COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Ninth Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-SIXTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 14 March 1955, at 11.15 a.m.

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PRESENT:

Acting Chairman: Miss BERNARDINO Dominican Republic

Chairman: Miss BERNARDINO Dominican Republic

Rapporteur: Mrs. ROSSEL Sweden

Members:
- Mrs. CHAMORRO ALAMAN Argentina
- Mrs. DALY Australia
- Mrs. NOVIKOVA Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic
- Miss TSENG China
- Miss MAÑAS Cuba
- Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX France
- Mrs. GUERY Haiti
- Miss ROESAD Indonesia
- Mrs. TABEL Lebanon
- Begum ANWAR AHMED Pakistan
- Mrs. DEMBINSKA Poland
- Mrs. FOMINA Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
- Mr. ATTLEE United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- Mrs. HAHN United States of America
- Mrs. SANCHEZ de URDANETA Venezuela
- Mrs. MITROVIC Yugoslavia

Also present:
- Mrs. LOPEZ Colombia
- Mrs. KIEP Germany
- Miss FUJITA Japan
PRESENT (cont'd):

Representatives of specialized agencies:

Mrs. FIGUEROA  International Labour Organization
Miss SALAS  United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
Dr. COIGNY  World Health Organization

Observer from an intergovernmental Organization:

Mrs. LEYES de CHAVEZ  Inter-American Commission of Women

Representatives of non-governmental organizations:

Category A:

Miss SENDER  International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
Miss KAHN  World Federation of Trade Unions
Miss FOX  World Federation of United Nations Associations

Category B and Register:

Begum NAFISA HAMDANI  All Pakistan Women's Association
Miss GUTHRIE)  International Alliance of Women
Miss DOOD )
Mrs. CARTER )
Mrs. FREEMAN )
Mrs. PARSONS )
Mrs. REGISTER)
Mrs. HYNER )
Miss MacLEAN)
Miss ROBB  International Federation of University Women
Miss RUIZ )
Miss SMITH)
Mr. WOLLE-EGENOLF  International League for the Rights of Man
Mrs. ROBERTS  Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations; Associated Country Women of the World
PRESENT (cont'd):

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OPENING OF THE SESSION

The ACTING CHAIRMAN, opening the ninth session of the Commission, extended a cordial welcome to the members, the representatives of the Specialized Agencies, the President and Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Commission of Women, and the representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations.

Much progress in the advancement of women’s rights had been made since the Secretary-General had addressed the Commission at the opening of its eighth session. Thirty-nine States had signed the Convention on the Political Rights of Women adopted by the General Assembly in 1952 and nineteen ratifications had been deposited with the Secretariat. Many other States had taken the necessary preliminary action to enable them to accede to the Convention. For example, the Peruvian Legislature was currently debating a bill on women’s suffrage. On 25 August 1954 the Constituent Assembly of Colombia had enacted legislation granting women the right to vote. In January 1955 the President of Honduras had granted political rights to all Honduran women who could read and write while in Haiti women had participated for the first time in municipal elections and had elected six members of their sex to important posts. In addition, women were participating in increasing numbers and with increasing success in the work of the General Assembly and its subsidiary organs. In the circumstances, it was regrettable that women had been overlooked in the re-organization of the top echelon of the Secretariat which had gone into effect on 1 January 1955.

The Commission should continue its efforts until all women enjoyed equal rights with men. In that connexion she expressed her gratitude to her Government, which had given her its fullest co-operation in the performance of her duties as Chairman of the Commission.

Mr. HUMPHREY (Secretariat) expressed the Secretary-General’s regret that pressure of work had prevented him from attending the opening meeting of the Commission’s ninth session. Mr. de Seynes, the Under-Secretary for Economic and Social Affairs, had also requested him to convey his regrets to the Commission.
The Under-Secretary had been called to Geneva on business but would arrange to meet the Commission immediately upon his return to Headquarters.

For his own part, Mr. Humphrey said that perhaps no one in the Secretariat or even the United Nations, with the exception of the Acting Chairman, had followed the Commission's work more closely or for a longer period. He had watched the Commission's development since its inception and had seen how its achievements were steadily winning for it the high respect of other United Nations organs.

He then drew attention to the Secretary-General's memorandum on the review of programme of work and establishment of priorities (E/CN.6/268) which dealt with the Economic and Social Council's examination of the Secretary-General's report on the organization and work of the Secretariat in the economic and social fields. The Council had adopted resolution 557 B (XVIII) endorsing the Secretary-General's approach to the problem, inviting the Secretary-General to take such action as was appropriate to put his suggestions into effect and instructing the functional commissions:

"(a) to concentrate their efforts on issues of major importance and to avoid recommending activities not likely to make a substantial contribution to the promotion of the objectives of the United Nations;

"(b) to submit to the Council for prior approval all requests for new studies or other projects which would require additional budgetary provisions or substantial changes in the work programmes."

QUESTION OF THE REPRESENTATION OF CHINA

Mrs. FOMINA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) protested against the absence of any representative of the Chinese People's Republic, whose place was illegally occupied by a person who had no right to represent China. It was quite inadmissible that the Chinese People's Republic, with its great people of over five hundred million persons, was not represented on the Commission. The absence of a legal representative in the Commission constituted a serious detriment in the work of the Commission. She felt it necessary to draw attention to the fact that the place of China in the Commission could be occupied only by
a person authorized by the Central People's Government of the Chinese People's Republic which was the only legal Government of China.

Mrs. DEMBINSKA (Poland) said that only Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China was authorized to speak on behalf of China. A representative of the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China could, if present, give the Commission the benefit of the experience acquired by the women of China since the liberation of their country.

It was illegal that the seat for China should be filled by a representative of the Kuomintang.

Miss TSENG (China) said that she represented the only legal government of China. It had been recognized by the United Nations and even by the Soviet Union itself, which had signed the Sino-Russian Treaty of Friendship and Alliance in 1945.

The Government she represented enjoyed the support of the people, and had loyally co-operated with the United Nations in order to preserve peace and uphold the principles of the Charter. The reverse was true of the communist regime, under which the women of the Chinese mainland were not free to think or express their political views. The fact that she herself, although not a member of the Kuomintang, was a representative proved that her Government allowed women the greatest freedom. She had a double right to participate in the work of the Commission, as the legal representative of a Government which was in harmony with the spirit of the Commission.

Finally, the Commission was not competent to decide a question of credentials; the USSR representative's statement was therefore out of order.

Mrs. FOMINA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that she was not going to reply to the slanderous accusations made by a person who represented nobody since the representative of the pitiable remnants of Chiang-Kai-Shek clique had long ago been rejected by the Chinese Peoples.
Mrs. NOVIKOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) supported the USSR representative's remark and protested against the slanderous accusations made by the Kuomintang representative. The methods and tactics of those imposters and their advocates were known to all. The Commission's work was bound to suffer from the fact that millions of Chinese women were deprived of representation on the Commission. She repeated it now and would repeat it in the future until a legal representative of the Chinese People's Republic was sitting on the Commission.

Mrs. HAHN (United States of America) said that any statement challenging the right of the legal representative of China to be seated on the Commission was out of order. Furthermore, her Government would oppose any suggestion to exclude the Chinese representative and seat a representative of the Chinese People's Republic.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN ruled that the Commission was not competent to take any action in the matter.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Mrs. RÖSSEL (Sweden) nominated Miss Bernardino (Dominican Republic) for re-election to the office of Chairman.

Mr. ATTLEE (United Kingdom) and Mrs. CHAMORRO ALAMAN (Argentina) supported the nomination.

Miss Bernardino (Dominican Republic) was re-elected Chairman by acclamation.

Mrs. HAHN (United States of America) nominated Begum Anwar Ahmed (Pakistan) as First Vice-Chairman.

Begum Anwar Ahmed (Pakistan) was elected First Vice-Chairman by acclamation.

Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX (France) nominated Mrs. Dembinska (Poland) as Second Vice-Chairman.
Mrs. NOVIKOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) supported the nomination.

Mrs. Dembinska (Poland) was elected Second Vice-Chairman by acclamation.

Mrs. DALY (Australia) nominated Mrs. Rössel (Sweden) as Rapporteur. Mrs. Rössel (Sweden) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (E/CN.6/256)

Mrs. RÖSSEL (Sweden) drew attention to the fact that the Commission had been represented in the Commission on Human Rights during the debate on the draft Covenants. Since that Commission still had on its agenda several items of interest to the Commission, she felt that it should continue to be represented at all sessions of the Commission on Human Rights. She felt that it should also be represented at sessions of the Social Commission when matters of primary interest to the Commission on the Status of Women such as maternal and child welfare problems were being discussed. She proposed the addition of an item to the agenda to meet that need.

It was so decided.

Mrs. CHAMORRO ALAMAN (Argentina) suggested the addition of an item to the agenda entitled: "Participation of women in the work of the United Nations and the specialized agencies".

It was so decided.

Miss MAÑAS (Cuba) announced that her delegation would submit for the Commission's consideration a draft resolution containing a draft convention on the nationality of married women prepared in the light of the comments of Governments on the draft circulated under Economic and Social Council resolution 547 C (XVIII). In order to provide sufficient time for a careful study of her delegation's proposal, she suggested that the order of items 4 and 6 of the provisional agenda (E/CN.6/256) should be reversed.

It was so agreed.
Mrs. HAHN (United States of America) pointed out that a new edition of the United Nations publication "Nationality of Married Women", based partly on the Secretary-General's report of recent changes in nationality laws, was to be issued shortly. She accordingly proposed that a second sub-item should be added under item 4, and entitled: "Recent changes in domestic law affecting the nationality of married women".

It was so agreed.

Mrs. HAHN (United States of America) also suggested that in the future the Commission be provided with an annotated agenda, similar to that provided the Economic and Social Council. She suggested that copies of the Economic and Social Council's annotated agenda, E/2680, should be circulated to the Commission in connexion with the consideration of the Commission's work programme and priorities for next year.

Mrs. DEMBINSKA (Poland) regretted that the item on maternal and child welfare was not on the agenda of the current session. She hoped it would be considered by the Social Commission at its next session and that it would be on the agenda of the tenth session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

The CHAIRMAN assured the Polish representative that the Social Commission would deal with the item fully at its next session.

The agenda was adopted.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.