



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination  
against Women**

**Twenty-third session**

**Summary record of the 484th meeting**

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 27 June 2000, at 10.30 a.m.

*Chairperson:* Ms. Schöpp-Schilling (Vice-Chairperson)

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*In the absence of the Chairperson, Ms. Schöpp-Schilling (Vice-Chairperson) took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.*

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

*Initial report of the Republic of Moldova (continued) (CEDAW/C/MDA/1)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Apostol (Republic of Moldova) took a place at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Apostol** (Republic of Moldova) thanked the members of the Committee for their objective and constructive comments, which reflected a deep understanding of the problems confronting her Government. It was hoped that the Republic of Moldova would evolve into a truly democratic society in which citizens enjoyed the rights to life, health, social protection and all other rights inherent in democratic societies. The fact that her country had signed many international agreements should be regarded as a desire to harmonize its legislation with world standards. A number of high-priority measures designed to improve the status of women were under way and aimed, among other things, at enhancing the role of women in public administration and analysing draft legislation on gender issues.

3. In response to questions posed by the Committee on the Government's relations with non-governmental organizations, she said that there had been very close cooperation on a wide range of joint activities, including publications, seminars and round-table discussions on various topics relating to status, equality, partnership in problem-solving and non-violence. Although she could not state the full extent of non-governmental collaboration on the initial report, she was able to confirm that extensive consultations with non-governmental bodies had been held at the preparatory stage before her delegation appeared before the Committee the previous week.

4. Turning to the question on legislative reform, she said that almost the entire body of domestic legislation was undergoing reform. Furthermore, a small group of women members of Parliament had joined forces to bring about a number of amendments to existing laws, particularly in the area of pension benefits granted to

women. With regard to the excessive burden placed on working women, who were expected to bear the brunt of domestic responsibilities, she provided statistics showing that Moldovan women on average worked in the home two and a half times as many hours as men did, in addition to their work outside the home. The Government was not yet in a position to alleviate their plight through allowances. Perhaps the financial situation would improve after the Government had cleared its long-standing arrears on the wage and pension bills.

5. Questions concerning the payment of benefits to new mothers related to articles 4 and 13. She explained that women were entitled to paid pre- and post-natal leave up to 18 months, at the end of which partial pay would be granted. Compensation for child rearing was paid for children between 18 months and 16 years of age, or until the completion of schooling. She wished to stress, however, that such payments were means-tested and not all women would qualify for that entitlement.

6. In cases where a child was born out of wedlock but the father recognized paternity, the mother was not entitled to benefits as a single mother. If the father refused to provide financial support, the woman had the right to request a court order for child support. In cases where the man registered by the mother as the natural father refused to recognize the child, the woman was entitled to a single mother's allowance in addition to any other benefits that she might be entitled to.

7. In all cases, however, the amount of the benefit received was proportional to the family income in relation to the minimum wage. Benefits were payable until a child reached the age of 16 or completed formal education. All women, even those who had not been employed, were entitled to pre- and post-natal leave benefits under the national unemployment system, in addition to any other benefits to which they were entitled. A woman who left her job to take care of children up to the age of 14 years also had the right to long-term leave with full unemployment benefits.

8. She would raise the issue of special measures to promote entrepreneurship among women and increase their participation in the political process with the Government with a view to accelerating implementation of the Convention. She pointed out, however, that women already had equality of

opportunity with men in the area of entrepreneurship and self-employment, but the poor economic climate made it virtually impossible to obtain funding for such endeavours.

9. All parties and socio-economic organizations were required by law to work towards equal representation of men and women, although a proposal put before Parliament to establish quotas on the number of women in Parliament had not been approved. Measures had been taken in schools and through the mass media to eliminate gender stereotyping. Non-governmental organizations, many of which had been formed recently, played an especially important role in that area, with 38 non-governmental organizations registered with the Ministry of Justice and another 83 operating on the local level. In order to coordinate and enhance the effectiveness of their work, 20 non-governmental organizations had established the Non-Governmental Organization Forum, which organized seminars on women's issues throughout the country. In addition, Government decision 39 of 15 January 1998 had led to the compiling of a directory of statistics on the population of Moldova, which would be updated regularly and contain much information on gender issues.

10. With regard to family issues, no measures were currently being taken to reduce domestic violence since women rarely complained to the authorities, who in any case did not always react as they should, which further discouraged women from filing complaints. There was often a pattern of violence within the family since men considered it their right to use physical force. Although the law did provide for punishment in cases of physical battery, with punishments proportional to the severity of the offence, such cases were difficult to prove since there were often no witnesses or the witnesses were minor children. In an effort to improve the situation concerning domestic violence, the Ministry of Justice had proposed amendments to the Penal Code and changes in police procedures. The Government had been unable to provide support to women to enable them to purchase labour-saving devices and reduce their workload in the home because of a lack of financial resources.

11. With regard to the prevention of trafficking in persons and prostitution, the number of cases of kidnappings of children had fallen from 17 in the first quarter of 1999 to four in the first quarter of 2000, and

the Government had no proof that such kidnappings were for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Studies undertaken by the Ministry of the Interior showed that trafficking in women and prostitution were part of a general trend to higher crime levels as a result of economic instability, increased poverty, high unemployment, especially among young people, and poor support for and a lack of information about child-raising. Foreign nationals therefore found it easy to recruit young girls by promising them work abroad.

12. In an effort to counter such activities, in June 1998 Parliament had amended the Penal Code and relevant procedures to combat prostitution, pornography, procuring and the culture of violence. In 1998-2000, 1,540 persons had been identified as prostitutes, of whom 34 were minors and in 1998-1999 398 cases involving prostitution had been prosecuted. The vice police and the State Agency for the Protection of Morality had seized hundreds of videocassettes of which more than a hundred had been banned for obscenity and their publishers and distributors had been prosecuted. Most such prosecutions had occurred in or around Chişinău.

13. The Government also had information according to which 445 Moldovan citizens were illegal residents of other countries, of whom 96 were girls between the ages of 20 and 25. Working in cooperation with the local bureau of Interpol, the authorities had repatriated 19 under-age girls who had been working as prostitutes and had returned them to their families. Police were working to identify those who recruited girls for prostitution, and improved, computerized systems were being installed at border crossings to better monitor cross-border traffic.

14. The Ministry of the Interior had proposed that a special section should be formed to combat human trafficking and identify those responsible. She noted however that many Moldovans were working and living abroad quite legally and, thanks to treaties between the Republic of Moldova and some of the host countries, mostly former Republics of the Soviet Union, they enjoyed the same rights and social protection as citizens of those countries. The Government was continuing to negotiate similar agreements with other countries where Moldovan citizens were legally resident.

15. Referring to the question on the participation of women in trade unions, she said that most legally

employed women were members of trade unions. Unfortunately, the role of trade unions had declined in the Republic of Moldova in recent years. There was no constructive dialogue between trade unions and the Government; instead, the former resorted to strikes to try to resolve any issues. Since trade unions resisted the reforms that the Government was trying to carry out, which only served to further destabilize the economic situation, it would be preferable for Moldovan women to seek to promote their rights through non-governmental organizations. Indeed, many women's non-governmental organizations had achieved considerable success and were actively cooperating with the Government. She assured the Committee that her country would follow its recommendations to seek closer cooperation with non-governmental organizations.

16. Responding to questions on the rights of minorities in the area of education, she said that there were 1,489 schools in Moldova, 1,116 of which provided instruction in Moldovan, 266 provided instruction in Russian, while others taught in Hebrew and other languages. At the college level, 78 per cent of colleges taught in Moldovan; and 21.8 per cent in Russian. Instruction was given in Ukrainian in 72 schools and 4 high schools; and Bulgarian and Gagauz were also used in a number of schools and high schools.

17. According to article 35 of the Constitution, education was free of charge at all levels. However, the private-education sector was developing rapidly. In 1990, 100 per cent of all pupils had been enrolled in public schools, while in 1999, 1.4 per cent of them had attended private schools where classes were smaller and children received a better education. The situation was different in higher education, where there were almost as many private educational establishments as public ones. However, education remained free of charge in the public establishments, where the most brilliant students received scholarships. As far as the removal of stereotypes from school textbooks was concerned, pupils used textbooks printed in Romania in the Russian Federation and Turkey. Her Government would be able to address the issue of stereotypes only when more textbooks were published in the Republic of Moldova.

18. Turning to pre-school establishments, she acknowledged that it was true that fewer children were being sent to pre-school programmes. In 1990, there

had been 126 children for every 100 places in pre-school establishments; however, by 1999, there had been only 66 children for every 100 places. That decline had not been due to the lack of facilities. It was just that fewer parents could afford to pay the high costs of sending their children to pre-school programmes and therefore preferred to keep them at home. That obviously raised the question as to whether children would get the same preparation for schooling that they used to get in pre-school institutions.

19. With regard to health issues, from 1994 onwards, family-planning units had been established in all general clinics and hospitals. There were 60 such units throughout the country that carried out prophylactic work relating to venereal and sexually transmitted diseases and also provided information about contraceptive methods in high schools and other educational establishments. However, special courses to prevent venereal diseases and teach healthy lifestyles had not yet been introduced because of a lack of funds. Nevertheless, the programme for promoting the rights of the child approved by the Government provided for 30 courses to be held in various schools and educational establishments. In recent years, there had been a decline in the incidence of venereal diseases, including syphilis and gonorrhoea, from the ten-year peak that had ended in 1996.

20. Almost all the articles of the Constitution and the draft family code provided for equality of men and women in marriage. Children born out of wedlock enjoyed the same rights as children born within wedlock, except for the right to inheritance. If the parents were not married and the father acknowledged paternity, the child would enjoy the same rights as those enjoyed by other children, including the right to inherit property from both parents. As far as allowances granted by the State were concerned, it made no difference whether the child came from a formal family or a common-law family. Under the new family code, men could marry at the age of 18 and girls at 16. In exceptional circumstances, the marriageable age for women could be lowered by two years only.

21. Turning to a question relating to article 11, she said that rural schools were temporarily closed during the winter season, owing to lack of heating fuel. In such cases, the winter vacation was extended, and school children completed their course of study during the summer. Teachers did not require unemployment benefits, since they were not unemployed. The period

of work simply changed from winter to summer, and their salaries remained the same. In the winter of 2000, Moldova had received coal from the United States of America, much of which had been allocated to the schools, easing the problem of school closings. Coal had also been distributed to low-income persons who had been unable to afford the price of fuel.

22. Responding to questions raised under article 12, she said that, in the previous decade, the number of abortions had declined by more than half; most abortions were undergone by women between the ages of 22 and 34. The incidence of maternal mortality had also considerably declined, and only one woman had died in childbirth in 1999. Owing to insufficient publicity on the subject, many women were unaware of the harmful effects of tobacco on health, including women working in the tobacco industry. The State did, she agreed, have the responsibility to inform women of the dangers of smoking, so that they could choose for themselves whether to risk their health and that of future generations.

23. The next report would answer any outstanding questions and provide a more comprehensive account of the measures taken by both governmental and non-governmental bodies to protect women's rights and to achieve equality between men and women. Moreover, the Moldovan Government would do its utmost to submit it on time.

24. **The Chairperson** commended the Moldovan Government for its frank and thorough answers to the Committee's questions. In the difficult period of economic and political transition through which it was passing, the Republic of Moldova must both tackle long-standing patterns of discrimination and confront the new patterns emerging with the development of a market economy. The Government should take care to ensure that the transition did not occur to the detriment of women or without their participation. While praising the work of the parliamentary women's club, the Committee encouraged the Government to consider strengthening the national machinery for women as soon as resources became available.

25. The Government should not only review and amend existing legislation but should also adopt equal-opportunity legislation, clearly incorporating the definition of discrimination contained in article 1 of the Convention, and setting out the various areas in which discrimination might occur, including education,

employment and housing. Such legislation should include specific provisions on violence against women, sexual harassment, and discrimination in advertising. It should also establish temporary special measures, as defined in article 4, paragraph 1, in order to ensure that women were adequately represented in political forums, governmental bodies and commissions, public administration and education, and should also establish goals, targets and timetables in that regard.

26. Women should be encouraged to study in non-traditional disciplines at both the secondary and university levels, a measure which might be carried out by the public media and therefore should not require any additional budget allocation. Although the establishment of an ombudsman's office would require budgetary resources, the Government might begin to work towards that goal. The establishment of a monitoring body was also essential. In order to reduce the double burden on women of work and traditional family duties, awareness-raising campaigns should be conducted to encourage the younger generation of men to share in household and child-rearing responsibilities. Moreover, even if school textbooks were conservative or dated, teachers could use them as illustrations of traditional and stereotypical attitudes towards women.

27. Noting with satisfaction the participation of non-governmental organizations in promoting equal opportunity in the Republic of Moldova, the Committee encouraged the Government to begin to clarify their roles and mandates, with a view to providing them with Government support in future. The Government had spelled out a considerable number of measures it had taken with respect to article 4, paragraph 2. In a market economy, however, family benefits for women who stayed at home could prove detrimental to their status in the labour market. Emphasis should instead be placed on developing complementary measures such as paternity leave.

28. Violence against women was a cause for concern in Moldova. In the previous two decades, it had been generally recognized that such violence was not a family matter, but a violation of women's human rights. The Committee urged the Government to pursue and punish violators and to assist victims. In addition, it called on the Government to strengthen international cooperation with countries in which Moldovan women were the victims of trafficking, and to take measures to reintegrate such women into society after their return. Efforts should also be made to establish agreements

with neighbouring European countries where Moldovan citizens were illegally employed.

29. The effectiveness of protective legislation should be monitored and research conducted so that anti-discrimination measures could be targeted for specific areas and groups. Under article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention, Governments could take such measures on a temporary basis without fear of accusations of reverse discrimination. Ten-month delays in paying health-care personnel seemed unreasonable. The Committee nonetheless urged the Government to continue to guarantee free access to health care, especially to women in rural areas, and to develop a life-cycle approach to health, a strategy which would surely be facilitated by the fact that women dominated the health-care profession in Moldova.

30. The Government should bear in mind the goals of reducing the abortion rate and improving access to family-planning services, even if those goals could not be implemented immediately. She urged the Government to examine the Committee's general recommendations, make use of non-governmental organizations in the implementation process, and submit the second and third periodical reports in a combined form, which would then be due in March 2003. Lastly, welcoming the willingness of the Moldovan Government to sign the Optional Protocol, she urged it to do so promptly and also encouraged it to endorse the proposed amendment to article 20 of the Convention.

*The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.*