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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fourteenth session
Item 11 of the provisional agenda

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
Twelfth session
Item 13 of the provisional agenda

PERIODICITY OF THE SESSIONS OF THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND
THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Note by the Secretary-General

1. At its twenty-fourth session the Economic and Social Council decided by resolution 652 J (XXIV) and 665 D II (XXIV) to invite the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights to express their views on the recommendation of its Co-ordination Committee that the Council establish the principle that the two Commissions should in future meet biennially. The Council also decided not to modify for the present the periodicity of the sessions of the two Commissions.
2. The Secretary-General presents in the following paragraphs a brief account of the proceedings in the Council which led to the adoption of the above-mentioned resolutions.

Suggestion of the Secretary-General to the twenty-fourth session of the Council

3. In his report to the twenty-fourth session of the Economic and Social Council entitled "Observations on the work programme of the Council and on the financial implications of the Council's actions", the Secretary-General stated:^{1/}

^{1/} E/3011, para. 15.

"the Council may wish to give some thought to the experience of four of the functional commissions meeting on a biennial basis and to the possibility of extending such a practice to the Commission on Human Rights and the Commission on the Status of Women. Since the General Assembly examined the question,* the Commission on Human Rights has completed the task of drafting the Covenants on Human Rights, and Conventions have been opened for signature on two of the most important subjects dealt with by the Commission on the Status of Women. These and other circumstances, such as the fact that programmes in the field of Human Rights are increasingly oriented towards practical action and implemented over longer periods, conceivably warrant a change in the periodicity of the Commissions concerned. There may be, however, other considerations which militate against the adoption of a two-year cycle for these particular Commissions."

Recommendation of the Co-ordination Committee

4. The question was discussed in the Co-ordination Committee at the 152nd, 153rd, 154th, 157th and 158th meetings.^{2/} Several members felt that the preparation as well as the work of the sessions of the Commissions would be improved if the sessions were held at longer intervals. They also stressed the importance of general co-ordination of the meetings of the various functional commissions of the Council.

5. Other members felt that the recommendations were premature since the Commissions still had many important problems to solve.

6. The Co-ordination Committee by 10 votes to 1, with 5 abstentions, recommended to the Council that it establish "the principle that the Commission on Human Rights and the Commission on the Status of Women should in future, in line with the practice of other functional commissions, meet biennially and request them not later than in the course of their sessions in 1959 to arrange their work programmes accordingly".^{3/}

* In resolution 532 A (VI), the General Assembly requested the Council to reconsider its decision to convene the Commission on the Status of Women once every two years only (Council resolution 414 (XII)). The Council did so in resolution 445 I (XIV).

^{2/} Some observations of a similar nature to those made in the Co-ordination Committee were also made during the general discussion at the 981st and 983rd plenary meetings of the Council.

^{3/} E/AC.24/SR.158 and E/3024/Rev.1, Annex, para. 8.

Periodicity of the sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women

7. The Co-ordination Committee's recommendation, in so far as it concerned the Commission on the Status of Women, was discussed in the Social Committee of the Council.
8. In the course of the discussion at the 365th, 366th and 367th meetings of the Social Committee a majority of the members opposed the recommendation of the Co-ordination Committee. Apart from the reason stated above, the view was expressed that annual sessions of that Commission were necessary to ensure the close contact with the women of the world and that prompt action was required for the successful continuation of the work of the Commission.
9. The Social Committee recommended a draft resolution which was adopted by the Council in plenary at its 889th meeting by 9 votes to 5, with 3 abstentions, as resolution 652 J (XXIV). The text of the resolution is as follows:

The Economic and Social Council,

Taking note of the recommendation of the Co-ordination Committee that the Council establish the principle that the Commission on the Status of Women should in future meet biennially,

Recalling that, by its resolution 445 I (XIV) of 26 May 1952, the Council resolved to continue to convene the Commission for one session every year,

1. Draws the attention of the Commission on the Status of Women to the recommendation of the Co-ordination Committee;
2. Invites the Commission to express its views on this recommendation;
3. Decides not to modify for the present the periodicity of the sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women."

Periodicity of the sessions of the Commission on Human Rights

10. The question of the sessions of the Commission on Human Rights was taken up by the Council at its 995th and 996th meetings in connexion with the report of the Co-ordination Committee. There was general agreement in the Council that no distinction should be made in the handling of the recommendation of the Co-ordination Committee between the two Commissions and the Council adopted resolution 665 D (XXIV) by 8 votes to none, with 9 abstentions. The text of the resolution is as follows:

/...

"The Economic and Social Council,

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Having considered the reports of the Co-ordination Committee,

Approves the reports and the recommendations contained therein, with the exception of the recommendation contained in sub-paragraph 3 (e) of the annex to resolution 664 (XXIV) of 1 August 1957 relating to the periodicity of meetings of the Commission on Human Rights and the Commission on the Status of Women;

II

Recalling its resolution 652 J (XXIV) of 24 July 1957 concerning the periodicity of the sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women,

1. Invites the Commission on Human Rights to express its views on the recommendation of the Co-ordination Committee that the Council establish the principle that the Commission on Human Rights should in future meet biennially;

2. Decides not to modify for the present the periodicity of the sessions of the Commission on Human Rights."
