

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
TO THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. The Commission on the Status of Women held its First Session from 19 February to 24 February 1947, the following members being present:

Mrs. Jessie Street	Representative of	Australia
Mrs. E. Uralova	" "	Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic
Mrs. W. S. New	" "	China
Mrs. G. de Echeverria	" "	Costa Rica
Mrs. B. Bogtrup	" "	Denmark
Mrs. M. Lefauchaux	" "	France
Miss S. Basterrechea	" "	Guatemala
Begum Hamid Ali	" "	India
Mrs. A. de Castillo Ledon	" "	Mexico
Mrs. A. Coama	" "	Syria
Mrs. Mihri Pektas	" "	Turkey
Mrs. E. Popova	" "	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
Miss M. Sutherland	" "	United Kingdom
Miss D. Kenyon	" "	United States of America
Mrs. I. Urdaneta	" "	Venezuela

2. Miss E. Aguirre represented Mexico until the arrival of the regular member.

3. The Specialized Agencies were represented at the Commission by the following:

ILO	-	Mrs. E. Rowe
UNESCO	-	Miss J. Maass

4. The following Consultants were present:

AFL	-	Miss T. Sender
ICA	-	Mrs. H. Fuhrmann
WFTU	-	Miss L. Spiegel

* This document is a revision of the English version of E/281 only.

5. The Secretary of the Commission was Miss Elsie Bowdman.
6. The Commission elected the following members as its officers:

Mrs. Bodil Begtrup	(Denmark)	-	Chairman
Mrs. J. Street	(Australia)	-	Vice-Chairman, and
Mrs. E. Uralova	(Byelorussian SSR)	-	Rapporteur
7. The Commission decided to adopt for the First Session the Provisional Rules of Procedure as laid down in document E/CN.6/W.2 and to postpone the examination and amendment of those rules until the Second Session.
8. The Commission expressed the desire that the next session of the Commission should be held in 1947 at Geneva shortly before the session of the Commission on Human Rights.

CHAPTER II

TERMS OF REFERENCE

9. The Commission decided to recommend to the Economic and Social Council that its Terms of Reference, as stated in document E/90, be amended to read as follows:

(a) Functions

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, civil, social and educational fields with the object of implementing the principle that men and women shall have equal rights, and to work out proposals to give effect to such recommendations. The Commission shall also make recommendations to the Council on urgent problems requiring immediate attention, defense of women's rights. The Commission may submit proposals to the Council regarding its Terms of Reference.

CHAPTER III

CONSIDERATION OF COMMUNICATIONS

10. The Commission appointed a sub-committee, consisting of the representative of China, Guatemala, and the United States, to consider communications already received and the question of how the Commission should deal with communications received in the future.

/11. The sub-committee

11. The sub-committee presented a report (document E/CN.6/19) in which it made recommendations to the Commission as to the manner of dealing with communications, and drew the attention of the Commission to the communication from the Inter-American Commission of Women.

12. As regards communications received in the future, the Commission decided to make the following recommendations to the Economic and Social Council:

(a) That the Secretary-General be requested to compile a confidential list of communications received concerning the Status of Women, before each session of the Commission.

(b) That this confidential list, also specifying the contents of the communications, and giving the names of any organization sending such communications, be forwarded to the members of the Commission at least fourteen days before the opening of each session.

(c) That the members of the Commission at their request, have the right to consult the originals of these communications.

(d) That the Secretary-General be requested to inform the writers of all such communications that these will be brought to the attention of the Commission on the Status of Women.

13. As regards the communication of the Inter-American Commission of Women, the Commission decided to include the consideration of the question among other items on the Agenda.

CHAPTER IV

RELATIONS WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

14. The Commission, noting that Article 71 of the Charter of the United Nations provides that "the Economic and Social Council may make suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations which are concerned with matters within its competence. Such arrangements may be made with international organizations and, where appropriate, with national organizations after consultation with the Members of the United Nations concerned," decided, in view of the fact that the Economic and Social Council

/has already

has already set up a Committee on Arrangements for Consultation with Non-Governmental Organizations, that all requests from women's organizations for consultative status be referred to that Committee, and that whatever decisions the Committee may take be discussed by the Commission on the Status of Women at its next Session. This shall not apply to the principle of recognizing national co-ordinating agencies.*

15. The Commission expressed its desire that the Economic and Social Council should recommend the Member States to encourage the establishment within their respective countries of co-ordinating agencies of non-governmental organizations to which any organization engaged on the political, economic, social, educational and other problems relating to the status of women would be entitled to belong unless such agencies are already in existence. The Commission further recommended that when such agencies were formed their applications for consultative status should be duly considered.

* In view of the fact that two proposals were submitted regarding the question of co-operation with women's national organizations, the Commission decided to establish a drafting sub-committee, consisting of the Chairman of the Commission and the Representatives of Australia and the Byelorussian S.S.R. As a result of the work of the drafting sub-committee two draft resolutions were presented for consideration by the Commission. The Australian proposal was adopted as in paragraph 14. The proposal of the member from the Byelorussian S.S.R. was as follows:

"The Commission expresses the desire that the Economic and Social Council recommend to the Member Governments to encourage in their countries the establishment of co-ordinating democratic non-governmental organizations, which would co-operate in the political, economic, social, educational, and other fields connected with the status of women, and the fight for the full elimination of the remnants of fascism, and the establishment of a democratic peace among peoples.

"The Commission recommends that on the establishment of such organizations these should be able to turn to the Economic and Social Council with the request to provide them with consultative status and that such request should be considered in accordance with Article 71 of the Charter of the United Nations."

16. The Commission decided to hear representatives of the following international women's organizations, which had made application to be heard:

The Women's International Democratic Federation
The Associated Countrywomen of the World
The International Alliance of Women
The International Co-operative Women's Guild
The International Federation of University Women
The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
The International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues
The World Young Women's Christian Association
The International Federation of Business and Professional Women
The International Council of Women
The Pan-Pacific Women's Association
The World Women's Party.

After hearing these international women's organizations, the Chairman thanked them and remarked that the contact between the Commission and the international organizations had thereby been started.*

* The Representatives of Australia, Byelorussian SSR, France and USSR wished to add at this point the following statement:

"The representative of the USSR submitted a proposal recommending the Economic and Social Council to grant consultative status under Category A to the Women's International Democratic Federation. The representative of Australia, supporting the proposal of the representative of the USSR, also proposed that the Economic and Social Council be recommended to grant consultative status to the Liaison Committee of International Women's Organizations. The Commission decided not to consider this question, as earlier (see Item 14 of this report) it had decided to refer such questions for consideration by the Committee on Arrangements for Consultation with Non-Governmental Organizations."

17. The Commission specially signified its desire to collaborate with the World Federation of Trade Unions, the American Federation of Labor, and the International Co-operative Alliance, and stated that it wished to make use of their experience in working out its decisions.

CHAPTER V

RELATIONS WITH SPECIALIZED AGENCIES

18. The Commission took note of the agreements concluded between the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies, and the facilities provided therein for consultation and co-operation between these agencies and the Commissions of the United Nations.

19. The Commission asked the Economic and Social Council to request the Secretary-General to send all appropriate literature to all members of the Commission before its next session in order to enable them to study the work done in the past by the ILO in relation to the principles of the Commission.

20. The Commission wholeheartedly supported the statement contained in the International Labour Organization's Declaration of Philadelphia adopted on 17 May 1944 to the effect that "all human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue both their material well-being and spiritual development in conditions of freedom and of economic security and equal opportunity."

21. The Commission welcomed with satisfaction co-operation in carrying out the programme of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and wished to draw that Specialized Agency's attention to the section on education in the Commission's programme.

22. The Commission took note of the programme adopted by UNESCO in the field of basic education and decided to recommend to the Economic and Social Council:

(a) that the Secretary-General consult with UNESCO on plans for developing the programme of basic education without distinction as to sex, race or creed, and that he be invited to report to the next session of the Commission on its progress and any assistance which the Commission may be able to render in this connection;

/(b) that it be

(b) that it be suggested to UNESCO that in their education programme they devote particular attention to those regions where women have as yet no voice in the political affairs of their country or to those regions where women have already been granted the franchise but do not yet enjoy full political rights; and further that they take steps to promote an effective programme of basic education for women and communicate with the Commission periodically on the progress made in carrying out that programme.

(c) that the Secretary-General be asked to request the Member States to reply without delay to the questions in Part I, paragraph D (education) of the Questionnaire on the Legal Status and Treatment of Women in order to provide the Commission with data which will enable early consideration to be given to actions for advancing the rights of women in the educational field.

CHAPTER VI

RELATIONS WITH TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL AND INFORMATION FROM NON-SELF GOVERNING TERRITORIES

23. The Commission decided to recommend that the Economic and Social Council draw the attention of the Trusteeship Council to the importance attached by the Commission to the inclusion in the questionnaires required by Article 88 of the Charter, of questions relating to the Status of Women, to the nature and form of such questions, and to the methods whereby the rights of women in political, economic, social and educational fields might be promoted in the Trust Territories.

24. The Commission decided to request the Economic and Social Council, once the Trusteeship Council was established, to make arrangements for consultation and collaboration between the Trusteeship Council and the Commission.

25. The Commission took note of the resolution of the General Assembly

/relating

relating to the convocation of conferences of representatives of non-self-governing territories by the Members responsible for the administration of such territories and expressed the hope that local women who were leaders in the movement for obtaining equal rights for women would be included as representatives at such conferences, if they were convened.

CHAPTER VII

GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION ON THE POLITICAL
RIGHTS OF WOMEN

26. The Commission decided:

(a) To recommend to the Economic and Social Council that the Secretary-General be requested to urge each Member Government to complete and transmit to him by 1 June 1947 if possible, the following sections of the Questionnaire on the Legal Status and Treatment of Women: Part I, Public Law, Section A, Franchise, and Section B, Eligibility to Hold Public Office, and to indicate as far as possible, any changes in law or practice concerning these matters since the General Assembly Resolution was passed.

(b) To recommend to the Economic and Social Council that the Secretariat be requested to make by 1 September 1947 or before the next session a preliminary report on the political rights of women based on the replies of Member Governments to the above mentioned sections of the Questionnaire, and on such information as may be available from other authoritative sources, for presentation to the next session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

(c) To appoint the representatives of Mexico, Syria, the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to plan the preparation of this preliminary report, review its findings, and make recommendations thereon to the next Session of the Commission.

/(d) To recommend

(d) To recommend that such a report be submitted to the Economic and Social Council every year by the Commission on the Status of Women with the request that it be transmitted to the General Assembly.

27. The Commission decided to recommend to the Economic and Social Council that:

(a) The Secretariat be instructed to act as a clearing-house for the collection and dissemination of information and publications on the use of the franchise, which might be helpful to women who have recently acquired the right to vote;

(b) The Secretariat be instructed to prepare a preliminary report based on accounts of pertinent experience from countries where effective programmes have already been undertaken in this field, for submission to the Commission at its next meeting.

28. The Commission decided to express its gratification at the inclusion in the Peace Treaties with Roumania, Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Finland of provisions demanding that there should be no discrimination by the Governments of those countries on grounds of sex in the enjoyment of human rights.

29. The Commission recommended to the Economic and Social Council that the Secretary-General be requested to expedite the preparation of a questionnaire on the economic rights of women and to circulate it to Member Governments with requests for answers in the shortest possible time.

30. The Commission decided to express the wish that the Economic and Social Council should recommend that in cases where there is no adult suffrage, or where franchise is limited or curtailed in the case of women, the General Assembly should consider the question of means for securing complete adult suffrage in such countries in the shortest possible time.

CHAPTER VIII

EXAMINATION AND STUDY OF SECTION I AND II OF THE REPORT OF THE NUCLEAR SUB-COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

31. Having considered Parts I and II of the Report of the Nuclear Sub-Commission on the Status of Women (document E/38/Rev.1) the Commission decided to express its satisfaction with that report and, in agreement with its fundamental principles, to use it as a basis for its future work.

CHAPTER IX

CO-ORDINATION WITH OTHER COMMISSIONS

32. Commission on Human Rights - The Commission decided:

(a) To request the Economic and Social Council to arrange that the Commission on the Status of Women be represented by its officers (the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur) at the session of the Commission on Human Rights when the draft International Bill of Human Rights is being considered.

(b) To request that the drafting Group of the Commission on Human Rights be requested to circulate copies of the preliminary draft of the International Bill of Human Rights to members of the Commission on the Status of Women at the same time as it is made available to members of the Commission on Human Rights.

33. Social Commission - The Commission decided:

(a) In view of the fact that the bad state and lack of housing constitutes a major obstacle to the betterment of the condition of women, to support the resolution of the Social Commission relating to town planning and housing.

(b) To request that if the Economic and Social Council arranged for the establishment of a Service of Housing and Urbanism as proposed in the Social Commission's resolution, the Council should be asked to arrange for effective collaboration between that Service and the Commission on the Status of Women.

/(c) To request

(c) To request the Economic and Social Council to make known to the Social Commission the desire of the Commission on the Status of Women that provision be made for community centres and facilities for the care of children and the equipment of homes with labour-saving devices to enable housewives to take an active part in public and civil affairs.

34. Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities:

(a) The Commission decided to recommend that the Economic and Social Council call the attention of the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities to the importance attached by the Commission on the Status of Women to the work of that Sub-Commission.

(b) The Commission wished to be informed of the constitution, and of the efforts made by the aforementioned Sub-Commission for promoting the rights of women belonging to the various minority groups in the political, economic, social and cultural fields.

(c) The Commission suggested that the best organization of such co-operation between the two organs, would be the effective participation of a representative of the Commission on the Status of Women in the work of the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities.

CHAPTER X

PROGRAMME OF FUTURE WORK

35. The Commission decided by 8 votes to 2 to adopt the following guiding principles and aims in its future work:

I. PRINCIPLES

Freedom and equality are essential to human development and whereas woman is as much a human being as man, she is, therefore, entitled to share them with him;

Well-being and progress of society depend on the extent to which both

/men and

men and women are able to develop their personality to the full and are cognizant of their responsibilities to themselves and to each other;

Woman has thus a definite role to play in the building of a free, healthy, prosperous and moral society and that she can fulfil that obligation only as a free and responsible member.

Woman must take an active part in the fight for the total elimination of fascist ideology and for international co-operation directed to the establishment of a democratic peace among the peoples of the world and for the prevention of fresh aggression.

In order to achieve this goal, the purpose of the Commission is to raise the status of women, irrespective of their nationality, race, language or religion, to equality with men in all fields of human enterprise, and to eliminate all discriminations against women in provisions of statutory law and under maxims or rules, or interpretations of customary law.

II. AIMS

Therefore the Commission recommends that its aims shall be as follows:

A. Political

Equal participation in governments and the possibility of exercising all rights of citizenship, irrespective of race, language, or religion, and of assuming all the duties of a citizen, comprising:

1. Universal adult suffrage.
2. Equal right to vote.
3. Equal right to be elected.
4. Equal right to hold public office.

B. Civil

Full equality in all civil rights, irrespective of nationality, race, language, or religion, including among others:

1. Marriage -- Freedom of choice, dignity of the wife, monogamy, equal right to dissolution of marriage.

2. Guardianship

2. Guardianship - Equal right to guardianship of her own and other children.
3. Nationality - Right to keep her own nationality, and the right of her children to choose the nationality of the mother upon their attaining their majority.
4. Legal Capacity - Equal rights to enter into contracts and to acquire and dispose of inherited property.
5. Domicile - A married woman to have the same rights to establish her domicile as a man or a single woman.

C. Social and Economic

Full possibility of taking equal part in social life, which implies full opportunity of fulfilling her duties towards society.

1. To prevent discrimination against women in social and economic status and customs, irrespective of their nationality, race, language or religion. Women should be given equal rights with men in regard to labour, wages, holidays, and other economic and social rights.
2. To abolish prostitution.
3. While no disability should be attached to woman on the ground of her sex, in regard to the enjoyment of full equality, in the exercise of social and labour duties, consideration on grounds of health should be given equally to men and women and special consideration to women on grounds of motherhood. With that aim in view, try to achieve, inter alia, State protection of the interests of the mother and child by giving the mother, before and after childbirth, holidays with average pay; by arranging leave of absence during working hours for nursing mothers without deductions for such time from wages; by the creation of special rooms for nursing the children; and by the organization of a wide network of nursing homes and medical

/consultations,

consultation centres, creches and kindergartens, and other facilities.

4. There shall be an effective system of health and social insurance legislation which will provide equal preventive and remedial opportunities for women and will include special provisions for maternal and child welfare.

D. Education

Equal opportunity for compulsory, free and full education, equal opportunity in all specialized fields and the right to enjoy scientific discoveries applied to human growth and development.

To achieve these aims the Commission proposes:

1. that world public opinion be stimulated in favour of raising the status of women as an instrument for promoting human rights and peace.

The Commission also recommends that in view of the fact that in signing the Charter, the governments of all the United Nations recognized that one of its principal aims, as stated in the Preamble, was "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small," the Commission on the Status of Women expects the full collaboration and support of the governments of all Member States of the United Nations in their endeavours to raise the status of women throughout the world. At the same time, this Commission earnestly desires to render all possible assistance to those governments in the application of the principle of equal rights as between men and women.

2. that the Commission collaborate with United Nations organs, governments, specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations and any other experts deemed necessary.

CHAPTER XI

URGENT PROBLEMS

36. The Commission decided to express the wish that the Economic and Social Council should recommend to the General Assembly that the laws of all countries should be codified enforcing equal rights impartially for all citizens, or, where necessary, each country be requested to codify all its laws, political, economic, civil and socio-legal, conferring complete equality of rights on all women.

37. The Commission decided that in view of the importance to the Commission of carrying out its work effectively, and of keeping in touch with women all over the world, it was urgently necessary that the Secretary-General should as soon as possible appoint a competent woman who had taken an active part in the work to improve the status of women, to be head of the Status of Women Section of the Division of Human Rights.

CHAPTER XII

OTHER QUESTIONS

38. The Commission decided:

(a) to establish relations with a view to co-operation and co-ordination of work with the Inter-American Women's Commission in order to make use of the experience and the valuable studies of that organization regarding the status of women in the Americas.

(b) to request the Inter-American Women's Commission to send an observer to the meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women, to act in an advisory and informative capacity.

(c) to recommend to the Economic and Social Council that the Council consider ways and means of implementing the terms of this resolution, recognizing that the Inter-American Women's Commission is an inter-governmental regional organization working on the same problems

/as the Commission

as the Commission on the Status of Women.*

39. The Commission decided to recommend to the Economic and Social Council that, in order to make known and stimulate interest in the work of the Commission and to assist in compiling the information required the Secretariat should be instructed to arrange with Member States for one or more members of the Commission to visit Member States.

40. The Commission recommends the Economic and Social Council to investigate the question of summoning regional conferences, the first of which might be arranged during 1948, and to request the Secretariat to work out detailed alternatives with regard to place, programme, budgets, management, and potential attendance, for consideration at the next session of the Commission.

* The representatives of the U.S.S.R. and of the Byelorussian S.S.R. stated that they had abstained from voting because the question of the Inter-American Commission called for further study. Such a presentation of this question as had occurred at the meeting of the Commission was premature, especially in connection with the fact that the Commission had so far not taken any decision in regard to the real international mass organization - the Women's International Democratic Federation - for consideration by the Committee on Arrangements for Consultation with Non-Governmental Organizations, but had left the matter unconsidered in substance.

The representative of Mexico desired that the following statement be incorporated:

"The Inter-American Commission of Women is an official organization composed of one representative from each of the Governments of the American Republics. Its purpose is to study the status of women in the Western Hemisphere, and to report on the problems concerning women to the Conferences of American States. The Inter-American Commission is similar to our Commission on the Status of Women. Its work and status cannot be confused with those of any other non-governmental or voluntary organization in any part of the world. This organization is neither a specialized or a non-governmental agency. Because it is a regional body, it has a special status which should be recognized by the Economic and Social Council. I insist that to establish a working relationship and to ask the Inter-American Commission of Women to send an observer to our session, is not a departure from the Charter. On the contrary, it is of the utmost importance that we have friendly relations with a body that for eighteen consecutive years has been doing for the women of the Western Hemisphere what our Commission on the Status of Women intends to do for the women of the world."