

legislation, measures are necessary for effective implementation and enforcement. Legislative enactment is only one element in the struggle for equality, but an essential one as it provides the legitimate basis for action and acts as a catalyst for societal change.

Paragraph 44*

The inequality of women in most countries stems to a very large extent from mass poverty and the general backwardness of the majority of the world's population caused by underdevelopment, which is a product of imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, apartheid, racism, racial discrimination and of unjust international economic relations. The unfavourable status of women is aggravated in many countries, developed and underdeveloped, by de facto discrimination on the grounds of sex.

Paragraph 45

One of the fundamental obstacles to women's equality is that de facto discrimination and inequality in the status of women and men derive from larger social, economic, political and cultural factors that have been justified on the basis of physiological differences. Although there is no physiological basis for regarding the household and family as essentially the domain of women, for the devaluation of domestic work and for regarding the capacities of women as inferior to those of men, the belief that such a basis exists perpetuates inequality and inhibits the structural and attitudinal changes necessary to eliminate such inequality.

Paragraph 46

Women, by virtue of their gender, experience discrimination in terms of denial of equal access to the power structure that controls society and determines development issues and peace initiatives. Additional differences, such as race, colour and ethnicity, may have even more serious implications in some countries, since such factors can be used as justification for compound discrimination.

Paragraph 47

Fundamental resistance creates obstacles, which have wide-ranging implications for the objectives of the Decade. Discrimination promotes an uneconomic use of women's talents and wastes the valuable human resources necessary for development and for the strengthening of peace. Ultimately, society is the loser if the talents of women are under-utilized as a result of discrimination.

Paragraph 48

The sharp contrasts between legislative changes and effective implementation of these changes are a major obstacle to the full participation of women in society. De facto and indirect discrimination, particularly by reference to marital or family status, often persists despite legislative action. The law as a recourse does not automatically benefit all women equally, owing to the socio-economic inequalities determining women's knowledge of and access to the law,

* The United States reserved its position on paragraph 44 because it did not agree that the obstacles listed should be considered the main reasons for the inequality of women in most countries.