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MASTER FILE

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

THIRD SESSION

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FORTY-FOURTH MEETING

Held at Beirut, Lebanon,
on Thursday, 24 March 1949 at 10 a.m.

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2. Statement by the representative of the International Democratic Federation of Women.
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Present:

<u>Chairman:</u> Mrs. Marie Helene Lefauchoux	France
Mrs. Elsie Frances Byth	Australia
Miss Cecelia Sieu-Ling Zung	China
Mrs. Bodil Begtrup	Denmark
Mrs. Lina P. Tsaldaris	Greece
Mrs. Fortuna Andre Guery	Haiti
Mrs. Lakshmi Nandan Menon	India
Mrs. Amalia C. de Castillo Ledon	Mexico
Mrs. Adila Beyhoum El-Jazaeri	Syria
Mrs. Mihri Pektaş	Turkey
Miss Mary Sutherland	United Kingdom
Miss Dorothy Kenyon	United States of America
Mrs. Elizieveta Popova.	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
Mrs. Isabel Urdaneta	Venezuela

Representatives from Specialized Agencies:

Mrs. Mildred Fairchild Woodbury	International Labour Organization
Miss Jeanne H. Chaton	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Representatives from Inter-Governmental Organizations:

Miss Minerva Bernadino	Inter-American Commission of Women
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Consultants from Non-Governmental Organizations (Category A):

Madame Marie Cuette

World Federation of
Trade Unions

Secretariat:

Mrs. Amanda Lebarca

Chief of the Section
on the Status of
Women

Mr. Edward Lawson

Secretary

Mrs. Claude Day

1. STATEMENT BY MRS. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) AT THE COMMITTEE ON RESOLUTIONS CONCERNING POLITICAL RIGHTS OF WOMEN (Item 4 of the agenda)*

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) recalled that the question of political rights of women, one of the most important items on the agenda, had already been the subject of prolonged study by the United Nations and its various bodies. She stressed that the main point at issue was to ensure effective implementation of the recommendations of the Economic and Social Council in order to provide an adequate solution of the problem. She described the position in the Soviet Union, where the political and civic rights of women were guaranteed under the Constitution, and quoted statistics showing that a great number of women occupied key positions all over the country. Although the theory of equality in political rights had been proclaimed in the so-called democratic countries, the position in Spain, Greece, Switzerland, India, the United States of America, and others, was far from satisfactory. Any resolution passed by the present Commission should state clearly that the resolution adopted by the General Assembly in December 1946 had not fully been put into practice in the 38 Member States which had granted equality of rights. She referred to the limited conditions under which women could vote in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Canada, Mexico, and Greece, in comparison with the privileges enjoyed in her country and in Czechoslovakia. The General Assembly should be asked to reconsider the whole problem of political rights of women, with particular attention being drawn to the situation of women in the colonies and non-self-governing territories. It was for those reasons that she had submitted the resolution contained in document E/CN.6/93.

Mrs. PEKTAS (Turkey) pointed out that the first part of the Soviet Union resolution was already included in that submitted by the

/Resolutions Committee

* Interpretation of this statement was given at the beginning of the forty-fourth meeting of the Commission.

Resolutions Committee, while the second part served no useful purpose since the Secretariat had already prepared documentation on those countries in which women did not possess the full right to vote. In order to expedite the work of the Commission, she felt that all remarks should be confined to the precise items on the agenda.

Mrs. MENON (India) objected to certain of the comments made in regard to her country and wished to make it clear that India, although a Member of the United Nations, was under no obligation to accept the pattern of life evolved in the Soviet Union. Since the recent independence of her country, energetic steps were being taken to adjust conditions to existing circumstances. The new Constitution, now under preparation, provided for adult franchise and guarantees of equality of the sexes in social, cultural and political fields. She gave figures showing the high offices held by many women in various districts in India, and stressed that women delegates formed part of Indian delegations to the meetings of the United Nations and its various bodies.

She asked that reference to India should be deleted from page two of the Soviet Union proposal; otherwise she would be obliged to ask for rejection of the proposal, since it was not based on facts.

Mrs. TSAIDARIS (Greece) said that a copy of the statement she had made on the position and rights of women in Greece, with particular reference to a new draft Constitution, would be handed to the Soviet Union Representative, who had not arrived in time to hear the observations in question.

Referring to Mrs. Popova's statement about democratic conditions in Czechoslovakia, she recalled that 2,500 Greek children were being held in Czechoslovakia, and that officials of the International Red Cross Committee, sent under United Nations decisions to organize their repatriation, had been refused passports.

2. STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE INTERNATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION OF WOMEN.

An exchange of opinion took place as to whether it was in order to allow Mrs. Ibrahim, the Representative of the International Democratic Federation of Women, to address the meeting with respect to item 4 of the Agenda, since the debate on this item had been closed the previous day.

/Miss KENYON

Miss KENYON (United States of America) felt that an opportunity to address the Commission under special circumstances should not be limited to one international organization.

The Commission agreed, by twelve votes to none, with one abstention, to hear Mrs. IBRAHIM on the understanding that her comments would not exceed five minutes.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) explained that she had abstained from voting, merely because the general debate had been formally closed, and re-opened only as an act of courtesy to the Soviet Union representative.

Mrs. IBRAHIM (International Democratic Federation of Women), described the activities of her organization, which she said represented 80 million women in 51 countries. She emphasized that in those countries where women had no political rights, the tendency of the women's organizations and parliamentary bodies was that such privileges should be accorded only to the educated "elite". Such a conception was anti-democratic and deprived those women, whose work brought them into contact with the daily problems of life and with the masses of the people, of political rights. In countries where free schools did not exist, the poorer class had no opportunity for education, and it was unfair that this class should be deprived of political rights in favour of educated women, who were indifferent to the real problems of their countries.

A convention should be drafted which would eliminate all discrimination between educated and uneducated women. Great importance was attached to the recommendations adopted by the Commission, and all countries where women had no political rights should be classed as having political discrimination against women. It was essential for the rights of citizens to be applied in practice in conformity with existing legislation. There should be no discrimination in using the press, which now was available only to those with greater financial means, nor any restriction on women's organizations to hold meetings, to make petitions or to send representatives to meetings such as that of the present Commission. All democratic rights should be guaranteed, including those of all classes of women.

The Chairman declared the debate on item 4 of the agenda closed.

3. FIRST REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON RESOLUTIONS (Document E/CN.6/94)

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) considered that the Report of the Committee on Resolutions should not come before the plenary Commission until it had been adopted as a whole by the

Committee. Until then, it could only be regarded as a draft. On the other hand, the paper she had presented (Document E/CN.6/93) was an official basic document containing a draft resolution for submission to the Economic and Social Council. The text of that resolution had been distributed the previous day, and she felt that it should be given priority, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure.

The CHAIRMAN explained that the Committee on Resolutions was a working group of the Commission, set up to facilitate its task in framing resolutions. Official adoption of the report as a whole was, therefore, unnecessary. The various paragraphs had been considered by the Committee, and since the Report had been distributed on the previous day, the Commission could proceed to its discussion.

The Commission agreed, by 13 votes in favour and 1 against, to consider the Report of the Committee on Resolutions.

The Commission proceeded to consider document E/CN.6/94, paragraph by paragraph.

Achievement of Suffrage in Belgium and Chile

The paragraph was adopted. A minor drafting modification was suggested by Miss KENYON (United States of America).

Convention on Political Rights

Miss KENYON (United States of America) was under the impression that it had been decided to include this paragraph in the form of a statement in the report, not in the form of a resolution. She thought it should be the Commission which, at the appropriate time, should consider a convention to assist countries that had not granted women equal political rights.

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that she could not take part in the discussion and must abstain from voting since she had not received the Russian text. Moreover, amendments appeared to have been made in the document discussed by the Committee on Resolutions on the previous day, and she was not aware of those modifications.

Mr. LAWSON (Secretary of the Commission), explained that, except for a few minor drafting changes, the text was the same as the discussed in the Committee on Resolutions. The revised document had distributed to all members of the Commission on the previous day in

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two working languages, French and English, and it was not possible for the Secretariat to translate all documents into the other official languages of the United Nations.

In order to give Mrs. POPOVA time to study the question, which was an important one, the CHAIRMAN ruled that the discussion on the convention on political rights should be deferred until the next meeting.

Information on Trust Territories

Miss KENYON (United States of America) proposed, and Miss SUTHERLAND, (United Kingdom) agreed, to replace the words "to participate in political activities" in line 2 by the words "right to hold public office". There might be a difference of interpretation in different English-speaking countries, and it was desirable to avoid giving the impression that the Commission was interested in political agitation.

Miss KENYON further suggested adding the word "Pertinent" before the word "information" in line 5.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) suggested that in view of the difficulty which the Soviet delegate was experiencing, the Commission should defer until the next day discussion of the entire Report of the Committee on Resolutions and proceed with the next item on the agenda.

The CHAIRMAN replied that the Commission had a very full programme for the following day; she was, however, prepared to defer discussion of the paragraph on information on trust territories until the afternoon meeting.

In reply to a question by the CHAIRMAN, Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that she was prepared to discuss the next paragraph of the report.

Information on Non-Self-Governing Territories

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) referred to a text covering both trust and non-self-governing territories presented by the United States delegate, which she preferred to the present separate texts.

In reply, the CHAIRMAN summed up the earlier debates on the question, from which the Soviet Union delegate had been absent, and said that the texts adopted by the Committee on Resolutions were compromise solutions that on the text submitted by Miss Kenyon. In the United Nations Charter the p.

/these territories

those territories were dealt with separately in Articles 73 (e), and 88. As the resolution concerning trust territories had presented certain difficulties for the Soviet Union member, the Commission had agreed to defer its discussion until the afternoon meeting.

Miss KENYON (United States of America) agreed with Mrs. Popova that the text she had presented on behalf of the United States Government was better than those at present under discussion. In order to expedite the work of the Commission, she had not insisted on its adoption; but in view of the importance attached to the subject by her Government, she had cabled for instructions. She would abstain from voting, until a reply had been received.

In view of Miss Kenyon's position and of the fact that Mrs. Popova desired to have time for further consideration of the paragraph, it was agreed that the discussion should be deferred until the next meeting.

Information on Discrimination based on sex in the field of Political Rights

Mrs. URDANETA (Venezuela), supported by Miss KENYON (United States of America), suggested deleting the words "in the field of political rights, in particular" in the penultimate line and replacing them by the words "with respect to the rights...."

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) remarked that this amendment narrowed the sense of the resolution.

The paragraph, as amended, was adopted by 3 votes in favour, 5 against, with 1 abstention.

Mrs. LEDON (Mexico) had grave doubts as to whether the resolution, as amended, was sufficiently wide to cover all political rights, both local and national.

The CHAIRMAN stated that the rules of procedure did not allow modification of a text which had been adopted; a new text could, however, be submitted for consideration, if desired.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) assured the delegate from Mexico that the amended English text, as adopted, amply covered discrimination as regards local and national franchise.

At this point Mrs. LEDON (Mexico), Vice-Chairman, took the chair.

/Mrs. POPOVA

Mrs. POPOVA, (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said she would submit a new text in writing at the next meeting.

It was agreed to defer further discussion of the paragraph until the next meeting.

Participation of Women in the United Nations

The paragraph was adopted by ten votes in favour, with three abstentions.

The Commission rose at 1 p.m.