

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR

The United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed the year 1975 as International Women's Year, in the course of which intensive action is to be undertaken:

- (a) To promote equality between men and women.
- (b) To ensure the full integration of women in the total development effort, especially by emphasizing women's responsibility and important role in economic, social and cultural development at the national, regional and international levels.
- (c) To recognize the importance of women's increasing contribution to the development of friendly relations and co-operation among States and to the strengthening of world peace.

Upon receiving a declaration signed by 35 heads of State, maintaining that economic and social progress requires the full participation of women alongside men in all fields, United Nations Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim made the following statement:

“Since the inception of the United Nations, the Organization has been fully committed to the principle of equality between women and men, a principle which was established in the Charter of the United Nations in 1945 and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. But we must frankly admit that the gulf between formal acceptance of this principle and implementation in practice has been and still is very wide.

In short, despite the advances of the past 30 years, discrimination against women remains a pervasive fact of life in many countries and thus represents a major obstacle to real social, economic and political progress in the world.

MISCELLANEOUS

We are talking, after all, about half of the population of this planet. We are talking about a vast human asset which, in general, has not been given either the recognition and respect or the opportunities to contribute to the realization of an equitable world order and to the solution of pressing international problems which confront us today.

International Women's Year 1975 gives the international community a unique opportunity to promote genuine equality between women and men, not only in law but in everyday life; to ensure the full involvement of women in the development effort, and in the sharing of its benefits; and to greatly increase the contribution of women to the achievement of the fundamental aims and objectives of the United Nations—namely, the maintenance of peace, and the improvement of conditions of life for all.

We have it in our power to make this Year a truly valuable and important advance in the position of women in the social, economic, cultural and political process; or, alternatively, merely to make it a ceremonial occasion devoid of practical meaning.

We in the United Nations are determined to do all in our power to make International Women's Year of real significance. In this task we ask for and need the active assistance of all citizens. International Women's Year is not an occasion for women alone. It can be and should be an occasion for the united efforts of us all—men and women—to ensure that fundamental human rights and responsibilities are shared by all humanity. This Year should leave an imprint on history, not only on the history of women's advancement but also on that of people all over the world."

The Red Cross, which fights against all discrimination, supports the efforts undertaken for the defence of women, both in time of war and in time of peace, and thus supports activities throughout the world in connection with International Women's Year. Our Review will return to this subject with the forthcoming publication of an article dealing with the status of women and children in the law of armed conflict. Other organizations are also fighting for the same cause, for example the International Council of Nurses (ICN), whose Executive Director, Miss Adele Herwitz, wrote: ¹

"The status of women is not only a social issue; it is a nursing issue too. This question is closely linked to the status of the nursing profession.

International Nurses Day 1975, celebrated in most countries on May 12, the anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale, will focus on the theme International Women's Year.

¹ International Nursing Review. Vol. 22, No. 1, Issue 199, Jan.-Feb. 1975.

There are exceptions, of course, but in most countries the nursing profession is largely female. Another reason for nurse involvement in the issues which will receive attention in 1975 is the recognition by nurses of their responsibility as citizens for supporting action to meet both health and social needs of the public. The question of women's role in modern society comes into ICN's position on human rights in general.

Many of the nursing profession's continuing problems are a reflection of the role traditionally accorded to women. This has affected, for example, the salary levels in nursing and has made it difficult to achieve recognition of the need for university education for nurses and the need for nurse participation in policy- and decision-making in health matters.

The action which will be taken will vary according to the particular social conditions of each country. ICN'S focus will be the promotion of equality in every respect between men and women, as this affects the nursing profession and as this affects the nursing and health care available to all members of society."
