



**Convention on the Elimination
of all Forms of Discrimination
Against Women**

Distr.
GENERAL

CEDAW/C/SR.128
8 March 1988

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Seventh session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 128th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 3 March 1988, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. BERNARD

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The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS (continued)

1. The CHAIRPERSON drew attention to the draft recommendation prepared by Working Group II containing guidelines for the preparation of second periodic reports. Ms. Evatt had also submitted a draft recommendation on that subject which, inter alia, specified the period of time on which State parties should focus their reports. The guidelines prepared by the Working Group were clear and concise and, with the inclusion of the specific recommendation by Ms. Evatt to which she had just referred, ought to prove useful to States parties. Consequently, if she heard no objection, she would take it that members wished to adopt the guidelines for second periodic reports, including the recommendation by Ms. Evatt with regard to the reporting period, and to include them in the Committee's report to the General Assembly.

2. It was so decided.

Report of Working Group I

3. Ms. EVATT said that the Working Group had proposed that, in order to expedite the work of the Committee, the questions which Committee members put to representatives of States parties presenting periodic reports should be co-ordinated. Specifically, the questioning process could be made more direct, having one Committee member co-ordinate all questions asked on a specific article.

4. A certain amount of unproductive repetition had been observed in the general comments made concerning reports. Each member might therefore wish to focus on the reports of only some countries during a given session, with all members given the opportunity to comment on several reports in the course of the session. In any event, the Committee would remain flexible with regard to the questioning process in an effort to accommodate the interests of all Committee members.

5. Ms. NOVIKOVA did not believe that the proposed arrangement would facilitate the work of new members of the Committee. On the contrary, it would complicate the Committee's task and limit the opportunities for all members to ask questions. The United Nations relied on the collective wisdom of CEDAW, which meant that all members should have an opportunity to present their views. She therefore favoured retaining the current system of asking questions.

6. Ms. OESER suggested that, as a compromise, the Committee might follow the new arrangement when formulating general comments, while retaining the current procedure for asking questions about specific articles of the Convention.

7. Ms. FORDE endorsed the proposal made by Ms. Oeser.

8. Ms. GONZALEZ MARTINEZ suggested that the Working Group's proposals might be reworded to include a reference to paragraph 4 (a) (iv) of General Assembly

(Ms. González Martínez)

resolution 42/105, which referred to ways of expediting the consideration of periodic reports. The proposals set out by the Committee might then take the form of possible ways of complying with that resolution, rather than constitute a mandatory course of action.

9. Ms. CORTI expressed support for the proposal made by Ms. Oeser. As the Committee would have several new members when it held its eighth session, it should attempt to avoid any procedural arrangements that might give rise to confusion.

10. Ms. PILATAXI DE ARENAS pointed out that the current system for asking questions on specific articles was effective, as there had been very little repetition of questions.

11. The CHAIRPERSON suggested that Ms. González Martínez should submit in writing her proposal regarding questions on specific articles of the Convention. As there seemed to be a consensus among Committee members with regard to Ms. Oeser's proposal concerning general comments, she would take it that the Committee wished to follow that procedure on a trial basis at its eighth session.

12. It was so decided.

13. The CHAIRPERSON said that, in accordance with the Committee's rules of procedure, she would continue to serve as Chairperson until new officers were elected at the beginning of the eighth session. Consequently, she would be entitled to attend the meeting of chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies, to be held in October 1988. If, for some reason, she was prevented from attending the meeting, she would designate another member of the Committee to attend in her stead.

14. Ms. WADSTEIN, speaking in her capacity as Rapporteur, said that technical delays might prevent her from completing the Committee's draft report on its seventh session before the session ended the next day. She emphasized that the services that had been made available to the Committee were inadequate. Although the financial constraints faced by the United Nations were a frequently discussed topic, it was surely not the Organization's intention for CEDAW to do more than its share in accommodating that situation. The amount of clerical work which she and other experts had been required to do far exceeded what was acceptable, and constituted yet another example of how women were expected to do additional unseen and unpaid work. In her view, paragraph 9 of article 17 of the Convention, which stipulated that "the Secretary-General of the United Nations shall provide the necessary staff and facilities for the effective performance of the functions of the Committee ..." had not been fulfilled.

15. Ms. TALLAWY supported the remarks made by Ms. Wadstein, noting that secretariat services for the Committee were virtually non-existent. The United Nations should not have authorized the holding of the current session under those circumstances. The Committee was held accountable for the results of its work and for the reports it submitted to other United Nations organs, yet the Rapporteur had

(Ms. Tallaway)

virtually been compelled to become a working member of the secretariat, a situation which was entirely unacceptable. She protested such treatment and asked that her protest be reflected in the Committee's report. In addition, a note should be sent to the Secretary-General.

16. The CHAIRPERSON said that the amount of work that had been required of the Rapporteur must be deprecated most vehemently. The Committee had protested at the inadequacy of secretariat services in the past, yet the situation had only worsened with time, regardless of whether sessions were held in New York or in Vienna.

17. Ms. SINEGIORGIS said that the Committee had been woefully short of facilities as long as she had been a member. Even if the United Nations was under financial constraints, the Committee should not be the only one to suffer. She believed that the Committee should draft a message to the meeting of States parties to the Convention to be held the following week, indicating that it could not function in such circumstances. It was sometimes suggested that things were better in Vienna, but for the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, this was simply not true.

18. Ms. CREYDT (Secretary of the Committee) said that the entire Branch for the Advancement of Women had always had to cope with inadequate services. All the other human rights bodies operated under the auspices of the Centre for Human Rights in Geneva, and they certainly did not have to put up with such conditions. The Branch for the Advancement of Women had to deal with women's rights in almost every area in which the United Nations was active, but was expected to do so with a Professional staff of only 10 people. She believed that it would enhance the efficiency of the secretariat if the Branch were also to be attached to the Centre for Human Rights.

19. The Branch would remain a focal point for activities until the year 2000. It was quite possible that the Commission on the Status of Women would, at its forthcoming meeting, decide to hold another world conference to review achievements over the past decade. If so, additional staff and resources should be allocated to the Branch as preparations advanced and activities associated with the conference were decided upon.

20. The Branch had included in its programme budget estimates for the current session enough money to bring secretaries experienced in the work of the Committee from Vienna to New York. Unfortunately, the funds had been struck out of the final budget estimates on the grounds that, because of the financial crisis, there was no money to pay for General Service staff to travel to New York. As a result, she was having to make do with temporary secretaries who were unused to working under pressure. The separation of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs from the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs also meant that she had no departmental superior in New York to whom she could complain. She was having to rely largely on good will among her colleagues to get things done.

21. Ms. EVATT asked who had deleted from the budget the funds necessary to transport secretaries from Vienna to New York. She wondered whether the Chairperson could approach the body responsible and urge it to take a more sympathetic attitude.
22. Ms. CREYDT (Secretary of the Committee) said that, to the best of her knowledge, the request for funds had been turned down by the Division of Administrative Services in the United Nations Office at Vienna, to which any request for a review of the situation should be addressed.
23. The CHAIRPERSON remarked that, as neither she nor the Secretariat was entitled to bring the matter up at the meeting of States parties to the Convention, one of the States parties would have to be prevailed upon to do so.
24. Ms. TALLAWY said that, even if a message were conveyed to the meeting of States parties, the Committee must not fail to send the Secretary-General a written complaint about the conditions in which it was forced to work. When a meeting was held under United Nations auspices, the Secretary-General was responsible for providing proper services.

WAYS AND MEANS OF IMPLEMENTING ARTICLE 21 OF THE CONVENTION (continued)

Report of Working Group II

25. Ms. SINEGIORGIS reported that Working Group II had met a number of times. It had received a total of 16 proposals on a wide variety of subjects: the dissemination of the Convention; the timing of reports; the implementation of article 4.1 of the Convention; the concept of equal pay for work of equal value; the question of specialized agencies; national machinery; the resources available to the Committee; statistics; second periodic reports; traditional practices; technical assistance and training; the composition of the Committee; the clarification of certain terminology; family planning; and two general observations. Because the proposals had been submitted so late, the Group had managed to consider only 13, four of which it believed should be postponed to a later date: those concerning equal pay for work of equal value, technical assistance and training, the composition of the Committee, and the clarification of terminology. It believed that any proposals not taken up immediately should be kept on file by the Secretariat for discussion at a later date.
26. Ms. NOVIKOVA remarked that the Committee should be focusing on the quality, not the quantity, of the recommendations it made: sixteen recommendations was far too many. Members needed some time to study the recommendations and decide which were worth pursuing and whether any would lend themselves to consolidation.
27. The meeting was suspended at 11.40 a.m. and resumed at noon.
28. The CHAIRPERSON said that the Committee would defer any decision on the ultimate status of the recommendations based on its consideration of the reports of States parties. If she heard no objection, she would take it that the Committee

(The Chairperson)

wished to adopt the following wording for the draft recommendation on temporary special measures:

"The Committee,

"Taking note that the reports, the introductory remarks and the replies by States parties reveal that, while significant progress has been achieved with regard to repealing or modifying discriminatory laws, there is still a need for action to be taken to implement the Convention fully by introducing measures to promote de facto equality between men and women,

"Recalling article 4.1 of the Convention,

"Recommends States parties to make more use of temporary special measures such as positive action, preferential treatment or quota systems to advance women's integration into education, the economy, politics and employment."

29. It was so decided.

30. If she heard no objection she would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the following wording for the draft recommendation on equal remuneration for work of equal value:

"The Committee,

"Considering that it has considered 45 reports from States parties since 1983,

"Further considering that, although reports from States parties indicate that the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value has been largely accepted in legislation, more remains to be done to enable the application of that principle in practice,

"Recommends States parties to adopt or inspire the adoption of criteria for a gender-neutral job evaluation aiming at the comparison of female-dominated occupations with male-dominated occupations and, if possible, to create comprehensive implementation machinery to ensure the application of equal remuneration for work of equal value."

31. It was so decided.

32. If she heard no objection, she would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the following wording for the draft recommendation on effective national machinery:

"The Committee,

"Having considered the reports of States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,

(The Chairperson)

"Recommends States parties to establish and/or strengthen effective national machinery, institutions and procedures to monitor the situation of women comprehensively; to identify all causes of discrimination; and to help formulate new policies and effectively carry out strategies and measures to eliminate discrimination. This machinery should be established at a high level of government and should be ensured adequate resources, commitment and authority to advise on the impact on women of all government policies."

33. It was so decided.

34. If she heard no objection, she would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the following wording for the draft recommendation on statistics and data collection:

"The Committee,

"Recommends that States parties, in planning for national censuses, household surveys and other data gathering, ensure that so far as possible separate data are collected for men and women, in particular with regard to health, education, employment, political participation and land ownership."

35. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.