



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Sixty-second session

Summary record (partial)* of the 1336th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 27 October 2015, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Hayashi

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* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention *(continued)*

Eighth periodic report of the Russian Federation (continued)
(CEDAW/C/RUS/8; CEDAW/C/RUS/Q/8 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of the Russian Federation took places at the Committee table.*

Articles 10 to 14

2. **Ms. Trinchenco** (Russian Federation), replying to questions raised concerning sex education, said that the national school curriculum for basic general secondary education was based on federal State educational standards, which focused on the development of the pupil's personality, including the child's understanding and acceptance of traditional family values and his or her responsibility to the family, society and the State. The education and socialization of the schoolchildren was based on basic national values of Russian society such as civic-mindedness, patriotism, the family, health, work and others.

3. All general education students were required to take biology courses, which covered such areas as health, anatomy, vital functions, the digestive system, the prevention of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, genetics and inherited diseases, family planning and reproductive health. Courses in basic health and safety covered health, reproductive health, good hygiene, pregnancy and infant care. Those federal educational standards made it possible for schools to provide instruction on sex education by instilling spiritual and moral values in students. It was not necessary, therefore, to introduce specialized sex education courses.

4. In that connection, information about the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community did not form part of the State standards. The provision of information on the LGBT community both in and outside the classroom was left to the discretion of the individual schools. The Government did not hide such information from children. However, it considered that advocacy of those lifestyles was not compatible with children's mental health.

5. Under Russian law all children, including Roma girls, had equal access to education. Moreover, education was an inalienable right, irrespective of religion, gender or any other grounds for discrimination. Access to education was also guaranteed under the Constitution, and compulsory education applied to all children in the Russian Federation, and not just citizens. Technological advancements had revolutionized teaching, with distance and e-learning tools proving particularly useful in ensuring that children in remote, rural areas, including Roma children, had access to education. In addition, efforts to promote mutual understanding and ensure that Roma children could learn both their mother tongue and Russian included the development of a Romani alphabet, since that language had traditionally been unwritten, and additional teaching hours to help improve their knowledge of Russian.

6. While her Government attached great importance to gender equality in all spheres of life, it did not consider percentages and quotas to be the most appropriate means of measuring such equality. Equal access to education, work and political life should be assessed in terms of the competencies and potential of the individual. For instance, in certain educational fields, such as fundamental mathematics and mechanics, only 1 in 10 persons were women; however, in other fields, such as biochemical physics, women's representation was as high as 60 per cent. Similarly, the proportion of women in the teaching profession was significantly higher than that of

men, and women with science degrees were also well represented in academia. For example, 32 per cent of professors, 58 per cent of docents and 40 per cent of university deans were women.

7. Lastly, gender studies, women's studies and other related subjects were regarded as academic disciplines, and various departments and courses, with appropriately trained lecturers and teaching materials, were available at numerous Russian universities.

8. **Mr. Vovchenko** (Russian Federation) said that statistics on the numbers of students entering and graduating from university education were not currently available and would thus be provided at a later date.

9. Turning to the so-called dangerous occupations list, which limited opportunities for women, he said that such a list was no longer necessary since a new risk assessment system had recently been introduced. In that connection, the admittedly wide gender pay gap had decreased, with women's average income having increased from 64 per cent of men's average income to the current rate of 74.6 per cent over a five-year period. It was not correct to associate the pay gap with the absence of women in dangerous, albeit better paid, occupations; rather, the disparity was likely due to the fact that women were traditionally employed in lower-paid sectors, such as education, medicine and the civil service. However, over the past three years public sector wages had increased, which was why the gender pay gap was now shrinking. In fact, those pay increases had now started to attract increasing numbers of men to those sectors.

10. Regarding sexual harassment, he said that while there was no specific offence for sexual harassment in the workplace as such, there was a much broader legislative provision related to sexual harassment in any area of life.

11. **Ms. Baibarina** (Russian Federation) said that there had been a reduction of just over 20 per cent in abortions for under-14s between 2010 and 2014, although the abortion rate still stood at 45.5 per cent for that age group and 52.3 per cent for 15-17 year olds. Efforts to reduce the number of abortions included the mandatory provision of information on contraceptives each time a woman visited her gynaecologist and after an abortion or childbirth. Similarly, information on contraception and reproductive health was available on the Internet. Moreover, some 150,000 women had sought help from social and psychological support centres in 2014, of whom 30,000 ultimately opted to carry their pregnancy to full term.

12. In rural areas, mobile medical professionals and midwives disseminated information on contraception, while doctors visited mobile units at least once a month to provide consultations and fit intrauterine devices, free of charge. The number of unlawful abortions had significantly declined between 2010 and 2014, helped largely by ensuring access to legal abortions. There had been no change in the number of legal abortions performed as a consequence of the reduced list of grounds on which a pregnancy could be terminated. In fact, in the light of medical advances, that list had provided certain categories of women, such as those with heart and liver disease, with greater rather than fewer opportunities. The introduction of the so-called week of silence was intended to provide a period of reflection between seeking an abortion and having the procedure performed. It did not, however, impinge upon a woman's right to an early abortion or exceed the 12-week limit.

13. As far as access to modern contraceptives was concerned, the figure of 24.5 percent referred to in the periodic report related to the proportion of women per year who consulted their doctor for advice on contraceptive use. Contraception was widely available on sale in the Russian Federation, as exemplified in the 2011 national reproductive health survey mentioned in paragraph 14 of the replies to the list of

issues, which found that 83 per cent of women respondents said that modern contraceptives were accessible to them.

14. Antiretroviral drugs were given free of charge to women with HIV/AIDS, both during and after pregnancy, in order to prevent vertical transmission. Just over 80 per cent of women with HIV/AIDS were covered by those preventive measures and, consequently, the vertical transmission rate had fallen significantly, to around 2 to 3 per cent, and parent-to-child transmission had been almost completely eradicated.

15. **Mr. Vovchenko** (Russian Federation) said that a national action plan against trafficking in persons did not currently exist since law enforcement agencies, such as the police and border agencies, were already involved in investigative and intelligence work in that area. Information on the outcome of such work, as well as the number of convictions and persons detained for offences relating to trafficking, could be provided to the Committee at a later date, if required.

16. **Ms. Haidar** said that she would welcome information, including in writing, on whether a coordinating authority on anti-trafficking was in place, as well as details of the allocation of funds at federal and local levels to prevent trafficking and protect victims and the national procedures used by law enforcement and prosecutors. Given the growing magnitude of the problem of trafficking in the Russian Federation she wondered whether the Government intended to develop a national action plan in the future.

17. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** said that she much appreciated the information provided on the numbers of women in academia, which seemed to be higher than average. However, she wished to point out that lessons on reproduction as part of biology classes or other subjects was not what was meant by age-appropriate sex education. Indeed, it was regrettable that the State party continued to reject the Committee's previous recommendations on that issue, as well as those of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

18. **Ms. Nwankwo** asked whether a wide range of modern contraceptive methods were accessible and affordable for all women, including those living in rural areas. She said she wished to know whether the costs of contraceptives were covered by public health insurance and, if not, whether there were plans to include them in a future scheme. In the context of preventing the spread of HIV, she would also like to know whether there were any State-run programmes of substitution therapy for persons who used drugs, as recommended by the World Health Organization.

19. **Mr. Bruun** said it was his understanding that a list of factory jobs and occupations that were deemed too dangerous for women still existed, although more flexibility had been introduced under the law by allowing employers to offer jobs to women if they could demonstrate that they had made working conditions safer. He was nevertheless concerned about the risk of arbitrary solutions and stereotypical assessments. While more progressive employers might make a greater effort to accommodate women, other more conservative employers would exclude them from certain kinds of work and thus perpetuate stereotypes.

20. **Mr. Vovchenko** (Russian Federation) said that there was no need for education in schools on equality between family members since that principle already formed the basis of current classroom teaching. It would be useful to have specific examples of negative stereotypes that the Committee members had found in school textbooks in order to get a better idea of what was meant by such stereotypes. If a teacher believed that he or she had been fired because he belonged to the LGBT community, the teacher would have recourse to various appeals and, if a tribunal found in his or her favour, the employment and pay would be reinstated. Belonging to the LGBT community was not a formal ground for dismissal.

21. He agreed that the list of dangerous jobs cited by Mr. Bruun might well be used by less progressive employers to exclude women from certain kinds of work. Therefore, more work would be necessary to ensure that the list was not open to different interpretations.

22. **Ms. Baibarina** (Russian Federation) said that rural women had access to affordable modern contraceptives. Although the costs of contraception in general were not reimbursed by the State, in some regions, some forms of contraception were distributed free-of-charge to women in low-income families or to those with large families. The Government had just allocated 20 billion roubles to HIV prevention and to treating people living with HIV/AIDS.

23. Opioid substitution therapy was not authorized in the Russian Federation since national efforts to combat drug abuse were aimed not at reducing the harm caused by drug use but rather at treating addiction. Under a substitution therapy programme in the Crimean Federal Area that had been running since 2005, not a single participant had succeeded in becoming drug-free. Some 65 per cent of them had continued to use so-called street drugs alongside the opioid substitutes. Only 15 per cent had been employed, which was an indication of the poor quality of social rehabilitative services of the programme. Meanwhile, detoxification, psychotherapy and rehabilitation programmes had resulted in high levels of remission from drug addiction.

24. **Ms. Pomeranzi** said that she wished to raise questions under article 13 concerning social protection policies, the economic empowerment of women and their access to financial and productive resources. The State party report presented a set of social protection policies but they only applied to families and to mothers with children. No mention had been made of policies for women in difficult situations, single women, widows, elderly women or those suffering from multiple forms of discrimination. Moreover, social policy on women did not include gender equality, thus showing a patriarchal approach to welfare measures. She wished to know how the Russian Federation would give support to disadvantaged groups of women and whether it envisaged developing specific plans for women living in difficult circumstances and in poverty, bearing in mind the Beijing Platform for Action and sustainable development goals. Turning to the economic empowerment of women, she asked how many women entrepreneurs in small businesses were supported by the State and whether data on male and female entrepreneurship existed. Bearing in mind that economic empowerment was a tool of development, she asked whether the State party was considering providing technical assistance, credit and microcredit opportunities for small businesses.

25. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez**, referring to article 14 concerning implementation of the Convention in rural areas, said that the State party report had made no specific mention of gender perspectives with respect to education, health or social security. It was important for the Committee to receive data disaggregated by gender, age and ethnic background and rural and urban areas. She commended the progress made concerning sexual health and education, the reduction in maternal mortality and the increase in childbirth in rural areas. She recalled that during consideration of the State party's initial report in 2010, the Committee had remarked on the need to avoid overemphasis on women's roles as mothers or wives. Welcoming the fact that gender studies were taught in some universities, she asked whether the Government intended to undertake any research on the effects of its demographic policies on women's rights, particularly in remote rural areas. She wondered whether the State had encouraged women to have children and become mothers to the detriment of their work or studies. She noted that poverty levels remained at 40 per cent in rural areas despite the progress achieved. She was not convinced that rural women had the same access to abortion as they had in the past following the issuing of new grounds on

which abortion was permitted. Providing a mobile medical service for women in rural areas that could be accessed once a month might not be sufficient to resolve the issues surrounding an unwanted pregnancy. Highlighting the plight of indigenous peoples who lived in the most remote areas, including the developing oil fields, she asked how investment and economic development in remote areas took into account the rights of indigenous women, including protection from rape, forced labour and sexual exploitation. Further, she wished to know what measures were being taken, in the northern Caucasus in particular, to protect women from polygamy, bride abduction, early pregnancy and early marriage.

26. **Mr. Vovchenko** (Russian Federation), responding to the questions raised concerning social protection provided for women, said that he had already given examples of direct monetary payments made to women and families in his introductory statement. Legal and social assistance and shelters were provided to women victims of domestic violence. As for women living in poverty, economic support was given to households with children and a social contract encouraged all those who received such assistance to develop their professional skills through training. Economic support was given to women who wished to set up small- and medium-sized businesses, while a toolbox had been developed to assist women entrepreneurs. Government figures showed that women were the beneficiaries of 70 per cent of business enterprise subsidies provided to the unemployed.

27. **Ms. Kazmina** (Russian Federation) said that the State provided significant support for small businesses, nearly 40 per cent of which were run by women. The most popular activities for businesses headed by women were: consulting, advertising, the beauty business, tourism and others. In addition to the funding of their businesses, women also needed investment in personal development and vocational training. Supporting small businesses had been a recent focus of the Government and it had given priority to mothers with young children and to women starting business involving social services, health care or other projects. However, assistance to those setting up businesses was open to all and was not gender-specific.

28. **Mr. Vovchenko** (Russian Federation), noting the request for further disaggregated statistics on the status of implementation of the Convention, said that the impact of the population policy had been a positive one since, for the first time in 25 years, the previous three years had seen an increase in the birth rate and a higher number of births than deaths. Life expectancy had increased substantially, including in rural areas, although more needed to be done to close the gap of 10 years in average life expectancy between women and men. The Russian Federation had reduced infant and maternal mortality rates during the previous five years so that they were comparable with the European average.

29. The Government had adopted a series of measures to address the demographic challenges facing the country, including the introduction of financial incentives to encourage families to have second and third children. Such policies had significantly increased the national birth rate and had proved particularly effective in rural areas. The Government had also concurrently launched various vocational training programmes to facilitate women's return to the labour market following maternity leave and had addressed the shortage in kindergarten places. Disaggregated data on the impact and scale of national demographic and labour policies were readily available and could be provided to the Committee at a subsequent date upon request.

30. As to the support provided to indigenous women, the Government had implemented a new taxation system for petroleum companies operating in the country, with a proportion of the income generated being spent on facilities and services for the indigenous communities living in remote areas. While it had proved impossible to provide full access to education, health care and political and public participation for

indigenous women, the Government aimed to guarantee access to basic services as best it could.

31. **Ms. Baibarina** (Russian Federation) said that the extensive hospital network provided health-care services, including obstetric and gynaecological treatment, to women in remote and rural areas. A flying doctor programme had also been introduced to provide treatment to women in particularly remote and difficult-to-access areas.

32. **Ms. Lakhova** (Russian Federation) said that modern Russian society rejected patriarchal values. The Government continued to promote equal family responsibilities and around 50 per cent of fathers had taken advantage of their right to paternity leave to care for their children. Financial assistance would continue to be provided to remote and rural communities in order to improve their access to quality health-care and support farming and income-generating activities.

33. **Ms. Baibarina** (Russian Federation) added that billions of roubles had been invested in improving facilities and services for rural women.

34. **Ms. Pomeranzi** asked whether the Government intended to introduce gender mainstreaming policies in order to improve women's access to the labour market and increase the number of women entrepreneurs in remote and rural areas. Employment data disaggregated by region would be useful in that regard.

35. **Mr. Vovchenko** (Russian Federation) stressed that some 70 per cent of small businesses and microbusinesses were headed by women and said that he would provide employment data disaggregated by region at a later date.

36. **Ms. Leinarte** said that she would like additional information regarding the situation of pregnant migrant women held in detention centres, including whether mothers and their children were able to live together.

37. **Ms. Sharakhova** (Russian Federation) said that her country had welcomed a significant number of migrants, 36 per cent of whom were women. Single women migrants in detention centres were held separately from men, but families and couples were housed together.

38. **Mr. Klimakov** (Russian Federation) said that, as at 31 December 2014, there had been 570,176 prisoners in the Russian Federation, 54,797 of whom were women. In 2014, there had been 582 registered births. As at 30 June 2015, there had been 53,406 women prisoners and 239 births had been registered. There had been no cases of infant mortality. Pregnant female prisoners received the same standard of obstetric and gynecological care as other women in the country. Pregnant women made up around 3 per cent of the female prison population and the majority gave birth in local hospitals rather than in prison medical facilities. There were 13 children's homes in which some 700 children of female prisoners were raised. The mothers of those children were able to visit the homes breastfeed the child for the first 3 years of its life and help to raise their children.

Articles 15 and 16

39. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari**, noting the growth in the number of de facto unions, asked what legislative measures had been taken to protect the rights of women in such unions upon the dissolution of their relationships, in line with the Committee's general recommendation No. 29 on article 16 of the Convention, concerning the economic consequences of marriage, family relations and their dissolution. She also wished to know what methods were used to identify and ensure the equal division of marital property upon divorce, including whether assets such as savings and pensions were divided fairly. Further information regarding the factors taken into account by the

courts when setting alimony and granting custody in divorce proceedings would also be welcome.

40. As to the situation facing women in the North Caucasus region, she asked what steps had been taken to prevent the practice of sharia law in the region and to combat early marriages, bride kidnappings, honour killings, polygamy and female genital mutilation. She also wished know what efforts had been made to settle the case of *Magomadova v. Russia* pending before the European Court of Human Rights, referred to in an NGO report, in which the family-in-law of a woman whose husband had died had been awarded custody of her six children by the Chechen Supreme Court owing to her alleged “amoral” lifestyle.

41. **Mr. Vovchenko** (Russian Federation) said that every citizen, including persons in de facto unions, could write a will or establish a contractual agreement setting out their wishes for the division of their property and assets upon death. However, only married couples could automatically inherit their partner’s property. Pensions were linked to the individual and were not paid to the surviving spouse. A separate benefit to compensate for the loss of income following the death of a breadwinner was exclusively reserved for married couples. Property acquired during marriage should be divided equally during divorce proceedings and couples must establish a prenuptial agreement if they wished to deviate from that norm. The courts were responsible for deciding the amount and duration of alimony settlements and the custody and visitation arrangements if children were involved. No detailed data on custody rulings were available, but, in general, primary physical custody was granted to the mother. There had been instances of fathers failing to pay the required amount of alimony and mothers could bring those men before the criminal courts for failing to meet their legal obligations.

42. **Ms. Zhirikova** (Russian Federation) said that most couples entered into marriage for the purpose of having children and establishing a family. Persons in a de facto union must make contractual and other arrangements of their own to determine ownership of property, as there was no legally recognized joint ownership in such unions.

43. **Mr. Vovchenko** (Russian Federation) said that the Government continued to formally condemn in the strongest possible terms early marriages, bride kidnappings, honour killings, polygamy and female genital mutilation in the North Caucasus. It had adopted a number of measures to combat those practices and improve the overall quality of education in the region. However, many difficulties remained and more work would be needed to effectively address the situation.

44. **Ms. Zhirikova** (Russian Federation) said that it would be inappropriate for the Government to comment on judgements handed down by the domestic courts. In the case involving the mother’s morality and fitness to care for her six children, she was entitled to appeal against the custody decision of the Chechen Supreme Court.

45. **Mr. Vovchenko** (Russian Federation) thanked the Committee members for their valuable comments and recommendations. The Government remained firmly committed to fully implementing the provisions of the Convention and would continue to develop measures to support women.

46. **The Chairperson** thanked the delegation for the constructive dialogue which had enabled the Committee to gain further insight into the situation of women in the Russian Federation. She commended the State party for its efforts and urged it to take all necessary measures to address the Committee’s concerns and recommendations.

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 5.10 p.m.