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Seventh Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SEVENTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 25 March 1953, at 3 p.m.

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<u>Chairman:</u>	Miss BERNARDINO	Dominican Republic
<u>Rapporteur:</u>	Begum ANWAR AHMED	Pakistan

PRESENT: (continued)

<u>Members:</u>	Daw OHN	Burma
	Mrs. NOVIKOVA	Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic
	Miss MISTRAL	Chile
	Miss TSENG	China
	Miss MAÑAS	Cuba
	Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX	France
	Mrs. GUERY	Haiti
	Mrs. TABET	Lebanon
	Miss PELETIER	Netherlands
	Miss YOUNG	New Zealand
	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
<u>Also present:</u>	Miss FUJITA	Japan
	Dr. HORUAT	Yugoslavia
	Mrs. de CALVO	Inter-American Commission of Women
<u>Representatives of specialized agencies:</u>		
	Mrs. FAIRCHILD	International Labour Organisation (ILO)
	Mrs. MYRDAL	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
<u>Representatives of non-governmental organizations:</u>		
<u>Category A:</u>		
	Miss SENDER	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)
	Miss KAHN	World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU)
	Mrs. FOX	World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA)

Representatives of non-governmental organizations: (continued)

Category B and Register:

Mrs. SAYRE	Associated Country Women of the World
Mrs. WOODSMALL) Miss MAHON)	International Alliance of Women
Mrs. CARTER	International Council of Women
Mrs. HYMER	International Federation of Business and Professional Women
Miss LAGEMANN	International Federation of Friends of Young Women
Miss ROEB) Miss McGILLICULLY)	International Federation of University Women
Miss LA LCKDE) Miss SMITH)	International Federation of Women Lawyers
Mrs. WISHNER) Mrs. WOLLE-EGENOLF)	International League for the Rights of Man
Mrs. EVANS	Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations
Mrs. MCGIVERN	Pax Romana
Mrs. POLSTEIN	World Union for Progressive Judaism
Miss ZIZZAMIA	World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations

Secretariat:

Mrs. TENISON-WOODS	Chief of the Status of Women Section
Mrs. GRINBERG-VINAVER	Secretary of the Commission

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN (E/CN.6/214, 210, 211, 223, E/CN.6/L.101, E/CN.6/215, E/CN.6/178)

The CHAIRMAN suggested that item 8 (c) - vocational guidance and training - should be discussed in connexion with the above item, as sub-item 9 (d).

It was so decided.

Mrs. GRINBERG-VINAVER (Secretary of the Commission) said that most of the documents pertaining to the item had been prepared by UNESCO. With reference to sub-item 9 (c), she explained that the Secretary-General had not prepared a further report on legislative provisions in various countries concerning educational opportunities for girls and women, as the Commission had requested him to do at its sixth session, because in the first place, he had received no new information from Governments and, secondly, he had learned that the International Bureau of Education and UNESCO had prepared a similar report based on information furnished by Governments. He had therefore confined himself to transmitting to the Commission that report with a note (E/CN.6/215).

Mrs. GUERY (Haiti) said that under the Constitution of 1805 education in Haiti was free and compulsory, without any discrimination on grounds of sex. Women who so desired had always been free to pursue their studies beyond the primary level. Nevertheless, although a number of women had acquired a good education, woman's place had traditionally been in the home. In 1914, the establishment of a normal school for women had marked the beginning of a new trend, and women now attended secondary schools and universities on an equal basis with men. Among the poorer classes, however, what education a family could afford was usually reserved for the boys, while the girls stayed at home or went to work. That explained the high percentage of illiteracy among the female population. To combat illiteracy, educational centres had been set up

in recent years, including some special centres for women, who attended them faithfully, often after a hard day's work. Such sacrifices on the part of working women were, however, necessary if they were to take their rightful place side by side with men.

She was transmitting to the Secretariat a Haitian statistical bulletin dated 5 June 1952, containing statistical data on school enrolment.

Miss MISTRAL (Chile) stressed the important part played by education in overcoming racial and other group prejudices and prejudices against foreigners.

Mrs. MYRDAL (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that her organization carried on a number of activities designed to give women greater access to educational opportunities.

One of those activities was the compilation of statistical data on the progress in women's education. A short statistical table, giving the latest data on the percentage of female school enrolment in different countries had been included at the end of UNESCO's report (E/CN.6/223). On the whole, the figures showed a steady improvement over previous years, particularly in secondary and higher education - where primary education was concerned, there had always been less discrimination. In countries like Egypt, Syria, Ceylon and Spain, where secondary education for women had been particularly neglected until recent years, the progress had been most striking.

She went on to draw the Commission's attention to the work of the XVth Conference on Public Education, held at Geneva in 1952 under the joint auspices of UNESCO and the International Bureau of Education. For the first time in its history, the Conference, which had been attended by representatives of the Ministries of Education of fifty-one countries and observers from the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women and a number of specialized agencies, had discussed at length the question of the access of women to education. Discussion had been based on a study entitled "The Access of Women to Education", prepared in the light of information received from Governments in reply to a questionnaire which had been circulated to them. As a result

of its deliberations, the Conference had adopted recommendation No. 34, containing various statements of principle and practical suggestions for the study and solution of the problem of women's access to education (E/CN.6/223, paragraphs 6 to 11).

Following the Conference, the first of a number of regional UNESCO conferences on free and compulsory education had been held at Bombay. The Conference's recommendations applied to both sexes alike and a special recommendation had been made to expand teacher-training facilities for women. Similar conferences were to be held in the Middle East in 1954 and in Latin America in 1956.

Another activity that might be of interest to the Commission was the fundamental education centres run by UNESCO in Mexico and Egypt with a view to raising the general level of understanding of current problems. A special effort was being made to attract women to those centres, both as teachers and students.

UNESCO was also sponsoring the preparation of a number of handbooks designed to help women to become fully-fledged citizens. The handbooks, to be written in Spanish, French and English, would differ slightly in content to meet the special needs of the language areas they were to serve.

UNESCO had initiated a number of social science studies of the various factors contributing to or preventing the effective exercise by women of their political rights under their national constitution. France, the German Federal Republic and Yugoslavia had been chosen for those studies, because, while social conditions in those countries were comparable, women had come to the full enjoyment of their rights in different historical and political circumstances. It was hoped that the studies would be ready for the eighth session of the Commission. The problem of women's participation in public life in various countries had also been considered by the International Political Science Association at its Second World Congress held at The Hague in 1952, at which papers on the subject had been presented by experts from fifteen countries.

UNESCO was planning to send in 1953 a team of two experts to three countries outside Europe to study, in co-operation with national specialists, the present state of education for women in those countries and social factors impeding or promoting women's access to education. The studies would include analyses of statistical information and of views expressed in the legislative bodies and the Press of those countries.

Lastly, with the help of the Indian Government and in co-operation with the Asian Relations Organization, UNESCO had organized a regional seminar on the Contribution of the Social Sciences to the Study of the Status of Women, which had met in New Delhi from December 1952 to January 1953. The seminar, in which had participated twenty-three representatives from various Asian countries and from France, and observers from the United Nations, the ILO and a number of non-governmental organizations, had examined the anthropological, sociological and legal factors affecting the status of women in the Far East. It had been decided that a number of questions selected by the seminar should be studied further by local social scientists and study groups.

In conclusion, she pointed out that some of the activities she had mentioned had been special projects and that, while UNESCO would maintain its interest in the problem of the access of women to education, her organization might not continue to study special projects unless especially requested to do so. She had fuller documentation of UNESCO's activities which she could make available to members of the Commission.

The CHAIRMAN, speaking on behalf of the Commission, expressed appreciation of the great help given it by UNESCO and of the useful and informative report on the access of women to education (E/CN.6/223) presented by that agency.

Miss YOUNG (New Zealand) was also highly appreciative of the UNESCO report and of the two reports from the XVth Conference on Public Education. Those papers formed an excellent basis for the Commission's discussion and proved that, with its wide and varied agenda, the Commission should look to the other commissions and the specialized agencies for expert advice and

assistance rather than overburden the Secretariat with requests for special studies. In the past, the Secretariat had put in a great deal of work on the compilation of reports which arrived at few conclusions; hence in recent years the tendency had been to ask it rather to perform an organizing and analytic function.

The material submitted established beyond a doubt that the barriers to the education of women were economic and social. Generally speaking, women were offered the same educational facilities as men where the demand existed; hence the main problem was to stimulate the demand. Where elementary education was concerned, that could be done by generally raising the educational and cultural level, particularly among women, and the Commission should therefore give its full support to UNESCO's fundamental education projects and to all other international action which had a direct bearing on educational and cultural progress.

Above the elementary level it was a matter of obtaining recognition in every country of the value of a general education for a woman who did not intend to work and of enlarging the opportunities in skilled and professional work for women who might be attracted to those fields.

She saw no indication that women in Non-Self-Governing and Trust Territories were particularly discriminated against where education was concerned; if there was a lack of education, it was at least the same for men and women. She therefore felt that quite disproportionate emphasis had been laid on the situation in those territories in the UNESCO report.

Having studied recommendation No. 34 made by the XVth Conference on Public Education, she felt that the Commission should give it general support and possibly ask the Secretary-General to bring it to the attention of the Technical Assistance Administration and the specialized agencies. The Commission might also ask the specialized agencies constantly to bear in mind the problem of removing the economic and social barriers to feminine education and to direct their action to that end. In that connexion, the community welfare projects for which the Technical Assistance Administration had been providing expert advice were of the greatest importance.

She was ready to support the revised draft of article 33 of the recommendation, as suggested by the International Federation of University Women, if it could be adopted without the necessity of going through the entire recommendation article by article.

She was submitting to the Commission a draft resolution embodying the ideas she had just expressed.

Mrs. HAHN (United States of America) stated that her delegation endorsed wholeheartedly the principle of the fullest educational opportunities for all, without any discrimination on grounds of sex, a principle applied in all the forty-eight states and the various territories under United States jurisdiction. It was therefore in full agreement with the statement on the purposes of education adopted by the XVth Conference on Public Education.

The Constitution of every state in the United States made education free and compulsory for all children, boys and girls alike, and until the same age. All public elementary schools and most public secondary schools were co-educational and both sexes had equal access to all types of vocational and technical training and to higher education. The economic and social factors which in the past had prevented women from acquiring a higher education were becoming less and less significant, for social attitudes had changed and employment opportunities were now open to women in virtually all occupations and professions.

Moreover, it was becoming increasingly recognized that educated women became an educational influence in the family and the community. They watched over their children's emotional and physical well-being and transmitted to them the ideals of democracy, while in the community they were a force for progress in all fields, from sanitation to good government. Furthermore, an increasingly large number of women university graduates in recent years tended to marry and bring up families.

The concept of the school as a community centre rather than merely a place of instruction for children had also grown markedly of late. School buildings were used outside the school hours for adult education and other community purposes, and much was being done to educate adults for family and community living, thereby raising the cultural standards of entire communities.

Public schools in the United States were the responsibility of school boards elected by the citizens; many women served on those boards. Women also took part in guiding their children's education through the very active parent-teacher associations.

Education for responsible citizenship and democratic participation in government had always been a major objective in the United States. It took the form of courses in civics, government and social sciences, of fostering student organizations patterned on democratic institutions and of endeavouring to develop in the children the ability to assess facts and to engage in public discussion, which was basic to democracy. Such training was reflected in improved standards of local government, for which, incidentally, women worked vigorously. Women's organizations were actively endeavouring to improve laws and their administration through honest government and to promote public programmes relating to health, education and social welfare. Women in the United States were becoming increasingly concerned with public affairs and they and their organizations had frequently taken the lead in studying and dealing with social problems.

A comprehensive study of the education of women in the United States would be carried out by the newly established Commission on Women's Education of the American Council on Education. It would explore current and long-range needs resulting from the impact of changing social values upon women as individuals, members of families, workers, citizens, and creators and perpetuators of culture. It would also deal with women in faculty and administrative positions in higher education, the opportunities for women students in higher education, and the preparation of plans for continuing the education of adult women.

In short, the purpose of education for women in the United States was to train them to be good members of a democratic society.

Turning to the ILO report on vocational guidance and training (E/CN.6/178), she said that her delegation was particularly grateful for the information it contained concerning opportunities for women to enter apprenticeship. She agreed with the ILO that a better survey of such opportunities for women could

be made in a study which dealt with the entire field rather than with discriminations against women and she would favour the preparation of an expanded study along those lines.

Mrs. WARDE (United Kingdom) remarked that in her country education was compulsory for boys and girls alike and the same opportunities were offered. A new Education Act, adopted in 1944, had broadened the school system and had raised the school-leaving age from fourteen to fifteen. At the age of eleven, children could choose between three types of education, depending generally on their aptitude: trades and commerce, science and engineering, and academic courses. Some schools were co-educational while others were not, depending largely on the available facilities. The number of men and women teachers was more or less equal and discrimination against women was unknown.

Miss TSENG (China) stated that in Formosa primary education was compulsory for all children and primary schools were therefore attended by boys and girls in equal numbers. Beyond that level the number of women students dropped sharply; they formed only 27.4 per cent of the students in secondary schools and 13.9 per cent in universities. That was not because there was any legal discrimination against women - for example, examination papers for entrance to the university bore no indication of the applicant's sex; the reasons were mainly economic and social. A family not wealthy enough to educate all its children would give preference to boys; girls frequently left their studies to marry and bring up a family. Even university graduates found that upon becoming wives and mothers they had no time or inclination left for post-graduate study or research. Consequently, although universities engaged men and women teachers on the same conditions, the women formed only 18 per cent of the staff. She hoped that the present discussion and the information supplied by other members would show her how the situation could be remedied.

Miss MISTRAL (Chile) deplored the fact that the various continents knew so little about each other. Lasting peace was possible only if the East and the West learned to understand one another's mentality. To that end,

children in schools should be given more information about distant lands, preferably by means of illustrated books, since pictures were worth many words, and should not grow up in the provincial belief that their country was the centre of the world. She had found from experience that Western society had much to learn from the heightened sensibility and the intense spiritual life of Oriental peoples.

She added, for the information of the Commission, that the Minister of Public Education in Chile was a woman.

Mrs. TABET (Lebanon) expressed her interest in the Chilean representative's remarks and agreed that visual education was a valuable medium.

Mrs. WASILKOWSKA (Poland) pointed out that it was clear from the documents submitted by the Secretariat that the position with regard to educational opportunities for women was by no means satisfactory, even in the so-called advanced countries, and was simply catastrophic in most of the Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories. The UNESCO report showed that one half of the population of the world was illiterate; a large percentage of those illiterates were women. In seventy-six countries, girls were discriminated against in respect of primary education and the percentage of girls in the total school enrolment was often as low as four to ten per cent. The figures in the UNESCO report gave no indication of the proportion of attendance in relation to the whole female population and therefore gave no idea of the success of the steps which were being taken to combat illiteracy.

The United Nations report on the World Social Situation contained more accurate figures and concrete illustrations of discrimination. For example, it referred to the segregation of schools for coloured people, differences in the number of school years required, discriminatory treatment of teachers and differences in material assistance to various schools. The report also mentioned the extremely low percentage of school attendance in dependent territories, especially in the case of girls, who did not even appear in the education statistics of some territories. Moreover, in many territories the indigenous population was prevented from attending normal schools of the European type. The fact of there being such unsatisfactory educational facilities served to corroborate the generally abject condition of women in the dependent territories and should be a matter of concern and alarm to the Commission.

Discrimination with regard to women's access to education was closely linked with the economic and social situation of women, since it was obvious that where women had no economic opportunities and were deprived of social protection they could not participate fully in the cultural development of their countries. There could be no incentive to study in countries where women were debarred from professions by legal provisions or customary practice. Thus, even in advanced countries, the participation of women in higher education was limited. For example, in countries suffering from a shortage of doctors medical schools refused to admit women and hospitals refused to employ women doctors. The same applied to other professions.

Poland's experience clearly showed that women's access to education was influenced less by legal provisions than by their general economic and social position. Although women had had formal access to higher education in pre-war Poland, the number of women in universities was now nearly four times higher than before the war. That progress was due to the various measures taken by the State to ensure wide access to higher education for women.

All education was free of charge and the majority of the students had scholarships which covered all their living expenses and relieved them of the necessity to work while they were studying. Student mothers were secured equal conditions with working mothers in respect of social insurance, health services, child-care centres and so forth. Working people who were studying worked shorter hours at full pay and were given special paid leave before their examinations. Practical access to education was also ensured by the increase of the number of universities, institutes and schools.

Women's access to higher education was based on the extension of the primary and secondary educational system. Compulsory primary education had been fully achieved in Poland and compulsory secondary education was to be introduced. Great progress had been made with regard to women's attendance of schools in rural areas, where older peasant women were eagerly availing themselves of their first opportunity to receive education.

Her delegation believed that the experiment of appointing specialized agencies to solve educational problems had not stood the test and that United Nations organs, on which governments were represented, should take the

responsibility of undertaking definite obligations in that respect. In the case of educational opportunities for women, the Commission's main tasks were the abolition of illiteracy among women, special attention to the education of women in Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories and the elimination of all types of discrimination against women in countries where they had no full educational opportunities in spite of laws which extended all facilities to them.

Mrs. de CALVO (Inter-American Commission of Women) stated that her Commission had taken up the question of educational opportunities for women at its assembly at Rio de Janeiro in July 1952 and had adopted some important resolutions on the subject, especially with regard to adult education, literacy campaigns and civic education in secondary and higher schools. The Inter-American Commission was distributing the resolutions it had adopted in connexion with the principle of equal educational opportunities, a compendium of constitutional and legal provisions on adult education and a document on women in relation to the law and culture. The latter document had been submitted by the Chairman of the Commission to the Inter-American Cultural Council of the Organization of American States in September 1951 and contained references to discrimination against women in education, with special emphasis on vocational and technical education.

At its assembly held at Santiago in May and June 1951, the Commission had adopted resolutions on the literacy and training of peasant women, the teaching of the fundamental principles of constitutions and civil codes in secondary and higher schools and the utilization of popular crafts in the American countries.

The Commission's resolution on vocational and technical education, adopted at its 1952 assembly, stressed the importance of the principle of equal opportunities for men and women in the economic life of countries, the importance of raising women's economic and social status and the need for equal access to all types of education, including agricultural education. It recommended that governments should guarantee equal working conditions for men and women, secure equal and adequate facilities and opportunities for vocational and technical training, establish effective State control of private vocational and technical

training establishments to adapt them to the needs of working women in various industries and take women's needs into account when requesting technical assistance from the United Nations and the specialized agencies.

Item 8 of the agenda of the Commission's assembly at Rio de Janeiro had referred to the recommendations of the Commission and of governments on ensuring equal opportunities in primary, secondary, vocational, technical and higher education and on women's professions and access to responsible posts in internal administration services, foreign service and international organizations. Agenda item 9 had related to women's training in civics and their education for democracy.

She was extremely gratified to hear that the Chilean Minister of Education was a woman and pointed out that the Costa Rican woman Deputy Minister of Education was at present performing the functions of Minister and that the Deputy Minister of Education of Nicaragua was also a woman.

Miss SENDER (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) said that many of the problems of discrimination against women were closely connected with their educational opportunities. Even where there was no legal discrimination, many different factors militated against the full use of woman-power. Those factors might be traditional customs or religious beliefs but they were usually based on long-standing prejudices. Some girls counted on early marriage and others felt that they had to contribute to their families' finances as soon as possible. Economic conditions which restricted opportunities for women's employment also influenced education by diminishing the incentive for training.

The choice of an occupation should be absolutely free and should be made in the light of individual capacities. Girls often preferred to continue the customary habit of occupations which were generally considered to be more appropriate for them and were influenced by the assumption that it was difficult for them to compete with men in other branches of activity. Vocational facilities for girls had improved, but should be accompanied by systematic guidance on the opportunities open to them. Public opinion should be influenced

towards a more sympathetic attitude to the use of woman-power.

The main reason for the insufficient use of woman-power was the inadequacy of training facilities, due to economic and social factors. Better vocational training for women was essential in view of their position of equal responsibility with men in social and civic affairs. Economic independence gave rise to independent thinking, as was shown by the ever-increasing number of married women gainfully employed.

Many women were still unaware of the many suitable careers open to them. That situation could be remedied only by extending and improving vocational guidance services. Women had to make a great effort to influence public opinion towards an adjustment to the part which they were playing in economic development. The Second World War had accelerated the movement for wider utilization of women's abilities and talents but in many cases that had not led to the extension of the necessary technical training.

The ILO played an important part in the improvement of training facilities. Membership of the ILO entailed the acceptance of certain obligations and countries which did not join that organization admitted their reluctance to undertake such duties. The activities of the ILO were especially important for under-developed countries, where there was a great need for legislation on working women's rights. An essential factor in the improvement of economic opportunities for women was membership of an effective trade union.

Those considerations led to seven conclusions. New educational institutions must be based on the principle of equal access to education for men and women; women should have the same facilities as men for scholarships and allowances to enable them to continue their education; all women's training should be accompanied by civic and social education and education for family life; educational and vocational services should be equally available to men and women; standards of teacher training should be the same for both sexes; the increasing number of working women in some countries should not have an adverse effect on the income of the head of the family; and it should be borne in mind that the desire for independence was as strong in women as in men and that women wished to play their part in improving the welfare of their community.

Miss ROBB (International Federation of University Women) said that her organization had some comments to make on the UNESCO progress report on the access of women to education. The Federation believed that higher education did not exist in a vacuum but formed an integral part of the educational system. The figures in the UNESCO report for the education of girls at all levels were therefore especially interesting. It was obvious that women accounted for a large proportion of the illiterate population of the world and that fewer girls than boys attended elementary, secondary and technical schools and universities. Girls left school earlier than boys and fewer girls completed their school courses.

The figures in the UNESCO report on the position in Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories might be read in the context of the reports on the status of women in those territories prepared for the Commission and in relation to the United Nations Technical Assistance Programme and the sections on education in the Trusteeship Council reports. Reports to the Council on higher education in the territories concerned would be useful in that connexion.

The usual gap between generations, which was particularly noticeable in under-developed regions, was widest between adult women and their children; the need for fundamental education for women was therefore very important. Although custom and tradition were the primary causes for women's lack of access to education, these causes were further aggravated by the absence of equal pay for equal work and of vocational guidance and training, by low living standards and by the continuance of post-war economic emergencies.

The Federation was especially interested in UNESCO's fellowship programme, since through its own efforts it had enabled many women of various nationalities to continue their studies in universities all over the world. It had endeavoured to help displaced university women to migrate and to become integrated in their new environments and was trying to provide scholarly contacts for older university women remaining in refugee camps.

Although diversity in educational methods was desirable, uniformity of educational terms was an essential factor of exchanges of experience and, in an attempt to promote such exchanges, the French branch of the Federation had prepared a Glossary of Academic Terms.

The study on the long-range needs of women in education referred to in paragraph 8 of the report seemed to be particularly useful.

Several of the University Libraries in various parts of the world had benefited greatly by the gift-coupon project adopted by our members.

The Federation believed that the world-wide teacher shortage was connected with the widespread employment of women at primary or elementary levels. Better wages, wider social recognition and better teacher training facilities were required to overcome that shortage.

In conclusion, she referred to the Federation's communication in document E/CN.6/NGO/13 and the suggestion that the words "that university studies permit women to specialize in fields particularly suited to feminine aptitudes" in recommendation No. 34, article 33, of the joint Conference of the International Bureau of Education and UNESCO should be replaced by the words "that university studies be so organized as to enable women to specialize in fields of particular interest to them".

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.