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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Twenty-first Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FOUR HUNDRED AND NINETY-SECOND MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,  
on Monday, 29 January 1968, at 11.30 a.m.

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<u>Acting Chairman:</u>	Mrs. SIPILA	Finland
<u>Chairman:</u>	Mrs. JIAGGE	Ghana
<u>Rapporteur:</u>	Dame Mabel MILLER	Australia

OPENING OF THE SESSION

The ACTING CHAIRMAN declared open the twenty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Since the end of the last session, she had represented the Commission at the session of the Commission on Human Rights, and had attended the seminar on the civic and political education of women held at Helsinki together with a number of other members of the Commission. Unfortunately she had been unable to attend the meetings of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities relating to slavery because they had coincided with the twenty-second session of the General Assembly, where her presence as Chairman of the Commission had been felt to be of importance to the discussion of the draft Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Sixty-six amendments had been proposed during the Assembly's consideration of the draft Declaration, and together with other members of the Commission, she had done her best to defend the Commission's draft text, which had been evolved after so much discussion and compromise. While the final version of the Declaration, adopted unanimously by the General Assembly, might not be a masterpiece of legislation, the fact that it had been adopted was a notable achievement. However, while the text recommended by the Commission had not escaped unscathed, it was a great consolation that the major portion of it had remained intact. In that connexion, she thanked all the members of the Commission whose efforts had culminated in the final draft of the Declaration, and all those who had given their support to it during the twenty-second session of the General Assembly. She also expressed appreciation to the Chief of the Section on the Status of Women and her assistants for their untiring co-operation.

The adoption of the Declaration had opened a new era: not only had discrimination based on sex been condemned, but what constituted discrimination against women had now been clearly stated. It was indeed fortunate that the Declaration had been adopted on the eve of the International Year for Human Rights and she hoped that during the current year Governments, non-governmental organizations and private individuals would evaluate the status of women in their countries in the light of the principles of the Declaration. The time was past when only men influenced the policy of a country. The time when women struggled to gain equal rights, should now also come to an end. She looked forward to a time when the principles of the Declaration would be more than mere words on a printed

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(The Acting Chairman)

page and the full and complete development of all countries, the welfare of the world and the cause of peace would be guaranteed by the maximum participation of women as well as men in all fields. The present composition of the Commission, consisting of representatives of both sexes, was a good example of the combined efforts.

Mr. SCHREIBER (Secretariat) welcomed the members of the Commission on behalf of the Secretary-General. The adoption of the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women should be regarded as one of the most valuable achievements of the twenty-second session of the General Assembly and the outgoing Chairman should be commended for the efforts she had made to ensure its acceptance.

The provisional agenda (E/CN.6/490) for the current session contained a number of items which were familiar to the Commission. Item 5, however, concerning measures which the United Nations could adopt to eradicate all forms and practices of slavery and the slave trade affecting the status of women was a new topic for the Commission although women were directly affected by such practices. Under that item, the Commission would have to examine the most systematic and effective ways of dealing with the problem of slavery as it affected the status of women. In that connexion, he observed that the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, in operative paragraph 3 of its resolution 4 (XX), had requested the Commission on Human Rights to recommend certain measures relating to the question of slavery to the Economic and Social Council. Since the Commission on Human Rights was to meet within a few days, he hoped the Commission on the Status of Women would be able to consider the item at an early date.

With regard to item 7, concerning the complex question of family planning, the Commission would have before it an interim report by the Secretary-General. It should consider how to organize its work on the item with particular reference to co-ordination with the appropriate United Nations organs and with the specialized agencies. He hoped that the Commission would also be able to take up item 11, periodic reports on human rights, at an early date since that topic, too, was to be discussed at the forthcoming session of the Commission on Human Rights.

There was some cause for concern relating to advisory services in the field of human rights. Although the programme was generally recognized as very useful and the seminar on civic and political education of women held at Helsinki had yielded

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(Mr. Schreiber, Secretariat)

very valuable results, no Government had as yet offered to act as host for similar seminars in 1968, the International Year for Human Rights. He understood, however, that some Governments were still considering that possibility.

The Secretariat regretted that the documents prepared for the session had not been available earlier in all the working languages. As a result of the Economic and Social Council's decision to deal with social and human rights questions at its spring sessions only, all meetings of its subsidiary organs dealing with those questions had to be held between January and early March and it had not proved possible to produce the necessary documentation during the session of the General Assembly. Despite some real practical difficulties, however, the fact that the Commission on Human Rights and the Commission on Social Development would be meeting concurrently with the Commission on the Status of Women might provide opportunity for useful contacts between representatives of the respective Commissions dealing with related problems.

He drew attention to General Assembly resolution 2292 (XXII) concerning publications and documentation, and in particular to the recommendations of the Secretary-General contained in the annex thereto concerning summary records and the final report. He hoped that the members of the Commission would respond positively to the Assembly's appeal.

With reference to items 15 and 16 of the provisional agenda, he expressed the hope that the Commission would review its methods of operation, its requirements as to documentation, duration of its sessions and programme of work and draw the attention of the Economic and Social Council to those questions which should be given priority. In that connexion the members of the Commission were, of course, aware of the present trend in United Nations activities in the field of human rights. Having set basic standards in many aspects of the protection of the dignity of the individual, the concern of United Nations organs was to encourage and promote the observance of those standards everywhere. As the Secretary-General had said in a message on the occasion of Human Rights Day (10 December 1967), it was a remarkable and heartening phenomenon that in a world racked by political divisions and social and economic disparities, the United Nations had unanimously adopted so many international instruments proclaiming standards of respect for human rights, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Covenants on Human Rights and the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The ultimate objective, however, was the implementation of those standards at the

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national and local level and it was the task of the international community to consider how it could improve its methods of encouraging, assisting and reviewing national and local efforts and how it could bring its influence to bear on the improvement of specific situations constituting gross violations of human rights.

## ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Mrs. DEMBINSKA (Poland) and Mrs. TILLET (United States of America) nominated Mrs. Jiagge (Ghana) for the office of Chairman.

Mrs. SAN DIEGO (Philippines), Mr. UGGLEDAHL (Finland) and Mrs. ROBERTSON (Peru) supported the nomination.

Mrs. Jiagge (Ghana) was elected Chairman by acclamation.

Mrs. Jiagge (Ghana) took the Chair.

The CHAIRMAN invited nominations for Vice-Chairman under rule 15 of the rules of procedure, as amended by Economic and Social Council resolution 1231 (XLII), which provided that one or more Vice-Chairmen should be elected at the first meeting each year; previously, the Commission had been empowered to elect only one or two Vice-Chairmen.

Miss CHATON (France) nominated Mrs. Bokor (Hungary) as Vice-Chairman.

Mrs. TALLAWY (United Arab Republic) seconded the nomination.

Mrs. Bokor (Hungary) was elected Vice-Chairman by acclamation.

Miss LAVALLE (Mexico) nominated Mrs. Marinovic (Chile) as Vice-Chairman.

Mr. VAKIS (Cyprus) seconded the nomination.

Mrs. Marinovic (Chile) was elected Vice-Chairman by acclamation.

Mrs. OULD DADDAH (Mauritania) nominated Mrs. Al-Radi (Iraq) as Vice-Chairman.

Mr. OZER (Turkey) seconded the nomination.

Mrs. Al-Radi (Iraq) was elected Vice-Chairman by acclamation.

Mrs. NUITA (Japan) nominated Dame Mabel Miller (Australia) as Rapporteur.

Mrs. NAHVI (Iran) seconded the nomination.

Dame Mabel Miller (Australia) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.

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STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

The CHAIRMAN thanked the members of the Commission for the honour done to her country and to the African continent by electing her Chairman. She paid a tribute to the outgoing Chairman, the representative of Finland, whose untiring efforts during the previous session and in the Third Committee of the General Assembly had played a major part in securing the unanimous adoption by the Assembly of the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

The Declaration was, of course, only the first step; it would remain a dead letter unless the Commission took measures to ensure that it was given wide publicity and that machinery was established for its implementation throughout the world. The Commission might therefore wish to establish a working group to submit proposals on methods of implementing the Declaration and to include an item on the subject in the agenda for the current session. The establishment of follow-up machinery would, in any event, be a particularly appropriate activity during the International Year for Human Rights.

A number of the items on the provisional agenda provided an opportunity for the Commission to consider how the legislative framework of human rights could be made economically relevant. In a world in which one-half of mankind still suffered from poverty, disease and hunger, there was little opportunity for the poor of the developing countries to develop their natural abilities. For the developing countries the only significant division among countries was not an ideological one: it was the division of the world into rich and poor nations. International aid did much to relieve the most urgent problems of the latter, but ultimately the remedy was to be found in international justice. As matters stood, it could not be denied that the developing countries were being exploited by those who determined world market prices; they were not in a position to bargain for fair prices for their exports of primary products which were often their sole source of revenue and foreign exchange, and they had to pay unduly high prices for their purchases of manufactures.

It was to be hoped that the second session of the Conference on Trade and Development would awaken the conscience of the international community to the plight of the developing countries. The main responsibility, however rested with

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