



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Eighty-first session

Summary record of the 1862nd meeting*

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 15 February 2022, at 11 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Safarov (Vice-Chair)

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* No summary records were issued for the 1860th to 1861st meetings.

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Mr. Safarov (Vice-Chair) took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

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

Sixth periodic report of Uzbekistan (CEDAW/C/UZB/6; CEDAW/C/UZB/Q/6; CEDAW/C/UZB/RQ/6)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Uzbekistan joined the meeting.*
2. **Ms. Fayziyeva** (Uzbekistan), speaking via video link and introducing the sixth periodic report of Uzbekistan, said that, since the parliamentary elections held in late 2019, women had made up 32 per cent of members of the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis (parliament) and 25 per cent of members of the Senate, placing Uzbekistan among the top 50 countries in the Inter-Parliamentary Union's ranking of women in national parliaments.
3. Since the previous constructive dialogue, the Government had adopted the Act on Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men, the Act on Protection of Women from Harassment and Violence and the Reproductive Health Act. The minimum age for marriage had been made equal for women and men and gender-discriminatory provisions had been removed from labour laws, enabling women to undertake occupations that had formerly been prohibited to them. Legislative acts were now subject to expert examinations to ensure that they were in keeping with the principle of gender equality and were applied in a non-discriminatory manner.
4. In May 2021, the Government had approved the Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality in Uzbekistan by 2030 as well as the measures for implementing the strategy in 2021 and 2022. Policy on gender issues prioritized the establishment of equal rights and opportunities for women and men in connection with elections, public services, education, science, sports, health care, the socioeconomic sphere and the upbringing of children, among other areas. The Government had established a framework for gender planning and budgeting and better keeping of gender statistics.
5. In order to strengthen national mechanisms for the advancement of women, the following had been established: the Senate Gender Equality Commission; the Senate Committee on Women and Gender Equality and the Commission on Family and Women's Issues of the Legislative Chamber; and the National Public Council of Women, among others. In addition, the Government had set up and defined the responsibilities of a parliamentary commission for monitoring the national implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals up to 2030. The Government had also established the Ministry of Mahalla and Family Support, which provided comprehensive support to women, and the Public Fund for the Support of Women and the Family, which promoted women's participation in the organization of family life, private entrepreneurship and the production of handicrafts, among other areas. It had also set up a special national working group that studied and identified the problems facing women in every part of the country and coordinated measures to reduce poverty.
6. Steps had been taken to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on campaigns to prevent gender-based violence and protect women and children. Uzbekistan had been one of the sponsors of Human Rights Council resolution 48/12 on the human rights implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people, which had been adopted at the Council's forty-eighth session. The resolution called on States to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on young people's rights.
7. Within the United Nations Framework for the Immediate Socioeconomic Response to COVID-19, the Government had implemented a nationwide quarantine system, penalized the dissemination of false information, set up specialized medical institutions and quarantine zones in all regions of the country and equipped those institutions with medicines to curb the spread of COVID-19. Medical workers were offered comprehensive incentives and social protection and efforts were made to raise public awareness of the disease, including through social networks.

8. A system of remote learning had been established so that students could continue their education during the pandemic and measures were taken to ensure the public's ongoing access to food, medicines, medical products and other essential goods. Free targeted assistance had been provided to persons with disabilities, persons on low incomes and other vulnerable members of the public.

9. A fund had been established to provide comprehensive support to all sectors of the economy during the pandemic. Taxes and customs duties on imported goods had been significantly reduced and businesses were given the opportunity to temporarily suspend tax payments and interest payments on bank loans. Individuals and companies were not held liable if they missed deadlines for the submission of official documents and foreign nationals were allowed to remain in the country for a longer period of time than usual.

10. During the pandemic, measures had been taken for the return of Uzbek citizens living abroad. Over 7,500 citizens had been evacuated from other countries, and humanitarian assistance had been provided to a number of countries. The Government had recently adopted more than 20 pieces of legislation, which, inter alia, established limits on the extent to which human rights could be restricted. In addition, a mass vaccination campaign had been conducted and additional training had been provided to over 4,000 doctors and 11,000 nurses.

11. **Ms. Marufova** (Uzbekistan), speaking via video link, said that the Ministry of Mahalla and Family Support had been established in 2020. Advisers to regional chief administrators (*khokims*) on women and family issues had been appointed in provinces, districts and cities. Deputy chairs responsible for family, women and social issues had been appointed in the more than 9,000 local bodies known as mahallas.

12. In order to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and support women living in hardship, the so-called Women's Notebook, a database to identify and address the problems of vulnerable women, had been introduced. Women included in the notebook were eligible for comprehensive support, including business loans on favourable terms and assistance with housing, medical services, counselling and legal services. The Fund for the Support of Women and the Family provided affordable housing to vulnerable women and families, including mothers with children with disabilities, low-income families, single mothers and women living in poor quality housing.

13. During the pandemic, the Ministry of Mahalla and Family Support had established coordination centres to provide poorer families with essential products and services, including food assistance. In June 2020, philanthropic centres had been set up in every region of the country in order to support poorer citizens. The Ministry had assisted thousands of poor families and provided food and medicine to persons over 65 years of age who required special assistance.

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14. **Ms. Tisheva** said that, since 2016, the State party had implemented extensive legal and policy reforms affecting practically every sphere of society. As many significant laws and policies had been adopted very recently, their impact on women was often difficult to assess. Although the Committee commended the efforts made by the Government, it believed that further reforms and implementation mechanisms would be required in order for the State party to achieve full compliance with the Convention. The constructive dialogue would reveal the challenges facing the Government as it sought to realize the reforms and achieve sustainable results that would enhance women's participation in the political, social and economic life of the country.

15. **Ms. Ameline** said that she would welcome further information on the legal status of the Convention and its visibility in the State party. In particular, she wished to know how the courts applied international laws and how often they invoked the Convention. It would be interesting to learn more about the visibility and legal scope of the Committee's concluding observations and whether the Oliy Majlis would be discussing how best to respond to them. The Committee would be grateful to hear about any mechanisms established to strengthen provisions on gender equality in existing legislation.

16. The Committee noted that the State party prioritized the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal No. 5, which concerned gender equality, and asked what would be done to increase the synergy between the Goals and the Convention. She wondered what role women activists played in the implementation of new initiatives launched to promote gender equality and how the State party planned to enhance their participation. It would be interesting to learn how the Government planned to make it easier for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations to operate within the country.

17. She asked whether the Government expected the national human rights institution to be granted category A status within the near future and whether the implementation of the Convention formed part of the institution's mandate. The Government might state whether the definition of discrimination in national law would be amended to cover all types of discrimination, including that directed at women belonging to ethnic minorities, refugees, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons. Lastly, she wished to know whether the Government would strengthen its cooperation with European and international organizations to ensure that it implemented the Committee's priority recommendations as effectively as possible.

18. **Mr. Muslimov** (Uzbekistan), speaking via video link, said that, since achieving independence, Uzbekistan had ratified more than 40 international conventions and treaties, all of which had been incorporated into national legislation.

19. **Ms. Artikova** (Uzbekistan), speaking via video link, pointed out that, as Deputy Prosecutor General, she was the first Uzbek woman to be appointed to such a high-level position in the Office of the Prosecutor General. Under the Constitution, international law took precedence over national law. However, courts were not required to invoke international law in every case.

20. **Ms. Kadirkhanova** (Uzbekistan), speaking via video link, said that the Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality in Uzbekistan by 2030 provided for a comprehensive approach to the principle of gender equality in all areas and at all levels of decision-making. A road map had been adopted for its implementation in 2021–2022. The priorities set out in that strategy, such as electoral rights, equal educational opportunities and equal rights and responsibilities in the family, were all defined in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals. Quarterly reports were to be submitted to the Senate by ministries, various agencies and regional authorities on implementation of the Strategy.

21. **Mr. Abdullayev** (Uzbekistan), speaking via video link, said that the rights and freedoms of foreign citizens and stateless persons were guaranteed in accordance with international law. Their access to political asylum depended on national interests based on the generally accepted principles and rules of international law. The legal and regulatory procedures governing political asylum had been approved by presidential decree in May 2017. Residence permits had been issued since February 2021 to over 37,000 foreign citizens, including more than 17,000 women.

22. **Ms. Fayziyeva** (Uzbekistan) said that article 3 of the Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men Act contained a definition of gender-based direct and indirect discrimination based on international law and the provisions of the Convention. Article 4 prohibited all forms of discrimination. The Ministry of Justice had drafted a bill on equality and non-discrimination that was currently being considered by the ministries and departments concerned.

23. **Ms. Ameline** reiterated her question regarding the framework for dialogue with NGOs and activists, which should perhaps be bolstered or facilitated. She underscored the need to guarantee the effectiveness of all legislation, for instance through implementing decrees or decrees specifying how a law should be enforced.

24. **Ms. Fayziyeva** (Uzbekistan) said that the authorities worked closely with more than 20 non-governmental non-profit organizations, many of which had helped them to draft the report. Civil society institutions were currently involved in all forms of dialogue, including discussions of draft legislation and international human rights obligations by parliamentary committees, and their proposals and recommendations were taken into account.

25. **Ms. Artikova** (Uzbekistan) said that civil society activists and other population groups were becoming actively involved in decision-making on matters to which they attached great importance, such as measures to combat corruption, the preparation of public budgets and the fight against crime. It was essential to promote accessible and transparent cooperation between civil society and governmental bodies.

26. **Ms. Marufova** (Uzbekistan) said that the procedure for establishing a non-governmental non-profit organization had been streamlined. All draft legislation affecting their rights and interests must be coordinated with national associations of such organizations. The Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis had established the institution of a permanent representative of non-governmental non-profit organizations. Grants totalling some 419 million sum had been provided to NGOs in different regions in 2021.

27. **Ms. Basitkhanova** (Uzbekistan), speaking via video link, said that, pursuant to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, the President had established an inter-agency commission with more than 20 members, including five from NGOs working on behalf of persons with disabilities.

28. **Ms. Tisheva** said that a Gender Equality Commission had been established in 2019 to further strengthen guarantees of labour rights and that the Senate Committee on Women and Gender Equality exercised parliamentary oversight to encourage the incorporation of international standards into national law. The Committee had reportedly received around 700 petitions in 2020. The Ministry of Mahalla and Family Support and the Children's Ombudsman also received complaints. She was interested in hearing about procedures for coordinating the diverse complaint mechanisms and about their impact on women in practice. She asked, for instance, whether such complaints were a prerequisite for women's access to the courts. She would welcome information concerning effective legal aid and access to justice for women, especially rural women and women with disabilities.

29. She would welcome an update on the status of the draft national action plan to prevent gender-based violence. She also noted that standard operating procedures had been established for a multisectoral response to gender-based violence and the coordination of police, health-care, social and psychological services. It would be useful to know which entities were responsible for the implementation of such strategies.

30. She also wished to know whether the Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality provided for the compilation of gender disaggregated data, gender budgeting, research and coordination with other bodies, also at the local level, and benchmarks for implementation and monitoring. She asked whether there was provision for gender mainstreaming in the national development strategy.

31. The State party's report referred to a database on problem and exemplary families at the local level. Women might be ashamed or endangered by such classification. Reference was also made to the strengthening of spiritual and moral values, an approach that might undermine women's rights and independence. The focus should be on gender equality and the rights of rural women.

32. **Ms. Stott Despoja** said that Ministers were permitted to enact temporary special measures to promote gender equality under the Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men Act. She wished to know whether any temporary special measures had been adopted to increase the number of women in leadership positions in the public and private sectors, particularly since women had accounted for 25 per cent of the Senate and 23 per cent of representatives in local councils in 2019. She welcomed in that regard the increase to 32 per cent in the Legislative Chamber. Steps should also be taken to increase women's participation in decision-making bodies, peacebuilding and regional development, giving special attention to women with disabilities and rural women.

33. She would appreciate information regarding temporary special measures aimed at achieving the equality of women in employment and education, including targeted recruitment, hiring and promotion as well as training or support programmes. The Committee would also appreciate an outline of temporary special measures to support rural women, older women, women in detention and women with disabilities in areas such as education, employment, housing and civic engagement. As very few women were employed in the

security sector, she asked whether there were any plans to adopt temporary special measures to increase the number of women in the security services and to protect them from discrimination.

34. The Committee was concerned about the nationality and status of women and refugee children from Afghanistan. It wished to know whether the State party was considering the adoption of any temporary special measures to increase their protection and their right to work, housing, health care and education.

35. In view of the critical importance of the prevention of gender-based violence, she asked what temporary special measures the State party would introduce to reduce its prevalence, including improved data collection and monitoring mechanisms.

36. **Ms. Artikova** (Uzbekistan) said that, with respect to the question raised concerning access to justice, her Government was well aware of the crucial importance of the rule of law. Vulnerable persons, such as persons with disabilities, low-income families or women raising children, were entitled under the law to apply to a prosecutor to defend their interests without incurring any costs from the State. In addition, legal assistance was provided not only to offenders but also to victims. Agreements had been concluded with international organizations on the funding of lawyers' services.

37. The Senate coordinated action to implement gender equality legislation regarding, for instance, women's petitions, gender-based violence, child-rearing, education, equality of opportunity, and access to legal services and justice. The authorities were grateful for the assistance of international organizations for assistance in resolving such important issues.

38. **Ms. Eshmatova** (Uzbekistan), speaking via video link, said that a total of 177 monitoring visits had been conducted by the Ombudsman to prisons in 2021, including 6 to the country's only closed women's prison. The team examined conditions of detention, medical care, food, labour opportunities and other conditions. Boxes for communications and petitions to the Ombudsman existed in all places of detention. Petitions generally concerned inhumane acts, material and social assistance, employment opportunities on release and reduction of sentences. The Ombudsman had signed a memorandum with the Probation Service. When women were released, the Ombudsman and the Ministry of Mahalla and Family Support ensured that they were provided with employment and with assistance in reintegrating into society.

39. **Ms. Marufova** (Uzbekistan) said that article 70 of the Electoral Code stated that at least 30 per cent of the candidates nominated by political parties must be women. The increase in the number of women candidates in recent years had been reflected in the recent elections.

40. The Education Act prohibited discrimination in education and guaranteed equality of opportunity. The number of female students in higher education had increased in 2021 in response to a recently introduced quota. More than 2,000 girls from low-income families had been awarded scholarships to institutions of higher education in 2021. It was planned to provide 6,000 grants to girls by 2026. Budgetary support for higher education had been provided to over 1,400 young mothers who wished to continue their studies.

41. The Ministry of Mahalla and Family Support had established a fund that provided comprehensive support to women. The Women's Notebook had been created as a temporary special measure to reduce poverty during the COVID-19 pandemic. More than 1,100 vulnerable women had received 19 billion sum in support, including housing grants, from the fund. In addition, more than 360,000 employment opportunities had been created for women, including more than 80,000 for women living in hardship.

42. Hotlines had been set up inter alia by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ombudsman to receive applications for assistance. In 2021, the Ministry of Mahalla and Family Support had received some 6,000 applications from women, mostly for financial or housing assistance. Shelters likewise responded to requests for psychological, financial and legal support.

43. **Ms. Kadir Khanova** (Uzbekistan) said that the Gender Equality Commission had two main priorities: to implement State policy on equal opportunities and rights for women and

men and to coordinate the work of all State bodies in that field. All the ministries and agencies concerned with gender matters were represented in the Commission. It received biannual reports on the implementation of the Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality in the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030 from the aforementioned ministries and agencies. A resolution on standard operating procedures for upholding women's rights had been adopted in July 2020 with the aim of improving the quality of legal, medical, social and psychological support for victims of gender-based violence.

44. **Ms. Tisheva** said that, since the persistence of gender stereotyping and traditional discriminatory attitudes hindered the implementation of laws on the protection of women and their access to justice and independent services, she wished to know what action was being taken by the State party to address such stereotyping and what the main objectives, indicators and target groups of such action were. She wondered what basic messages concerning gender equality and women's rights were conveyed by the innovative schools for future brides and grooms mentioned in paragraph 65 of the replies to the list of issues ([CEDAW/C/UZB/RQ/6](#)).

45. She noted that domestic violence against women had not been defined or criminalized in the Protection of Women from Harassment and Violence Act of 2 September 2019 and that protection orders were generally valid for only 30 days. No provision had been made for the expulsion of perpetrators from the family home. The mediation reportedly used in many cases to avoid separation or divorce was influenced by traditional attitudes, as were court decisions. As a result, the victims of domestic violence were obliged to remain in the same home as the offender and face even worse, life-threatening violence. Although femicide was rife it had not been qualified as a specific crime. She therefore wished to know when the above-mentioned Act would be amended in such a way as to ensure better and more effective protection through longer protection orders and the rapid expulsion of perpetrators from the family home. What protection did the action and procedures of local commissions afford to victims of domestic violence? She would like to know when the State party intended to revise the reconciliation and mediation procedures to create a supportive environment free from stigma in which women could report cases of domestic and other gender-based violence.

46. She would appreciate information about the regional coverage of the rehabilitation centres and about State support for independent centres run by non-governmental organizations. What plans existed to ensure that they received sufficient funds to employ qualified staff? The Committee considered that specialized centres were needed for rape victims and women with disabilities. She would be grateful for an indication of when the State party intended to amend its Criminal Code to incorporate the notion of consent in its definition of rape, in accordance with international law. Lastly, she wished to know what measures would be taken to ensure that the survivors of gender-based violence had access to justice and received legal aid and compensation. Procedural rules should be altered to make them victim-friendly and gender sensitive. She asked whether provision would be made for the ex officio prosecution of domestic and other forms of gender-based violence. Lastly, she would like to hear what would be done to counter the patriarchal values impeding women's access to justice.

47. **Ms. Leinarte** said that while it was commendable that Uzbekistan had criminalized the use of forced labour for the cotton harvest, she wondered how the increased demand for cotton was being met at a time when many migrant labourers had returned to their countries of origin owing to the COVID 19 pandemic. Since officials and private businessmen had reportedly called on Uzbek public sector employees to work in the cotton fields or else risk losing their jobs, she would like to know how many people had been held to account for making a profit from such forced labour.

48. She welcomed the fact that trafficking had been defined in Uzbek legislation in accordance with international law. However, she asked whether the delegation could comment on the fact that the law, as it stood, would not seem to exempt victims of transnational trafficking for forced labour or for sexual purposes from being charged with illegal entry into the country. She also wished to know what measures were being taken to counter trafficking for sexual purposes within Uzbekistan and the exploitation of Uzbek women and girls in foreign countries. What amendments had been made to the Anti-Human Trafficking Act? Were foreign victims allowed to remain in Uzbekistan even if they were unwilling to cooperate with Uzbek authorities? The Committee would like the delegation to

explain what measures had been taken to assist victims of trafficking and say how many women had been charged with the offence of prostitution. Were their clients prosecuted? In the light of the Committee's general recommendation No. 38 (2020) on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration ([CEDAW/C/GC/38](#)), she wished to know what measures were being taken to encourage women to leave prostitution by offering exit programmes and alternative sources of income.

49. **Ms. Marufova** (Uzbekistan) said that school curricula included the topics of women's rights and gender equality as a means of countering stereotypes. An advisory board on equal rights and opportunities for women and girls had been set up under the auspices of the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education. Attempts were being made to overcome stereotypes from an early age by improving girls' education and encouraging women's political activity. Girls' clubs had been founded in schools and mahallas and a project had been launched to hold a students' summit. Some higher education institutions had centres for gender equality studies. In mahallas, commissions existed to foster moral values. Their members included psychologists, activists, sociologists and senior citizens with a rich fund of experience. The Ministry of Mahalla and Family Support ran courses for prospective married couples to prepare them for family life and also worked with their parents. The courses included the subject of family finance. A balance was being sought between overcoming harmful stereotypes and maintaining family traditions.

50. **Mr. Abdullayev** (Uzbekistan) said that some 9,000 protection orders had been issued in 2021 to protect women and girls from various forms of abuse. In the same year, about 6,000 persons had been convicted of harassment or violence and ordered to take part in programmes to correct their behaviour. A trust fund had been set up at the Ministry of Internal Affairs to assist victims of gender-based violence and a new department for women's issues had been set up in the Ministry in order to provide legal assistance and prevent such acts of violence. To that end, over 300 inspectors were deployed in over 12,000 mahallas and were tasked with enforcing the rights and protecting the interests of women, especially those living in hardship.

51. **Mr. Muslimov** (Uzbekistan) said that the court system was being digitalized in order to improve access to justice. Complaints and documents could be filed electronically through an interactive portal and court hearings could be held by videoconferencing from any part of the world. Court decisions were posted on the website.

52. The percentage of women judges had risen by just over three percentage points since 2018 and currently stood at 15.9 per cent. Indeed, the first deputy president of the Supreme Court was a woman and the presidents of three regional courts were women.

53. Under articles 28 and 34 of the Protection of Women from Harassment and Violence Act the victims of violence and harassment could claim moral damages and compensation from the perpetrators. The delegation would provide the Committee with a report on the cases of gender-based violence that had been heard between 2020 and 2021.

54. **Mr. Yakubov** (Uzbekistan), speaking via video link, said that, under the new draft Labour Code currently pending Senate approval, men and women would have equal rights. Fathers would henceforth enjoy all the entitlements that had been granted to mothers as guardians of the family, such as parental leave, leave for childcare and breaks to feed children.

55. Uzbekistan had completely eradicated child labour and forced labour. The cotton harvest was monitored with the assistance of the International Labour Organization, human rights defenders, civil society activists, trade unions and labour inspectors to preclude the use of forced labour. A feedback mechanism has been established in 2017 with the help of the International Labour Organization and complaints of forced labour could be filed on a special website. The number of such complaints had fallen from over 2,000 in 2018, 1,200 in 2019 and some 900 in 2020 to about 140 in 2021. Steps had been taken to identify the perpetrators and criminal proceedings instituted against them. The penalties for forced labour had been increased by 100 per cent since 2019.

56. **Ms. Artikova** (Uzbekistan) said that the people of Uzbekistan abhorred trafficking. Her Government had ratified the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons

and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others and assumed all its responsibilities thereunder. It fully understood the importance of halting such activities. Long-term measures were, however, needed to educate men not to use violence against women and to teach women how to protect themselves. A national commission, which acted as a national rapporteur, had been appointed to combat trafficking. Discussions were under way on an amendment to the Criminal Code concerning the prosecution of prostitution.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.