

REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION
(1995)

State of Palestine

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This report on the follow-up of the resolutions adopted at Beijing (1996) was jointly prepared by the Interministerial Coordination Committee, representing women's affairs departments in ministries and State institutions, and the General Federation of Palestine Women, representing non-governmental women's organizations and centres operating both inside and outside the homeland.

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FOREWORD

This report is designed to respond to the note verbale sent to the Government and non-governmental organizations with a view to seeking information on three key issues:

1. Overview of the progress made towards the achievement of equality between men and women;
2. Financial and institutional arrangements;
3. Implementation of the 12 critical areas of concern identified in the Platform for Action.

The report fulfils the requirements to cover all the areas of concern, as well as measures adopted, difficulties encountered, proposals made and the outlook for the future. It also devotes attention to the cooperation efforts pursued among Government institutions and non-governmental organizations with a view to engaging in a continuous and enduring partnership for action, achieving better outcomes for women and integrating women into the process of economic, political, social and cultural development relating to the 12 areas of concern and to the priorities which promise to be satisfied at national level, having been linked to the strategies instituted by the State, with emphasis on the particularities of Palestinian women.

It is hoped that this paper will accomplish the objectives for which it was written and thus serve as a starting point for more precise action in the future that focuses on the crucial projects to be carried out in Palestinian society.

INTRODUCTION

Historical background to the political struggle of the Palestinian people

A. Historical overview of the national cause of the Palestinian people

For over a century, the Palestinian people has faced a bitter struggle aimed at uprooting it from its land in favour of the Zionist movement, which built the State of Israel on the land of Palestine on 15 May 1948, the year of the catastrophe of the Palestinian people.

To this day, the Israelis have failed to comply with General Assembly resolution 181 of 29 November 1947 (the partition resolution), which stipulated the establishment of two States, one Palestinian and one Jewish.

On the contrary, they have waged unmitigated war against the Palestinian people ever since, using killing and oppression to drive out Palestinian inhabitants and force them to seek refuge in Arab States and other countries of the world.

As a result, Palestine was divided into three areas:

- (a) The Jewish-occupied land, constituting 76.7 per cent of the area of Palestine, on which the State of Israel was established to alter the demographic composition to 93 per cent Jewish and 17 per cent Palestinian;
- (b) The West Bank, constituting 23 per cent of the area of Palestine, which was annexed to Jordan;
- (c) The Gaza Strip, constituting 1.3 per cent of the area of Palestine, which was placed under Egyptian administration.

On 5 June 1967, Israel attacked the Arab States and occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip, thus bringing the whole of Palestine under the control of Israeli occupation.

Following the 1967 catastrophe, the Israeli occupation forces deliberately pursued a policy of repression against the inhabitants of the occupied territories, which was characterized by:

1. Endeavouring to drive out and expel Palestinian inhabitants and refusing to allow the return of those who were displaced during or as a result of the war and those who were abroad for reasons of work or study;
2. Annexing Jerusalem and extending the influence of its municipality by annexing 28 villages on the West Bank and sections of Bira, Bethlehem and Beit Jala, as well as exerting pressure on the inhabitants of Jerusalem and withdrawing their identity cards with the intention of evacuating Palestinians and installing Jewish settlers in their place in the Palestinian sections;
3. Reducing the level of health and educational services and undermining the economic structure;
4. Building settlements on Palestinian land confiscated from its owners, the area of which now amounts to 53 per cent of the land in the West Bank and 40 per cent of that in the Gaza Strip, and persistently expanding settlements and confiscating land to this day;

5. Crushing the resistance of the Palestinian people to forced occupation, using any terrorist and inhuman method of doing so, including killing, detention, foreign exile and domestic blockade.

Over the past decades, the Palestinian people has waged a protracted struggle for the restoration of its full legitimate rights, namely its right to self-determination, the return of refugees and the establishment of its national State on its own land, with Jerusalem as its capital, under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, under which all national groups and parties are amalgamated, together with grass-roots and trade union organizations.

The Palestinian struggle has assumed an assortment of forms, from armed struggle, political and diplomatic efforts, and grass-roots action both inside and outside the occupied territories, particularly in the Palestinian communities in neighbouring Arab States.

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict has inevitably affected the course of events in the Arab and international arenas, having passed through various stages, most significantly:

1. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon, which drove out the forces of the Palestine Liberation Organization to other Arab States in a new operation aimed at their dispersal;
2. The Gulf War, which adversely affected the Palestinian people, leading as it did to the expulsion of some 500,000 Palestinians from Kuwait and the other Gulf States. The economic plight of the Palestinian people was therefore exacerbated, both in Palestine and abroad. It also had adverse repercussions on the inflow of financial resources to the Palestine Liberation Organization.
3. The eruption of the grass-roots intifada in the occupied territories to counter the Israeli policy of occupation and repression, since throughout the years of the intifada, the Palestinian people was subjected to further terrorism and hundreds of women and children were martyred by the bullets of Israeli soldiers, while hundreds of thousands were thrown in prison and yet hundreds more were subjected to mass expulsions outside the homeland. Palestinian towns and villages were also subjected to lengthy blockades, which paralyzed economic and social activity, the objective of all such activities being to suppress the people's courageous intifada.

Significant achievements were accomplished during the years of the celebrated struggle of the Palestinian people, who, despite the oppression

and terrorism, never once faltered. Arab and international support were gained with the recognition of the legitimate and just rights of the Palestinian people in United Nations resolutions and the recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization as its legitimate representative. The grass-roots struggle in the occupied territories also acquired widespread Arab and international support, as did the people's intifada.

B. A new stage in the history of the Palestinian people

As a result of the protracted struggles and valiant intifada of the Palestinian people under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization and its determination to attain its just rights, coupled with Israel's consequent realization that it was incapable of eliminating the national cause of the Palestinian people and its national movement, fresh prospects emerged for a resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict that was geared towards historical bargaining and the achievement of a just and comprehensive settlement in the region with Arab and international support.

(a) On that basis, at the session of the Palestine National Council held in Algiers in 1988, the Palestine Liberation Organization declared the Palestinian peace initiative by recognizing Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as General Assembly resolution 181 of 1947, and sought the establishment of the State of Palestine in accordance with the latter.

(b) The initiative of the Palestine Liberation Organization made way for the convening of the 1991 Madrid peace conference under the sponsorship of the United States of America and the Soviet Union on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace. At the Madrid conference, the Palestinian desire to establish a just and comprehensive peace came under the world spotlight, thus attracting support for the Palestinian cause.

(c) Pursuant to the Palestinian-Israeli agreement on principles reached in Oslo in 1994, Israel withdrew in phases from the towns and territories of the Gaza Strip and West Bank, which Palestinian forces entered, having assumed control on 4 May 1994. However, 72 per cent of the area of the West Bank and 37 per cent of the area of the Gaza Strip, as well as the crossing points, borders, airspace and water resources, remained under the control of Israeli occupation.

In January 1996, general elections were held in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the President of the Palestinian National Authority was elected, together with the Legislative Council consisting of 88 members.

Since its establishment, the Palestinian National Authority has strived to achieve national reconstruction through its institutions and ministries. Significant accomplishments have been made in the various economic, social, political and legislative fields, and development mechanisms and plans have been formulated along with draft unified laws aimed at ensuring that these achieve fruition in the forthcoming stage.

With the approach of 4 May 1999 signalling the end of the (five-year) transitional stage, the crisis is deepening due to the Israeli policy. As such, it heralds the breakdown of the agreements signed between the two parties and threatens the peace process, particularly since the Palestinian people will refuse to acquiesce to Israeli procrastination or continuing occupation and settlement, as well as to the infringements on its freedom and sovereignty.

Through its activities on the Arab and international fronts, the Palestinian National Authority is making efforts to forestall the impending collapse of the peace process and to place the facts before the international community concerning the position of the right-wing Government of Israel, which refuses to implement the accords, continually declining to fulfil its obligations thereunder in regard to entering the final stage negotiations, which should have begun two years ago, to discuss important issues, such as refugees, boundaries, Jerusalem and settlements.

The international community is demanding that pressure should be exerted on the Israeli Government with a view to compelling it to meet its obligations. As a sponsor of the peace process, the United States of America is also calling on the Israeli Government to shoulder its responsibilities in that respect and advocates that it should receive no further support until it fulfils its responsibilities towards the peace process and recognizes an independent Palestinian State, with the aim of achieving security and stability for the peoples of the region.

PART ONE

I. Overview of the progress made towards the achievement of equality between women and men and the advancement of women

Preface

The question of the advancement of women and the enhancement of their status is of paramount importance in the world of today as it prepares to embark on the next century. The world is now aware of the importance of the role played by women in development and in facing the rapid succession of

challenges such as globalization, electronic communications and the internet. Many States today are endeavouring to continue the efforts for the advancement of women which they have been pursuing for two decades, for it was in 1975 that the first World Conference of the International Women's Year was held in Mexico, focusing on women's conditions worldwide and the need to change them for the better. Follow-up and preparatory conferences ensued, most significantly the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, held in Nairobi, which produced an important reference document, namely the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000. The Fourth World Conference on Women, at which the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted, was then held in Beijing in 1995.

During this period, the specialized international organizations focused their concerns on women and the improvement of their economic, social and political circumstances, striving for greater effective participation in the sustainable development process.

They assumed the task of elaborating instruments and mechanisms intended to address evident concerns aimed at raising the status of women and enhancing their social equality. Of these, the most significant are the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), the World Summit for Children (1990), the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992), the International Conference on Population and Development (1994) and the World Summit for Social Development (1995).

The States which attended the Beijing Conference made a commitment to continue working to promote women and implement the Beijing Platform for Action, which affirms the importance of pursuing action for the advancement of women, the strengthening of their work and the attainment of their equal rights, bearing in mind the particularities of each State. It also stipulates the vital need to formulate strategies, policies and programmes and identify the priorities of each State, and further urges State institutions and non-governmental organizations to participate in action to accelerate the advancement of women.

The Beijing Platform for Action takes into consideration the obstacles in the way of efforts to implement strategies relating to women, particularly in view of the political and economic difficulties and conflicts being experienced worldwide and creating the complex social problems that place women in their present position, which should be furthered and strengthened, together with their role in development.

The Beijing Platform for Action lists the priorities on which emphasis should be placed in the form of 12 areas of concern. These are women and poverty, education and training of women, women and health, violence against women, women and armed conflict, women and the economy, women in power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, human rights of women, women and the media, women and the environment and the girl child.

Palestinian efforts and achievements in regard to the advancement of women

On this basis, Palestine participated in the Beijing Conference in the form of a high-ranking delegation, headed by the Minister of Social Affairs, Mrs. Intesar Al-Wazner, and comprising State and non-governmental organizations, with the aim of presenting the Palestinian efforts exerted in the last decades for the advancement of Palestinian women.

The particularities of Palestinian women derive from the special nature of their national cause, which constitutes their lives and affects the course of their advancement. The Israeli occupation of Palestine in 1948 created a problem which distinguished that cause in that most of Palestinians became refugees living in intolerable social, health and economic conditions, both inside and outside the occupied territories. This problem was further complicated by the Israeli occupation of 1967 and the Israeli policy aimed at obliterating the Palestinian national identity, building settlements, demolishing houses and occupying Palestinian land and towns, as well as the city of Jerusalem, the capital of the State of Palestine.

Following the adoption of the Platform for Action resulting from the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in September 1995, and in the light of regional, Arab and national Palestinian instruments approved in the preparatory stages of the Conference and the outcome of the Arab ministerial conference held in Amman in September 1996, work was carried out at official and grass-roots levels to formulate a national strategy for Palestinian women, taking into account Palestinian resources and the priority needs of Palestinian women inside and outside the homeland.

Organizational mechanisms have been created to fulfil this goal: at Government level, a coordination framework (the Interministerial Coordination Committee) was formed of representatives from the women's affairs departments in ministries and State institutions with a view to promoting the national status of Palestinian women. Chaired by the Minister of Social Affairs, Mrs. Intesar Al-Wazner, the Committee pursues its work in accordance with the Beijing Platform for Action and the needs and priorities of Palestinian women with a view to translating these into various activities and programmes.

Based on the priorities of Palestinian women and the areas of concern contained in the Beijing Platform for Action, the General Union of Palestine Women has similarly pursued action in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and outside the homeland, with prominent personalities and non-governmental women's centres also taking part.

The joint efforts of the Interministerial Coordination Committee and the General Union of Palestine Women are channelled towards unifying national attitudes to the enhancement of women's conditions in accordance with the available resources.

As a result of these efforts, the national strategy for Palestinian women was formulated and announced at a conference, held in June 1977, which brought together all the prominent women's figures at Government and non-governmental levels and was attended by representatives of the Executive Committee, the Palestinian National Authority and the Legislative Council, as well as by representatives from civil organizations. This strategy formed a substantial basis for the procedures and plans of action implemented by women's affairs departments at Government level and by the General Union of Palestine Women in cooperation with all non-governmental women's organizations and centres.

Ever since the outset of the Palestinian cause, Palestinian women have played a distinct national role inside and outside Palestine and have fought in various ways to eliminate the occupation and secure the return of the occupied Palestinian territories. They have also helped to establish women's unions and charitable associations, endeavoured to alleviate some of the oppression and suffering endured by the Palestinian refugee families living in camps, and provided assistance to the families of martyrs. Women have shouldered the responsibility of supporting families whose men have either been detained or martyred, while the women in the camps in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Jordan have made efforts to improve the quality of the social, economic, health and cultural areas of life, particularly for women and children. The activities of civil organizations and women themselves have therefore been distinguished by ongoing action in the absence of a national authority on Palestinian soil, particularly in the case of the General Union of Palestine Women, which comprises a large number of women's associations and organizations inside and outside Palestine.

In 1974, the Palestinian National Authority began to assume control of the Palestinian territories for the first time since the occupation of Palestine, bringing with it the fruits of its rebellion and constant struggle inside and outside Palestine and in international forums. Apparent from an early stage was the official and institutional interest concerning the

policies of the Palestinian National Authority towards the advancement of Palestinian women and support for the continuation of their positive and historic national role of participation in building the State institutions which Palestinians are endeavouring to establish.

This same commitment was explicit in the Declaration of Palestinian Independence, regarded as the first Palestinian Constitution, which established the status of women and their entitlement to equal rights and duties with men.

On the basis of this approach, Palestinian women are attempting to devise and adhere to their own strategies and make progress in achieving them. The national strategy for Palestinian women was drawn up in line with the 12 critical areas of concern contained in the Beijing Platform for Action, emphasizing priorities in accordance with the particular nature of the Palestinian cause and listing them under eight areas of concern, namely women and poverty, education and training of women, women and health, violence against women, women in power and decision-making, women and the media, women and the economy and the girl child.

It also took various activities and actions into consideration and proposed mechanisms for the implementation and translation of these strategies, particularly given that the Palestinian National Authority is engaged in earnest efforts to establish the institutional infrastructure and formulate legislative acts and laws for the Palestinian State before the end of this millennium. This area of concern assumed particular importance and is interconnected with all other such areas.

The Legislative Council operates in compliance with the 1988 Declaration of Palestinian Independence, as the legislative acts and laws ratified and in force, together with the draft basic law, are based on the principle of equality and non-discrimination against women and on the principle that women's rights are a part of human rights. As much is evident in the Legislative Council Elections Act, the Nationality Act, civil laws, the Municipal and Local Council Elections Act and the Education Act, as well as in Palestine's compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other international agreements concerning equality, such as those concerning the rights of the child and the equal rights of women in exercising their political rights and in decision-making. Moreover, the Palestinian National Authority is amending and updating the laws and regulations in force, such as the Personal Status Act, and is also undertaking a women's initiative.

With a view to social, economic and political security and their participation in development, Palestinian women exercise their right to engage in political activity. Several women have been elected to the Legislative Council and now constitute 7.5 per cent of its members. An even greater number has been elected to the National Council and now constitutes 8.8 per cent of its members. Given that a woman minister has been appointed since the Beijing Conference, there were two women ministers prior to the resignation of the Minister of Higher Education, although it is hoped that the latter will be replaced by another woman in the future. In a move unprecedented in the Arab region, a woman also nominated herself as a candidate for the presidency of the Palestinian National Authority.

Palestinian women joined in diplomacy and international negotiations, having taken part in the Oslo and Madrid conferences and United Nations discussions and represented Palestine in international conferences on the Palestinian question and human rights. At grass-roots level, non-governmental organizations and women's associations have also joined in national political action against Israel's occupation and its arbitrary practices, which exacerbate the suffering of the Palestinian women working for a just and honourable peace. In the departments of the Palestinian National Authority, women have been appointed to leading positions at grades which enable them to share in the various levels of decision-making in 13 ministries, as well as in the police force, which is a new and non-traditional field for women.

The official and public interest in the question of women is mirrored by the conspicuous amount of space devoted to the subject in the print and audio-visual media; women's issues and situations are discussed in daily newspaper supplements and also covered in special radio and television programmes.

Special programmes on health, for example, devote attention to raising women's awareness of health, bearing in mind the national strategy drawn up with the aim of safeguarding women's and children's health with a view to a better life. These educational campaigns and programmes are influential; the fertility rate has dropped and child inoculation has risen to 95 per cent. Moreover, Palestine is one of the first nominated countries in the region to declare itself free of poliomyelitis. Such programmes have also drawn women's attention to the importance of early screening for breast cancer, cervical cancer and sexually transmitted diseases.

Education and training of women is a major priority and focus of concern for the Palestinian National Authority in view of the hindrances caused to this sector by the Israeli occupation, school closures and the

school drop-out rate during the basic stage. A prominent achievement within the sector, and one which benefits women, has been the elaboration of a draft law to raise the compulsory education age to the basic stage in a bid to reduce the female illiteracy and drop-out rates: 23 per cent of women are illiterate and the rate is particularly high among rural women, who frequently enter into marriage at an early age.

A national strategy for vocational and technical education and training has been drawn up with the aim of preparing women for the employment market and training them to participate effectively in the sustainable development process. With the introduction of computer studies into education programmes, women have been able to gear themselves more towards meeting modern-day requirements and facing the challenges of globalization. Academic institutions also show a marked interest in the advancement of women and a women's studies programme in which both sexes are clearly conceptualized has been created at university level, in which connection intellectuals take part in discussion, write papers and studies and translate them into action.

In the field of economy and the alleviation of poverty and unemployment, a key project aimed at helping impoverished women to improve their economic situation is run by the Ministry of Social Affairs, which endeavours to provide women with training in a number of vocational skills and in the management of self-run projects. It also stands as guarantor for women who borrow from loan institutions in an effort to ensure that women have equal access with men to the loans previously denied to them, thus allowing them to become more self-sufficient and more capable of supporting their penniless families.

It remains imperative for women to participate in the economic development process by ensuring the elimination of unemployment among women and creating work opportunities for them.

Women have also benefited positively from agricultural loans, given that the institution offering such loans has extended its service to 15,898 women. The experiment is still continuing with success, enabling women to be self-reliant in establishing productive projects of their own. One non-governmental institution has also increased the size of loans available to women to sums of between 3,000 and 15,000 dinars, thus indicating that there is now greater confidence in women and their equal ability with men to cope with the economic aspects of life and make a contribution to development.

Non-governmental institutions also make an unstinting contribution to the production process, the Lebanon branch of the General Union of Palestine Women having created job opportunities and enhanced the quality of life in

the Palestinian camps by instituting and strengthening income-generating production projects.

One of the Government's key policies was to establish a programme on male and female statistics in the Central Bureau of Statistics in 1996, one year after Beijing, with a view to increasing awareness among those concerned with women's issues and strengthening women's equality with men in the fields of planning and decision-making, which is regarded both as an obligation and a positive early achievement for women's equality with men. The term "gender" is now widely employed in the discussion of social, economic and political matters.

The matter of violence against women constitutes an important priority in the national action plan owing to the importance of safeguarding the family and esteeming the household role of women, in addition to the fact that violence against women is often a hidden practice that is as traditional as the stereotypical and demeaning image of women and their powerlessness. The Palestinian National Authority has accordingly complied with, *inter alia*, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, thereby ensuring a more secure future for women in both institutional and legal terms.

The Ministry of Social Affairs has also maintained the same compliance, having established a girls' welfare home catering for 20 girls aged under 18 who have been exposed to domestic violence, in addition to a second home for the same purpose. Non-governmental organizations also instituted a legal and social guidance programme and set up a so-called "hotline" after the Beijing Conference to take women's complaints, indicating the success of the pioneering experiment to assist women who are subjected to violence to seek help and protection.

The Ministry of Social Affairs is also implementing a programme for men under the title of "Towards a Better Family" with a view to raising their awareness of women's and children's rights and halting the practice of violence against family members. Equality is thus emphasized by raising awareness of the rights and duties of both sides.

Despite these efforts, the greatest obstacle remains the failure of women to exercise their rights and defend themselves owing to the prevailing traditions and the negative stereotypical and demeaning image of women and their powerlessness, which points to the importance of using both conventional and modern means of mass communication to deal with the subject and bring it into greater focus.

Women and armed conflict is an area of concern to which the Palestine Liberation Organisation attaches great importance. Since the beginning of this century, the Palestinian people has been fighting against the imperialism which caused it to seek refuge in 1947 and to migrate in 1967. Since that date, Palestinian women both inside and outside the homeland have been suffering from poor physical and mental health and endured poor educational conditions as a result of Israel's occupation of all Palestinian territories.

Through their engagement in various kinds of military, political and diplomatic efforts, women have played an active part in resisting the occupation, raising their children as Palestinians and building a better future for them in an independent State.

Palestinian children have played a distinctive historical role in their use of stones to fight against the occupier during the years of the renowned Palestinian intifada, which drew widespread international support on account of the children and their mothers who were martyred while defending their homeland. In 1997, 139 women were martyred and others were subjected to beating, ill-treatment and imprisonment. Seven women have been under detention since 1995 and women today continue alongside men to demand their release from prison by mounting loud worldwide protests against the Israeli authorities. Palestinian women are also still conspicuously involved in persistent action against the occupation, the building of settlements, the seizure of land and the demolition of houses.

The attention which Palestine devotes to the girl child is based on the equality of the sexes. The Palestine Liberation Organisation having signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ministries and non-governmental organizations are under obligation to safeguard the physical, mental and social welfare of the girl child. A number of social programmes are run for disabled persons and persons with special needs, as are psychological, sports, health, educational and cultural programmes for the girl child, on whom focus is placed in order to ensure the development of a healthy generation of Palestinian society.

These points of analysis illustrate the widespread response to the Beijing Platform for Action and women's issues, as well as the positive achievements made, even though these require strengthening and follow-up. Such political, social and economic development plans and programmes, however, run counter to the expansionist policy of occupation, the severance of links with the West Bank, the imposed policy of closing the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the hastened measures to Judaize Jerusalem and isolate it from the remaining areas of the Palestinian homeland, thereby impeding the

development process and preventing the Palestinian National Authority from imposing its sovereignty over the land and people.

The outlook for the future is that Palestinian men and women hope to live together in an independent Palestinian State and are preparing to usher in the third millennium on a positive note. Traditions notwithstanding, the gender concept is now accepted in Palestinian society and the stereotypical image of women has begun to change; more education and employment are now available for women and their capacity to work and participate in production and use modern technologies will grow, thus strengthening their role and their equality with men in the fundamental areas of concern discussed in Beijing.

As the tools of information, modern technology, the media and the internet have developed, Palestinian women have managed to gain their benefit and will be in a position to use them positively in the first decade of the next millennium, provided that the financial and training resources are available to make an impact on women and men alike by eliminating many of the traditional means of production, stereotypes and customs. Accordingly, women will have a permanent linkage with the outside world, while also endeavouring to safeguard the Palestinian identity and the positive aspects of their inherited historical customs.

Palestinian women will advance in the creative fields and the media, where their image will improve, and they will enjoy greater participation in the development process. The Palestinian State will seek to maintain a constant and ongoing commitment to the advancement of women and will support their participation and equality, a general objective that is vital to the shared management of the affairs of Palestine, its society and its security. If that commitment continues in conjunction with the enthusiasm for its cause and its economic, social, political and cultural concerns, Palestine will continue space with civilization.

PART TWO

II. FINANCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

1. Financial arrangements

This area of concern constitutes a permanent obstacle to the implementation of women's projects and programmes in the various sectors, as the financial resources available to promote the advancement of women still only constitute under 0.5 per cent, and at best only 1.2 per cent, of the funds provided by donor States for all women's activities.

In 1998, the sum of \$3,571,000 was not very much different from the sum of \$3,438,000 provided in 1995. In 1996, it stood at the even lower figure of \$2,987,000 and at \$2,979,000 in 1997.

The allocations earmarked in the different fields for ministries and Government departments are meagre and inadequate. However, in view of the interest in women's health as a priority area of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action and in the significance of maternal and child health in building a sound society for both women and men, there has been a marked increase in the budget of the Ministry of Health, which administers this important sector.

It should be noted that, in most cases, no specific women-related budget items are allocated to ministries in the national strategy for women, a factor which adversely affects the implementation of all objectives and priorities in the identified areas of concern. The reason is attributable to the lack of any fixed financial resources in the budget of the Palestinian National Authority and the failure of donor States to fulfil their financial commitments. The sums allocated for loans from private institutions are also conspicuously low. The Ministry of Social Affairs has therefore adopted the new measure of standing as guarantor for women who borrow from loan institutions in order to ensure that they acquire funding for the establishment of small self-run projects.

In addition, coupled with the fact that the loans are only small, the interest rate on loans to women from private institutions is not conducive to furthering the integration of women into the economic development process, which is currently experiencing a period of stagnation and general distress owing to the closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and global influences on the economy.

2. (a) Institutional arrangements

The Palestinian National Authority has complied with implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action concerning action for women, which is a fundamental area of concern. To that end, it approved the requisite measures in a bid to accelerate the institutional advancement of women, and general women's affairs departments were established in 13 ministries and Government offices to form part of their institutional and organizational structure. In the Ministry of Social Affairs, which is headed by a woman minister, a general women's affairs department has been established comprising three offices to deal with education and awareness-raising, women's welfare, and training and empowerment, as well as an employment office. Departments have also been established in the Ministries of Planning and International Cooperation, Health, Agriculture and Youth and Sports, together with a women's committee in the Ministry of Education. The Central Bureau of Statistics works in cooperation with these institutions and created a male and female statistics programme in order to record gender statistics.¹

Although these departments are still being established and developed as institutions, they operate within the structural organization of the Ministry, which follows up their activities and coordinates their work with the other ministries through the Interministerial Coordination Committee, which includes a director-general, a department head and the holder of the women's portfolio. One of the Committee's tasks is to coordinate the planning, implementation and follow-up of projects and programmes relating to the advancement of women and the achievement of that objective. Male and female workers in the field have received training in gender planning skills, as well as in project preparation, follow-up and appraisal from the gender perspective. A committee of non-governmental organizations has also been formed through the General Union of Palestine Women in which women's centres, organizations and notable personalities play a part.

Following the 1996 Beijing Conference, the committee also cooperated in devising the national strategy², which contains the guidelines for national, regional and international policies and commitments in connection with the advancement of Palestinian women.

The strategy also specifies the goals and plans which it intends to implement. The above State and non-governmental departments are guided by the new concept of sustainable development with a view to the advancement of women and the development of human resources in the fields of women's social,

¹ See annex II for further information and statistics concerning the status of Palestinian women.

² See annex I for the text of the Palestinian national strategy for women.

economic, political and cultural development and their equality with men, thus indicating the clear commitment to the concept of social gender.

Women's institutions laid down specific project goals based on the strategy and on Palestinian priorities. They also planned projects to achieve both long- and short-term goals. Unfortunately, however, they are not bound by a fixed budget. On the contrary, in most cases budgets are non-existent, which has implications for the implementation of the strategic projects. With a view to such implementation, 17 branches of the General Union of Palestine Women have been formed throughout the entire homeland with a view to the advancement of women.

These institutions are governed by legislative acts, laws and regulations which endeavour to organize the institutional structure. They are also committed to the concept of gender and to the implementation of resolutions adopted at international conferences in conjunction with State and non-governmental organizations. In the Gaza Strip alone, the number of these institutions has increased to about 30, which undoubtedly highlights the fact that Government and civil activity to implement the Beijing Platform for Action has been stepped up.

Beginning with workshops to raise awareness of the concept of gender and the advancement of women, these institutions train women in important fields, such as the development of administrative skills, the use of computers, small project management, journalism for the press and media, public relations, technical skills and political participation.

(b) Arrangements for the coordination of efforts to follow up international conferences

The aforementioned Interministerial Coordination Committee composed of the relevant ministries engages in discussion and action to coordinate efforts, including those of the ministries and bodies which follow up international conferences and coordinate their own efforts with those of civil organizations. Together with the latter, for example, the Ministry of Justice devotes attention to human rights and questions of discrimination, as well as to the domestic follow-up of resolutions adopted in that connection at international and regional conferences. A committee member is elected to (illegible) the presidency of the conference and to formulate decisions and recommendations. The General Union of Palestine Women also takes part in the meetings of the United Nations Development Fund for Women in New York, which annually adopts a resolution to assist Palestinian women under occupation. Together with non-governmental organizations, it also participates in all international conferences.

In fact, various parties consult the State institutions and non-governmental organizations concerned with women with a view to cooperating in the follow-up of resolutions adopted by international conferences. It is essential to establish a committee to follow up implementation of the recommendations adopted by the conferences concerned, including, *inter alia*, the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995, the World Summit for Children and the United Nations Conference on Human Rights.

(c) Role of non-governmental organizations in the planning and organization of follow-up activities

Palestinian non-governmental organizations play a prominent role in the advancement of women by helping to draw up strategies, plans and objectives in connection with projects and programmes relating to women's issues and equality.

A non-governmental organization, for instance, namely the General Union of Palestine Women, helped to compile the national report of Palestinian women on implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. Through the many branches which it has in a number of geographical regions, the Union formulates programmes and projects on the basis of social, educational, health and cultural priorities, family matters and national grass-roots action against the occupation. It also attaches importance to the implementation of economic projects that help to improve the quality of life and combat poverty by creating job opportunities for poverty-stricken women.

PART THREE

III. PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN IMPLEMENTING THE CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN IDENTIFIED IN THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION

Critical area of concern	Examples of ensuing policies and projects for implementation of the critical areas of concern/Beijing Platform for Action	Examples of obstacles and useful lessons learnt	Other initiatives to be undertaken	Recommendations
1. Women and poverty: women and the economy	<p>A key project that has helped impoverished women is the initiative of the Ministry of Social Affairs to stand as guarantor for women borrowing from loan institutions and thus enable such women to become self-reliant in establishing their own projects.</p>	<p><u>Lesson</u> The provision of guarantees for women is a good example of the concept of sustainable development in practice, which it is important to spread more widely.</p>	<p>Conduct studies to identify priorities for economic projects that benefit women.</p>	<p>Encourage loan institutions by introducing initiatives for women, particularly those who are impoverished.</p>
	<p>The Ministry of Social Affairs established an anti-poverty office to ensure the welfare of impoverished women by providing monetary assistance and health insurance.</p>	<p><u>Obstacle</u> Lack of funds to allow the greatest possible number of impoverished women to benefit.</p>	<p>Increase the size of small loans to enable women to participate in productive economic development.</p>	
	<p>Since 1994, the number of women benefiting from loans has risen to 96 per cent in the case of agricultural projects. The success of this experiment has encouraged such women to pursue their productive projects, even after the loan institution has ceased follow-up of their activity. A non-governmental loan organization has also increased the size of its loans to between 5300 and 513,000.</p>	<p>The women's success is also regarded as a success for the loan institution, thus promoting greater support.</p>		<p>Provide guidance in order to avoid project failure.</p>
	<p>Through its Lebanon branch, the General Union of Palestine Women (a non-governmental organization) helped to implement loan programmes, from which a total of 14,000 women benefited, with a view to raising the economic standard of living of impoverished women. Non-governmental institutions also established a market for women's products in order to encourage marketing and 36 exhibitions of</p>	<p><u>Obstacle</u> The failure of agricultural cooperatives and the absence of regulations to govern the agricultural sector and protect women working in</p>	<p>Encourage women to return to the land and agriculture and use production to become self-sufficient, particularly in the case of impoverished</p>	

women's produce were mounted.

Agriculture.

rural women.

In 1998, the Ministry of Social Affairs increased its capacity to create special projects for the development of entrepreneurial skills. Of the 1,089 female trainees who benefited, 276 set up their own projects.

The scarcity of financial resources does not further the expansion and sustainability of projects.

Need to encourage non-governmental organizations to participate in income-generating activities.

At the Ministry of Planning, the office responsible for planning and developing the participation of women carried out research on loan policies and the equality of opportunities for women and men to obtain loans.

The office responsible for planning and developing the participation of women ran 17 workshops on the gender aspect of planning, follow-up and education, as well as on planning, management and budget preparation.

Need to follow-up the women's training workshops on working in productive projects and market requirements.

Importance of providing incentives for productive women and recognizing them as an example to be followed.

2. Education and training of women

A draft law has been elaborated to raise the age of compulsory education to the end of the basic stage.

The initiative to require girls to complete schooling and avoid early marriage is a good indirect lesson.

Need to draft legislation to raise the age of marriage to 18 years.

Computer studies have been introduced in the Ministry of Education programmes for girls and boys, thus strengthening the quality of education for girls and their equality with men.

This will help the new generation to keep pace with modern-day developments and prepare them for the future.

Change of educational curricula to show women in a positive light.

Endeavour to increase the number of women benefiting from successful projects and also introduce

All administrative activities performed in ministries have been computerized in order to ensure that girls' results are calculated objectively. The administrative methods used for both sexes have also been made easier and updated.

School drop-out rates have fallen and pupil enrolment in the basic stage has increased since 1995 to 833,439 pupils. The previously lower number was attributable to the instability which reigned before the Palestinian National Authority came into being.

The number of cooperative centres rose to 129, in which the number of females amounted to 44 per cent of the overall total.

The office responsible for planning and developing the participation of women conducted a study on the vocational training offered to both women and men in Palestine.

Women have benefited from the increased civil and private sector interest in technical training; in 1996, the number of women enrolled in training was 36.7 per cent in the civil sector and 33.7 per cent in the private sector. The figure was much lower in State institutions (the public sector), standing at 17.2 per cent for the Ministry of Labour and 15 per cent for the Ministry of Social Affairs.

The Ministry of Social Affairs established two training centres for women freed from the prisons of the occupier as a result of their fight against the occupation.

Make use of the electronic revolution and the media for distance learning and continuing education.

such projects more widely. Need for intensive training in the use of computers and the internet.

Lesson

Security and a just peace will help positive achievements to be made.

Importance of highlighting and publicizing technical education in the media.

Obstacle

Lack of financial resources, high training costs and the unavailability of training in Government bodies.

Make greater efforts to fund projects that help impoverished women, particularly those in rural areas.

Need to find financial resources and send training missions abroad.

Lesson

Training is beneficial in helping former prisoners to face society and life afresh after their release.

Endeavour to pursue women's on-the-job training and assess the extent to which women integrate socially without accumulating

A national strategy for vocational and technical education and training has been drawn up and Government-run academic colleges have been turned into technical colleges teaching practical subjects with a view to producing the labour force and the specialized vocational skills needed on the job market.

Lesson
Need to devise educational curricula that coincide with women's educational and practical needs in order to increase the number of those with an academic education and address the lack of them without an adequate education and good qualifications.

problems.
Need to increase the number of technical schools after studying job market requirements and making plans accordingly.

Need to conduct studies and accordingly outline non-traditional projects for women.

3. Violence against women

The Palestinian National Authority and non-governmental organizations undertook to implement the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, particularly articles 16 of both concerning marriage and family relationships.

Objective
The implementation of certain critical areas of concern is hampered by traditions and the stereotyping of women as weak and inferior, as well as by the Personal Status Act, which is currently being changed.

Adopt the draft personal status act.

Need for greater efforts to change the attitude to women and educate men.

The Ministry of Social Affairs opened a welfare home for girls catering for 20 girls aged under 18 who had been subjected to violence and subsequently established another home in a different geographical area following the success and favourable reception given to this project.

Importance of follow-up to educate women on their rights and on the avoidance of actions leading to violence against them.

A programme for men entitled "Towards a Better Future" has been implemented with the aim of raising awareness of child education, child sexual abuse, school drop-out, delinquency and early marriage. Favourably accepted by the grass-roots in towns and villages, the programme has benefited a total of 7,365 individuals.

Objective
Absence of any law punishing those who practice violence against women and children and lack of financial resources for more media activities.

Importance of carrying out studies to identify the causes of violence and attempt to stop it.

The so-called "hotline" was opened after the Beijing Conference to protect the family from violence against any of its members, including women.

Indirect lessons that more cases of violence should be uncovered in order to help resolve the cause.

Need to find innovative means of raising awareness against family violence.

Governmental and non-governmental organizations took part in a conference entitled "No violence against women".

Traditions are the main obstacle in connection with the practice of violence.

The office responsible for planning and developing the participation of women conducted a study on violence against women in which the media and organizations working in that field took part.

4. Women and health

The Ministry of Health formulated a national strategy for women's health and the continuous development of planning and programming. Women helped to review the Ministry of Health's five-year plan.

Lesson
Interest in maternal and child health is noticeably growing. Despite undoubtedly positive achievements, however, the lack of financial resources impedes further development of this sector, as well as any increase in the number of beneficiaries.

Increase the number of health centres in all rural areas and equip them with the necessary medical supplies.

Need for periodic review and amendment of the strategy to bring it into line with health requirements and need to draw up plans defining priorities.

A women's health database has been established that includes the development of data and indicators in connection with the status of women's health.

Make more concentrated efforts to raise preventive health awareness and ensure the inclusion of early screening for cervical and breast cancer.

The Palestinian National Authority

Obstacle

Devote

Importance of

drafted a general health act that is to be presented and discussed with a view to its entry into force.

Lack of intervention and statistics on women.

attention to increasing women's awareness of their own health and that of their family.

building on achievements to ensure that the entire homeland benefits.

The inoculation of children against infectious diseases has risen to 95 per cent. Moreover, despite difficult circumstances, Palestine was one of the first nominated States in the region to declare itself free of poliomyelitis.

Increased financial resources to be earmarked for women's health programmes.

The fertility rate among women fell from 6.7 per 1,000 in 1995 to 6.1 per 1,000 in 1996 as a result of programmes and activities related to women's health. The number of hospital births also grew from 36.6 per cent in 1995 to 41.2 per cent in 1996.

Goal
Ensure more universal achievements and create incentives for women to follow health guidelines.

Need to produce constant articles in the media in order to raise awareness.

The General Union of Palestine Women organized seminars and courses on reproductive health for women aged 14 to 40 from all governorates.

The General Union of Palestine Women in Lebanon organized some 300 seminars covering women's illnesses, breastfeeding, AIDs, first aid, dental health and domestic (allegable).

Obstacle
Poor standard of health services in refugee camps inside and outside the homeland.

Importance of determining programme and planning objectives so that they can be implemented within a specific time frame and according to a clear and mandatory budget.

Workshops were held for some 800 health professionals, midwives and nurses on family planning, cervical cancer and sexually transmitted diseases.

Establish reproductive health centres in all communities, particularly in rural and

Need to maintain the level of services provided by the United Relief and Works (UNRWA) to Palestinian

Two nursing institutes have been turned into colleges; one offers a master's degree in nursing and the other is now a college for midwives.

Obstacle
Insufficient allocations for cardiology, brain surgery, neurology and ophthalmology. Patients are sent to Jordan and Egypt for treatment at a cost of \$13,714,285 to the Ministry of Health, representing 15.3 per cent of its budget.

remote areas. communities in the homeland and elsewhere.

Need to send specialist ministers in the fields which are lacking and establish modern hospitals with clinics.

5. Women and the media

In conjunction with the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Information trained 25 journalists in women's health and produced and directed 43 radio programmes on the subject, as well as 75 television programmes on family planning.

Lesson
The media has the ability to reach the widest possible number of women and can therefore help to influence them positively, particularly in matters of health and awareness-raising. This should continue and be further expanded with a view to increasing the successes achieved.

Pursue cultural and media activities.

Need to reach rural women via the media, particularly those who are illiterate, and to change the stereotypical image of women through the media.

Women have been active in the print and audio-visual media and have taken part in preparing listening and reading material. Some of the non-governmental organisations concerned with women's affairs provide good examples of the success in raising awareness of women's issues, including health. One of these, for example, transmitted two television programmes, one weekly and the other twice weekly, and also publishes Sarr Al-Nisa' (Women's Voice) in the Arabic and English languages as a weekly supplement in the newspaper Al-Ahram. There are also awareness-raising programmes on the radio.

Obstacle
Despite such appreciated efforts, funding and training are an obstacle in this field.

Seek financial resources for the promotion of women in the media and for training in various fields.

Importance of running media competitions to produce interest in women's issues.

Need to encourage women to enrol on journalism and media courses and encourage them to pursue journalistic

corrects.

A bi-monthly newspaper and three documentary films have been produced on women's issues and an office has been established to produce reading and listening material for those interested in researching women's and gender issues. Several publications have also been issued on women and elections, together with guides to legislative elections, women's loan institutions and female management training, as well as a number of annual publications and posters dealing with women's issues.

Lesson
Women are becoming increasingly interested in media journalism. There is also concern to create social interest in women's issues.

A film produced on early marriage and motherhood has been screened in mother and child clinics.

Need to devote attention to children's creative writing and to creating a positive image of the girl child in family programmes with a view to ensuring that there is no discrimination between boys and girls.

The Ministry of Culture ran a creative writing competition for women.

Lesson
Attention should be devoted to education through the media, especially for rural and illiterate women.

Need to be creative in educating children of both sexes in order to raise a healthy new generation that is aware of problems and rights, particularly concerning the girl child.

A total of 32 male and female employees working in the media field in ministries and in public radio and television have benefited from training in organizational, media and communication skills.

6. Women in power and decision-making

Palestinian women are involved in politics owing to the particular nature of their just cause, which entails fighting by different means to eliminate the Israeli occupation. Both before and after Doujina, they have consistently engaged in various political activities, including the assumption of power and decision-making

Obstacle
Persistence of the stereotypical image of women, tradition and unfavourable customs.

Encourage mutual assistance for the struggle of Palestinian women and encourage their political participation.

positions.

In a move unprecedented in the region, a woman put herself forward as a candidate for the presidential elections in 1996.

Issue
Participation in decision-making is growing, as is the commitment to women's issues and the role of women in the integral development process.

Provide incentives for historians to document the struggle and pioneering activities of women.

In 1996, five of 28 women candidates were elected to the Legislative Council to constitute 5.7 per cent of the total membership.

There are 56 women members of the National Council, constituting 8.7 per cent of the total membership, and three of the 100 members of the Central Council are women. Although the percentages are small, they represent positive successes that demonstrate the commitment to women's participation in executive, legislative and judicial decision-making, which has been compounded by the appointment of a number of women judges.

Obstacle
Without Yassal's withdrawal from the occupied territories, any attempt to accelerate women's effective participation will remain problematic owing to political, social and economic instability.

Need to encourage women to elect women candidates in forthcoming elections so that women come to hold positions of legislative, political and judicial authority.

In 1996, two women ministers were appointed to the Government, whereas in 1995 there was only one woman minister (Minister of Social Affairs). The number was again reduced to one, however, with the resignation of the Minister of Higher Education.

There are women ambassadors in the diplomatic corps and women from Palestine participated in the peace processes together with men in the hope of establishing a just and lasting peace after the suffering endured by all Palestinians.

Need to appoint one woman minister, if not more, to replace the one who resigned.

The office responsible for planning and developing the participation of women conducted research on women in decision-making.

Need to carry out and update research in order to supplement information and

link it to national and international information networks.

The General Union of Palestine Women has been active in raising women's political awareness, helping through its branches to oppose settlement. Women also joined in solidarity with mothers campaigning to have their sons released from prison or detention and supported the right of (illegible) women to retain their identity. Women took part in leading demonstrations and protests on the fiftieth anniversary of the Palestinian catastrophe and were involved in committees for the right of refugees to return from the camps outside homeland.

Obstacle
The Israeli Government's adherence to its policy of settlement, occupation and non-compliance with international instruments, and its failure to recognize Jerusalem as the future capital of the Palestinians.

Continue to fight for achievement of the objectives of the Palestinian people to return to the homeland, determine its fate and establish a state.

Need to establish the infrastructure in villages, camps and towns in order to ensure access to clean drinking water and provide essential treatment in health centres and hospitals.

The General Union of Palestine Women participated in Arab and international conferences relating to the Palestinian people and women.

Lesson
Participation in decision-making.

Palestinian women take part in administrative and institutional decision-making and organize employment affairs in the ministries. In all, 22 women have been appointed to the grade of director-general in ministries and constitute 15 per cent of those employed at this responsible administrative level.

Obstacle
Coupled with the lack of training in management and the use of modern technology, the lack of financial resources prevents women from performing their best at work.

Further efforts aimed at building the body of political, economic and social institutions.

Importance of the history of the women's movement and women's activities in the last five decades.

Increase women's participation in various forms and levels of politics.

Strengthen and increase the numbers of women in decision-making positions in line with their numbers in society.

A woman was appointed as commander of the women's police force, which also has 24

Obstacle
The stereotypical

Continue to foster

women officers.

Image of women tends as an obstacle in many fields, including the police and leadership positions.

Lesson

Respect is due to the Palestinian people and their fighting spirit, which provide a lesson for the men, women and people of the world and for history.

international support for the implementation of United Nations resolutions in order to secure the legitimate national rights the Palestinian people concerning its rights of return and self-determination and the right to establish an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital.

7. The girl child

The Palestine Liberation Organization is committed to implementation of the Rights of the Child, which it signed in 1993.

Lesson

Early attention was given to the signature and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Children's books should be published and those which are particularly good should be distributed to children's centres in institutions.

Devote particular attention to the disabled girl child as a human being with right and duties.

The Ministry of Social Affairs is implementing programmes to monitor the psychological health of children subjected to domestic or social violence that have so far catered for 1,500 children of both sexes.

Government and non-governmental bodies should devote full attention to childhood.

Women instructors should be trained in teaching good behaviour to children and emphasis should be placed on the need for the girl child to respect herself and her rights as a female.

The Ministry of Education is implementing a successful policy based on the principle of equality between the sexes that will further the attainment of positive results in educating the girl child.

Message

Insufficient funds to enable children's projects to be more widely implemented.

Need to devote attention to women's creative writing for young children.

The Ministry of Education is implementing a programme for persons of both sexes with special needs or disabilities.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports is implementing a programme for boys and girls interested in youth leadership, communication skills and citizenship.

The Ministry of Health is implementing services to protect children against diseases.

Non-governmental bodies have implemented guidance and awareness-raising programmes, as well as youth leadership programmes, in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Lesson

Early attention should be devoted to girl children so that they grow into women who are healthy and well-integrated, both socially and mentally.

Obstacle

Tll-treatment of the girl child in society and unequal practices between the two sexes.

Need for intensive information and guidance campaigns to combat bad social practice.

8. Women and armed conflict

At every political stage, women took part in military action to resist imperialism and occupation with a view to the achievement of a just peace.

Lesson

The women's fighting spirit helped to change the negative stereotype of women, both locally and worldwide.

The national spirit of these women should be maintained so that they continue to fight against any interuocor in order to protect the future of the Palestinian State and its capital, Jerusalem.

Need for women with the fighting spirit to form part of the international delegations visiting friendly States in order to explain the just Palestinian cause.

Palestinian women imparted a positive picture of their fighting spirit worldwide and also participated in the Palestinian intifada by taking up arms against the occupation.

Women were martyred and injured in battle.

Lesson

constituting 9 per cent of those injured in 1957.

The women of Palestine affirmed that the struggle is not confined to men alone, but that every citizen has the right to a homeland.

Women lend support to the Palestinian struggle, in which connection they express themselves to detentions, challenge the Israeli occupation, defend land and oppose the building of settlements and the demolition of houses.

Women help to support their families, with many assuming the role of family breadwinner where the husband has been martyred in defence of the homeland.

Lesson
The lack of financial resources places impoverished women at a further disadvantage.

Funding should be sought.

Need to allocate and secure budgets with a view to implementing more projects aimed at women who are in poverty due to their husband's martyrdom.

ANNEXES

ANNEX I

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH
THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION

In the light of the recommendations of the Fourth World Conference on Women (the 1995 Beijing Conference), as well as the Platform for Action and the other documents issued by the Conference, emphasis was placed on the need to use specific formal mechanisms and create the structures needed to achieve the goal of equality between men and women and advance the status of Palestinian women in general, taking priorities and available resources into account.

By means of the plans and programmes of action implemented by ministries and Government institutions and the establishment of women's affairs departments in various ministries and official agencies, the Palestinian National Authority has made a substantial contribution to advancing the status of women.

Non-governmental women's organizations and centres have also played an effective and worthwhile part in implementing both the programmes of action and projects aimed at developing the status of Palestinian women and fostering their role.

In conjunction with non-governmental organizations, the Government prepared the national strategy announced in June 1997. This strategy is based on national programmes and legislative acts relating to Palestinian women on the one hand and on international conventions and treaties, in particular the Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference for Women, on the other.

This part of the report will cover the achievements made at the national level towards accomplishing the objective of equality between women and men in Palestine in the various spheres and the main obstacles encountered in the effort to implement the Beijing Platform for Action.

1. THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR WOMEN

The national strategy for women specifies general objectives and measures designed to accomplish those objectives. These are:

1. To ensure participation in achieving the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people to return to their homeland, achieve self-determination and establish an independent Palestinian State, with Jerusalem

as its capital:

2. To review policies, laws, legislative acts and decisions to ensure that they do not discriminate against women and are based on principles of equality and equal opportunity between women and men;
3. To provide an information database that will assist in defining needs and obstacles, promoting achievements and overcoming obstacles, and offer training in its use;
4. To ensure that women participate in organized economic activity and offer them support and training;
5. To provide health care for women throughout every stage of their lives;
6. To develop and update Palestinian teaching curricula in the context of a national curriculum founded on uniform educational and social bases that prepares pupils for a life of democracy and equality;
7. To make education compulsory and ensure that basic education is universally accessible (a primary school in every village or residential community by the year 2000);
8. To work with the legislative authorities to raise the age of marriage to 16;
9. To protect children from violence, discrimination and exploitation, provide their basic needs and devote particular attention to the status of the child within the family;
10. To promote public information in support of policies and plans geared towards the needs of both sexes;
11. To implement development policies aimed at alleviating acute poverty among women;
12. To increase the percentage of women in decision-making positions;
13. To develop the role of the General Union of Palestine Women into a framework for non-governmental organizations, given that it represents Palestinian women both inside and outside the homeland, as well as expand its presence and establish its centres in all governorates with a view to ensuring universal accessibility to women in villages, towns, camps and desert encampments;

ANNEX II

STATUS OF PALESTINIAN WOMEN: FACTS AND FIGURES

Following the announcement of the final results of the general survey of population, houses and facilities on 30 November 1998, conducted by the Central Bureau of Statistics of the Palestinian National Authority, there is no longer any difference of opinion over the statistical estimates and indicators concerning the Palestinian people, whose circumstances are clearly highlighted by the significant evidence provided in the facts and figures.

This part of the report covers the statistical indicators of the status of Palestinian women within society.

Population

The statistical results in table 1 indicate that the total population in the occupied territories stands at 2,895,693, consisting of 1,470,506 males and 1,425,177 females (including inhabitants of the Jerusalem area). Women constitute 49 per cent of the population.

Table 1 illustrating the distribution of the population by age, sex and area clearly shows that:

- The child population aged under 15 amounts to 47 per cent of the total population;
 - The 15-19 adolescent age group amounts to 10.5 per cent of the total population, followed by the 20-24 age group, which amounts to 9.1 per cent;
 - The 15-64 age group amounts to 49.5 per cent of the total population and persons over 65 amount to 3.5 per cent.
- * The distribution of Palestinian inhabitants by age, sex and area (of those who were counted) includes the inhabitants of the Jerusalem area.
- * These percentages will have implications for the lives of the Palestinian people, both male and female, most of whom are under the age of 19.
- * Data on the marital status of the Palestinian population indicate that 54.5 per cent are married, 39.6 per cent have never been married, 1.2 per cent have entered into the first contract of marriage, 0.07 per cent are divorced and 3 per cent are widowed.

14. To strengthen the mechanisms at government level for advancement of the status of women, as well as those which help to improve and expand the existing forms of coordination among ministries;

15. To create a central mechanism at national level for advancement of the status of women.

The national strategy for women is based on the following key points:

1. The national programme of the Palestine Liberation Organization, which calls for achievement of the objectives of the Palestinian people to return to its homeland, realize its right of self-determination and establish a Palestinian State;

2. The Declaration of Palestinian Independence issued by the Palestine National Council in Algiers in 1988, the provisions of which encompass the equal rights and duties of men and women;

3. The document concerning the rights of Palestinian women issued by the General Union of Palestine Women and other documents issued by Palestinian and Arab non-governmental organizations concerning equality between women and men;

4. International conventions and agreements adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted in 1979, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989.

* The various achievements of the national plan will be set forth here, together with the obstacles to its implementation.

- * The overall fertility rate is 5.6 per 1,000 in the West Bank, 6.7 per 1,000 in the Gaza Strip and 6.1 per 1,000 in the Palestinian territories as a whole.
- * The refugee population amounts to 41.4 per cent of the overall population, including 26.5 per cent of the total population in the West Bank, with the exception of the Jerusalem area, and 65 per cent of the total population in the Gaza Strip.
- * The statistical results also indicate that almost three-quarters of Palestinian families (73.2 per cent) are nuclear families and that 23 per cent are extended families. Single person families amount to 3.3 per cent and composite families are virtually non-existent (0.5 per cent).

Education

The statistical results shown in table 2 concerning inhabitants aged 5 years and over who are enrolled in education indicate that:

- * The total number of those enrolled in education amounted to 341,537 persons, 53.5 per cent of whom are males and 47.4 per cent females. The number of those enrolled in education in the West Bank amounted to 258,518 males (52.1 per cent) as compared with 237,554 females (47.8 per cent). In the Gaza Strip, 346,866 persons are enrolled in education. Of these, 53.1 per cent are males and 46.8 per cent females. About 37.7 per cent of the inhabitants in the West Bank are enrolled in education as opposed to 61.2 per cent who are not. In the Gaza Strip, 43.1 per cent of inhabitants are enrolled in education as opposed to 56.5 per cent who are not.
- * The educational status of the population aged 10 and above indicates that the number of illiterate persons of both sexes amounts to 13.6 per cent, or 197,043 individuals. Of these, [illegible] per cent, consisting of 72.9 per cent females and 27 per cent males, are in the West Bank, whereas in the Gaza Strip, the total number of illiterate persons amounts to 35.8 per cent, of whom [illegible] per cent are males and 67 per cent females.
- * The literacy rate (those who can read and write) is 16.9 per cent, of whom 53 per cent are males and 47 per cent females.
- * The numbers of those having completed the elementary stage amount to 26.1 per cent, of whom 52 per cent are males and 48 per cent females.

- * The number of those having completed the preparatory stage is 22.8 per cent, of whom 52 per cent are males and 48 per cent females.
- * The number of those completing 15 or more years in education is 13.3 per cent, of whom 55 per cent are males and 45 per cent females.
- * The educational gap between males and females increases at the stage of the baccalaureate, which is completed by only 3.9 per cent of pupils, 70 per cent of whom are males and 30 per cent females.
- * The gap is even greater at the stage of higher education, which is completed by a minute number of generally not more than [illegible] per cent, of whom 89 per cent are males and 20 per cent females.
- * Those having completed a doctorate constitute [illegible] per cent of the total number of inhabitants above the age of 10. Of these, 93 per cent of are males and 7 per cent females.
- * Those enrolled in Ministry of Education schools amount to about 62 per cent, with a further 25 per cent studying in UNWRA schools, 4 per cent in private schools and 9 per cent enrolled in nurseries.

Number and distribution of schools

- * In all, there are 2,400 schools and nurseries, 76 per cent of which are in the West Bank and 24 per cent in the Gaza Strip. There are 1,175 Government schools, 171 private schools, 789 nurseries and 265 UNWRA schools, 63 per cent of which are in the Gaza Strip and 37 per cent in the West Bank. The reverse is true concerning the distribution of both GOVERNMENT and PRIVATE schools and nurseries, of which MORE are in the West Bank than in the Gaza Strip, where fewer inhabitants are enrolled.
- * In the academic year 1996/97, the drop-out rate was 3.3 per cent and [illegible] per cent in the basic stage. In the tenth form, it rises to 6.3 per cent, more of whom are female than male.
- * A comparison of the education figures for 1997/98 with those for 1994/95 shows a noticeable rise in the number of students from 651,967 to 838,499. There are 28,693 male teachers and 21,554 female teachers.
- * In those same years, there were 2,400 and 1,910 schools respectively. The growth is attributable to the rate of development in the education sector in terms of pupil enrolment and the fall in the drop-out rate,

both of which are due to the stability created under the Palestinian National Authority and the fact that hundreds of families have returned to enrol their children to be educated in the schools of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. (In other words, the population has increased.)

- * In 1997, the number of cultural centres officially registered by the Ministry of Higher Education also increased to 129. These centres run educational courses in a variety of subjects and have an enrolment of 15,347 students, 56 per cent of whom are males and 44 per cent females. Geographically speaking, the distribution of students is 68 per cent in the West Bank and 32 per cent in the Gaza Strip.
- * There are 28,693 teachers employed in education, of whom 53 per cent are female and 47 per cent male. Of those, 64 per cent are employed by the Government, 18 per cent by UNRWA, 9 per cent by private schools and 9 per cent by nurseries. In addition to other administrators, technicians and employees, 2,175 principals are employed on the administrative staff, 61 per cent of whom are females and 39 per cent males.
- * In 1996/97, the total number of students in universities and higher institutes was 47,176, of whom 57 per cent were males and 43 per cent females. In the intermediate institutes, there were 4,599 students, of whom 58 per cent were males and 44 per cent females.
- * The number of students enrolled in the humanities, education, science and management was 69.4 per cent of the total number of male and female university students. There are now 1,963 individuals employed in university lecturing, 88 per cent of whom are males and 12 per cent females. Clearly, therefore, there is an enormous discrepancy between the numbers of males and females employed in university lecturing. There is also a similarly conspicuous discrepancy in connection with intermediate college teachers, of whom there are 332, 74 per cent of them males and 26 per cent of them females.

Employment

- * Statistical data indicate that Palestine's human workforce, namely its inhabitants aged 10 and over, amounted to a total of 1,686,199, or 65.3 per cent of the total population. The number of economically active inhabitants, whether employed or unemployed, amounted to 601,092, representing 35.5 per cent of the total human workforce. Of these, 107,635 are unemployed, representing 17.9 per cent of the economically active population.

- * The number of women in employment stands at 51,509, representing 10.4 per cent of the total number in employment of 494,367.
- * The economically inactive population, namely students, those engaged in full-time domestic activities, incapacitated persons and those who have no desire to work, amounts to 1,085,318 individuals, representing (illegible) per cent of the total workforce.
- * Women's employment is confined to a limited number of economic activities compared to those in which males are engaged. The services sector employs the highest numbers of women, accounting for (illegible) per cent of employed women in the West Bank and 66.2 per cent in the Gaza Strip.
- * In the West Bank, the agricultural sector accounts for 32.8 per cent of females (40 per cent of the total numbers of workers) as compared with 11.3 per cent of males. In the Gaza Strip, 6.6 per cent of males and 2.1 per cent of women are employed in agriculture (16 per cent of the total number of workers).
- * The proportion of women workers in the industrial sector is limited, with the greatest number employed in manufacturing to the tune of 73 per cent in the clothing industry. Women who work in Israel, where they are formally employed in seasonal agriculture, constitute 3 per cent of its total workers.
- In the informal sector, women constitute 62.9 per cent of the total workers in the Gaza Strip and 55.5 per cent of the total workers in the West Bank. Examples of the activities involved are buying and selling (particularly in the Gaza Strip), household production, clothes weaving, hairdressing and subcontracted piecework for the clothing industry.
- * The overall extent of poverty among the households of the West Bank and Gaza Strip amounts to 23 per cent, constituting 38 per cent of the total households in the West Bank and 16 per cent of the total households in the Gaza Strip. The extent of poverty among female-headed households amounts to approximately 30 per cent and among male-headed households to approximately 22 per cent.
- * In Palestinian society, female-headed households constitute about 7 per cent of the total number of households. Most of the women in question are widows, which is true in the case of 74 per cent of the total number of female-headed households. The number of women receiving

assistance is 62.2 per cent of the total number of households receiving assistance in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Health

- * The statistical indicators show that the health service in Palestine is accessible to the tune of 53 per cent in some residential communities, 47.3 per cent in others and 31 per cent in UNWRA clinics.
- * Of mothers with newborn babies who received ante-natal care, 92.9 per cent also receive post-natal care.
- * 96 per cent of babies are breastfed and 7.5 per cent are weaned before the first three months, while the numbers receiving supplementary milk amount to 40 per cent in the West Bank and [illegible] per cent in the Gaza Strip.
- * Breastfeeding is continued in the case of 58.5 per cent of babies aged 9 to 12 months, 57 per cent of whom are in the West Bank and 60 per cent in the Gaza Strip.
- * In regard to family planning, 98 per cent of married women are aware of contraception methods, which are used by 66.7 per cent of women, 71.1 per cent of whom are in the West Bank and 38.3 per cent in the Gaza Strip. Modern methods are used by 52.6 per cent of the total number of women using contraceptive methods. Of these, 57.2 per cent are in the West Bank and 43 per cent in the Gaza Strip. Contraception is now used by 45 per cent of the total number of married women, 5.5 per cent of whom are in the West Bank and [illegible] in the Gaza Strip. Used by 21.5 per cent of women, the coil is the most common form of contraception. Of these women, 24 per cent are in the West Bank and 16 per cent in the Gaza Strip.
- * Of children aged 12 to 23 months, 95.7 per cent receive specific vaccines against poliomyelitis, 96.4 per cent receive the triple vaccine (against diphtheria, chicken pox and tetanus) and 94.6 per cent receive vaccines against mumps, measles and German measles.

TABLE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF THE PALESTINIAN INHABITANTS COUNTED BY AGE, SEX AND AREA (INCLUDING THE INHABITANTS OF JERUSALEM)

[NB: Please insert the figures starting on the right-hand side of the page and reading leftwards- i.e., first column in the English text will start with the number 369 934 and end with the number 914 344, final column will start with 47.0 and end with 100.0]

[Column headings across the top of the table]

Males	Females	Both	Percentage	Males	Females	Both	Males	Females	Both	Percentage
		sexes				sexes			sexes	

[Column headings down the side of the table]

0-14
15-64
65+
Unstated
Total

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1998

TABLE 2: ENROLMENT IN EDUCATION FROM THE AGE OF FIVE UPWARDS BY SEX AND AREA

[N.B.: Please fill in the columns again reading in reverse from right to left: i.e., the first figure in the first column in the English text will be 288 518 and the last figure will be 444 109, and the last column will begin and end with the figure 100]

[Column headings across the top of the table]

Males enrolled
Males not enrolled
Unstated
Total
Females enrolled
Females not enrolled
Unstated
Total
Numbers enrolled
Percentage
Unstated
Percentage
Total
Percentage
Total
Percentage

[Column headings down the side of the table]

West Bank
Gaza Strip
Overall total
in the
Palestinian
territories

Source: Bureau of Central Statistics, 1998