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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Fifth Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE EIGHTY-FIFTH MEETING

Held at Lake Success, New York,  
on Tuesday, 1 May 1951, at 3 p.m.

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<u>Chairman:</u>	Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX	France
<u>Members:</u>	Mrs. DALY	Austral
	Miss ZUNG	China
	Mrs. MEDEROS de GONZALEZ	Cuba
	Miss BERNARDINO	Dominican Republic
	Mrs. TSALDARIS	Greece
	Mrs. GUERY	Haiti
	Mrs. SEN	India
	*Miss LAVALLE URBINA*	Mexico
	Miss PELETTIER	Netherlands
	Mrs. DEMBINSKA	Poland
	Mrs. POPOVA	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

\* Alternate

Members (continued):

Miss SUTHERLAND United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Mrs. GOLDMAN United States of America

Observers:

Mrs. ACUNA de CHACON )  
Miss MORALES ) Costa Rica

Representatives of specialized agencies:

Mrs. MYRDAL United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Dr. INGALLS World Health Organization (WHO)

Representative of an inter-governmental organization:

Mrs. ACUNA de CHACON Inter-American Commission of Women

Representatives of non-governmental organizations:Category A:

Mrs. KAHN World Federation of Trade Unions

Mrs. FOX World Federation of United Nations Associations

Category B:

Mrs. VERGARA Catholic International Union for Social Service

Miss GUTHRIE )  
Mrs. MAHON ) International Alliance of Women

Miss SLEEPER International Council of Nurses

Mrs. HYMER International Federation of Business and Professional Women

Mrs. SCHWARZENBACH )  
Mrs. LAGERMAN ) International Federation of Friends of Young Women

Mrs. EVANS )  
Miss McGillicuddy ) International Federation of University Women

Mrs. ZIZZANIA International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues

Miss SCHAIN Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations

Mrs. FROELICH World Union of Women for International Concord (member of the Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations)

Mrs. STUART World's Women's Christian Temperance Union

Miss PALMER )  
Miss PERRY ) World's Young Women's Christian Association

Secretariat:

Mrs. TENISON WOODS Representative of the Assistant Secretary-General

Mrs. GRINBERG-VINAVER Secretary of the Commission

INFORMATION CONCERNING THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN TRUST TERRITORIES (E/CN.6/163)

The CHAIRMAN invited the Commission to take up the consideration of the Secretary-General's report on the status of women in Trust Territories (E/CN.6/163).

Miss SUPHERLAND (United Kingdom) proposed that the Commission should express its appreciation of the Secretariat's work in preparing the document, and take note of the document in its report.

Miss BERNARDINO (Dominican Republic) had certain observations to make in her two-fold capacity as representative of her Government on the Commission and on the Trusteeship Council. Her delegation had often pointed out in the Council that much remained to be done in the field of women's rights in the Trust Territories.

Recalling her own experience as a member of the Committee on Petitions of the Council, she explained that many petitions had been received from women in Trust Territories concerning their educational and health problems. Her delegation had always favoured assistance to those women, and on all occasions the Administering Authorities had shown themselves sympathetic and more than willing to co-operate. Originally the annual reports submitted by the several Administering Authorities had dealt with the population of each Territory as a whole; now, however, it was a source of satisfaction to note that some reports gave information on the status of women in separate chapters headed "Status of Women". At the preceding session of the Council, she had noted with particular satisfaction the annual report on the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, in which the Administering Authority had shown a sympathetic attitude toward the suggestions made by members of the Council concerning improvement of the status of women in the Territory.

She thought the Commission should ask the Secretary-General to continue to furnish all available statistical material concerning the status of women in the Trust Territories, and that the Council should be urged to include at least one woman in each of its Visiting Missions in the future.

/The CHAIRMAN

The CHAIRMAN proposed that the Resolutions Committee should be asked to prepare a draft resolution for adoption by the Commission, incorporating both the United Kingdom proposal and the suggestions of the representative of the Dominican Republic.

It was so decided.

Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States of America) wished to clear up any misunderstanding on the part of some members of the Commission concerning the territories of Hawaii and Alaska. Although those territories were considered in the United Nations to be Non-Self-Governing Territories, it should be made clear that their inhabitants, including women, had enjoyed full political rights for a long time. The legislative bodies of those territories had included many women; moreover, the women had manifested great intelligence and objectivity in exercising their vote.

#### NATIONALITY OF MARRIED WOMEN (E/CN.6/161, section II)

Mrs. GRINBERG-VINAVER (Secretary of the Commission) summarized the history of the question of a convention on the nationality of married women, as it had been discussed in the Commission and in the Economic and Social Council. Recalling that the matter had been referred by the Council to the International Law Commission, she observed that the question had not been included in the agenda of the next session of that Commission: accordingly, the Secretariat had prepared no new material on the subject.

Mrs. MEDEROS de GONZALEZ (Cuba) thought that the Commission should press for inclusion of the question in the agenda of the International Law Commission's next session.

Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States of America) agreed with the Cuban representative; the proposed convention was a matter of urgency, and the Commission should express to the International Law Commission its interest in having the work of drafting carried forward as quickly as possible.

/Miss BERNARDINO

Miss BERNARDINO (Dominican Republic) said that in view of the action taken and the interest shown in the question in the past by the Commission on the Status of Women, matters should not be allowed to remain as they now stood. The current session of the Commission might possibly be its last; it was essential, therefore, to adopt a resolution urging the International Law Commission, through the Council, to proceed with the drafting of the proposed convention without delay. The delegations of Cuba and the Dominican Republic would submit a draft resolution to that effect for the consideration of the Commission.

Mrs. MEDEROS de GONZALEZ (Cuba) read the text of the joint draft resolution, explaining that it was merely a tentative text intended to serve as a basis for a final version to be prepared by the Resolutions Committee.

Miss PELLETIER (Netherlands) thought the adoption of too many resolutions would weaken their effect; the Commission should express its regret in its report, reserving resolutions for more important matters.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that a resolution on the subject would have to be produced for examination by the Economic and Social Council.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) was inclined to agree with the Netherlands representative and wondered whether the draft resolution would be of much effect. The summary records of the summer session of the Economic and Social Council in 1950 showed that the Council had devoted much attention to the resolution submitted by the Commission.

She thought that it would be appropriate if the Commission were to express its satisfaction with the reply which the International Law Commission had made to the Economic and Social Council.

Mrs. MEDEROS de GONZALEZ (Cuba) suggested that the joint resolution of Cuba and the Dominican Republic on the Nationality of Married Women (E/CN.6/L.32) should be placed before the Resolutions Committee, which might draft it in its final form. It was intended only as a reminder, and it was to be hoped that it would produce some results.

/The CHAIRMAN

The CHAIRMAN noted that the discussion of certain items, notably 3 (c), 4 and 5 on the agenda was rendered difficult by the fact that the documentation had not yet been circulated in French and Russian. She suggested the item on the nationality of married women might be taken up again after the discussion of item 3 (c). She asked the members of the Commission whether they wished to pass the draft resolution (E/CN.6/L.32) to the Resolutions Committee for drafting in its final form, or whether they merely wished to make a recommendation in their report.

It was decided that the draft resolution should be passed to the Resolutions Committee.

ADVISORY SERVICES FOR IMPROVEMENT OF THE STATUS OF WOMEN: JOINT DRAFT  
RESOLUTION OF LEBANON, MEXICO AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (E/CN.6/L.27)

Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States of America), introducing the draft resolution sponsored by Lebanon, Mexico and the United States of America on advisory services for improvement of the status of women (E/CN.6/L.27) said that some of the problems had already been discussed in previous years and that there was a suggestion in the Secretary-General's report on a 20 year programme for peace which bore upon the item. In his report, the Secretary-General suggested that the United Nations programme of advisory services in relation to social welfare might be expanded to include services in the field of human rights, specifically mentioning improvement in the status of women. Such aid might include assistance in the formulation of basic laws and their application.

There was room for the use of technical knowledge even in women's suffrage, as the Secretary-General's memorandum showed.

Some countries liked to begin with local suffrage for women or educational qualifications. In the United States women's suffrage had come State by State up to 1919 and more than half of the country's women could vote before the amendment of the Federal Constitution gave the vote to women throughout the nation. Gradual progress was sometimes essential, and there was every reason why governments should profit by different kinds of experience.

Her Government considered the suggestion for expanded advisory services entirely sound. Such services to Governments would be rendered to them only upon their request and should cover many phases of the status of women, not just

/political

political rights. As the cost of the plan would be relatively low, there should be little difficulty for women's organizations in persuading their governments to ask for advisory services.

Despite appearances, there were many highly technical problems involved in the task of improving the status of women. The phrases of resolutions or constitutions must be embodied in specific laws and regulations which could be enforced. The subject matter on civil liberties and fiscal law, which would come up in the discussion on item 5, would provide many illustrations of how countries differed in the interpretation of basic rights. Even in the Commission there might be differences as to what constituted discrimination against or protection of women. Advisory services could deal with realities and pave the way for the gradual development of basic equalities in terms useful to both men and women in all countries.

Regional training conferences in social welfare, which had been set up under the Advisory Service Programme, seemed to be of special interest. Such a conference on how to improve legislation for women might be very useful to government leaders in areas where there seemed to be possibilities of change. The staff and the expenditure required would be small. That had been true of the meetings of regional representatives and non-governmental organizations held in Beirut, in the year when the Commission had met there, and they had apparently been successful.

The resolution supported by the United States incorporated an approval of the Secretary-General's recommendation on advisory services on improvement in the status of women. Her delegation thought that the recommendation should go to the Economic and Social Council as an indication of full approval of the expansion of the United Nations in that direction.

Miss BERNARDINO (Dominican Republic) wanted to ask some questions in connexion with technical assistance. She wished to know first, what would be the assistance given, second, whether it would not be possible for women's organizations to carry out that work, third, whether full equality might not mean that men would require assistance too, and fourth, whether some countries would not take exception to requests of such a nature.

/Mrs. GOLDMAN

Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States of America) hoped that further discussion would be possible after the representative of Lebanon had arrived. With regard to Miss Bernardino's third question, she would like to mention that in the United States, the League of Women Voters was already admitting men as members. Anything which tended to raise the intelligence of voters would be of help. In many countries women's organizations would be able to do the work of raising the status of women. But it was obvious that the United Nations would be able to obtain a much larger fund of information. It was always valuable to pool experience.

Miss BERNARDINO (Dominican Republic) thought that the idea was excellent, but that the same end might be achieved by expanding the work of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Mrs. LAVALLE URBINA (Mexico), in answer to the Dominican Republic representative's questions, said assistance to improve the status of women might take the forms which had already been successfully used by the United Nations, such as the organization of conferences and seminars. Women's organizations in Mexico were strong and well-informed and could play a useful part, but United Nations technicians could give them very valuable advice and guidance. The final decision as to the action to be taken would rest with the national organization, but the United Nations' experience would be of great assistance to them. She had no information as to which countries would make use of the programmes offered; there could, however, be no harm in making assistance available to Governments which requested it.

Mrs. GUERY (Haiti) said the United States representative's idea was of great interest and value. The United Nations could speak with authority on the subject of improving the status of women and the fresh light it could throw on the question would doubtless be well received by the organizations concerned.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) said she <sup>had</sup> interpreted the terms of the draft resolution (E/CN.6/L.27) more broadly as referring not only to direct assistance in connexion with the political education of women but to any assistance given under the social welfare programme which would help to improve the status of women.



One of the difficulties in the way of improving the actual, as opposed to the legal position of women, especially in many of the less developed countries, was that the traditional work of women was extremely arduous. In considering the draft resolution, the Commission should bear in mind that some forms of advisory and technical aid which the United Nations could provide on request would help to improve the actual condition of women; for example assistance in the development of child welfare or medical services.

She would propose an amendment to the draft resolution, as the final paragraph urged the United Nations to provide services which seemed to be covered already by existing arrangements in connexion with advisory sources.

Miss BERNARDINO (Dominican Republic) and Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States of America) welcomed the United Kingdom representative's contribution to the discussion and hoped that the Committee on Resolutions would take it into account.

Mrs. MEDEROS de GONZALEZ (Cuba) said she was convinced of the usefulness of the expert advisory services, but urged that when the Commission gave final form to the draft resolution it should be careful not to imply or suggest that women needed external help in order to reach the standards to which they claimed to have a right.

The CHAIRMAN indicated that, since the draft resolution had been submitted under item 3(e), study of information on programmes of political education for women, discussion of it could be completed only after the Commission had discussed the other documentation on that item which had not yet been circulated in all the working languages. In the meantime, she invited the representative of the Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations to speak on the political education of women.

Miss SCHAIN (Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations) said the organizations associated in the Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations had a special interest in the question of the political education  
/of women.

of women. She introduced the representative of the International Alliance of Women; since the subject was of particular concern to that organization, its representative would speak for the organizations represented on the Liaison Committee.

Mrs. MAHON (International Alliance of Women) expressed her organization's satisfaction with the pamphlet "The Role of Women in Political Life" which had been prepared as a guide for the use of non-governmental organizations in their work of promoting intelligent use of the vote in those countries where that privilege and obligation had recently been acquired. Leaders of these organizations would undoubtedly find it useful in helping women to understand the part they might play in the political life of their country.

She hoped that that pamphlet was only the first of many. Such pamphlets should contain concrete suggestions and pointed and challenging questions relevant to all government structure, to electoral procedures and to community services financed through taxation. They should make specific suggestions as to how new voters could learn about their own government. Some organizations which had had long experience in the field of political education believed that new voters should concentrate first on the study of local community conditions, gradually progressing to study of national and international problems as their experience in political education and activity increased. It was necessary constantly to stress the need of non-partisan, non-political, objective study of conditions, issues and legislative measures pertaining to the welfare of the community or nation, which citizens could improve by acting through their legislative processes. Her organization believed that all citizens should work in the political parties of their choice, but that did not preclude the possibility of members of all parties working together for the common good to achieve higher standards in such fields as education, health, housing and public administration.

While recognizing that nations differed widely in governmental structure and in educational and cultural background, she was convinced that such pamphlets for universal use could be prepared by experienced people -- probably women since they seemed to have studied the needs of the new voter more seriously than men.

/Certain

Certain questions were equally applicable to a highly educated new voter in Europe or to an African tribesman. Moreover, study of the United Nations, its specialized agencies, its procedures and its actions must be a part of the political education not only of new voters but of men and women all over the world.

The Liaison Committee suggested that the Commission on the Status of Women might use its influence with Governments to urge their citizens to participate fully in the suffrage granted them. The apathy of both men and women voters in countries where suffrage existed was a menace to those countries. Suffrage was a high privilege, inevitably accompanied by heavy responsibility, and an intelligent and responsible electorate must be developed if democracy was to survive.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.