

**ECONOMIC
AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL**

**CONSEIL
ECONOMIQUE
ET SOCIAL**

UNRESTRICTED

E/HR/18/Rev.1
16 May 1946

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

TO THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

The Sub-Commission on the Status of Women, established by the Economic and Social Council under Council Resolutions of 16 and 18 February 1946 to submit proposals, recommendations and reports to the Commission on Human Rights regarding the status of women and to submit proposals to the Council through the Commission on Human Rights regarding its terms of reference and definitive composition met at Gillet Hall, Hunter College, New York City, during the period 29 April to 13 May 1946.

The Commission consisted of the following members:

Mrs. Bodil Begtrup - Denmark
Miss Minerva Bernardino - Dominican Republic
Miss Angela Jurdak - Lebanon
Miss Fryderyka Kalinowska - Poland
Mrs. Marie Helene Lefauchaux - France
Mrs. Hansa Mehta - India
Mrs. W. S. New - China

At its first meeting the Sub-Commission elected its officers:

Chairman - Mrs. Bodil Begtrup
Vice Chairman - Miss Minerva Bernardino
Rapporteur - Miss Angela Jurdak

Mrs. Janine Bernheim acted as Secretary of the Sub-Commission, and Miss Catherine Rolfe as Assistant Secretary.

Discussions centred on the fundamental principles to be adopted, the scope and programme of work to be undertaken, and the composition of the full Sub-Commission.

There was a general feeling among the members of gratitude towards the Economic and Social Council for taking up the question of the Status of Women, and for setting up this Sub-Commission to study the problems involved, and in this way, implementing the principle stated in the

Preamble of the Charter "the equal rights of men and women."

It was recognized that the Sub-Commission was set up to advise the Commission on Human Rights on problems relating to the status of women. In consequence, the Sub-Commission must work in harmony with that Commission. There was general agreement that the Sub-Commission should study the status of women in all its aspects and make the broadest possible recommendations to the Commission on Human Rights on the scope of the work to be undertaken by the Sub-Commission when fully constituted. The ideals at which to aim, and guiding principles on which to work, were defined by the members as a preliminary to their detailed discussions. Members considered that the work of the Sub-Commission should last until women had reached the point where they were on equal footing with men in all fields of human enterprise. In practice priority had to be given to Political Rights since little progress could be made without them. Nevertheless, improvements in civil educational, social and economic fields were especially important and therefore, these problems should be attacked simultaneously.

The question whether the Trusteeship Council, when it came into being, should be invited to consult the Sub-Commission regarding the status of women in the non-self-governing territories placed under its charge was discussed, having in mind Article 76 (c) of the Charter. It was generally agreed that this was a matter that could well be left for later sessions of the full Sub-Commission.

During the discussion on the question of definitive composition of the Sub-Commission, the advantages and disadvantages of a small membership were carefully weighed. A smaller body could be more efficient, although a large one would give more universal representation of women's activities. It was decided to recommend a minimum figure of fifteen, to include three ex-officio members from the Commission on Human Rights. The additional members were to be selected from regions insufficiently represented in the nuclear Sub-Commission, and particularly from countries where women had reached different stages in status. There was a difference of opinion on the question of representation. Some members considered that representation

should be on a governmental basis since without the support of governments the work of the Sub-Commission could not be effective. Others were of the opinion that members should be elected in their individual capacity in the same way as the nuclear Sub-Commission had been appointed by the Economic and Social Council. The members reached the conclusion that since, in practice, the Economic and Social Council would not appoint the individuals who were persona non grata with their governments the selection should be made according to individual capacity, by the Council. With regard to term of office, the members felt that continuity was necessary during the first years of the application of their programme. After 1950 a system of rotation should be put into effect, which might follow the lines laid down by the Economic and Social Council for the other Commissions.

In the course of the discussions the members of the Sub-Commission expressed their belief that democracy is now the only social order in which women can enjoy full rights as human beings, and that women, a great number of whom have made so many sacrifices in the cause of democracy and liberty and who have proved in action that they are able to face all duties and tasks, affirm their resolution to work in the service of world peace with all their heart, mind and will.

Accordingly, the Sub-Commission recommends that the full Sub-Commission should be guided by the following ideals in its future work:-

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

Well-being and progress of society depend on the extent to which both men and women are able to develop their full personality 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 fulfill this obligation only as a free and responsible member;

In order to achieve this goal, the purpose of the Sub-Commission is to raise the status of women to equality with men in all fields of human enterprise.

I. Policy

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

A. Political

Equal participation in governments and possibility to exercise all the rights and assume all the duties of a citizen which comprise:-

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

B. Civil

1. Marriage. Freedom of choice, dignity of the wife, monogamy, equal right to breach of marriage.
2. Guardianship. Equal right to have guardianship of her own and other children.
3. Nationality. Right to keep her own nationality, and her children having the right to choose the nationality of the mother on majority.
4. Property. Equal right to hold and acquire administer and inherit property.

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.
2. (a) To abolish prostitution by removing the legal and customary provisions pertaining to it.

- (b) To take strong measures to put down traffic in women and children.
 - (c) To prevent clandestine prostitution by providing conditions that make it no longer necessary for women to earn money by these means.
 - (d) To enable former prostitutes to return to normal life without discrimination by providing work for them as well as a broad and widely accessible educational system.
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 rights and in the assumption of social and labour duties, special consideration on grounds of health may be given equally to men and women and special consideration to women on grounds of motherhood.
4. There shall be an effective scheme 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 care.

D. Education

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

To achieve these aims, the Sub-Commission proposes:-

1. that world public opinion be stimulated in favour of raising the status of women as an instrument to further human rights and peace. The Sub-Commission also recommends that in view of the fact that the governments of all the United Nations in signing the Charter 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 Sub-Commission on the Status of Women expects the full collaboration and support of the governments of all the United Nations in their endeavours to raise the status of women throughout the world. At the same time, this Sub-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 Sub-Commission collaborates with United Nations Commissions, with governments, with specialized agencies with public and private agencies, with international and national women's organizations,* with any other experts deemed necessary, and that representatives of the former organizations should be invited to participate as observers or as consultative agents.
3. that the Sub-Commission welcomes reports and recommendations.

II. Programme

Bearing in mind this broad outline of their goal the Sub-Commission proposes the following programme of work:-

1. To undertake a world wide, up-to-date, reliable and valid survey of laws pertaining to the status of women, their application and the actual status of women. (The Sub-Commission should secure the information through governments, specialized agencies, women's organizations, academic institutes, trade unions and others.)
2. To conduct polls in various regions to sound public opinions on matters of interest to the Sub-Commission.
3. To organize a forum to hear the views of the consultative agents.

* See Appendix I.

4. To call a United Nations Women's Conference to further the programme.
5. To arrange for international exchange of all categories of manual and intellectual women workers, including the industrial, agricultural and cultural fields.
6. To collect and systematize records on women's affairs in the form of books, pamphlets, charts etc. (preferably as a Section of the United Nations' archives).
7. To implement the proposal to create a world wide public opinion through the media of the press, radio, publications, lectures, motion pictures, etc.
8. That the United Nations Information Section prepare material about the United Nations to be distributed on request.
9. To request reference to the Sub-Commission of all communications and information concerning matters of interest to women received by the United Nations.
10. To train leaders in a course on women's affairs and to encourage the promotion of scholarships.
11. That public and private agencies be urged to plan and equip the homes in ways which will enable the housewife to devote more time to participate actively in civic affairs.
12. That an Executive Office on Women's Affairs be established as part of the Secretariat to deal with all work of the Sub-Commission, under the leadership of a highly competent woman who will be appointed after consulting the Sub-Commission and will be assisted by qualified staff.
13. That an Executive Committee be formed from members of the Sub-Commission residing in the vicinity of the headquarters of the United Nations. The purpose of this committee shall be to guard the general policy of the Sub-Commission.

III. Composition

Following the terms of reference in document E/27, Section B.4, that the nuclear Sub-Commission shall make recommendations on the definitive composition of the Sub-Commission, the nuclear Sub-Commission recommends:-

1. That the future composition should be fifteen members including three members from the Commission on Human Rights.
2. That the members should be appointed by the Economic and Social Council in their individual capacity.
3. That the additional members should be selected from the regions of the Balkan States, Great Britain, Latin America and the United States of America to make up the definitive composition of the Sub-Commission.
4. That selection should be made from among women prominent in public affairs.
5. That before final appointment by the Economic and Social Council, the chairman of the Sub-Commission should be consulted.
6. That in view of the fact that the present Sub-Commission is eligible for re-election and that its work cannot begin before October or November 1946, all members be re-elected for a period of three years commencing on 1 April 1947, to serve effectively during the period of initiation.
7. That after this period a sound system of rotation be adopted.
8. That members should attend regularly.
9. That in the case of an emergency, alternates may be designated according to the rules of the Economic and Social Council.
10. That the next session of the Sub-Commission should take place before the end of the year, the date to be determined by the Chairman of the Economic and Social Council in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Sub-Commission.

Members of the Sub-Commission wish to emphasize that action by the Economic and Social Council in establishing this Sub-Commission has awakened hope and expectancy among women in all parts of the world. It is the firm belief of the Sub-Commission that all the recommendations for social progress which it has made are equally important; yet it wishes to stress that immediate action can and should be taken under the headings proposed:-

1. Executive Office (Paragraph II, 12)
2. Survey (Paragraph II, 1)
3. Education (Paragraph I, D)
4. Women's Conference (Paragraph II, 4)
5. Political Rights (Paragraph I, A)

The Sub-Commission on the Status of Women earnestly requests the Economic and Social Council to direct an appeal to the governments of the United Nations that have not accorded suffrage to women, to take such action at the earliest date possible within their frame of government, in order that all the terms of the Charter of the United Nations shall be put into effect.

In conclusion, the Sub-Commission expresses the hope that the full Sub-Commission will explore the vast field of complex problems concerning the status of women all over the world so that it can play its part in building a better world in which men and women in full equality work together towards universal peace.

APPENDIX I

Memorandum to the Commission on Human Rights from the Sub-Commission
on the Status of Women, dated 6 May 1946.

As the meeting of the Committee on Non-Governmental
Organizations is being held on 20 May, the Sub-Commission wishes to
make the following recommendation:

For the efficient handling of the work of the United Nations it is
important that the Sub-Commission on the Status of Women should
stimulate the interest of women of the international and national
organizations, to collaborate with these organizations and co-ordinate
their efforts.

Therefore, the Sub-Commission requests the Economic and Social Council
to refer to it all communications and information received concerning
all matters of interest to women.

The Sub-Commission would appreciate if it should be consulted in all
matters pertaining to women before any decision is reached by the Council.

The Sub-Commission would appreciate if the Commission on Human Rights
would transmit this to the Economic and Social Council.
