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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 3rd MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,  
on Wednesday, 17 February 1988, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. MANGWAZU (Malawi)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

PROGRAMME MATTERS (continued)

(a) UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT FUND FOR WOMEN (continued) (DP/1988/4)

1. Mrs. EKAAS (Norway), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, thanked the UNDP Administrator and the Director of UNIFEM for the introductory statements they had made at the previous meeting. The year 1987 had marked the tenth anniversary of UNIFEM and had witnessed the establishment within the UNDP Bureau for Programme Policy and Evaluation of the Division for Women and Development, with the special task of ensuring that UNDP programmes and projects took women's interests into account. Those developments, as well as the release of the evaluation report prepared by a Norwegian consultant, had increased interest in the mandate of the Fund, its field activities and its relations with UNDP. In that connection, her delegation welcomed the dialogue that had been established between UNDP and UNIFEM during the implementation of the recommendations in the evaluation report as well as the new guidelines governing the operational relationship between the two entities. The Nordic countries felt that it was necessary to maintain that constructive dialogue in order to keep a clear distinction between the respective roles of the two institutions, to identify areas of complementarity and mutual support, and to ensure the rational use of scarce resources.

2. In order to improve the quality of the Fund's catalytic and innovative activities as described in document DP/1988/4, its administrative and management capacities should be strengthened. The Nordic countries accordingly welcomed the establishment of three additional P-4 posts at headquarters as well as the specialist posts, which should make the Fund a more effective catalyst in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. That strengthening of personnel should, however, be accompanied by the establishment of a staff training programme. Another important point concerned effective resource and management utilization. In that connection, annex II of document DP/1988/4, entitled "Analysis of the Financial Management Implications for UNIFEM of the Potential Change-over from a Full to a Partial Funding Base", was of particular importance. The Nordic countries favoured the establishment of that new system in 1988 but felt that the question should first be examined by the Budgetary and Finance Committee at its June session. The Fund had displayed caution in proposing to maintain its operational reserve at 45 per cent of unspent allocations. That reserve, combined with a conservative project approval policy, quarterly reviews of pledges made and contributions received, other financial management control tools and the solid financial basis of the Fund, should enable UNIFEM to avoid a serious financial crisis and to honour its commitments. The Nordic countries welcomed that opportunity for the Fund to approve new, better and longer-term projects. Those controls must, however, be maintained, and it would be advisable for the Fund to submit a detailed report on the implementation of the system of partial funding at the 1991 spring session of the Consultative Committee of UNIFEM.

(Mrs. Ekaas, Norway)

3. The Nordic countries continued to support the ongoing review undertaken by UNDP and UNIFEM. There were few institutions specifically for women. The consultant responsible for the evaluation study had praised the development strategy of UNIFEM and its pioneering role in the advancement of women and in development in general. UNIFEM deserved political and financial support in order to make itself better known. It needed UNDP backstopping. The mechanism of co-operation between the two entities, specifically between the Consultative Committee of UNIFEM and the Governing Council of UNDP, must therefore be strengthened.
4. Mr. FREE (Canada) felt that the measures taken to implement the recommendations in the evaluation report on UNIFEM were important because they made it possible to strengthen the Fund's technical and administrative capacities while creating less ambiguity regarding the links between UNIFEM and other United Nations bodies, particularly UNDP. UNIFEM and UNDP had apparently taken the recommendations into account, because all but one were the subject of comments in document DP/1988/4. The adoption of guidelines for operational relations with UNDP, the establishment of project selection criteria by the Consultative Committee and the strengthening of administration and management were welcome initiatives. It was now a matter of recruiting and assigning additional personnel and establishing systems relating to finance and administration. He agreed that it would be necessary to review on a regular basis progress made in implementing the recommendations, but he would like more details concerning the role of UNIFEM in the work of the Programme Review Committee and its links with other bodies in the United Nations system.
5. In the matter of decentralization, he had three comments: UNIFEM should examine the question as soon as possible; decentralization should be carried out in such a way as to make projects more effective; finally, the adequacy of operational quality-control measures must be assured.
6. Lastly, his delegation favoured a system of partial funding, which would make it possible to improve programming and project delivery. Since the relevant proposal in annex II of document DP/1988/4 was not very clear, however, he recommended that the new system should be examined by the Budgetary and Finance Committee at its June session.
7. Mr. SAHLMANN (Federal Republic of Germany) welcomed the measures taken by UNDP and UNIFEM to implement the recommendations in the evaluation report on the Fund as well as the approval of the new guidelines for co-operation between the two bodies. He endorsed the adoption of a system of partial funding, which would help to improve programme delivery and encourage donors to increase their contributions to the Fund. The new system should not, however, enter into force until it had been examined by the Budgetary and Finance Committee at its June session.
8. The 45 per cent reserve was enough for the Fund to be able to continue to operate on a sound financial basis, particularly with the introduction of new methods of financial management. To prevent it from becoming too large in the

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(Mr. Sahlmann, Federal  
Republic of Germany)

future, it seemed reasonable to review the amount every year after the Pledging Conference. The implementation of the recommendations in the evaluation report should be an ongoing process and it would be useful for the UNIFEM report submitted at the 1989 session to describe the progress made and include a re-evaluation of trends.

9. Mr. THOMAS (United Kingdom) favoured the increase in UNIFEM staff, the change-over to a system of partial funding, subject to a review of the control systems described in annex II of document DP/1988/4, and the evaluation of results at the end of the programming cycle. Given the close links already existing between UNDP and UNIFEM, however, he had reservations concerning the participation of UNIFEM in round-tables for the exchange of information with multilateral organizations. It would probably make more sense to use the Fund's meagre resources for the execution of projects on behalf of development and of women. The idea of the refinement of project formulation procedures seemed reasonable. UNIFEM should therefore continue to adopt a flexible approach and use some well-defined criteria to select catalyst and innovative projects.

10. Mrs. PERKO (Yugoslavia) thanked the Director of UNIFEM and the Administrator of UNDP for their detailed statements concerning the operation of the Fund. She reaffirmed her country's commitment to UNIFEM, which had done remarkable work throughout its 10 years of existence. Indeed, the increase in voluntary contributions in comparison with previous years proved that Member States were satisfied with the results obtained by UNIFEM and had confidence in it.

11. Document DP/1988/4 was very informative and interesting, in as much as it made it possible to have a better understanding of the operational activities of UNIFEM, to evaluate the results it had achieved and to determine how to improve its functioning where necessary. In that connection, her delegation found the project for a change-over to a system of partial funding acceptable and was prepared to support it.

12. Mr. TANAKA (Japan) said that his Government attached great importance to the role of UNIFEM. Its financial contribution to the Fund reflected its support. Japan was aware of the positive measures taken by the United Nations bodies on behalf of women and felt that it was very important for those bodies to promote mutual co-operation in order to conduct such activities more effectively. UNIFEM should provide the countries concerned with more detailed accounts of its activities and of the work of its Consultative Committee.

13. Mr. GLAZER (United States of America) said that UNIFEM's mandate and activities were of both sociological and economic significance. The attention it had received, from the UNDP Governing Council and in the Norwegian consultant's evaluation report, was a tribute to the Fund's importance. His delegation had carefully considered that report, as well as the measures taken by the Administration on the basis of the recommendations it contained. Those measures were positive and encouraging, even if they were incomplete and still had to be finalized.

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(Mr. Glazer, United States)

14. The United States hoped that the Fund was not being unrealistic by counting so much on contributions in its financial projections contained in document DP/1988/4. It also hoped that the controls referred to by the Director of UNIFEM would be applied. His delegation would closely follow any progress achieved and was looking forward to other reports on ongoing initiatives. The arguments in favour of a change-over to a partial-funding base were convincing. On the whole, the United States accepted the proposal put forward, subject to final consideration by Council members.

15. Mr. AQUARONE (Netherlands) thanked the UNDP Administrator and the Director of UNIFEM for their joint report on the Fund (DP/1988/4), and for their introductory statements at the previous meeting. The document was extremely clear, and contained much valuable information. UNIFEM had been very instrumental in bringing out the vital role played by women in the development of developing countries. His delegation noted with satisfaction the Fund's association with UNDP-assisted instruments, such as national technical co-operation assessments and programming (NaTCAPS), round-table conferences and country programming exercises. The Netherlands hoped that such collaboration would be continued, and would be extended to other international organizations, to Governments and to non-governmental organizations. In that connection, the report did not specify what linkages UNIFEM was to have with non-governmental organizations.

16. His delegation welcomed the emphasis the UNIFEM mandate placed on innovative and experimental activities, as part of direct support, and the criteria for project selection. However, UNIFEM was and must continue to be a relatively limited Fund. Essentially, its role should be confined to executing projects in key sectors, with a view to the rational utilization of its limited funds.

17. He welcomed the efforts to strengthen the administration and management capacities of UNIFEM. The staff should continue to be strengthened so that the Fund could make the most of the resources available to it. There was nothing wrong with employing more junior Professional officers, but most of them should be assigned to field offices rather than headquarters. His Government fully appreciated UNIFEM's activities and its efforts to be more effective. Hence, the steady increase in the Netherlands contributions to the Fund in recent years.

18. Referring to the potential change-over from a full- to a partial-funding base, he said that the Netherlands recognized the obvious advantages of the new system, under which resources could be used more effectively and project delivery increased. That system was already employed by many other Funds, such as the United Nations Capital Development Fund. However, contrary to the assertions in document DP/1988/4, his delegation was not convinced that a partial-funding base would automatically increase contributions. The report's projections on the expansion of UNIFEM seemed to be based on figures that were far too optimistic. It was highly unlikely that the Netherlands would increase its contribution. If other countries were in a similar position, the projections might have to be brought down to more realistic levels, especially in view of the trend in the exchange rate of the United States dollar. Those reservations aside, his delegation had no objections to the proposed switch to the new system.

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19. Ms. SNYDER (Director, United Nations Development Fund for Women) said that because there had been so many questions and remarks, and the time available at the meeting was limited, she would prefer to furnish detailed replies in writing. For the time being, she would make just a few preliminary remarks.

20. She thanked the Nordic countries, Yugoslavia and Japan for their interest in UNIFEM's activities and for their unfailing support to the Fund. Concerning the need to train staff members referred to by the Norwegian representative, she said that training programmes were already being conducted, especially in the field of computers. She welcomed the suggestion to strengthen relations between UNDP's Division of Women in Development and UNIFEM. The Fund was already collaborating with similar services established at UNESCO and FAO, for example, and with the Group in the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination responsible for joint inter-agency programming. The Fund's mandate, as defined in General Assembly resolution 39/125, stressed that UNIFEM must serve as a catalyst for the whole of the United Nations system. The Fund was also collaborating with the World Bank and the African Development Bank, and expected to extend that collaboration to the Asian Development Bank in the near future. She hoped that one day, there would be machinery in all the United Nations agencies to enable women to take their rightful place beside men in the development process. Even when such machinery was in position, the Fund would not lose its *raison d'être*, especially in the field of innovative and experimental activities, where it was better able to take action than some of the larger Funds. The question of relations between the Consultative Committee on UNIFEM and the UNDP Governing Council would be brought to the attention of the Consultative Committee at its twenty-third session, in April 1988.

21. The Fund was grateful to the Canadian Government for contributing to its African programme relating to women and food-cycle technologies. The question of the Fund's linkages with other organizations could not be examined in depth in a report as short as the one before the Council (DP/1988/4). As UNIFEM was not an executing agency, it collaborated with many United Nations agencies, Governments and non-governmental organizations, especially national non-governmental organizations. The question of decentralization warranted closer consideration. As the UNIFEM staff was currently not very large, it was still better for most staff members to remain at headquarters. However, the execution of certain projects had already touched off the decentralization process, particularly in the field of food-cycle technologies and credit support services.

22. She was gratified by the many remarks in favour of a change-over to a partial-funding base, which would enable the Fund to concentrate its resources on its own field of activities, namely, development assistance to certain countries, particularly activities for the women of those countries. She noted with satisfaction that the delegation of the Federal Republic of Germany recognized that improving administration and management was a continuous process. She noted that the United Kingdom had reservations concerning the Fund's participation in country programming exercises and round-table conferences, and that the Netherlands, by contrast, approved. In fact, the object of UNIFEM's participation in such exercises and conferences was to develop model projects for women.

(Ms. Snyder)

23. She thanked the United States for accepting the principle of a change-over to a partial-funding base, and for its interest in the work of the Norwegian evaluation team. As to whether the Fund's resource projections, contained in document DP/1988/4, were realistic, she said that they took into account not only the potential change-over to a partial-funding base, which would have the effect of releasing additional resources, but also the expected increase in contributions, both from Member States and from national women's organizations and national committees for UNIFEM.

24. She thanked the Government of the Netherlands for its special grants to the Fund for activities to promote the integration of women in development. Lastly, UNIFEM planned to assign most of its junior Professional officers to field offices, where they would be supervised by more experienced staff members from those offices and headquarters.

25. The PRESIDENT proposed that the Governing Council should adopt the following decision:

"The Governing Council

"1. Takes note of the report on the United Nations Development Fund for Women (DP/1988/4), which contains proposals for changing from full funding to to partial funding (paras. 22-26 and annex II);

"2. Welcomes, in particular, the close linkages established between UNDP and the Fund, and looks forward to their further strengthening;

"3. Approves, in principle, the change to partial funding, on the understanding that financial and administrative issues arising from this change will be referred to the Budgetary and Finance Committee at its thirty-fifth session in June 1988."

26. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.

