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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Twenty-sixth Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 658TH MEETING

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 1 October 1976, at 9.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mrs. GONZALEZ de CUADROS (Colombia)

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INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS RELATING TO THE STATUS OF WOMEN (agenda item 3) (continued):

(a) DRAFT CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
(E/CN.6/574, 591 and Add.1; E/CN.6/L.687) (continued)

1. The CHAIRMAN invited the Commission to resume its consideration of agenda item 3(a). The Commission had before it an amendment (E/CN.6/L.687) designed for the insertion of a new article on the situation of women in rural areas into the text of the draft convention.

2. Miss TYABJI (India) explained that the amendment contained in document E/CN.6/L.687 was the outcome of the combined efforts of seven delegations, which had met as a working group. The purpose of the amendment was to draw attention to the position of rural women, who accounted for two-thirds of the women in the world. Their situation was particularly serious in the developing countries, such as India, where nearly 2 million women lived in rural areas in extremely precarious conditions. She drew particular attention to subparagraph (c), which guaranteed women the right to obtain extension services to which - despite their importance in enabling peasants to learn new methods of farming - rural women in the developing countries did not have access. She pointed out that two amendments had been made to the text of document E/CN.6/L.687: the words "including functional literacy" had been inserted in subparagraph (c) after the words "formal and non-formal", and in subparagraph (e) the words "appropriate technology;" had been added after "marketing facilities".

3. Mrs. DEVAUD (France) said that she was fully in agreement with the amendment submitted by the Indian representative because she believed that a major effort should be made on behalf of rural women and that one of the basic priorities of the Decade was to improve their living conditions. However, she thought it might be more logical, as well as more effective, when the final version of the draft convention was drawn up, to insert each subparagraph of the proposed text in the appropriate chapter (training, medical services, credit facilities, etc.) in order to stress, in each chapter, that a special effort should be made on behalf of rural women.

4. Mrs. DAHLERUP (Denmark) unreservedly supported the Indian amendment as set forth in document E/CN.6/L.687.

5. Mrs. LAMINA (Madagascar) said that her delegation regretted it had been unable to take part in the working group which had drafted the text submitted in document E/CN.6/L.687; she fully supported the text and hoped it would be adopted unanimously.

6. Mrs. SALYO (Indonesia) drew attention to the importance of the amendment, which her delegation had co-sponsored, for the developing countries where the situation of rural women was particularly serious, and hoped it would be adopted unanimously.

7. Mrs. BOKOR-SZEGO (Hungary) also supported the amendment submitted in document E/CN.6/L.687, because in her view the situation of rural women should receive the undivided attention of the Commission. She pointed out that the Women's International Democratic Federation had already dealt with the issue at the Berlin Congress. She agreed with the French representative that it would be better to draw attention to the situation of rural women in each article of the draft convention.
8. Mrs. ESFANDIARI (Iran) said that the amendment should be adopted in the form proposed, as a separate article. In her opinion the situation of rural women was so disturbing that it should be the subject of a special article.
9. Mrs. GUEYE (Senegal) associated herself with previous delegations in expressing wholehearted support for the proposed amendment. Like the Iranian representative, she thought that a special article devoted to rural women would carry greater weight.
10. Mr. MICHEEL (German Democratic Republic) said that his delegation wholeheartedly supported the amendment proposed in document E/CN.6/L.687, which it would also like to sponsor.
11. Mrs. HERRAN (Colombia) also accepted the proposed amendment, but suggested that the word "services" in subparagraph (b) should be replaced by "information".
12. Mrs. HUSSEIN (Egypt) thought that the amendment, of which her delegation was a sponsor, should appear in the draft convention as a separate article. She found it difficult to accept the Colombian proposal, because advice and services included information, whereas information did not cover services.
13. Mrs. ROMANOVICH (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic), unreservedly endorsed the amendment submitted by the India representative, but proposed that the words "and enjoy the rights granted by social security" should be inserted at the end of subparagraph (b).
14. Miss TYABJI (India) did not think it would be advisable to include the phrase proposed by the Byelorussian delegation, as most developing countries did not yet have a social security system. It would be unrealistic to allude to such a distant hope in an article which was to be applicable in the immediate future.
15. She could not agree to the proposal by the Colombian representative to replace "services" by "information" in subparagraph (b), because in the developing countries it was essential for medical services to include family planning services, so that rural women could take advantage of them. She therefore proposed that the word "services" should be retained.
16. Mrs. HERRAN (Colombia) said she would not press her proposal, but wished to enter a reservation concerning the word "services", which was unacceptable to her.

17. Mrs. HUTAR (United States of America) said she fully supported the amendment in document E/CN.6/L.687, of which her delegation was a sponsor.
18. Mrs. FERRER GOMEZ (Cuba) also supported the proposed amendment, but suggested that a new paragraph reading as follows should be inserted between subparagraphs 8(b) and 8(c):
19. "Take all necessary steps to eliminate illiteracy in rural zones and to promote the access of rural women to education".
20. She believed that illiteracy among rural women and their lack of access to education constituted one of the most serious evils in the developing countries.
21. Ms. SANDLUND (Sweden) unreservedly supported the proposed amendment which, in her view, should form a separate article.
22. Mrs. ESFANDIARI (Iran) noted that the amendment proposed by the Cuban representative was unnecessary, as the words "including functional illiteracy" had already been inserted in subparagraph (c). She appealed to the Byelorussian representative not to press her proposal, because the developing countries were most certainly not yet in a position to extend social security to rural women.
23. Mrs. HUSSEIN (Egypt) said that the Cuban proposal could be taken into account by inserting the words "education and" before the word "training" in subparagraph (c).
24. Mrs. FERRER GOMEZ (Cuba) accepted the Egyptian proposal.
25. Mrs. NIKOLAEVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) thought that the proposed amendment was an excellent idea as rural women, who made up the greater part of the women of the world, deserved a special effort on their behalf. Accordingly, she fully endorsed the amendment. It was admittedly difficult for developing countries which as yet had no social security systems to accept the Byelorussian proposal; however, it might be well to extend social security to rural wage-earning women who were employed under contract.
26. Mrs. HUSSEIN (Egypt) said that most developing countries were striving to extend social security coverage gradually, to all workers; at least that was what was happening in Egypt at the present time. It could therefore be said that the women in rural areas should have the right to social security on equal terms with men. In other words, where there was social security for men, women would also be entitled to it on the same footing.
27. Mrs. COENE (Belgium) accepted the text proposed in document E/CN.6/L.687, but found it somewhat incomplete as it made no provision for any form of social security. She therefore supported the Byelorussian proposal as amended by the Egyptian representative.
28. Mrs. DEVAUD (France) proposed, in the light of the comments by the Soviet Union and Egyptian representatives, the addition of the following at the end of the subparagraph (b): "and to enjoy the right to social security when such a system exists in rural areas, at least for wage earners".

29. Mrs. SALYO (Indonesia) supported that proposal. In her country, the many women who were employed under contract on plantations ought to enjoy social security.
30. Mrs. HUSSEIN (Egypt) suggested that the words "on equal terms with men" should be inserted after the word "enjoy" in the text proposed by the French representative.
31. Miss TYABJI (India) accepted the text proposed by the French representative as amended by the Egyptian representative.
32. Mrs. FERRER GOMEZ (Cuba) also accepted the proposals of the French and Egyptian representatives.
33. Mrs. COENE (Belgium) wondered whether the article under consideration did not reproduce provisions already contained in article 10(e), which dealt with education, including, functional literacy.
34. The CHAIRMAN said that some of the provisions of the article under consideration were perhaps redundant, but that its main purpose was to draw attention to all aspects of the situation of women in rural areas.
35. Begum FARIDI (Pakistan) said that the purpose of the article under consideration was the elimination of illiteracy and, above all, ignorance.
36. Mrs. DEVAUD (France) said she would not press her proposal to insert the various subparagraphs of the text under consideration into the relevant chapters of the convention if the idea gave rise to objections. However, she was still of the view that repeated references to a disadvantaged segment of the population had the effect of highlighting their situation to greater effect.
37. Mrs. TALLAWY (Egypt), supported by Miss TYABJI (India), said that she would prefer the article to remain in the form in which it had been drafted.
38. Mrs. NIKOLAEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) noted that the provisions which the French delegation wished to insert in various articles of the draft convention had appeared in former article 12, which related to the women in urban and rural areas. She recalled that the Commission's decision not to consider that article had been taken at the initiative of the French delegation. Several delegations therefore felt it incumbent upon them to draft a new article which would become article 12 in order to fill the gap. A number of the provisions of former article 12 had been omitted from the present amendment, but the draft convention could be improved later on by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.
39. Begum FARIDI (Pakistan), referring to the list of co-sponsors of document E/CN.6/L.687, said that her delegation supported the additional article under consideration but was not a sponsor.
40. The CHAIRMAN said that, in the absence of objections, she would take it that the Commission adopted the text of the additional article (E/CN.6/L.687), as amended.
41. It was so decided.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

42. Mrs. BRUCE (Assistant Director, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs) thought that the Commission should now decide how it would conclude its consideration of the items on its agenda. The Commission had adopted the substantive articles of the draft convention, with the exception of article 4; in addition to article 4, it yet had to consider the preamble and the final provisions. It also had four draft resolutions before it, and had not taken up agenda items 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9. Under item 8, it had to consider the draft provisional agenda for its twenty-seventh session (E/CN.6/L.698).
43. According to the normal procedure, the Commission's report should be submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its session of April 1977. Any other course of action would be exceptional and, because of its financial implications, would have to be approved by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.
44. The Commission could therefore do one of two things: either extend its session by one week or resume the session at the end of the year in Geneva. She recalled that, if the resumed session was held in 1976, the membership of the Commission would be unchanged, but that after December 1976 it would no longer be the same.
45. She then indicated the financial implications of a resumed two-week session in December; interpretation costs in English, Spanish, French and Russian would amount to \$22,000; translation costs at the rate of 15 pages of original text per day in English, Spanish, French and Russian, \$53,600; cost of the preparation, reproduction and distribution of summary records in English, Spanish and French for two meetings per day, \$73,800; the cost of reproducing and distributing documents other than summary records, \$7,200, and other staff costs \$4,200, making a total of \$168,000. In addition, there would also be the travel costs and subsistence allowances for five New York staff members, amounting to \$8,100.
46. If the Commission decided to extend its session by one week, the expenditure incurred by Conference Services would amount to \$84,400 with summary records or \$47,500 without summary records. The subsistence allowances for five staff members from New York who were already in Geneva would total \$1,900.
47. In both cases, the costs relating to travel and subsistence, or to subsistence only, would have to be charged to the budget of the appropriate programme at Headquarters. Conference service costs would be met from appropriations allocated to the United Nations Office at Geneva for conference purposes in general, providing that the Committee on Conferences approved the extension or resumption of the session.
48. Mrs. HIRLEMANN (France) said that her delegation would find it difficult to agree to an extension of the session, as it had other commitments during the next few days. A resumed session, on the other hand, would have to be held in December, and the membership of the Commission should remain unchanged. For budgetary reasons, the resumed session should not last more than one week, and she suggested that only the consideration of the draft convention should have summary record coverage.

49. Mr. EHSASSI (Iran) said that it was impossible for his delegation to be represented in the Commission for another week because it had other commitments. The Commission might, however, be able to meet again in December for one week. He wondered why the resumed session could not be held in New York; that solution would certainly be less costly.
50. Mrs. BRUCE (Assistant Director, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs) said that the Secretariat was now in contact with Headquarters, but it seemed unlikely that the New York conference services would be able to service the Commission in December. If the Commission decided to extend its session, it should make its decision known as soon as possible so that it could be approved by the Committee on Conferences without delay.
51. Mrs. COCKCROFT (United Kingdom) said she would be unable to represent her country in the Commission for one more week for the same reasons as the delegation of France. In that connexion, she noted that, if the Commission could complete its work by extending its session for one week, she did not see why the resumed session would have to last two weeks. Her delegation was of the opinion that the Commission's main concern should be to complete its consideration of the draft convention. It might therefore be necessary to postpone the other agenda items until later. She was therefore in favour of holding a resumed session at Geneva at the beginning of the second week of December.
52. Mrs. TALLAWY (Egypt) said that her delegation would be unable to attend the Commission's meetings beyond the date originally fixed, and thought it might be difficult to obtain the necessary approval for an extension from the competent bodies. Her delegation considered it would be necessary to hold a resumed session of more than one week, because five working days did not seem to be enough to complete consideration of the remaining agenda items. It would prefer the resumed session to be held in New York in order to avoid additional travel expenses. In view of the exceptional situation created for the Commission by the United Nations Decade for Women and the need to complete consideration of the draft convention, she thought that the Commission should decide to hold a resumed two-week session in New York.
53. Ms. HENDSCH (United States of America) said that, because of the financial implications of a resumed session, her delegation would prefer the session to be extended.
54. Mrs. DAHLERUP (Denmark) shared the views expressed by the representative of Egypt.
55. Mrs. NIKOLAEVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said she did not think it would be possible to extend the session because most members of the Commission had prior commitments. The best solution would be to devote a special two-week session to the completion of work on the convention. The other items on the agenda of the twenty-sixth session which had not been considered because of lack of time could be deferred to the Commission's twenty-seventh regular session, which was to be held in 1978. It would be preferable to hold the special session in New York in order to reduce costs and, as the month of December was very busy, it would be better for the special session to be held in January 1977. Lastly, it would be advisable for the membership of the Commission to be the same at the special session as at the current session.

56. Ms. SANDLUND (Sweden) said that she was in favour of holding a resumed session in early December in New York for the reasons given by the delegations of Iran and the United Kingdom.

57. Mr. EHSASSI (Iran) said that his proposal had been to hold a resumed session which would last seven working days, not one week of only five working days. With regard to the date, he suggested that the resumed session should be held at the end of the first week of December, when the Main Committees of the General Assembly were completing their work and when the necessary conference services should be available.

58. Mrs. COENE (Belgium) said she was in favour of a resumed session of the Commission later in the year, with the same membership as at the current session. She had no definite views with regard to the place and date of the resumed session, but would prefer a meeting of seven to ten days at Geneva in early December.

59. It was, of course, important to complete the elaboration of the convention, but there were other important items on the agenda, such as item 6 (Communications relating to the status of women). By decision 86 (LVIII), the Economic and Social Council had invited the Commission to report to it on that matter at its sixty-second session and she failed to see how the Commission could do so if it did not deal with the question of communications at the resumed twenty-sixth session.

60. Miss GONZALEZ MARTINEZ (Mexico) said that she too was in favour of a resumed session of seven to ten days at the end of the first week or the beginning of the second week of December. She did not, however, believe it was realistic to think that the Commission would be able to complete the elaboration of the convention in such a short time. The Commission might very well refer the final provisions to the Economic and Social Council and aim at completing the preamble at the resumed session.

61. Miss TYABJI (India) agreed that, in the present impasse, the only solution was to hold a resumed session, the resulting additional costs of which were, however, to be deplored.

62. Mrs. GUEYE (Senegal) said that she was also in favour of a resumed session; two weeks would be too long, but eight full days should be enough to complete the elaboration of the convention. The session might therefore be held from 6 to 15 December or, better still, at the beginning of January.

63. As the session would be a resumption of the current session, it should logically be held at Geneva, but her delegation would not object to New York.

64. Mrs. HIRLEMANN (France) said that she would like to know whether the meeting would be considered as an extension or as a resumption of the current session if the Commission resumed its work in January 1977 in New York. In other words, she wondered whether the Commission could request that the current session, which should normally be held at Geneva, should be resumed in New York.

65. Mrs. BRUCE (Assistant Director, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs) said that it was for the Economic and Social Council to decide that matter. All the Commission could do was to submit to it a recommendation along those lines.

66. She had received additional information concerning the financial implications of a resumed session. The travel costs of the members of the Commission would amount to \$20,000, and would be nearly the same whether the resumed session was held at Geneva or in New York. Moreover, part of the conference servicing costs, which would amount to \$168,800 with summary records and to \$95,000 without summary records, might be absorbed from the permanent and temporary resources allocated to the Office of the United Nations at Geneva for the biennium 1976-1977. She had not received any information in that connexion with regard to New York. Travel expenses and subsistence allowances for five staff members coming from New York to Geneva would, as she had said, amount to \$8,100.

67. The Commission could, if it so wished, make a recommendation to the Economic and Social Council concerning a resumed session and could, if necessary, indicate its preference for New York or Geneva. The Council would decide mainly on the basis of the calendar of conferences, and the final decision with regard to budget appropriations would be made by the General Assembly.

68. Ms. LAMINA (Madagascar) said that she was in favour of a resumed session in December. Since she herself would not be free because of a regional seminar which would take place in Madagascar from 28 November to 15 December, she would prefer the resumed session to be held in New York, where experts from her delegation would be attending the General Assembly.

69. Mrs. HUTAR (United States of America) requested that a vote should be taken on her proposal for the extension of the session for one week at Geneva.

70. The proposal to extend the twenty-sixth session was rejected by 17 votes to 2, with 4 abstentions.

71. Mrs. BRUCE (Assistant Director, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs) suggested that interested delegations should hold consultations to prepare a draft resolution recommending that the Economic and Social Council should authorize a resumption of the twenty-sixth session.

72. Mrs. NIKOLAEVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) was of the opinion that the Commission should first decide whether the twenty-sixth session was to be resumed or a special session devoted to the completion of the elaboration of the Convention.

73. Mrs. COCKCROFT (United Kingdom) considered that the Commission must decide on the agenda for the resumed session before interested delegations could consult to prepare the draft resolution.

74. Mrs. BRUCE (Assistant Director, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs) said that, in resolution 3521 (XXX), the General Assembly had entrusted the Commission with the mandate of completing the elaboration of the convention in 1976, and that, in resolution 1999 (LX), the Economic and Social Council had requested the Commission to consider different aspects of the preparatory work for the 1980 Conference, including its agenda. It had also requested the Secretary-General to transmit the relevant part of the Commission's report on the work of its twenty-sixth session to the Committee on Review and Appraisal, which was to meet in May 1977.

75. Mr. EHSASSI (Iran), Mrs. HUTAR (United States of America) and Miss TYABJI (India) stressed that, as the meeting in question would be a resumption of the twenty-sixth session, it would have to have the same agenda as the current session.

76. Mrs. HIRLEMANN (France) was of the opinion that the Commission must first take a decision on the agenda for the resumed twenty-sixth session. Until it had done so, it would not be able to decide on the agenda for the twenty-seventh regular session, because the items which it would be unable to consider at the resumed twenty-sixth session would have to be included in the agenda of the twenty-seventh session.

77. Mrs. NIKOLAEVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) considered that the Commission should complete the elaboration of the convention at the resumed twenty-sixth session and, if any time remained, consider matters relating to the 1980 World Conference. She was of the opinion that consideration of all other items should be postponed until the twenty-seventh session.

78. Mrs. TALLAWY (Egypt) proposed that, as a compromise solution, the agenda for the resumed session should include the following three items: the elaboration of the convention, the preparatory work for the 1980 Conference, and the review and appraisal of the progress made in the implementation of the International Development Strategy and the World Plan of Action, on the understanding that the convention would have priority over the other items.

79. After an exchange of views in which Miss TYABJI (India), Mrs. GUEYE (Senegal), Mrs. SALYO (Indonesia), Mr. EHSASSI (Iran) and Mrs. HIRLEMANN (France) took part, Mrs. TALLAWY (Egypt) said that, if the Commission wanted the Economic and Social Council to take account of the recommendation it was going to make, that recommendation had to be adopted unanimously. Moreover, the usual practice was that if a body was unable to consider some of the items on its agenda, their consideration was postponed until the following session. The Commission therefore had no reason to disagree about the agenda for the resumed session.

80. Miss TYABJI (India) said she agreed with the representative of Egypt that a recommendation to the Economic and Social Council must be adopted unanimously. The Commission seemed to be in agreement that there should be a resumed session, that priority should be given to consideration of the draft convention, and that the other agenda items which had not yet been considered at the current session should not be dropped.

81. Mrs. BRUCE (Assistant Director, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs) said she thought that the Commission could take two separate decisions. It should first decide whether it wanted to recommend to the Economic and Social Council that it should authorize either a resumed session in 1976 or 1977 or a special session. It should then take a decision on the agenda of the meeting.

82. Mrs. SALYO (Indonesia) also considered that the Commission had reached a consensus on the resumption of the session. Only the agenda was causing problems and, in the recommendation to the Economic and Social Council, she would like priority to be given to consideration of the draft convention.

83. Mrs. NIKOLAEVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said she also thought that all members of the Commission agreed that there should be a resumed session which, as she had already said, should preferably be held in January 1977. With regard to the agenda, she recalled that her country had proposed that, at the resumed session, the Commission should give priority to consideration of the draft convention on the elimination of discrimination against women and then to the preparatory work for the 1980 Conference.

84. Miss TYABJI (India) requested the closure of the debate in accordance with rule 48 of the rules of procedure.

85. The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the motion for closure.

86. The motion was adopted by 12 votes to none, with 12 abstentions.

87. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the meeting should be suspended to enable the members of the Commission to prepare the draft resolution to be transmitted to the Council.

88. The meeting was suspended at 12.25 p.m. and resumed at 12.50 p.m.

89. Mrs. TALLAWY (Egypt) submitted the following draft resolution:

90. "The Commission on the Status of Women,

Noting the provisions of General Assembly resolution 3521 (XXX) requesting the Commission on the Status of Women to complete in 1976 the elaboration of the draft convention on the elimination of discrimination against women;

Regretting its inability to conclude its work on the drafting of the convention on the elimination of discrimination against women and on other items of the agenda;

Noting the extreme importance of completing this work, particularly in the light of the Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace;

Strongly recommends to the Economic and Social Council that it authorize the holding of a resumed twenty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in 1976, preferably in New York, to enable it to complete its work, with special priority to be given to the drafting of the convention on the elimination of discrimination against women and to the preparatory work for the World Conference in 1980."

91. Mrs. HIRLEMANN (France) said that, although some delegations wanted the resumed session to be held in New York, others preferred Geneva. In order to ensure unanimity, she proposed that the words "preferably in New York" should be deleted.
92. Miss GONZALEZ MARTINEZ (Mexico) endorsed the text proposed by Egypt and urged the Commission to adopt it by consensus.
93. Ms. HENDSCH (United States of America) proposed that the words "to complete its work" should be replaced by the words "to complete consideration of its agenda".
94. Mrs. GUEYE (Senegal) supported the French representative's comments. She considered that it should be left to the Economic and Social Council to decide where the resumed session would be held.
95. Mrs. TALLAWY (Egypt) accepted the amendment proposed by the representative of the United States. With regard to the deletion of the words "preferably in New York", she thought that the majority of the members of the Commission had shown a preference for New York, and that that preference should be brought to the attention of the Economic and Social Council.
96. Mrs. HIRLEMANN (France) wondered whether the resumed session should not be held where the current session had been held.
97. Miss ST. CLAIRE (Secretary of the Commission) said that the Economic and Social Council was an example of a body whose sessions were held partly at Geneva and partly in New York.
98. Mrs. HIRLEMANN (France) said that, although she did not refuse to withdraw her proposal, she was not fully convinced that the majority of the members of the Commission had shown a preference for New York.
99. Mrs. GUEYE (Senegal) said that, although the Commission could make recommendations, it could not indicate its preferences.
100. The CHAIRMAN said that, if she heard no objection, she would take it that the Commission decided to adopt the Egyptian draft resolution, as amended by the United States representative.
101. The draft resolution, as amended, was adopted by consensus.
102. Ms. HENDSCH (United States of America) asked what would be done at the resumed session with the draft resolutions submitted at the current session.
103. Miss ST. CLAIRE (Secretary of the Commission) said that they would be considered at that time.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.