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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Ninth Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-NINTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York
on Wednesday, 16 March 1955, at 11.05 a.m.

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PRESENT:

<u>Chairman:</u>	Miss BERNARDINO	Dominican Republic
<u>Rapporteur:</u>	Mrs. ROSSEL	Sweden
<u>Members:</u>	Mrs. CHAMORRO ALAMAN	Argentina
	Mrs. DALY	Australia
	Mrs. NOVIKOVA	Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic
	Miss TSENG	China
	Miss MAÑAS	Cuba
	Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX	France
	Mrs. GUERY	Haiti
	Miss ROESAD	Indonesia
	Mrs. TABET	Lebanon
	Begum ANWAR AHMED	Pakistan
	Mrs. DEMBINSKA	Poland
	Mrs. FOMINA	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
	Mrs. SAYERS	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
	Mrs. HAHN	United States of America
	Mrs. SANCHEZ de URDANETA	Venezuela
	Mrs. MITROVIC)	Yugoslavia
	Mr. BOZOVIC)	
<u>Also present:</u>	Mrs. LOPEZ	Colombia
	Mrs. KIEP	Germany
	Miss FUJITA	Japan
	Mrs. de TEJEIRA	Panama
<u>Representatives of specialized agencies:</u>	Mrs. FIGUEROA	International Labour Organisation
	Miss SALAS	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<u>Observer from an inter-governmental organization:</u>	Mrs. LEYES de CHAVES	Inter-American Commission of Women

PRESENT (cont'd):Representatives of non-governmental organizations:Category A:

Miss SENDER	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
Miss KAHN	World Federation of Trade Unions
Mrs. FOX	World Federation of United Nations Associations

Category B and Register:

Mrs. BROWN) Miss GUTHRIE)	International Alliance of Women
Mr. LONGARZO	International Conference of Catholic Charities
Mrs. CARTER) Mrs. FREEMAN)	International Council of Women
Miss MacLEAN) Miss MEINANDER) Miss POLLITZ)	International Federation of Business and Professional Women
Miss SCHWARTZENBACH	International Federation of Friends of Young Women
Miss ROBB	International Federation of University Women
Miss MUNK) Miss RUIZ) Miss SMITH)	International Federation of Women Lawyers
Mrs. WOLLE-EGINOLF	International League for the Rights of Man
Mrs. ROBERTS	Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations; Associated Country Women of the World
Miss JULLY	Society of Comparative Legislation
Mrs. POLSTEIN	World Union for Progressive Judaism
Mrs. ANDERSON) Miss FORSYTH)	World's Young Women's Christian Association
<u>Secretariat:</u> Mr. HUMPHREY	Director, Division of Human Rights
Mrs. TENISON-WOODS	Chief of the Status of Women Section
Mrs. GRINBERG-VINAVER	Secretary of the Commission

POLITICAL RIGHTS OF WOMEN: (a) ANNUAL REPORT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON POLITICAL RIGHTS OF WOMEN (A/2692; E/CN.6/L.154); (b) REPORTS ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN TRUST AND NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES (E/CN.6/260 and Add.1 and Corr.1 and Add.2, E/CN.6/255) (continued)

Mrs. SAYERS (United Kingdom) said that the Disarmament Sub-Committee in session at London had been convened by the unanimous decision of the General Assembly to consider vital questions of disarmament and was competent to deal with all the matters raised in the USSR draft resolution (E/CN.6/L.154). What was more, the Sub-Committee's chances of reaching any real understanding could only be diminished by the draft resolution's obvious propaganda appeal on an issue that was completely outside the Commission's terms of reference.

Mrs. DALY (Australia) said that she had expected that, in discussing the question of political rights the Commission would follow the same fruitful line of approach that had been followed in previous years. The representatives of the Soviet Union, Poland and Byelorussia had said that discussions under that item should not be limited to the political rights of women but should be related to the struggle for enduring peace. The Commission's terms of reference clearly precluded it from considering political questions such as the so-called armaments race or the problem referred to as the question of co-existence. If the Commission widened the scope of its discussion to that extent it would not only far exceed its terms of reference but would be unable to undertake the type of constructive discussion that Governments and women everywhere expected of it. The Commission was not expected to deal with political problems which were the concern of the General Assembly or the Security Council, but to give attention to well defined objectives affecting the status of women. It could most effectively advance the cause of peace by working for the achievement of the defined objectives laid down under its terms of reference.

The substance of the USSR draft resolution went far beyond the questions which the Commission had been directed to consider and was primarily a political one which, far from assisting the Commission's work, was likely to cause serious dissension among those who were looking to the Commission for guidance. She submitted that the draft resolution was out of order.

Mrs. HAHN (United States of America) thought that in view of the wording of the USSR draft resolution and recommendations contained in its operative part in particular, the text could not properly be discussed either by the Commission or by the Council. In addition, the Disarmament Sub-Committee of which the USSR was a member, was now meeting at London to discuss ways and means of achieving disarmament. If the USSR were seriously interested in exploring the possibility of disarmament and not merely in disseminating propaganda it could submit any constructive proposals it might have to the Sub-Committee. The United States Government did not feel that the questions of disarmament and of world peace were proper subjects for propaganda manoeuvres and its proposals concerning disarmament would be submitted to the appropriate forum.

Miss TSENG (China) agreed with the comments of the United States, United Kingdom and Australian representatives and expressed the hope that the Chairman would rule out of order a text which was diverting the Commission's attention from the business on its agenda.

Mrs. FOMINA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the USSR draft resolution touched on issues which were directly connected with the rights of women and was thus within the Commission's terms of reference. The question of developing and preserving the political rights of women must in fact be considered in the context of the struggle against preparations for a new war and the armaments race. The women of the Soviet Union, like millions of women in other parts of the world felt that the most serious problem facing them was the question of peace. Far from being a propaganda or political manoeuvre, as the representative of the United States of America was trying to show the draft resolution tackled a problem of vital interest to women upon which the Commission should take action.

The USSR draft resolution was completely in accordance with the provisions of the Charter and the Declaration of Human Rights as well as with the Commission's terms of reference and the guiding principles adopted by the Commission at its first session.

Mrs. HAHN (United States of America), speaking on a point of order, drew attention to rule 52 of the Commission's rules of procedure, and asked the Chairman to put to the vote the question whether the USSR draft resolution (E/CN.6/L.154) was in order.

Mrs. NOVIKOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) did not understand how a rule of procedure could be invoked to bar discussion of the Soviet proposal, especially as the Commission, at its very first session, had adopted as one of the guiding principles of its programme of work the promotion of international co-operation directed towards the establishment of peace and the prevention of further aggression. The USSR draft, recognizing that the urgent problem of granting women equal economic and political rights could only be resolved in an atmosphere free from the threat of war, interpreted the desire of millions of women for a peaceful life for themselves and their families. Surely, the Commission on the Status of Women was the appropriate spokesman for those women and for the many thousands in all countries who had voiced their protests against war preparations, the manufacture of atomic and hydrogen weapons, and nuclear tests. Women's organizations the world over were appealing to Governments to halt the race towards atomic destruction and to restore friendly relations among peoples.

The achievement by women of political rights could not be separated from the need to maintain peace and ban weapons of mass destruction, and their deep desire for such a peaceful climate could not be dismissed as a propaganda manoeuvre.

Mrs. RÖSSEL (Sweden), speaking on a point of order, moved the closure of the debate under rule 48 of the Commission's rules of procedure. A majority vote in favour of the motion would mean that the Commission could then proceed to vote on the United States proposal that the Commission was not competent to discuss the USSR draft resolution.

Mrs. DEMBINSKA (Poland), speaking against the motion for closure of the debate, also recalled the guiding principle adopted by the Commission at its first session and the evidence she had presented earlier to demonstrate that the agenda item was closely related to that principle. The USSR proposal did not require the Commission to exceed its competence, because its allusions to disarmament and the banning of atomic and hydrogen weapons were of a general nature, and in no way impinged on the specific problems being dealt with by other United Nations organs. It merely recognized the reality that the progress of women towards de facto political equality was being retarded by the arms race and the climate of impending war. If the draft resolution constituted propaganda, it was propaganda for a noble purpose - peace, the only condition in which the Commission could effectively ensure the exercise by women of their political rights. To divorce the question of the political rights of women from its broader context - that of the general climate in international relations - was to deal with it on an abstract level, and to obscure the real reasons why women in many countries were not, in practice, enjoying political equality. Obviously, the question of women's political rights was a political problem indeed, all the matters before the Commission had political implications. They had to be viewed within the framework of the world political situation.

Miss ROESAD (Indonesia) opposed closure of the debate on the grounds that all members of the Commission should have an opportunity to speak on the USSR draft resolution. After a most careful study, she was prepared to give her views on it.

Mrs. FOMINA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), speaking on a point of order, asked whether the Commission's guiding principle regarding the establishment of peace and the prevention of further aggression had been invalidated or repealed since its first session. Rules of procedure were too often invoked to prevent debate on important issues. The Swedish and United States motions seemed to be directed towards that end. She requested a roll-call vote on the motion for closure.

Mr. BOZOVIC (Yugoslavia), explaining his vote on the Swedish motion, said that he would vote against closure of the debate because his delegation, was, as a matter of principle, against any limitation of debate.

The CHAIRMAN called for a vote on the Swedish motion for closure of the debate.

A vote was taken by roll-call.

Yugoslavia, having been drawn by lot by the Chairman, was called upon to vote first.

In favour: Australia, China, Cuba, France, Lebanon, Pakistan, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Venezuela

Against: Yugoslavia, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Indonesia, Poland, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Abstaining: Dominican Republic, Haiti

The motion was adopted by 10 votes to 5, with 2 abstentions.

Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX (France) explained that, although she agreed with the USSR and Byelorussian representatives that women's organizations and others were free to discuss threats to peace, she had voted for the closure of the debate because such questions were outside the Commission's specific terms of reference. The same difficulty had arisen at previous sessions and had been settled in the same way. The Security Council and the Disarmament Commission were better qualified to deal with such matters.

Mrs. FOMINA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) pointed out that the Commission had decided at its first session, by a vote of 8 to 2, that women should take an active part in the struggle for the total elimination of

(Mrs. Fomina, USSR)

the fascist ideology, for a democratic peace and for the prevention of further aggression. The refusal of some delegations to discuss the matter was therefore somewhat strange. The inclusion of that item in the agenda of the fifth session had perhaps not been so urgent as it was at present, but the threat of atomic war had now greatly increased: the Soviet Union was therefore entirely justified in submitting its draft resolution (E/CN.6/L.154). Her delegation had voted against the closure of the debate as it desired the substance of the draft resolution to be discussed.

Mrs. NOVIKOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) supported the USSR representative's remarks. It was impossible to discuss women's political rights without taking the world situation into account.

Mrs. SAYERS (United Kingdom) said that she had voted for the closure because the questions raised in the Soviet draft resolution lay outside the Commission's terms of reference and could better be discussed by other United Nations bodies.

The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the United States motion that the Commission was not competent to consider the Soviet draft resolution.

The United States motion was adopted by 12 votes to 3, with 2 abstentions.

The CHAIRMAN, speaking as representative of the Dominican Republic, explained that she had voted for the motion because the Soviet draft resolution raised questions that were outside the Commission's terms of reference and could be better considered by other United Nations organs.

Miss TSENG (China) said that she had voted for the motion, as the question lay within the competence of the Security Council and the Disarmament Commission.

Mrs. MAÑAS (Cuba) explained that she had voted for the motion, because the Commission's prestige would suffer if it attempted to discuss matters outside its terms of reference.

Mrs. DEMBINSKA (Poland) said that she had voted against the motion, because, first, the Soviet draft resolution contained a general appeal which came within the Commission's terms of reference and might help women in their struggle for equal political rights with men; secondly, the Commission should take into account the world-wide concern over the threat of war; and thirdly, failure to take a decision on such a point would undermine the Commission's prestige in the eyes of the world.

Mr. BOZOVIC (Yugoslavia) acknowledged the truth of the fact that the Commission's terms of reference were somewhat limited and that that might raise some legal difficulties with regard to the vote on the USSR draft resolution; nevertheless, he considered that the idea contained in that text was not wholly outside the Commission's terms of reference. The question of disarmament and of the use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes was of great interest to women, and consequently to the Commission. He thought that an appeal might well be made expressing that interest.

The Yugoslav delegation had some serious objections to the actual wording of the USSR resolution. He had therefore abstained from voting on the United States motion.

Mrs. FOMINA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) thanked the representatives who had voted against the motion. By doing so they had shown they understood the connexion between the granting of political rights to women and the maintenance of peace. They had the support of millions of women outside the Commission.