



**Convention on the Elimination  
of all Forms of Discrimination  
Against Women**

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Seventh session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 124th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,  
on Tuesday, 1 March 1988, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. BERNARD

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Convention (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE  
CONVENTION (continued)

Second periodic report of Hungary (CEDAW/C/13/Add.1)

1. The CHAIRPERSON recalled that CEDAW had agreed to follow, for a trial period, the procedures established by the Human Rights Committee for considering second periodic reports. Working Group I had been entrusted with reviewing the second periodic report of Hungary and had prepared a list of questions which had been transmitted to the representative of Hungary for a reply.
2. At the invitation of the CHAIRPERSON, Mr. Endreffy (Hungary) took a place at the Committee table.
3. Mr. ENDREFFY (Hungary) said that his country remained deeply committed to the strict implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Hungary would co-operate fully in achieving the elimination of all kinds of discrimination against women.
4. The CHAIRPERSON read out the list of questions prepared by Working Group I.
5. Mr. ENDREFFY (Hungary) said that the Convention had been promulgated by decree-law and had thereby become an integral part of Hungarian domestic law. Even prior to its entry into force, its principles had been incorporated into Hungarian legislation.
6. The provisions of the Convention were in full conformity with his Government's overall efforts to develop an appropriate legal framework and create a material basis for the practical enjoyment of equal rights by women. Women's participation in the labour force had increased considerably. They had attained a significantly higher level of education and were strongly represented in the teaching and medical professions. The amended Family Act and the Government's long-term demographic and social policy programme provided for increased material support to families with children, increased State contributions towards childrearing costs, continuing assistance to parents in co-ordinating employment with parental duties, further development of child welfare institutions, the introduction of genetic counseling, and improvements in prenatal care and mother and baby welfare services. The social policy programme also aimed to increase women's involvement in public life.
7. No significant changes had occurred in the status and equality of women in the short interval between Hungary's two reports. Hungary continued to focus on bringing about such changes. No new institutions to ensure that the principle of equality between men and women was respected in practice had been established. Women who had suffered discrimination could seek judicial or administrative remedies. The idea of the inferiority or superiority of either sex was incompatible with socialist values.

(Mr. Endreffy, Hungary)

8. Regarding action taken by Hungary to publicize the Convention, the latter had been published in the Official Gazette and in the widely distributed publications of the National Council of Hungarian Women, and was part of the school curriculum. Hungary's report to the Committee had been disseminated in the press and in a wide variety of periodicals.

#### Article 2

9. Public officials, employers and others could be prosecuted for violating constitutional provisions prohibiting discrimination against women. Hungarian law did not provide for a special institution to deal with women's complaints of discrimination. However, the courts could designate judges to deal with specific cases. No statistics were available on court cases concerning discrimination against women brought since the publication of the initial report.

#### Article 5

10. Although no general programmes to combat domestic violence and sexual harassment of women had been formulated, reported cases of abuse were routinely investigated, and administrative or judicial action was taken if necessary.

#### Article 6

11. The Hungarian Penal Code defined prostitution as a crime, regardless of the sex of the offender. The prostitute's client was not liable to prosecution.

#### Article 7

12. He provided statistics pointing to the women's high level of employment in elementary and secondary schools, universities, and various other fields, and their participation in local councils, trade unions and trade union executive bodies.

13. He referred to the relevant section of the report dealing with the National Council of Hungarian Women. The Council elected a Presidium which represented it in various social and mass organizations and different forums. It had standing committees in such areas as legal questions, women and work, culture, family policy, aging, public services and international affairs. It published its own periodicals and journals, containing surveys, legal advice and information on education and health care, which helped to promote the advancement of women. The Council had played an important role in the preparation of the report.

14. The representation of women on all Government boards and committees was desirable, but need not be based on an equal ratio of men and women. Women might well be in the majority in some committees. While statistics were unavailable concerning the proportion of women at all levels of the Communist Party, their representation in the Party was considerable.

(Mr. Endreffy, Hungary)

Article 8

15. His country encouraged women's involvement at decision-making levels inside and outside the Government. Women were increasingly representing Hungary at meetings of various international organizations.

Article 10

16. Equal educational opportunities were guaranteed to all Hungarians regardless of sex. Women were largely involved in such fields as economics, medicine, pharmacology, arts and philosophy, and education. A smaller percentage of women were involved in engineering, agriculture and veterinary medicine. With improvements in working conditions, women had been able to enter some areas of employment from which they had previously been excluded because of health risks. The number of women in agriculture had declined, but was increasing in trade, transport, post and telecommunications, social and cultural services and public administration.

17. No specific programmes had been set up to encourage girls and boys to seek education and vocational training in areas other than those traditionally open to their gender. Although issues relating to family life, health and family planning were not covered by any specific programmes, they were dealt with as part of health education in elementary and secondary schools.

18. Equal sports facilities were available to all Hungarians, regardless of sex. Girls were strongly encouraged to participate in sports, and Hungarian women ranked highly in international competitions. He provided statistics on the number of children enrolled in kindergarten, the number of children of kindergarten age and the proportion of female teachers in kindergarten and primary schools.

Article 11

19. Under Act II, article 19 (2), of the Labour Code, employment could not be denied to pregnant women or mothers with small children, who were in fact supposed to be given preference in respect of employment. Observance of that provision was monitored in the workplace by legal departments, trade unions and political and mass organizations. Article 20 (2) of the Labour Code provided that women and minors could not be assigned to work liable to be injurious to them in view of their physical condition or development. There were special provisions for pregnant women.

20. Scientific and technical progress required a comprehensive reform of the educational system, the long-term objective being to eliminate deep-rooted traditions in choice of profession and to encourage women to turn to new technologies. More and more women were working in high-technology professions. Over half of the country's women graduated from high school and more than 30 per cent of scientific research and development workers were women.

(Mr. Endreffy, Hungary)

21. No action had been taken to establish the same retirement age for men and women. In Hungary, women retired at 55, men at 60.

22. Family grants and allowances were paid according to the number of children in the family: the greater the number of children, the higher the allowance, the aim being to encourage women to have larger families. A family allowance for the first child had been introduced as of 1 January 1975 and there were plans to increase the benefits payable after the third child. The size of the monthly allowance payments had increased since 1977.

23. The average wage for men was 6,425 forints, while that for women was 4,779 forints. Tradition, subjectivism, and the fact that women still worked chiefly in lower paid professions were among the main reasons for the difference. The gap was narrowing steadily, however, and the Government intended to apply the principle of equal pay for work of equal value during the forthcoming comprehensive wage reform.

24. Technological developments had created new opportunities for women, the most attractive being in the micro-electronics, computer technology, telecommunications, chemical and machine industries. There had been no unemployment problem during the period covered by the second report.

#### Article 12

25. As a result of Government policy on family allowances and child-care facilities, the natural decline in the birthrate had been halted; the birthrate had stood at 12.2 per thousand in 1985 and 12.1 per thousand in 1986, while the average number of live births for married women aged 15 years and older had been 1.88 in both years. Life expectancy at birth was 65.6 years for men and 73.6 years for women. The death rate was 13.8 per thousand: the major causes of death were diseases of the circulatory system and cancer.

26. Family planning services were available to all women free of charge. Rural women could use them through the established health care network. Pre-marital counselling had been introduced relatively recently, with encouraging results.

27. Abortions had totalled 80,882 in 1980, 81,970 in 1985 and 84,000 in 1986. Permission to have an abortion had to be obtained from an abortion committee; if a woman was unmarried or had at least two children or had a health problem, permission was usually granted.

#### Article 14

28. In 1987, 41 per cent of Hungary's population had lived in rural areas, 19.7 per cent in Budapest, and 39.2 per cent in other towns. Over the past 27 years nearly 20 per cent of the total population had migrated from the countryside to the city. In some parts of the country, rural women were actually better off than women in the cities. More and more rural families had their own cars and the

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(Mr. Endreffy, Hungary)

socialist reorganization of agriculture had increased living standards and employment opportunities significantly in the villages.

29. Health services were provided at a relatively high level all over the country. The greatest number of physicians per 10,000 population was to be found in Budapest, but the average in the countryside was 31.9. Almost every village had an elementary school, while secondary education was concentrated in each county centre. The policy of industrial decentralization and the industrial activity of co-operatives had increased job opportunities and special training courses in rural areas.

30. The National Council of Hungarian Women worked with other social organizations to put all the provisions of the Convention into effect, paying special attention to the advancement of rural women. The members of its various working committees and the Presidium held frequent meetings in different parts of the country.

#### Article 15

31. Family law made no distinction between the sexes: both had the right to choose their partners, to marry or divorce, to adopt children and to perform the tasks of being partners. The law did not use the terms "women" and "men", but spoke of "persons to be married", "married partners", "parents", and "former married partners", deviating from that usage only when providing for women's personal rights and the names that married or divorced women might use. Property rights in marriage were also based on equality. From the time of marriage, everything a husband and wife earned and purchased was considered their joint property, irrespective of their relative contributions to it. That arrangement applied even if one member of the couple was not a wage-earner, and ceased only at the end of the marriage. Any valuable item owned by one of the spouses before the marriage, or inherited or received as a gift thereafter, was excluded from the joint property and considered to be his or her private property. The notions of joint and private property also covered debts. Under the recently amended Family Act, there was no restriction on the right of married women to own or sell land that belonged to them, or to enter into contracts or obtain credit. The consent of the spouse was required, however, if either member of the couple wished to sell common or joint property.

#### Article 16

32. In 1986, the amended Family Act had increased the legal age for marriage to 18 years for both sexes. Whether maintenance was to be paid after separation or divorce was decided by the courts, unless the parties themselves agreed otherwise, but priority was given to the interests of any children. Children born out of wedlock had the same rights of maintenance, inheritance and name as children born in wedlock.

33. Upon the breakdown of a marriage, the law required joint property to be divided equally between the former husband and wife. Either member of the former



(Mr. Endreffy, Hungary)

couple might be required to pay alimony if the other partner was in need of it and had not proved unworthy of such assistance. In only one case did the law make a distinction between women and men: if a woman was on maternity or child-care leave, the former husband or partner could, at her request, be obliged to pay supplementary alimony. The purpose of that provision was to stabilize the mother's and child's financial situation in a period when expenses increased and the mother's income might decrease. Maintenance was always payable for minor children, up to a maximum of 45 per cent of the father's wage if the children remained with their mother.

34. Domestic violence was not a characteristic of Hungarian society. If it occurred, the offender was punishable by law. Rape was severely punished by the Penal Code, irrespective of family ties. As to whether the level of alcoholism caused special problems for women: according to available statistics, there had been an estimated 435,000 alcohol-addicted persons - male and female - in 1985. As for the proportion of the population married or living in de facto relationships: in 1987, 18.8 per cent of the population aged 15 years and older had been single; 63.7 per cent, married; 11.1 per cent, widowed; and 6.4 per cent, divorced. There had been 2.6 divorces per thousand population in 1980, and 2.8 per thousand in 1986.

35. Ms. EVATT thanked the Hungarian representative for participating in the Committee's experimental procedure and providing answers to most of the Committee's questions. She regretted that some of the information thus provided had not been incorporated into the second periodic report, which had added very little to the initial one.

36. Ms. GONZALEZ MARTINEZ agreed that the answers just given made good some of the deficiencies of the second report, which to her appeared to be largely a copy of the initial report. Further material had been circulated informally to Committee members and she was intrigued by one detail of the statistics on education: although the number of schools, classrooms and teachers were all shown to have increased in recent years, the number of students attending secondary schools and training programmes had barely increased at all. Was that because the population had not increased overall, or did the statistics omit to mention some other form of education and training? It also appeared that only a small proportion of students went on with their higher education until they obtained a diploma; she wondered whether the proportion of women doing so was as low as the proportion of students overall.

37. Ms. CORTI asked why, if Hungarian women had increased their participation in political life, the proportion of female deputies to the national Parliament had declined since the submission of the initial report.

38. The representative of Hungary had spoken of maternity leave, but she wondered whether fathers were entitled to take parental leave. She would also like to know whether there were any plans for legislation to establish the same retirement age for men and women.

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39. Ms. WADSTEIN remarked that, like other developed countries, Hungary displayed marked sex segregation in the workplace. She hoped that the third periodic report would provide information on temporary special measures taken under article 4.1 of the Convention. Sex differentiation was also visible in wages. The Hungarian representative had said that one reason for the disparity between men's and women's earnings was that women worked in lower paid professions, but why were those professions less well paid? Some occupations seemed to be poorly paid precisely because they were dominated by women. She, therefore, welcomed the information that the notion of equal pay for work of equal value would be introduced at the next wage reform.

40. The third periodic report should provide more statistics on accomplishments during the reporting period. The importance of such statistics could not be overemphasized. She would also like the report to indicate whether anything had been done to encourage men to take a greater share in family activities and household chores. If the Government wished women to bear more children, men would have to shoulder a greater part of the domestic burden.

41. Ms. PILATAXI DE ARENAS expressed dissatisfaction at the way in which some parts of the Convention had been dealt with in the second periodic report. It was not enough to say that a particular legislative provision was in conformity with the Convention: the Committee needed to have details of that legislation and of other activities and programmes. She did not like the method of grouping articles of the Convention together, because that made for incongruous assemblages of information and allowed certain provisions of the Convention to slip through almost without comment. She hoped that the third periodic report would offer a more detailed analysis.

42. Ms. GUAN Mingian said that much had already been achieved on women's behalf in Hungary; it was therefore completely understandable that there had not been any significant change in the status of women during the four years that had elapsed since the submission of the country's initial report. She nevertheless wished to know why the proportion of women in the Hungarian Parliament had declined from 27 per cent to 21 per cent. She also wanted to know whether the economic reforms currently being undertaken by the Hungarian Government had created any new problems for women and what was being done to overcome any such problems.

43. Ms. CARON said that the introduction of the report by the representative of Hungary had been quite informative, although the report itself provided very little new information.

44. In its initial report, the Hungarian Government had indicated that no inequities existed in the country's family legislation; she consequently wished to know what improvements had been made in the Family Act and why the Government had considered them necessary.

45. Having learned from Hungary's initial report that unmarried persons could not adopt children, she wondered whether the law governing adoption had been amended in the intervening period. She found that the Government's encouragement of women to



(Ms. Caron)

have more children contradicted its emphasis on women's equality on the job. Women could not acquire the experience necessary for promotion to managerial positions if they spent half their adult lives procreating.

46. Ms. MONTENEGRO DE FLETCHER said the report showed that Hungary was a developed country making considerable efforts to integrate women in the entire development process. However, she was concerned at the tendency, noticeable in most developed countries, to afford women excessive protection, thereby reducing them to second-class citizens. Encouraging women to have more than three children affected their physical health and helped perpetuate their traditional reproductive role. She wondered whether women who were not interested in having children but preferred to develop their own abilities were given the same incentives as those who wanted children.

47. She asked whether the Hungarian Government had considered setting a quota for female representation in the Cabinet as a means of overcoming sexual stereotyping.

48. Ms. SOUMARE said that the Hungarian Government was to be congratulated on its policies concerning women. She knew from her own experience how active Hungarian women were in all areas of national life and was therefore concerned that the percentage of women taking part in political activities had declined.

49. The rising divorce rate was another source of concern, given the special attention which the Hungarian Government paid to the family; she wondered whether the Hungarian Government was studying that problem.

50. Finally, she wished to know whether the aging of the population, described in one of the tables circulated informally by the Hungarian delegation, had any repercussions on the provision of public health services.

51. Ms. OESER said that the report provided an interesting overview of the situation of women in Hungarian society and their achievements, although there was some obvious overlapping with the initial report. She welcomed the Hungarian Government's readiness to implement the Convention and looked forward to seeing the Committee's questions answered in the country's next periodic report.

52. Ms. NOVIKOVA said that the representative of Hungary had made every effort to answer all the Committee's questions. Experts who were disappointed in the second report must understand that Hungary was breaking new ground as the first State party to have its second report considered by the Committee. Effecting social change was a complex and lengthy process, and the four years which had elapsed since Hungary's initial report had been considered did not constitute a span of time likely to produce many changes, particularly since the status of women in that country was already quite high.

53. In any event, the report and the oral presentation showed that Hungary was steadily improving the status of women. Under socialism, States assumed responsibility for creating the necessary conditions that would enable women to combine their family and professional roles. The systematic establishment of a

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(Ms. Novikova)

broad range of social, economic and legal guarantees allowed women to enjoy the rights accorded to them and would ultimately result in further progress.

54. Naturally, it was not possible to solve all problems at once, and the representative of Hungary had been frank in acknowledging the problems still facing Hungarian women. However, setting goals constituted the first step towards their achievement. In her view, the report did not fully reflect the extent to which Hungarian women were active in national life.

55. She suggested that the Committee's work would be facilitated if representatives of States parties were to begin their presentation by outlining their country's overall approach to women's issues. The Committee would then be better equipped to appreciate the thrust of the report in question.

56. Ms. VELIZ DE VILLALVILLA said it was clear to those with personal experience of Hungary that the report did not fully reflect the situation of women there.

57. She asked how many fathers had availed themselves of parental leave opportunities and whether any programmes existed to encourage more men to take such leave. Data pertaining to the division of labour between the sexes within the home would likewise be useful. Had the Government undertaken any educational campaigns to encourage both spouses to share such work?

58. Given Hungarian women's high level of political activity, the decline in the number of women in Parliament was surprising. She asked whether any studies had been conducted to ascertain the reason for that decrease and requested additional data about the number of women candidates in recent elections.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.