

UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC  
AND  
SOCIAL COUNCIL



Distr.  
GENERAL

E/CN.6/258  
7 January 1955

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

DOCUMENTS MASTER  
INDEX UNIT

JAN 11 1955

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN  
Ninth session  
Item 12 of the provisional agenda

COMMUNICATIONS CONCERNING THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Memorandum by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to invite the Commission on the Status of Women to reconsider the procedure for dealing with communications concerning the status of women which is laid down in resolution 76(V), as amended by resolution 304 I (XI) of the Economic and Social Council.

Under resolution 76(V) as amended, the Secretary-General has been requested:

"(a) To compile and distribute to members of the Commission on the Status of Women, before each session, a non-confidential list containing a brief indication of the substance of each communication, however addressed, which deals with the principles relating to the promotion of women's rights in the political, economic, civil, social and educational fields, and to divulge the identity of the authors of such communications, unless they indicate that they wish their names to remain confidential;

"(b) To compile, before each session of the Commission, a confidential list containing a brief indication of the substance of other communications concerning the status of women, however addressed, and to furnish this list to members of the Commission in private meeting without divulging the identity of the authors of communications, except in cases where the authors state that they have already divulged or intend to divulge their names or that they have no objection to their names being divulged;

"(c) To enable the members of the Commission, upon request, to consult the originals of communications dealing with the principles relating to the promotion of women's rights in political, economic, civil, social and educational fields;

"(d) To inform the writers of all communications concerning the status of women, however addressed, that their communications have been received and duly noted for consideration in accordance with the procedure laid down by the United Nations. Where necessary, the Secretary-General

should indicate that the Commission has no power to take any action in regard to any complaint concerning the status of women;

"(e) In the future, to furnish each Member State concerned with a copy of any communication concerning the status of women which refers explicitly to that State, or to territories under its jurisdiction, without divulging the identity of the author, except as provided for in paragraph (b) above."

The Secretary-General presented a memorandum (E/2598) on the "review of the organization and work of the Secretariat in the economic and social field" to the eighteenth session of the Economic and Social Council. In paragraph 23 of Section IV of the memorandum the Secretary-General expressed the opinion that "it would be desirable for the Council and the General Assembly carefully to review the mandates given to the Secretariat" and, by way of example, he mentioned resolutions 75 (V) and 76 (V), as amended, as "two resolutions of the Council involving a great volume of work which has produced little tangible result". Under these two resolutions "the Secretariat is asked to prepare for the Commission on Human Rights, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities confidential lists containing summaries of the many thousands of communications received each year which allege violations of human rights".

After considering the Secretary-General's memorandum, the Council adopted resolution 557 A (XVIII) by which it "expresses its general approval of the suggestions relating to the priorities and programmes set forth in Sections II, III, IV and V of the Secretary-General's report".

The Commission on the Status of Women is therefore respectfully requested to consider the advisability of making recommendations to the Council with a view to amending resolution 76 (V), as amended, and in doing so, to take into consideration resolution 557 A (XVIII) of the Council and the observation of the Secretary-General on the preparation of confidential lists of communications.

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