



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

Distr.
GENERAL

CEDAW/C/SR.10*
8 August 1983
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Second session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 10th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York
on Monday, 1 August 1983, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. IDER

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* No summary records were issued for the 1st to 9th meetings.

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The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.m.

OPENING OF THE SECOND SESSION

1. The CHAIRPERSON declared the session open and welcomed the participants; she noted that 51 countries had ratified the Convention, which demonstrated its importance.

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

2. Ms. SELLAMI-MESLEM (Director of the Advancement of Women Branch, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, and Assistant-Secretary-General of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women) welcomed the members of the Committee on behalf of the Secretary-General and congratulated them on the work they had carried out at the first session, held at Vienna from 18 to 22 October 1982. The report of that session had been transmitted to the Economic and Social Council at its first regular session of 1983 so that, in accordance with article 21 of the Convention, the Council could submit it to the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session. The General Assembly would consider that report in conjunction with the report of the Secretary-General on the status of the Convention. It should be noted in that respect that two countries had signed the Convention since the thirty-seventh session of the General Assembly and seven others had ratified it or acceded to it in 1983. As of 28 July 1983, 90 States had signed the Convention, of which 48 had signed and ratified it, and three others had acceded to it. A total of 51 States had ratified the Convention or acceded to it, of which seven were from Africa, 19 from Latin America, seven from Asia, eight from Western Europe and other States and ten from Eastern Europe. Those figures demonstrated the importance attached by Governments to the Convention and the effectiveness of the efforts made by women's groups and organizations.

3. In accordance with the agenda for the session, the Committee would consider the guidelines for submission of reports by States Parties. Those guidelines were of particular importance since they would assist countries in preparing their reports and at the same time would be useful to the Committee in carrying out its work of ensuring the final elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. For all those reasons, she recommended, in order to make best use of the time available, that an informal working group should be set up to prepare the draft guidelines, on the basis of the preliminary versions, the observations made at the first session of the Committee and the guidelines followed by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Human Rights Committee.

4. As to the questions concerning the site and duration of sessions and the provision of summary records of sessions of the Committee, she said that the Secretariat had duly taken into account the views expressed on the subject at the first session of the Committee but wished to stress the advantages of the Committee meeting, when possible, at Vienna, where it had access to the support services of the Advancement of Women Branch.

(Ms. Sellami-Meslem)

5. With regard to the date of sessions, taking into account the request made by the Economic and Social Council in operative paragraph 2 of its decision 1983/101 (E/1983/INF.1) and the fact that the second meeting of the States parties to the Convention was to be held in April 1984 in New York, a preliminary understanding had been reached, if the Committee was in agreement, to hold the third session in New York from 26 March to 6 April 1984. The meeting of the States parties would be held on 9 April 1984 and the mandate of the members of the Committee elected at that time would begin on 16 April 1984, in accordance with rule 8, paragraph (b) of the Committee's rules of procedure. After that the Committee could agree that its sessions should be held at New York every two years, when the States parties met to elect half the members of the Committee, and at Vienna in the years in which no meeting of the States parties was planned.

6. As to the duration of sessions, article 20 of the Convention provided that the Committee should meet every year for a period not exceeding two weeks.

7. Lastly, on 30 March and 12 April 1983 the Secretariat had distributed the list of States Parties to the Convention to all Permanent Missions to the United Nations at Vienna and New York and in accordance with rule 44, provisional steps had been taken to provide summary records for meetings of the current session.

8. She reminded members of the Committee of the recommendations appearing in General Assembly resolution 36/117 on the control and limitation of documentation for treaty bodies.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

9. The CHAIRPERSON said that the following changes should be made in the agenda appearing in document CEDAW/C/6: item 3, "Approval of the filling of a casual vacancy on the Committee", should be changed to "Approval of the filling of two casual vacancies on the Committee", since Ms. Rakel Surlien of Norway had resigned from her post in the Committee after being appointed head of a ministry in her country. The Government of Norway suggested that Mrs. Lucy Smith be appointed to fill the vacancy. Under item 5 of the provisional agenda, "Guidelines for reports by States Parties", the suggestion that a working group should be set up to draw up those guidelines would be considered later. As to item 6, "Consideration of reports and information submitted by States Parties under article 18 of the Convention", she would submit suggestions when the agenda had been adopted.

10. If there was no objection, she would take it that Committee adopted the agenda (CEDAW/C/6) with the amendment suggested.

11. The agenda, as amended, was adopted.

APPROVAL OF THE FILLING OF TWO CASUAL VACANCIES ON THE COMMITTEE.

12. The CHAIRPERSON said that in accordance with article 17, paragraph 7 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Government of Egypt had appointed Ms. Aboul Al-Fatouh to fill the vacancy which had

(The Chairperson)

arisen in the post previously occupied by Ms. Merbat El-Tallaway. If there was no objection, she would take it that the Committee approved the appointment of Ms. Al-Fatouh. Similarly, she would take it that the Committee approved the appointment of Ms. Lucy Smith to fill the vacancy in the post held by Ms. Surlien.

13. It was so decided.

SOLEMN DECLARATION

14. Ms. AL-FATOUH and Ms. SMITH, in accordance with rule 10 of the Committee's rules of procedure, made a solemn declaration on assuming their duties in the Committee.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

15. The CHAIRPERSON suggested that an informal working group should be set up under the chairmanship of the Rapporteur, Ms. Bernard. She also suggested that the reports submitted by States Parties should be considered in the order in which they had been received, except in the case of the reports of Norway, the Philippines and Sweden, since those Governments had requested that the consideration of their reports should be postponed until 1984, in the first case, and for one week in the other two cases.

16. Ms. GONZALEZ MARTINEZ requested that the documents concerning the draft guidelines should be distributed so that the experts could study them. She also suggested that a meeting should be devoted to the consideration of those drafts and that the informal working group should then prepare a new text, taking into account the opinions expressed by members of the Committee. She believed that two reports of States Parties could be considered each day, in the order in which they had been submitted, and taking in account the requests for postponement.

17. Ms. LECHOWICZ said that she supported the suggestion that a working group should be set up to prepare draft guidelines. As to the consideration of reports from countries, she wished to know which countries had sent representatives to introduce their reports.

18. Ms. ILIC said that the guidelines were essential to the success of the future work of the Committee since they would make it possible to arrive at common conclusions on the basis of the information submitted by States Parties. Moreover, since one of the basic purposes of the submission of reports was to establish a dialogue with the reporting States, it would be useful if representatives of the States concerned could be present during the consideration of those reports.

19. Ms. PATIÑO DE MARTINEZ said that the reports which she had had an opportunity of considering revealed for the most part the willingness of States to submit sufficient information to allow the Committee to discharge its functions satisfactorily.

20. The CHAIRPERSON suggested that, in the light of the proposals formulated by various members of the Committee, an open-ended working group should be established.
21. Ms. GONZALEZ MARTINEZ said that she was unable to support the Chairperson's suggestion because she feared that the group's work would be hampered if it were transformed into a group of the whole. She accordingly proposed that the group should comprise a maximum of six experts and that the Committee should hold its own discussion of the guidelines.
22. Ms. BERNARD (Rapporteur) agreed that the group should not comprise more than six members. It could consist of those experts who had made proposals on the guidelines and perhaps one or two additional members. The composition of the group should be sufficiently flexible to allow it to discharge its functions effectively and to subsequently inform the Committee of the results of its work.
23. The CHAIRPERSON suggested that the afternoon meeting should be devoted to an exchange of views on the guidelines for reports and that the consideration of reports submitted by States parties should begin the following day. The representatives of reporting countries would reply to questions at the meeting following that at which their reports had been introduced.
24. Ms. CARON recalled that some weeks earlier she had proposed to the secretariat that the working group, should consist of the members of the Bureau, together with two or three other experts. In her view, too large a working group could not operate effectively.
25. Ms. BERNARD (Rapporteur) said that in her opinion, the working group should be constituted immediately.
26. Ms. BIRYUKOVA agreed with the Chairperson's suggestions regarding the order in which reports should be considered and the establishment of the working group. Nevertheless, she requested that the group should be open-ended so that account could be taken of all the proposals formulated and the duration of the discussion in plenary meeting could be limited. The open-ended working group was a regular feature of United Nations practice.
27. The CHAIRPERSON asked the Committee Secretary to supply the names of the representatives who would be present when the reports of their respective countries were considered so that a timetable could be prepared.
28. Ms. CREYDT (Secretary of the Committee) supplied the names requested.
29. The CHAIRPERSON said that it would be as well to begin with the reports of those countries which had sent representatives, and she suggested that the reports of the German Democratic Republic and Mexico should be considered. Once the names of all the representatives were available, the programme of work for subsequent days would be prepared.

30. Ms. ILIC proposed that the Committee should begin consideration of the reports of the German Democratic Republic and Mexico, and then prepare a provisional timetable.

31. Ms. BERNARD (Rapporteur) said that the working group should be established first, following which the guidelines for reports could be formulated.

32. Ms. SMITH agreed that it was necessary to establish a working group with limited membership and then hold a debate on the guidelines at the afternoon meeting. She supported the suggestion that the working group should comprise the members of the Bureau and the members of the Committee who had already made proposals, for example, the expert from Mexico. She also felt that it was not yet possible to establish a timetable.

33. Ms. GONZALEZ MARTINEZ endorsed the proposal made by Ms. Ilic. The working group should comprise six people only, namely the members of the Bureau and one or other members. She was prepared to co-operate with the working group.

34. Ms. PEYTCHEVA said that in determining the nature of the proposed working group account should be taken first and foremost of the importance of the document to be drafted, which would in fact comprise the basis of the Committee's future work. On the one hand, effective discussions would be more feasible in a working group with limited membership. On the other, an open-ended working group would facilitate more detailed consideration of the documents. If it was decided that the membership of the group should be limited, account should be taken of the experience of the members of the Bureau and the need to ensure equitable geographical distribution.

35. Ms. CORTES said that the purpose of the Committee's meeting was to consider the reports of States parties to the Convention on the legislative, judicial, administrative and other measures adopted to implement the provisions of the Convention and the progress made in that regard during the twelve months since its entry into force. The Committee would also consider the factors and difficulties which had affected the degree to which Governments had discharged their obligations. In considering the reports it would be necessary to take account of the background in each case, since the progress made could be determined only if the situation existing prior to the entry into force of the Convention was known.

36. The CHAIRPERSON observed that it seemed to be the general wish that the meeting should be devoted to a discussion of the guidelines, and she requested those members wishing to contribute to their formulation to submit their documents to the Committee secretariat as soon as possible.

37. The procedure generally followed in other committees had been that, following the consideration of each report, the representative replied to the questions put at meetings on the preceding day or even earlier. Nevertheless, the Committee should not be rigid in that regard.

38. Ms. BERNARD (Rapporteur) requested the immediate establishment of the working group so that it could begin its work at the afternoon meeting. It had been proposed that the Bureau should serve as the basis of the group, with the addition of one or two other members, or that a separate working group should be established comprising those members of the Committee who had already made proposals on the guidelines, or other members. In her view, the Committee could take a decision on the matter before the adjournment of its morning meeting.

39. Ms. CARON, Ms. PATIÑO DE MARTINEZ and Ms. MACEDO DE SHEPPARD supported the Rapporteur's proposal. It was clear that most members of the Committee who had expressed a view wished the working group to be established as soon as possible.

40. The CHAIRPERSON said that if the composition of the working group was postponed until the afternoon meeting no time would be lost, since members of the Committee could reach agreement in informal consultations, following which it would be easier to adopt a decision in plenary meeting.

41. Ms. PEYTCHEVA wondered what criteria would be used to elect the additional two members of the working group, since it was necessary to respect the principle of equitable geographical distribution which had been observed in electing the Bureau. If the working group was to consist of the members of the Bureau, it would be necessary to elect five additional members representing the regions of Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and Western Europe.

42. Ms. NGOC DUNG endorsed the view expressed by many of the experts that the working group should be open-ended. Otherwise, time would be wasted in the plenary Committee since it would be necessary to hold a much more extensive debate to incorporate amendments from members who had not participated in the working group.

43. Ms. AL-FATOUH and Ms. MUKAYIRANGA supported the Chairperson's suggestion that informal consultations should be held on the composition of the working group during the lunch time recess, since there were differences of opinion between delegations on the matter.

44. Ms. SMITH suggested that the working group should comprise only the current members of the Bureau. A decision to that effect could be taken immediately.

45. Ms. LAMM agreed with those who had stressed the importance of the guidelines for the Committee's work and for the States which had ratified or acceded to the Convention. In her view, it was not appropriate to establish a group with limited membership. Ms. Smith had suggested that the working group should consist solely of the members of the Bureau; yet there were other experts who had prepared comments and who would wish to participate in the formulation of the guidelines.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.