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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Ninth Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-EIGHTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,  
on Thursday, 17 March 1955, at 11.00 a.m.

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Territories (E/CN.6/255; E/CN.6/260 and Add.1 and Corr.1 and Add.2)

(continued)

PRESENT:

|  |                          |  |
|--|--------------------------|--|
| <u>Chairman:</u>   | Miss BERNARDINO          | Dominican Republic   |
| <u>Rapporteur:</u>                                       | Mrs. RÖSSEL              | Sweden   |
| <u>Members:</u>  | Miss CHAMORRO ALAMAN     | Argentina  |
|  | Mrs. DALY                | Australia  |
|  | Mrs. NOVIKOVA            | Byelorussian Soviet<br>Socialist Republic                              |
|  | Miss TSENG               | China  |
|  | Miss MAÑAS               | Cuba   |
|  | Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX          | France   |
|  | Mrs. GUERY               | Haiti  |
|  | Miss ROESAD              | Indonesia  |
|  | Mrs. TABET               | Lebanon  |
|  | Begum ANWAR AHMED        | Pakistan   |
|  | Mrs. DEMBINSKA           | Poland   |
|  | Mrs. FOMINA              | Union of Soviet Socialist<br>Republics                                 |
|  | Mrs. SAYERS              | United Kingdom of Great<br>Britain and Northern Ireland                |
|  | Mrs. HAHN                | United States of America   |
|  | Mrs. SANCHEZ de URDANETA | Venezuela  |
|  | Mrs. MITROVIC )          | Yugoslavia   |
|  | Mr. BOZOVIC )            |  |
| <u>Also present:</u>                                     | Mrs. LOPEZ               | Colombia   |
|  | Miss Fujita              | Japan  |
|  | Mrs. de TEJEIRA          | Panama   |
| <u>Representatives of specialized agencies:</u>          |                          |  |
|  | Mrs. FIGUEROA            | International Labour<br>Organisation                                   |
|  | Miss SALAS               | United Nations Educational,<br>Scientific and Cultural<br>Organization |
| <u>Observer from an inter-governmental organization:</u> |                          |  |
|  | Mrs. LEYES de CHAVES     | Inter-American Commission<br>of Women                                  |

PRESENT: (continued)Representatives of non-governmental organizations:

|                    |                |  |
|--------------------|----------------|--|
| <u>Category A:</u> | Miss SENDER    | International Confederation of Free Trade Unions |
|                    | Mr. THORMANN   | World Federation of Christian Trade Unions       |
|                    | Miss KAHN      | World Federation of Trade Unions                 |
|                    | Mrs. FOX       | World Federation of United Nations Associations  |
|                    | Mrs. MURI-EREN |  |

Category B and Register:

|                     |                       |   |
|---------------------|-----------------------|---|
|                     | Mrs. MUNK             | Agudas Israel World Organization  |
|                     | Mrs. CARTER           | International Council of Women  |
|                     | Mrs. FREEMAN          |   |
|                     | Mrs. HYMER            | International Federation of Business and Professional Women                                     |
|                     | Miss MacLEAN          |   |
|                     | Miss MEINANDER        |   |
|                     | Miss POLLITZ          |   |
|                     | Mrs. LAGEMANN         | International Federation of Friends of Young Women  |
|                     | Miss RUIZ             | International Federation of Women Lawyers   |
|                     | Miss SMITH            |   |
|                     | Mrs. WOLLE-EGENOLF    | International League for the Rights of Man  |
|                     | Mrs. ROBERTS          | Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations; Associated Country Women of the World |
|                     | Mrs. WALSER           | Women's International League for Peace and Freedom  |
|                     | Miss JOLLY            | Society of Comparative Legislation  |
|                     | Mrs. RICHMAN          | World Jewish Congress   |
|                     | Mrs. ANDERSON         | World's Young Women's Christian Association   |
|                     | Miss FORSYTH          |   |
| <u>Secretariat:</u> | Mr. HUMPHREY          | Director, Division of Human Rights  |
|                     | Mr. SCHACHTER         | Director, General Legal Division  |
|                     | Mrs. TENISON-WOODS    | Chief of the Status of Women Section  |
|                     | Mrs. GRINBERG-VINAVER | Secretary of the Commission   |

POLITICAL RIGHTS OF WOMEN: (a) ANNUAL REPORT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON POLITICAL RIGHTS OF WOMEN (A/2692; E/CN.6/L.155, E/CN.6/L.156); (b) REPORT ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN TRUST AND NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES (E/CN.6/255; E/CN.6/260 and Add.1 and Corr.1 and Add.2)(continued)

Mrs. RUSSEL (Sweden), presenting draft resolution E/CN.6/L.155, stressed the importance of close co-operation between the Commission and the non-governmental organizations.

Begum ANWAR AHMED (Pakistan) said that Pakistan was happy to join Australia and Sweden in co-sponsoring draft resolution E/CN.6/L.155, which was directly connected with the resolution urging non-governmental organizations to continue to further the development of education for women in the field of citizenship, adopted at the eighth session. It would be of value to the Commission to receive information on the action taken by non-governmental organizations in that field.

Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX (France) proposed the addition of the words "including access to public office" at the end of the first paragraph of the preamble. It would be most useful if the non-governmental organizations could supply information on regulations and other obstacles which prevented women from holding public office.

Mrs. DEMBINSKA (Poland) proposed that the first operative paragraph of draft resolution E/CN.6/L.155 should be amended to read "Invites the Secretary-General to obtain from non-governmental organizations, whether or not in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, ...".

Mrs. RÖSSEL (Sweden) supported the French amendment.

The Polish amendment, on the other hand, raised a difficult point which had been discussed by the General Assembly at its ninth session. The Secretary-General might find some difficulty in selecting the non-governmental

(Mrs. Rössel, Sweden)

organizations from which information was to be requested if those not in consultative status were to be included. She felt that the representative of the Secretary-General should be asked to clarify the position.

Mrs. TABET (Lebanon) wished to correct an error in the information concerning her country given in the Secretary-General's memorandum (A/2692). The footnote relating to Lebanon as listed in Table VI of that document (page 41) indicated that women's suffrage was subject to educational qualifications not applicable to men. That was not true, as would be seen from article 21 of the Lebanese Elections Act (A/2692, page 21): there was no special restriction on Lebanese women's right to vote.

Mrs. MITROVIC (Yugoslavia) supported the draft resolution as a whole but suggested adding the words "including the Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories," after the words "in countries" in the fifth line of the first operative paragraph. The Commission should obtain more specific data on the status of women in those Territories than were at present available.

Mrs. FOMINA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), referring to the Polish amendment, asked what procedure was followed by the Secretariat for consultation with non-governmental organizations.

Mrs. GRINBERG-VINAVER (Secretariat) read out rule 75 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council.

Mrs. NOVIKOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) supported the Polish and Yugoslav amendments, which would enable the Commission to obtain more information. The Commission should not adopt an over-formalistic approach which would prevent it from trying new solutions.

Mrs. DALY (Australia) accepted the French amendment. It clarified an important point on which information should be requested from the non-governmental organizations. She could not accept the Yugoslav amendment

(Mrs. Daly, Australia)

which introduced an element of discrimination into a general recommendation. She asked the Yugoslav representative to withdraw that amendment.

Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX (France) suggested that in view of the complexity and importance of the two resolutions and the amendments before the Commission, it might be wiser to refer the texts to the Resolutions Committee for consideration.

Mrs. SANCHEZ de URDANETA (Venezuela) thought that the draft resolutions should not be referred to the Resolutions Committee until the legal implications of the Polish amendment had been clarified.

Mrs. DEMBINSKA (Poland) supported the Yugoslav amendment which was a useful addition to the text of the joint draft resolution (E/CN.6/L.155). It would emphasize the importance the Commission attached to the work of women's organizations in the Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories and ensure that the Commission received the fullest possible information on the political rights of women in all parts of the world.

Mrs. FOMINA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) endorsed the Polish and Yugoslav amendments. They would help the Commission to obtain a complete picture of the methods and techniques used to promote political rights for women throughout the world.

Mrs. SAYRES (United Kingdom) said that while she considered the French amendment was implicit in the text and therefore unnecessary she would not object to it. She reserved comment on the Polish amendment until the views of the representative of the Secretary-General had been heard. By way of a preliminary observation, however, she said that the text would appear to cut across the constitutional arrangements of the United Nations for consultation while at the same time placing an impossible task upon the Secretariat.

(Mrs. Sayres, United Kingdom)

She fully supported the Australian representative's comments on the Yugoslav amendment. It was discriminatory because it called attention unnecessarily to the Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories while making no reference to conditions in certain sovereign States. She wondered whether the Yugoslav delegation would be prepared to insert a reference to sovereign States in the text.

Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX (France) agreed with the United Kingdom representative. The women in many Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories were in a much better position than the women of many sovereign States. The Secretary-General's memorandum (A/2692) showed that in some States the citizens had no voting rights whatsoever while in other countries only male citizens had the right to vote, and women were not even considered to be citizens. Some Governments reported their intention of granting women political rights but said that new legislation or constitutional provisions were still in draft form. In a number of countries women were compelled to satisfy more requirements than men in order to be able to vote. In others voting was compulsory for men but not for women. The replies of the Governments of India and Pakistan were especially interesting: they indicated conditions which were theoretically satisfactory, but added, conscientiously and realistically, that all voters, men and women, were required to be duly entered in the electoral rolls, a practical problem of some difficulty. In many sovereign States where the principles of the Charter and of the Declaration of Human Rights were respected it was still impossible in practice to achieve the ideal of universal suffrage. For those reasons she thought it was wrong to single out the Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories for attention in a resolution dealing with political rights of all women.

Mrs. NOVIKOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) could not agree that the Yugoslav amendment was discriminatory. On the contrary it showed the Commission's interest in obtaining information on the political rights of women in all parts of the world. There was documentary evidence that the situation in the Trust Territories was unsatisfactory and that women in particular were

(Mrs. Novikova, Byelorussian SSR)

subject to discrimination in many fields. While it was true that conditions were also unsatisfactory in certain sovereign States that was no justification for rejecting the Yugoslav amendment.

Her delegation would support the Polish amendment.

Mrs. MITROVIC (Yugoslavia) pointed out that the inhabitants of the Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories were entitled under the Charter to freedom and independence but it was apparent from the Secretary-General's report (E/CN.6/255) and from the reports of the Trusteeship Council that the Administering Authorities did not invariably discharge their duties satisfactorily. It was therefore essential to mention the situation of women in those areas.

Miss ROESAD (Indonesia) thought that some of the objections to the Yugoslav amendment were based on the erroneous assumption that the text was designed to lay special emphasis on conditions in the Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories. The purpose of the amendment was in fact to place the Commission in a better position to appraise the situation with regard to the political rights of women in all countries. As the Administering Authorities were under an obligation to provide the Trusteeship Council with information on the political, economic, social and educational advancement of the peoples of the Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories she saw no reason why the Commission should hesitate to call for information about those areas.

Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX (France) said that the reports submitted to the Trusteeship Council showed that in Togoland under French administration the number of voters had increased from 152,000 to 210,000 in one year while in the Cameroons under French administration their number had increased from 600,000 to 900,000. The exact number of women voters was unknown, for like women voters in the metropolitan countries, the women of the Trust Territories did not wish to be treated as a separate electoral group with separate electoral rolls or ballots. Observers reported that one-third of the voters at present were women.



(Mrs. Lefauchaux, France)

The welfare of women everywhere was of course of interest to the Commission. That being so, she wondered whether the Commission could not agree to use a general phrase such as "including the under-developed regions of the world" in place of the Yugoslav amendment.

Begum ANWAR AHMED (Pakistan) wished to make it clear that the women of Pakistan enjoyed equal political rights with men. In fact, special seats had been reserved in the legislature for women candidates, and only women voters could participate in the elections for those seats. As women were also eligible to compete for any other seat in the legislature, they enjoyed in practice a double vote.

As regards the difficulties of preparing electoral rolls, to which the French representative had alluded, the Pakistan delegation failed to see how suffrage was possible without the registration of the electorate.

Mrs. FOMINA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) thought that the Yugoslav amendment clarified the Commission's position. The wording was familiar in United Nations resolutions and should not be abandoned for a more general formula. The representatives of France, the United Kingdom and Australia were attempting to divert the Commission's attention from conditions in the Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories. Although there was a separate sub-item on the Commission's agenda concerning the status of women in Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories, the two draft resolutions on the political rights of women which were now before the Commission (E/CN.6/L.155 and E/CN.6/L.156) made no reference to the women of those areas. The Yugoslav amendment would correct that deficiency.

Miss ROESAD (Indonesia) thought that the factual information given by the French representative showed how essential it was that the Commission should receive the type of information which would be elicited by the Yugoslav amendment. Moreover, the programme of future work adopted by the Commission at its eighth session specifically gave high priority to the status of women in both the Trust and the Non-Self-Governing Territories. For that reason she preferred the Yugoslav amendment to the French suggestion.

Mrs. RÖSSEL (Sweden) said that her country had always been concerned with the status of women in the Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories and did not object to the Yugoslav amendment in principle. She thought, however, that the text of the draft resolution was inclusive and that the proposed amendment would be redundant. It would, however, be useful to have the views of the Resolutions Committee on the point. The Commission might also consider using the words "in areas" instead of "in countries". She drew the attention of some members who seemed to have misunderstood the intention contained in the draft resolution to the fact that it did not call for information on the status of women, but rather on methods and techniques of promoting and safeguarding women's rights.

Mrs. MITROVIC (Yugoslavia) supported the French proposal that the draft resolution and the proposed amendments should be referred to the Resolutions Committee for further study.

Mr. SCHACHTER (Director, General Legal Division) suggested that the Polish amendment involved both practical and legal problems. The practical problem for the Secretary-General would be to determine which were the non-governmental organizations he was requested to approach. In the past, when resolutions of United Nations bodies had made a general reference to non-governmental organizations, without specifying whether or not they enjoyed consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, it had been the practice of the Secretariat to limit its communications to organizations which did have that status.

With respect to the legal problems, he referred to the debate in the Third Committee during the ninth session of the General Assembly in connexion with the draft covenant on human rights. Objection had been made by some representatives on legal grounds to a proposal calling for the views of all interested non-governmental organizations. It was their view that such direct consultation might contravene Article 71 of the Charter, governing arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations in the economic and social fields. That particular legal point had not been decided, but the proposal which had evoked that objection had not been adopted.

(Mr. Schachter, Director,  
General Legal Division)

Moreover, even though it might be conceded that the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council itself might provide for consultation in specific cases with organizations which did not have consultative status, it was open to question whether the Commission as a subsidiary organ of the Council could enter into arrangements for consultation not provided for by the Council.

The problem might be made more difficult if the action of the Commission could be considered to be at variance with particular decisions of the Council in regard to the organizations to be consulted.

He did not wish, nor was he authorized, to decide those legal problems; he merely desired, in response to the question, to draw the Commission's attention to the legal aspects of the Polish proposal.

Mrs. NOVIKOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) suggested that organizations not in consultative status might transmit the information desired by the Commission through accredited NGOs. They could be informed of the Commission's decision through the organizations enjoying consultative status or even through the press. There would not therefore appear to be either practical or legal obstacles to the adoption of the Polish amendment.

Mrs. DEMBINSKA (Poland) considered that, in view of the rapid growth of women's organizations and the extension of their activities, it would be unwise to deprive the Commission of the benefit of all their views. In order to obtain a more comprehensive idea of public opinion, the Commission surely had a right to appeal to other organizations besides those on the Council's list.

Mrs. DALY (Australia) thanked the Director of the General Legal Division for clarifying the situation.

As a co-sponsor of the proposal under discussion, she could not accept the Polish amendment. The Economic and Social Council had made comprehensive consultative arrangements under Article 71 of the Charter. It had adopted a

(Mrs. Daly, Australia)

resolution (288 (IX) B) defining the principles governing the establishment of those arrangements and the form that they should take. Moreover, the Council NGO Committee dealt exclusively with consultative arrangements, and rules 82 to 86 of the Council's rules of procedure defined its functions. At its eighteenth session, the Council had approved recommendations presented by the Bureau of the Conference of NGOs for improving existing methods of consultation.

It would be unwise and unconstitutional to disrupt the normal arrangements for consultation with NGOs, as well as a discourtesy to those NGOs which enjoyed consultative status.

Mrs. FOMINA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the question of extending consultation to NGOs other than those in consultative status had not been settled. Consequently, no United Nations decision precluded such consultation. It should be done with a view to obtaining maximum information. Indeed, the Polish addition should be made a general rule for the Commission.

Miss ROESAD (Indonesia) could not support the Polish amendment owing to the practical difficulties it involved.

Begum ANWAR AHMED (Pakistan) considered that the question of consultation with NGOs was a separate issue which would arise in connexion with the Commission's work in a number of fields. Accordingly, it should be dealt with as a separate agenda item either at the current session or at the tenth session.

Mrs. RÖSSEL (Sweden) felt that while it was certainly not for the Commission to discuss consultation with NGOs other than those in consultative status with the Council, the problem did warrant clarification by a competent United Nations organ, perhaps the Council, or the General Assembly's Legal Committee. However, until it had been settled, she could not accept the Polish amendment because of the practical difficulties it involved. If the amendment was pressed, she would ask for a separate vote on it.

The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Swedish-Australian draft resolution (E/CN.6/L.155) should be referred to the Resolutions Committee.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.