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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
 Fifth Session
 SUMMARY RECORD OF THE EIGHTY-THIRD MEETING
 Held at Lake Success, New York,
 on Monday, 30 April 1951, at 3 p.m.

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<u>Chairman:</u>	Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX	France
<u>Members:</u>	Mrs. DALY	Australia
	Miss ZUNG	China
	Mrs. de GONZALEZ	Cuba
	Miss BERNARDINO	Dominican Republic
	Mrs. TSALDARIS	Greece
	Mrs. GUERY	Haiti
	Mrs. SEN	India
	Miss LAVALLE URBINA	Mexico
	Mrs. PELETIER	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

Observers:

Mrs. ACUNA de CHACON } Costa Rica
Miss MORALES }

Representative of a specialized agency:

Mr. WINSLOW International Labour Organisation
(ILO)

Representative of an inter-governmental organization:

Mrs. ACUNA de CHACON Inter-American Commission of Women

Representatives of non-governmental organizations:

Category A: Miss KAHN World Federation of Trade Unions
Mrs. FOX World Federation of United Nations
Associations

Category B: Mrs. DAYGL All India Women's Conference
Miss AIETA Catholic International Union for
Social Service
Mrs. NOIDE Commission of Churches on
International Affairs
Miss GUTHRIE International Alliance of Women
Mrs. FREEMAN } International Council of Women
Mrs. PARSONS }
Mrs. HYMER International Federation of
Business and Professional Women
Mrs. SCHWARZENBACH International Federation of Friends
of Young Women
Mrs. EVANS International Federation of
Miss MCGILLICUDY University Women
Mr. BEER International League for the Rights
of Man
Mrs. ZIZZANIA International Union of Catholic
Women's Leagues
Miss DINGMAN International Union for Child
Welfare
Miss PALMER } World's Young Women's Christian
Miss PERRY } Association

Secretariat:

Mrs. TENNISON WOODS Representative of the Assistant
Secretary-General
Mrs. GRINBERG-VINAVER Secretary of the Commission

/ADOPTION OF

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (E/CN.6/164, E/CN.6/164/Add.1)

The CHAIRMAN called for suggestions for the inclusion of new items in the provisional agenda.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) pointed out that document E/CN.6/163 contained general information concerning the status of women in Trust Territories. The political rights of women in Non-Self-Governing Territories had already been fully discussed at the Commission's fourth session, and the document now submitted on the status of women in Non-Self-Governing Territories (E/CN.6/159) related ^{only} to the subjects dealt with in items 4 and 5. She therefore proposed that item 3 (d) should be amended to read: "Information concerning the status of women in Trust Territories" and that document E/CN.6/159 should be taken up in connexion with the discussion of items 4 and 5.

The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the United Kingdom representative's proposal.

The United Kingdom representative's proposal was adopted by 6 votes to 2, with 1 abstention.

Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States of America) said the ^{provisional} agenda did not provide for a review of the question of the nationality of married women, and proposed that item 4 should be amended to include that subject. She also suggested that a report on the progress made in returning Greek children to their homes might be given under item 5. Item 10, participation of women in the work of the United Nations might be expanded to permit a review of the work of women in technical assistance. Finally, a new item might be placed on the agenda dealing with the Commission's future plans and priority of work.

Miss BERNARDINO (Dominican Republic) supported the United States representative's suggestion that the Commission should discuss the nationality of married women, and the question of the Greek children, but proposed that the latter subject should be dealt with as a separate item.

Mrs. TSALIKIAN (Greece) also requested that the question of Greek children should be placed on the agenda, in order that the Commission might be informed of the current situation and the action taken in the matter.

/Miss SUTHERLAND

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) would not oppose any of the United States representative's suggestions, but felt strongly that the Commission should limit its comments to the action taken on those questions since its last session and should not reopen the discussion.

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) reminded the members of the Commission that they had agreed at their first meeting that the agenda was already sufficiently full and provided a comprehensive plan of work. She warned the Commission of the danger of overburdening its agenda, and moved that the proposed new items should not be included on the agenda.

Mrs. DEMBINSKA (Poland) supported the USSR representative's motion.

Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States) explained that the items which she proposed for inclusion were not new items which would give rise to a substantive discussion, but questions with which the Commission had already dealt and on the progress of which it should be informed.

The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the proposal that the question of the nationality of married women should be placed on the agenda as a separate item.

The motion was adopted by 10 votes to 2, with no abstentions.

The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the inclusion of the question of Greek children as a separate item on the agenda.

The motion was adopted by 9 votes to 2, with no abstentions.

The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the proposal for the inclusion of a study on the participation of women in the work of technical assistance under item 10 of the agenda.

The proposal was adopted by 8 votes to none, with 3 abstention.

The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the inclusion of an item on the Commission's programme of work.

The motion was adopted by 11 votes to none, with 2 abstentions.

There being no objections, the provisional agenda, as amended, was adopted.

The CHAIRMAN proposed that the question of nationality of married women should be taken up after the existing item 3; the question of Greek children after the existing item 8; the report of the Inter-American Commission of Women after the existing item 10; and the Commission's programme of work after the existing item 11.

It was so agreed.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) and Mrs. FELETIER (Netherlands), urged that the Commission should try to complete its work in two weeks, rather than three. It had done so the previous year, although it had had a heavy agenda, and it should be able to do so again if the debates were not unnecessarily prolonged.

The CHAIRMAN agreed that the Commission should attempt to finish its work in two weeks.

She proposed that two committees should be set up to assist the work of the Commission: a committee on resolutions and a committee for the examination of communications received by the Secretariat.

It was so agreed.

The CHAIRMAN proposed that each committee should have five members; that would be sufficiently large to be representative but not so large as to slow down the progress of the work. She suggested that the Committee on Resolutions should be composed of the representatives of the Dominican Republic, India, the Netherlands, the USSR, and the United States of America, and the Committee on Communications of the representatives of Australia, Cuba, Greece, Poland, and the United Kingdom and that it should be left to each Committee to appoint its own chairman.

It was so agreed.

/With regard

With regard to collaboration with non-governmental organizations, the CHAIRMAN suggested that the representatives of those bodies should be allowed to participate in the discussion of any item which was of particular interest to their organization.

It was so agreed.

POLITICAL RIGHTS OF WOMEN (E/CN.6/160, E/CN.6/163, E/1712, A/1342)

Mrs. GRINBERG-VINAVER (Secretariat) introduced the documentation available to the Commission on the subject of political rights of women. Document A/1342, a memorandum by the Secretary-General on the political rights of women, contained the legislative texts of various countries on the subject and listed those countries which had granted political rights to women and those which had not. A draft convention on the political rights of women, based on various national legislations and on the Bogota Convention of 1948, was given in document E/CN.6/160. For item 3(c) of the agenda, the Secretary-General had submitted a report on the political education of women. The document on the status of women in Trust Territories (E/CN.6/163) was a compilation of replies by governments to the questionnaire circulated by the Secretary-General, and showed the progress achieved in that field since the previous year.

Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States of America) expressed her appreciation of the documents available.

In the absence of the Lebanese representative, she drew the Commission's attention to recent events in Lebanon, where women had achieved the right to vote in municipal elections for the first time.

She hoped that the representative of Haiti would tell the Commission of the new rights which had been granted to women in her country since the Commission's previous session.

/Mrs. POPOVA

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) pointed out that the preamble of the Charter reaffirmed faith in the dignity and worth of the human person and the equal rights of men and women, while Article 1 referred to the United Nations as a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of their common ends. In 1946 the General Assembly by its resolution 56 (I) had recommended all Member States to take the necessary steps to give women equal rights with men. The question of women's political rights had been considered at every session of the Commission and on several occasions by the Economic and Social Council.

In many countries, however, women still did not have equal rights with men. In the United States, women had had the right to vote since 1920, although in most states that right was limited by tax and property requirements. Millions of women who were American citizens, particularly many women in the working classes, were still unable to vote, and state laws continued to restrict rights which were granted by federal law. There were very few women in the Government of the United States; in the Eighty-Second Congress there were nine women, one in the Senate and eight in the House of Representatives. The "Women Lawyers' Journal" mentioned the question of laws discriminating against married women. Many of the laws apparently protecting women in employment were intended to defend men from feminine competition. There were laws prohibiting women from serving on juries. Finally, racial discrimination deprived millions of American women of their rights, particularly in connexion with marriage.

In the United Kingdom, women officially enjoyed full political rights, but there were many restrictions, since electoral rights were limited by property requirements, and working women were hampered by the lack of equal educational opportunities. There were no women in the House of Lords, and only twenty-two in the House of Commons.

In the Union of South Africa the discrimination against coloured people deprived many women of their rights, and she quoted a case reported in the "Pretoria News" of an Englishman who had been sentenced by a court for wanting to marry a coloured girl.

There were very few women in political life in Turkey, and in the Latin American countries women's rights were very limited. In some countries, such as Haiti, Colombia, and El Salvador, women had no political rights at all. In support of her statement she referred to the Secretary-General's memorandum on constitutions, electoral laws and other legal instruments relating to the franchise of women and their eligibility to public office and functions (A/1342). Sometimes rights were granted on paper, but not in practice.

In the Trust Territories administered by the United States, the United Kingdom, Belgium and other countries, the position of the indigenous people was as bad as it had always been. In Nauru, for instance, which was administered jointly by Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, there was no participation by the indigenous population in the government. She referred to the 1949 Report of the Administering Authorities. Women therefore could not take any part in public life. The same was true of Uganda, Tanganyika, Nyasaland and other Territories where the native population had no vote and therefore women could have no political life. In Malaya women were still in the position of slaves, and it had even been reported in the "Pakistan Times" that girls were openly sold in the streets of Singapore.

In the USSR, however, women had equal rights in all respects, which were guaranteed by article 132 of the Constitution. There were 208 women deputies to the Supreme Soviet, and there were many women on the local and national Soviets. Women had achieved great success in all walks of life in all the Republics of the USSR. Mothers were given special assistance to enable them to participate in public life. In the USSR women were really equal to men, while in the United States, although they appeared so, in reality they were not.

The Commission on the Status of Women had a fine record in the work of helping women to achieve political equality. In many countries women still had no real rights, and she hoped that the Commission would make an effort to help them.

Miss BERNARDINO (Dominican Republic) reserved her right to speak later on the political rights of women. She thought that the representative of the USSR was trying to confuse the issue. Women in the Dominican Republic did enjoy

/political rights,

political rights, the best proof of which was that she herself was serving on the Commission in the capacity of her country's Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary. It was true that in 1949 there had been no woman in the legislative bodies of the Dominican Republic but that was merely because the only woman in the legislature had resigned her post in order to take up a higher one.

Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States of America) wanted to correct certain erroneous statements about the United States made by the USSR representative, although she would admit that the rights of women were not always fully implemented. Referring to the Secretary-General's memorandum (A/1342), she thought that it would be helpful if the Secretary-General would include information as to the year when women's suffrage was first effectively granted in each country. Extracts in the memorandum were always taken from the constitution in force in countries, which, while stating the actual legal position, did not always give a true picture of the situation. She would revert to the subject later.

Mrs. GUERY (Haiti) reported that, owing to the efforts of women's organizations, the principle of equal political rights was recognized in the new Haitian Constitution of November 1950, but the exercise of those rights was still being postponed, and for that reason she felt the need of a convention on political rights of women.

Mrs. TSALDARIS (Greece) wanted to give the Commission some additional information on events which had occurred in Greece since the previous session. As she had stated during the fourth session, until April 1949 only women over thirty who could read and write had been allowed to vote. A decree-law of 29 April 1949 had granted the franchise to every woman over twenty-five, and also provided that women could be elected to municipal councils. The Minister of the Interior had exercised the prerogative he enjoyed pending the elections and had immediately appointed two women to the municipal council of Athens. The alternate representative of Greece on the Commission, Mrs. Mantzoulinou, was one of those municipal councillors, and had fulfilled the duties of Secretary-General of the municipality of Athens, a post to which she had been unanimously elected. The decree-law also provided that after 1953 women would be eligible as mayors.

Over 500,000 women had voted in the elections of 15 April 1951 and a number had been elected to the municipal councils. The exact figures would be

known in a few days, when the Minister of the Interior had published the final results of the elections.

In 1943 only 2,000 women had registered as voters; but the smallness of the number had been due less to any lack of interest on the part of women than to the restrictions imposed on them by the law. Those restrictions had been abolished owing largely to the participation of women in the country's social activities and to their large and increasing representation in the liberal professions.

There was every evidence that the Greek Government intended still further to extend women's political rights.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) expressed her satisfaction at the new way in which the Secretariat had set out the information on the political rights in existence in different countries. It was unfortunate that there were still sixteen countries which granted no rights to women, but the progress made in twenty-one other countries in recent years should be noted.

She wanted to correct a statement made by the USSR representative. There was no property qualification for voting in the United Kingdom. There was a simple residence qualification, which deprived no one of the right to vote. If the USSR representative had read the reports on the Trust Territories, she would have realized that her statements on the subject were inaccurate.

The CHAIRMAN agreed that the granting of political rights was bound to be slow work. She called for a discussion on the draft convention on political rights of women, which might lead to passing a general resolution. She read the draft convention prepared by the Secretariat (document E/CN.6/160) and asked members for their opinions on the general principle of the convention itself.

Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States of America) thought that while expressing its satisfaction at the abolition of certain types of discrimination existing in some countries, the Commission should not lose sight of its most important goal, namely, the achievement of full voting rights for all women throughout the world. The establishment of such rights was essential, not only to ensure full participation by women in the national life of their countries, but also to ensure full support for the United Nations throughout the world.

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), replying to the United Kingdom representative, remarked that facts must be faced; it was necessary to recognize the unpleasant truth that discriminatory conditions existed in the United Kingdom and that steps should be taken to eliminate them.

With respect to the draft convention, she felt that its adoption could do little to further the Commission's aims. Of the fourteen original

signatories of the Bogota Convention of April 1948, only three had ratified the Convention and put it into effect in their countries by 15 January 1951. One signatory State still retained in its constitution a provision making voting compulsory for men, but had adopted no provision regarding women. Colombia, Guatemala and Peru, all original signatories, had granted virtually no political rights to women; even in the United States of America, which officially granted full rights to women, the number of women in Congress was negligible. In Mrs. Popova's view, all those facts showed clearly that the adoption of a draft convention would not be a realistic step toward achievement of equal political rights for women; for that reason her delegation proposed other, more concrete measures in the draft resolution which it would present subsequently.

Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States of America) recalled that her delegation had already submitted, jointly with the delegations of Mexico and Lebanon, a draft resolution on the political rights of women (E/CN.6/L.26). She would prefer it to be introduced by the representative of Lebanon on her arrival, and pointed out that the text might perhaps be expanded to include the question of a draft convention.

Miss BERNARDINO (Dominican Republic) had an amendment to the draft convention which she was not prepared to submit until the following day; she hoped, therefore, that no final decision would be taken at the current meeting.

The CHAIRMAN reiterated her view that the Commission should, if possible, take a decision of principle at the current meeting on the question whether or not to adopt a draft convention on the political rights of women. That would save time and effort, since if the Commission decided to adopt a draft convention, it might prove unnecessary to adopt a second and more general resolution on the subject. Once a decision had been taken on the general principle involved, the Commission could then proceed, at its next meeting, to discuss the text proposed by the Secretariat, as well as all amendments and alternative texts submitted by members of the Commission; a general debate could be held, and the Resolutions Committee could draw up and submit a composite text for approval by the Commission.

For her part, while recognizing that the adoption of a draft convention would by no means provide a final solution for the problem of political rights for women, the Chairman felt that it could be a constructive and desirable step to take.

Mrs. SEN (India) proposed that the discussion on the draft convention be deferred until the Commission had before it the proposed USSR draft resolution on the political rights of women.

Mrs. TSALDARIS (Greece) drew attention to the fact that there had been considerable divergence of views in the Economic and Social Council during its discussion of the question the preceding year. Certain members of the Council had felt strongly that increased political rights for women could be more effectively promoted through propaganda and education than by the adoption of a convention, and had pointed out that many Governments would have to modify their national legislation to a considerable extent before they could ratify such a convention. Nevertheless, she felt that the Commission should maintain its previous decision and discuss the text of a draft convention.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) maintained the views she had expressed at the preceding session of the Commission; she was opposed to the adoption of a convention because the procedure already being followed was bringing results. A convention was not needed in those countries which had already granted or were about to grant political rights to women, and it would be of little value in those countries which had so far refused to consider granting such rights. Accordingly she would abstain in the vote on any text of such a convention.

Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States of America) pointed out that the proposed convention would be of little direct influence on her country, as women already enjoyed full rights to vote and to hold office under a system which provided for free elections and free choice of candidates. She had supported the proposal for a draft convention at the Commission's preceding session because her delegation wished to do everything in its power to uphold the interests of women in other countries who did not yet enjoy the same political rights.

Mrs. GUERY (Haiti) supported the adoption of a convention as a desirable and effective means of action.

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) observed that most members of the Commission had had insufficient time to acquaint themselves thoroughly with the large mass of documentation before them relating to all the items on the agenda. She suggested, therefore, that the Commission should suspend its meetings for one day in order to allow for further study of the documents.

The CHAIRMAN could not support the USSR suggestion, in view of the Commission's decision to finish its work within two weeks if possible. She suggested that the discussion of item 3 (c), "Study of information on programmes of political education for women", might be postponed, since it involved more extensive documentation, but that the Commission should proceed with the discussion of item 3 (a) and (b) the following morning.

After some discussion, the Chairman's suggestion was adopted.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.