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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Fifth Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE NINETIETH MEETING

Held at Lake Success, New York,  
on Friday, 4 May 1951, at 10.30 a.m.

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<u>Chairman:</u>	Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX	France
<u>Rapporteur:</u>	Mrs. JURDAK KHOURY	Lebanon
<u>Members:</u>	Mrs. DALY	Australia
	Miss SIEU-LING-ZUNG	China
	Mrs. de GONZALEZ	Cuba
	Miss BERNARDINO	Dominican Republic
	Mrs. TSALDARIS	Greece

Members (continued)

Mrs. GUERY	Haiti
Mrs. SEN	India
Miss LAVALLE URBINA*	Mexico
Mrs. PELETTIER	Netherlands
Mrs. DEMBINSKA	Poland
Mrs. POPOVA	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
Miss SUTHERLAND	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Mrs. GOLDMAN	United States of America

Representative of a specialized agency:

Mrs. STANLEY	International Labour Organisation (ILO)
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Observer sent by an inter-governmental organization:

Mrs. ACUNA de CHACON	Inter-American Commission of Women
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Representatives of non-governmental organizations:

Category A:

Miss KAHN	World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU)
Mrs. FOX )	World Federation of United Nations
Mrs. SPRAGUE )	Associations (WFUNA)

Category B:

Mrs. DAYAL	All-India Women's Conference
Mrs. MAHON	International Alliance of Women
Mrs. PARSONS	International Council of Women

\* Alternate

Representatives of non-governmental organizations (continued)

Category B:

Mrs. HYMER	International Federation of Business and Professional Women
Mrs. EVANS	International Federation of University Women
Mrs. ZIZZANIA	International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues
Miss DINGMAN	International Union for Child Welfare
Miss SCHAIN	Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations
Miss PALMER Miss PERRY }	World's Young Women's Christian Association

Secretariat:

Mrs. TENISON-WOODS	Representative of the Assistant Secretary-General, Chief of the section on the Status of Women
Mrs. GRINBERG-VINAVER	Secretary of the Commission

REPORT OF THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION OF WOMEN (E/CN.6/171)

The CHAIRMAN invited the representative of the Inter-American Commission of Women to submit that body's report to the Commission.

Mrs. ACUNA de CHACON (Inter-American Commission for Women) read the report of the Inter-American Commission of Women to the fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (E/CN.6/171).

The CHAIRMAN thanked the representative of the Inter-American Commission of Women for her statement and asked the Commission what action it proposed to take on the report.

Miss BERNARDINO (Dominican Republic) said she had been Chairman of the Inter-American Commission of Women, and taken part in the work of its Office for more than fifteen years. She could therefore appreciate directly the enormous value of the work done by that body since its establishment, and knew how courageously and steadfastly it had defended the cause of the political, economic, social and cultural rights of women in the countries of Latin America. She was glad therefore to commend the efforts of the Inter-American Commission of Women. It seemed to her particularly appropriate to do so seeing that the present Chairman of the Commission was the Mexican representative on the Commission on the Status of Women, who had worked for many years, with Miss Bernardino herself and other members to make the Inter-American Commission a body that merited respect and enjoyed very high prestige.

For technical reasons she would reserve her position with regard to the part of the Commission's report dealing with regional seminars. The question was on the agenda of the next assembly of the Inter-American Commission of Women which was to be held in Chile at the end of May that would be the time when that particular aspect of the report should be examined.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) had been most interested in the report of the Inter-American Commission of Women and in the progress which had been made in these countries under the Commission's guidance.

She would like to know whether, during her visit to the countries covered by the programme of the first regional seminar, the Chairman of the Inter-American Commission of Women had come in contact with the representatives of women's trade unions. It was essential to encourage the development of a democratic trade union movement among women, if the economic status of women was to be improved.



Mrs. ACUNA de CHACON (Inter-American Commission of Women) said that, possibly for the first time in the history of a small Central American State, the regional seminar held in the capital of El Salvador had gathered together women from every stratum of society, including the working class all of whom had co-operated in preparing resolutions affirming and defending their rights and dealing particularly with the problem of conditions of work for women. The regional seminar had been extremely valuable to working women.

Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States of America) thanked the representative of the Inter-American Commission of Women for the excellent report submitted. She recalled that the United States had long been a member of that organization which grouped all the women in the American continent in the defence of their rights and the fight against discrimination.

The method of regional seminars inaugurated by the Inter-American Commission of Women was extremely interesting in that it permitted a pooling of the experience acquired in the various American countries and a useful exchange of views and information.

Stress should be laid on the clear cut difference between the Commission on the Status of Women and the Inter-American Commission of Women, which, as a regional body operating on the spot, could deal directly with the problems which arose in the various American countries. One of those problems was that of the position of working women which was to be studied by the Commission in co-operation with the bodies interested in that question. The results of that study would, of course, be of the greatest interest to the Commission on the Status of Women. Conversely, the comparative study of various legislations done by the Commission on the Status of Women should encourage the Inter-American Commission of Women to take up similar work.

Mrs. ACUNA de CHACON (Inter-American Commission of Women) thanked the members of the Commission on behalf of her organization and assured them that the Inter-American Commission of women fully intended to follow the way marked out by the Commission on the Status of Women.

Miss LAYALLE URBINA (Mexico) stressed the very great importance of the work done by the Inter-American Commission of Women, which concerned most directly the women of the American continent, but which at the same time served the cause of women in general. The Commission was seeking, with considerable success, to encourage the women of America to understand their problems and find a satisfactory solution to them.

She herself had taken part in the seminar in San Salvador, which had been particularly useful in enabling the women of the American continent to give expression to their views and their problems.

She associated herself with the praise bestowed by the representatives of the Dominican Republic and the United States of America and said she wholeheartedly supported the work of the Inter-American Commission of Women.

Mrs. de GONZALEZ (Cuba) thought that all the representatives would agree in recognizing that the work of the Inter-American Commission of Women was closely linked to that of the Commission on the Status of Women. That being so, would the Commission be willing to adopt a draft resolution congratulating the Inter-American Commission of Women on its work and expressing a desire to maintain close contact with that organization?

Mrs. GUERY (Haiti) associated herself with the Cuban representative's suggestion. She also congratulated the Inter-American Commission of Women on its remarkable work. She had already had occasion to note the intelligence and devotion shown in the Inter-American Commission of Women by the women of Latin America who had resolved to put their intellectual capacity and courage at the disposal of the cause of women. The women of Haiti had derived particular benefit from the Commission's efforts and were most grateful to it.

The CHAIRMAN said that, if the Commission felt it was not sufficient to note in the report the statement by the representative of the Inter-American Commission of Women and the comments it had brought forth, and wished to adopt a resolution on the matter, it could ask the representative of Cuba to prepare a draft resolution which would be sent directly to the Ad Hoc Committee on Resolution.

It was so decided.

POLITICAL RIGHTS OF WOMEN

(e) Status of Women in the Trust Territories (E/1712, paragraph 25; E/CN.6/L.41)

The CHAIRMAN opened the discussion on the draft resolution by the Dominican Republic concerning the status of women in the Trust Territories (E/CN.6/L.41).

Miss BERNARDINO (Dominican Republic) explained that the idea of the draft resolution had come to her as a result of having attended two sessions of the Trusteeship Council. She had no doubt of the support of the small countries who had no interests at stake, but she appealed to the big countries to set aside personal considerations and adopt the draft resolution.

The CHAIRMAN suggested -- and the representative of the Dominican Republic accepted -- certain changes in the form of the draft resolution, in particular the deletion of the second paragraph of the preamble which rather weakened the text and the substitution for the phrase "that a woman should share the responsibilities of the mission" of the broader expression: "that women should share the responsibilities of missions". She also suggested that the operative part should be altered as follows: "Requests the Secretary-General to invite the Member States chosen by the Trusteeship Council to see, as far as possible, that women take part in the visiting missions to Trust Territories, and to circulate the present resolution to Member States of the United Nations."\*

Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States of America) felt that the draft resolution would be more appropriately discussed under item 12 of the agenda concerning the participation of women in the work of the United Nations.

Miss BERNARDINO (Dominican Republic) did not think it mattered under which item the draft was discussed provided it was adopted.

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\* Provisional translation

Mrs. GUEY (Haiti) congratulated the representative of the Dominican Republic on her draft resolution and the Chairman on the suggestions she had made.

Mrs. DALY (Australia) was sorry she could not support the draft resolution because her Government considered that it was for the Trusteeship Council to decide on the membership of missions.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) said that her Government agreed with the Australian Government; she would abstain from voting on the draft resolution.

Miss BERNARDINO (Dominican Republic) pointed out that, although the Trusteeship Council chose the countries which were to be members of missions, it did not choose the individuals sent by those countries. The value of the draft resolution lay in the fact that it asked the Member States elected by the Council to consider the possibility of appointing women to represent them on missions.

The CHAIRMAN suggested that the request might be made less peremptory if the French phrase: "Invite le Secrétaire général de prier les Etats membres" were substituted for the phrase: "Prie le Secrétaire général d'inviter les Etats membres".

Mrs. KHOURY (Lebanon) appreciated the standpoint of the representatives of Australia and the United Kingdom, but said the draft resolution, as the representative of the Dominican Republic had clearly shown, was not incompatible with the rights of the Trusteeship Council.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) said that, since the Trusteeship Council chose the Member States for missions and the States nominated the individuals to represent them on a mission, her Government felt that it was ultra vires for either the Commission on the Status of Women or the Economic and Social Council to discuss the question or to make recommendations on the subject. Her Government, for its part, would of course have no objection to the inclusion of women in missions.

/Mrs. KHOURY

Mrs. KHOURY (Lebanon) recalled that the United Kingdom representative had made a similar statement the previous year when the Commission had been considering a draft resolution asking Member States to appoint more women to represent them in the United Nations. That resolution had been adopted and had given results since the number of women representatives and advisers in delegations had increased. She hoped that the draft resolution submitted by the Dominican Republic would have equally successful results.

The CHAIRMAN proposed that the beginning of the operative part of the draft resolution should be replaced by the phrase: "Requests the Secretary-General to suggest to the Member States chosen by the Trusteeship Council...".

Miss BERNARDINO (Dominican Republic) was surprised at the amount of discussion to which her draft resolution had given rise, seeing that it was one of the most moderate proposals submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women. If the Commission, whose duty it was to try to eliminate discrimination on grounds of sex, was not thereby implicitly entitled to make a respectful request to Member States to include women members in the missions sent to countries where discrimination against women existed, it would have still less title to go and give political instruction to new women electors. In her opinion, the Commission would be acting within its terms of reference in adopting the draft resolution and she appealed to the small countries to support it since the great Powers which administered Trust Territories would not adopt it for reasons well known to everyone.

The CHAIRMAN asked the representative of the Dominican Republic to explain her last remark.

Miss BERNARDINO (Dominican Republic) said she had been referring to the countries which had already stated how they would vote. She was not referring to France which had been doing its best to eliminate discriminatory measures ever since 1946.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) was surprised at the statement made by the representative of the Dominican Republic. There was discrimination in the Trust Territories but it was also common in other parts of the world, particularly in the less-developed countries. That was not the point. The fact remained that the Commission should not discuss subjects which were the concern of Member States and of the Trusteeship Council. She pointed out that the members of visiting missions sent to Trust Territories came from countries other than those of the administering authorities.

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) <sup>had</sup> unfortunately received document E/CN.6/L.41 only at the beginning of the meeting and had not had time to consider it.

The CHAIRMAN said that the USSR representative could have made her comment earlier when the Commission was beginning its discussion of the Dominican Republic's draft resolution. As, however, the Commission had definite rules of procedure, the chairman must see that they were observed. In the matter at issue, the USSR representative could invoke rule 51 of the rules of procedure of Functional Commissions of the Council, to the effect that the consideration of draft resolutions should, if so requested by any member, be deferred until the next meeting on the day following their submission. She would therefore grant the request made by the USSR representative and adjourn the discussion on the draft resolution submitted by the Dominican Republic until the meeting to be held on the following Monday.

Mrs. DEMBINSKA (Poland) said that, as so many new ideas had been brought up during the discussion on the draft resolution submitted by the Dominican Republic, she would reserve the right to state her delegation's views on the contents of the draft at the meeting to be held on the following Monday.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) pointed out that half the time allotted for the session had already elapsed and the Commission still had a great deal to do. Could the Commission therefore not consider the general discussion on item 3 (d) of the agenda closed and take a vote on the draft resolution submitted by the Dominican Republic at the beginning of the meeting on Monday?

/The CHAIRMAN



The CHAIRMAN did not feel she could close the general debate at that stage but pointed out that any representative could under the rules of procedure ask for the debate to be closed at any stage of the discussion.

THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN PUBLIC LAW (E/CN.6/L.40)

The CHAIRMAN read out the draft resolution on the status of women in public law (agenda item 5) which had just been submitted. She recalled that the Commission had decided the previous day, after the general discussion on item 5, to prepare a draft resolution stressing the need to remove the prohibition on the employment of married women in public services, as such prohibition constituted a discrimination against women.

Mrs. PELETIER (Netherlands) noted that the draft resolution (E/CN.6/L.40) mentioned no delegation and asked who had sponsored it.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) said she had drafted the resolution at the Chairman's request but had been unable to complete it in time to submit it to the Ad Hoc Committee on Resolutions the previous day. It might be necessary to make a few minor drafting changes in the text of the resolution and, in particular, to give the reference number of the comparative reports mentioned in its first paragraph.

The CHAIRMAN proposed that the draft resolution should be referred to the Ad Hoc Committee on Resolutions which would make the necessary drafting changes.

It was so decided.

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE WORK OF THE UNITED NATIONS (E/CN.6/167, E/CN.6/L.28)

Mrs. GRINBERG-VINAVER (Secretariat) said that, in response to the wishes expressed by the Commission at its fourth session, the Secretariat had prepared a memorandum on the participation of women in the work of the United Nations (E/CN.6/167). The document gave information on the nature and extent of Secretariat posts held by women in 1950, outlined the principles followed in matters of

/appointment

appointment and promotion and gave a brief summary of the changes made in staff regulations since the Commission's previous session.

The Secretariat had asked for a representative of the Bureau of Personnel to be made available to the Commission to answer any questions that might be asked by members during the discussion on item 12 of the agenda.

Miss SIEU-DUNG ZUNG (China) said her delegation was satisfied with the contents of the Secretary-General's memorandum which showed that the new staff regulations made a clean sweep of a large number of inequalities which had formerly existed between staff of both sexes. She was glad to note that action had thus been taken to meet the views expressed by the Commission at its fourth session on the need to delete some discriminatory provisions from the staff regulations.

There was, however, a secondary matter on which she would like the Commission to take action: under rule 25 of the Provisional Staff Regulations adopted by the General Assembly at its first session, a male staff member was entitled to travelling expenses for his wife and dependent children accompanying him on annual leave, but a female staff member was entitled to travelling expenditure only for her dependent children. That difference should be eliminated, but she did not think the question was sufficiently important to call for a resolution. The Secretariat might itself take the initiative and remove that inequality.

Miss BERNARDINO (Dominican Republic) recalled that her delegation had voted at San Francisco for the adoption of Article 8 of the Charter which stated that the United Nations would place no restrictions on the eligibility of men and women in any capacity and under conditions of equality in its principal and subsidiary organs. There seemed to have been some reluctance in implementing that Article because the number of women holding the post of director in the United Nations remained very small. To justify the disproportion existing between the number of men and women in senior posts, it was alleged that women were either not trained to carry out important administrative duties or else did not wish to do so. That was not in accordance with the facts and the only possible conclusion was that the world at present was organized by men and it was hard for women to find a place in it. Whereas a man was not usually required to show exceptional qualifications for exercising certain functions, a woman was supposed to have undergone extremely advanced training before she was given an important post.

/Admittedly,



Admittedly, however, the Secretary-General of the United Nations had made a great effort to assure men and women equal opportunities for appointment and promotion in the Secretariat. While expressing their gratification on that score, the Dominican, Lebanese, Mexican and United States delegations had felt it advisable to submit a draft resolution (E/CN.6/L.28) providing that the Economic and Social Council should request the Secretary-General to obtain from specialized agencies reports as to the number and proportion of women employed in their secretariats, and to continue to appoint women to positions in the Secretariat of the United Nations.

She hoped that the Secretary-General would not merely carry out that request but would appoint women to specially important posts, thus giving tangible expression to the principle of equality which should prevail in the United Nations.

#### ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMISSION'S WORK

Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States of America), speaking on a point of order, asked whether it would not be possible for the Commission to discuss only one or two of the <sup>new</sup> questions on its agenda at its morning meetings. It would be to the benefit of the Commission's work if its members knew in advance what questions they would have to discuss. She had not known that the participation of women in the work of the United Nations was to be discussed during the current meeting.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the Commission would not be able to finish its agenda on time if it discussed only two questions a day. She announced that the Ad Hoc Committee on Resolutions would meet in the afternoon; it would discuss the draft resolutions concerning paragraph (c) of item 3 (Programmes of political education for women), the draft resolutions concerning item 4 (The nationality of married women), the new text for paragraph (a) of item 5 (The status of women in public law -- public services and functions) and perhaps also a draft resolution on item 13 (Report of the Inter-American Commission of Women) the general debate on which had been closed. The Committee had still to take a decision on the draft resolution concerning paragraphs (a) and (b) of item 3 which some members of the Commission had asked to have postponed.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.