



# Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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## Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Eightieth session

### Summary record of the 1836th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 3 November 2021, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Acosta Vargas

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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)*

*Ninth periodic report of the Russian Federation (continued)* (CEDAW/C/RUS/9, CEDAW/C/RUS/9/Corr.1, CEDAW/C/RUS/Q/9 and CEDAW/C/RUS/RQ/9)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of the Russian Federation took places at the Committee table.*
2. **The Chair** said that, at the invitation of the Committee, other members of the delegation would be speaking via video link from Moscow.

*Articles 10–14 (continued)*

3. **Mr. Pudov** (Russian Federation), responding to the question on the quality of education, said that great importance was attached to the right to education, which was guaranteed under article 43 of the Constitution. Parents and guardians had an obligation to ensure that children between 6 and 15 years old attended school, which was free of charge. Children's access to education was guaranteed without discrimination, irrespective of gender, race, nationality, language, socioeconomic condition or religion. Mindful of the fact that the Russian Federation was a multi-faith and multinational society, the Government was taking comprehensive measures to ensure the right to education for all of the country's nationalities and all children without exception.
4. Children who experienced difficulties at school, especially as a result of their national origin, were provided with social, psychological and medical support free of charge. Children from families with limited resources received free textbooks and healthy school meals. School bus services ensured that children in rural areas were able to get to school. Efforts were also made to enhance motivation among students, prevent social problems and ensure that all parents understood the importance of education. Steps were being taken to improve teachers' capacity to teach Russian as a second language. In most regions, children from Roma and Sinti communities already spoke Russian. Children in the first three grades of school had ethnic classes, which ensured their future successful integration into mixed classes. Special preventive measures were in place to ensure that children with high rates of unjustified absenteeism pursued their education.
5. **Mr. Korneev** (Russian Federation) speaking via video link, said that the Committee had expressed concern in its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/RUS/CO/8) about sexual and reproductive health education. Some changes had been made in that area in recent years. The educational programmes developed by schools must be fully in line with federal educational standards and model programmes. In 2016, the federal model programmes had been overhauled in order to remove stereotypes about women and girls and to expand sexual and reproductive health education. At primary level, children aged between 7 and 10 years started to learn about family relations. Children from 11 to 15 years continued to receive education on family issues and values, as well as being introduced to biology and the human body. Children aged 16 and 17 years were taught about families and marriage and went into more detail on the human body in biology and genetics. The exact content of the lessons was determined by the specific education programme of each school, taking into account the views of parents.
6. There were approximately 140,000 migrant children attending school in the Russian Federation. On the basis of instructions from the President, a set of comprehensive measures was being implemented to ensure their full integration. The Ministry of Education had not received any reports concerning refusals to provide education to migrant children on the basis that they were not citizens.
7. **Ms. Trichenko** (Russian Federation) said that the Ministry of Science and Higher Education had a deputy minister with responsibility for gender issues, who was herself a woman. Nine of the Ministry's 20 departments were currently headed by women. In 2020, the Ministry had started raising awareness of women scientists, and there was an official ministerial website with information on women of interest. In 2021, there was a special focus

on women researchers who had participated actively in the various stages of the fight against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, including the development of vaccines. In the scientific field, of the women researchers who had completed postgraduate theses, 53 per cent had done so in the technical sciences, 25 per cent in natural sciences and only 8 per cent in social sciences. To ensure the achievement of Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals, it was important to support women's lifelong education. To that end, under a special decree of 2021, events had been organized to provide free additional professional training for women who had taken maternity leave, women who were not currently in employment, women with children with disabilities, and women who were at the pre-retirement stage. Some 56,000 individuals had participated in the courses across 90 educational institutions

8. **Ms. Polezhaeva** (Russian Federation) said that the Government had adopted comprehensive measures to ensure the socioeconomic and cultural development of the Roma. The State party was looking forward to a thematic visit from a group of experts from the Council of Europe – when pandemic conditions allowed – to assess State support for Roma culture. In 2019, the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs had developed methodological guidelines for the executive branches and local authorities of constituent entities of the Russian Federation on how to work with the Roma population, taking into account the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe. The Federal Agency granted subsidies to non-governmental organizations that worked to promote Roma culture.

9. **Ms. Rebrina** (Russian Federation) said that there was a system for the prevention of crimes against minors in which educational institutions also participated. There was a section for minors in the Ministry of the Interior and committees for the affairs of minors at municipal level. The General Prosecutor's Office monitored respect for the rights of minors and the enforcement of laws in the field of prevention. Schools had an obligation to ensure that children were safe and to identify behaviour that might suggest that a child was being subjected to violence by his or her parents or classmates. If problems were identified in the home, social and psychological support was provided. The number of school psychologists had been increased. The General Prosecutor's Office applied a comprehensive set of measures to prevent violence against minors in general, including organizing awareness-raising activities and initiating legal proceedings against anyone who harmed the health or life of a child. No problems were ignored in that area.

10. **Ms. Tisheva** said that she commended the sustained economic indicators achieved by the State party, even during the pandemic, and the fairly high level of women in employment, including women with children, and women working full-time. Nonetheless, there were still areas of concern and gender inequality in the labour market, primarily caused by gender segregation by sector and occupation and wage discrimination against women. The delegation might indicate further specific steps that the Government intended to take to address wage inequalities between men and women, and horizontal and vertical occupational gender segregation, including timelines to repeal discriminatory protective measures, such as the list of restricted professions. She would like to know what legislative and policy measures would be taken to address stereotypical attitudes and prejudices, such as the adoption of temporary special measures to facilitate the entry of women into traditionally male-dominated positions. She would welcome information on the steps that would be taken to ensure that men and women had equal access to training and employment in the widest possible range of sectors and occupations, and to encourage fathers to take parental leave.

11. She wished to know when the State party intended to introduce a comprehensive definition of sexual harassment in its legislation, to set up an appropriate mechanism for access to justice for women, and to carry out appropriate awareness-raising activities and training, while introducing requirements for internal rules and guidelines to prevent and tackle sexual harassment at work and in educational institutions. She would appreciate information on the number of cases of sexual harassment brought before the courts in the previous two years under the Criminal Code and the applicable administrative provisions.

12. She also wished to know how the State party would measure the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women's employment and employment rights, and whether corresponding measures were or would be included in recovery plans. Lastly, she would also

like to know what was being done to promote employment opportunities for women from minorities, women with disabilities, older women, migrant workers and women from other vulnerable groups.

13. **Mr. Pudov** (Russian Federation) said that, under labour law, men and women had the same rights in the workplace and any discrimination in relation to their salaries was prohibited. National legislation prohibited employers from specifying the age or gender of potential recruits in advertisements for job vacancies. The Government had recently adopted a federal law providing that the working conditions in places of employment must be assessed on a regular basis. Employers who established the requisite health and safety conditions in their workplace were allowed to recruit women for posts normally forbidden to them. The number of jobs that were restricted to men had been reduced in recent years. Entrepreneurs and business owners who failed to establish safe conditions in the workplace were required to pay a fine. As the Committee had noted, the majority of workers in the health-care and education sectors were women. Pursuant to a decree issued by the President, steps had been taken to ensure that salaries in those two areas were in line with average salaries throughout the country.

14. **Ms. Malenko** (Russian Federation), speaking via video link, said that workers' salaries depended only on their qualifications and on the nature of the work that they carried out. An employer who paid a woman less than a man for doing the same work would be in violation of labour law. The gender pay gap in the Russian Federation could mainly be explained by the fact that women were primarily responsible for childcare within families while men were the main breadwinners. The majority of hazardous jobs, and jobs in remote, inhospitable areas, were undertaken by men.

15. Any family member involved in the care of a child was entitled to take parental leave until that child reached the age of 3 years. Employers were required by law to allow parents or other family members to work part-time if the children in their care met the established age requirements. Persons who cared for a sick family member were also entitled to work part-time. Employers were forbidden from terminating the employment contracts of women who had a child aged up to 14 years or a child with a disability aged up to 18 years. In accordance with legal amendments made in the previous two years, the parents of children with a disability were entitled to take additional paid leave every month in order to care for their child. That leave could be taken by one parent or shared between two parents.

16. Employees who had two or more children up to the age of 14 years, or a child with a disability up to the age of 18 years, including single mothers and fathers, were entitled to take 14 additional days' paid leave per year. Furthermore, women working in agriculture were entitled, upon written request, to receive one additional day of paid leave per month. Alternatively, they could ask their employer to reduce their working week to 36 hours, increase their pay or divide their working day into different shifts. Improvements had also been made to the employment conditions of health-care staff in rural areas. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government had made it possible for employees to work remotely for part or all of the working week.

17. **Mr. Pudov** (Russian Federation) said that the unemployment rate had not risen since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, there were currently more job vacancies in some sectors than there had been beforehand.

18. **Ms. Shatilyuk** (Russian Federation) said that, under article 131 of the Criminal Code, rape was defined as an act in which the perpetrator used violence or threats to coerce the victim into having sexual intercourse with him or her. Other articles of the Criminal Code referred to acts of rape in which the perpetrator was the same sex as the victim, and those, in which the perpetrator coerced the victim into engaging in sexual intercourse by threatening to blackmail him or her or to confiscate his or her property. A total of 272 persons had been convicted of rape in 2019 and 230 persons had been convicted of that offence in 2020. Around 90 per cent of the victims had been women, some 20 per cent of whom had been minors. Under the Code of Criminal Procedure, no particular type of evidence was prioritized over any other type in criminal trials. Perpetrators of rape were often convicted on the basis of the victim's testimony, even when no scientific or forensic evidence had been submitted. During

rape trials, the authorities worked closely with victims to inform them of the progress of proceedings.

19. **Ms. Shcherbakova** (Russian Federation) said that employers were prohibited from terminating the employment contracts of pregnant women or women with children up to 3 years of age. Sexual harassment in the workplace was prohibited under the Criminal Code, which provided for harsher penalties where the perpetrator had harassed a subordinate. With regard to women's access to justice, Federal Act No. 59-FZ of 2 May 2006 provided that men and women had an equal right to submit a complaint to the authorities and to receive a timely response. Templates for complaints were made available and assistance was provided to any person who was unable to draft a complaint on his or her own. Free legal assistance was provided to persons in need. Any citizen who was refused assistance by a State agency had the right to submit a complaint to the prosecutor's office, which would investigate it and respond accordingly.

20. **Mr. Pudov** (Russian Federation) said that the Government had taken legislative measures to make it easier for employees to work remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the number of persons who worked in that way had risen from 30,000 before the outbreak of the pandemic to around 3 million.

21. In the Russian Federation, all laws underwent a process of public consultation before they were submitted for adoption. The regulations governing such consultations were published online and the authorities were required to respond to all experts' comments on draft laws. When the Government considered ratifying an international instrument, it conducted a comprehensive study to determine what legislative changes were needed to bring national legislation into line with the instrument concerned, how much it might cost to carry out those changes and how much it would cost to implement the instrument.

22. **Ms. Tisheva** said that she wished to know what legislative measures would be taken to make it easier for women whose rights had been violated to file complaints, including by shifting the burden of proof away from them. In that connection, the Government might consider introducing specific laws prohibiting discrimination against women, including against women belonging to vulnerable groups.

23. **Ms Al-Rammah** said that she wished to know what measures the State party was taking to improve women's awareness of and access to safe and effective contraceptive measures, and to provide free contraceptives to vulnerable groups of women. The Committee wondered whether efforts were being made to permit abortions in cases of fetal impairment or incest. The delegation should shed light on the reasons why health-care personnel were provided with ill-fitting personal protective equipment.

24. She asked whether there was a law under which genital mutilation, to which nearly all girls in some parts of the country were reportedly subjected, was made a criminal offence and, if not, when such a law would be adopted and enforced. In that connection, she wished to know whether there had been campaigns to raise awareness of the unacceptability of female genital mutilation. She also wished to know what efforts had been made to prevent the stigmatization of women with disabilities, including psychosocial disabilities, and female drug users and to ensure that they had access to health services. In addition, she asked what steps had been taken to prevent the forced sterilization of women and girls with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities.

25. **Ms. Olina** (Russian Federation) said that the number of abortions in the country, which was still high, had been halved over the previous 10 years and that it was still falling quickly. In 2020, there had been slightly more than 13 abortions per 1,000 women of childbearing age.

26. Women's reproductive rights, including their rights in respect of contraception and sterilization, were protected by a comprehensive set of laws. Consideration was being given to amending the requirements for the termination of pregnancy on medical grounds. A woman could have an abortion after the 12-week limit if carrying the pregnancy to term would endanger her life. Some 15 to 20 per cent of women who were seeking abortions changed their minds after counselling sessions. Abortion-related services, including pre-abortion counselling, were provided at no cost.

27. Modern methods of birth control, including hormonal methods, were recommended by health-care personnel and reached growing numbers of women, including in rural areas. Sterilization, which was regulated by law, was also provided free of charge. Health-care personnel who had reason to believe that a patient had been harmed by a practice such as female genital mutilation were required to report their suspicions to officials from the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

28. The Ministry of Health and other relevant institutions ensured that all health workers, including women, were provided with the personal protective equipment they needed. Women's specific needs – for smaller gloves to fit their generally smaller hands, for example – were taken into account in the procurement of such equipment.

29. **Mr. Pudov** (Russian Federation) said that law enforcement agencies and labour inspectors made considerable efforts to stamp out exploitative labour practices, including by monitoring social networks and, if necessary, conducting investigations and instituting criminal or other legal proceedings.

30. **Mr. Evdokimov** (Russian Federation), speaking via video link, said that a comprehensive approach, including medical treatment and a broad range of social services, was taken to combating drug abuse. Female drug abusers had access to those services on a basis of equality with males. Addiction services, including medical care, were provided at no cost. The provision of those services, which were available throughout the country, had not been interrupted by the pandemic. In all, there were 129 public rehabilitation facilities that provided inpatient care.

31. **Mr. Safarov** said that he wished to know what steps the State party had taken to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the economic situation of the State party's people, its growing number of female entrepreneurs in particular. In that connection, he wondered what had been done to help homeowners pay their mortgages, rein in the reported excesses of the country's debt collectors and prevent lending institutions, not only banks, from lending money at extortionate rates.

32. He would welcome an indication of the percentage of the country's private-sector employers headed by women. Information on the percentage of medium-sized and large companies led by female entrepreneurs would also be welcome.

33. **Mr. Pudov** (Russian Federation) said that about 1.7 million – some 30 per cent – of the country's 5.7 million small and medium-sized businesses, including in particular businesses involved in retail and wholesale services, beauty parlours and restaurants, were owned and operated by women. In response to the disruption caused by the pandemic, the State had offered tax holidays to employers who undertook not to lay off their employees and subsidized wage payments.

34. In 2020, financial institutions had made microloans worth a total of approximately 20 billion roubles. Lenders had been active in sectors of the economy often dominated by small and medium-sized businesses run by women. The General Prosecutor's Office monitored the efforts made by lending institutions to collect outstanding debts.

35. **Ms. Shcherbakova** (Russian Federation) said that everyone had the same rights and duties under the Civil Code. Contracts, including loan agreements, could be enforced only if they were drawn up in accordance with the law. A person could take out a loan without the knowledge of his or her spouse; the presumption in the Family Code was that the agreement of one spouse always applied to the actions of the other, but it was possible for a court to make the borrower alone responsible for repayment. Under a federal law adopted as a result of the pandemic, homeowners could suspend their mortgage payments for six months without incurring any penalties.

36. **Mr. Pudov** (Russian Federation) said that State microfinance organizations, which made lending to female entrepreneurs a priority, offered loans on particularly favourable terms. Interest rates, for example, were never higher than those charged by the country's central bank.

37. **Ms. Rebrina** (Russian Federation) said that the activities of debt collectors were fully regulated by federal law and that debt collectors who violated the rights of indebted parties

were held accountable. A specific body maintained a registry of debt collectors and monitored their work. The General Prosecutor's Office had a special division that protected the rights of entrepreneurs, including owners of small and medium-sized enterprises, and that held regular meetings with the Presidential Commissioner for Entrepreneurs' Rights, and similar meetings were held between prosecutors and corresponding offices at local levels. The entrepreneurs in question, including women, were always invited to take part.

38. **Ms. Peláez Narváez** said that the Committee would appreciate it if the delegation could provide statistics indicating the number and types of complaints presented by women in rural areas during the visits carried out by the Investigative Committee and the Commissioner for Human Rights, and the types of redress that had been provided to them. She would also like to know what specific measures the State party had taken for the development of rural areas.

39. Noting that a draft law had been drawn up to revise all the legislation related to indigenous peoples, she said that the Committee would appreciate information on the provisions that would protect the natural resources and land rights of indigenous women and on the measures taken by the State party to combat climate change, and specifically to mitigate its impact on women in rural areas. She would like to know whether any steps had been taken to assist women and children of the Roma and Sinti communities, why legal conflicts involving Muslim women were handled on the basis of customary law instead of ordinary national law, and what measures had been adopted to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex women against discrimination and violence, for example through training members of the judiciary and law enforcement personnel.

40. The Committee would like to find out more about the treatment of transgender persons in the penitentiary system and to hear whether the Government was considering the possibility of criminalizing acts of homophobia and transphobia that affected women. Noting that the State party had adopted a new framework policy for migration, she asked whether the authorities had considered adapting the policy so that women in administrative detention would not be separated from their children. She wished to know what resources were made available for the education of children whose mothers were in detention; how proper care and treatment were provided for pregnant women and women who gave birth in administrative detention; and how the authorities ensured that women with disabilities provided their free and informed consent regarding any decisions taken about their treatment.

41. **Ms. Semenova** (Russian Federation) said that the legislation of the Russian Federation was applicable throughout the country and to everyone, including women living in rural areas, on an equal basis. To encourage the economic and social development of rural areas, a comprehensive development programme had been adopted with the aim of providing comfortable and affordable housing, a developed labour market and sufficient infrastructure. Like all women in the State party, women in rural areas were entitled to all social support measures, including various maternity and parental benefits and special allowances for single parents. A specific programme was implemented in rural areas to enhance skills and help people find employment and develop businesses, with assistance from State funding.

42. **Mr. Pudov** (Russian Federation) said that the Government was implementing a programme that ensured full medical and health-care coverage of persons living in rural areas free of charge. When special forms of assistance were required, including for pregnant women, medical evacuations were organized, if necessary with the use of airborne medevac services.

43. **Ms. Rebrina** (Russian Federation) said that women living in rural areas had the same rights as anyone else. They were able to send written complaints or proposals to the authorities either online or through mobile reception offices that travelled to rural areas and were staffed by members of the prosecutors' offices and other representatives of government agencies.

44. **Ms. Annenkova** (Russian Federation) said that the rights of numerically small indigenous peoples were protected at the federal and regional levels by legislation and special programmes. The Government kept a register of numerically small indigenous peoples; inclusion in the register was a precondition for such peoples to assert their collective rights and the individual rights of their members, for example in respect of the preservation of their

culture, language and spiritual heritage. At the regional level, programmes aimed at ensuring their sustainable development were carried out, especially in terms of access to information, health services and legal assistance. Medical services were often provided with the use of boats or helicopters, owing to the remote locations of the beneficiary communities in question.

45. The Russian Federation often took part in exchanges of best practices in the fields of education and health care in the context of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Within the Russian Federation, efforts were under way to ensure participation by members of numerically small indigenous peoples in decision-making that affected them. The vice-president of their national association was a woman, and the association's president regularly travelled to remote areas to manage its various programmes.

*Articles 15 and 16*

46. **Ms. Narain** said that the Committee would like to know whether women were treated on an equal footing with men in respect of their legal capacity to conclude contracts and administer property, whether family relations were governed by civil, religious or customary law, and to what extent women were treated equally with men under those laws. She asked whether marriages, de facto unions and partnerships concluded under such laws were recognized by the State. The Committee had received reports that the courts and court bailiffs overwhelmingly favoured fathers when, following a divorce, they assigned custody of children, awarded alimony or executed court orders. It would be of interest to the Committee to hear the number of cases in which fathers retained child custody or failed to pay alimony, both nationally and more specifically in the region of the North Caucasus; to learn the conditions accepted by courts to suspend alimony payments; and to find out whether legal aid was available for women who required it for their representation in family courts.

47. While the minimum marriage age had been set by the Family Code at 18 years, the Committee had received disturbing reports of earlier marriage and even of the sale of children into marriage under the guise of local tradition, for instance in the North Caucasus region. Even under the law, certain derogations made it possible to legally marry at the age of 16 years or earlier. The Committee wished to know when the State party intended to amend the Family Code to eliminate such derogations and bring the Code into line with the Convention; what action had been taken to prohibit forced marriages and bride kidnapping; and how many cases of such incidents had been reported in the previous two years. She would also like to find out whether polygamous marriages were allowed or tolerated and whether the Government would prohibit such practices. Lastly, she asked why the Russian Federation had not ratified the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption.

48. **Mr. Pudov** (Russian Federation) said that discrimination on the grounds of gender was illegal. Under the Family Code, both parents had equal rights in respect of their children. The minimum age for marriage was 18 years, albeit with some exceptions that applied criteria allowing for marriage from the age of 16 years. Marriage of persons under the age of 18 years that did not meet those criteria could lead to criminal prosecution. Traditional family values were of the utmost importance in the State party, and marriage was considered to be the union of a man and a woman. Such values were enshrined in the Constitution and the Family Code. In assigning child custody after dissolution of a marriage, family courts considered all circumstances, regardless of the gender of the parents, but custody was generally awarded to the mother. The opinions of children over 10 years old were sought and taken into consideration by the family court when it awarded custody.

49. Substantial efforts had been undertaken to ensure that alimony was paid fully and on time. A special State allowance was paid out to single parents, the beneficiaries of which were most often mothers, along with a personalized allowance if they had no other source of income.

50. He thanked the Committee for the constructive dialogue and assured it that the agencies and authorities of the Russian Federation would do their utmost to fully take into consideration the Committee's comments and concluding observations with a view to finding new solutions to overcome discrimination against women and improving the country's implementation of the Convention.

*The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 5.15 p.m.*