

## COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

## SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SIXTH MEETING

Held at Lake Success, New York, on Thursday, 13 February 1947, at 11:00 a.m.

## Present:

Chairman: Mrs. Begtrup (Denmark)

Vice-Chairman: Mrs. Street (Australia)

Rapporteur: Mrs. Uralova (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic)

Members: Mrs. New (China)

Mrs. G. de Echeveria (Costa Rica)

Mrs. Lefauchaux (France)

Miss Basterrechea (Guatemala)

Mrs. Hamid Ali (India)

Mrs. Cosma (Syria)

Mrs. Popova (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)

Miss Sutherland (United Kingdom)

Miss Kenyon (United States of America)

Mrs. Urdanita (Venezuela)

Substitute: Mrs. Aguirre (Mexico)

Representatives of Specialized Agencies:

Mrs. Rowe (International Labour Organization)

Consultants of Non-Governmental Organizations:

Mrs. Fuhrmann (International Co-operative Alliance)

Miss Spiegel (World Federation of Trade Unions)

Secretariat: Mr. Humphrey (Director, Division of Human Rights)

Miss Bowerman (Secretary of the Commission)

Continued consideration of item 9 of the Agenda, Examination and study of Sections I and II of the Report of the Nuclear Sub-Commission on the Status of Women. (documents E/38/Rev.1 and E/CN.6/9).

The CHAIRMAN reviewed briefly the history of the Report prepared by the Nuclear Sub-Commission on the Status of Women, and of the work of that Sub-Commission. The report outlined the four chief aims of the

/Sub-Commission

Sub-Commission in its work of raising the status of women throughout the world. She remarked that, since the Sub-Commission had met in April 1946, a number of its suggestions, contained in the Report, had already been carried out. In view of the importance of the task of raising the status of women, the Economic and Social Council had decided to confer on the Sub-Commission the status of a full Commission on the Status of Women, whose terms of reference included the preparation of recommendations to the Economic and Social Council with respect to promoting women's rights in political, economic, social and educational fields, and with respect to any urgent problems in the field of women's rights. The Economic and Social Council had referred to the Commission for study Sections I and II of the Sub-Commission's Report.

The Chairman quoted a paragraph from page 5, document E/CN.6/9 to the effect that in the economic, social and educational fields the Commission could not only co-operate with the specialized agencies, but could also recommend to the Economic and Social Council various studies connected with the promotion of women's rights and the safeguarding of women's interests.

The Chairman then called the attention of the Commission to Section IA, Political Rights, the first of the four aims outlined in the Sub-Commission's Report (page 17, document E/38/Rev.1).

Miss KENYON (United States of America) expressed the opinion that, since the Commission was at present discussing the matter of policy, concrete proposals for the implementation of that policy should be made at a later stage, when the programme of work was under discussion.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) agreed with the United States representative.

Mrs. URALOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic), Rapporteur, stated that the question of political rights was one of the greatest importance. She invited statements by the other Members concerning recommendations by the Commission which would be most helpful to their countries.

/The CHAIRMAN

The CHAIRMAN stated that since the General Assembly Resolution on the Political Rights of Women was a separate item on the Agenda, practical measures for the securing of those rights might more properly be discussed under that item. She agreed with the United States representative that the present discussion should be limited to considerations of policy.

Mrs. HAMID ALI (India) urged the adoption of the four principles outlined under Political Rights (page 17, document E/38/Rev.1). She felt that the Commission should state that in countries in which universal suffrage did not exist, its gradual introduction within the next ten to twenty years was recommended. She wondered whether the phrase "equal right to vote" was understood to apply to both men and women.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) enquired whether universal suffrage was not in the province of the Commission on Human Rights rather than in that of the present Commission.

The CHAIRMAN and the representatives of India, the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics agreed that overlapping of principle between the two Commissions was both inevitable and desirable; the programme of work, however, should be so co-ordinated as to avoid duplication.

Mrs. PCPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) asked the Indian representative for a precise formulation of her proposal. The Byelorussian representative had raised the question of discussing substance; the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics representative also had proposals to make.

Mrs. HAMID ALI (India) stated that she fully supported the four points given in section IA, under Political Rights. She proposed that the words "universal suffrage" be followed, by the words: "where there is no universal suffrage, it should come in gradually by stages, within ten to twenty years."

Mrs. STREET (Australia) agreed with the Chairman that the time limit was not necessary. She cited several countries in which universal suffrage had been introduced and operated successfully without lengthy preparations. The educational level in those countries had been no obstacle to universal suffrage. The time limit proposed by the Indian representative appeared unduly long.

/The CHAIRMAN said

The CHAIRMAN said that in its Report (page 22, document E/38/Rev.1) the Sub-Commission requested the Economic and Social Council to direct an appeal to Members who had not yet granted suffrage to women to take such action at the earliest date possible within their frame of government. In certain cases, legislative and constitutional reasons might occasion several years' delay before Members were able to take such action.

Mrs. HAMID ALI (India) said that, in setting a time limit, she had given consideration to non-self-governing territories, which might require a longer period.

Mrs. STREET (Australia) suggested that the recommendation might say that, with the exception of non-self-governing territories, countries should introduce universal suffrage within one or two years. She stressed that universal suffrage was the most effective approach to the improvement of economic and social conditions, since candidates for governmental offices gave primary consideration to the needs of the electorate.

The representatives of India, France and the United Kingdom felt that no distinction should be made between non-self-governing territories and sovereign States. The United Kingdom representative stressed the fact that cultural backwardness was not confined to the non-self-governing territories. She felt that a recommendation to Member States who had not yet done so to grant universal suffrage was advisable, but without the time limit.

Miss KENYON (United States of America) supported the Indian proposal, but urged that the mention of a time limit should be omitted. The Commission desired effective implementation of all its principles with the least possible delay. She pointed out that the Commission was a permanent body, which could keep itself informed as to the manner in which its principles were being carried out and make further recommendations to Member States who delayed unduly.

Mrs. HAMID ALI (India) agreed that the time limit might be omitted, and that Member States should be urged to grant universal suffrage, equal right to vote, equal right to be elected, and equal right to hold public office with the least possible delay.

/Miss KENYON (United States of America)

Miss KENYON (United States of America) felt that the Indian proposal urging immediate action should be introduced in the first paragraph under the general heading "Policy", and should thus apply not only to the political, but to the civil, social and economic, and educational fields as well.

Mrs. de ECHEVERRIA (Costa Rica) recommended that all governments be asked, within the limits of their constitutions, to grant women the right to vote at the earliest possible opportunity.

Mrs. HAMID ALI (India), in answer to a question by the CHAIRMAN, said that while she regarded the attainment of political rights as the most important factor without which under-developed countries would not be able to reach the same standard as advanced countries, she would not press her point. She would be willing to request the granting of all rights at the earliest possible time.

The CHAIRMAN, speaking on behalf of Denmark, pointed out that the DANISH delegation to the General Assembly had also regarded political rights as the outstanding factor, which explained the resolution introduced by the DANISH delegation and passed by the General Assembly.

Miss KENYON (United States of America) suggested that if the attainment of political rights were to be listed as the most urgent matter in the Commission's programme for action, the question might be put in its right perspective.

Mrs. URALOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) pointed out that it was essential to implement the principles expressed in the General Assembly resolution. To do so women would have to have economic as well as political rights, as they had had for twenty-nine years in the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic.

In her country women realized the importance of these rights not only for themselves but for their families. In fact, it was often difficult for them to understand how women in other countries could exist without them.

Article 97 of the Byelorussian Constitution guaranteed women equal rights including the right to work, equal pay, social security, maternity and child care. Article 98 guaranteed that there should be no discrimination regarding race or nationality. Race prejudice was punishable by law, since the equality expressed in these Articles constituted the fundamental law of the country.

The women of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic took pride in these laws, and they also took advantage of them. Not only were women represented in every trade and profession, but over twenty thousand women served as deputies of elective bodies, while 164 women had been elected to the Parliament of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic.

Many of these women were highly educated, while others had had no educational opportunities. Educational qualifications as such, she thought, were not all important since real education came with political rights and experience.

The women of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, having gained their full rights, identified themselves with their country. During the war, and during three years of Nazi occupation, they knew what they were fighting for. Fifty thousand of them participated actively in the war as guerillas. She therefore felt that in discussing the political rights of women throughout the world, the Commission should make recommendations of a nature most helpful to women in those countries where they had not yet achieved full emancipation. It was essential that they should obtain their political rights at the earliest possible opportunity, and she would therefore propose an addition to the effect that the General Assembly should periodically hear the views of women from countries which had not yet granted women their rights.

In speaking of political rights it was essential to mention economic rights as well, such as the right to work, maternity and child care, etc. She fully sympathized with the member from India, realizing how hard it would be to live without the basic rights.

/The CHAIRMAN asked

The CHAIRMAN asked the member from the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic to put her proposal in writing, adding that the Commission's recommendation would have to be made to the Economic and Social Council rather than to the General Assembly directly.

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) suggested that each member's observations, addenda, and amendments should be considered as additional proposals in the Commission's report.

Mrs. STREET (Australia) moved that the Commission adopt paragraph IA as it stood (document E/38/Rev.1, page 17).

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) drew the Commission's attention to the introductory part of paragraph IA, pointing out that it should include some basic principles as expressed by the Sub-Commission on page 16, second paragraph of the same document. She thought it was essential to restate the need for women to fight against the remnants of Fascism and to work toward democratic development and international co-operation. Without including such guiding principles, she did not think the Commission would fulfil the hopes of the women of the world.

The CHAIRMAN thought the member from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had introduced a new point which she asked her to move formally after having put it into writing. She then called for a vote on the Australian motion.

DECISION: Paragraph IA was adopted unanimously.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) referring to the question of guiding principles, said she felt that these were covered in the United Nations Charter and therefore needed no restating.

The CHAIRMAN ruled that discussion on the question of guiding principles should be deferred until after the Commission had examined points I and II of the Sub-Commission's report.

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) asked that a phrase to the effect that equality should be without distinction as to race,

/language

language or religion, should be included under paragraph A, a principle already elaborated by the members from India, Mexico and others, but not included in the paragraph.

Miss KENYON (United States of America) in reply to the CHAIRMAN who pointed out that paragraph IA had already been voted upon, moved to re-open discussion on this subject, thus affording the member from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to introduce her amendment.

Mrs. STREET (Australia) felt it would be wiser to re-open discussion on the subject at such a time as the member from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had put her addendum into writing.

The CHAIRMAN asked the member from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to present her addendum at the afternoon session.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

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