



Convention on the Elimination  
of All Forms of Discrimination  
against Women

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Eighth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 132nd MEETING

Held at the Vienna International Centre, Vienna,  
on Monday, 20 February 1989, at 10 30 a m

<u>Temporary Chairperson</u>	Ms BERNARD
<u>Chairperson</u>	Ms EVATT

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The meeting was called to order at 10 40 a m

#### OPENING OF THE SESSION

1 The TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON declared open the eighth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) She welcomed the members of the Committee and the observers

2 Miss ANSTEE (Director-General, United Nations Office at Vienna) welcomed the participants She wished especially to welcome the five new members of CEDAW, elected at the most recent meeting of States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women The tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention would fall in December 1989 It was generally agreed that the Convention was a milestone in international law, involving a profound change in perceptions of de jure and de facto human rights The pace of ratification of the Convention had recently quickened, and now there were 96 States parties Advancement towards legal equality for women through the Convention was the main area of progress towards the goal of overall equality by the year 2000 It was no easy task to ensure that the provisions of the Convention were implemented, and the process of asking questions and drawing conclusions at the international level was an essential factor

3 It had been decided two years previously that the United Nations Office at Vienna would be a focal point for all United Nations activities in the field of social policy and social development, and she was anxious to ensure that the Committee would be able to perform its important task with efficiency and dispatch Governments were also concerned that adequate resources should be given to the work of CEDAW The Secretariat was trying to make services related to the Convention available on a year-round basis, through a secretariat nucleus which had no other assignments It also drew on the general resources of the Division for the Advancement of Women to provide staffing and research assistance for the Committee's deliberations A third channel of support to CEDAW was the regular programme of technical co-operation, whereby training could be provided for States parties in matters related to the implementation of the Convention The first training programme of that nature had recently taken place, hosted by the Government of Greece Other seminars were being organized Efforts were being made to publicize the Convention itself, and a "Compendium of international conventions concerning the status of women" had now been issued in English (ST/CSDHA/3) It was proposed to issue, on a five-yearly basis, full sets of CEDAW's reports and summary records as a reference document

4. Unfortunately, the resources available to CEDAW were being reduced In the 1990-1991 budget, the staff of the United Nations Office at Vienna would be cut by nearly 15 per cent, despite the new demands being made on the Secretariat The requirement to send a number of staff to Namibia had deprived the current session of CEDAW of the services of a Legal Officer She was not unduly pessimistic, however, because of the hard work put in by the staff of the Division for the Advancement of Women One financial measure requested by the General Assembly, in resolution 43/100, had been a comparative statement of the full cost of holding CEDAW sessions as between New York and Vienna The comparison was far from straightforward Travel and per diem costs for staff and members of the Committee would be substantially higher for sessions in New York than for sessions in Vienna With regard to conference servicing costs, those were computed on the

(Miss Anstee)

assumption that all conference servicing staff were contracted from outside, and on that basis a meeting in Vienna was always more expensive than a meeting in New York. In reality, conference servicing costs for meetings already programmed could be absorbed within the standard conference budget of the United Nations. From the practical point of view, it was easier for the Secretariat to provide effective services in Vienna. If the Committee met in New York, it was essential that a minimum number of qualified staff be sent from Vienna to service it.

5 The Committee bore a significant responsibility as the only international legal watchdog for women's rights. Its recommendations formed a major input for other policy forums as well as for States parties. She was sure the Committee would continue to guide the international community in the right direction as it entered the 1990s.

6 The TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON thanked the Director-General for what was being done by the Division for the Advancement of Women to publicize the work of CEDAW. The efforts it was making in a climate of financial stringency should be applauded.

7 Ms SELLAMI-MESLEM (Director, Division for the Advancement of Women) said that the task of monitoring progress at the national level in the implementation of the Convention was rendered more complex by cultural diversity, varying levels of development and the different legal systems involved. Too often, the Convention had no impact on the daily lives of women.

8 The Committee's reports and the detailed national reports constituted an important source of information on the situation of women, and were of great assistance to the Division in the preparation of documentation for the Commission on the Status of Women.

9. Since March 1988, Sierra Leone and Luxembourg had adhered to the Convention. The two new ratifications would increase the number of outstanding reports, which was already a matter of concern to the Committee. The report of the Netherlands Human Rights and Foreign Policy Advisory Committee (A/C.3/43/5), which had been sent to members, was relevant to the work of the Committee. CEDAW had been represented by Ms Illic at the recent Meeting of Chairpersons of Human Rights Treaty Bodies, as a consequence of which the General Assembly had adopted resolution 43/115, requesting the Secretary-General to finalize the manual intended to assist States parties in the preparation of reports (see operative paragraph 5). Three members of the Committee had also attended the Interregional Seminar on the Convention held in Greece for a similar purpose.

10 Turning to the question of financial resources, she noted that General Assembly resolution 43/100, while expressing support for the Committee, qualified its recommendation in operative paragraph 11 by indicating that assistance should be provided "within existing resources". The Division was badly affected by the staff reduction decided on, since its activities had increased as a result of the decision to hold annual sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women. However, the Division would do its best to assist the Committee in its work, and had attempted to make available as much statistical information as possible.

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SOLEMN DECLARATION BY THE NEW MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

11 Ms Alfonsín de Fasan, Ms Bustelo del Real, Ms Walla-Tchangai and the re-elected members Ms Bernard, Ms Evatt, Ms Gonzalez Martinez, Ms Laiou-Antoniou, Ms Oeser and Ms Sinegiorgis made a solemn declaration as provided for in rule 10 of the rules of procedure of the Committee (A/38/45, annex III)

The meeting was suspended at 11 25 a m and resumed at 12 05 p m

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

12 Ms Evatt was elected Chairperson, Ms Guan Mingqian, Ms Pilataxi de Arenas and Ms Oeser were elected Vice-Chairpersons and Ms Ukeje was elected Rapporteur, all by acclamation

13. Ms Evatt took the Chair

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Adoption of the agenda

14 The provisional agenda (CEDAW/C/17) was adopted

Composition of the standing Working Groups (Working Group I on ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee and Working Group II on the implementation of article 21 of the Convention)

15 After a brief discussion, the CHAIRPERSON suggested that the members of Working Group I should be Ms Gonzalez Martinez, Ms Guan Mingqian, Ms Akamatsu and Ms Forde and that the members of Working Group II should be Ms Sinegiorgis, Ms Corti, Ms Laiou-Antoniou, Ms Oeser, Ms Pilataxi de Arenas, Ms Sayogyo and Ms Soumare Other members of the Committee could attend the meetings of the Working Groups

16 It was so agreed

17. The CHAIRPERSON said that Working Group I would be looking at periodic reports received, and considering issues arising from the report of the Meeting of Chairpersons of Human Rights Treaty Bodies A list of issues to be referred to the Byelorussian SSR, the German Democratic Republic and the USSR would have to be prepared as soon as possible

18 Ms CORTI asked whether the Committee would continue with the procedure followed at the eighth session, namely of submitting questions in advance to the States parties concerned

19 The CHAIRPERSON said that the procedure had been adopted on a trial basis and the Working Group should consider whether it had proved satisfactory

20 Working Group II would be dealing with matters on which consideration had been deferred at the eighth session and with any other matters suggested by members of the Committee

Tenth anniversary of the Convention

21 Ms CREYDT (Secretary of the Committee) said that it was proposed to hold two press conferences, one on 20 March, under the joint auspices of the Austrian authorities and the United Nations, and one on 1 March, under United Nations auspices at the Vienna International Centre

22 Ms SINEGIORGIS asked for further information and suggested that members should be given time for informal consultations on ways of celebrating the anniversary

23 The CHAIRPERSON suggested that the Committee should discuss the question at the following meeting, when full information would be provided

24 It was so agreed

The meeting rose at 12 45 p m