



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR CONFERENCE

Statement by the

Delegation of Portugal

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

read by Mrs. Maria Regina Tavares da Silva
member of the National Commission on the Status of Women.

Mexico, 19th June - 2nd July 1975.

Mr. President

Members of all delegations



We would like to address you in the name of a country that is at this moment undergoing a profound change in political and social aspects. The Revolution of the 25th of April 1974 has brought with it new possibilities in the way of democracy and pluralism, in the construction of a true socialism and in the achievement of decolonization. As a matter of fact, the fall of an authoritarian regime has allowed the existence and exercise of democratic freedom, has allowed new patterns of social life and the right for all voices to be heard. The choice of true socialism by the people of our country is the basis for the construction of a classless society, where all have the same opportunities and where exploiters and exploited shall be no more. The Revolution has also started the process of decolonization, based upon the recognition of the right of all peoples to self-determination and independence and of the justice of a struggle for national liberation.

Out of these framework of essential values and policies a new society is emerging in which portuguese women have a role to play.

For us, then, the International Women's Year comes at a time of deep change in political, social, cultural and economical aspects; a time also of quest and tension, a time of growth as a nation and as a people.

The Portuguese Government, in the text of a resolution about

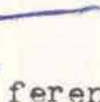


the celebration of the International Women's Year in our country pointed out: "In Portugal, this year coincides with the consolidation of the Revolution of April 25th and its significance becomes, therefore, particularly important, for the evolution of a country in which women represent a great progressive force".

This revolutionary situation that we live now leads us to be particularly sensitive to one of the basic points of this Conference and of the International Women's Year - the whole concept of development and its global significance. We are at a stage when development is vital for our country. It is a pre-requisite for the achievement of our ultimate political goals.

What, then, can be or must be the role of women in such a revolutionary context and in a perspective of development? To answer this question, we would like to share with you all, some of our reflections on this point.

First of all, what does development really mean and how should women participate in its process?



Development, as it has already been emphasized in this Conference "is not only economic growth, but implies change, social, structural and attitudinal change". We certainly agree with the fact that change involves increasing national income, improving levels of living, adopting new technology, acquiring new skills and capacities, changing values of occupations, etc. Indeed, it is very important reforming the social economic structure and establishing new institutions. What is at stake with development is a much broader concept of social change. Social change which implies eco-



conomic growth, needs at least that economic growth which makes fundamental social rights feasible and therefore capable of allowing a new social order. In this context, integration of women in development - that which concerns us now - is the ability to participate actively in the process of change and to utilize effectively the opportunities offered by it: integration of women in development effort is indeed their capacity to introduce a new dynamic force in these process of change made up by the collective attitude and concerted action of women at all levels and in all spheres of social and economic life.

|| Women must participate - must be present and active as women in this building up of new patterns of society. || However, it is true that women have been locked up in a system of relationship where the rules have been more clearly defined than those of men and have confined them to certain spheres of action. We want to stress that even when we speak of the importance of the integration of women in development in terms of the economic value of that participation we take as the most important element the happiness of women, the capacity for them to be active, happiness builders of the new society we all are looking for, regardless of the type of society from which we come, regardless of the unequal distribution of wealth, regardless of the low gross national product or the high gross national product that characterizes each one of our countries.

It's always the woman as a human being, as full human being with a right to happiness and a right to introduce in history a new capacity of being human that is at stake. We are tired of the slogans



that we need to sacrifice ourselves for the next generation. In fact, sacrifice is a beautiful thing when it comes out of a dynamic and personal choice, but can not be imposed by any authorities and sacrifice is not a political rule. It is a moral attitude and as such a moral attitude belongs to the individual conscience. Therefore, it is the women today as they are, as human persons that should be our concern in all the efforts of their integration in development and construction of a new society.

Another element to take into account in this analysis is our conviction that collective force of women will bring about a new aspect in social change. It is very striking to see that social change in all countries has been accomplished mostly by men, and women have to adapt to that change made by men. Even the countries and the revolutions that consider themselves most avantgarde take for granted that women will follow in their wake. In fact, very often women can not do anything else but follow in the way of the rules laid down by men. However, we think that it is time that women help to change drastically the direction of social change. It was very interesting for us to see in the FAO paper concerning the role of women in rural development the concept of social visibility. However, this concept is not only a concept for the rural women, but is also a concept for the urban women. We need, in order to speak in an adequate way of participation of women or integration of women in development, to review completely the capacity of women to make their work and other women's work socially visible.

A last point on this question of development and participa-



tion and one that does concern every country is the concept of fundamental solidarity of all countries in connection with development, namely economic development. This in itself is a very important principle because it puts above the individual needs and rights of the different countries the need for cooperation between all states. The fact that participation of all countries on a basis of equality should be satisfied at the level of the world economic problems with a view to the common interest of all countries is a most significant one. This is important because women in this context are subject of change. It is a discrimination made by the United Nations body itself if we go on distinguishing between women in developed and women in developing countries. We may distinguish them for the sake of analysis, for the sake of stating which are the problems in one part of the world and in the other part of the world, but we can not distinguish them in what concerns strategy, because strategy implies the solidarity among all countries and therefore the solidarity among women of all countries. That solidarity is not only a consequence of the integration which is a part of this new economic order but - this is fundamental for us - it is a basic condition for this new international economic order to be effective. That same change will also be the basis of a new relationship among nations.

We have been sharing with you some reflections on women development and participation. We are coming to an end; however we would like only to say how this is expressed in concrete terms in our country at this moment. In the first place, there is a strong feeling that the conditions are there for women to participate.



There are the conditions and the will and the effort. As a matter of fact portuguese women are there taking part massively in the elections, colaborating in political parties, in neighbourhood commissions, in worker's committees in mass-meetings and street demonstrations, etc. They may not be at decision-level yet, they may not be in large numbers yet in high administrative and govermental posts, but they, the women among the people take responsibilities and initiatives now. This is for us a source of hope and joy and a promise of a new society that we hope will be based upon justice and solidarity. We could also mention the concrete achievements in the conquest of women's rights, but we shall not go into that now. We shall only say that however much may have been accomplished in this last year, we feel that still almost everything remains to be done. The other side of reality is still the very vivid exploitation of women, both in the labour-market and in domestic life. In professional work women still receive lower wages than men doing the same job. At home, women still carry the burden of a double task not shared by men. Awareness of this oppression is wakening in women's minds. At the same time the capacity and the will to fight against oppression and build justice is growing in their hearts. There is a revolutionary force at work, both in the way of a structural change in society and in the women's own status, role and condition.

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, we believe that our task at this moment is to fight both for a Revolution that may lead us to complete freedom as a people and for a Revolution on the Status of Women that may lead us to full participation and fullfilment.

Mr. President



As I finish this statement, allow me to greet in a very special way the women of Angola, Guine-Bissau and Mozambique. That they may help to build new countries of justice of freedom. For them and their peoples the best wishes from the women of Portugal.

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro