speaking, the crowd broke out into a spontaneous chorus of "We Shall Overcome." Several delegates to the conference, which brought representatives from nearly 180 nations, said Clinton had proven her political skills in her work for international women's rights, and although they weren't too familiar with the details of New York's Senate race, said they'd vote for her if they lived here.

NEW YORK POST

HILL STANDS UP FOR WOMEN IN SPEECH AT U.N.

BYLINE: Gregg Birnbaum

Hillary Rodham Clinton used a speech at the United Nations yesterday to demand better treatment for women around the world - but her message won't be lost on voters closer to home in New York.

Clinton's appearance at a U.N. women's conference marked the fifth anniversary of a similar gathering in Beijing - where the first lady sparked an uproar by slamming her Chinese hosts for forced abortions and mass sterilization.

Clinton's campaign recently has seized on her 1995 Beijing bombshell - which fans consider her finest hour - to portray the first lady as a courageous fighter who stands up for what she thinks is right.

That speech is showcased in "Hillary" - a lavishly produced 18-minute video shown at her campaign kickoff in February and distributed to supporters.

Clinton's U.N. visit was deemed an official White House event, although the high-profile appearance clearly had implications for her Senate race.

Clinton was introduced by U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who had the audience laughing when he joked that the first lady was very busy these days - a reference to her candidacy.

In her 30-minute address to about 500 women from dozens of countries, Clinton recalled her Beijing speech - "Our shot was heard around the world," she said - and added that women have made great strides over the past five years.

But Clinton said "honor" killings, violence against women, and the denial of voting rights still are widespread, citing a particular problem of an estimated 1 million women sold into slavery each year.

Clinton later attended a \$2.5 million mega-fund-raiser by the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee to celebrate the 70th birthday of Rep. Charles Rangel (D-Harlem).

Some of the "soft money" could be spent to help Clinton's battle GOP contender Rick Lazio.

Lazio did his own digging for dollars yesterday.

The Suffolk County Republican was to attend a private fund-raiser at the home of Dr. Stephen Rush, a financial supporter and friend, in Great Neck, L.I.

Meanwhile, in Washington, a federal judge ordered the White House to turn over archived e-mails from the first lady, President Clinton and their staff.

The order came in a conservative group's lawsuit that charges the Clinton administration with attacks on political enemies using information that by law is confidential.

'Women 2000'

□ The world's women still face a tough road.

It was exciting to see the General Assembly of the United Nations filled almost entirely with women this week.

Wearing tailored suits and pumps, work dresses and high heels, roomy pants and comfortable shoes, filmy Indian saris and billowing African robes and headdresses, nearly 10,000 women and some men representing more than 180 countries attended a weeklong special session of the General Assembly known as "Women 2000."

Five years after the international women's conference in Beijing put women's rights on the world's radar screen, women from places as obscure as the Republic of Moldova and as notorious as Zimbabwe reassembled to measure how much progress they've made, and how short they've fallen of their goals.

A surprising number of delegates hold high-ranking government jobs. Wandira Kazibwe, vice president of Uganda; Deputy Prime Minister Laurette Onkelinx of Belgium, and Onechanh Thammavong, vice president of the Lao national assembly, were among the delegates who addressed the conference yesterday.

Some countries we consider Third World seem to have more women in top government posts than some of the more developed countries. India, Pakistan, Great Britain and Israel have all had female

COMMENTARY

Sheryl McCarthy

heads of state, while the United States can't seem to get beyond white males.

So, has the condition of the world's women improved since Beijing? The bottom line is that women are still catching hell all over the world. Despite the platform for action signed by 180 countries in Beijing, in India baby girls are still aborted or killed after delivery, and women are still murdered because their families can't pay their dowries.

In Bangladesh, hundreds of women a year are burned with acid by scorned husbands or lovers.

In many African countries, girls are still subjected to genital mutilation.

In Iran, women still wear the chador in public and in Afghanistan, well, forget Afghanistan. Under the fanatical Taliban, women and girls can be beaten or killed for going to school or leaving the house.

In countries all over the world, women and children make up the majority of the poor, and girls are the majority of children not attending school.

The basis of the Beijing agreement was that its signers would revoke all their laws that discriminated against women.

Five years later, however, 12-year-old girls can still be legally married off in Colombia, dowries are required in Sudan,

husbands are the legal heads of households in Turkey and Yemen and wives are required to obey them; Kuwaiti women are barred from voting; French women (at least on paper) are barred from working at night; in Nepal, only male children can inherit property; and in Ethiopia, rape isn't a crime if the rapist marries his victim.

Meanwhile, in the United States, domestic violence is a huge problem and there's still a wage gap. On the upside, every delegate who spoke at the United Nations told of improvements in women's lives.

In Uganda, official documents must now refer to "she" as well as "he."

More than 3 million girls are now in primary school, compared with 800,000 three years ago, and women now account for 30 percent of local government officials.

There's been progress. But, as speaker after speaker confirmed, poverty, limited access to education, lack of economic independence, patriarchal traditions, lack of medical care, exposure to HIV and AIDS, and a growing world traffic in women for prostitution and slavery plague the lives of millions of women.

Delegates to "Women 2000" are debating a new document that will outline where their countries need to go in the next five years.

But, amid all the talk about documents, protocols, resolutions, policies and statements of principles, one feels that they're a substitute for action.

"What we've been hearing is a lot of rhetoric from the government delegates," says Monique Widyono, co-executive director of Equality Now, an international women's rights group based in New York City.

"They're just negotiating words," she says. "We've done a lot of this before."

What women need from these governments now, Widyono says is "clear political will and commitment. Why in the year 2000 are we still negotiating over the need to eliminate discriminatory laws?"

Why indeed?