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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Ninth Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE HUNDRED AND NINETY-THIRD MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 25 March 1955, at 11.15 a.m.

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PRESENT:

<u>Chairman:</u>	Miss BERNARDINO	Dominican Republic
<u>Rapporteur:</u>	Mrs. RÖSSEL	Sweden
<u>Members:</u>	Miss CHAMORRO-ALAMAN	Argentina
	Mrs. DALY	Australia
	Miss TSENG	China
	Miss MAÑAS	Cuba
	Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX	France
	Mrs. GUERY	Haiti
	Miss ROESAD	Indonesia
	Mrs. TABET	Lebanon
	The Begum ANWAR AHMED	Pakistan
	Mrs. DEMBINSKA	Poland
	Mrs. FOMINA	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
	Mrs. SAYERS	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
	Mrs. HAHN	United States of America
	Mrs. SANCHEZ de URDANETA	Venezuela
	Mrs. MITROVIC	Yugoslavia
<u>Also present:</u>	Mrs. LOPEZ	Colombia
	Mrs. de TEJEIRO	Panama

Representatives of specialized agencies:

Mrs. FIGUEROA	International Labour Organisation
Miss SALAS	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Representative of an inter-governmental organization:

Mrs. de CALVO	Inter-American Commission of Women
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Representatives of non-governmental organizations:Category A:

Miss SENDER	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
Mr. THORMANN	International Federation of Christian Trade Unions
Miss KAHN	World Federation of Trade Unions
Mrs. FOX	World Federation of United Nations Associations

Representatives of non-governmental organizations (continued)

Category B and Register:

Miss GUTHRIE)	
Miss STRAUSS)	International Alliance of Women
Mrs. CARTER	International Council of Women
Mrs. HYMER)	
Miss McLEAN)	International Federation of Business
Mrs. MEINANDER)	and Professional Women
Miss POLLITZ)	
Miss LAGEMAN	International Federation of Friends of Young Women
Miss ROBB	International Federation of University Women
Miss LALONDE	International Federation of Women Lawyers
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. MADDEN	Pax Romana
Miss GAINES	World Assembly of Youth
Mrs. RICHMAN	World Jewish Congress
Mrs. ANDERSON)	
Miss FORSYTH)	World's Young Women's Christian Association

Secretariat:

Mrs. TENISON-WOODS	Chief of the Status of Women Section
Mrs. GRINBERG-VINAVER	Secretary of the Commission

NATIONALITY OF MARRIED WOMEN: (a) REPORT ON COMMENTS FROM GOVERNMENTS ON THE DRAFT CONVENTION ON THE NATIONALITY OF MARRIED WOMEN (E/CN.6/259 and Add.1 to 3; E/CN.6/L.153 and Corr.1, E/CN.6/L.163, E/CN.6/L.164, E/CN.6/L.165, E/CN.6/L.169, E/CN.6/L.170); (b) REPORT ON CHANGES IN LEGISLATION CONCERNING THE NATIONALITY OF MARRIED WOMEN

The CHAIRMAN informed the Commission that the USSR representative had asked for a postponement of the vote on the Cuban resolution (E/CN.6/L.153 and Corr.1), so that she might have time to study the Russian text of the document and the amendments to it. She therefore proposed that the vote should be postponed until the afternoon of Monday, 23 March.

It was so decided.

Miss MAÑAS (Cuba) commented on the amendments proposed by the representatives of the United Kingdom, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Byelorussian SSR to the Cuban draft convention.

The United Kingdom representative had rightly pointed out that the expression "contracting parties" was used in the preamble, while the term "contracting States" was used in the articles. The terminology would be brought into line when the final text was drafted. With regard to the difference between the words "nationals" and "aliens" in the English text of article 1 and the words "unos de sus nacionales y una extranjera" in the Spanish text, she recalled her statement at the 189th meeting, to the effect that those words would be replaced by the phrase nacionales y extranjeros. The Cuban delegation would regret the deletion of the word "voluntary" in article 2, as that was a principle on which it had long insisted. The words "will effect" in that article would be replaced by an expression corresponding to the Spanish text.

As the vote had been postponed until Monday, she would not refer for the time being to the USSR amendments (E/CN.6/L.169); nevertheless, she pointed out that they related to a clause which was usually inserted in international instruments and which might be studied by a higher organ.

With regard to the Byelorussian amendment (E/CN.6/L.170), she proposed, as a compromise solution, that the Commission should adopt a text similar to that of article IV of the Convention on the Political Rights of Women.

Mrs. NOVIKOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that that seemed a much better solution, but that she wished to consider it first.

Mrs. HAHN (United States of America) explained that her delegation had submitted some amendments (E/CN.6/L.165) to the Cuban draft, in order that the Convention should fully reflect the principle of equality between men and women with regard to nationality. In its existing form, the Cuban draft was not as liberal as United States legislation, which not only allowed women to retain their nationality on marriage, but facilitated the naturalization of any person, whether man or woman, whose spouse was a citizen of the United States, and recognized the right of a mother to transmit her nationality to her children on the same terms as the father.

Although in some countries women did not yet enjoy equal rights with men with regard to nationality, progress was constantly being reported. The Commission would be wrong to set itself unduly low standards, even if that enabled a larger number of countries to sign the Convention. By adopting the principle of equality, it would stimulate Governments to put it into practice.

Miss MAÑAS (Cuba) stated, in reply to one of the United States representative's arguments, that in her country too the husband of a female national might acquire Cuban nationality under the same conditions as the wife of a male national.

Mrs. DALY (Australia), referring to article 4 of the draft convention, said that, although the amended wording proposed at the previous meeting by the Cuban delegation was acceptable, it might be better to adopt a text similar to that of article 7 of the draft convention on the recognition and enforcement of foreign arbitral awards, recently adopted by the Committee on the Enforcement of International Arbitral Awards, which could be found in the annex to document E/AC.42/4.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN: (a) PROGRESS REPORT ON ACCESS OF WOMEN TO EDUCATION (E/CN.6/266; E/CN.6/L.171); (b) REPORT ON ACCESS OF WOMEN TO APPRENTICESHIP (E/CN.6/264); (c) REPORT ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN TRUST AND NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES (E/CN.6/260 and Add.1 and 2, E/CN.6/255)

Miss MAÑAS (Cuba) pointed out that her delegation had frequently stressed that the Cuban Constitution prohibited any discrimination on the basis of sex, religion or race, in any sphere whatsoever; only recently, the Cuban Government had adopted legislation establishing penalties in cases of discrimination.

The Government, which had long since concerned itself with eliminating illiteracy, had set up schools in the most remote parts of the country and had organized mobile units to disseminate culture in all its forms. It had also introduced school meals, thus assuring better study conditions for the pupils. Higher educational establishments were attended by as many women as men. Professorial posts were obtained on a competitive basis; a woman held a chair at the University of Havana, which had recently decided to establish a museum for paintings and a faculty for instruction in the fine arts.

Mrs. RÖSSEL (Sweden) said that the remarks she wished to make on educational opportunities for women fell within the scope of the question of economic opportunities for women and that she would therefore deal with the subject under that heading.

She had no objection to the Pakistan amendment, but pointed out that it related to technical assistance. A resolution on equal pay for equal work adopted by the Commission already dealt with that question and another similar draft resolution would probably be submitted in connexion with economic opportunities for women. She thought the Commission might exhaust in advance the questions listed under item 9 of its agenda.

Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX (France) said that the Commission would do well to confine itself to a consideration of the access of women to secondary education, and that she would make a few comments on that subject.

(Mrs. Lefaucheux, France)

Fifty per cent of the pupils attending secondary schools in France were girls. Their education, like that of the boys, was free. The curriculum and examinations were the same for boys and girls and the girls' teachers, men and women, had the same qualifications and, like all other officials, received the same salaries. The Minister of National Education appointed a woman as well as a man director in co-educational institutions.

The situation was not as good in the overseas territories. Nevertheless, progress was so rapid that the documents before the Commission were already out of date. Moreover, the statistical data furnished by the French Government for the Non-Self-Governing or Trust Territories under French Administration applied only to school children doing complete courses of study. As shown in the UNESCO report, the number of girls attending secondary schools had increased most between 1930 and 1953 in French West Africa, and the proportion of girls had tripled. She agreed however with what the Polish representative had said at the 192nd meeting about the difficulty of interpreting the figures in documents. To have a clear picture of the situation, the size of the population, the proportion of children attending school and the percentage of girls in the total school enrolment should all be known.

There was no discrimination in the schools of the Territories under French Administration. The programmes were similar to those in the metropolitan country and education was free. That year, the pupils of the Yaoundé secondary school had distinguished themselves in the competition between all the lycées. It was worth noting that two thirds of those who had passed their baccalaureat examination were girls.

Turning to the question of the vernacular, she pointed out that none of the Africans she knew favoured instruction in the vernacular. They felt that it would be better for the children to learn the language in which they could go on to secondary and higher studies, and that they should do so while they had the adaptability of the young. Very often there was no written vernacular.

(Mrs. Lefaucheux, France)

One interesting measure was to authorize the pupil to choose his original tongue as "first language" for the baccalaureat, as in the case of Arabic, the language of a great civilization, and of Malagasy. She personally thought that the measure could be extended to cover other languages.

The problem of the scattered school population, of which the Australian representative had spoken, often arose in the French Overseas Territories. France, too, resorted to correspondence courses which had yielded good results. She would point out to her Government the possibilities of using wireless broadcasts for schools.

Mrs. SAYERS (United Kingdom) said that the United Kingdom Education Act of 1944 stipulated that all parents, under penalty of prosecution, must see to it that their children received an education between the ages of 5 and 15. Education was free. Moreover, the schools served very cheap meals, transportation was free of charge and, where necessary, the authorities granted a maintenance allowance.

The programmes were not uniform, as the education authorities of each county, and not the Ministry of Education, were responsible for them. The only differences that still existed in the education of boys and girls were due to social custom and were therefore outside Government control.

It should be stated, however, that more boys than girls pursued higher studies, for two reasons: the girls married younger and could find employment which was fairly well paid from the start and required no special training.

As regards the role of women in education, in England and Wales there were 1,120 women teachers in primary boys' schools, and only 120 men teachers in primary girls' schools. School inspectors were both men and women and held equal status. Two women had held the post of Minister of Education, and the present Vice-Chancellor of the University of London was a woman.

(Mrs. Sayers, United Kingdom)

Where technical careers were concerned, one of the major British trade unions, the Amalgamated Engineering Union, noting the lack of specialists and technicians, had decided to call upon women and was planning to provide for training for girls in training schools.

The United Kingdom delegation would vote for the Pakistan draft (E/CN.6/L.171) if the Pakistan representative agreed to change the word "special" in the last but one paragraph to "due". The United Kingdom Government felt that no pressure should be brought to bear on the institutions administering technical assistance funds - which were generally inadequate - and that it was for the Governments requesting assistance to prove that the projects they wished to undertake were important.

The CHAIRMAN, speaking as the representative of the Dominican Republic, thanked UNESCO for its report giving the latest information on the Dominican Republic.

There was no discrimination on grounds of sex in the field of education in the Dominican Republic. Education was free and compulsory for all children between the ages of 7 and 14 years. University education was not free, but the registration fees were not high enough - 75 dollars a year - to constitute a real obstacle. While women were still in the minority at the university, an increasing number of them was going into the liberal professions where they now numbered over 700. The majority of the teachers were women. Since 1942 women had held different chairs at universities. Her sister had been the first woman to hold a chair for medicine and after her death in 1945, she (the Chairman) had founded a university scholarship in memory of her sister, Dr. Bernardino, to be granted every year to the best second-year medical student, man or woman.

(The Chairman)

The Dominican Republic was very advanced in the field of education and it used the latest methods. There was a total of 5,727 educational institutions, including primary, secondary and vocational schools and higher educational institutions, which spoke highly for a country with only about 2 million inhabitants. That figure did not include a total of 4,345 literacy centres which should succeed in completely eradicating illiteracy within the next five years.

Her country was aware of the fact that much remained to be done in spite of the progress achieved during the past years, and it assigned a very considerable part of its budget to education.

Mrs. MITROVIC (Yugoslavia) said that the UNESCO report on secondary education for girls (E/CN.6/266) clearly showed that the opportunities for girls were far from being equal to those offered to boys. It appeared from table I (pages 10 to 16) that in many countries in Asia and Africa in particular, the proportion of girls in secondary education was below 20, or even 10 per cent.

She had one objection to make to the UNESCO statistics; by not giving some figures such as those of the total population, they failed to give a clear idea of the situation.

The UNESCO report mentioned inadequate school premises as one of the factors limiting the access of girls to secondary education. Yugoslavia where the proportion of girls receiving secondary education was 43 per cent, knew from its own experience the importance of school buildings in extending secondary education.

UNESCO's report showed that the Commission had no cause to worry about the differences in curricula. In most countries the curriculum was the same for girls as for boys and any difference related to optional subjects only. There were no differences in Yugoslavia, but the Government, which felt that the present curricula did not meet the needs of modern youth, that secondary education lacked flexibility and did not place sufficient emphasis on practical activities, was studying a revised curriculum. She hoped that young women would, as a result, be better prepared to enter a trade or profession or to play their part as wives and mothers of the future.

(Mrs. Mitrovic, Yugoslavia)

She had the impression that some of the conclusions reached in the report were somewhat hasty generalizations. For instance, it was stated on page 48, paragraph 5, that secondary school teaching was still a career in which men predominated. That was certainly not true of the greater part of Europe, and in Yugoslavia, for example, women were in the majority in the teaching profession. On the other hand, she fully supported UNESCO's conclusions as regards the lack of schools and the few opportunities for young women.

In her opinion, the Commission might, at its next session, recommend the adoption of practical measures after taking note of the report which UNESCO was to prepare on higher education. It was for that reason, although it had no objection in principle to the Pakistan draft resolution (E/CN.6/L.171), that the Yugoslav delegation would prefer the question to be referred to the next session and thought that, in any case, the Commission should hear the UNESCO representative on the question of technical assistance before taking a decision on the draft.

Mrs. NOVIKOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) felt that boys and girls should have equal access to all stages of education in order that there might be complete equality between men and women. Young men and women should then be able to obtain, on a footing of equality, employment corresponding to the education they had received. They should receive the same salaries and women should have access to higher posts in the same way as men whether at the local, national or federal level. Equality was of fundamental importance in education, as it determined equality in all other fields. It was because that basis was non-existent in a large number of countries that women did not enjoy equal political and economic rights. Such factors were inextricably linked and contributed to women's place in society.

In view of the prejudice against women in many countries, young women were not encouraged to be an expense to their families or to spend time and trouble on higher education, because such young women knew that, even if they proved to be more brilliant than young men, the latter would be given preference so far as employment was concerned, and that from the professional standpoint young women

(Mrs. Novikova, Byelorussian SSR)

would not have the same advantages as young men. According to the statement of the representative of Haiti that was the case in her country where, for example, women teachers received a lower salary than men teachers. Moreover, as the UNESCO report showed, the same situation existed in a large number of other countries.

She wished to offer some criticisms of the UNESCO report. In her opinion, the document contained information that was too general and often referred to a continent when it would have been much more interesting to have analytical data on each country and comparative tables. The report should have given, for each country, the total number of children of school age, the total number of pupils and the percentage of female pupils. The way in which figures were presented in the report might lead to misunderstandings since they concealed the true situation as regards the education of girls. For example, when the report stated that the number of girls receiving higher education had doubled in such and such a Trust or Non-Self-Governing Territory, it was impossible to discover whether that fact did or did not indicate appreciable progress. Even if the number of female students had been 100 and had risen to 200, such a percentage was nevertheless very low in relation to the total female population of the country.

She wished to refer to the question of the vernacular in the case of the Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories. Children found learning much more difficult if they were not taught in their mother tongue, and that obstacle delayed their enrolment in secondary schools. Fundamental education in Byelorussia was compulsorily given in the mother tongue and foreign languages were a separate subject in the curriculum. The Commission should do all in its power to make teaching in the vernacular compulsory.

She then briefly described the situation in her country so far as education was concerned. In Byelorussia the primary study period, that is to say compulsory education, lasted for seven years in rural areas and ten years in towns. From 1956 onwards the study period would be the same in towns and rural areas.

Steps were being taken to revise secondary education (where the principle of equality between girls and boys had always been applied) so that pupils could already specialize at that stage. The number of secondary schools was constantly growing and 136 new schools had been opened in 1953 and 1954.

(Mrs. Novikova, Byelorussian Soviet
Socialist Republic)

The number of women students attending universities equalled that of men students, and the number of the former destined for the teaching profession outnumbered the latter. Sixty-eight per cent of the teaching profession were women and they were naturally on a basis of equality with men. Women occupied higher teaching posts. She herself was the Director of the Institute of Historical Sciences. Byelorussia was therefore a perfect example of a country where the principle of equality was applied.

Lastly, she wished to emphasize that, contrary to what was generally believed, in Byelorussia the adolescent was free to choose his profession. That was only one of the aspects of freedom which the citizen enjoyed in all fields.

Miss TSENG (China) pointed out that China was not shown in tables I and II of the report (E/CN.6/226) and was not mentioned in the conclusions of that report.

There was no discrimination in China against women so far as education was concerned. Out of 120,800 students 52,000 were women, which was equivalent to 43 per cent.

The situation as regards primary education was satisfactory, but secondary education left much to be desired. Only 10 per cent of primary school pupils entered secondary schools. That low percentage was explained by the lack of schools. Prejudice, custom, the attitude of the family, early marriage and the fact that young women often went out to work immediately they had completed their primary education were all obstacles to the access of women to secondary education. Further, as women found it very difficult to obtain higher posts, they were not encouraged to avail themselves of secondary education.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.