



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

Distr.
GENERAL

CEDAW/C/SR.12
10 August 1983
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

UN Doc. 1983/12

AUG 21 1983

COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Second session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 12TH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 2 August 1983, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. IDER

CONTENTS

Organization of work

Consideration of reports and information submitted by States parties under
article 18 of the Convention

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, Department of Conference Services, room DC2-0750, 2 United Nations Plaza.

Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

The meeting was called to order at 11.00 a.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. Ms. CARON, speaking in her capacity of chairperson of the informal working group, said that the members of the group intended to meet daily and that she wished to suggest that the Bureau should periodically assess the progress made by the group in its work.
2. The CHAIRPERSON said that, for the time being, Wednesday afternoon would be set aside for a meeting of the working group and decisions concerning further meetings would be adopted later.
3. Ms. MARTINEZ said that, in view of the importance of drawing up appropriate guidelines, it would not seem wise to leave the working group's meetings to chance. No doubt the Bureau could co-ordinate the meetings of the Committee and the working group so that there would be sufficient time both for consideration of reports and for the drafting of guidelines.
4. Ms. BIRYUKOVA pointed out that the Committee had an obligation to give the reports submitted by States thorough consideration and, furthermore, that the working group did not have the power to change the Committee's programme. There was no doubt that the drafting of guidelines in accordance with the Convention was extremely important, but the task before the Committee was to consider the reports submitted by States and to make recommendations to the General Assembly.
5. Ms. BERNARD (Rapporteur) suggested that the Committee should first of all consider the report of the German Democratic Republic.
6. The CHAIRPERSON said that, if she heard no objection, she would take it that, as far as the procedure for consideration of reports was concerned, the Committee wished to give representatives an opportunity to introduce their countries' reports and then reply to any questions that the members of the Committee might wish to ask.
7. It was so decided.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS AND INFORMATION SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION

Consideration of the report of the German Democratic Republic (CEDAW/C/5/Add.1)

8. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Hucke (German Democratic Republic) took a place at the Committee table.
9. Mr. HUCKE (German Democratic Republic) said that 33.6 per cent of the members of the People's Chamber, which was the supreme legislative organ of the German Democratic Republic, were women. The Democratic Women's League of Germany was represented in the People's Chamber by a parliamentary group made up of 35 female

(Mr. Hücke, German
Democratic Republic)

deputies. There were five women in the Council of State, which functioned as a collective Head of State. There was a woman heading the Ministry of Education, and in other ministries, such as the Ministries of Finance, Health and Light Industry, women held the office of Vice-Minister.

10. In his country, 1,868 women currently held the office of mayor. Half of the 1,252 judges in the country were women, and almost 50 per cent (26,330) of the assessors at the district and county courts were women. At the two highest levels of the polytechnical schools almost 52 per cent of the students were girls. Girls and women were encouraged to pursue their studies to an advanced level and represented over 70 per cent of the number of students attending technical and engineering schools. Women held approximately one third of the managerial posts in all sectors of society and one sixth of such posts in industry and agriculture.

11. In the German Democratic Republic progress towards the elimination of discrimination against women and towards the attainment of full equality was taking place on a parallel with the country's development. Today, women were participating fully in all the processes of social and economic life. Since the elimination of discrimination against women was regarded as part of the task of eliminating all forms of discrimination, it had not been considered necessary to adopt new legal instruments upon the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

12. However, it must be acknowledged that there were still problems and that there was no doubt that further problems would emerge in the future in connection with the attainment of full equality for women. If those problems were to be dealt with definitively, established traditions and customs would have to be abandoned in order to prevent the concept of the equality of men and women from becoming no more than a hollow principle that was meaningless in real life. Women must also speak out in support of peace and participate actively in building the future and promoting social progress, which was only possible within the limits of peace. Prompted by that concern and in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, the German Democratic Republic had sponsored the Declaration on the Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Co-operation, which had been adopted by the General Assembly at its thirty-seventh session.

13. The women of the German Democratic Republic fully supported the women of the peoples who had freed themselves from the yoke of colonialism, who were endeavouring to gain national and economic independence for their countries and struggling side by side with men to eliminate apartheid and racism for ever.

14. Ms. REGENT-LECHOWICZ said that the initial report under consideration was a good model for the drafting of reports; it was precise and adequately reflected the situation of women in the German Democratic Republic. There was no doubt that in that country the position of women in all fields of political, economic and social life, as well as in the family, was equal to that of men. Furthermore, the Democratic Women's League of Germany had made a major contribution to the cause of peace and disarmament.

(Ms. Regent-Lechowicz)

15. She would appreciate more detailed information from the representative of the German Democratic Republic on all the professions open to women. Since industrial and technological progress was so rapid, a number of types of work that might be detrimental to the health of women were emerging, and it would be interesting to know whether there was legislation in that area.

16. Mr. NORDENFELT said that the scope of the report was adequate and the statistics provided showed how practice and legislation co-existed in the German Democratic Republic. However, it was not clear whether the entry into effect of the Convention had to any extent resulted in the adoption of measures to amend legislation or influence practice in the area of the equality of men and women. He understood that there were specific norms laying down equality only in the Family, Civil and Penal Codes; he was not sure whether equality was explicitly laid down in the Constitution of the country or whether it was merely implied, since all citizens enjoyed equal rights.

17. Furthermore, where information on the number of women holding elective or non-elective offices was provided, the number of persons involved and the corresponding percentages were often given, which was extremely useful. However, in two or three instances the percentages were not given, as in the case of the mayors or the members of the Council of State. It seemed that the Democratic Women's League was a group represented in Parliament. He wished to know what the constitutional framework of the representation by the 35 female deputies was, whether those deputies were elected individually and whether there were constitutional provisions in that connection. The point was unclear.

18. The report contained other curious figures. In paragraph 3, for example, it was stated that there was compulsory 10-year polytechnical education for all girls and boys and that women accounted for over 70 per cent of the students at engineering and technical schools. However, only one sixth of the managerial posts in industry and agriculture were held by women. As to Family Law, efforts were made to enable women to combine family obligations with work responsibilities. It was stated in paragraph 4 that relations between the spouses were supposed to be arranged in a manner that would allow the wife to reconcile her vocational and social activities with motherhood. The question was whether men were also allowed to combine work responsibilities with family obligations.

19. Ms. DE REGO DA COSTA DA GAMA SALEMA MOURA RIBEIRO asked what was the population of the German Democratic Republic and whether there were more women than men. With regard to the legal system, she inquired whether international conventions were binding on the State and private individuals, and what were the penalties when the authorities or private individuals failed to comply with the relevant provisions. As to political rights, she asked how many supreme political organs there were in the German Democratic Republic and whether the Democratic Women's League of Germany was a political party or a women's organization represented in the People's Chamber. On the question of the Labour Code and labour rights, she asked whether the principle of equal pay for equal work was applied in practice. With regard to the family code, she wished to know whether only duly registered marriages were valid and whether the children of unmarried mothers were protected or were considered illegitimate.

20. Ms. PATIÑO DE MARTINEZ noted that, according to the report, the Democratic Women's League had 1.4 million members and the Council of State five women. She wondered whether those five women belonged to the League or were part of the general female population of the German Democratic Republic. She was also interested to learn whether the influence of the League extended to the community level and to the Government itself. As to labour matters, she noted that the work-week for women with two or more children had been reduced to 40 hours; the question was how long the work-week was for the rest of the population.
21. Ms. MACEDO DE SHEPPARD said it had previously been suggested that the reports should have annexes containing relevant legislation. That would often obviate the need for a number of questions. She wished to know what kind of penalty was applicable in the event of non-compliance with the provisions referred to in the report. She also wished to know what was the assistance, referred to in paragraph 2 of the report, that was given by the Democratic Women's League to mothers who were temporarily unemployed. It was stated in another section of the report (para. 3) that such women were covered by a range of social benefits.
22. The inclusion of some information on the country would have clarified certain obscure points. For example, it was stated in paragraph 1 that the establishment of a socialist society had entailed the abolition of social relations based on exploitation. The question was whether such a system left room for private property or property by succession. Information on that point would certainly be welcome.
23. Ms. NGOC DUNG said that she was impressed by the report's wealth of material and clear presentation. As was stipulated in article 18 of the Convention, it was important for States parties and the general public to know not only about progress made, but also about measures adopted with a view to making progress. She had the impression that the report did not give a full account of such measures. It was essential to know what were the obstacles, factors and difficulties faced by the responsible organs in fulfilling the obligations under the Convention and what action was being taken to overcome such difficulties. That could encourage other countries to make additional efforts. Specifically with regard to access to employment, it was stated in paragraph 3 of the report that 87 per cent of all women of working age were gainfully employed. That was an outstanding point in the report, and she wished to know how the German Democratic Republic had been able to achieve that record.
24. Ms. SMITH said the report showed that the German Democratic Republic had made considerable progress in applying the principle of equality between the sexes. It was not clear, however, whether the country had any organ to deal exclusively with guaranteeing such equality and preventing discrimination against women, or any State mechanism to promote equality between the sexes. While the report indicated that the Civil Code, the Penal Code and the Labour Code specified norms for the equality of women, it omitted to mention whether the Penal Code expressly prohibited discrimination against women, what were the applicable penalties and what compensation was available to women who were discriminated against. According to the report, notable progress had been made with regard to the participation of

(Ms. Smith)

women in political life, although there were still more men than women at the senior levels. It was not clear whether special measures had been adopted to increase the political participation of women at the higher levels. It would be useful to know whether there were express provisions in favour of women stipulating, for example, that if a woman was duly qualified for a post, she should be given preference over an equally qualified man. The Committee should be told whether measures had been adopted to encourage fathers to assume their child-care responsibilities. She wished to know, for example, whether men were granted leave to see about their new-born children.

25. Ms. CORTES said that both the form and the content of the report submitted by the German Democratic Republic had left a very favourable impression. Inasmuch as the Government had made such substantial progress in eliminating discrimination against women, she wondered whether other measures to promote the implementation of the Convention were envisaged. She was also interested to learn whether, according to any surveys that had been carried out, the women of the German Democratic Republic believed that they actually enjoyed equality in all aspects of the country's life. The representative of the reporting State had referred to ancient traditions that would have to be overcome in order for women to attain full equality. She wished to know what were the prospects for a female head of State in the foreseeable future.

26. Ms. BIRYUKOVA said that the German Democratic Republic had submitted a very comprehensive report, which indicated not only the legal provisions and regulations prohibiting discrimination, but also the mechanisms established to enforce such legislation. The German Democratic Republic had proclaimed and implemented the principle of equality between the sexes. The statistics relating to part II of the Convention clearly showed the important role of women in the country's political and social life. It was important to note the substantial progress made by the Government in creating the social and economic conditions necessary to enable women to enjoy equal rights. It was also interesting to note that 99.2 per cent of female school-leavers who did not go on to a higher educational establishment took up vocational training and that a large proportion of women in the agricultural sector had undergone training in that area. At universities and other institutes of higher education, women accounted for more than 52 per cent of the student body. It was that equal access to education that enabled women to participate on an equal footing in the work place, in the country's professional and cultural life, in family life, in society and in employment. She wished to know whether any problem had arisen because women were in the majority at some technical schools and institutes of higher education, and consequently in some professions.

27. As to the assistance provided to women and families for the rearing of children, many of the German Democratic Republic's experiences and achievements had also been useful in the Soviet Union. She asked the representative of the German Democratic Republic to explain to the Committee how those measures were reflected in the rise in the birth rate and in family planning.

(Ms. Biryukova)

28. She suggested that the Committee's report to the General Assembly should mention the possibility and the advantages of using the positive experiences described in the report of the German Democratic Republic and in the reports of other States parties to the Convention to further the elimination of not only de jure discrimination but also de facto discrimination against women.

29. Ms. CARON said that she would be interested in knowing what had been the main difficulties experienced by the German Democratic Republic in placing women on an equal footing with men and what progress had been achieved in that connection. Specifically with regard to employment, the report referred to the principle of equal pay for equal work. She asked whether that principle included the idea of equal pay for work of equal value. With regard to family law, it would be interesting to know whether the family name was necessarily the father's name or whether children could choose to use the last name of either their father or their mother. In that connection, she also asked what name the children in a single-parent family would use.

30. Ms. PEYTCHEVA said that the German Democratic Republic had submitted a model report, both in form and in content. The German Democratic Republic had achieved particular progress in establishing the equality of women in all areas. It would be interesting if the representative of the German Democratic Republic were to share with the members of the Committee his country's experiences in providing vocational training for girls. As she understood it, every young woman in the country received vocational training until the age of 35, not only as part of the educational system but also through training programmes in the work place. She expressed particular interest in the programme for the advancement of women, which was an integral part of all plans for the development of enterprises in every production sector. In view of the large percentage of women in managerial posts in all sectors of society, she asked the representative of the German Democratic Republic to provide information on the measures that had enabled women to hold one third of the managerial posts.

31. Ms. GONZALEZ MARTINEZ congratulated the representative of the German Democratic Republic on the report he had introduced. With regard to the participation of women in State decision-making bodies and in governmental bodies, she asked how the figures contained in the report should be interpreted; in other words, were they real figures or had a percentage been set for the participation of women in certain bodies. In her opinion, figures and percentages on the participation of women in specific posts did not reflect the real situation of women or the opportunities that that State, or society itself, offered for women to develop their capabilities fully.

32. Moreover, she requested additional information on the methods that had been used to encourage girls to pursue higher studies, and inquired whether there were any measures to ensure that the State, enterprises and individuals promoted the equality of women. The report indicated that the penal law established penalties for anyone who trafficked in human beings or engaged in the exploitation and encouragement of prostitution. In that connection, she asked whether any steps had been taken to eliminate prostitution, not by imposing penalties but through persuasion.

/...

(Ms. Gonzalez Martinez)

33. With regard to family law, it would be interesting to know what was meant by the words "common family name". If the spouses were free to choose the name of either the husband or the wife, she asked what the "common name" would be. In connection with adoption, she asked whether a single woman could adopt children.

34. As to the education and rearing of children, in view of the extraordinary measures adopted to protect working mothers, she asked whether any assistance was provided for widowed or divorced fathers who were left with children to care for. Lastly, although she felt it would be useful and interesting to have the legal texts on which the reports were based, the translation of such texts into all languages would be an enormous task for the Secretariat.

35. Ms. MUKAYIRANGA asked whether women in rural areas in the German Democratic Republic were in the same situation as their urban counterparts, whether women had the same rights as men in passing on their nationality, whether women could testify in court that they had been the subject of discrimination, as was stipulated in the Convention, and whether the large proportion of women participating in government and in the judiciary had not, in actual practice, encountered resistance from men.

36. Ms. AL-FETOUH said that the report of the German Democratic Republic had improved her understanding of the social and economic situation of women in that country and of the enormous amount of relevant legislation. However, she requested specific examples of the application of the relevant legal measures, because she was convinced that women and children must be afforded ongoing protection. She also asked whether any legislation had been adopted to protect the economic independence of women in the context of marriage and divorce.

37. Ms. BERNARD requested statistics on divorce and on the incidence of prostitution and rape and asked what measures had been taken, if those problems did, in fact, exist. She also asked whether rape cases were judged in private and whether policewomen participated, whether adolescent pregnancies were a frequent occurrence, whether all sectors of the female population were represented by the Democratic Women's League of Germany, whether there were family courts to deal with juvenile cases, how the family health care centres operated and on what scale.

38. Ms. LAMM said that the data on the participation of women in political life were interesting but asked whether women's agricultural work, which constituted hard physical labour, was not declining as a result of the migration to cities.

39. Ms. ILIC praised the statistics included in the report of the German Democratic Republic and welcomed the fact that its national legislation already embodied the principles contained in the Convention. However, she asked how compliance with those principles was ensured in practice and what additional measures were envisaged for the future in order to supplement the good solutions and the institutions already in existence.

40. Mr. HUCKE (German Democratic Republic) said that his Government linked the implementation of the principles contained in the Convention to the struggle for peace, because it felt that the rights of women could be guaranteed only in a climate of peace. Replying to some of the questions raised, he explained that no new measures were envisaged, because all the necessary laws were already fully in effect. An act promulgated recently extended paid maternity leave to the child's first birthday.

41. Lastly, he said that he would need more time in order to provide adequate answers to all the questions asked.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.