

# THE WORLD CONFERENCE OF THE UN MID-DECADE FOR WOMEN: IMPRESSIONS OF AN OBSERVER,<sup>1)</sup>

In issue 15 of *Al-Raida*<sup>(2)</sup>, a very brief report was made on the «Mid-Decade World Conference of the United Nations for Women» held at Copenhagen, Denmark, 14-30 July 1980. The article was based on various reports about the Conference, especially the one stating women's specific needs in the list of «Resolutions and Decisions» adopted by the Conference.

As the Institute of Women's Studies in the Arab World was not represented at the Conference, it seems helpful and appropriate to publish in this issue some interesting impressions given by a delegate from the University of Dar es-Salaam, Tanzania, to this Conference. These impressions express to a large extent the point of view of Third World women and should be a matter of concern to First World and Second World women as well as to those of Third World countries.

In the first place the author criticizes the «low profile that the Non-Governmental Organizations were forced to assume. They were hardly given an opportunity to air their views even in areas where their role was recognized to be essential... A way should be devised to involve them at the decision-making stages instead of calling on them to carry out decisions made by other bodies.»

A second criticism concerns the slow pace at which the implementation of decisions and resolutions has been going so far. The mid-Decade Conference served to remind the Conference members of all countries of the necessity of achieving more progress in the near future.

In the third place, Conference resolutions emphasized improved health services for women as a factor in their further engagement in gainful employment which will require as well technical training for women as a prerequisite for their effective participation in the economic life of their societies.

A fourth point is the need for involving women in the designing of projects which aim at helping them, especially small scale projects which women could handle on their own, individually or collectively. Awareness-raising on the part of women as to their own problems and needs should form an essential part of any program.

The final point presented by the writer is most important. She says that she was very much aware of

(1) Ruth M. Beshu, lecturer, University of Dar-Es-salaam, Tanzania, and member of the Lutheran World Federation Delegation to the Copenhagen Conference; article published in *ICVA NEWS*, Oct, 1980, No. 87, pp. 12-14.

(2) *Al-Raida*, Feb. 1981, Vol. IV, No. 15, p. 9.

## CONFERENCES

the commercialization of poverty and oppression affecting the great majority of people in underdeveloped countries... It seemed to her that there was a deliberate effort on the part of the developed world to close their eyes to the causes of poverty, oppression, racism and misery, and instead, overplay their roles as aid givers to the victims of those evils. They are quite willing to help the victims of crimes but very reluctant to deal with the criminals. This is a vicious circle, and is poor logic.

The writer concludes by saying: «I wish to question this whole philosophy of perpetual beggars and eternal masters of wealth... Aid in whatever form must remain a very temporary measure, while the search for long-lasting solutions must be intensified. In the long run, it is not the masters who will decide to relinquish their supremacy. It will have to be the affected who will rise and take charge of their fates.»

*(ICVA: International Council  
Voluntary Agencies, the international  
association of non-governmental, non-profit  
organizations, Geneva, Switzerland.)*

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