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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
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DISCRIMINATION AND PROTECTION  
OF MINORITIES  
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Item 9

MEASURES TAKEN BY UNESCO FOR THE PREPARATION OF  
INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS RELATING TO DISCRIMINATION  
IN EDUCATION

Statement submitted by the International Federation of University  
Women, a non-governmental organization in Category B consultative  
status

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is circulated in accordance with paragraphs 28 and 29 of Economic and Social Council resolution 288 B (X).

Dated: 8 January 1960

Received: 21 January 1960

The International Federation of University Women is opposed to all forms of discrimination by the very nature of its membership, comprising university women of fifty countries in every continent, and of its Constitution, to which each member association must subscribe, which in Article I states its purpose:

"... to promote understanding and friendship among the university women of the world, irrespective of their race, religion or political opinions,...."

At its 13th Conference, which met in Helsinki in August 1959, the Federation reaffirmed its loyalty to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its willingness to work for the implementation of these principles all over the world.

The Federation is happy to have been given the opportunity, as an international non-governmental organization with consultative status, of putting forward its views to UNESCO on the proposed international convention and recommendations on discrimination in education. It is bound to attach much importance to the preparation of these international instruments, both because of its general adherence to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and because one of its reasons for existence has been, and remains, the struggle against discrimination on grounds of sex. In educational matters generally it is possible for concealed forms of discrimination to be contained in the form of special provisions for special cases, amongst which are sometimes included the supposed requirements of girls and women. The Federation therefore wishes to reaffirm its conviction that in any international instrument the principle of equality of educational opportunity between the sexes should be clearly and unequivocally stated.

The Federation considers it desirable that any international instrument should be drawn up in clear and general terms to have as wide an application as possible. Too many particularities allow of too many evasions. It is however of prime importance to include in the instruments a clear statement of the principle of equality of opportunity, without any discrimination on arbitrary grounds such as race or sex, with equality of access to all kinds and levels of education. Special mention may perhaps be made here of technical education. The Federation would stress the grave danger in this, as in all spheres, of attempting to orientate girls or boys too early through particular forms of education or training, and the need to equip both boys and girls to play a full part in public life and to make their full contribution to the community through the development and use of their individual capacities and skills. It should be borne in mind that education to suit one set of conditions (which may be rightly or wrongly observed) does not take into account the possibility that those conditions may change. The Federation would therefore again stress the necessity to ensure that variations in education should depend on the ability and inclination of the individual and not upon any arbitrary factor such as sex; and the need, where special educational provisions are made (for less

privileged peoples, for those less well endowed physically or mentally, for those in a minority group of any kind (voluntarily or by accident of birth) or for the education of the sexes separately) to ensure that opportunity is open for all kinds and levels of education, if and when those specially provided for are able, or wish, to avail themselves of it.

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