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Sixteenth Session  
SOCIAL COMMITTEE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND FORTY-SECOND MEETING

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Monday, 13 July 1953, at 3 p.m.

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Present:

Chairman:

Mr. MUNOZ (Argentina)

Members:

Argentina	Miss FLOURET
Australia	Mr. BRENNAN
Belgium	Mrs. CISELET
China	Mr. TSAO
Cuba	Miss MANAS
Egypt	Mr. AZMI
France	Miss LISSAC
India	Mr. VIRA
Philippines	Mr. INGLES
Poland	Mr. ZDANOWSKI
Sweden	Mr. MICHANEK
Turkey	Mr. TUNCEL
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics	Mr. ORLOVSKY
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. OVERTON
United States of America	Mr. KOTSCHNIG
Uruguay	Mr. PEROTTI
Venezuela	Mr. RIVAS
Yugoslavia	Mr. PLEIĆ

Observers:

Dominican Republic

Miss BERNARDINO

Representatives of specialized agencies:

International Labour Organisation

Mr. BLAMONT

United Nations Educational, Scientific  
and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Mr. TERENCE

Representatives of non-governmental organizations:

Category A

World Federation of Trade Unions Mr. DIALLO

Category B and Register

Catholic International Union for  
Social Service Miss HERTOGHE

International Alliance of Women --  
Equal Rights, Equal Responsibilities Mrs. SPILLER

International Bureau for the Suppression  
of Traffic in Persons Miss HARRIS

International Council of Women Mrs. CARTER

International Federation of Business  
and Professional Women Mrs. SCHRADER-RIVOLLET

International Federation of Friends  
of Young Women Miss WEIBEL

International Federation of University  
Women Miss DUBOIS  
Mrs. NANTET de SERRANT

International Institute of  
Administrative Sciences Mr. ASCHER

International World Calendar  
Association Mr. JOYCE

Pax Romana Miss ARCHINARD

Woman's International League for  
Peace and Freedom Mrs. BAER

World Federation for Mental Health Mrs. ASCHER

World's Young Women's Christian  
Association Miss ARNOLD

Secretariat:

Mr. Humphrey Acting Principal Director,  
Department of Social Affairs.

Mrs. Tenison-Woods Chief, Status of Women  
Section, Division of  
Human Rights.

Mr. Messing-Mierzejewski Secretary to the Committee

## 1. PROGRAMME OF WORK

The SECRETARY proposed that, to meet the request made at the previous meeting by the Indian representative, and on the assumption that the Committee would conclude its consideration of item 18 of the Council's agenda (report of the Commission on the Status of Women (seventh session)) by Wednesday, 15 July, it should on Thursday take up narcotic drugs (item 20), if necessary deferring sub-item (c) thereof (report of the United Nations Opium Conference). Since in the fourth week the Council would be considering in plenary a number of social items, including items 10, 11 and 12, it was unlikely that the Social Committee would be able to meet before Wednesday or Thursday of that week. Item 14 (prevention of discrimination and protection of minorities) could then be taken up by the Committee on Wednesday or Thursday of the fourth week (15 or 16 July), together with sub-item (c) of item 20.

The programme of work proposed by the Secretary was provisionally approved.

## 2. REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (SEVENTH SESSION) (item 18 of the Council's agenda) (E/2401) (resumed from the previous meeting).

Mr. INGLES (Philippines), congratulating the Commission on the Status of Women on its report on its seventh session (E/2401), said that respect for women was deeply rooted in the culture and tradition of his country. Before the coming of the Conquistadores Philippine women had enjoyed an enviable position of equality with men both in the family and in society, but the Spanish civil law which had prevailed for three centuries had transplanted into the country the Roman law concept of the absolute authority of the paterfamilias. It had taken a new regime at the turn of the century, to introduce changes in order to temper the rigour of the Roman law, and those changes had culminated, after Philippine independence, in the drastic revision of the civil code to bring it into greater harmony with tradition and modern thinking in the Philippines. At the present time women enjoyed full political rights.

Turning to the various draft resolutions submitted by the Commission, he said that his delegation felt that draft resolution B (nationality of married women) still required modification, and he agreed with the Commission that the comments on it of Member Governments should be sought. The lack of uniformity in nationality laws was due to many other causes than discrimination based on differences of sex - for instance, to racial discrimination. The question of the

right of an alien wife to acquire the nationality of her husband was one which involved national policy concerning the naturalization of aliens, and logically should be dealt with in a wider context; the problem was, indeed, at present being studied by the International Law Commission. On the other hand, the rigid attitude of some governments on nationality issues, including immigration and naturalization, seemed to suggest that it would be better to tackle the problem piecemeal, in which case the draft proposed by the Commission would be a step in the right direction. Should the Committee approve the principle of a convention on the nationality of married persons, his delegation would wish to see a territorial clause included, and had submitted an amendment<sup>(1)</sup> to that end. It was categorically stated in the opening proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that the human rights proclaimed therein should be recognized and observed not only among the peoples of States Members, but among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction. Moreover, the General Assembly had directed the Commission on Human Rights to insert such an article in the draft covenants on human rights. That ought to be taken as the official United Nations policy, and should be observed in every convention relating to human rights. Possibly the Commission on the Status of Women had wished to avoid discussing the question because of its political implications; but in the view of his delegation, the Economic and Social Council was an appropriate organ in which to discuss such a political issue.

He agreed with the Egyptian representative that draft resolution C (status of women in private law) was obsolete in view of the inclusion of an article dealing with the same subject in the draft covenant on civil and political rights. With regard to draft resolution D, on the same subject, his delegation, while recognizing that its adoption and implementation would mean an improvement in the status of women in a number of countries, felt that a resolution in such positive terms might perhaps be premature. As he had already said, the civil legislation of his own country had been considerably modified in recent years, and women then

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(1) The Philippines amendment read:

"Add a new article to the 'Convention on the Nationality of Married Persons' to read as follows:

"The provisions of the present Convention shall extend to or be applicable equally to a signatory metropolitan State and to all the territories, be they non-self-governing, trust or colonial territories which are being administered or governed by such metropolitan State".

enjoyed a large measure of equality in respect of family and property rights, so that in principle he would not be opposed to draft resolution D. However, in the Commission on Human Rights he had voted in favour of the compromise formula aimed rather at guiding legislation towards equality of the spouses than at bringing about immediate changes in legislation, in order to accommodate certain countries which faced real difficulties in the matter. With regard to draft resolution E (political rights of women), his Government had already taken the necessary steps to enable the Philippines to sign the Convention on Political Rights of Women of 20 December 1952. His delegation had, however, some reservations about the provision recommending the signature of the Convention "by non-member States which are or become Members of one or more of the specialized agencies of the United Nations or are or become Parties to the Statute of the International Court of Justice". He was not satisfied with that formula which, on the one hand, did not recognize the principle of universality, yet, on the other, did not permit individual consideration of the States to be invited.

His delegation had no objection to any of the other draft resolutions and would support them all, except that he would like to see draft resolution H (educational opportunities for women) modified to bring it into line with the recommendations of the recent Sixteenth International Conference on Public Education.

Mrs. FLOURET (Argentina) expressed her delegation's appreciation of the Commission's report, and in particular of the order of priorities laid down in it. With reference to draft resolution B, she would have preferred to see the Commission on Human Rights take up the question of the nationality of married women within the framework of the problem of statelessness, but had no objection to the procedure proposed by the Commission on the Status of Women, and agreed with the Philippine representative that it would be appropriate to forward the resolution to Member Governments for their comments. Her country's legislation was in full accord with the draft convention embodied in the resolution.

Her delegation wished to pay a tribute to the work done by the Commission to improve the status of women in private law. It was a matter for particular satisfaction that the substance of Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should have been incorporated into the draft covenant on civil and political rights. The family was the basic cell of the community, and woman, as the nucleus of that cell, must be given the most complete protection by society and the State.

Her delegation also regarded the attention given by the Commission to the study of the political rights of women as of prime importance. In Argentina, women and men had equal political rights, and women had every opportunity of participating to the full in the nation's political, social and economic activities. With regard to the two principles of equal pay for equal work, and of equal educational opportunity, she could inform the Committee that in her country legislation provided for the first and educational programmes took full account of the second. She endorsed the wish expressed by the Commission that discrimination on grounds of sex in appointments to the United Nations Secretariat should be speedily abolished. The Commission's proposals in the field of technical assistance also warranted whole-hearted support.

With respect to the Commission's programme of work for 1953-1954, she was sorry to see that the question of education appeared to have been relegated to a secondary place. Her delegation was convinced that the better education of women was the key to the improvement of their status in every other field.

Mr. KOTSCHNIG (United States of America) said that his delegation fully agreed with what previous speakers had said about the importance of the Commission's work. Indeed, it had been at the initiative of the United States delegation that the Sub-Commission on the Status of Women had been made a full Commission. In his country, women wielded enormous influence in all walks of life, and were playing their fullest part in every field. In support of that assertion, he could point to the fact that no less than five of the advisers to the United States delegation at the Council's present session were women. The report on the Commission's seventh session bore witness to the important work being done by the Commission, and was commendably concrete and precise in its recommendations. Reserving his right to speak later on the several draft resolutions submitted for the Council's approval, he said that he wished to speak on draft resolutions B and J forthwith.

The United States delegation was in full agreement with the principle embodied in draft resolution B, but agreed with the view of certain other representatives that it might be premature to press too strongly for immediate action along those lines, or even to invite the comments of Member Governments on the draft convention on the nationality of married women. The issues involved were very complex and should be left to the International Law Commission which was dealing with the problem of nationality on a broad basis, including the nationality of men and dependants. However, although he could not support draft resolution B, he would not vote against it, but would abstain.

Draft resolution J (technical assistance programmes in relation to the status of women) might require some clarification. Although he believed that the kind of advice spoken of in paragraph 3 of the operative part might be of great value, its provision was not a service that could properly be financed out of existing technical assistance funds. The United States Government might be prepared to consider favourably a special appropriation for the purpose in the regular budget of the United Nations, and would be glad if an estimate of the probable cost of such a programme could be provided.

With regard to certain of the resolutions adopted by the Commission itself, he doubted the soundness of that relating to equal educational opportunities (paragraph 84 of the report), and particularly of paragraph 2 of the operative part thereof. In the view of his Government, primary education ought to be compulsory and free everywhere, and the question of scholarships should therefore not arise at that level. Moreover, the cost of making the proposed analysis of the number of scholarships granted respectively to men and women would in his view be out of all proportion to the value of the results. Paragraph 4 of the resolution on the participation of women in the work of the United Nations and the specialized agencies (paragraph 92 of the report) was also, he felt, inadequately worded. To be significant, the data asked for should be limited to information on the proportion of women to men in the higher posts of the United Nations, its organs and commissions, and in the specialized agencies.



In conclusion, he emphasized that, in spite of those minor blemishes in the report, the United States delegation regarded the work of the Commission as of great significance and value.

Mr. VIRA (India) associated himself with the tributes which had been paid to the work of the Commission and to its Chairman.

Referring to draft resolution B, he saw no objection to the proposal that the draft convention on the nationality of married persons should be circulated to governments for their comments. That procedure would not commit governments to acceptance of the text but, on the contrary, would enable the Commission to revise it in the light of the observations received. He felt the Egyptian and Philippine amendments to the resolution to be premature; the time to make detailed modifications would be after governments had sent in their comments. However, if those amendments were to be put to the vote, he would vote for the Philippine amendment (1).

He supported the Egyptian representative's suggestion that draft resolution C (status of women in private law) be sent back to the Commission for reconsideration in the light of the provisions of article 22 of the draft covenant on civil and political rights included in the report on the ninth session of the Commission on Human Rights.

He would vote for draft resolution D on the same subject, and although he had sympathy for the Egyptian amendment thereto, (2) he would like to consider the matter further. In India, men and women already enjoyed equal political rights, and he would accordingly vote for draft resolutions E and F.

His delegation also supported, in principle, draft resolution G (equal pay for equal work). That principle of equality of remuneration was embodied in the Indian Constitution and in the Fair Wages Bill of 1950 and had been applied by many industrial tribunals and the Central and State Governments so far as non-manual workers were concerned. Disparities, however, existed in the wage rates of men and women workers in factories, plantations and agriculture. As it was not practicable to establish immediately adequate machinery for job appraisal, the

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(1) See above page 5

(2) See summary record of the 241st meeting (E/AC.7/SR.241), page 8.

ratification of the International Labour Convention on that subject had been postponed<sup>(1)</sup>. Meanwhile, the extent of the problem of job appraisal was being examined in greater detail so that the question of ratification of the Convention might be reviewed.

He would vote for the joint amendment<sup>(2)</sup> to draft resolution H (educational opportunities for women), and for draft resolutions I and J.

Mr. ZDANOWSKI (Poland) thought that the Commission's report on its seventh session deserved serious consideration.

His delegation took the view that the Commission's main task was to deal with problems relating to equality of rights for men and women. It did so because the question of equal rights for both sexes had been completely settled in Poland both in law and in fact. The Polish Constitution proclaimed equal rights for men and women in all spheres - public, economic, social and cultural. There were 74 women members of Parliament in his country; more than 300 women judges and public prosecutors; 20,000 women in important posts in industry; and 15,000 women members of People's Councils. Under Article 66, paragraph 2, of the Constitution, women also enjoyed equal rights with men in the matter of labour conditions and wages. The Constitution also guaranteed their right to leisure, social insurance benefits, education, access to public office and so on, and provided for maternal and child welfare, assistance to expectant mothers, paid holidays before and after confinement and so forth. All those provisions were strictly applied.

But, although it had been settled in Poland, the question of equal rights for women was still outstanding in other countries. The Polish Government would, therefore, support all efforts to find a universal solution to the problem. That was why, although not entirely satisfied with it, it had signed the Convention on Political Rights of Women.

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(1) Equal Remuneration Convention (No.100) 1951 and Recommendation (No.90), 1951.

(2) See summary record of the 241st meeting (E/AC.7/SR.241), page 15.

On the whole, the Polish delegation considered that the Commission on the Status of Women had taken a step forward during its seventh session; but there was still a long way to go.

Without referring in detail to the draft resolutions submitted by the Commission, he would stress the importance of draft resolution G (equal pay for equal work). The Polish delegation had been glad to find that the subject had been included in the agenda for the seventh session, for discrimination in that field was still extremely common. But the Commission had devoted too little time to the question - only five meetings out of a total of twenty-six, and two of those five meetings had dealt with the subsidiary question of part-time work.

The Polish delegation also regretted that draft resolution G should have been based on the Convention on the subject adopted by the 34th International Labour Conference in 1951, which was of negligible value, as was proved by the fact that it had so far been signed by only three Governments. His delegation would nevertheless vote for the resolution as being a step in the right direction. It would also support the other draft resolutions that were designed to abolish discrimination, to ensure educational opportunities for women, and to grant them equal rights with men.

The Commission should devote more time in future to the questions of discrimination against women and of maternal and child welfare. It should also give priority to problems relating to political rights for women and to economic discrimination, which were more pressing than the question of the nationality of married women, to which a great deal of attention had, nevertheless, been paid during the discussion.

Miss MANAS (Cuba) had little to add to what the Chairman of the Commission on the Status of Women had said in her introductory statement at the previous meeting. Cuba had always championed the principle of equal rights for men and women, and consequently welcomed the draft resolutions submitted by the Commission for adoption by the Council.

In connexion with draft resolution B, the original text of which had been submitted by the Cuban delegation, she observed that it was unjust that women should be obliged to change their nationality on marriage, as was the case in certain countries, especially as men were not required to do the same. Any change in a person's nationality should be the result solely of a purely voluntary act. Her delegation had agreed to the present text of draft resolution B, according to which the draft convention on the nationality of married persons would be circulated to governments for comment, in order to meet the wishes of the majority of members of the Commission. It realized that many States not represented on the Council were in a position to make observations that would improve the text.

In connexion with draft resolutions C and D (status of women in private law), she stated that, since the new legislation of 1950 abolishing obsolete laws on the subject, Cuban women were no longer in an under-privileged position, and the family unit enjoyed the protection of the State.

There were many countries in which women made a valuable economic contribution to the family's upkeep. She could not quite agree, therefore, with a certain representative's view that it was desirable for them not to do so, as he had said was the case in his own country.

The Argentine representative had well summarized the position on educational opportunities for women (draft resolution H); all the other rights of women depended on their being properly educated. Her delegation had joined the other authors in submitting the joint draft amendment<sup>(1)</sup> to that resolution, with the object of making it capable of commanding general support.

Mr. MICHANEK (Sweden) said that in Sweden the acceptance in practice of the principle of equality between men and women was to a large extent a question of education and information. His delegation was consequently in favour of measures designed to secure its acceptance elsewhere, and the substance of the draft resolutions submitted to the Council by the Commission accordingly met with its approval. It had, nevertheless, certain criticisms to make about the Commission's methods of work.

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(1) See summary record of the 241st meeting (E/AC.7/SR.241), page 15.

The Commission was trying to do too much at once. As a result, it had been faced at its seventh session with a formidable mass of documents, which it had had little time to assimilate. The Commission on the Status of Women should adopt the procedure proposed by the French representative in the case of the Social Commission, and consider one group of related items at each of its sessions. That would mean drawing up a programme of work for several years ahead. Far fewer objections would be then raised to the Commission's draft resolutions, since they would be prepared with greater care on a basis of fuller documentation, properly assimilated. Consideration of certain problems would, it was true, have to be put off for a considerable time, but full equality between men and women was in any event not a goal that would be reached in a hurry.

He also felt that governments ought not to be asked to supply so much information in reply to questionnaires. The Swedish Government, for one, lacked the necessary staff to enable it to reply by the date required and with the desired fullness to such enquiries.

His delegation felt that it would be premature to submit the draft convention on the nationality of married persons to governments for comment; it required further consideration, particularly by the International Law Commission.

He would abstain from voting on draft resolution G (equal pay for equal work) because the Swedish Government was not prepared to intervene in negotiations between parties in the labour market.

Most of the amendments so far proposed to the draft resolutions were, in his view, improvements.

Mr. TUNCEL (Turkey), congratulating the Commission on the Status of Women on the work it had done at its seventh session, said that, as the representative of a country where women were emancipated in law and in fact, he would support any effort to abolish discrimination between the sexes that might still exist anywhere in the world. Experience in Turkey had shown that the full and rapid emancipation of women was the key to social progress. If the same goal was to be achieved elsewhere, the question of education, whether basic or adult, must have priority in the Commission's programme. Turkish experience was a living example of the predominant role of education in social progress.

He had noted with interest, and supported, the views expressed on education by the Argentine delegation.

Mr. PEROTTI (Uruguay) said that in the matters with which the Commission on the Status of Women was concerned his country was in a privileged position, since it had embodied in its legislation all the principles advocated by the Commission. There was no discrimination of any kind in Uruguay between men and women, as was evident from the country's laws and Constitution.

The Commission's report was the outcome of a compromise, certain divergences of opinion having developed during the seventh session. It was none the less a valuable document, which the Committee would be justified in approving.

He then briefly analysed the Commission's proposals, in connexion with the most important of which he described what had been done in his own country.

The problem of the nationality of married women had been solved in Uruguay. His delegation would therefore vote in favour of draft resolution B, and would in due course submit some amendments designed to improve its wording.

With regard to the status of women in private law, the Uruguayan Constitution and legal practice in the country gave some idea of the progress achieved in that field. Men and women were assured of the same civil rights under the law; women had civil capacity, they were entitled to dispose of joint estate and of their own earnings, they had the same rights in respect of mortgages and so on. In that field, Uruguay had given the fullest expression to women's aspirations, and he would therefore urge the Committee to approve draft resolutions C and D.

With regard to political rights, in Uruguay both men and women had the right to elect and to be elected and to hold public office. The Constitution made no distinction based on sex.

The principle of equal pay for equal work had already been put into practice in Uruguay.

In education, the Uruguayan Government had shown great foresight during the last half-century by embodying in legislation the equal right of women to study.

Referring to draft resolution J (technical assistance programmes in relation to the status of women), he said that the Uruguayan delegation felt that everything possible should be done to enable women to play their proper part in that field, and so ensure the harmonious course of social progress.

In conclusion, he said that it was not enough to express specific aspirations in legal texts; the rights of women must be translated into practical reality.

Mr. TSAO (China) observed that the Chinese delegation attached great importance to the Commission's work. Men and women enjoyed equal status under the Chinese Constitution and laws, and in practice had equality of access to public office and private employment. China had, moreover, recently signed the Convention on Political Rights of Women.

He supported the draft resolutions submitted by the Commission, but wished certain points in draft resolution J to be clarified. First, did the "various United Nations programmes of technical assistance", referred to in the second paragraph of the preamble, mean the United Nations technical assistance programme, the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance or the advisory social welfare services, or all three? Secondly, was it necessary for the Secretary-General to be authorized to render the "expert advice" referred to in paragraph 3 in the operative part? If the advice were given under the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance, it would be dealt with by the Technical Assistance Board (TAB) and the participating agencies concerned such as the International Labour Office or UNESCO, for example, according to the nature of the problem, while if it were given under the advisory social welfare services, no authorization to the Secretary-General would be required either.

Mr. OVERTON (United Kingdom) said that the United Kingdom had led the world in the field of political equality between the sexes. Any inequality between men and women in other fields that still persisted there was due to certain survivals from the past and economic circumstances which were largely outside governmental control. His Government was pursuing a consistent policy of endeavouring to secure recognition of the self-evident fact that men and women were equally fit both to enjoy rights and to shoulder responsibilities.

He shared the Swedish representative's view that the Commission on the Status of Women ought to confine itself to considering a particular question, or group of questions, at each of its sessions. There had been so many items on the agenda of the Commission's seventh session and such a vast volume of documents to assimilate in so short a time that it had proved necessary to defer consideration of certain items until the eighth session, while others had received but scanty consideration.

Regarding certain of the draft resolutions proposed by the Commission, he observed that, in common with many United Nations bodies, the Commission appeared to believe that to adopt a resolution was equivalent to action. Moreover, some resolutions were repetitive. The result desired might be much more effectively secured by a single resolution stating a principle clearly than by a series of resolutions on the same subject adopted in successive years. Draft resolution G (equal pay for equal work) was an example. While accepting the principle of equal pay, his Government therefore questioned the wisdom of the Council's adopting, in the shape of draft resolution G, yet another resolution on the subject.

Draft resolution H (educational opportunities for women) was obscure, and he welcomed the joint amendment<sup>(1)</sup> as a necessary clarification. He took the expression "basic school curricula" to mean those courses of study designed to provide a general educational background which were normally taken by boys whatever their field of specialization.

Draft resolution J (technical assistance programmes in relation to the status of women) confused two issues, the role of women in formulating requests for technical assistance, and that of technical assistance in improving the status of women. The United Kingdom Government took the view that it was not for subsidiary organs of the Council to put forward proposals suggesting special treatment for technical assistance programmes in their own special field; consequently, it felt that the resolution was ill-advised, though it would not on that account oppose it. The best way of ensuring that the technical assistance given to governments catered for women's interests was to see that the governments concerned paid due attention to those interests when formulating their requests for technical assistance.

Operative paragraphs 2 and 3 of the resolution contained in paragraph 92 of the report seemed to suggest that there had been discrimination against women in respect of appointments to the Secretariats of the United Nations and the specialized agencies. He would ask the Secretariat to prepare a statement on the subject.

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(1) See summary record of the 241st meeting (E/AC.7/SR.241), page 15.



Two of the draft resolutions submitted for the Council's consideration called for no action at that stage. The nationality of married persons, dealt with in draft resolution B, was to be considered by the Council at its seventeenth session, when it would have before it the International Law Commission's report on that exceedingly complex subject. On the subject of draft resolution C (status of women in private law), the Commission on Human Rights had made a recommendation, which had been dealt with under item 13 of the Council's agenda (report of the Commission on Human Rights (ninth session)).

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.