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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Fourth Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SIXTY-FOURTH MEETING

Held at Lake Success, New York,
on Monday, 8 May 1950, at 11 a.m.

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Acting Chairman:)
Later Chairman:)

Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX France

Members:

Miss McCORKINDALE Australia

Miss Siou-Ling ZUNG China

Miss MORALES Costa Rica

Miss PEDERSEN Denmark

Mrs. TSALDARIS Greece

Mrs. SEN India

Mrs. KHOURY Lebanon

Mrs. de CASTILLO LEDON Mexico

Mrs. PEKTAS Turkey

Miss SUTHERLAND United Kingdom of Great Britain
and Northern Ireland

Mrs. GOLDMAN United States of America

Mrs. URDANEJA Venezuela

Representative of a specialized agency:

Miss FAIRCHILD International Labour Organisation (ILO)

Representatives of non-governmental organizations:

Category A:

Miss SENDER International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
Miss BERG World Federation of United Nations Associations

Category B:

Mrs. RYDH International Alliance of Women
Mrs. CARTER } International Council of Women
Mrs. FREEMAN }
Miss TOMLINSON International Federation of Business and Professional Women
Miss ARNOLD World's Young Women's Christian Association

Secretariat:

Mrs. MYRDAL Director of the Department of Social Affairs
Mrs. MENON Secretary of the Commission

1. The ACTING CHAIRMAN declared open the fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women.
2. Mrs. MYRDAL (Secretariat) welcomed the members of the Commission on behalf of the Secretary-General.
3. She wished to advise the Commission that the Secretary-General had received the following letter from the representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the United Nations:
 4. "I have the honour to inform you that the representative of the USSR will not take part in the work of the fourth session of the Committee on the Status of Women, inasmuch as the representative of the Kuomintang group will be taking part in it illegally.
 5. "The Soviet Union will not recognize the legality of any decision taken at the above-mentioned session of the Commission on the Status of Women with the participation of the representative of the Kuomintang group."
6. She emphasized that the United Nations was committed to an unceasing effort to make men and women equal as citizens of their countries and of the international community.

7. Progress, one of the objectives set forth in the United Nations Charter, could not be achieved without the full participation of women. The Secretary-General wished to reaffirm his interest in and desire to work towards that objective. He would do his utmost to carry out the recommendations of the Commission.

8. In considering the results of its past activities, the Commission would note with satisfaction that some Member States had taken steps to extend the suffrage of women. It was to be hoped that before long all Member States would implement the provisions of resolution 56 (I). The right to vote was but one phase of the Commission's work, but it was an essential phase.

9. The ACTING CHAIRMAN regretted the absence of the representative of the USSR.

10. Miss ZUNG (China) stated, in connexion with the letter received by the Secretary-General from the representative of the USSR, that she had never been, was not and would never be a member of the Kuomintang Party. She questioned the right of a Member State to absent itself from meetings of a United Nations body whenever it failed to agree with the procedure adopted.

11. Attendance at sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women, which was striving to increase the rights of half the human race, should not be governed by party politics.

12. Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States of America), on behalf of her Government, expressed concern at the decision of the Soviet Union not to attend the current session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

13. That decision raised serious doubts as to the Soviet Union's declared interest in true equality for women.

14. The refusal of the Soviet Union to participate in the work of the Commission was a definite violation of its pledge under the Charter to co-operate with other Member States in promoting respect for and observance of fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.

15. Mrs. Goldman hoped that the women of the Soviet Union knew that they were being denied a voice in the Commission and an opportunity to collaborate with it for their own benefit and that of all women throughout the world.

16. The decision to ignore the Commission was a further demonstration that the so-called "equality" claimed by the USSR for its women was actually an equality in slavery and not in freedom.

17. The creation of the United Nations had brought new hopes of peace, security and freedom to women throughout the world. Full participation by women in political decisions and in economic progress meant greater strength to the United Nations. The work of the Commission on the Status of Women should therefore proceed. No Member of the United Nations, by its wilful absence, could impair the normal functioning of the Commission or the validity of its decisions.

18. She doubted whether any country had yet found the best way to meet the changing situations and expanding opportunities of women in the modern world. The absence of a woman representative of the Soviet Union was particularly to be deplored in view of the fact that the onward sweep of the United Nations, which carried with it the hopes of all mankind, could best be maintained by full and conscientious participation in each organization and commission which had a share in the movement to unite the nations of the world.

19. Mrs. de CASTILLO LEDON (Mexico) welcomed the opportunity to participate again in the work of the Commission on the Status of Women. She hoped that the session would prove fruitful and would result in greater improvement in the status of women.

20. In conclusion, she regretted the absence of the representative of the Soviet Union.

21. Mrs. SEN (India) considered it as a privilege to participate for the first time in the work of the Commission on the Status of Women, which supplied a much-needed international platform. She was convinced that the Commission would prove of very great value in applying the fundamental principles of human rights.

22. While regretting the absence of the representative of the Soviet Union, she felt that it was not for the Commission to criticize a decision taken by a Member State. It was to be hoped that an improvement in international relations would result in the renewed participation of the Soviet Union in the work of the Commission.

/23. The ACTING CHAIRMAN

23. The ACTING CHAIRMAN observed that some members of the Economic and Social Council had adversely criticized the last report of the Commission; she did not think, however, that such criticism was justified. It had been said that the report lacked imagination, but the fact that the document appeared somewhat dull was chiefly due to the fact that there had not been sufficient response by the various Governments to the recommendations of the Commission.

24. There was a close relationship between the Commission and the various specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations concerned with the status of women; the International Labour Organisation in particular had shown great interest in the question. Moreover, the Commission had been represented in other United Nations bodies, such as the Commission on Human Rights. She hoped that such co-operation would continue in the future, as the non-governmental organizations and the Commission on the Status of Women both possessed valuable experience and knowledge which should be freely exchanged.

25. The Commission appreciated the excellent work which Mrs. Menon and her colleagues in the Secretariat had accomplished, despite limitations of staff.

26. Miss McCORKINDALE (Australia) congratulated the French representative on the work she had done as Chairman at the previous session, and the Turkish and Mexican representatives for their work as Rapporteur and Vice-Chairman respectively.

27. The Commission was unique in that it foresaw the time when there would be no further need for a special body of trained representatives to help the United Nations to carry out its high ideals by assisting all States to avoid injustices to any portion of the human race in their laws and practices.

28. The Commission was faced with a positive task: in addition to advising in the fields in which help could be given to remove inequality and hardships, it had the final objective of making universally available a potential source of experience and strength which an educated womanhood acting in co-operation would provide. Although the democratic system might perhaps appear to have the disadvantage of slowness, it was nevertheless best to effect changes as public opinion became prepared to accept them.

/29. States with

29. States with greater experience were in duty bound to assist other less favoured countries; with the help of the United Nations, the backward countries could be helped to reach their goal by suggestions for improved legislation and other means which would enable them to develop their potential resources. In that way, the peoples of the world could move forward free from unwarranted fears which, in the past, had prevented women from making a full contribution to the building of world solidarity.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Election of Chairmen

30. Mrs. TSALDARIS (Greece) nominated Mrs. Lefauchaux (France) as Chairman.

31. Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States of America), Miss ZUNG (China) and Mrs. URDANETA (Venezuela) supported that nomination.

32. There being no other nominations, Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX (France) agreed to serve as Chairman for a third term, and thanked the Commission for its recognition of her work.

Election of two Vice-Chairmen

33. Mrs. CASTILLO LEDON (Mexico) nominated Mrs. Urdaneta (Venezuela) as Vice-Chairman.

34. Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) nominated Mrs. Sen (India) as Vice-Chairman.

35. There being no other nominations, the CHAIRMAN declared Mrs. Urdaneta (Venezuela) and Mrs. Sen (India) elected first and second Vice-Chairmen respectively.

Election of Rapporteur

36. Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States of America) nominated Mrs. Khoury (Lebanon) as Rapporteur.

37. There being no other nominations, the CHAIRMAN declared Mrs. Khoury (Lebanon) elected Rapporteur.

/ADOPTION

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (E/CN.6/128)

38. Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) suggested that since the documentation submitted on item 10 -- Status of women in Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories -- related chiefly to political and legal status, item 10 should be dealt with as a sub-head of item 3, rather than as a separate item. Such a procedure would be in accordance with the Commission's policy of making no distinction between countries at different levels of development in considering discriminations against women in regard to political rights.

39. The CHAIRMAN agreed, and suggested that item 10 should become item 3(b) of the agenda, with the consequent renumbering of item 3(b) to 3(c), and item 3(c) to 3(d).

40. In answer to a question from the representative of Australia, she assured her that such a re-arrangement would not preclude the Commission's discussing the education of women in Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories.

41. She assured the United Kingdom representative that the order in which items were discussed would be established with due regard to the availability of documents.

42. She further suggested that it might be desirable to include the heading, "Any other business", as a separate item on the agenda.

43. Mrs. SEN (India) proposed that the item: Consideration of the organization of the office, should be included in the agenda. Its consideration was necessary in view of the fact that certain resolutions of the Economic and Social Council dealing with the subject had not yet been implemented.

44. Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States of America) reminded the Commission of the United States representative's suggestion to the Council the previous year that the report of the Commission should be drawn up in greater detail and should include proposals which had been rejected, as well as proposals which had been adopted, with the reasons for their rejection.

45. Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) referring to the Chairman's suggestion, doubted the wisdom of making it possible to add miscellaneous items to the Commission's already heavy agenda. She suggested that if any member wished

/to propose

to propose an additional item, she should do so at once and not wait until the Commission had almost finished its work, since representatives might then be forced to take decisions on matters on which they were insufficiently informed.

46. After some discussion, the CHAIRMAN suggested that the Commission should adopt the agenda as amended, on the understanding that representatives who wished to submit additional items could do so at the end of the afternoon meeting on Wednesday, 10 May.

It was so agreed.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.

17/5 a.m.