COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SECOND MEETING

Hold at Lake Success, New York, on Tuesday, 11 February 1947, at 11:00 a.m.

Present:

Chairman: Mrs. Bøgtrup (Denmark)
Vice-Chairman: Mrs. Street (Australia)
Rapporteur: Mrs. Uralova (Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic)

Members:
- Mrs. New (China)
- Miss Ramirez Basterrechea (Guatemala)
- Mrs. Hamid Ali (India)
- Mrs. Popova (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)
- Miss Sutherland (United Kingdom)
- Miss Kenyon (United States of America)

Representatives of Specialized Agencies:
- Mrs. Rowe (International Labour Organization)
- Miss Meass (UNESCO)

Consultants of Non-Governmental Organizations:
- Miss Sender (American Federation of Labor)
- Miss Fuhrmann (ICA)
- Miss Spiegel (Workers Federation of Trade Unions)

Secretariat:
- Mr. Humphrey (Director, Division of Human Rights)
- Miss Bowerman (Secretary of the Commission)

The meeting was opened by the CHAIRMAN.

Message from Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt

Miss KENYON (United States of America) read the following message from Mrs. Catt:

[Message content follows]
"Just 99 years ago the first convention of women ever held in the entire world took place in Seneca Falls, New York. An announcement of the meeting was printed in the local newspaper, inviting women to attend, but no woman had signed it. A man presided over it because no woman dared to do it.

"Three women made a statement of aims for such a convention. A man offered one additional aim and that was that women should also have the right to vote. The entire programme was adopted and has been used all the world around ever since.

"Equal opportunities in all the professions, all education, all varieties of work, free speech, free assembly, personal freedom and the vote have already been won in many lands.

"Now women delegates are meeting today at the home of the United Nations in the most wonderful convention within the century to discuss the Status of Women.

"Why not make the most resolute call for the vote in all lands? Women vote in some thirty-five countries. Now why should they not vote in all the others. Education must go hand in hand with the vote. Then men and women will certainly march forward side by side to a peaceful and more moral world. Let us close the century 1848-1948 with the vote for men and women and find every nation civilized."

The CHAIRMAN asked Miss Kenyon to convey the Commission's thanks to Mrs. Catt.

2. Adoption of Provisional Agenda

Mrs. URALOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) suggested that Items 12, 13, and 14 of the provisional agenda be discussed following Item 8, since they could be more easily dealt with than Items 9 and 10, which most delegates had had little time to study. Moreover, some delegates had not yet arrived and she felt it would be wiser to postpone discussion on Items 9 and 10 until the Commission was fully represented.

/Mr. HUMPHREY
Mr. HEPBURN (Secretariat) explained that the Secretariat had considered Items 9 and 10 the most important ones and had therefore put them first. However, there was no reason why the Commission could not change the agenda.

Miss SPIEGEL (World Federation of Trade Unions) pointed out that there were two types of non-governmental organizations in contact with the Commission namely those in Category A and those listed on page 3 of document E/CN.6/3. Speaking for the organizations in Category A, she asked that consideration of relations with them should be postponed until later during the Commission's session.

The CHAIRMAN said the organizations were of course free to participate in all discussions, and that the Commission would merely consider what recommendations to make to the Council regarding relations with non-governmental organizations.

Miss STEEBERLAND (United Kingdom) thought it unwise to change the agenda, the order of which seemed logical to her. Moreover, she did not think that relations with non-governmental organizations could be discussed until the Commission had decided on its own work. She did not regard Item 12 as a simple issue and preferred not to discuss it when so many members of the Commission were still absent.

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) agreed that it would be wiser to postpone discussion of the most important questions, namely Items 9 and 10.

Miss KENYON (United States of America) favoured adoption of the provisional agenda as it stood.

Mrs. STREET (Australia) supported the proposal of the member from the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic that Items 9 and 10 should be deferred until all members were present.

The CHAIRMAN put the motion to a vote, namely that Items 12, 13 and 14 should be discussed before Item 9.

/DECISION:
DEPARTMENT: The motion was carried by 6 votes to 2, with 1 abstention.

The provisional agenda, with the amendment of the member from the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, was then adopted unanimously.


Mrs. STREET (Australia) favoured adopting the Rules of Procedure under paragraph 4 (c) which would avoid detailed discussion at this time. Under Rule 63, the rules could be amended at the second session.

Miss KENYON (United States of America) agreeing with Mrs. Street on the desirability of avoiding a lengthy discussion, preferred to have the rules adopted under paragraph 4 (b) and moved so formally.

The CHAIRMAN put the United States motion to a vote.

DECISION: The motion was carried unanimously.

4. Examination of Terms of Reference (document E/560)

Mrs. STREET (Australia) moved to have the first paragraph amended as follows:

"The function of the Commission shall be to prepare recommendations and reports to the Economic and Social Council on promoting equal status and opportunities for women with the object of implementing the principle that men and women shall have equal rights within the member states of the United Nations."

Mrs. HAMD ALI (India) preferred the original term "women's rights" since in some countries even the status of men was such that to grant women equality of status would amount to practically nothing.

Miss KENYON (United States of America) agreed with the member from India, pointing that there was, indeed, an equality of slavery. She preferred to retain the original term "women's rights".

Miss SENDER (American Federation of Labor) pointed out that the terms of reference of all Commissions were based on instructions of the Economic and Social Council and could therefore not be changed. The Commission could only recommend changes for the Council's consideration.

/Mrs. STREET
Mrs. STREET (Australia) withdrew the first part of her amendment in favour of the original text, but wished to retain the additional phrase "with the object of...". This, she felt, would cover both categories of countries, those where men had certain rights but women had not, as well as those where human rights as such were not respected.

Regarding changes in the terms of reference, it was perfectly proper for the Commission to recommend changes to the Council.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) regarding the point raised by the Indian member, felt that the Commission should take into consideration the decision of the Human Rights Commission regarding basic human rights.

Mr. LUSTIGEN (Secretariat) pointed out that the Human Rights Commission had just finished its first full session, where the machinery had been set up to draft a bill of rights. The Commission had asked its Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur to work out a preliminary draft to be presented to the Commission at its next session. He promised to make the report of the Human Rights Commission available to this Commission, but pointed out that the Commission had not yet defined the basic human rights.

Miss KENN (United States of America) objected to the phrase "within the member states of the United Nations" contained in the Australian Amendment. She felt it would be unfortunate to limit the fight for women's rights which should be worldwide.

Mrs. STREET (Australia) explained that she had included the phrase because the United Nations could influence only member countries, and was willing to welcome all democratic nations to membership. However, she agreed to withdraw this phrase.

Mrs. NEW (China) seconded the Australian amendment.

The CHAIRMAN called for a vote on the Australian amendment. Paragraph 1 of document E/90 would now read:

"The function of the Commission shall be to prepare recommendations and reports to the Economic and Social Council on promoting Women's rights in political, economic, social and educational fields, with the
object of implementing the principle that men and women shall have equal rights."

The second sentence of the paragraph would remain unchanged.

DECISION: The Australian amendment was carried unanimously.

The CHAIRMAN then suggested that this point should be left open for further discussion, since some members might wish to propose additional changes at a future meeting of the Commission's session. This point of view was supported by the Indian member.

5. Consideration of Communications (document E/CN.6/4)

Miss BOWERM (Secretary of the Commission) announced that further communications had been received since publication of this document, information on which would be circulated later in the day.

Mr. HUMPHREY (Secretariat) pointed out that the matter of communications had been exhaustively discussed by the Human Rights Commission. It had been the policy of the Secretariat not to disclose communications from individuals unless the Commission so requested. The Human Rights Commission had adopted a resolution to the effect that the originals of such communications should be disclosed to members of the Commission upon request.


She suggested appointing a Sub-Committee to examine these communications and report back to the Commission.

Miss KENYON (United States of America) supported the Chairman's proposal.

The CHAIRMAN called for a vote on the establishment of a Sub-Committee to examine communications.

DECISION: The proposal was accepted by 7 votes to 1, with 1 abstention.

The CHAIRMAN then suggested that the members from China, Guatemala and the United States of America should compose the Sub-Committee. She called for a vote on these nominations.

DECISION: The proposal was accepted by 6 votes to none.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.