COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FOURTH MEETING

Held at Lake Success, New York on Wednesday, 12 February 1947 at 11 a.m.

Present:

Chairman: Mrs. B. Begtrup (Denmark)
Vice-Chairman: Mrs. J. Street (Australia)
Rapporteur: Mrs. E. Uralova (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic)

Members:

Mrs. W. S. Now (China)
Mrs. G. M. F. de Echeverria (Costa Rica)
Miss S. Basterrechea (Guatemala)
Mrs. Hamid Ali (India)
Mrs. Elise Aquirre (Mexico)
Mrs. A. Cosma (Syria)
Mrs. E. A. Popova (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)
Miss M. Sutherland (United Kingdom)
Miss D. Kenyon (United States of America)

Representatives of Specialized Agencies:

Mrs. E. Rowe (ILO)
Miss J. Mass (UNESCO)

Consultants of Non-Governmental Organizations:

Miss L. Spiegel (WFITU)
Miss T. Sender (AFL)
Mrs. H. Fuhrmann (ICA)

Secretariat:

Mr. E. Lawson
Miss E. Bouwerman (Secretary of the Commission)

1. Item 7 of the Agenda. Relations with Trusteeship Council and Information From Non-Self-Governing Territories (Document E/CN.6/3)

The CHAIRMAN, referring to paragraphs 4 and 6 of document E/CN.6/3, said that it was essential for the Commission on the Status of Women to have contact with women of the Trust territories and with those of non-self-governing territories, and that all the information collected by the Secretariat regarding that subject would be placed before the Commission.

/Should any
Should any international conference be called, then members of the Commission would certainly wish to take part.

Miss KENYON (United States of America) supported the views of the Chairman.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) also agreed. She felt it would be useful for the Commission to consult with the Trusteeship Council after its first session regarding the questionnaire which had been circulated under Article 98 of the Charter of the United Nations.

The CHAIRMAN suggested that a resolution regarding co-operation between the Commission on the Status of Women and the Trusteeship Council should be drafted by the Secretariat so that the Commission could discuss it later.


The CHAIRMAN read the recommendation made to the General Assembly by the Danish delegation (page 1, Document E/CN.6/5) and said that it was necessary to arouse public interest in the question of the political rights of women. The Information Section of the Secretariat had taken an active part in spreading information regarding this matter.

Mrs. NEW (China) said that, after the Chinese delegation had received the communication addressed by the Secretary-General to all Member States regarding the Danish resolution, she had requested the nine leading women's organizations in China to consider it. However, distances were great in China and the economic situation difficult, and she had only received one reply. All members of the Commission should impress upon the women's organizations in their various countries the importance of the question of political rights of women.

Miss KENYON (United States of America) said her Government considered the implementation of the resolution of the General Assembly of great importance.
Referring to the United States proposal on the implementation of the General Assembly Resolution on the Political Rights of Women, (Document E/CN.6/10), she said that the task before the members of the Commission was to educate and to awaken people to the importance of political rights of women in the achievement of true democracy. All information requested in the questionnaire which had been sent by the Secretariat to the Member Governments should be in the hands of the Secretariat by 1 July, and in case certain countries had not submitted answers by that date, then the information regarding those countries would be based on material obtained from other authoritative sources. The Commission should be in possession of full information by 1 September, and that information could then be circulated to all parts of the world.

Replying to Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) who said that she had not yet received a copy of the questionnaire, the CHAIRMAN said that it had been circulated to all members.

Mrs. STREET (Australia) suggested that consideration of the United States proposal should be postponed in order that members of the Commission might have more time to study it.

Miss KENNYON (United States of America), replying to Mrs. STREET (AUSTRALIA), said that the report mentioned in point (b) on page 2 of document E/CN.6/10 would be submitted by the Secretariat to the Commission on the Status of Women and the latter would then appoint a Sub-Commission to review it in conjunction with the Secretariat. 1 September had been selected as the time limit for the submission of the report in order to give the Secretariat time to gather the information desired, and also as an indication of the pressing nature of the matter under consideration.

The CHAIRMAN said that consideration of the United States proposal would be postponed until the following day, and members should then submit suggestions as to how contact might be made with women's organizations everywhere and with groups representing public opinion.
Replying to Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom), the CHAIRMAN said that document E/CN.6/5 also contained proposals regarding methods of implementing the resolution of the General Assembly.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) noted that the Secretariat had prepared a detailed questionnaire in two parts; part 1 dealing with public law and part 2 with private law. She considered that the Commission should not wait until replies had been received from the various Governments if it intended to achieve any practical results in the near future. Referring to paragraph 3 on page 6 of document E/CN.6/5, she said that the United Kingdom Government and most British women's organizations felt that education was the keynote in political progress in those countries where women had not yet been granted political equality. Full emancipation followed full and free education, and she wished to propose a resolution urging the Secretariat to concentrate on obtaining answers to those questions dealing with educational opportunities for girls and women with a view to stimulating development in countries where there was discrimination between sexes in regard to those opportunities.

Miss KENNEDY (United States of America) said that she also had a resolution on the same matter which she would submit at a later date.

Replying to Mrs. EAMUD ALI (India), the CHAIRMAN said that the document under consideration contained a history of the resolution regarding the political rights of women and also mentioned the questionnaire.

Mrs. EAMUD ALI (India) considered that the Commission should first consider the matter of franchise and the political rights of women and then pass on to educational and social questions.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the questionnaire which had already been circulated by the Secretariat contained questions regarding political rights, education, etc. Political rights gave a woman an opportunity to become a member of Parliament and thus to work for the improvement of education, etc.

/Mrs. STREET (Australia)
Mrs. STREET (Australia) considered that the Commission should not single out any particular section of the questionnaire. Although educational and professional opportunities were important as far as women were concerned, she did not see why the franchise should be withheld if they had not had those opportunities. The franchise was now exercised in some countries in which, before the war, the people had had no opportunities of education. She felt that too much stress was placed on education vis-a-vis experience of life, and people living in backward countries knew as well as those who had had educational opportunities what was necessary for liberty, education, health services etc. She supported the suggestion that the questionnaire should be dealt with in full and suggested that the words "political rights" in the last line of page 1 of document E/CN.6/5 should read "civil and economic rights".

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the second part of the Danish resolution had been withdrawn for technical reasons. She asked the representative for the United Kingdom to submit her amendment in writing for discussion on the following day.

Miss BASTERRECHEA (Guatemala) said that the women of Guatemala had taken a greater interest in political affairs since they had been given the vote, and she supported the proposal of the representative of the United Kingdom that more information should be requested regarding education of women.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) pointed out that she had not said that education should precede the granting of political equality. Women might be given legal equality, but if they had no education they could not exercise the power given them. The Commission should help the women in those countries to obtain equal educational opportunities.

/ The CHAIRMAN
The CHAIRMAN said that in many so-called illiterate countries where women had been granted political rights they had taken a leading part in the elections. She pointed out that there were two proposals before the Commission, one submitted by the United States representative and the other by the United Kingdom representative, and there was also the proposal of the representative of Australia regarding the amendment of the second part of the Danish resolution submitted to the General Assembly.

Miss KENYON (United States of America) suggested that discussion of the questionnaire should be postponed in order that the text of the United States proposal might be circulated.

The CHAIRMAN said the United States proposal would be discussed under Item 10 of the Agenda. Item 8 was being left open in order that members might put forward suggestions as to the implementation of the Assembly resolution.

3. Relations with Non-Governmental Organizations and Arrangements for Hearing their Views.

The CHAIRMAN called the Commission's attention to document E/CN.6/3 and the resolution regarding the Women's International Democratic Federation introduced by the member from the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic (document E/CN.6/12).

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom), on a point of order, recalled that the Australian member had previously introduced a resolution which should be discussed first (document E/CN.6/13).

Mrs. URALOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) pointed out that the resolution she had introduced on the previous day had been a supplement to the Australian resolution, and she therefore wished to have her proposal discussed in the appropriate order.

The CHAIRMAN did not regard the resolution introduced by the member from the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic as either an amendment or an addendum to the Australian resolution.

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) asked the member from Australia just which co-ordinating agency she was referring to.

/The CHAIRMAN
The CHAIRMAN explained that the Australian resolution did not refer to any existing agency, but established a point of principle to the effect that if a country set up an agency co-ordinating non-governmental organizations, interested in the status of women this co-ordinating agency should have consultative status.

Mrs. NEW (China), referring to document E/CN.6/3, pointed out that the question of relationship with non-governmental agencies was still under consideration by the Economic and Social Council, and that the Commission could not therefore, single out any one organization for endorsement.

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) asked the Chairman whether she had any information regarding the request of the Women's International Democratic Federation for consultative status.

The CHAIRMAN replied that she personally was in possession of a communication from the IIFW, but any official communication would have to come to her through the Secretariat.

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said she had information to the effect that the Secretariat had received a request from the IIFW, and she wished to have the communication read.

The CHAIRMAN explained that the request had been sent to the Economic and Social Council which was the correct procedure. This Commission could not pass decision on applications, although it could support them.

Mrs. STREET (Australia) thought that there had been some confusion regarding the two resolutions. Her resolution, she explained, was not in contradiction to the resolution introduced by the member from the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic: one dealt with the request of international bodies, with a membership, as in the case of the IIFW, in 41 countries, while her own applied to co-ordinating bodies within each country. She was prepared to have the resolution of the member from the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic discussed before her own, and she moved so formally. This proposal was seconded by Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics).
Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) opposed the resolution introduced by the member from the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic (document E/CN.6/12). She pointed out that the Commission had not received any application from the IDFV, which had been correctly sent to the Economic and Social Council. The Council had previously decided upon the procedure to be followed in the case of all applications, a procedure which involved the supply of complete data regarding the scope and the functions of any applicant organization. The Commission had no such information at its disposal. Applications would have to be addressed to the Steering Committee of the Council.

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) repeated her request to have the communication from the IDFV read to the Commission after which, she felt, the member from the United Kingdom would understand why it was necessary for this Commission to reply to the IDFV.

Mrs. URALOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that according to a report by the IDFV the request had been sent three times, and at least once on 10 January 1947.

Miss KENYON (United States of America) pointed out that the Sub-Committee on Communications, which was to meet at 1:00 p.m., could scan all communications received and report on the IDFV's request at the afternoon session.

The CHAIRMAN, in answer to a question by the United Kingdom representative, said that it might well be in order for the Commission to request to seek communications addressed to the council.

Mrs. STREET (Australia) asked whether it was essential to have the letter, since there was a resolution before the Commission.

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) agreed that the lack of a document would not prevent the Commission from taking the correct view on the matter, but she had wished to satisfy the member from the United Kingdom.

/Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom)
Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) pointed out that even if the Commission received the letter from the IDFW, it would still have to receive letters from all the other organizations listed in document E/CN.6/3. Her major point, she repeated, was, that this was not a matter for the Commission to decide upon. It would have to be referred to the Sub-Committee of the Economic and Social Council established for this purpose.

The CHAIRMAN said that if the Commission endorsed the application by the IDFW it should, in her view, also endorse the application by the Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations. She would put forward such a motion as the representative from Denmark.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) pointed out that document E/CN.6/3 did not specify that only these two out of the seventeen international organizations had applied for a category A status. Without information on the subject the Commission could therefore not discuss the matter.

Mrs. URALOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) wished her resolution discussed, adding that if any of the members desired additional information on the IDFW she would be glad to supply them with it.

The CHAIRMAN asked the member from the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic whether she would be willing to delete the word "special" from the last paragraph of her resolution, since it would be difficult for the Commission to express a "special" desire to co-operate with just one women's organization.

Mrs. URALOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) agreed to this.

Miss KENYON (United States of America) asked that the discussion be continued during the afternoon session.

Mrs. HAMID ALI (India) introduced a motion for closure.

Miss KENYON (United States of America) insisted on her right to speak, declaring that debate could not be closed until all members had had an opportunity to express their views.

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) seconded the motion for closure.
for closure.

Miss KENYON (United States of America) did not think the Commission had all the facts at its disposal, nor was it fully informed until it had heard the views of the United States member.

Mrs. STREET (Australia) asked for adjournment without closure.

The meeting rose at 1:00 p.m.