In 1997, United Nations efforts to advance the status of women and ensure their rights continued to focus on implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a comprehensive plan for women’s empowerment adopted at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China.

The General Assembly took action on follow-up activities to the Conference, including ways to enhance the capacity of the United Nations to implement the Conference outcomes. In addition, the Assembly adopted resolutions on protecting women and ensuring their rights in a variety of situations, including women migrant workers, the girl child, women in rural areas, women in development, traditional practices affecting women’s health and trafficking in women and girls.

The Economic and Social Council adopted a comprehensive set of agreed conclusions on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system. It endorsed agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women on 4 of the 12 critical areas of concern identified in the Beijing Platform for Action. The Council also addressed the situation of Palestinian women.

In 1997, the Commission on the Status of Women commemorated its fiftieth anniversary as the only intergovernmental body devoted to women’s advancement. During its forty-first session (New York, 10-21 March) [E/1997/27], assessed progress achieved in implementing four of the critical areas of concern contained in the Platform for Action [YUN 1995, p. 1170] adopted at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women: women and the environment; women in power and decision-making; women and the economy; and the education and training of women. The remaining critical areas of concern related to poverty, health, violence against women, armed conflict, mechanisms to promote the advancement of women, human rights, the media and the girl child. The Commission adopted a set of agreed conclusions on the four areas considered.

Regarding women and the environment [E/1997/27 (agreed conclusions 1997/1)], the Commission recognized that gender equality was essential in order to achieve sustainable development and called for measures to ensure the active participation of women on an equal footing with men in sustainable development at all levels. The Commission stated that the involvement of women was essential for the development and implementation of policies aimed at promoting and protecting the environmental aspects of human health, and in the development of sustainable and ecologically sound consumption and production patterns and approaches to natural resource management. It proposed a series of actions for Governments, the private sector and the international community.

In its agreed conclusions on women in power and decision-making [agreed conclusions 1997/2], the Commission called for accelerated implementation of strategies promoting women’s full and equal participation in decision-making in the political, economic and social spheres. A gender balance should be promoted in governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including the United Nations, as well as in the business sector. Political parties should fund training programmes to enable women to run for, be