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14 May 1979

Dear Mahnaz,

Your letter arrived on the same day when I left for a longer trip and my answer is, therefore, delayed. I am glad, however, that you received an explanation from my Special Assistant in the meantime.

It was really good to hear from you as I had been wondering, what had happened since I last saw you in New York in November. Be sure my thoughts have been with you and other friends in Iran during these difficult times. When people ask me about the situation of women, I do not have much else to answer except what I read in the newspapers, but my impression is that women in Iran continue to be fully aware of their rights and that they continue to claim them. The work, which you and the Women's Organization have done has certainly made a lot of change and it is not easy to put the clock back even with a new regime.

I am glad to hear that you are writing a book and would be most interested in learning more about it when it comes out.

It is quite obvious that the offers made by the American Universities show their confidence in your capacity to teach courses on this subject. They are certainly right in assuming that a person who has devoted so many years of her life for this activity at both the non-governmental and governmental level and who also knows very well the international situation in this field, must have a unique opportunity to share her experience with teachers and students in this country and elsewhere.

New developments have taken place in connexion with the Institute. There were three countries, which expressed interest in hosting it, of which Tunisia finally withdrew its offer and Austria did not press its invitation, when it became clear that a developing country was preferred.

Mrs. Mahnaz Afkhami
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..... In the resolution of the Economic and Social Council, of which I enclose a copy, the offer of the Dominican Republic was accepted. We are now engaged in consulting the Member States about the Board, which should be elected in July, at the Summer Session of the ECOSOC. Negotiations are being held with the Dominican Republic and I hope that we will have a great deal to report to the General Assembly at its thirty-fourth session this autumn. The Director should be elected when we have the Board to consult with. Until the host country agreement will be signed, preparations will be continued in New York.

Preparations for the World Conference are well under way. Dr. Lucille Mair from Jamaica is now the Secretary-General for the Conference and a separate Secretariat is being established with a number of persons from the Advancement of Women Branch of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs being there on secondment. We work closely together, but in September when the CSDHA moves to Vienna, there will naturally be some physical constraints.

If and when I write about my own experiences in this position, I shall always remember the excellent assistance and inspiration that I have got in your country beginning from the highest circles of the society. Whatever has happened does not change my opinion, which is based on facts. You personally have played a very important role in this field and I shall never forget it.

Is there ever any hope to see you here in New York? It would be useful to exchange news and tell you more about the recent developments.

Hoping that everything will go well with your present projects and looking forward to hearing from you again,

Yours sincerely,



Helvi Sipilä

Assistant Secretary-General for
Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs