

## COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

## FIRST SESSION

## SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FIRST MEETING

Held at Lake Success, New York, on 10 February 1947, at 11 a.m.

## Present:

Mrs. J. Street	(Australia)
Mrs. E. Uralova	(Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic)
Mrs. W. S. New	(China)
Mrs. B. Bagtrup	(Denmark)
Miss Sara Basterrechea	(Guatemala)
Mrs. N. Popova	(Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)
Miss M. Sutherland	(United Kingdom)
Miss D. Kenyon	(United States of America)

## Representative of Specialized Agency:

Mrs. E. Rowe	(ILO)
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## Consultants of Non-Governmental Organizations:

Miss Sender	(AF of L)
Mrs. Fuhrman	(ICA)
Mr. Stanczyk	(Representative of the Assistant Secretary-General for Social Affairs)
Miss E. Bowerman	(Secretary of the Commission)

Mr. STANCZYK, representative of the Assistant Secretary-General for Social Affairs, welcomed the members of the Commission. He pointed out the Commission's important task of presenting to the Council recommendations and reports on questions relating to women's rights in political, economic, social and educational fields.

While enjoying full equality in the family circle, women were denied for centuries the right of full participation in the economic, political and educational life of society. Much progress had been achieved in the

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fight for women's rights, but there were still large areas where the position of women had to be improved.

In building up the structure of the United Nations, one should not forget women's contribution to international co-operation and understanding. It was they who attempted to ease and correct, especially in times of war, the injustices and inequalities brought about in most cases by men. During the war women justified, by their readiness to defend freedom and justice, their predecessors who had struggled against discriminatory laws and age-old prejudices.

Women's rights, set forth in the Preamble and Article 1 of the United Nations Charter, received prominence when the Brazilian delegation proposed that the Economic and Social Council should set up a Commission of women to study their political status. In May 1946 the Nuclear Commission met to discuss the fundamental principles, the scope and the programme of work of such a Commission. The members stated that democracy was the only social order in which women could enjoy full rights as human beings; that freedom and equality were essential to human development and that the well-being and progress of society depended upon the development of the full personality of men and women aware of their responsibilities.

The Sub-Commission submitted to the Commission on Human Rights a report suggesting future policies and a working programme; it was now for the Commission on the Status of Women to study that report.

Many communications had been received from international and non-governmental organizations of women, among them the Inter-American Commission of Women, offering support and co-operation. The Commission would have to consider ways of utilizing the assistance of those organizations. It also had at its disposal the resources of the appropriate departments of the United Nations Secretariat and could avail itself of the co-operation of specialized agencies.

The attainment of political equality for women was of primary importance. Following a recommendation by the Sub-Commission, the General Assembly adopted a resolution recommending that all Members States that

had not already done so, should grant to women equal political rights with men. The recommendation had been communicated to Members' Governments, and, if successful, would be a significant step towards that complete equality which was the Commission's goal.

There were, however, many immediate problems relating to the Commission's work.

Mr. STANCZYK concluded by stating that the Commission had a great responsibility and challenge before it, to speed the release of the energy of the women of the world and thus to contribute to the common ends of the United Nations.

#### Election of Chairman

Miss KENYON (United States of America) proposed Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) for Chairman.

Mrs. STREET (Australia) proposed Mrs. BEGTRUP (Denmark) for Chairman. Mrs. STREET stressed the need for continuity which she felt could be achieved by electing Mrs. Begtrup who was the former Chairman of the Nuclear Sub-Commission.

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) supported the candidature of Mrs. Begtrup.

Mrs. URALOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) also supported the nomination of Mrs. Begtrup.

Mrs. NEW (China), as a former member of the Nuclear Sub-Commission, appreciated Mrs. Begtrup's work, but felt that a new leader should appraise the foundations laid by the Chairman of the Nuclear Sub-Commission.

Mr. STANCZYK (Secretariat) pointed out that only eight members were present and wondered whether the Commission might not prefer to postpone the election of officers until the next meeting.

After some discussion of Mr. STANCZYK's suggestion, the Commission decided, by five votes to three, to proceed to the elections at once.

Miss KENYON (United States of America) spoke in support of Miss Sutherland.

The Commission elected, by secret ballot by five votes to three,  
Mrs. BEGTRUP, Chairman.

Mrs. BEGTRUP (Denmark) took the Chair. She thanked the Commission and pointed out the Commission's great responsibilities. The report under the Commission's consideration could be improved, yet she hoped that its main points would be preserved. Collaboration among women was important, in its effect on peace. She hoped that the Commission's work would proceed as harmoniously as that of the Sub-Commission.

#### Election of Vice-Chairman

Mrs. URALOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) proposed Mrs. STREET (Australia) for Vice-Chairman in view of her past experience and understanding of the problems of women.

Mrs. NEW (China) felt that a representative of a Latin American country should be elected and proposed Mrs. LEDON (Mexico) for Vice-Chairman.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) agreed with Mrs. New and supported the nomination of Mrs. Ledon.

Mrs. BEGTRUP (Denmark) supported the nomination of Mrs. Street.

The Commission elected, by secret ballot by five votes to three,  
Mrs. Street, Vice-Chairman.

#### Election of Rapporteur

Mrs. SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) proposed Mrs. NEW for Rapporteur. She recalled the Chinese representative's past experience and her work on the Nuclear Commission.

Mrs. BEGTRUP (Denmark) nominated Mrs. Uralova.

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) supported the nomination of Mrs. Uralova.

The Commission elected, by secret ballot, by six votes to two,  
Mrs. Uralova, Rapporteur.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.