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Seventh Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-EIGHTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York
on Thursday, 26 March 1953, at 11.10 a.m.

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Mrs. GALLO-MULLER	Chile
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Miss GUERY	Haiti
Mrs. TABET	Lebanon
Miss PELETIER	Netherlands
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Mrs. WASILKOWSKA	Poland
Mrs. POPOVA	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
Mrs. WARDE	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Mrs. HAHN	United States of America
Mrs. SANCHEZ de URDANETA	Venezuela

Also present:

Miss FUJITA	Japan
Mrs. de CALVO	Inter-American Commission of Women

Representatives of specialized agencies:

Miss FAIRCHILD	International Labour Organisation (ILO)
Mrs. MYRDAL	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Representatives of non-governmental organizations:

Category A: Miss SENDER

Miss SENDER	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)
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	Mrs. ROITBURD	International League for the Rights of Man
	Mrs. EVANS	Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations
	Mrs. McGIVERN	Pax Romana
	Mrs. WALSER	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
	Miss ZIZZAMIA) Mrs. WEBER)	World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations
	Mrs. ANDERSON	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

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN (E/CN.6/210, 211, 214, 215, 221,
and 223)

Mrs. NOVIKOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) noted that the documents prepared by the Secretariats of the United Nations and of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization did not present the problem of educational opportunities for women in its entirety. The problem could not be separated from that of educational opportunities in general, for it must not be forgotten that, when the working masses were deprived of education, the status of women suffered accordingly. In many countries the working masses, exploited by rulers who were more intent on promoting the interests of monopolies than those of the people, lived under the threat of unemployment and poverty and lacked all educational opportunities.

There were also special restrictions affecting women. In some countries higher education was closed to them; in practice, vocational training schools seldom accepted any but male students. According to the documents of the Secretariat and UNESCO, women were very often unable to pursue the studies which would enable them to fill certain posts, for example, in banking and civil engineering, and some of the major technical colleges, those giving instruction in mining, the arts, manufacture and colonial administration, for example, were closed to them.

The situation was even more revolting in the colonies and Non-Self-Governing Territories. In some of them, women, like the great majority of the population, were illiterate. Sometimes there was not even any primary education available. Official figures showed that only one to ten per cent of the children of school age attended school. In many territories there was no higher education. Appropriations for education were reduced each year.

She contrasted that state of affairs with the situation in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics where education and the choice of a career were open to everyone. Schooling was free and compulsory and there were no illiterates among the industrial and agricultural population. The period of study, which at the moment was seven years, was to be increased to ten years at the end of the current five-year plan. The Government awarded scholarships for the universities and technical colleges. Appropriations for education had increased

from 22,000 million rubles in 1940 to 57,300 million in 1951. 23,500 schools had been built since the war and the current number of pupils was 57 million. In 1952 the institutions of higher education had awarded diplomas to more than 22,000 young specialists and had accepted over 375,000 students, half of whom were women and girls.

Soviet women and men were equal. Soviet women had free access to all types of education, including specialized and higher education. Forty-two per cent of the graduates were women. More than two and a half million women had attended scientific institutes in 1952. There were over a million women teachers and 42 per cent of the law graduates were women.

The benefits of education had spread to the most remote regions of former Czarist Russia, which had been particularly backward. Illiteracy had completely disappeared there and women had access, on an equal footing with men, to all forms of education. In the Republic of Kazakhstan, in Central Asia, for example, 42 per cent of the graduates of institutions of higher learning were women.

On the completion of the current five-year plan, the seven-year study period in Byelorussia would be increased to ten years in the towns, if not in the villages. The number of pupils had increased by 393,000 since 1945 and the current number of teachers was 67,000, or 11,000 more than in 1940. There was constant progress in specialized education. More than 310,000 students had graduated from the agricultural colleges since the end of the war. Appropriations for education continued to increase and had amounted to 29 per cent of the total budget in 1940, 34 per cent in 1949 and 38.2 per cent in 1952. The universities and higher technical colleges trained specialists, the need for whom was daily increasing. At the moment those institutions had an average of 25,000 students and more than 13,000 students followed correspondence courses. The students received scholarships from the Government.

The intellectual level of the Soviet peoples was constantly rising, as was indicated, for example, by the growing number of libraries and museums, and no one of good faith could fail to admire the progress of culture and education in the Soviet Union.

She also drew attention to the development of extra-scholastic establishments - kindergartens, children's parks, young workers' and artists' centres - and to the spirit which prevailed in them - love of country, love of the people, fervent attachment to peace and respect for all the other peoples of the world.

She hoped that the Secretariat would be better documented in the future and that the reports on the educational opportunities for women in the various countries would be more complete. She also hoped that the Commission would continue to encourage equality of rights for men and women in education.

Mrs. SANCHEZ de URDANETA (Venezuela) stated that her country's Constitution guaranteed women equal rights with men in education. Primary education was free and compulsory and lasted six years. The Government also supplied free text-books. Girls followed the same curricula as boys and also studied domestic economy and child care. Secondary and higher education was the same for boys as for girls. There were 6,000 schools in Venezuela. The teaching staff numbered approximately 17,700 and marriage was no obstacle to women in that profession. In 1951-52, 142 million bolivars had been appropriated for education out of a total budget of 1,951 million.

Mrs. TABET (Lebanon) pointed out that Lebanon was not mentioned in the reports of the Secretariat and UNESCO because its statistical services were not yet fully developed. She hoped that, with the co-operation of UNESCO, they would be ready in July.

Men and women were completely equal in Lebanon and she was pleased to point out, for example, that the railway and physics laboratories in the American University were under the direction of women. The secondary schools were open to women and men alike. There were many women university graduates in Lebanon

and they had founded a federation which was affiliated to the International Federation of University Women, the headquarters of which was in London.

Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX (France) wished to present some observations on the educational opportunities for women in metropolitan France and the overseas territories.

Primary education in France was compulsory and free for all, without discrimination. Secondary education was not compulsory, but it was free, and the proportion of women who availed themselves of it was satisfactory: in 1950 approximately 45 per cent of the students in public secondary educational establishments and 49 per cent in private secondary educational establishments had been girls. The percentage of girls in institutions of higher learning had at that same period been only 35 per cent but there was every reason for believing that the percentage had increased substantially in the last three years. Women had access, on a footing of equality with men, to teaching posts.

The question of free education, which was of capital importance, had not, she felt, been set forth with sufficient clarity, in the documents submitted to the Commission, which did not enable the reader to form a general picture of the situation in that connexion in the various countries.

In the overseas territories the situation seemed much less favourable if only the absolute figures were considered. It was true that the proportion of women in those territories who received schooling was still very small. Without going into details about all the difficulties which prevented the immediate spreading of education throughout each territory, not the least of which was the dispersal of the population over very wide areas, she pointed out that the main problem was that of recruiting teachers. It would be easily understood, to mention a clearly limited example, that the teachers who followed the nomadic tribes in their peregrinations must have an unusual propensity for teaching.

If, on the other hand, the curve of the increase in the number of children and young people benefiting from educational facilities in the overseas territories was studied rather than the absolute figures, a very encouraging impression

would be gained. The French Government had done substantial work in that connexion and had apportioned very large sums of its budget for the development of education in the territories for which it was responsible. It should be noted that the women had benefited from those efforts, since the indigenous inhabitants were becoming much less reluctant to send their girls to school. That was the result of a publicity campaign which was beginning to bear fruit.

With regard to secondary education, the number of high schools and colleges in the overseas territories was growing rapidly. It was scarcely necessary to mention that secondary education in those territories was free and open to all children irrespective of sex or origin. Contrary to what some representatives had implied, the idea of segregating pupils according to race or origin had never occurred to anyone in metropolitan France or in the overseas territories.

Considerable progress had been achieved in higher education. At Dakar there was a university offering courses identical to those of the metropolitan faculties and awarding the same diplomas; most of the students at that university were indigenous inhabitants. The number of indigenous students who came to complete their studies in France itself was constantly increasing. Lastly, mention must be made of the Koranic schools, which gave special instruction to Moslem children and whose functioning was ensured by the French Government.

In those territories of the French Union, such as the Associated States, in which the French Government was no longer responsible for education, the information available made it clear that great efforts had been made to promote education for women, at the primary and secondary, as well as the basic, educational level. In Cambodia, incidentally, the Minister of Education was a woman.

She wished to make a number of observations concerning Recommendation No. 3¹ adopted by the XVth International Conference on Public Education. While satisfactory in some regards, that recommendation contained a number of terms which in her view were very dangerous. The preamble stated that in principle, women, like men, should have opportunity to fulfil the tasks appropriate to their aptitudes; it might well be asked what the words "in principle" were to be taken to mean, in view of the fact that equality must be established not only in principle but also in practice. Again, the recommendation stated that general education for girls should be equal in value to that for boys; that statement, too, was open to misinterpretation, since it was not clear whether the words "in value" were to be given a qualitative or a quantitative meaning. In any case women were entitled to education not "equal in value" to, but identical with, that for men. Lastly, the recommendation contained the phrase "account being taken of differences in psycho-physiological development..." which lent itself to various interpretations and permitted of the conclusion that it was unnecessary to provide the same educational facilities for girls as for boys. A study of the operative part of the recommendation revealed such expressions as "by all available means" and a reference to "fields particularly suited to feminine aptitudes". Lastly, there was a serious omission from the recommendation: it did not contain a paragraph recommending that women should be given equal opportunities with men for vocational education.

The recommendation revealed a frame of mind which should place the Commission on the Status of Women on its guard. The Commission must ensure that there was no possibility of ambiguous or incomplete texts being used to evade the essential basic principles and it must combat the recommendation by reaffirming that women were entitled to receive the same education as men without any need to introduce qualifications based on psycho-physiological or other factors.

Miss MANAS (Cuba) considered that education for women was a question of vital importance, being the prior condition for the improvement of their economic situation. Her delegation's views were well known and

she would merely recall that at the previous session it had warmly supported a draft resolution proposing that young girls and women should be guaranteed access to all forms of vocational training and apprenticeship. Anxious to avoid any weakening of that principle, the Cuban delegation had also opposed the replacement of the word "guarantee" by the word "ensure" and it greatly regretted that the latter word had been retained.

The Cuban Government had always taken a keen interest in the problem of education. Under the Cuban Constitution, education was compulsory and free to all without distinction and any discrimination in the field of education would be severely punished by law. In rural schools, equipment was provided by the Government and pupils were given a free lunch. The school textbooks were the same for girls and boys and the children were taught to love their country and democratic institutions and encouraged to develop a spirit of solidarity.

Cuban women had access to all technical, commercial, agricultural or art schools and could select the field in which they wished to specialize, with a view to the trade or profession they proposed to practise later. In Cuba there were even women electricians. In the universities, the largest of which was the Central University at Havana, instruction was given free of charge to students who could not afford to pay the fees. For the past fifteen years or so, women, who had previously shown a preference for the arts, seemed to have been turning towards the sciences, for the number of women who were now enrolling in the science faculties had increased.

Teaching posts were awarded on the results of competitive examinations to which women as well as men were freely admitted. The ability of the candidates was the sole deciding factor and it should be noted in that connexion that there was a woman on the staff of the School of Architecture of the University of Havana.

In conclusion, she stated that the Commission must spare no effort to ensure that in all countries women were given equal access with men to all forms of education, not only in theory but also in practice. Her delegation intended to submit a draft resolution jointly with the French delegation.

In reply to two questions by Mrs. GUERY (Haiti), Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX (France) explained that students from the French Overseas Territories who were awarded scholarships to complete their studies in France undertook more or less tacitly to return to work in their country of origin for a certain length of time once their studies were completed; that applied to young African or Malagasy women who specialized in social studies and whose services were especially needed in their country of origin. Generally speaking, however, that rule was not applied very strictly and any student at the grandes Ecoles - such as the Ecole des mines, the Ecole des arts et manufactures or the Ecole des travaux publics - who wished to remain in France could find jobs there. Nevertheless, she did not consider that the country of origin suffered any substantial loss when a student decided to remain in France.

Educational programmes in the French Overseas Territories were, generally speaking, identical for both sexes. In Africa, however, there was a tendency for girls to be given primary instruction in the local language whereas boys were taught in French. That tendency, prompted by the desire to teach girls only domestic science and child care, was very dangerous since it might deny girls access to secondary education.

Mrs. GUERY (Haiti) thanked the French representative for her explanatory statement. There was no doubt that in the case of Haitian students, for example, the young men and women who obtained scholarships abroad found it difficult to resist the temptation of an easier life in a country which offered greater opportunities of obtaining lucrative employment. In general, therefore, the grant of a scholarship abroad should be accompanied by a contract whereby the holder undertook to return to his country of origin on completion of his studies, in order to make his services and experience available to his fellow nationals and was assured well paid employment.

She was also keenly interested in the question of education in the vernacular language. It was obviously quite inadequate to provide education in the local languages, which were not very widespread and through which only a very limited public could be reached. In deciding to declare French the official language of Haiti, the founders of the Republic had clearly appreciated that it was necessary for a people to be able to speak, read and write a language known throughout the world.

In conclusion, she urged that in carrying out its educational programmes UNESCO should employ the services of teachers rather than of persons who had acquired a reputation in the field of literature or the arts; only teachers were able to perform, in the best interests of the peoples concerned, the difficult task of developing education in the under-developed territories.

Begum AHMED (Pakistan) stated that in her country women did not suffer from any inequality of treatment with regard to educational opportunities. More and more special schools for women were being established and it should be noted in particular that a medical school for women had recently been established to remedy the shortage of women doctors. At the same time, women had free access to mixed schools and faculties. It should be noted, incidentally, that the only woman expert in atomic energy questions in Asia was a national of Pakistan.

Miss PELETIER (Netherlands) pointed out that for the first time in history the post of Under-Secretary of State for Education in the Netherlands was held by a woman.

The CHAIRMAN, speaking as the representative of the Dominican Republic, congratulated UNESCO on the excellent report it had submitted to the Commission on its programme with regard to education for women (E/CN.6/223); the report brought out very clearly the progress accomplished as well as what remained to be achieved in the important field of access of women to education.

In the Dominican Republic, primary education was compulsory for children of both sexes and secondary education was accessible to girls in conditions of complete equality with boys. No laws or regulations restricted women's access to higher education; up to the present time, however, Dominican women had not shown great enthusiasm for specialized technical studies; on the other hand, many of them were engaged in the liberal professions and a number of women held university chairs. Generally speaking, the Dominican Republic had made enormous strides since the adoption of its fundamental education programme in 1942: as the result of that programme, within a space of less than eight years more than 500,000 illiterates, out of a total population of 2,200,000 had learned to read and write. The number of persons currently attending school was 250,000, almost half of whom were women and girls. Thousands of rural schools had been established in the most remote regions of the country. No distinction was made between boys and girls in the matter of education.

She associated herself with the Haitian representative's remarks concerning the part which scholarship holders were called upon to play in their countries of origin: it was only right that the knowledge and experience they acquired should be made available to their own community.

In conclusion, she declared that her delegation was prepared to support a resolution whereby the Commission would express strong disapproval of certain paragraphs of Recommendation No. 34 adopted by the XVth International Conference on Public Education, her delegation considered that those paragraphs were prejudicial to the dignity of woman.

Mrs. MYRDAL (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), in reply to various comments on the UNESCO report (E/CN.6/223), observed that the studies made by UNESCO were undertaken only at the request of Member States and within the limits laid down by them. In the statistical presentation, UNESCO based its analyses on information from official sources. It was in response to several requests that the organization had collected information on the situation in the Non-Self-Governing and Trust Territories.

The statistical tables contained in the annex to the report obviously did not give a complete picture of the situation of women's education or survey the various systems of education existing in the world. General information of that kind was contained in special UNESCO publications such as the World Handbook of Educational Organizations and Statistics. In the report under consideration UNESCO had dealt chiefly with discrimination against women in the matter of access to education, in the belief that that was what the Commission wanted. The discussion which had just taken place had shown, however, that the members of the Commission would have liked the purely statistical analysis to be accompanied by an explanatory text; she would inform UNESCO of that fact and felt able to assure the Commission forthwith that its wishes would be carried out. Future reports might include, for instance, brief descriptions of the general educational situation for men and women in the various countries, including statistics on literacy. Such descriptions would indeed give a much more accurate idea of the situation regarding sex equality in education; the percentages given by data concerning only the school age population obviously gave a more favourable picture in view of the increasing number of girls attending school, while literacy figures, including the older generations, would show a situation more unfavourable to women.

*Mrs. de CALVO (Inter-American Commission of Women) said that the Bureau of the Inter-American Commission of Women had made a compilation of constitutional and legal provisions advancing popular education in the American republics. A study of those provisions showed that in all the twenty-one republics women had access to higher education and that the governments were vigorously combating illiteracy. The function of the Inter-American Commission was to investigate the problems of American women and to propose to the governments measures for their solution; at its eighth session it had adopted a resolution which emphasized the fact that to campaign against rural illiteracy and to teach country women sound principles of domestic, family and agricultural economy was also to campaign against the flight from the countryside. In the same resolution, the Inter-American Commission had recommended that governments should organize lectures and develop education with a view to improving the standard of living of rural families, and should pay special attention to rural educational establishments to train women teachers well acquainted with country life.

The Inter-American Commission of Women was at present making preparations for its ninth Assembly; inter alia it was preparing a document on the position with regard to the education of women in the rural areas, who formed so large a proportion of the population of the American republics.

Miss FAIRCHILD (International Labour Organisation) drew the Commission's attention to the progress report drawn up for it by the International Labour Office on vocational guidance and vocational and technical training of women (E/CN.6/221). That short document was merely intended to acquaint the members of the Commission with the ILO's most recent activities in that sphere and was in no sense a substantive report. The members of the Commission would recollect that a full technical report had been submitted at their sixth session (E/CN.6/178). She would mention its chief points in order that the ILO's position in the matter should be quite clear.

In that report the ILO had first pointed out the problem of the vocational and technical training of women should be considered in conjunction with trends in women's employment and the possibility of utilizing woman power, both in economically developed countries and in non-industrialized regions. The ILO had always stressed that women should benefit equally with men from facilities for vocational training; at the same time the regular demands for female labour and the possible opening of new occupations to women should be borne in mind. A meeting of Experts on Women's Work convened by the ILO in December 1951 had carefully examined the question and its conclusions appeared in document E/CN.6/178, pages 39 and 40.

The ILO report also emphasized the importance of vocational training in connexion with equal pay for equal work for men and women and showed how steps to develop the vocational training of women workers and thus to increase their output could have a favourable influence not only on women's salaries and wages but on the general level of salaries and wages.

The ILO also noted that the problems of vocational training were closely connected with the development of general fundamental education. Women should be given the same opportunity for vocational guidance and vocational training as men, and girls should be given a general education which would prepare them to undertake a career, if desired. The ILO report pointed out that the qualitative

and quantitative deficiencies that existed in basic education and in opportunities for training open to girls and women put them at a great disadvantage in the labour market, and women at a great disadvantage in the labour market.

The deep interest taken by the ILO in the general question of vocational guidance and training was shown by the numerous recommendations it had adopted on the subject in 1939 on vocational training (Recommendation No. 57), in 1949 on vocational guidance (Recommendation No. 87) and in 1950 on vocational training for adults (Recommendation No. 88). It had thus been particularly glad to receive through the Economic and Social Council, in 1952, the latest request of the Commission on the Status of Women, i.e. to collect information on the extent to which women and girls were excluded from apprenticeship to certain trades. The Governing Body of the International Labour Organisation had discussed the question at length at its 120th session and had consulted the International Organisations Committee, which consisted of employers' and workers' representatives. Some of the members of that Committee had been of the opinion that the proposed study, to be useful, should go not only into the exclusion of girls and women from apprenticeship to certain trades but also into the whole question of access to apprenticeship for women and girls. The members of the Correspondence Committee on Women's Work, including government experts and representatives of employers and workers and of women's organizations, had also been consulted with regard to the manner in which the question raised by the Economic and Social Council should be tackled. The ILO Governing Body would take up the matter again as soon as it knew what opinions had been expressed in the course of the consultations carried out by the International Labour Office. Miss Fairchild would like to know what the Commission thought of that rather different approach to the problem, so that she could inform the ILO.

She then informed the Commission of the other aspects of the subject with which the ILO was chiefly occupied. In particular it was studying the question of employment in relation to the protection of women workers in Asia, thus continuing the work begun by the Preparatory Asian Regional Conference, which had met at New Delhi in 1947. It was also studying problems of vocational training of women in Asia; the situation there was complicated by the fact that there was no large international women's organization which could take up the matter of women's rights. The regional organization of the ILO was therefore trying to fill that gap by its own action.

At the request of the Asian Regional Conference, the ILO was also studying the question of the vocational training of children and young workers in Asia. It had held a meeting on the subject at Kandy (Ceylon) in December 1952 and the Asian Regional Conference would take the matter up again at its next meeting, at Tokyo, in September 1953. At Kandy the ILO had expressed great interest in the question of vocational training for girls, as shown in the report issued at the conclusion of its work, in which a UNESCO representative had played a very active part.

The Textiles Committee of the ILO had discussed the problems of the employment of women in the textile industry at its fourth session. In particular it had considered the problem of vocational training for women including the possibility of training and promotion of women workers for supervision. There had been general agreement in the Committee that the principle of equality for men and women workers should be put into practice.

In connexion with the United Nations Expanded Technical Assistance Programme, the ILO had set on foot in various countries vocational guidance and training projects. In most cases workers of both sexes could benefit from them. The ILO would however be prepared to give that type of help in solving the specific problems of women's vocational training if governments requested it to do so. It was regrettable that up to the present governments had shown so little interest in that aspect of the question.

In conclusion, she referred once more to the great importance of women's vocational guidance and vocational and technical training, especially in view of the growing proportion of women workers in the world. The figures in the possession of the ILO nevertheless showed that women's work was still largely limited to unskilled or semi-skilled jobs and that in industrially under-developed countries they were mainly occupied in agriculture and handicrafts; the reasons were that the opportunities for vocational training were neither sufficiently good nor sufficiently numerous to correspond to the present size of the women's labour force, and that the nature of the general education given to women was not such as to fit them for a career.

Mrs. QUERY (Haiti) said that she had been deeply interested in the ILO representative's statement, particularly with regard to the work done in Asia in the matter of vocational training. She felt certain that Haiti could derive great advantages from ILO assistance in that field and she reserved the right to revert to that question at the following meeting.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.

10/4 a.m.

+ p.m.