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THE SOUTHERN CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

September 18, 1995

Ms. Sandy Thurman

FAX: 872-9661

I am faxing you further information on the upcoming Oct. 9 "SCIS Breaking News" panel discussion on the Beijing conference. The title of the program is "U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women: A Report Back," and the other panelists are:

- Ms. Elizabeth Coleman of Maidenform, Inc.
- Ms. Veronica Biggins of Heidrick & Struggles.

Ms. Marilyn Geewax cannot participate because she will be out of town that day.

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the results of the Beijing conference and the impact it will have on women in Atlanta and worldwide. It will be held at the JW Marriott Hotel at Lenox on Monday, Oct. 9 at 7:00 p.m. There will be a \$15 charge for all participating members and \$20 for nonmembers. This will help pay for logistics expenses.

As of this date, sponsors of this event are the Board of Directors Network, Inc. and Play It Again, which is owned by an attorney, Ms. Martha Kuckleburg, in Buckhead. The following cooperating organizations are:

- Metropolitan Atlanta Chapter of 100 Black Women
- Georgia National Organization for Women
- Georgia Advocates for Battered Women and Children
- Georgia Association for Women Lawyers
- Women's Chamber of Commerce of Atlanta
- Georgia Executive Women's Network
- Women Business Owners of Atlanta
- Women in Communications
- JW Marriott Hotel at Lenox

9/26/95

SANDY,

THIS LOOKS GOOD.

We expect that there will be more than 200 people attending. Kindly call me or Dr. Cedric Suzman at 261-5763, if there are any questions.

THANKS

Sincerely,

Sarah

Sarah J. Robbins

Communications Director

ms.

MA
FVZ
SA



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Topic

"THE UNITED NATIONS FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: A REPORT BACK"

Speakers

J. VERONICA BIGGINS served as the Vice Chair of the United States Delegation to the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women. Prior to this assignment, Ms. Biggins served as the Assistant to the President of the United States and Director of Presidential Personnel, and is currently an executive search consultant for Heidrick & Struggles. She has been recognized by *Georgia Trend* as one of the 100 most influential Georgians, and sits on several prominent Boards of Directors.

ELIZABETH J. COLEMAN, delegate to the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, is Chairman of the Board of Directors and Chief Executive Officer of Maidenform, Inc. Ms. Coleman has also served as Vice Chair of the President's Export Council within the Department of Commerce, is a Past President of the Atlanta Legal Aid Society, and serves on the Board of the National Women's Law Center.

SANDRA L. THURMAN, delegate to the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, directs the Advocacy Program at The Task Force for Child Survival and Development at The Carter Center in Atlanta. She currently serves on the Governor's Commission on Women, the Mayor's Council for Community Affairs, and the Advisory Committee for the 1996 Olympic Games. From 1989 to 1993, Ms. Thurman was Executive Director of AID Atlanta and currently serves on its Board of Directors.

Background

As the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women opened in Beijing, China, 5,000 women from 182 countries gathered to create a declaration concerning women's rights. The meeting focused on critical issues such as violence against women, reproductive rights, empowerment and ethnic cleansing. The distinguished leaders heading the United States delegation were Honorary Chair, Hillary Rodham Clinton; Official Chair, Ambassador to the U.N. Madeline Albright; and Co-Chair, Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala. Additional contributions to the Conference's goal of promoting women's rights were made by the 26,000 delegates to the concurrent and ambitious Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Forum.

Since the announcement of China as the host country, controversy plagued the Conference, particularly over the location of the NGO meeting in Huairou outside of Beijing. Tensions in U.S.-Sino relations raised questions as to whether Ms. Rodham Clinton would attend the Conference, although China's release of American detainee Henry Wu insured the First Lady's presence in Beijing. The Conference's agenda continued to be overshadowed by the disruptive actions of the Chinese security forces, and participants of both the U.N. Conference and the NGO Forum complained of police surveillance and various forms of harassment. Nevertheless, an ambitious "Platform for Action" was agreed upon by the Conference calling for the recognition of women's sexual rights and on governments to raise the economic circumstances of women, protect them from increasing levels of violence and improve the status of girls throughout the world. There are high hopes that the Conference will have a positive and far-reaching impact on the social and economic position of women in today's world as we approach the 21st century.

Time & Place

JW Marriott Hotel at Lenox, Atlanta

3300 Lenox Road at Lenox Mall

Monday, October 9, 1995 7:30 p.m., Valet parking is \$2.50 per hour; Self-Park is available.

Admission

SCIS Members & Cooperating Organizations, \$15.00 Non-Members & Guests, \$20.00

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Breaking News Briefing

United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women

Monday
October 9, 1995
7:30 p.m.



I wish to attend the Breaking News Briefing on:

UNITED NATIONS FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

Monday, October 9, 1995, in Atlanta, 7:30 p.m.

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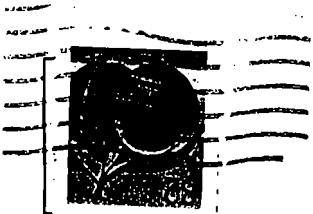
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**The Southern Center for International Studies
and
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invite you to attend a Breaking News Briefing

**"THE UNITED NATIONS FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN:
A REPORT BACK"**

with

J. Veronica Biggins, Vice Chair of the United States Delegation
Elizabeth J. Coleman, Member of the United States Delegation
Sandra L. Thurman, Member of the United States Delegation

Monday, October 9, 1995, 7:30 p.m.
JW Marriott Hotel at Lenox, 3300 Lenox Road, Atlanta

Child care
health care
nutrition



meal

Women Face 'Global Glass Ceiling,' U.N. Says

Annual Study Reports an Absence of Equal Opportunities Around the World

By A. D. Horne
Washington Post Foreign Service

Despite decades of progress in health and education around the world, women still face a "global glass ceiling," a new U.N. report indicates.

The sixth annual Human Development Report, published yesterday by the U.N. Development Program as an "analytical backdrop" for next month's U.N. Women's Conference in Beijing, calls for "a new world order that would embrace full equality of opportunity between men and women as a basic concept."

The report, compiled by a team of economists led by former Pakistani finance minister Mahbub ul Haq, marshals pages of statistical data to show that "in no society do women enjoy the same opportunities as men."

The United States, which the report ranks second only to Canada in overall human development—an index combining health, education and real purchasing power per person—is rated fifth, behind Sweden, Finland, Norway and Denmark, on a new scale that reflects "gender disparities" in 130 countries. And the U.S. ranking slips to eighth—behind the four Nordic countries, Canada, New Zealand and the Netherlands—on a third index that assesses countries' "empowerment" of women in government and business.

"There has been tremendous progress in education and health for women around the world in recent decades," said James Gustave Speth, the U.N. development agency's administrator, in a telephone interview. "But then they hit this glass ceiling."

According to the report:

- Among the developing world's 900 million illiterate people, women outnumber men 2 to 1. Girls constitute 60 percent of the 130 million children without access to primary school.

- Of 1.3 billion people in poverty, 70 percent are women.

- The average female wage is three-fourths of the male wage in the nonagricultural sector in 55 countries with comparable data.

- In developing countries, less than a seventh of the administrators and managers are women.

- Around the world, women occupy 10 percent of the parliamentary seats and 6 percent of the cabinet positions.

The report includes what Speth called "the first concrete estimate" of worldwide economic discrimination against women—"not only unpaid work, but also underpaid. When you add it up it comes, very crudely, to \$11 trillion, about half of global economic output."

To help close these gaps, the report calls for a campaign to ratify and carry out the 1979 U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Although 139 countries have ratified this charter, 41 U.N. members have not signed it; six signatories, including the United States, have not ratified it; and 43 others have attached reservations or conditions to their ratification.

The report also proposes forming a non-governmental monitoring group to "focus on key instances of unequal laws, unequal wage rates for equal work and social or legal indifference to violence against women."

One of the report's most urgent recommendations is for an explicit commitment to bring cases of "mass rape and torture of women" before an international tribunal: "It is intolerable that the use of mass violence against women as a weapon of war... is not considered a war crime."

On the positive side, the report notes that "female life expectancy has increased 20 percent faster than male life expectancy over

the past two decades" and that "in adult literacy and school enrollment, the gaps between women and men were halved between 1970 and 1990 in developing countries." It lists examples of steps to give "more choices to women and men in the workplace":

- "In Finland starting in 1990, parents could choose between two alternatives: after a 12-month maternity leave, either parent can stay at home until the child is 3 years old, with monetary compensation and job guarantees. Or the community must arrange for child care" for working parents.

- "Since 1976, Finland has allowed parents of children under age 4—and Sweden parents of children under age 10—the right to shorten their workday by two hours."

- "Germany and Japan have devised 'flex-time' practices to enable their workers to combine their family needs with production schedules."

- "Sweden has separate taxation for part-time and full-time work to increase after-tax earnings for part-time work."

- "In Zambia, an income tax amendment was introduced in 1987 allowing women to claim child allowances and deductions on their insurance contributions—and removing some tax discrimination against women."

Speth, a former president of the private World Resources Institute, said his U.N. agency from now on "will evaluate every activity in terms of its impact on the advancement of women."

As for the United Nations' record on the subject, Speth conceded, "I think we have a way to go." The agency he has headed since 1993, he said, has adopted "essentially affirmative action policies which we want to use to move forward to establish gender equality.... I know UNICEF [now led by former Peace Corps director Carol Bellamy] has a similar policy."

GLOBAL REPORT CARDS

These tables, drawn from the 1995 Human Development Report, show the world's 10 leading countries in an overall index of health, education and purchasing power, and a new scale that rates countries on progress in empowering women.

► Top 10 countries in Human Development Index 1992 FIGURES

Country	Life expectancy at birth	School enrollment	Real GDP per capita
1. Canada	77.4 years	100%	\$20,520
2. United States	76.0	95	23,760
3. Japan	79.5	77	20,520
4. Netherlands	77.4	88	17,780
5. Finland	75.7	96	16,270
6. Iceland	78.2	81	17,660
7. Norway	76.9	88	18,580
8. France	76.9	86	19,510
9. Spain	77.6	86	13,400
10. Sweden	78.2	78	18,320

► Top 10 countries in gender empowerment 1992 FIGURES

Country	Parliament seats held by women*	Female admin. and managers	Female prof. and technical workers
1. Sweden	33.5%	38.9%	63.5%
2. Norway	39.4	25.4	66.5
3. Finland	39.0	23.9	61.4
4. Denmark	33.0	14.7	62.9
5. Canada	17.3	40.7	56.0
6. New Zealand	21.2	32.3	47.8
7. Netherlands	29.3	13.5	42.5
8. United States	10.3	40.2	50.8
9. Austria	21.1	16.4	48.0
10. Italy	13.0	37.6	46.3

*1994 figures

SOURCE: United Nations Development Program, 1995 Human Development Report

P. A1

Around the World, Women Are United By Child-Care Woes

Poor Facilities and High Costs
Have Moms Scrambling
For Quality Supervision
Long Hours in Dirty Clothes

Much will divide the thousands of women who converge on Beijing next week for the Fourth World Conference on Women, including clashing views on abortion and human rights, not to mention vast disparities in culture. But most will hold one concern in common:

Who cares for their children while they are away?

As women in nearly all regions of the world play a growing role in politics

By Wall Street Journal staff reporters Sue Shellenbarger, Matt Mofjett and Kathy Chen.

and business, child care, once viewed as a family affair, has emerged as an economic issue. Concerns about inadequate child care "will pervade the meeting" as women at the parley seek ways to close the gender gap in areas ranging from pay to education, says Noeleen Heyzer, director of Unifem, the United Nations Development Fund for Women.

Influencing Lives

World-wide, the availability of child care shapes women's economic roles in subtle but profound ways. In some countries, a lack of adequate day care holds down women's wages by forcing them into jobs that allow them to keep their children nearby, such as farm work or street vending. In others, girls are expected to drop out of school to care for siblings while their mothers work, dooming another generation of women to low-skilled jobs. Meanwhile, extended families, a traditional source of child care, are breaking down in many nations just as women face mounting pressure to support their families.

A look at child-care practices across cultures shows sharp contrasts. In rural China, for example, it is common for farmworkers to leave their four-year-olds unattended at home while they toil in the fields, according to the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation in Ypsilanti, Mich. In France, on the other hand, nearly all children that age are enrolled, free of charge, in some of the world's best preschools.

Yet there are remarkable similarities, too, in the child-care problems women face. In most cultures, even when both parents are present, finding care usually remains the responsibility of the mother. Though the poorest women typically rely on relatives and friends, the majority of others in most countries can't afford to hire someone to come into their homes and must find group child-care instead.

For millions of women, that means a nerve-racking search in loosely regulated environments. With exceptions in France and Scandinavia, most women face a trio of day-care obstacles: poor availability, high costs and low quality. Here are a few of their stories:

IBADAN, Nigeria — Folasade Babatunde, a postal clerk and mother of three, still grows angry when she recalls how workers at her day-care center treated her child.

When her one-year-old dropped food all over herself at lunch, no one bothered to clean up the little girl. Ms. Babatunde arrived late that day to find dried food still caked all over the child's clothes and body.

"I said, 'Look, woman, look at my baby!' I felt bad," says Ms. Babatunde. She ordered the day-care workers to wash the child. Another day, she arrived earlier than usual to find that her daughter's diaper hadn't been changed all day.

Child-care quality problems are widespread in Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation. Workers at most of the day-care or preschool facilities used by 19% of urban families are poorly trained and paid, often ignoring the most basic health and safety practices, says Olayemi Onibokun, an early-childhood education professor at the University of Ibadan and a researcher for the High/Scope Foundation. One caretaker may oversee as many as 50 children amid loose regulation by the Nigerian states; some workers drug children so they will sleep, she says.

Nigerian families are already under heavy stress, with inflation running at 100%. Both Ms. Babatunde and her husband, Emmanuel, a secretary at the university, must work full-time just to pay for basic needs. They spend about 10% of their income on child care at their current center, where two teachers watch 30 children including several babies. Ms. Babatunde says she would pay more if she could find better care. "I want what is best for my child," she says.

But nothing better is available nearby and she can't rely on the family's broken-down car to commute elsewhere. In all, day care "has been very, very difficult," Mr. Babatunde says. "But you cannot take a child to the office. So what are you going to do?"

RIO DE JANEIRO — In a country only beginning to recover from a decade of economic ills, Claudia Maria Caetano faces one big child-care challenge: paying for it.

The child-care bill for Ms. Caetano's Please Turn to Page A2, Column 5

p. A2

Continued From First Page

three-year-old son, Felipe, consumes about one-quarter of the \$600-a-month salary she earns as a nurse in the infirmary of a fish-processing plant. Ms. Caetano, who is separated from her husband, avoids eating out and has cut her clothing budget to pay her child-care bill; she is thankful her employer provides the nurse's uniform she wears to work, she says.

Felipe attends Rain Drop Nursery, a day-care center in a middle-class neighborhood on the edge of this giant city. Rain Drop provides a school bus for door-to-door pickup, a huge convenience for Ms. Caetano who, like most Brazilians, can't afford her own car.

In Brazil's machismo culture, shortages of affordable day care keep many women out of office or factory jobs, says Branca Moreira Alves, regional program adviser for Unifem in Brasilia. Of the 36% of Brazilian women who work, more than half of them are in such jobs as home-based piecework.

Ms. Caetano is glad she can afford Rain Drop at all. "The cost is a burden," but any financial stress is better, she says, "than knowing I didn't give Felipe the best care I could afford."

WARSAW — The crumbling of Communism in Poland has been a mixed bag for working mothers — bringing new opportunities, along with many of the child-care problems of free-market economies.

Elzbieta Dziekan, single mother of a three-year-old, is grateful just to have a job; her main worry is that child-care troubles will disrupt it. She searched three months for her post as a cosmetics-factory secretary and had several job offers withdrawn after employers learned she had a child, she says.

She managed to find a preschool for her daughter, though she is stretching to pay for it; tuition consumes 15% of her wages. Many preschools run by the totalitarian regime have closed and child-care fees have risen sharply, to between 11% and 22% of earnings from "a nominal amount" under Communism. This leaves many families unable to afford child care, says Malgorzata Karwowska-Struczyk, an educational psychologist at the Polish Institute for Educational Research.

But Ms. Dziekan worries that her daily arrangements might collapse if her daughter gets even a routine illness. Workplace pressures on women such as Ms. Dziekan are rising, Dr. Karwowska-Struczyk says. Though mothers are entitled under Polish law to 16 weeks' maternity leave, for example, many employers emboldened by the free-market climate disregard it, pressuring women to rush back to work after childbirth in fear of losing their jobs.

Ms. Dziekan is hoping to advance her career. So if her daughter falls ill, instead of taking a day off, she will scramble to find a backup sitter — adding still more to her child-care bill. After only four months on the job, she says, "I can't miss work."

BELJING — When Deng Yao and her husband set out to look for day care for their two-year-old, Wang Yu, they hit hurdle after hurdle.

"To find a nursery was very hard," says Ms. Deng, an accountant for a private software company. "I went to four or five places near our home, but they all said come back" in a few months.

Though the Chinese government has long encouraged employers to provide child care, the country's shift to a free-market economy has led some to close on-site centers. Fees are rising and care for infants and toddlers is scarce. Parents in China are far more dissatisfied than parents in other countries with preschool-staffers and facilities, an 11-nation High/Scope Foundation survey found.

Ms. Deng met many bureaucratic obstacles before she could even begin to worry about quality. Timing was a problem; she needed child care in the middle of the school year, months after most centers require parents to register. Also, she is registered as a resident of another city, leaving her last in line behind Beijing mothers for any openings.

Largely by luck, she says, the couple found a slot at a center run by her husband's alma mater, Beijing University. Though Wang Yu seems to like it, Ms. Deng still isn't completely happy. She worries that all but one of the center's four teachers lack training and the others are women in their 40s and 50s who don't put much effort into relating to the kids.

But settling out on another day-care search is impossible. Ms. Deng would have to take time off from her job — a kind of flexibility that is out of the question, she says.

WOODFORD GREEN, England — For Suzanne Stringer, single mother of two-year-old Clare, finding good child care is a high-stakes gamble.

Though she holds a skilled job as a magistrate's clerk in the court system, Ms. Stringer spends 36% of her take-home pay, more than on her mortgage, to place her child in a private nursery school. Slots at the church-based nursery she chose are in such hot demand that she applied when she was seven months pregnant.

To Ms. Stringer, the nursery, with its trained staff, seemed like the safest bet for Clare. Most day care in Britain is provided by relatives or "child-minders," who care for a few children in their homes and typically are poorly paid.

But even in a nursery, good care isn't assured, says Carol Sherriff, director of the Daycare Trust, a nonprofit child-care information concern in London. "You can pay a lot of money for a nursery and still get a bad one," she says. British regulators oversee mainly child-care health and safety conditions, leaving other quality worries to parents.

In that environment, Ms. Stringer's friends have hit some jarring problems. One placed her baby in a nursery where she wasn't fed well and lost weight. Another, after facing "screaming battles" with her son over attending day care, had to take several months of unpaid leave from work to find a better place.

Already, Ms. Stringer is worried about her next move: finding after-school care for Clare in two years. She will allow six months for the search, she says: "then all I can do is hope I am as lucky as I have been with the nursery."

JOLIET, Ill. — In the vast smorgasbord of U.S. consumer markets, Chris Rossman, a middle manager for an oil company, would seem to enjoy a wealth of child-care choices unavailable to mothers in the rest of the world.

But most options actually available for Ms. Rossman's children, ages six and two, fail to meet even her most basic standards: reliability and quality.

Like China's Ms. Deng, Ms. Rossman faced shortages of infant and toddler care for her son. Right after Ms. Rossman conceived her son, she put his name on a waiting list at a day-care center. Even with the early sign-up, she doubts she would have secured a place if her daughter hadn't already been enrolled in the center.

Like Nigeria's Ms. Babatunde, she worries about quality. At one center, teacher turnover was so high that Ms. Rossman's daughter never got attached to any of the adults around her. And when her son fell ill with pneumonia, teachers failed to call her until his temperature had climbed to 104 degrees. "They said, 'We just noticed it.' I was mortified," says Ms. Rossman, who had given them instructions that morning to watch him. The child was hospitalized for three days.

Like Poland's Ms. Dziekan, she worries about missing work when her children are sick. When both got chicken pox while her husband, a management consultant, was traveling on business, Ms. Rossman scrambled to cover her job, working at night from home and calling in her mother, who drove four hours from Indianapolis, and her mother-in-law to care for the children.

And like Britain's Ms. Stringer, she yearns for some assurance from an impartial source that her children will be well cared for. Never in the places she has lived — first Dayton, Ohio, and now Joliet, a working-class community of 83,000 near Chicago — has she been able to find what she wants: A center accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, a professional group.

Even using the best the market has to offer in her area — something she can afford only because she and her husband both have good jobs — she has often "felt like the child-care problems were almost insurmountable," she says. "But compared with what some other working mothers face, it's a piece of cake."

p. A-5

U.N. Forum Hears Speech By Burmese

Women Told a Cure For Misery Is Power

By PATRICK E. TYLER

HUAIROU, China, Aug. 31 — In a videotaped address that seemed to radiate across Asia with its admonitions against intolerance by authoritarian governments and violence against women, the Burmese Nobel laureate, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, today opened a mammoth meeting of private women's groups gathered from all over the world to shape the issues of the Fourth World Conference on Women, which opens Monday.

"For millenia women have dedicated themselves almost exclusively to the task of nurturing, protecting and caring for the young and the old, striving for the conditions of peace that favor life as a whole," Mrs. Aung San Suu Kyi said.

"It is time to apply in the arena of the world the wisdom and experience that women have gained," she added.

Her criticism of repressive and male-dominated governments was as blunt, perhaps more so, than any statement the opposition leader has made since her release from house arrest this summer, and she said her video-taped message had only reached China after unspecified "difficulties."

The address was an extraordinary beginning for what may be the largest convocation of women ever assembled to lobby world governments, if only because it was delivered in China, whose Communist Party leadership has become so intolerant to the kind of challenge Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi represents that it has jailed thousands of dissidents and persecuted those who have undertaken even modest efforts to petition for democratic reform.

The women's meetings here, an hour away from the main conference in Beijing, are private and separate, yet officially connected to the main conference by an agreement between the United Nations and China.

Mrs. Aung San Suu Kyi's videotaped message was in marked contrast to the official male-led Burmese delegation, which, reports say, will insist Burmese women already have full equality with men.

"Insecure people tend to be intolerant," she said, "and their intolerance unleashes forces that threaten the security of others."

In the videotape, recorded in Myanmar, formerly Burma, she said, women have not been given political power in the countries around the world and have been exploited in Asia's sex trade.

"It is want that has driven so

many of our young girls across our borders to a life of sexual slavery where they are subject to constant humiliation and ill treatment," she said. "It is fear of persecution for their political beliefs that has made so many of our people feel that even in their own homes they cannot live in dignity and security."

The official Chinese news media did not report her words, but the many foreign, shortwave-radio broadcasts that reach China are likely to carry the speech within a day or two.

More than 4,000 women showed up for Mrs. Aung San Suu Kyi's address at a converted cinema that sat only 1,500. Most were turned away.

It was not clear what prevented her from delivering her speech in person except that her arrival as an pro-democracy opposition leader would have drawn obvious parallels to China's suppression of its own opposition movement.

The opening day of the conference, where more than 17,000 delegates have arrived so far, was also marked by acts of defiance against the Chinese authorities, who have erected one of the most pervasive and intrusive security environments ever put in place for a United Nations-sponsored meeting.

Outside, the human rights group Amnesty International staged a demonstration to call attention to the plight of political prisoners around the world.

The Chinese authorities had said they would not tolerate demonstrations outside the perimeter of the conference site here, and they repeated today that they will not brook any criticism of Chinese leaders.

"The Chinese have said they will not allow free speech on the grounds of the forum," said Pierre Sane, secretary general of Amnesty International. "We're calling their bluff."

Addressing the security problems, Irene M. Santiago, the executive director of the conference, said, "We are really going to hold the U.N. accountable to us" to insure that freedom of expression is guaranteed and that harassment of delegates and journalists is ended.

During a news conference today, Ms. Santiago also spoke with exasperation about the problems that have afflicted the forum because of inadequate services and the physical separation from the conference in Beijing.

But she added, some Chinese officials have tried to help the women make the best of the site, which she said was far superior to that of the Nairobi conference in 1985.

MEDDLING BY CHINA IS SEEN AS MARRING MEETING ON WOMEN

U.N. IS PRESSED TO STEP IN

New Incidents Called Harmful
to Stature of Boutros-Ghali
and Beijing Credibility

By PATRICK E. TYLER

HUAIROU, Sept. 1 — As Chinese security forces continued today to obstruct the freedom of movement and expression of nearly 20,000 women gathered here from around the world, a senior Western official warned that protests over how China is serving as host to the Fourth World Conference on Women threaten to overshadow the event itself, seriously tarnishing the images of both China and the United Nations.

"It is just out of control and we have protested very strongly," said the senior official, who is among the leaders who have traveled here as official delegates to the women's conference.

"The United Nations has got to move on this," he said, noting that the world body has a responsibility as guarantor of the conference.

China's restrictive actions here will damage its prospects for being selected as host for major international events in the future, including Olympic events, the Western official said. And the failure of the United Nations leadership to push China to live up to the conditions under which it was allowed to become the host of this event could undermine the effort of the United Nations Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, to win a second term as leader of the world body.

"China is hurting itself so much," this official warned. "But Boutros-Ghali's leadership is also on the line in this, and the governments will hold him responsible."

Western governments preparing for Monday's opening in Beijing of the main conference are making strong complaints to United Nations representatives here and in New York over the persistent intrusion by Chinese security forces into the large-scale proceedings already underway in this distant Beijing suburb and into the preparations for the main conference that starts Monday.

Separately, the women who are leading the NGO Forum, the amalgam of 2,000 private, or nongovernmental, groups meeting here, have repeatedly appealed to both Chinese and United Nations officials for relief from the massive logistical dif-

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ficulties imposed by the isolation of the meetings here and from the daily intrusions by Chinese secret police.

The women's meetings here are private and unofficial, but their importance as a forum for shaping policy and ideas has been recognized by the United Nations, which guarantees their security under a letter of agreement with the Chinese Government.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali, has failed to intervene with the Chinese authorities, and his special representative in Beijing, Esmat Kittani, was "nowhere to be found" today, said delegation members from Western governments, who asked not to be identified.

A senior Western official said tonight that Chinese security agents violated an agreement with the United Nations by seeking to control access to the conference site in Beijing. Several Chinese plainclothes police officers entered the United Nations hall and pursued and ejected an accredited journalist, the official said.

"They were not supposed to be in

there at all," the official said. "It is just out of control and we have protested very strongly. The United Nations has got to move on this."

In another instance today, the proceedings of a "global tribunal" on human rights for women was interrupted when Chinese interpreters ceased translation for a packed auditorium just as the secretary general of Amnesty International, Pierre Sané, began to speak.

China criticized the London-based human rights organization this week for its long history of reports on human rights abuses in China. Chinese translation was also cut off for Sharon K. Hom, a law professor at the City University of New York, who followed Mr. Sané and who addressed some of the same issues.

To overcome the disruption, Ms. Hom spoke in English and then translated the gist of her remarks into Chinese for the audience.

After the meeting, Ms. Hom was mobbed by delegates who seemed to revel in her determination to overcome the obstacle the Chinese had sought to erect to prevent her human rights message from reaching the Chinese-speaking delegates in the

audience.

"Look at what they are doing here," said a young Turkish delegate named Leyla, who spoke on condition that she not be identified further. "They have cut off our shuttle buses, some people have been kicked out of their hotels in the middle of the night and I am afraid that if I let you quote my name, they will kick me out of my room, too."

Actions that have disrupted the women's meetings include these:

Chinese officials have drastically curtailed or canceled the transportation links they said they would maintain between this remote suburb, an hour's drive from Beijing, and the Beijing site of the formal governmental conference. Shuttle service that was supposed to operate every 20 minutes was cut to twice a day, delegates say.

Human rights advocates participating in the conference have been denied access to facilities to hold news conferences.

The Chinese publishing house that had agreed to provide press facilities for a special newspaper for the women's meetings here and for the conference reneged on its agree-

ment once the newspaper staff arrived in Beijing.

Journalists seeking to cover the women's meetings have been put under heavy surveillance by Chinese security forces, and their telephone services have been cut or frequently disrupted.

U.N. Leader Cancels Visit

UNITED NATIONS, Sept. 1 (AP) — Suffering from the flu, the United Nations Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali canceled a planned visit to Beijing, where he was to open next week's Fourth World Conference on Women.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali's opening address will be read instead by the Under Secretary General, Ismat Kittani, who is already in Beijing, a United Nations spokesman, Joe Sills, said today.

The 72-year-old Mr. Boutros-Ghali canceled the trip "on the strongest possible advice of his doctors," Mr. Sills said. He was to go to South Korea and Japan after Beijing, but has also canceled those trips.

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MEETING OF WOMEN SAYS SURVEILLANCE BY CHINA MUST END

THREATENS TO END FORUM

Sense of Outrage and Crisis
Intensifies as Beginning of
U.N. Conference Nears

By SETH FAISON

HUAIROU, China, Sept. 2 — Two days before the opening of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, leaders of the parallel forum here delivered an ultimatum to their Chinese hosts today, warning that if security forces did not cease their intense surveillance of participants within 24 hours, they could close the forum down.

With nearly 30,000 women gathered here for a bonanza of international networking and open workshops, the demand by leaders of the Non-Governmental Organizations Forum on Women that security agents back off intensified a sense of crisis among United Nations and other officials that their long-planned conference could be ruined by unruly hosts.

Outrage over pervasive surveillance — for a fourth day participants complained that they were aggressively filmed, followed and harassed, although Chinese officials denied the accusations — came to a boil at a news conference where members of the forum's leadership committee issued their ultimatum.

"If they do not comply, we will go back to our constituencies and ask: Do you want to cancel, do you want to boycott, do you want to riot, or what?" said Salamo Fullavi, a member of the committee. "If they say let's go home, that's what it means."

Concern over the brazenly pushy behavior by security agents was echoed by senior members of the United States delegation to the United Nations conference, including Timothy Wirth, Undersecretary of State for Global Affairs, who said he thought the integrity of the meeting was being threatened.

"If they continue this, they are going to find themselves making the conference extremely difficult," Mr. Wirth said of the Chinese organizers. "They are meeting a lot of frustration and concern from people on how they are handling this."

With First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton scheduled to arrive in Beijing early Tuesday, Mr. Wirth and other members of the United States delegation seemed eager to defuse the crisis so that Mrs. Clinton's participation is not swallowed by an unraveling of the United Nations conference, which opens on Monday and runs through Sept. 15.

In Washington, Calvin Mitchell, a spokesman for the National Security Council, said that White House officials are "obviously following the events carefully" and added that "at this point I am unaware of any

made before noon on Sunday, when the committee's 19 members are scheduled to assess the situation.

With a format so deeply rooted in free speech and movement, taking place in a country where political activity is so tightly controlled by Communist Party authorities, perhaps such a confrontation was inevitable.

"The Chinese have to understand that the idea of a U.N. conference is the free flow of ideas," said Melinda Kimble, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for international organization affairs.

Yet Chinese leaders are unused to allowing any unscripted political gathering to occur, apparently concerned that any open discussion could include direct criticism of China's Communist Party rule, a point of sensitivity that often seems to verge on paranoia.

Late tonight, the officer in charge of security at Huairou denied that the police had followed or conducted surveillance on any participants. The officer, Zhang Kemian, insisted that he had mobilized "a certain number of police officers" to guard against criminals at the forum but, in an apparent concession, said he had reduced the number "now that security has been initially ensured."

Mr. Zhang also asked for patience. "Although Chinese police have accumulated experience in providing security services for large international sports and cultural events, it is the first time for them to cover an event as large as the current one," Mr. Zhang said, according to a report from the New China News Agency.

"It takes time for the police to adapt to the circumstances and improve their mode of work so as better to meet the requirements of large international conferences."

Most participants at the forum seem eager to concentrate on the issues facing the conference, such as violence against women, and expressed frustration with the distraction caused by intrusive security agents.

"It's really ridiculous," said Marilyn Golden of the Disabled Rights Education and Defense Fund, based in San Francisco. "But now that we've started to complain about access for the disabled, they've been increasing surveillance on us, too, coming up and taking pictures at our meetings."

Dorothy Q. Thomas, director of the women rights project for Human Rights Watch, a New York-based group, said that a man who appeared to be a security agent leaned over her shoulder to film her notes at a workshop on human rights.

"We want to speak openly with Chinese women about conditions they encounter in this country," said Ms. Thomas. "But in an atmosphere like this, these women are terrified to come forward and this is happening under the umbrella of the United Nations at a conference on the advancement of women's rights."

Repeating a charge that many other women also voiced, Ms. Thomas said what she saw at Huairou were the worst conditions she had experienced at any of the many conferences she has attended.

"That the United Nations has allowed this to occur is appalling," she said.

Mr. Wirth also laid responsibility for persuading the Chinese to cooperate squarely at the feet of Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the United Nations General Secretary, whose staff announced that he will not attend the conference because he has fallen ill with the flu.

"It's very important that we have the U.N. at the highest level weighing in very heavily," said Mr. Wirth. "It's something that Boutros-Ghali must do with the Chinese."

Mr. Wirth said that he had met with Mr. Boutros-Ghali's representative, Ismat Kittani, and that Mr. Kittani had blamed the troubles on flaws in the agreement signed by the United Nations and the Chinese over logistics. Efforts to reach Mr. Kittani were unsuccessful.

Mr. Wirth added that he had canceled plans to accompany Mrs. Clinton to Mongolia later in the week because of the likelihood that the conference would require constant, high-level attention.

Many of the men filming and harassing participants wore the passes of acceded participants in the conference. Ms. Santiago, the forum's executive director, said there was no way to tell how many of the 5,000 registered participants in the forum from China were actually working as security agents.

Another 23,500 participants from overseas have registered for the forum, another official said today. Around 4,000 journalists are also attending.

Throughout the forum, women expressed frustration with the Chinese hosts.

"As you can see, they are really against human rights," said Afaf Mahfouz, a representative from the Congo. "We want to protect human rights."

Reports Warn Of Lost Ground

WASHINGTON, Sept. 2 (Reuters) — Many governments are trying to reverse gains for women's rights, using concepts of women's "special role" to deny them equality and civil liberties, a human rights group said today.

"Some governments, among them Iran, the Holy See, India, Guatemala and Egypt, have threatened to roll back the gains for women's rights negotiated at previous conferences on human rights, population and social development," said the report from the group, Human Rights Watch.

In a statement accompanying the global report on women's rights, Human Rights Watch said the idea that governments must respect women's rights in order to advance women's political, social and economic status was "under siege."

Forum in China Proceeds but So Do Restrictions

By PATRICK E. TYLER

HUIROU, China, Sept. 3 — Divided over whether to step up their confrontation with China over excessive security and poor facilities, the leaders of an international women's forum here said today that they would carry on despite concerns that, in some cases, freedom of expression was being severely stifled.

The leaders of about 2,000 private groups meeting here for the Non-Governmental Organizations Forum on Women threatened on Saturday to suspend or cancel their meeting unless China withdrew its oppressive security forces from the meeting site within 24 hours.

But in the next 24 hours, further harassment and surveillance by Chinese security officers, some armed with video cameras, occurred inside the 100-acre area reserved for meetings by the 30,000 participants. The committee did say, however, that there were fewer complaints of intimidation.

United States officials expressed concern that Hillary Rodham Clinton, who arrives in Beijing early Tuesday and is tentatively scheduled to address the women here on Wednesday, could face an unstable and unpredictable environment.

"I am really worried about that," said Timothy E. Wirth, Undersecretary of State for Global Affairs, a member of the American delegation.

The forum here is a parallel gathering to a United Nations-sponsored conference in Beijing, the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Under a letter of agreement with the United Nations, Chinese security agents are supposed to treat the enclosed area for both conferences like United Nations property, permitting complete freedom of expression and even demonstrations.

China's Communist Party leaders and the security organs they have put in charge of containing this cell of free speech they have allowed into

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Women's Forum in China To Continue Despite Curbs

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the country, appear incapable of tolerating what is truly a foreign presence.

During the sessions today, dozens, perhaps hundreds, of plainclothes Chinese security agents continued to roam the meeting site, keeping close watch on, and even harassing several groups, including a number of exiled Tibetan women and their associates.

The swing from confrontation to conciliation reflected, in part, the internal politics of the steering committee for the women's organizations gathered here.

Supatra Masdit, a newly elected member of Thailand's Parliament and potential candidate for Prime Minister, is the "convener" of this forum and, in a marathon private meeting today, she prevailed on her colleagues to overlook a certain amount of intrusion by Chinese security officers and to try to deal with them through consultations.

Afterwards, Ms. Masdit took pains to assert that the 24-hour period she and her colleagues set on Saturday was misinterpreted.

"It was unfortunate that the 24 hours mentioned" was "interpreted as a deadline," Ms. Masdit said in a statement issued late today. The statement also said that, "In general, the forum is going well, with participants engaging in planned and spontaneous events."

In their statement, the women leaders added, "One day after meeting with senior officials of the China organizing committee regarding issues including surveillance, access to facilities for the disabled and transportation, participants indicate improvement" and "a desire for the meeting to continue."

"Remaining areas of concern include freedom of expression for and conflict between certain groups," the statement continued, adding that for the duration of the meeting in this rural suburb of Beijing, "reports of problems or incidents" would be taken up with the Chinese hosts "on a case by case basis."

The delegates to these meetings seemed divided on whether their goals were being undermined by China's attempts to contain them.

Eunice A. C. Okeke, a university lecturer from Nigeria, said, "I have participated in all the activities I wanted to; that's why I haven't noticed any problems with the security."

But Monica Boethius, from Stockholm, said she came to China expecting trouble after the forum was moved to Huirou, away from the United Nations meeting.

"But," she added, "I never expected that the Chinese would be sabotaging this conference as effectively as they have been."

"We are spread over an enormous area that is divided up," she continued, "there is never any information for the delegates; we spend hours walking around — this all prevents us from doing the job we came here for."

The worst harassment today occurred when a Canadian lawyer, Eva Herzer, who traveled here with a number of Tibetan exiles, was assaulted when she tried to distribute materials advocating the views of the Tibetans at a workshop on population and reproductive health issues in Tibet.

"Suddenly, they pulled the materials out of my hands and pushed me up against a wall," she said, referring to a number of Chinese attending the workshop who were wearing delegates' badges. "Someone punched me in the side and tried to grab my bag," she said, adding, "I was really scared."

Zhang Kemian, the Chinese police official in charge of forum security, said early today that, the police commitment to insuring free speech notwithstanding, "The Chinese police do not wish to see any acts violating China's laws and infringing upon China's sovereignty, or attempts to use the forum to create conflicts among different ethnic groups with an aim to split the country, nor are such acts permitted by the entire Chinese people."

Michael D. McCurry, White House press secretary, said in Hawaii today: "We very much regret the restrictions on free expression and association which have been occurring in Beijing. We believe those are wrong and they are counterproductive to the work of a very important international conference."

He added, "The First Lady especially hopes that those matters will be cleared up prior to her arrival."

Mrs. Clinton is to arrive in China on Tuesday after stopping Monday night in Guam.

On Saturday, the United States joined in calling on the United Nations to intervene to get the Chinese to withdraw their security forces from the meetings here.

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Forum Features Dissident Videos

Burmese Nobel Winner Addresses Women on Tape Smuggled Into China

By Steven Mufson
Washington Post Foreign Service

BEIJING, Aug. 31—It was a double-feature video day at the Nongovernmental Organizations Forum on Women—but not the sort of blockbuster performance that host nation China is eager to repeat.

Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, the Burmese dissident recently released after nearly six years of house arrest, delivered a videotaped keynote address that had been slipped into China for the first full day of the forum.

"It is not the prerogative of men alone to bring light to this world. Women, with their capacity for compassion and self-sacrifice, their courage and perseverance, have done much to dissipate the darkness of intolerance and hate," Aung San Suu Kyi said in the video.

The video was noteworthy as one of the first public speeches by the newly released democracy advocate and because it was shown in tightly controlled Communist China, which has maintained close relations with the military dictatorship in Burma. Aung San Suu Kyi did not seek to attend the women's forum for fear of being barred from reentering Burma.

Chinese authorities made no effort to interfere with the showing of the video, but witnesses said a scuffle broke out between Chinese security people and conference participants following the screening of a video about Tibet titled "Voices in Exile." The topic is a sensitive one here because China invaded Tibet in the 1950s and ever since has been struggling against an exile-based independence movement.

The video was shown in a small third-floor room in a building in Huairou, the suburban town about an hour's drive outside Beijing where the NGO Forum is taking place. While it was playing, Chinese security officials scribbled notes. Afterward, a Chinese person attending the session grabbed the video out of the machine. He passed it to a Chinese security officer who started backing out of the room, but the 30 to 40 people who were crowded into the room moved to block the door, one of them later recounted. One member of the audience snatched the video back, and it quickly vanished from view once again.

The incident was just one of the controversies that have dogged the conference, which is supposed to be about drawing up recommendations to help promote women's health, human rights and economic advancement around the world, in anticipation of the official U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women, which opens here next week.

See CHINA, A31, Col. 1



An elderly woman passes a billboard promoting the NGO Forum in Huairou, near Beijing.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

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CHINA, From A25

Participants complained today that the Chinese had broken commitments to provide adequate transportation to the meeting. Instead of buses every 20 minutes, as promised to the United Nations in June, China provided once-a-day bus service to and from Beijing hotels.

Many women also complained about heavy surveillance of particularly controversial groups. Chinese security men photographed and videotaped a workshop about the advocacy of women's rights in the United States and China. A caucus to discuss the human rights portions of the "program of action" document to be issued at the end of the forum was also attended by security men.

But more than a dozen activists of the London-based human rights group Amnesty International took part in an unprecedented protest on Chinese soil without much interference. Standing in front of the Huairou meeting place, they held up posters and T-shirts bearing pictures and names of 12 female victims of human rights abuses.

The people on the posters included Chinese journalist Gao Yu, who was jailed last year for six years on charg-

es of leaking state secrets in articles published in Hong Kong.

Gao, 51, whose reports in the independent *Economics Weekly* won her an international reputation in the mid-1980s, was arrested in October 1993, just two days before she was to leave China to begin a journalism fellowship in the United States. She is reported to be in poor health.

Thousands of people, including actresses Jane Fonda and Sally Field, still have not been able to obtain visas from the Chinese government even though China told a senior U.N. official in June that China would not limit the number of people who could attend.

Chen Jian, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, said his government issued 27,496 visas but did not specify how many were for the NGO Forum and how many for the official U.N. conference.

Organizers said 17,000 women had arrived by Wednesday night to take part in the forum—about 10,000 fewer than had registered for hotel rooms and nearly 20,000 fewer than had registered in New York for the meeting. U.S. officials said some people who arrived in Beijing without visas were forced to sleep at the airport and fly back to Japan.

Women's Forum Daily Newspaper Silenced by Chinese Regulatory Roadblock

By Steven Mufson
Washington Post Foreign Service

BEIJING, Sept. 1—Stymied by Chinese regulations, the U.N.-designated daily “newspaper of record” at the Nongovernmental Organizations Forum on Women has been unable to publish a single issue, despite protests from U.N. officials.

So far five issues of the Earth Times have failed to appear because the Beijing newspaper it had contracted with to print them says it is too busy with other printing work. No other newspaper or printer in Beijing will print the Earth Times without a special government permit, which the forum paper has been unable to obtain.

“We’re not an ideological rag,” said a frustrated Pranay Gupte, the paper’s publisher and editor who worked for 15 years at the New York Times and who now writes a column for the international edition of Newsweek. “Our objective is to cover the U.N. conference and issues, not to cover ideology or China.”

Gupte added that as a result of the problems, “We are

in a major bind.” He said if the obstacles can’t be removed by Saturday, he would return to New York with his production team and put out the paper in New York as a protest paper, albeit one with little impact on the forum proceedings here.

The silencing of the paper is just one of the incidents

“Our objective is to cover the U.N. conference, not ideology or China.”

— Pranay Gupte, publisher

in which participants say China has failed to live up to the commitments it made when it agreed to host both the official U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women, which opens Monday, and the parallel meeting of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) concerned about women’s

issues. Two other newspapers—one in French and one published by a women’s feature news service—that were invited by the United Nations to cover the meetings have also had trouble finding the means to publish.

Typically when the United Nations holds a conference, several newspapers are published daily to report on the conference events, participants and negotiations. The newspaper editors usually come from abroad and stay in the host country during the conference.

But some sources say that when Premier Li Peng attended the U.N. conference on poverty in Copenhagen last spring, he was offended by an opinion article in one of the NGO Forum newspapers which called him a “butcher.” Many analysts believe that that was when China began to consider measures to minimize contact between women at the meeting and Chinese.

The Earth Times, a non-profit publication that has covered other U.N. meetings in Rio de Janeiro, Cairo and Copenhagen, had an agreement to publish first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton’s column during the women’s conference.

The paper had planned to publish eight pages every day for 16 days and had an agreement with the Workers’ Daily to publish it. The Workers’ Daily had demanded a price about 50 percent higher than the price Earth Times pays its printer in New York City. And Earth Times also agreed to put up its 20 reporters, editors and production workers at the Workers’ Daily hotel. The total cost of putting out the paper in Beijing: \$351,000, says Gupte.

Because Earth Times had obtained all the necessary approvals and invitations from the United Nations and China’s Foreign Ministry, the paper sold advertising for the forum editions to cover part of the cost. Several foundations, including the Rockefeller and New York Times foundations, have also given money to the paper.

Women Agree China Forum Will Go On

By Steven Mufson
Washington Post Foreign Service

BEIJING, Sept. 3—Despite new confrontations with Chinese security officials, leaders of an international women's forum backed off today from an ultimatum demanding that China stop harassment of the meeting participants.

The forum leaders declared in a statement that there had been some easing of restrictions at the forum site and that it would go on as planned. "In general, the forum is going well with participants engaged in planned and spontaneous results," they said.

Shortly before the statement was issued, however, Chinese police scuffled with Islamic women demonstrators and are alleged to have punched a Canadian who tried to distribute leaflets about Tibet.

The controversy revolved around the Non-governmental Organizations Forum on Women, timed to coincide with the U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women, which begins Monday in Beijing. The NGOs, who began meeting Thursday in Huairou, about an hour's drive from Beijing, have complained that Chinese security men have videotaped discussions, searched papers, followed participants and disrupted meetings.

Forum leaders said their remarks Saturday setting a noon deadline for action were misinterpreted. They said Chinese officials had addressed some concerns and that, for example, "Participants with disabilities report marked improvement in access." The forum sites have virtually no ramps, and people in wheelchairs need to be carried into most buildings.

The NGO Forum leaders said participants "indicate improvement in these areas as well as a desire for the meeting to continue." However, the statement added: "Remaining areas of concern include freedom of expression."

The committee also was demanding action on an incident Saturday in which Chinese-language publicity material was confiscated from a tent used by lesbians.

Chinese officials continued to deny that there have been any significant problems with the women's meetings so far. At the same time, they enabled Earth Times to start publishing. The paper, invited by the United Nations to be the official newspaper of record for the forum, has already missed six of its 16 planned issues.

While women's groups were defending their right to free speech within the confines



Kim Miyeo, a South Korean delegate at the women's forum near Beijing, is overcome with emotion as she participates in a demonstration in support of equal rights for the disabled.

of the forum site, routine restrictions continued to apply to the rest of China. A Chinese court has sentenced leading dissident Liu Gang to 10 days in jail for refusing to renounce his ideas and for failing to report to police every week, a relative told the Reuters news agency.

Liu had been jailed after student demonstrations were crushed in 1989. Recently freed, he has had frequent quarrels with police. He was arrested Friday. His release will coincide with the end of the women's forum.

Some changes were evident today at the forum. Chinese police mostly wore plain clothes. And in the hotel lobby of the Lidon Holiday Inn, a sign saying that visitors were prohibited in rooms was changed to say that they should sign in and leave by 11 p.m.

Yet those changes were not enough to halt new clashes. Islamic women demonstrators—some demanding an end to the embargo against Iraq, some protesting a U.N. document enshrining sex education and reproduc-

tive rights, and others demanding greater rights and freedoms for Muslim women—were prevented by police from marching out of the forum site into the town of Huairou.

Police also chased the Canadian woman handing out leaflets about Tibet.

The harassment from the Chinese government helped galvanize many groups that want first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton to speak out about human rights at the U.N. conference.

"No one who attends the conference will have a louder or more influential voice than you will," William Shultz, executive director of Amnesty International USA, said in an open letter to Mrs. Clinton. "Should you fail to address several critical issues, your silence will speak volumes."

Tens of Thousands of Women Sitting Around Talking

By KATHY CHEN and MARCUS W. BRACCHI
Staff Reporters of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

As grassroots groups prepare to fold up their exhibition tents and head home from the Fourth U.N. World Conference on Women, many are launching last-minute lobbying efforts that can be desperate or downright dirty.

REPORTERS' NOTEBOOK

Since their part of the conference began a week ago, some 27,000 unofficial delegates have been holding exhibitions, workshops and debates in Huairou, the town an hour's drive from Beijing that is the site of an unofficial meeting. The grassroots groups have been trying to influence the nearly 5,000 attendants and journalists at the official U.N. forum in Beijing to see things their way. Over the next week, the official group will create a "Platform for Action" that will be a kind of economic and social blueprint for the world's women.

The distance between Huairou and Beijing has made lobbying difficult. "We've been separated. We've had no access," grumbles delegate Argergy Giavasis, who spent some of her time shopping and sightseeing instead.

But logistical problems haven't stopped other groups, such as the International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission. "We stand in hallways, we stand inside and outside sessions, we find their room numbers at hotels and leave fliers for them," says Julie Dorf, executive director.

Tracy Mickens admits that she goes "around eavesdropping on conversations" in the hallways. Ms. Mickens, coordinator for international advocacy at Planned Parenthood Federation of America Inc., also swaps information with like-minded delegates trying to figure out what the opponents are arguing.

Among such opponents, Dale O'Leary and A. Majid Katme make an unlikely pair. Mrs. O'Leary is from Maryland, a 54-year-old Christian woman whose business card describes her as a "family mother." Dr. Katme, president of London's Islamic Medical Association, is a Muslim who favors the collarless white blouse and black jacket popular among Iran's top leaders. Together, they are tag-team pro-family lobbyists.

"I'm looking for differences in our views and can't find any," says Dr. Katme.

Call it the Holy Alliance. Much of the debate at the conference in Beijing and at the forum in Huairou has centered on abortion, pre- or extramarital sex, contraception and sexual orientation.

Groups as diverse as the Vatican, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Christian organizations from the U.S. and Europe have joined forces. Many of the groups originally bonded at last year's International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, where they fought platforms that included references to contraception and abortion.

That was where Mrs. O'Leary and Dr. Katme met. "We share so many values: that virginity is normal in our world . . . that marriage is a sacred contract, a divine contract, whether in Islam or in Christianity," says Dr. Katme.

"Our Muslim friends are wonderful because they understand all this," adds Mrs. O'Leary.

Many of the conflicts surfacing here are simply cover for political battles that are taking place at home. Take the Iranian delegation's campaign to drop references to "universality of human rights" and "equality of women." The official delegation wants the word "equity" to replace "equality" in the conference platform. Equity isn't objective and

would permit Iran to keep laws that forbid women from holding certain public posts, such as the presidency, without flouting the platform.

Fighting Tehran is the National Council of Resistance of Iran, a Paris-based parliament-in-exile that is represented in Beijing as a nongovernmental group. Soheila Sadegh, a soft-spoken 36-year-old who belongs to the council, notes that in Iran, women's career paths are restricted, their rights under marriage are limited, and they must wear head coverings. "It's ludicrous to talk about women's rights in a country where women cannot choose their own clothing," she says.

Hillary Rodham Clinton's speech Tuesday, in which she criticized China for its "indefensible" restrictions on participants at the Huairou meeting and indirectly slammed its human-rights record, drew a much-delayed reaction Thursday.

Responded Foreign Ministry spokesman Chen Jian: "We take note of the fact that some people from some countries made some indiscreet remarks or criticisms. . . . We would like to caution these people to pay more attention to the problems prevalent within their own countries."

After a day in which many women complained about how little money the world was spending on women's issues, the United Nations Development Fund for Women yesterday celebrated its 20th anniversary with a gala party at a fancy Beijing club.

But the organization, which has an annual budget of \$11 million—not enough to cover the air fares of even a third of the participants at the Beijing conferences—found some willing sponsors.

"We are family hotels, even though we cater to

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businessmen, and we wanted people to know about us," says Herbert Carran, food and beverage director of the Moevenpick Hotel in Beijing, which clipped in \$1,000 and staff for the party.

Canadian Airlines International paid about \$5,000 to fly two women in from Argentina and Brazil. Why? "My wife twisted my arm a lot," says Ed Grauvogl, the airline's general manager in Beijing. "And I respect her."

Tracy Mickens has found inspiration at the conference; in both the sung and unsung heroines of the international women's movement.

In addition to Mrs. Clinton, high-profile Americans attending the conference have included Gloria Steinem, Betty Friedan, Jane Fonda and former Congresswoman Bella Abzug. But Ms. Mickens says her most memorable discussion was with a sociologist from Zambia who got pregnant to debunk a popular belief in her country that talismans and herbal medicines are effective contraceptives.

"It made my mission real again," says Ms. Mickens. "It's not just handing out some papers to the press. That's what I'll take away from this conference."

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CHINESE AIDES VEX A WOMEN'S FORUM

Gathering Related to U.N.'s
Harried by Security Men

By PATRICK E. TYLER

HUAIROU, China, Aug. 29 — Just after dawn today, a senior staff member of an international women's forum assembling here left her hotel room for stroll around Huairou reservoir, where the mist-shrouded Fragrant Hills loomed to the west and the morning light caught delicate pagodas in silhouette.

A Chinese policeman stepped into her path and ordered her back to her room.

Later in the day, another senior official of the forum, a gathering parallel to the Fourth World Conference on Women, found men with walkie-talkies going through her belongings. When she challenged them, they said they were in her room to pick up the laundry.

In the final day of preparation for the opening of the forum of nongovernmental organizations, known as the N.G.O. forum, Beijing was awash in recriminations over China's management of this mammoth meeting.

"It has been a very long day," said Colleen McCabe, a spokeswoman for the forum, which has attracted nearly 30,000 women to this distant suburb of Beijing.

After a long struggle to get here, most of the women in the forum have hotel rooms, but many are running short of patience.

"A lot of people have been searched," Ms. McCabe said, "and I've had at least a thousand ques-

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tions from journalists about when and where the demonstrations are going to begin," she said.

The reason for the questions is that many of the women arriving here are angry. The Chinese Government held up some visas; denied visas to hundreds, perhaps thousands, of others; separated the nongovernmental forum from the main United Nations conference, which is an hour away in Beijing, and generally treated this convocation of women's advocacy groups as a hostile force invading China.

Perhaps because of the mood, the Government tried to impose some last-minute limitations on public expression.

At a morning press conference, Tian Qiyu, China's Vice Minister for Public Security, acknowledged the longstanding agreement that women could demonstrate on the land that had been made available to the United Nations.

But, he added, referring to the forum site here: "Within the designated area, relevant organizations can have processions and demonstrations, but these activities should not infringe upon the sovereignty of the host country and should not attack or slander the state leaders of the host country, nor shall such activities be allowed in which violence is taking place against other persons."

Mr. Tian's statement, made in Beijing, reverberated through Huairou within hours, further agitating many of the women preparing their agenda for the United Nations conference, which runs from Sept. 4 to 15 in Beijing.

Miles from the World Conference in Beijing, a parallel session is harried.

After all, they say, China actively pursued the opportunity to play host to the conference to begin with.

But in recent months China has arrested dissidents, pushed migrant workers out of Beijing, rounded up prostitutes and the homeless and executed dozens of people around the country in what was described as a law and order crackdown. The action was an echo of the kind of rough justice that marked the period when the International Olympic Committee was considering Beijing as a site for the 2000 games.

Amnesty International, which was allowed into China for the first time in the history of the human rights group, denounced the campaign of arrests and repression that preceded the conference, including the execution of 16 people.

Pierre Sane, the secretary general of the organization, said, "We have heard virtually every excuse from Governments to justify human rights violations, but this is simply unbelievable: to welcome the world to Beijing, people must die?"

A Chinese Government spokesman, Chen Jian, retorted later, "Amnesty International is an organization that has always harbored deep prejudices against China, and its allegations are groundless."

"We didn't do those things they



Confusion abounded yesterday in Huairou, China as the opening of a nongovernmental women's forum neared. Caroline Maneno Oketch, right, of Kenya, asked Chinese student volunteers for directions.

claimed," Mr. Chen said. The executions were reported earlier in a Beijing newspaper controlled by the Communist Party.

In the afternoon, Mr. Chen amended the statement of the Public Security

official, saying, "These two conferences are U.N. conferences, and the place where these conferences are held are U.N.-designated premises."

But he added, "Any organization

or individuals attending the World Conference on Women should not use it as an opportunity to interfere in China's internal affairs. All activities outside these areas must abide by Chinese laws and regulations."

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*Grass-roots groups have proved to be
real players at conferences like the
one in Beijing on the world's women*

People's Forum Meets The People's Republic

By Richard C. Hottelet

FOR the People's Republic of China, hosting the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women holds more than a touch of poetic justice.

The government wanted the prestige of this gathering after the tragedy of Tienanmen and the suppression of nascent political democracy. It seemed a way to overcome worldwide opprobrium. (At the same time and for the same reason, Beijing campaigned to be the site of the 1996 Olympic games.) Now tens of thousands of delegates, government representatives, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and interested individuals will converge on Beijing to discuss women's problems and to champion women's rights in a country where woman's status is low. The spin doctors in Beijing may not have gauged the effect of having the world community on the scene, not only with eyes and ears but also, inevitably, as carrier of the dissent virus.

Months ago, as damage control, the hosts decided to split the participants. Official delegations from more than 150 countries and accredited groups from hundreds of established NGOs — about 7,000 delegates in all — will meet at the conference center in Beijing on Sept. 4. However, before the conference opens, perhaps 36,000 others under a distinctly unofficial umbrella called the NGO Forum will be allowed to hold an opening rally of their own in the capital, at which they intend to sound a stirring keynote for what is to follow. The forum will then move to a small town, 30 miles away, to do its multifarious thing in relative isolation. Its members are promised free access to the conference site, but there is no assurance that they will have facilities for their usual booths, workshops, and information centers — on women's education, commercial credit, and such things as global networking for community development. Or that these will be accessible to the Chinese public. Meanwhile, visas, documents, and hotel reservations needed to attend the forum have been issued sparingly and tardily.

Most troubling for the regime must be that the word "people's" has a new, assertive meaning quite at odds with the cosmetic adjective that figures in misleading titles like the People's Republic. Not that the idea is so new. Alexis de Tocqueville, who took the measure of democracy in America in the 1830s, noted a unique condition. On the basis of egalitarianism peculiar to North America, people built an active relationship with their state — through private groups busy at many public things: religious, cultural, professional, charitable, and civic improvement. These were clearly forerunners of today's NGOs, which increasingly play a role in international as

well as domestic affairs. Many, like the International Committee of the Red Cross, devote themselves to humanitarian relief. Many more lobby for causes. They are also watchdogs, as France, approaching its nuclear tests in the Pacific, knows well. Some have become research organizations of high caliber.

Deliberately outsiders, for the most part, they can help the establishment with their expertise, and in reaching people at the grass roots. The newly user-friendly World Bank sidesteps usurious money lenders as well as red tape in granting micro-loans of \$100 to impoverished families and small groups of village women. It gets them started on income-producing self-employment at livestock and poultry raising, handicrafts and textiles, trading and shopkeeping. The bank channels the money through local NGO networks and registers superior performance in loan repayment. The UN Development Program now uses the same device. And 30 percent of US Agency for International Development funds is distributed through private organizations rather than governments.

SOME NGOs are flaky, some are one-person operations. Some — think of the "militias" — are potentially dangerous. But the NGO Forum has been a goad for action at international conferences where people tend to be more content to talk. It emerged as a real player, an unconventional counter-conference, at the environmental summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and has done its thing at others since, with serious manifestoes and street theater, hunger strikes and fairs.

The forum has worked no miracles, but its voice has been heard with growing respect. It is sometimes somber, sometimes shrill, a voice of democracy raised against being herded in the mass society of today's world. What better place to test it than in the People's Republic of China?

■ Richard C. Hottelet, a longtime correspondent for CBS, writes on foreign affairs.

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Mrs. Clinton to Join Joust Between Women Activists, China

By Sheila Tefft

Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

BEIJING

KEYNOTING a sometimes rancorous international women's summit in Beijing this week, Hillary Rodham Clinton faces a delicate political balancing act.

Playing a broadening role as

an advocate for women's rights worldwide, Mrs. Clinton will be juggling her mission to patch up strained Sino-US ties without ignoring the ongoing confrontation between women activists and Chinese security officials over free speech and human rights.

Clinton addresses the United Nations Fourth World Conference

on Women today and the parallel Non-Governmental Organizations Forum tomorrow, amid tensions over stringent Chinese security and alleged harassment of some participants.

Her appearance at the summit was held in doubt until the recent release of Chinese-American rights activist Harry Wu, who was

detained in China on spying charges for a month and has criticized her for agreeing to attend.

While Clinton's high-profile visit is intended to help ease differences, she risks a conservative backlash at home by slighting human rights controversies at the women's meeting.

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Since the NGO meetings began Aug. 30, they have been plagued by tight Chinese security and interference with some delegates, mainly Tibetan and human rights activists.

"Hillary should speak out about that because it is deleterious to the purposes of the conference," says Robin Munro of Human Rights Watch, Asia. "You can't begin to talk about advancing human rights for women when even the basic rights aren't guaranteed."

"This is a dilemma for Mrs. Clinton. Do you risk angering the Chinese when you are trying to rebuild relations or risk political anger among the activists and at home?" asks a Western diplomat.

On Monday, as 3,000 delegates attended the opening of official conference proceedings in Beijing, activists at the forum site in Huairou, a distant Beijing suburb, continued to confront pervasive Chinese security. This came only a day after NGO forum organizers, deeply split over confronting Chinese authorities, decided to back off from an ultimatum demanding an end to harassment or face a boycott. The leaders say the interference violates China's agreement with the UN to hold the meeting.

Singing "We Shall Overcome," hundreds of women demonstrators protesting violence against women broke through a police cordon surrounding the Huairou site and paraded down the town's main street before being stopped by other police.

On Sunday, police had scuffled with Islamic women demonstrators and are alleged to have roughed up a Canadian participant trying to distribute leaflets about Tibet.

Fearing Clinton's visit could stir more demonstrations, police have created virtual security islands around the Beijing and Huairou sites to prevent city residents from contacting foreign delegates.

Activists, angered by what they consider Chinese attempts to isolate them in Huairou from official proceedings in Beijing, have complained that Chinese police have attempted to break up meetings, interfered with journalists, obstructed access to the forum site, and seized materials and

videotapes criticizing China.

Beijing has also been accused of delaying the publication of several UN-sanctioned newspapers.

The police surveillance and harassment has been particularly aimed at human rights groups and exiled Tibetan activists who have openly challenged China at press briefings and seminars during the forum. Most bitter have been the clashes between Tibetan exiles who managed to obtain credentials and visas to attend the forum and pro-Chinese Tibetans.

Chinese officials, who maintain the complaints are "a very irresponsible action taken by a tiny minority of people," resisted the demands for an easing of security.

"There is no such thing as a change to procedures," says Xu Zhijian, secretary-general of the China Organizing Committee, who was booed by some women activists at a press conference. "If that is the case, the conference and forum will not go on."

Despite the interference, controversy, and intermittent downpours, most of the activists caucused and held workshops in anticipation of the official conference.

"This battle between the Chinese and the human rights groups is coloring everything. There is a lot more going on here," says an African participant.

"I have come a long way ... My organization has spent a lot of money to send me here, and I want to get something for women accomplished."

Against the backdrop of tensions over the meeting conditions, battle lines were being drawn on issues including references to contraception, access to reproductive health for teens, abortion, sex education, promoting equality for girls, and allotting increasingly scarce resources for women's programs.

At opening ceremonies yesterday, Gertrude Mongella, secretary-general of the UN conference, threw herself into the fray and urged participants to make clear that women are no longer "guests on this planet."

"This planet belongs to them too," she said, warning against a conservative backlash. "A revolution has begun. There is no going back."

U.N. Women's Meeting Settles Key Disputes

By Steven Mufson
Washington Post Foreign Service

BEIJING, Sept. 13—Delegates to the U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women, rushing to complete a consensus "Platform for Action," have struck deals covering women's rights in the politically sensitive areas of sexuality, inheritance, family and the responsibility of parents in the "reproductive health" of girls.

With just two days remaining, women's groups say they have kept language they won in the Cairo conference on population last year and made further progress in defining women's rights, asserting that women should have greater say in political decision making, promoting women's economic "empowerment" and giving women more control over their sexual lives.

"Ten years ago, you couldn't talk about women even having sexuality, much less having rights pertaining to it," said Dorothy Thomas of New York-based Human Rights Watch.

Up to 25 of the 180 nations are expected to express "reservations" about any one of the platform's dozen sections. In addition, a key part of the introduction being negotiated tonight could serve as a loophole for many nations. It would assert that the document should be enforced with regard for different cultural and religious traditions.

The document drawn up at this 12-day conference will have no binding effect, as China demonstrated. After losing a debate over whether countries should use "coercive" laws to control women's ability to choose the number of children they have, China announced that it would stick to its strict one-child policy anyway.

"It's a necessity, not a luxury," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Chen Jian, who noted that U.N. documents "are only recommendations and are not legally binding."

Nonetheless, many women felt they have won significant victories and produced a document that could help pressure governments into changing laws and practices that discriminate against or oppress women.

Four issues have been given particular prominence. Violence against women ranging from domestic violence to wartime abuse, barely mentioned at the last major women's conference in Nairobi, is a centerpiece of the platform. It also stresses the need for innovative banks and other financial mechanisms to help "empower" women economically.

For the first time, women are said to have the right to "make decisions related to their sexual and reproductive health"—giving them the right to just say no. And governments have been asked to make commitments to come up with the money to follow through on the issues raised at the conference.

Today's negotiations took place as government delegates showed signs of fatigue from 10 days of talks. On Tuesday night, a Vatican delegate yelled at other delegates during one exchange. Another delegate said that a 3½ hour session was so fatuous that the page in her notes from the session was blank. A bleary-eyed Timothy E. Wirth, U.S. assistant secretary of state for global affairs, said he was "conferenced out."

In platform negotiations, the Vatican and Islamic nations have won compromises over language that they felt sanctioned or encouraged nontraditional families or sexual promiscuity. And they teamed up with other nations to push for the clause that acknowledged cultural and religious traditions.

But many people remained unsatisfied. Annetta Moran, part of a New Zealand antiabortion group, said the conference had "focused ad nauseum on sexual rights and sexual orientation" and that it was "full of hypocrisy." Moran said that the document should cast off "feminist newspeak" and protect the rights of unborn children.

Some of the key issues and lingo ironed out so far include:

■ **Family**—Should references use the singular or plural form of "family"? Catholic and Islamic nations argued that the plural implied approval of nontraditional families, such as lesbian couples, single parents and people living together with out-of-wedlock children. They wanted the document to refer to women's role "in the family," meaning married couples and their children.

"Family" won out, but a follow-up phrase points out that the word means different things to different people. The platform also says: "The family is the basic unit of society and as such should be strengthened."

■ **Inheritance**—Women's groups compromised with Islamic governments, which had battled to use the word "equity" instead of "equality" in the inheritance passage. Islamic governments believed that the word equity allowed a more flexible interpretation. In four places, the passage now reads that there will be "equal access to inheritance." In one it gives children an "equal right" to inheritance. It was, one organizer said, "a balancing act."

■ **Coercive policies**—The document's health section condemns "coercive medical laws and practices," a direct slap at China for a one-child policy that is often enforced with forced abortions, sterilizations or pu-



South Africa's Palesa Beverly Ortale, center, of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, embraces supporter Rebecca Sevilla after Ortale spoke at the U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing.

nitive fines. China tried unsuccessfully to water the section down, arguing that the word "laws" should be deleted because all laws are coercive.

The document also endorses sexual choices without "coercion, discrimination or violence." That terminology, one negotiator said, could eventually be used to help a woman being sold as a slave in rural China, or an unwilling child bride in India, or an American woman whose husband had raped her.

■ **Human rights**—The final document refers to "human rights," deleting the modifying phrase "universally recognized human rights." Human rights groups had campaigned for the deletion, arguing that human rights don't need to be recognized.

Women's groups also beat back an effort to add a clause to the human rights section that would have allowed modification for religious, cultural or national law.

■ **Sexual orientation**—A move by the European Union to guarantee rights of people regardless of sexual orientation was thwarted. But sections prohibiting discrimination against women mentions sexual orientation as part of a long list of those protected.

■ **Sexual relations**—The document overcame objections from Islamic and Catholic nations. It says: "Equal relationships between women and men in

matters of sexual relations and reproduction, including full respect for the integrity of the person, require mutual respect, consent and shared responsibility for sexual behavior and its consequences."

■ **Parents**—The health section mentions both parental responsibilities as well as children's need for privacy. This comes up in the context of whether minors need parental approval for abortion. The compromise illustrates why this document is more than 130 pages long.

It said: "Taking into account the rights of the child to access to information, privacy, confidentiality, respect and informed consent, as well as responsibility rights and duties of parents and legal guardians to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and informed guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognized in the convention on the rights of the child, and in conformity with the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. In all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration."

■ **Gender**—Delegates agreed it means simply men and women and not five different sexual preferences as some groups suggested.

■ **Commitments**—More than 50

countries have outlined a series of measures they plan to take to bolster the status of women after the conference.

Many of these were existing measures repackaged for the conference. Before the conference wealthy nations had made sure each country need only commit for its own domestic actions. Wherever the document requested "new and additional resources," the United States cut out the "new and additional" portion.

"This Platform of Action is meaningless unless it is supported by new and additional resources," said Sarla Gopalan, India's secretary for women and child welfare.

Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala last week said that the United States had a series of initiatives planned, but little in the way of new money, either for its own citizens or for foreign aid. "It is clear for anyone that reads the American papers about what's happening to our budgets that we are not going to have additional resources to add," she said.

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Women's Meeting Near Accord

U.N. Conference Resolves Dispute on Sexual Freedom

By Steven Mufson
Washington Post Foreign Service

BEIJING, Sept. 15 (Friday)—Delegates to the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women neared the end of their work this morning by resolving a dispute over sexual freedom and putting the finishing touches on a document meant to serve as a guideline for establishing and protecting women's rights around the world.

Of the 189 countries represented at the conference, at least 22 were planning to append formal reservations to the document later today, officials said. The reservations will reveal the extent to which fundamental rifts that existed when the conference started 11 days ago were not bridged.

"I think that, leaving Beijing, we have accomplished the goals we set for ourselves,"

said Geraldine A. Ferraro, U.S. ambassador to the U.N. Human Rights Commission and vice chair of the U.S. delegation. The document "addresses abuses that occur to women throughout the world, and hopefully governments will start to implement the recommendations when they get back home."

Women's groups say they have kept language they won in the Cairo conference on population last year and made further progress in defining women's rights. The document promotes women's economic "empowerment" and asserts that women should have a greater say in political decision making, have more control over their sexual lives and be protected from violence in or out of the home, in times of war or peace.

More than 50 governments have made commitments to follow through on the issues

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raised at the conference with new programs or new money.

Dorothy Thomas of Human Rights Watch said that the conference marked a change in the relationship between women and governments. Women, she said, had gone "from claiming handouts, from claiming privileges to demanding rights."

On the last day of the conference, delegates overcame a final stumbling block by dropping a controversial section of the preamble to the "Platform for Action" that lays out the meeting's recommendations.

Conservative Islamic nations agreed to drop a phrase on "cultural and religious differences" that opponents said could undermine or weaken the universal nature of human rights in the document, a U.N. official said.

In return, European Union delegates gave up a demand to enshrine sexual freedoms in the preamble. They agreed to "ensure the full enjoyment by women and girls of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and take effective action against violations of those rights and freedoms."

Many sexual rights and freedoms are still dealt with in the longer Platform for Action, which underscores that human rights of women include the rights to control and decide matters related to their sexuality—language that could still open the door to homosexuality, but in less explicit terms.

The Vatican, a strong voice of dissent on sexual issues through much of the meeting, was conspicuously silent during the final negotiations.

"It is only focusing on sexual things," Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said Thursday, complaining about the document. "You ignore what is the main concern for women in Nigeria, in Zimbabwe and in India and so on—that is tropical diseases and elementary and basic health services and so on."

An alliance of the Holy See and official delegations largely from Islamic nations fought to stress the role of women within the family and to delete language that might be interpreted as encouraging abortion, promiscuity, lesbianism and premarital sex.

Sudan's Islamic government, meanwhile, found a way to deal with issues it did not like. It pledged to ig-

creased the likelihood that governments would be pressed to follow through on many of the recommendations in the U.N. document.

Indeed over the past three weeks, while the government delegations at the U.N. conference haggled over words and phrases—one woman said she negotiated for seven hours over a single paragraph—NGOs who gathered at a parallel meeting an hour away in the town of Huairou demonstrated a boisterous energy that was not dampened by rain, poor facilities, or Chinese government harassment and surveillance.

And yet, many of the issues raised at the U.N. conference—such as sexual freedoms and abortion—are likely to be intractable.

Earlier today and Thursday, sexual freedoms were the last stumbling block of the U.N. conference as Islamic nations and the Vatican made a final effort to add to a conference document language noting "cultural and religious particularities" that some delegates fear could become an escape clause used to justify restrictive practices.

While the Vatican worked largely behind the scenes, Islamic nations criticized other countries for trying to impose sexual mores on them.

"There has been a lack of understanding and respect for the views of some, while from another side there are views that are being imposed," Shahla Habibi, Iran's presidential adviser on women's affairs, said Thursday. "Particular groups are endeavoring to turn the world into a model they deem appropriate."

Largest Women's Conference Ends

Vatican Dissents on Reproductive Rights in Final Platform

Associated Press

BEIJING, Sept. 15—The leader of the world's largest formal gathering of women cited an old Chinese proverb at today's closing session to warn delegates of the hard road ahead.

"Let Beijing be the first step of our thousand miles," secretary general Gertrude Mongella of Tanzania told 5,000 delegates from 139 nations to conclude the U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women.

Delegates hugged and wept at the end of the two-week conference, which created a sense of solidarity about improving women's lives but also exposed some deep ideological rifts.

The disagreements surfaced during days of hard bargaining on the conference's main product, an extensive platform that ranges from promoting inheritance rights to condemning rape in wartime.

The non-binding document was written as a guide to governments. Some have already pledged funds, legislative action or government programs to help women. Others have made no financial commitments. Women's groups said they would keep up pressure for action in their home countries.

Once the conference had approved the platform by consensus, some delegates lined up to state their official objections to various provisions.

Chief among the critics was the Vatican, which said the document's "obsession with reproductive matters" came at the expense of broader concerns.

The leader of the Vatican's delegation, Mary Ann Glendon, said that the Catholic Church had its own interpretation of some platform provisions, such as taking references to sexuality to mean sex in marriage.

The platform's defenders pointed to positions on human rights, health services and educational opportunities, arguing that those stances were intended to address the needs of women across the globe's social

and cultural spectrum, from a mother in Botswana to a female executive in Europe.

"I think it's a contract with the world's women," said former New York congresswoman Bella Abzug, a conference participant. "It's a jump-start for transformational politics."

Some provisions were groundbreaking. The conference platform is the first U.N. document, for instance, to state that women have the right to decide freely all matters related to their sexuality and child-bearing.

Negotiators said that the reproductive rights provision could apply in situations as different as date rape in the United States to forced sterilizations in China.

Another attempted first failed to materialize.

A ban on discrimination against lesbians was dropped from the final draft after strong objections from predominantly Roman Catholic and Muslim countries. But homosexual rights activists said they were pleased that the proposal progressed as far as it did.

With such once-taboo subjects under debate, some organizers worried about a conservative backlash.

"Some people are getting scared about too much change too fast," said Patricia Licuanan of the Philippines.

Mongella, the conference secretary general, urged participants to keep their goals in sight as they encounter opposition.

"Reassemble your ranks, sharpen your focus and march on," she said. "Let us ensure that we carry the torch forward."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To read the full U.N. report on its Decade for Women, see *Digital Ink*, The Post's on-line service. To learn about *Digital Ink*, call 1-800-510-5104, ext. 9000.

Departing China, Women Hold Hope, But See Obstacles

By SETH FAISON

BEIJING, Sept. 15 — Assumpta Tibamwenda sat on a corridor floor today, musing about the meaning of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women as she watched its closing ceremony on television, where delegates from one nation after another could be heard voicing reservations about the platform they had just passed.

"I have mixed emotions," said Ms. Tibamwenda, a social worker from Uganda. "Listening to all these delegates list their reservations, you have to wonder how willing they will be to implement the program they agreed to."

"Yet," she added, "we achieved some real gains, winning sexual rights and equal inheritance. So at least there's a glimmer of hope."

Ms. Tibamwenda's comments summed up the range of opinion among the thousands of people who attended the conference that ended here today. In weaving a fragile consensus among more than 5,000 delegates from 185 countries, a spectrum including militant Muslim fundamentalists, radical feminists and lots of people in between, United Nations negotiators could not possibly please everyone.

The last item agreed upon at a final session in 12 days of lengthy negotiations — which did not end until 4:45 A.M. today — was an affir-

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Women Hold Hope as They Depart China

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mation that women's rights should supersede national traditions, arguably the most far-reaching stance on human rights ever taken at a United Nations gathering.

Yet there were delegates from Sudan and Iran, among other countries, who said for the bulky United Nations record that they would be reluctant to adopt measures passed in the final document that interfered with national customs or religion.

"There won't be consistent implementation," Ms. Tibamwenda sighed. "But wherever there is implementation, I suppose that will be a good thing."

The "platform for action" produced by the conference is not a binding document, but rather intended as a model that campaigners for women's rights can wave at their respective governments when local laws or practices do not conform with these newly affirmed international standards.

Some items in the document are specific, like saying that children should have the right to privacy when they receive health care and counseling.

Others are more vague, like the one calling on governments and businesses to "build a critical mass" of female leaders, executives and managers in decision-making positions.

"The documents are full of promise but often short on concrete commitments," said Mary Ann Glendon, the head of the Vatican's delegation. "The Holy See strongly disagrees with an exaggerated individualism, in which key relevant provisions of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights are slighted, such as the obligation to provide special care to motherhood."

During the conference, the Vatican found itself allied with other states

that stress the primacy of religion, like Iran, Sudan and Libya. On the other side of the table was the European Union, the most progressive force at the conference.

American delegates, sensitive to charges from Republicans that items like a child's right to privacy on health matters and a woman's right to say no to sex were "anti-family," went out of their way to describe the United Nations document they endorsed as "pro-family."

Yet to many delegates, the achievements of the conference were in one favorite issue or other, irrespective of government pronouncement.

An agreement that women's rights should supersede national traditions.

ments that seemed to reek of domestic and international politics.

B. Ngeny of Kenya said she thought the conference's most positive achievement was the agreement that proposes equal inheritance among male and female heirs.

"In Kenya, when the parent dies, only the boys can inherit the family property," Mrs. Ngeny said. "That is not fair and we made it clear during the discussions that women should have the same rights as men."

That provision did not go far enough for Hina Jilani, a Pakistani woman from the Asian Foundation on Women, Law and Development, who pointed out that the wording agreed upon was that women have "equal rights to inheritance" rather than the "right to equal inheritance."

"They have been trying to give with one hand and take away with the other," Ms. Jilani said. "The question is not what the Koran says. The issue is: do you want to give equal rights to women? This is not a conference about religion."

She also questioned the appropriateness of allowing the Vatican to take part in a conference on women.

Around the conference site in northern Beijing today, however, many women were upbeat, particularly on the relative lack of rancor in the conference's debate.

"I was really impressed that the consultations and dealings were done peacefully and calmly and in an understanding manner," said Jehudith Huebner, a member of the City Council in Jerusalem. "For the first time in the history of women's conferences, when the representative from Israel spoke, sisters from my neighboring countries did not walk out."

Parma Khastgir, a high court judge in India, expressed a similar sentiment. "What appealed to me the most was the fact that people overcame their ethnic barriers and were able to discuss universal problems," Ms. Khastgir said. "They show solidarity."

Chinese delegates were relatively passive in the debates, perhaps because their leaders had their hands full acting as hosts, dealing with the logistics of the conference and with accommodations that many delegates complained were below standard.

Liu Jiarong, a Chinese delegate added her voice to the complainers.

"I am really proud that my country is hosting this conference," Ms. Liu said. "But most Chinese participants lack basic English skills, so we couldn't communicate with other people freely. The translators were not very competent."

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First Lady Blasts China On Rights

Clinton Defends Women At U.N. Conference

By Steven Mufson
Washington Post Foreign Service

BEIJING, Sept. 5—First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, declaring that it was "time to break the silence" about the abuse of women, condemned rights violations around the world and rebuked China for its "indefensible" treatment of women taking part here in a forum of nongovernmental organizations.

Speaking this afternoon before a plenary session of 1,500 delegates and observers at the U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women, which opened here Monday, the first lady made a stirring call for an end to violations of women's rights.

"If there is one message that echoes forth from this conference, it is that human rights are women's rights, and women's rights are human rights once and for all," she said to applause.

Despite concerns among many groups here that Clinton would shy away from criticizing China at a delicate time for strained Sino-U.S. relations, the first lady strongly denounced human rights violations here as well as elsewhere around the world.

Although she did not mention China by name, Clinton clearly was taking aim at the Beijing regime when she said: "It is a violation of human rights when women are denied the right to plan their own families, and that includes being forced to have abortions or being sterilized against their will."

Clinton's criticism of Chinese policies fell on receptive ears. Approximately 20,000 women have been

See CONFERENCE, A24, Col. 1

CONFERENCE, From A1

struggling for days with Chinese police harassment, searches and restrictions on meetings and demonstrations at the Nongovernmental Organizations Forum on Women taking place about an hour's drive from Beijing in the town of Huairou. These actions followed weeks of uncertainty and confusion over the granting of visas to those wishing to attend the meeting; some groups critical of Chinese policy have been barred from coming.

"It is indefensible that many women in nongovernmental organizations who wished to participate in this conference have not been able to attend or have been prohibited from fully taking part," Clinton said, to strong applause.

"Let me be clear," she added. "Freedom means the right of people to assemble, organize and debate openly. It means respecting the views of those who may disagree with the views of their governments. It means not taking citizens away from their loved ones and jailing them, mistreating them or denying them their freedom or dignity because of the peaceful expression of their ideas and opinions."

The official New China News Agency carried brief excerpts from speeches by N.K.A. Rawlings, the first lady of Ghana; Ivan Kuras, vice prime minister of Ukraine; and a Jordanian princess. Clinton's name was last on a list of other speakers who were not quoted.

The news agency devoted more space to the comments by Peng Peiyun, deputy head of China's delegation and head of China's family planning and one-child policy, lauding China's "achievements." And the agency described a demonstration it said took place in Huairou in which people allegedly carried a banner saying "Stop U.S. imperialism. Women of the toiling class unite."

The first lady's comments could further complicate Sino-U.S. relations. Those ties were frayed in May when the Clinton administration yielded to congressional pressure and granted a visa to Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui to attend a reunion at his alma mater, Cornell University. The two-month detention of Chinese American Harry Wu, a crusader against conditions in China's prisons and forced labor camp system, also dealt a blow to relations.

State Department officials have just begun to calm China's fury over the Lee visit. Ten days ago, the two nations agreed to a meeting of their foreign ministers in late September and to prepare for a possible summit meeting between President Jiang Zemin and President Clinton. And the Chinese ambassador to the United States, recalled in June, is expected to return to Washington soon.

Because of the recent warming in relations, some administration advisers opposed Hillary Clinton's visit, saying that if she failed to deal with the human rights issue it would appear as though the United States had been intimidated by China—and that if she did deal with the issue, it could further damage relations between Washington and Beijing.

In an interview with reporters, Clinton played down the strains her speech would put on U.S.-China relations, saying, "We are working toward having a very comprehensive and hopefully good relationship with China in many areas."

"For me, it was important to express how I felt and to do so as clearly as I could," she said.

White House officials said Clinton's remarks were designed to strike a balance between the obvious need to take account of China's behavior and its treatment of the delegates and the desire not to antagonize Beijing or be rude to the hosts.

"You couldn't not mention some of those things," one senior official said, because failure to bring them up would have exposed Clinton to charges of pandering to the Chinese at the expense of the conference goals.

The first lady has no meetings scheduled with Chinese officials during her visit. However, Assistant Secretary of State Winston Lord plans to meet Wednesday with Chinese officials to prepare for the planned talks

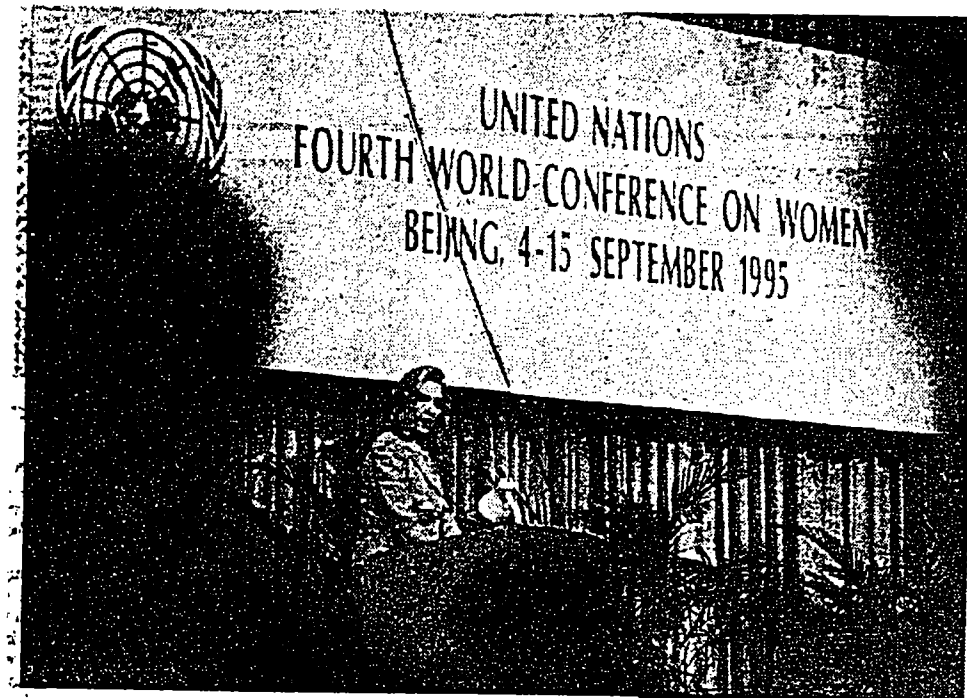
between Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen.

Some senior administration officials tried to soften the blow of Clinton's remarks here by stressing that she also cited women's rights abuses common in other nations. "Clearly this was a global speech on women and women's rights," a senior administration official said tonight. "It didn't single China out."

Indeed, without mentioning the name of any country, Clinton condemned the Indian practice of burning brides when their marriage dowries are deemed too small; the African custom of performing genital mutilation on women; domestic violence found in the United States and elsewhere; and the Bosnian and other conflicts in which "women are raped in their own communities and when thousands of women are subjected to rape as a tactic or prize of war." Many abuses she cited can be found in several nations.

Madeline K. Albright, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, said the intention of the U.S. team here was "not to mince words, not to put a gloss on the issues, but to talk about what we need to talk about to improve the situation in this country and all countries throughout the world."

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First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton discusses plight of women around the world in speech at Beijing conference. REUTERS

"However different we may be," Clinton said, "there is far more that unites us than divides us. We share a common future. And we are here to find common ground so that we may help bring new dignity and respect to women and girls all over the world—and in so doing bring new strength and stability to families as well."

She also stressed the importance of women to "families," a word that the Vatican and other conservative delegations have said was used too seldom in the Platform for Action, the U.N. draft document under consideration here.

In the evening, the head of the Vatican delegation, Harvard University law professor Mary Ann Glendon, said: "The conference documents . . . are not bold enough in acknowledging the threat to women's health arising from widespread attitudes of sexual permissiveness."

Glendon reiterated the Catholic Church's opposition to abortion. "It will be a great reproach to our society if all we have to say to a woman or a girl who is pregnant and frightened is that she must destroy her own unborn child," she said.

Regarding abortion, Clinton said obliquely that the conference document should guarantee the "right to determine freely the number and spacing of the children [women] bear." It is a phrase borrowed from the U.N. conference on population last year in Cairo. She added in a morning speech on health issues that she endorsed the Cairo conference

"This was the most eloquent and forceful I've ever heard her," Kate Michelman, president of the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League, said about Clinton's speech. "Everyone knows the countries she was talking about."

But not everyone was satisfied with the first lady's remarks. Rep. Christopher H. Smith (R-N.J.), chairman of the House subcommittee on international operations and human rights, said that while he was happy that she denounced forced abortions, "for want of one word—China—the speech fell short."

"If women have a conference in Beijing and it doesn't mention that China has engaged in this terrible practice, it would be an opportunity lost and negligence, really," Smith said.

Clinton also tested some phrases likely to become standard usage during the upcoming U.S. presidential campaign.

She opened and closed her afternoon speech with the phrase "common ground," a phrase President Clinton often uses in trying to define his administration as lying between the extremes of American politics.

The phrase also resonated here as delegates from more than 180 nations are trying to reach a consensus about the wording of a 120-page document setting new standards for women's health, economic welfare, family planning and status in society.

clause that "in no case should abortion be promoted as a method of family planning."

"There is no formula for how women should lead their lives," said Clinton, who upset some conservatives during the presidential campaign who felt she put down cookie-baking, child-rearing housewives. "That is why we must respect the choices that each woman makes for herself and her family."

On Wednesday Clinton will make a speech in Huairou, the site of the NGO Forum. On Thursday she will stop over in Mongolia before returning to the United States on Friday.

Staff writer Thomas W. Lippman in Washington contributed to this report.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For a full text of the proposed U.N. action platform for the conference, see *Digital Ink*, The Post's on-line service. To learn about *Digital Ink*, call 1-800-510-5104, ext. 9000.

MEMO

DATE: October 9, 1995
TO: Sandy Thurman
FROM: Cheryl
SUBJECT: Tonight's speech

Dinner tonight is in the Swan Room of the JW Marriott hotel at 6:15 (NOT 6:00). The speakers are Veronica, Elizabeth Coleman, Shell(?) Izzy from the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce and yourself. Dorsey is moderating. There are 155 confirmed attendees.

Sarah called back and changed the format. You will each have 15-20 to speak from 7:30 to 9:00 and then a Q and A from 9:00 to 9:30. She asked that you focus on your mission, what you accomplished and what needs to be done. You'll go into more detail about the format during dinner.

U.N. Documents Inequities for Women as World Forum Nears

By BARBARA CROSSETTE

UNITED NATIONS, Aug. 17 — The last two decades have seen advances in the education and health of women around the world, yet hundreds of millions of women in both rich and poor nations are still significantly undervalued economically, denied access to political power and kept down by crippling inequalities under the law, according to a report released today.

"We hear and we say that life is unfair, but what this report shows is that life is dramatically unfair to women," said James Gustave Speth, administrator of the United Nations Development Program, which commissioned the study.

Seventy percent of the world's poor are women, and women and children make up 80 percent of its refugees and a disproportionate number of the casualties in dozens of small-scale wars.

"Violence stalks women's lives, in peace and in war," the report says.

Violence in personal relationships is a universal fact, according to the report. Women's groups from every region of the world are demanding that some concrete action on this issue be taken in Beijing next month at the Fourth World Conference on Women, said Barbara Arnwine, executive director of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, based in Washington, D.C.

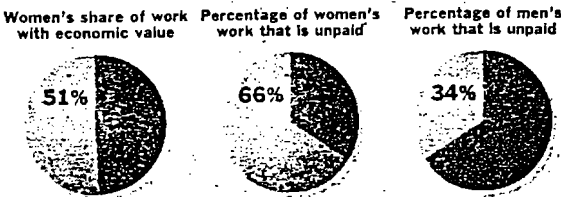
Workshops about violence at regional sessions preparing for the China conference have been packed to overflowing, said Ms. Arnwine, who will lead a delegation predominantly composed of African American women to the conference.

Madeleine K. Albright, the chief American representative at the United Nations and the leader of the United States' delegation to Beijing, said in an interview that protection against domestic violence and the human rights of women in general,

DISPARITIES

Women's Work, Women's Worth

Though women make up half the world's population, a study released yesterday by the United Nations Human Development Program found that women still have far to go before achieving parity with men in 13 industrial countries studied.



Sources: United Nations Development Program, United Nations Population Division

The New York Times

along with their need for economic security, are among the issues she will emphasize at the conference.

While there has been a lot of disparate, anecdotal evidence available, the new study attempts to pull together "in a rigorously analytical way" as much quantitative information as possible to make international comparisons, Mr. Speth said in an interview.

"It is very apparent to everyone in our country offices around the world — 135 of them — that the advancement of women, the involvement of women in decision-making, is a critical developmental factor," said Mr. Speth, a founder and former president of the World Resources Institute who is now the highest-ranking American in the United Nations system.

The study is the sixth annual Human Development Report to be prepared by independent experts for the development agency. Each year the report, which ranks 174 nations

on a range of social and economic factors, also chooses a different theme for special attention. This year it focuses on the status of women, and it was timed for release before the conference on women, which is held once in a decade.

"The key finding is that gender gaps in human capabilities — education, health — have been halved in the last two decades," Mr. Speth said. "There have been huge increases in the capacity of women, including in the Arab states. But when you go on beyond the preparatory phase of life, women overwhelmingly still lack access to economic and political opportunities. They are effectively shut out of the higher reaches of economic and political leadership and decision-making."

The report says that worldwide, women have only 14 percent of top managerial jobs, hold 10 percent of national legislative seats and six percent of cabinet-level positions.

Only in the Nordic countries, led by Norway, have women reached the level of 40 percent or more in government ministries, in large part because of strong affirmative action policies, the study concludes.

The United States, which is given the world's second-highest overall human development ranking in this report, after Canada, falls to fifth place when income and health disparities between men and women are taken into account. Sweden, Finland, Norway and Denmark all move to the top. If women's access to political and economic power is factored in, the United States falls to eighth place.

Two areas of the report's findings are expected to draw special attention in Beijing: the economic undervaluation of women's work and the legal barriers women face.

On the economic value of women's work, Mr. Speth said that the report looked at 31 countries at various stages of development and concluded that "if you take into account both the uncompensated work women do and the wage discrimination against women, you come up with a figure of \$11 trillion."

In studying the way the laws of various countries treat women, the report's findings were sober.

Among the examples of legal discrimination mentioned were laws that prohibit women from traveling abroad without male permission. In Botswana, Chile, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland, women are under the legal guardianship of husbands and have no property rights.

"The starkest reflection of the low status accorded to women in societies everywhere is the discrimination against them in law," the report said. "Unless such legal barriers are removed, no progress can be made toward equal rights."

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China's Unruly Guests

BOSTON—For weeks, you might have assumed the entire conference hinged on one woman's travel plans. The itinerary of Hillary Clinton—would she or wouldn't she go to Beijing?—dominated the early news about the U.N.'s Fourth World Conference on Women.

You might have thought the only real issue was the relationship between China and United States. The China question—should we or shouldn't we "reward" them with our presence?—dominated the Sunday talk shows.

For that matter you might have believed that the gathering of 30,000 women from some 180 countries was of importance only for its effect on American presidential politics. Journeying ever-rightward, Bob Dole said the whole event was about inflicting a "left-wing ideological agenda" on the world.

It wasn't until the activist women finally arrived into the chaos of China, until the opening of the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) Forum, that the relationship between the world and its women became more than a political footnote.

The People's Republic of China is as awkward a backdrop for a women's conference as the exploding city of Cairo was for last year's population conference. Geraldine Ferraro, vice-chair of the American delegation, says that when China volunteered to host the meeting, "they thought it would be like the Olympic Games. We'd go in, run our races, and leave."

Instead, for all their ham-handed acts to stifle activists, the Chinese have learned how hard it is to control the message when you have democratic "guests." While the government released 1,000 doves in welcome, 1,000 stories soared across the world about female infanticide, forced abortions and work inequality in a country that holds one-fifth of the world's women.

Nevertheless, the dirty little secret is that China ranks smack in the middle of the United Nations index of gender equality, just between Guyana and Syria, well below Sweden and well above Afghanistan. On this list are countries where women can't vote, where wife-murder is barely a misdemeanor, where rape is a booty of war and girls are ritually mutilated.

Across the globe, women make up 70 percent of the poor and two-thirds of the illiterate. There are few enough nations where women are equally educated, none where the political structure is made up of equal numbers of men and women. In the United Nations itself, Madeleine Albright is one of only five women ambassadors.

So the "left-wing, ideological agenda" of this two-part conference of grassroots activists and governments is to try and push this man's world another revolution or two on its axis, making it a fairer, safer, place for women.

Officially, the U.N. goal will be to produce a document signed by government delegates that affirms universal rights and goals for all women—no small thing for nations where gender equality is still a dangerous, modern notion. This process of change through consensus can seem agonizingly slow and cumbersome. Yet over time the interaction between activists and governments can make a difference.

Ten years ago, when the last woman's conference met in Nairobi, the issues of domestic abuse and female genital mutilation were barely on the world's agenda. Two years ago in Vienna, the United Nations recognized women's rights as human rights for the first time, and violence against women was defined as a violation of human rights. Just last year, the world agreed that a plan to control population depended on educating women.

Now in Beijing, amid the wrestling over diplomatic words, the subjects range across women's lives. The talk is about violence, about human rights abuses, about access to education and credit and medical care, about legally recognizing women as equals to men before the law, even in divorce and child custody.

No document can overhaul a culture where the right of inheritance is regarded as an assault on religious teaching or where genital mutilation is defended as a tradition. But it becomes a lever for change, a signed flag to wave before a recalcitrant government. The activists return to their grass roots carrying proof of the world's support in their suitcases like a combustible souvenir. So do the 7,000 Chinese "observers."

"This conference," says Albright, head of the American delegation, "deals with a woman as an actor in her own life. . . . It's about having the education she wants and marrying whom she wants and planning her family and her work. . . . It's about the whole picture of women and what we can do in the world when our talents are freed up."

Today in China, a baby girl may still be a cause for disappointment or infanticide. Meanwhile, even in America, the most high-profile woman in political life is still the wife of a president. Everywhere you look, the "whole picture" of women is due for enlargement.

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Women's health from Cairo to Beijing and beyond

Many of the 189 governmental delegations to the UN Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing on Sept 4-15, hoped at most to maintain earlier achievements. Of particular concern was conserving advances in protection of women's reproductive health made at the 1994 UN International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo. To much surprise, hard negotiations in Beijing produced a Platform for Action that advanced beyond Cairo's achievements.

The principal achievement of Cairo was recognition that women's empowerment in their families, communities, and nations would go far to improve their reproductive health. The Beijing conference reaffirmed that a critical component of human rights is protection of women's rights, and developed the Cairo commitment beyond reproduction to socioeconomic and related factors in women's health.

The resulting Beijing Platform for Action identifies a number of critical areas of concern, including women's health, and specifies strategic remedial objectives and actions. The document proposes institutional and financial arrangements to implement the Platform.

The most gross violations of women's integrity endangering health, particularly violence against women and outrages during armed conflict, were the least contentious. Language was quickly accepted reaffirming domestic violence against women, rape in war, and female genital mutilation as human rights violations. More contentious were women's rights to express sexuality without endangering

health. There was a difficult debate before the conference accepted that "The human rights of women include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to the sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence". The Cairo mandate addressed health impacts of unsafe abortion, but the Beijing Platform also requires that countries review punitive legal measures against women who have undergone illegal abortions.

A critical area of concern at Beijing was continuing vulnerability of girls. Girls inherit the historic onus of discrimination against women in their cultures, such as denials of health services, nutrition, education, and socioeconomic opportunities.

Women's unequal status in their societies jeopardises their health and well-being. The Cairo conference recognised that reproductive health would equip women to achieve their full capacities as human beings, but the Beijing Platform reciprocally recognises that respect for women's human rights would advance their interests, including health. Women's socioeconomic inequality was recognised to compromise women's health. Accepting the emotional, social, and physical dimensions of health, the conference required national and international protection of women's rights in order to afford women means to protect and advance their health interests. Health and wellbeing have eluded the majority of women in the world because of discrimination and related violations of human rights that women have suffered.

Beijing's strategic objectives

The Platform agreed on the need to:

- increase women's access throughout the life cycle to free or affordable, good quality health care;
- strengthen preventative programmes directed against threats to women's health;
- undertake widespread initiatives to reduce sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV infection and AIDS;
- promote research and dissemination of information; and
- increase resources and monitor follow-up.

The Platform denies states the power to invoke customs, traditions, or religion to avoid obligations to eliminate violence against women, and recognises violations of rights through denial of justice. The Platform condemns tolerance of abuse of women's rights through deployment of forces that have historically caused and justified women's subordination and compromised their health. The Preamble to the Platform states that "While the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious background must be borne in mind, it is the duty of states, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms".

Rebecca J Cook

Global climate change and health

Participants at the conference on the potential health impacts of global climate change sponsored by the US White House's National Science and Technology Council and the Institute of Medicine and held in Washington, DC, Sept 11-12, recognised that this topic presents an unusual challenge to conventional science. It poses fundamental differences of scale (regional and global), context (entailing the disturbance of complex systems such as weather systems, oceanic processes, ecological relationships, food-system productivity, and human demography), and uncertainty (reflecting the complex non-linear processes involved in these disturbances and the fact that future climate scenarios are the starting point for health-impact predictions)—hence the need to develop different research methods.

Considerable attention was directed to two of the most predictable indirect health impacts—changes in vector organism habitat and parasite transmissibility, and

in regional productivity of agriculture and fisheries. The development of integrated modelling for making quantitative predictions of these health outcomes is still at an early stage. This underscores the contingent nature of health-impact modelling, which is several steps "downstream" of scientists addressing antecedent questions about climate change and its effects on those natural systems that then affect human health.

There was some divergence of views as to how sensitive certain vector organisms would be to climate change—and how this might in turn influence the probability of transmission. (For example, the dengue vectors *Aedes aegypti* and *A albopictus* now coexist in the southeastern USA, and they vary in their vectorial efficiency and their sensitivity to external climatic change.) Workshop sessions stressed the need for more information about how vector-borne and other infectious diseases respond to changes in climatic variables.

A running start in this task could be obtained by examining relations between regional climate changes over the past two decades and selected health outcomes. The meeting heard preliminary evidence of associations between recent changes in the inter-annual pattern of "El Niño" climate events and regional outbreaks of cholera, dengue, and malaria. Several speakers described research showing how the warming of coastal waters and the consequent algal blooms potentiate the dissemination of cholera. Perhaps this helped account for the rapid spread of cholera along the coasts of Ecuador and Peru in the early 1990s?

Unlike the complexities of infectious disease, the recent death toll in Chicago's mid-July heatwave afforded ready evidence of a more direct potential impact of climate change. Climatologists forecast that global warming will lead to a generalised increase in the frequency of such events.

A J McMichael