INTRODUCTION

On 17 October 1997 a conference was held in Nijmegen on "The observance of the UN women treaty in the Netherlands". Reason for this conference was the following. In the spring of 1997 a report by a commission under the leadership of drs. L. Groenman was finished and presented to the minister of Social Affairs and Employment. The Minister sent the report to the Lower Chamber, adding that a reaction by the government would be given taking into account the conference anticipated by the Groenman commission. In July 97 the Minister requested Prof.mr. I.P. Asscher-Vonk to organize this conference.

The aim of this conference was to organize a discussion on the findings in the report mentioned above and to consult experts from the women's movement on the report. The aim was to give a hand to the government. The result of the conference should determine which recommendations should be executed urgently, and in which way this should be realized. Furthermore should become clear whether something is missing in the recommendations by

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1 President of the conference was mr. P.C. Lodders-Elfferich
Invited to participate in the conference were persons who had taken part in the preparation of the Groenman Report (NGOs, departments and semi-governmental organizations as shown in Workdocument I and II to the Groenman Report) or in some other way had given proof of involvement or expertise on the UN women treaty or the related topics.

The conference consisted of a plenary part, in which the topic was introduced. Subsequently the clusters of recommendations were discussed in workgroups. The workgroups have set themselves the aim of listing the recommendations which should be executed immediately. The afternoon was closed with a plenary discussion on the basis of the lists made up by the workgroups.

The conference was closed with a plenary discussion. In the discussion the lead was taken by a panel in which representatives of employers and employees and municipalities were seated who could take part in the discussion. They were asked after the feasibility of the selected priorities, and the best method of realization.

**AIM AND STRUCTURE OF THE CONFERENCE**

Aim and structure of the conference was laid out in the introduction by prof. Asscher. She drew the attention to the limited scope of the conference and emphasized that the discussion on the treaty could not be restricted to the topics discussed in the conference and the viewpoint that was chosen for the discussion of these topics. The importance of a continued discussion was stressed, if only to do justice to the position of the treaty in a changing society. The necessity of holding a legal discussion on the way of observing the treaty and the functioning of the treaty was stressed.

Drs. L. Groenman asked in her introduction attention for the starting point that the treaty contains more and more concrete obligations than was thought during the discussion of the ratification law, which lasted from 1985 to 1991. The treaty recognizes the structural character of the unfavourable position of women in relation to men and resolutely attributes protection to women.

Speaker explained how the Commission divided the main aim of the treaty into three sub-aims, *i.e.* promotion of the complete legal equality and equality in public service, improvement of the position of women and breaking