



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

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Fourth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 45th MEETING

Held at the Vienna International Centre, Vienna,  
on Monday, 21 January 1985, at 11 a.m.

Temporary Chairperson: Mrs. SHAHANI (Assistant Secretary-General for  
Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs)

Chairperson: Ms. BERNARD

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

OPENING OF THE SESSION

1. Mrs. SHAHANI (Assistant Secretary-General for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs), speaking on behalf of the Secretary-General, declared open the fourth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and welcomed the members of the Committee to Vienna. She expressed her gratitude to the Committee for the valuable work it had accomplished during its first three sessions and extended her special thanks to the outgoing officers. Many basic issues had been settled: the rules of procedure and the general guidelines regarding the form and contents of reports received from States parties under article 18 of the Convention had been prepared and adopted; the Committee's mandate with regard to such matters as the admissibility of reservations, reports of the specialized agencies, suggestions and general recommendations had been considered; and 13 initial reports had been examined and difficulties and obstacles had been identified. As a result of those efforts, the members of the Economic and Social Council as well as delegations to the General Assembly had expressed their satisfaction with the work of the Committee.
2. Six months prior to the opening of the 1985 World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, the Committee had become a major factor in guiding governments to take legal and other measures to secure the universal admission of women to all spheres of life without any restrictions based on sex. Furthermore, the Committee had started to contribute to the better functioning of the United Nations system in its efforts to improve the status of women and enhance their involvement in the development process. The Committee could rest assured of the continuing support of the Secretariat and of her own personal commitment to its work. In her view, co-operation with the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs could be further improved if women's issues were all dealt with in Vienna, rather than being dispersed by holding sessions of the Committee alternately in New York and Vienna. It would be greatly appreciated if that question could be taken up under provisional agenda item 7, when the views expressed at the first session might perhaps be reconsidered.
3. She congratulated the eleven members elected at the Second Meeting of States parties, who included five new members and six re-elected members. She also wished to pay a tribute to the memory of Mr. Evner Ergun, who had worked with such dedication and sincerity to prepare the forthcoming World Conference.
4. On the proposal of Mrs. Shahani, the members of the Committee observed a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of Mr. Ergun.
5. Mrs. SHAHANI (Assistant Secretary-General for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs), continuing her statement, said it was gratifying to observe the continuous increase in the number of States accepting obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which now had 65 States parties representing 41 per cent of the membership of the United Nations. Since the previous session, Bangladesh, Democratic Yemen, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Liberia, Mauritius and New Zealand had become parties to the Convention. At the same time, however, it should be noted that out of 52 reports due under article 18 of the Convention as of 31 December 1984, only 26 had so far been received by the Secretariat. Since the success of the Committee's work depended on the fulfilment of reporting obligations, the Secretariat urged

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States parties which had not yet submitted their reports to do so as soon as possible. In that connection, the Canadian representative at the thirty-ninth session of the General Assembly had expressed the view that it might be necessary to extend the Committee's annual sessions beyond two weeks to allow it to comply with the reporting cycle. Any such prolongation would depend primarily on the availability of a sufficient number of reports. By the end of the fourth session, the Committee would have considered 19 of the 26 reports submitted. The remaining seven, namely those of Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Ecuador, Mongolia, Portugal, Venezuela and Viet Nam, would be considered at the fifth session. It would be most desirable, in order to comply with the Committee's decision to take the different levels of development and the geographical situation of States parties into account, if at least one report from the African region (Cape Verde or Ethiopia) could be received by June 1985. Meanwhile, the Secretariat would continue to invite governments that had ratified or acceded to the Convention to submit their initial or subsequent reports in accordance with the established reporting cycle.

6. She wished to inform the Committee of the action undertaken by the Secretariat in connection with two main decisions adopted at the third session.

7. In the first place, it would be recalled that the Committee had decided to consider at its fourth session the achievements of and the obstacles experienced by States parties in the implementation of the Convention as a contribution to the 1985 World Conference and had recommended that the Economic and Social Council entrust the Secretariat with a mandate to prepare a draft report on that subject. As Secretary-General for the 1985 World Conference, she had drawn the Council's attention to the extreme difficulty of preparing such a report without additional resources. Members of the Council had taken the view that such a report would duplicate the information available in other reports. Consequently, in its resolution E/1984/8, the Council had not endorsed the Committee's recommendation but had requested the Secretary-General to prepare a compendium of information based upon national reports in order to assist the Committee in the preparation of a report to the Conference. The preparation of the Compendium had been a time-consuming task, requiring extensive research, but could be useful to Member States as a model for national action to eliminate discrimination against women. The Committee might wish to set up a working group to prepare an introduction containing an assessment of the achievements of and the obstacles experienced by States parties in implementing the Convention. The document would be edited by the Secretariat and submitted directly to the 1985 World Conference.

8. Secondly, the Committee had agreed that an item should be included in the agenda of a future session concerning ways and means of implementing article 21 of the Convention, which provided that the Committee might make suggestions and general recommendations based on the examination of reports. The Committee had suggested that the Secretariat should verify how that matter was handled by similar bodies. Pursuant to that decision, the Secretariat had sought advice from the Office of the Legal Counsel in New York and from the Centre for Human Rights in Geneva. Owing to a heavy workload, their replies had not been received until the end of November 1984, and would be made available to the Committee at a later stage. However, regarding the substance to which "suggestions" and "recommendations" could be addressed, the Office of the Legal Counsel considered that both could be made to "the form, contents and dates of the periodic reports" as provided for in rule 46 of the Committee's rules of procedure.

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9. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution E/1984/8, and the General Assembly, in resolution A/39/130, had recognized the importance of the summary records of bodies established to monitor the implementation of international human rights instruments and had authorized the provision of summary records of meetings of the Committee on a regular basis. At the same time, the Committee was invited to consider the format and content of its future reports, which were prepared in addition to the summary records, bearing in mind the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolution 37/14 C of 16 November 1982, which required all United Nations organs to restrict substantially the volume of their documents. She therefore appealed for the Committee's understanding and acceptance of a shorter report as from the present session. For future sessions, the Committee might wish to consider whether it would not be sufficient to restrict the content of the reports to decisions, suggestions and general recommendations, and organizational and other matters, and to refer to the summary records for more detailed information. Such a report would fully meet the requirements of article 21 of the Convention. However, a final decision on the matter at the fourth session was not necessary, since a uniform proposal by all treaty bodies, including the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, would be desirable. The Secretariat had already attempted to take up the issue with those two bodies, but had so far failed owing to financial constraints.

10. The Committee might be interested in further information on the 1985 World Conference, which was to be held in Nairobi from 15 to 26 July and would be preceded by a non-governmental organizations' world meeting for Women: "Forum 85". The purpose of the Conference was to review and appraise both the progress achieved and the obstacles encountered in the realization of the goals and objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women at the national, regional and international levels within the United Nations system and to formulate strategies to the year 2000. The Conference would adopt plans designed to establish a just society, in which dignity, opportunity and power were not the monopoly of one sex alone. The key documentation for the World Conference would be: first, a report on the review and appraisal of progress made and obstacles encountered during the Decade, based on a questionnaire sent to all Member States; second, a report on the review and appraisal of progress achieved and obstacles encountered by the United Nations system; third, a world survey on the role of women in development; and fourth, a report on forward-looking strategies of implementation for the advancement of women and on concrete measures to overcome obstacles. Other documents would include the recommendations of the five regional preparatory meetings and the non-governmental organizations' report.

11. The regional meetings, held in Tokyo, Arusha, Havana, Vienna and Baghdad, had reflected the specific priorities and needs of women in the respective regions and had identified common problems of women throughout the world. The main achievements in all five regions had been the raising of awareness of the vital role of women in development, a higher level of consciousness and progress in the legislative field. The main obstacles had been identified as the economic crisis and global recession, as well as prevailing attitudes.

12. At the Tokyo meeting, convened for the Asian and Pacific countries, the participants had noted the higher level of consciousness which the United Nations Decade for Women had generated, leading to marked progress in education, health and

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employment. The participants had adopted recommendations concerning forward-looking strategies and had endorsed a programme of regional priorities and strategies to the year 2000.

13. The African regional preparatory meeting in Arusha had recognized the greatest achievement of the Decade as being both the increased visibility of women in the region and awareness of their role in the socio-economic development of Africa. The three key issues for the forward-looking strategies of the African region included the economic situation, development and peace, and the monitoring of changes in the status of women through national machinery, legislation and political participation.

14. The European preparatory meeting in Vienna had dealt specifically with the economic role of women in the region. The participants had noted the progress made during the Decade in the number of women in the labour force, the enactment of legislation concerning their participation and the elimination of discrimination, and the acceptance of the principle of the integration of women in development. The recommendations made dealt with the areas of development strategies and policies, labour force participation and employment, equality in the labour market and data collection.

15. At the recent preparatory meeting in Havana for the Latin American and Caribbean region, the participants had noted the progress made in education, employment and health. It had been recognized that the obstacles to women's participation in the economic, political, social and cultural life of their countries were intimately related to the general conditions of underdevelopment and the debt and political crisis of the region. Stress had been laid on the need to link closely the three themes of the Decade in planning activities and programmes to promote the status of women.

16. At the regional meeting in Baghdad, participants from the Western Asian region had identified priorities for policies and programmes in the areas of political participation and improvement in legal status, employment and production, education and training, as well as in nutrition, health services and housing, the family, women's organizations and disadvantaged groups. The strategy for the region stressed the need for integrated development while maintaining cultural identity. The main priority had been seen as the ending of the continued occupation of Arab territories and of the prevailing military conflicts in the region.

17. It was gratifying to announce that the third and last session of the Commission on the Status of Women, acting as the preparatory body for the 1985 World Conference, would be held in Vienna from 4 to 13 March 1985. The Committee might feel it necessary to bring particular matters to the Commission's attention.

18. She felt confident that the countries of all regions would play a major part in ensuring the success of the 1985 World Conference. The Committee was making an enormous contribution to achieving the goals of the Decade and deserved congratulation.

#### SOLEMN DECLARATION BY THE NEW MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

19. The TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON invited newly elected or re-elected members of the Committee to make the solemn declaration provided for in rule 10 of the Committee's rules of procedure.



20. Ms. BERNARD, Ms. CARON, Ms. EVATT, Ms. GONZALEZ, Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU, Ms. MONTENEGRO DE FLETCHER, Ms. OESER, Ms. de REGO da COSTA SALEMA, Ms. SINEGIORGIS and Ms. WADSTEIN solemnly declared that they would perform their duties and exercise powers as members of the Committee honourably, faithfully, impartially and conscientiously.

#### ELECTION OF THE CHAIRPERSON AND OTHER OFFICERS OF THE COMMITTEE

21. The TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON invited nominations for the offices of chairperson, vice-chairpersons and rapporteur for a term of two years, in accordance with the provisions of article 19, paragraph 2 of the Convention and rules 13 and 14 of the Committee's rules of procedure (A/38/45).

22. Ms. REGENT-LECHOWICZ nominated Ms. Bernard for the office of chairperson.

23. Ms. Bernard was elected Chairperson by acclamation.

24. Ms. Bernard took the chair.

25. Ms. GONZALEZ nominated Ms. Cortes for the office of vice-chairperson.

26. Ms. ILIC nominated Ms. Sinegiorgis for the office of vice-chairperson.

27. Ms. CARON nominated Ms. Smith for the office of vice-chairperson.

28. Ms. Cortes, Ms. Sinegiorgis and Ms. Smith were elected Vice-Chairpersons by acclamation.

29. Ms. IDER nominated Ms. Oeser for the office of rapporteur.

30. Ms. Oeser was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.

#### ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS (CEDAW/C/10/Rev.1)

31. Ms. CARON requested that an adjustment be made in the tentative timetable for the session to allow Canada to present its initial report during the afternoon of Tuesday, 22 January, and to make its replies during the afternoon of Friday, 25 January, in each case in place of Panama.

32. It was so agreed.

33. Ms. BIRYUKOVA proposed that provisional agenda item 5, Contribution of the Committee to the 1985 World Conference, should be considered after provisional agenda item 6, Consideration of reports submitted by States parties, since the Secretariat's Compendium of information submitted under item 5 had only just reached most of the members, and since a number of members were not yet present and therefore could not express their views on it.

34. Ms. GONZALEZ suggested, in the light of the statement made by the Secretary-General's representative, which had highlighted the heavy workload of the Committee, and of the fact that many experts had only just received their copies of the Compendium, that the Committee should consider setting up a small working group to examine that document in detail, working either in parallel with the Committee or outside the Committee's working hours.

35. Ms. ILIĆ said that the proposed reversal of the order of provisional agenda items 5 and 6 would cause difficulties for States parties which would be working to an established timetable. The suggestion to set up a working group was a good one. However, it might be useful if the Committee were first to have a general discussion on the Compendium produced by the Secretariat, so that the working group could base its work on the views which had been expressed.

36. Ms. REGENT-LECHOWICZ agreed that there should be a general discussion of the Secretariat's document before a working group was set up. She supported, as logical, the suggestion that item 6 should be considered before item 5.

37. Ms. CORTES supported the idea of a general discussion of the Compendium before a working group was set up.

38. Ms. SINEGIORGIS observed that reversal of the order of provisional agenda items 5 and 6, although logical, would lead to problems. It might be preferable to have a first discussion of the Compendium that afternoon and resume consideration of it later in the week.

39. Ms. EVATT said that provisional agenda item 6, Consideration of reports submitted by States parties, was the most important item of the session. It would be a pity to reduce the time allotted for that item in favour of item 5 on the Committee's contribution to the 1985 World Conference, which was of lesser importance.

40. Ms. JAYASINGHE supported the suggestion that the order of the two items should be reversed, and that a working group should later be set up. The Committee should not overlook the fact that the views of five other States parties would have to be added to the Compendium.

41. The CHAIRPERSON suggested that a preliminary discussion on the Compendium should take place that afternoon and that a small working group should then be set up and allowed a limited amount of time for its work. Consideration of provisional agenda items 7 and 8, scheduled for 29 January, could be brought forward to the morning of 22 January, and the Compendium might be discussed further on Tuesday, 29 January.

42. Ms. BIRYUKOVA maintained her original proposal that item 6 should be taken up before item 5. She had no objection to the establishment of a working group after a general discussion on the Compendium, but that might not prove necessary: members of the Committee might provide the Secretariat with written comments. Moreover, it might be difficult for members of the Committee, who had to be present for the consideration of reports by States parties, to attend meetings of a working group. Another possibility might be to invite the States parties to introduce their reports ahead of the scheduled time, if they were prepared to do so.

43. Ms. CARON said that setting up a small group usually proved an effective way of advancing work. Such a group could meet outside the time of the regular Committee meetings. She believed it would be difficult for States parties to present their reports before the scheduled time.

44. Ms. MACEDO DE SHEPPARD said that it would be impossible to discuss at short notice a document of such length as the Compendium. She, herself, had not yet received a copy of the Spanish version. She agreed, however, that a preliminary discussion should take place as soon as possible, that a working group should be set up and that the Committee should evaluate the group's findings towards the end of the session.

45. The CHAIRPERSON suggested that the Committee should take up provisional agenda item 7 that afternoon and hold a general discussion on the Compendium at its 47th meeting.
46. Ms. MONTENEGRO DE FLETCHER stressed the importance of keeping to the timetable established for consideration of the reports by States parties.
47. Ms. GONZALEZ, in a desire to reconcile conflicting interests, suggested that the preliminary discussion of the Compendium should be limited to presentation of the document and that the Committee should consider holding an additional meeting on Saturday, 2 February.
48. Ms. SMITH supported that suggestion.
49. Ms. GUAN MINQIAN drew attention to the fact that she had not yet received a version of the Compendium in Chinese. However, in view of the time constraints, she accepted the Chairperson's suggested arrangements for the 46th and 47th meetings.
50. Ms. REGENT-LECHOWICZ stressed the desirability of deferring any discussion of the Compendium until all the members of the Committee were present and had discussed the reports by States parties.
51. Ms. SINEGIORGIS suggested, as an alternative arrangement to allow Committee members more time to study the Compendium, that no meeting be held that afternoon and that an additional meeting should be scheduled for 26 January. Provisional agenda item 7 could be taken up on the morning of 22 January and evening meetings could be arranged if necessary.
52. The CHAIRPERSON observed that no meetings had been scheduled for 30 January. If the consideration of item 7 was brought forward, the morning of 29 January would also be available for consideration of item 5.
53. Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU and Ms. IDER supported the suggestion made by Ms. Sinegiorgis.
54. The CHAIRPERSON said that two proposals had been made: one was to hold no meeting that afternoon, while the other was to hold a meeting that afternoon at which provisional agenda item 7 would be considered. On the morning of 22 January the Committee would hold a preliminary discussion for the presentation of views on the Compendium and would, if necessary, set up a working group. The timetable for consideration of reports by States parties would be left unchanged.
55. Ms. EVATT and Ms. de REGO da COSTA SALEMA supported the proposal that provisional agenda item 7 should be considered that afternoon and item 5 at the morning meeting on 22 January.
56. That proposal was adopted.
57. The provisional agenda (CEDAW/C/10/Rev.1) was adopted.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.