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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Fourth Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SEVENTY-FIFTH MEETING

Held at Lake Success, New York,
on Monday, 15 May 1950, at 3 p.m.

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<u>Chairman:</u>	Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX	France
<u>Members:</u>	Miss McCORKINDALE	Australia
	Miss ZUNG	China
	Miss MORALES	Costa Rica
	Miss PEDERSEN	Denmark
	Mrs. TSAIDARIS	Greece
	Mrs. SEN	India
	Mrs. KHOURY	Lebanon
	Mrs. CASTILLO LEDON	Mexico
	Mrs. PEKTAS	Turkey
	Miss SUTHERLAND	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
	Mrs. GOLDMAN	United States of America
	Mrs. URDANETA	Venezuela

Representatives of specialized agencies:

Miss FAIRCHILD	International Labour Organisation(ILO)
Miss CHATON	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Representatives of non-governmental organizations:

<u>Category B:</u> Mrs. CARTER	International Council of Women
Miss TOMLINSON	International Federation of Business and Professional Women
Miss LAGEMANN	International Federation of Friends of the Young Woman
Miss ROBB	International Federation of University Women
Miss ZIZZAMIA	International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues
Miss ARNOLD	World's Young Women's Christian Association

<u>Also present:</u> Mrs. MENDOZA BARRET	Inter-American Commission for Women
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<u>Secretariat:</u> Mr. LIN MOUSHENG	Division of Human Rights
Mrs. MENON	Secretary of the Commission

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN (E/CN.6/146)

General discussion

1. The CHAIRMAN announced that the Commission would proceed to general discussion of item 10: educational opportunities for women.

2. Miss FAIRCHILD (International Labour Organisation) said that the question of technical and vocational education had long been of interest to the International Labour Organisation, which placed its facilities at the disposal of the Commission to assist it in its work.

3. As the representative of the International Federation of Business and Professional Women had stated that morning, the ILO had been concerned with the subject of vocational and technical education for ten years. In 1939, it had adopted a recommendation on vocational training and a recommendation on apprenticeship; in 1948, a Convention on Employment Service Organization; in 1949, a recommendation on vocational guidance; and a recommendation on vocational training of adults was under discussion during the current year. The ILO
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programme on vocational and technical education applied equally to men and women, and in all the texts she had just quoted the place of women in the programme was indicated as being equal to that of men. The established policy of the ILO in its manpower operational programme was that educational services should be equally available to women.

4. For two years the ILO had been studying facilities for vocational and technical training in all parts of the world, and monographs had been produced or were in preparation dealing with conditions in Asia, Latin America and the Middle East, based on field study by ILO representatives in collaboration with the governments of the countries concerned. On the basis of its studies, the ILO had established Manpower Field Offices in Rome and in Bangalore to develop the ILO's technical and vocational guidance services to governments. Similar offices would shortly be opened in Latin America and probably in the Middle East.

5. Governmental requests to the ILO had so far dealt mainly with the training in general terms and relatively little emphasis had been placed on vocational and technical education for women. The subject was therefore reasonable for the Commission's consideration, and she hoped that it would devote particular attention to it, both because of women's need for vocational education and because governments required trained women in order to make the best possible use of their manpower resources. During and since the War there had been a considerable development in the employment of women, particularly in the United Kingdom, the United States of America and France.

6. There was a great variation in the opportunities open to women in different countries. In general, technically advanced countries, and in particular industrially advanced countries, offered women more opportunities for both training and placement than did the less developed countries. Training opportunities, of course, depended to a large extent on the state of the labour market. In the interests of the countries themselves, as they became more technically advanced, as well as in the interests of social justice, there must be fuller development of the capacities of women.

7. She again indicated that, if the Commission so desired, the ILO would be very glad to co-operate with UNESCO, and, if necessary, with the FAO in pursuing the study of the question.

8. Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) referring to the question of terminology, pointed out that the term "technical education" might be taken by some observers to cover two types of education in the United Kingdom. They had secondary technical schools and courses as part of their programme of secondary education for all boys and girls from 11 to 15. This meant secondary education with a technical rather than an academic bias, but it was not vocational education. Technical education in the strict sense of the term should be applied to the technical and vocational schools and institutions for young people after the school-leaving age of 15. She therefore urged that care should be taken to ensure the use of a standard terminology when collecting information.

9. She emphasized the importance of co-operation with the ILO in collecting information on vocational training and guidance.

10. Mrs. CASTILLO LEDON (Mexico) said she had been much interested in the UNESCO representative's statement and had been glad to hear her comments on the report of the Inter-American Commission for Women to UNESCO on discrimination in educational opportunities for women. She wished to remind her, however, that the Inter-American Commission for Women was an official governmental organization, having a different status from the non-governmental organizations which had been mentioned in the same connexion. She was sure that the Inter-American Commission for Women would continue to give all possible help to UNESCO.

11. Speaking of Mexico's contribution to education, she drew attention to the law by which every person able to read and write was under the obligation to impart that knowledge to another, and suggested that that method might profitably be followed by other countries in which illiteracy existed.

12. The education of country women posed a considerable problem in most Latin American countries. Certain resolutions referring to the question had already been adopted by the Commission, but she thought that it should adopt a more specific resolution urging particular attention to the subject now that fuller information was available.

13. On the question of equal educational opportunities for women, she felt that the Commission should aim at co-education, rather than separate education for men and women. Women should be entitled to exactly the same education as men and there should be no suggestion that their intellectual capacity was lower than that of men.

/14. Miss MORALES

14. Miss MORALES (Costa Rica), quoting the definition of citizenship in the most recent Constitution of her country, pointed out that the aim of education should be to form good citizens, of both sexes. She therefore felt that the question of women's education should not be over-emphasized merely because women had recently acquired the right to vote. Men required education just as much as women particularly in political matters.

15. The CHAIRMAN requested members, and representatives of specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations, to submit their suggestions and draft resolutions on the subject to the Chairman of the Committee on Resolutions as soon as possible.

16. Summing up the Commission's general conclusions, she indicated that it was the Commission's intention to ask UNESCO to continue its study of the subject. The study might be continued on a regional basis, or a general programme of action might be visualized. The Commission's resolution would deal with technical training, and rural education, and reference might also be made to the possibility of working women continuing their intellectual training. Other points which had been raised were equality of opportunity; reservation of bursaries and scholarships for men; and the necessity of assisting intellectuals still in displaced persons camps to find suitable positions. The question of professions in which only women were employed should also be taken up.

17. Speaking as representative of France, she thought that the question of education in under-developed countries was very complex. The United Kingdom representative had stated that the development of education in under-developed countries must be a function of economic development. That was true to a certain extent. She pointed out, however, that in some under-developed countries such as Nigeria and the Gold Coast, a considerable impetus had been given to the development of education by the metropolitan country before the economic situation of the territory strictly justified it. The question was not solely one of financial possibilities or of the provision of technical equipment, because it was nearly always possible to obtain the necessary material and equipment, even with limited resources. The real difficulty lay in the recruitment of teaching personnel. She had, therefore, been much interested in what the Turkish representative had said that morning concerning the training of teachers, since her own country had encountered the same difficulties. Boys, and more particularly girls, from under-developed territories who received their

education in the metropolitan country were frequently unwilling to return to teach in those territories and it was difficult to convince them that that was their duty.

18. In view of the dispersion of the population in such territories and the high rate of illiteracy, a particularly large teaching body was required. A practical solution, therefore, appeared to be to appeal to those people who could read to teach others. An experiment along those lines had been tried in Morocco and some 6,000 or more children had thus been taught. The Administration appealed to those who could do so to teach the children and adults in their immediate neighbourhood a vernacular language. Material and equipment for the establishment of small teaching units was provided by the Administration, and government inspectors, who were themselves qualified teachers, came around periodically to encourage and advise the amateur teachers, and to select children of particular intellectual promise so that they might receive a more formal education. In general, it was only women who had sufficient time to establish such schools. The system had proved very useful, and she suggested that the Commission should ask governments to adopt it and give it their support where it had already been put into practice.

19. Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) did not think that there was any substantial difference between the views of France and the United Kingdom with respect to the question of educational opportunities for women. It was, of course true that the United Kingdom had provided considerable sums for social services and education in under-developed areas, but the high level of education attained in some countries could not be achieved in those areas until they had reached a more advanced stage of economic development.

20. With regard to the Chairman's reference to the Gold Coast, the United Kingdom representative pointed out that whereas sixty teachers were being trained in 1942, the figure had risen to 400 teachers last year.

/21. In conclusion

21. In conclusion, she again emphasized that educational advancement in under-developed areas must go hand in hand with economic development.

22. Miss CHATON (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) stated that obsolete legal provisions and time-honoured traditions constituted the major obstacles to equal educational opportunities for women. The elimination of those obstacles required a preparatory phase of work which would vary according to the legislation and traditions on female education in different countries. The purpose of any legislative action should be to amend or remove obsolete provisions which no longer corresponded to modern conditions.

23. The extension of compulsory education was one of the items to be taken up at the general conference on education to be held in 1951. In that connexion, particular attention should be given to the repercussions of that extension on the education of women. Even if women should be entitled by law to equal educational opportunities, it would still be necessary to educate public opinion which, under the influence of secular traditions and psychological factors, differentiated between the social roles of men and women. In view of that basic differentiation, careful consideration should be given to a plan of action to educate public opinion. In under-developed countries, education remained the jealously regarded privilege of the men. Reaction to the basic education of women had been one of defiance, and in most areas that education had been confined to instruction in child care. Traditional resistance might be overcome more easily if the organs entrusted with basic education used more women to implement part of their programmes.

24. UNESCO was closely studying the results of basic education and would probably be in a position to give advice on specific programmes for specific areas.

25. In the more highly developed countries there was still a traditional discrimination with respect to the education of women. The main task in those areas would be to bring about a change in the trend of public opinion through

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a clear presentation of the demographic, political, economic and educative aspects of the problem. It should be pointed out, for instance, that the proportion of women in the countries of the world ranged from 47 to each hundred men to 160 per hundred men, the latter figure representing the proportion of women in the population of Germany for the year 1949. It should further be indicated that greater opportunities for the professional education of women would result in the greater welfare of the population as a whole. Steps should be taken to change the traditional view that women had entire responsibility for the home but a doubtful right to extensive education. An attempt should be made to diffuse the idea that the responsibilities of the home rested equally upon all members of the family and that girls should be given the opportunity to develop their intellectual gifts.

26. Education of public opinion should be undertaken with all available means, although a careful study should be made of the existing situation before any plan of action was put into operation.

DRAFT RESOLUTION ON THE POLITICAL RIGHTS OF WOMEN (E/CN.6/L.10)

27. The CHAIRMAN invited the Commission to consider the draft resolution submitted by the representative of India on effective programmes of political education for women who had recently acquired the right to vote. In view of the fact that the question of the political rights of women had been thoroughly discussed in previous meetings, the Commission might be prepared to take a vote on the draft resolution.

28. Mrs. SEN (India) stated that points 3 and 4 of the draft resolution had been amended to read as follows:

"3. Notes that effective programmes of such education cannot be undertaken as extensively as desired in certain regions by non-governmental organizations without further assistance; and therefore

/4. Recommends

"4. Recommends to the Economic and Social Council to request the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, in consultation with the Commission on the Status of Women, to undertake a study of effective programmes of education in citizenship, such as would provide assistance to non-governmental organizations which are concerned with the political education of women in countries where women have recently acquired the right to vote or are only beginning to participate in public office".

29. Miss CHATON (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) wondered whether UNESCO would be able to provide facilities for political education for women who had recently acquired the right to vote. The organization was concerned with education in general and she did not think that it would be possible to carry out the programme suggested in the revised Indian draft resolution.

30. UNESCO proposed to disseminate propaganda on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which in itself was one way of spreading the concepts of democracy and equality. The Executive Director of UNESCO had also called upon various organizations to co-operate in that effort.

31. She thought that the current programmes of UNESCO already provided active assistance in the field of education and could not see how the organization could undertake a new task outside its accepted studies of adult education in general.

32. Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) recalled the work done after 1918, when women were first given the vote in the United Kingdom, by women's voluntary organizations in arousing the interest of women in their newly acquired rights.

33. She associated the ideas in the Indian draft resolution with the development of adult education in civic affairs.

34. Non-governmental organizations had already submitted interesting material to the Secretary-General; that documentation might be studied by the Secretariat, which could then make appropriate suggestions for its use by the Commission and by women's organizations.

35. Although she fully appreciated the difficulties which might confront UNESCO in undertaking a new task, she thought that the national branches of various women's voluntary organizations could nevertheless be supplied with valuable information to help them in the work of fostering the interest of women in their political responsibilities.

36. Mrs. MENDOZA BARRET (Inter-American Commission for Women) was opposed to the Indian draft; women did not require specialized education in order to fulfil their political responsibilities, as the draft suggested. In that matter, they did not lag behind men and to suggest that women alone needed such education would, in fact, be an act of discrimination against them.

37. The CHAIRMAN referred to the United Kingdom representative's suggestion, and pointed out that the question was not one of special political education for women, but rather of providing women's organizations with such material and suggestions as might be available, in order to arouse their interest in matters of citizenship and government.

38. Miss CHATON (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) pointed out that she had received no instructions from her Headquarters. If the Commission proposed to stress the point, then the Executive Board of UNESCO itself would have to take a decision as to whether it was in a position to fulfil the requirements.

39. Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States of America) said that the report of the UNESCO representative considerably clarified the situation.

40. The question of political consciousness on the part of women was very important. They should not be made to feel isolated and cut off from civic matters. But there was no intention to force the issue of political education upon either the Secretariat or UNESCO unless they could provide an effective aid to those governments which needed specific suggestions.

41. Once women had gained their first experience as voters they could be encouraged to join in the general activities of citizenship.

42. At the next meeting of the Commission she intended to submit a paper dealing with a new attempt in the field of political education.

43. Mrs. MENDOZA BARRET (Inter-American Commission for Women) again emphasized the point that men as well as women needed political education and that it would be wrong to stress the situation of women in that matter. So far as general education was concerned, however, she agreed that it should be applied to women in every field.

44. Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) observed that, after the initial stages of arousing women's interest in civic and governmental affairs had been passed, many women made up their minds to join one of the national political parties and political education from that point was generally undertaken by the parties themselves.

45. The important primary objective was to give help and encouragement to women who had just acquired the vote to use it wisely.

46. Mrs. URDANETA (Venezuela) pointed out that the last part of the Indian draft resolution should be amended in view of the fact that UNESCO might not be able to fulfil the tasks with which it was to be charged. The draft should therefore be referred to the Committee on Resolutions.

47. Mrs. SEN (India) was willing to accept the United Kingdom suggestion.

48. The CHAIRMAN said that the Indian draft resolution would be considered by the Committee on Resolutions and would be submitted to the Commission again at its next meeting.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.