Bleak future for women predicted

From Halima Shariff in Arusha.

A BLEAK future with low living conditions has been predicted for African women and children if the continent continued to depend on other countries for development.

The situation of women in terms of quality of life, health, nutrition and education would be catastrophic for themselves and their children, according to a report on women in Africa by the year 2000 presented here yesterday at the women's conference.

The report to serve as a basis in drawing up a forward-looking strategy in Africa was compiled by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

The report said over-urbanisation together with polarisation of industrial activities would accentuate unemployment and under-employment of women whose population is estimated at 477 million by the turn of the century.

Urban overcrowding, lack of sanitation and poor housing conditions will increase the spread of diseases and force women into prostitution and other forms of delinquency, the report added.

It predicts worsening climatic and socio-economic conditions in the rural sector, which it said would lead to a scramble for scarce opportunities in the formal sector.

Technological transfer will continue to displace women from their traditional activities while favouring men in newly-created employment opportunities as a result of their generally greater training and specialization, the report added.

The report said, "all these trends will force women into the informal sector where it is likely they will have a marginal place among the already marginalised".

Meanwhile, African governments have been called upon to step up efforts to dismantle apartheid and other oppressive policies and fully utilise their natural resources to attain development.

The call was made here by representatives of almost all African countries at the meeting.