



Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Eighth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 144th MEETING

Held at the Vienna International Centre, Vienna,
on Tuesday, 28 February 1989, at 2 30 p m

Chairperson Ms EVATT

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session

The meeting was called to order at 2 35 p m

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

Second periodic report of the German Democratic Republic (CEDAW/C/13/Add 3 and Add 3/Amend 1 and Corr 1)

1 At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms Thiele, Mr Strasberg and Ms Korf (German Democratic Republic) took places at the Committee table

2 The CHAIRPERSON invited the representatives of the German Democratic Republic to introduce their Government's report and to reply to the questions that had been forwarded to them by the Committee

3 Ms THIELE (German Democratic Republic) said that the principle of sexual equality had been laid down in her country's first Constitution, adopted 40 years previously, and all legal provisions inconsistent with it had been repealed. Conditions had been created that guaranteed both men and women the right to life, work, education, decent housing, recreation, health care and care in sickness and old age. The German Democratic Republic had been one of the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which had been translated into German and published in the Official Gazette and several professional journals so that it was accessible to everybody.

4 In the German Democratic Republic, the policy of translating economic growth into social benefits was the key to the achievement of equality for women in everyday life. Material security, full employment and equal educational opportunities for all children were guaranteed, and free health care and protection for mothers and children were being continually extended. All the State's achievements were the result of hard work and women had made a major contribution to them through their industry and creative talents. Women constituted 49 per cent of the labour force and 91 per cent of all women of working age were gainfully employed, undergoing training or studying.

5 The Democratic Women's League of Germany (DFD), of which she was the Chairperson, was particularly concerned with supporting women in their efforts to apply their skills to their jobs and community activities. It tried to solve problems of daily life, helping women to harmonize employment and motherhood. Its efforts had the unqualified support of both the Government and the local authorities. Those authorities were obliged by law to pursue policies that ensured that the material and cultural needs of the people were increasingly met and families were protected and encouraged. The infrastructure thus set in place in towns and rural areas went far to reduce the burden of working women.

6 A major goal in the advancement of women was to ensure that an increasing part of the cost of the birth, care and education of children was borne by society and that the work of mothers was recognized. Places were available in creches for 81 per cent of all children under three, kindergarten places were available for all children of pre-school age, with 94 per cent of parents taking advantage of them, and after-school facilities existed for all pupils in grades 1 to 4. Of schoolchildren, 85.5 per cent had a hot midday meal at school and 76 per cent took part in the school milk scheme. In May 1987, the State had increased family allowances. The budget of a family with three children had been increased by 160 marks a month, an amount which paid the rent for a four-room flat with modern amenities, plus electricity and gas charges for a whole month.

(Ms Thiele)

7 Under new regulations, mothers were able to take one year of paid maternity leave after the birth of their first child. After the birth of the third and any subsequent child, the period was extended to 18 months. If they were released from work to nurse a sick child, married mothers of two or more children were entitled to social insurance benefits equivalent to their own sickness benefit. In the past only single mothers had been eligible for such benefit. A new principle introduced into the law entitled the husband or grandmother to request paid release from work for a year to look after a child instead of the mother, and to nurse a sick child. In drawing up legal regulations increased attention was paid to specific groups with a view to enhancing their material security. A recent regulation on special assistance to families with severely handicapped children gave the parents more time and better financial conditions for taking care of such children.

8. A great deal of money and effort was required to pursue the national policy of translating economic growth into social benefits. In 1989 alone, some 35 billion marks were earmarked in the national budget for education, vocational training and adult education, higher education, health-care and social welfare. That was far more than the funds set aside for national defence, which were, furthermore, to be cut by 10 per cent by 1990 as part of the policy of unilateral disarmament.

9 With regard to remaining obstacles to equal participation by women in political, social, economic and cultural life, she said that her country's experience had shown that the building of an advanced socialist society was a historical process that involved far-reaching political, economic, social, intellectual and cultural change, and included overcoming many obstacles. For example, the regulations adopted and the funds set aside to ensure that the sexes had equal status had not automatically resulted in a situation in which all people took advantage of the opportunities offered. Ideological barriers and outdated family traditions and customs still needed to be overcome. Although 86.4 per cent of all women received vocational training, and one in two technical school graduates and one in three university graduates was a woman, women held only one in three executive positions. The service sector did not yet meet the needs of working women in all respects, particularly in regard to relieving them of time-consuming chores. All those problems would be tackled gradually.

10 In discussing the ways chosen by States parties to secure the equal status of women, the Committee must not ignore developments in the world at large. Many global problems, such as hunger and underdevelopment, pollution and disease, as well as the harnessing of advanced technology in the interest of the human race, had a major impact on the achievement of equality for women. The joint efforts of the international community were needed to tackle those problems, and peace and disarmament were essential for advancing in that direction. The settlement of regional conflicts would undoubtedly promote the implementation of the provisions of the Convention. The German Democratic Republic had contributed to bringing about positive changes in the international arena, including the recent unilateral moves for disarmament. Women in the German Democratic Republic placed great hopes in the forthcoming talks in Vienna on conventional disarmament in Europe, and thousands of women from all walks of life would give expression to their hopes in peace rallies to be organized on International Women's Day, 8 March. The German Democratic Republic regarded its dialogue with the Committee, whose experts represented all social systems, as a contribution to the strengthening of peaceful international co-operation.

11 Mr STRASBERG (German Democratic Republic) said that questions had been asked about new measures and legal provisions adopted to promote equality since 1983. Many such measures had been introduced as part of the country's policy of improving and perfecting the legal and social security system. He gave as an example a Government Decree of April 1986 instituting measures for increased support for families with severely handicapped children. The mothers concerned were entitled to a reduction of working hours without a reduction in pay and to longer periods of annual leave. He noted that there were specialized schools for severely handicapped children in every district of the German Democratic Republic. Another Decree of April 1986 had established entitlement to the paid release from work, following maternity leave after the birth of their first child, of mothers who wished to take care of the child at home. A Decree adopted in May 1988 had laid down measures concerning government payment of maintenance allowances if regular maintenance payments could not be enforced for any reason.

12 Ms KORF (German Democratic Republic) said that questions had been asked about the monitoring of adherence to the principles of the Convention. No specific institution was responsible. In the country's experience, it was more useful for issues of sexual equality to be handled and discussed as a common concern rather than as a departmental issue. The stipulations of article 20 of the Constitution of the German Democratic Republic regarding equality of men and women were given effect in the Civil, Family and Labour Codes and other legal provisions. Various government departments monitored compliance with those provisions in their area of responsibility and ensured that they were respected in any new regulations issued under their authority. Other bodies, such as the social courts and the arbitration and grievance commissions, and workers' and farmers' inspectorates, also played an important role in monitoring adherence to the Convention. Because the implementation of equality was the policy of the State as a whole, it had not been found necessary to establish a special Ministry for Women's Affairs.

13 Questions had been asked regarding the existence of studies of traditions and customs that affected the status of women. Several such studies had been carried out into obstacles and barriers to sexual equality. Considerable research into women's affairs had been conducted for several years by the Academy of Sciences, the universities, the Central Institute of Youth Research, the Central Institute for Vocational Training, the political parties and the media. A specific scientific body, the Council for Women in Socialist Society, had been established to co-ordinate research projects in that area.

14 Ms THIELE (German Democratic Republic) said that there was much public interest in the question of programmes for overcoming traditional attitudes. The Women's Democratic League maintained advisory centres in the 250 districts of the German Democratic Republic, and activities were organized such as panel discussions and courses to prepare young people for marriage and family duties. The emphasis was on practical advice to young people in coping with day-to-day living and the responsibilities of family life.

15 Mr STRASBERG (German Democratic Republic) said that questions had been asked about the power of the courts to issue orders counteracting instances of discrimination, it had also been asked whether legal services were available to women who complained of discrimination. The courts were in fact required to take action in instances of discrimination against women in the field of labour, family, co-operative and civil law, and to do so without delay. Two thirds of all complaints were settled within one month. The District Courts offered legal services free of charge to all citizens, and the trade unions also had their own

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(Mr Strasberg)

legal services to inform people of their rights and assist them in complaints under labour legislation. The courts were also able to act to prevent repetition of any act of discrimination by using legal criticism, for instance of the management of a firm, to require the removal of the cause of the offence. The right of women to criticize any acts of private or public organizations that violated their rights and freedoms was upheld by the courts and the State authorities. An important and widely-used law in the German Democratic Republic established the right of citizens to address petitions to State bodies at all levels if they felt that their rights had been violated or a wrong decision taken. A response must be given within 10 days and the decision corrected or, if necessary, repealed.

16 Ms KORF (German Democratic Republic) said that a number of questions had been asked about families and family life. The majority of adults in the German Democratic Republic lived in stable family unions. Two thirds of adults over the age of 18 were married. In the majority of families, both spouses were able to develop their full potential, in keeping with the Family Code, for the benefit of society and to their own advantage. Employment of women outside the home had become the natural situation and child-rearing had become a joint responsibility. As a rule, husbands and wives shared the burden of employment and domestic chores, but the smooth running of households was not automatic. Organizing ability was needed as well as love and mutual respect. Opinion polls as well as discussions in the media showed that the division of labour within the family was often sex-specific. New patterns of thought in family life took a long time to develop. As a rule, women spent more time on such domestic chores as washing, cleaning and cooking, and technical and heavy physical work were regarded as the male preserve. Looking after children was increasingly regarded as a common task and given a very important place. Scientific studies showed that women as a rule spent more time in domestic work than men, although the ratio varied with the standard of education, social background and neighbourhood facilities. On the whole, women enjoyed less personal free time than men, but the situation was changing among young couples as women became better qualified. Husbands were doing more of the housework and more fathers were taking advantage of paid leave to care for sick children. Only a relatively small number, however, had yet taken advantage of the opportunity to take a year's paid leave after the birth of a child instead of the mother.

17 Women no longer played a subordinate role in the family. That also applied to rural areas. Women's expectations regarding the sharing of family responsibilities and chores had been raised considerably by training, financial independence and economic status, and although men often found it very difficult to accept their wives as independent and capable people, there were no legal or material reasons in the German Democratic Republic for keeping alive a faltering marriage, hence the increasing number of divorces.

18 Some questions raised concerned article 16 of the Convention. Article 7 of the Family Code stipulated that the family name, which was passed on to the children, could be either the name of the husband or that of the wife. That provision was very popular, and the law was therefore in no need of amendment. In the event of divorce, it was up to the parties to keep their family name or revert to former names.

19 One third of the children born in the German Democratic Republic were born to single mothers. However, many of those women lived under a common law marriage with the father of their child, and such couples eventually tended to marry after a

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(Ms Korf)

period of cohabitation The rights of illegitimate children were fully guaranteed in the Family Code

20 The German Democratic Republic was a party to 24 conventions of the International Labour Organisation on matters such as minimum wages, underground work for women, etc , and accession to the Convention on Family Responsibilities was being considered

21 Mr STRASBERG (German Democratic Republic) said that questions had been raised in connection with articles 5, 6 and 15 of the Convention concerning violence and sexual harassment in families, rape and the protection of victims, prostitution and procuring In the German Democratic Republic, women and children were protected against violence In particular, minors were protected against violence, neglect and sexual harassment under a special section of the Criminal Code on offences against members of the family and minors The effectiveness of the control of violence against women and children stemmed primarily from the conformity of the legal framework with the moral values of the population at large However, according to a United Nations survey, the German Democratic Republic was one of the 10 countries with the lowest crime rates in the world In 1987, for example, only 563 cases of violence, rape or attempted rape had been taken to court, and 377 cases of sexual harassment had been reported There was no trend towards an increase in sexual violence The victims of such violence were provided with counselling and assistance, and the Code of Criminal Procedure contained detailed provisions securing their rights in criminal proceedings The law enforcement authorities were legally bound to inform persons about their rights and assist them in asserting such rights, e g in claiming damages A ruling to that effect had been given by the Supreme Court Where an offender failed to pay the required damages, he was imprisoned and the State effected advance payment to the victim under a law adopted in 1988

22 Prostitution was punishable by law, and the number of cases appeared to be declining Procurement was also a punishable offence Under article 321 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, persons taking advantage of or encouraging prostitution were liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years No case of minors involved in prostitution had been reported

23 Ms THIELE (German Democratic Republic), referring to article 7 of the Convention, said that two women were members of the Politburo of the Socialist Unity Party (SED), five were members of the State Council, one was Minister for Education and five were Deputy Ministers However, there was also a large proportion of women in elected bodies Over 20,000 women candidates of the Democratic Women's League of Germany would be put forward in the forthcoming municipal elections, but in any case all the political parties nominated a good proportion of women

24 In 1950 the Democratic Women's League had initiated the drafting of the first law on equality for women In 1965, the Family Code had been adopted following broad democratic debate, in which the Democratic Women's League had participated, as also in the drafting of the 1972 legislation on abortion and the Labour Code Furthermore, the preparation of the country's five-year plans for economic development was also based on extensive popular consultations in which the Democratic Women's League participated Women clearly took an active part in the management of the country's affairs

25 Ms KORF (German Democratic Republic) said that a question had been raised in connection with article 8 regarding women in the diplomatic service. A woman was General Secretary of the National Committee for UNESCO, and women were active in the consular services, the press service and personnel departments. Women had long participated in the work of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, regularly attending international conferences. Ms K Wit, the world ice-skating champion, had recently been appointed Ambassador of UNICEF by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

26 Mr STRASBERG (German Democratic Republic) said that, in connection with article 9, more details had been requested on the regulations governing the right to citizenship. Under article 2 of the Law on Citizenship, women and men were guaranteed the same constitutional rights to acquire, change or retain citizenship. Women and men enjoyed equal rights regarding the citizenship of their children, and under article 9 and the following articles of the Law a change in the husband's citizenship did not automatically entail a change in that of his wife.

27 Ms THIELE (German Democratic Republic) said that a question had been asked in connection with article 10 of the Convention regarding a UNESCO study on the promotion of equal opportunities. She had as yet been unable to look into the matter, but if the exact title of the study could be made available to her delegation she would try to reply later.

28 Mr STRASBERG (German Democratic Republic) said that women had access to all types of employment except jobs damaging to their health. Women and minors were prohibited from performing underground mining operations and from working under high atmospheric pressure or at very high temperatures.

29 As for sexual education, it was indeed provided in schools.

30. Ms KORF (German Democratic Republic) said, with regard to education, that over 50 per cent of university and technical college students were women. Jobs were found for all students during their last academic year. The percentage of women working as professors and lecturers was still unsatisfactory, however, it had recently increased from 8.5 per cent to 8.8 per cent. Universities operated special programmes providing young mothers with teaching materials and tutors.

31 Turning to article 11, she said that a comparison had been made between women employed in sectors such as medicine on the one hand and the building industry on the other. In view of the strenuous nature of building work, it seemed natural that not many women were employed in that sector. What was important was that girls should study new technology with a view to employment in such areas as microelectronics and computer science. Women accounted for 40 per cent of all the people undergoing further education in those areas, taking the form of in-service training with pay. The only restrictions applicable were intended to protect the health of women and the children of female students. Kindergartens and other such facilities were available at universities, and female students with children were eligible for a special allowance paid by the State. Much had been achieved in the area of management training for women, and the ratio of women to men in executive positions was one to three.

32 Mr STRASBERG (German Democratic Republic), referring to article 11, said that labour law in the German Democratic Republic had been codified in detail in the Labour Code, which had been the subject of widespread debate at the initiative of the trade unions. Already, 3 million copies of the Code had been sold. Article 97

(Mr Strasberg)

of the Labour Code set forth the principles for assessing the value of work, value was to be determined by the requirements of each particular job, qualifications (irrespective of sex), responsibility and working conditions. Article 3 of the Labour Code guaranteed women equal status at work. The classification of occupations was effected by the competent ministries and the trade unions.

33 Of course, legal disputes sometimes arose. They were referred to the enterprise "grievance committee", which had exclusive jurisdiction over labour disputes. The members of such committees were elected by secret ballot by the workers of the enterprises concerned, for a term of two years. The grievance committees, responsible for the enforcement of labour law, enjoyed respect and authority among the workers. Their decisions were objective and independent of the management. In fact, they often dealt with complaints against the management.

34 With regard to article 14 of the Convention, he said that 329,900 women were employed in agriculture in the German Democratic Republic, holding skilled jobs in management as well as in production. Over 90 per cent of the women working on co-operative crop farms, for example, had received vocational training. Thus the image of rural women today was quite different from the traditional one. They handled sophisticated modern machinery and had much more varied and interesting jobs than in the past.

35 Ms Korf (German Democratic Republic), referring to article 12 of the Convention, said that as a result of family planning virtually all children born in the German Democratic Republic at the present time were wanted by their parents. Forty per cent of women of child-bearing age regularly took contraceptive pills, of which a sufficient variety was available to ensure that all women were prescribed the type best suited to their needs. Other contraceptive methods were also available for both men and women. With regard to abortion, the 1972 Abortion Law gave all women the right to terminate an unwanted pregnancy. The operation was performed at an authorized medical centre as an in-patient service, was free of charge and entitled the patient to sick pay during her absence from work.

36 The Chairperson thanked Ms Thiele and her colleagues for their replies to the questions raised by the Committee and congratulated the German Democratic Republic on its ratification and implementation of the Convention and on the quality of its reports. The Committee had been deeply impressed by the serious and frank approach of the German Democratic Republic to women's issues, and in particular the question of women's participation in economic and political life, where much to commend had occurred.

37 Ms Guan Mingqian commended Ms Thiele and her colleagues on their replies, which she found entirely satisfactory. A study group from China had visited the German Democratic Republic in 1988 and had been highly encouraged by what it had seen. She looked forward to the return visit of a study group to be headed by Ms Thiele.

38 Ms Corti congratulated the representatives of the German Democratic Republic on the seriousness of their replies and expressed her appreciation of the comprehensive nature of the report. Regarding special schools for the handicapped, she said that in Italy a different policy was pursued, which consisted in endeavouring to send handicapped children to ordinary schools. She would be interested to hear comments on those two divergent approaches. With reference to work disputes, it would be interesting to know whether the process of resolving the case was a very lengthy one.

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39 Ms SOUMARE' thanked the German Democratic Republic for an excellent report and asked its representatives to convey the Committee's gratitude to the Government. She had particularly appreciated the statistics provided on the progress achieved by women in the political, social, economic and cultural fields. Ms Thiele had been a pioneer in the struggle against discrimination both nationally and internationally and deserved the Committee's warmest congratulations. She would have appreciated greater emphasis on the role of the Democratic Women's League of Germany in disseminating information about the Convention and following up the Nairobi Strategies.

40 Ms SINEGIORGIS commended the German Democratic Republic on its comprehensive report and on the care taken in replying to the Committee's questions. The German Democratic Republic's efforts to advance the status of women deserved the highest praise and set an example that her own country would try to emulate.

41 Ms PILATAXI DE ARENAS said that the mixed delegation sent by the German Democratic Republic to the Committee was a source of great satisfaction, since it was important that men and women should work together to attain the aims of the Convention. She was gratified by the exhaustive replies that had been given to the Committee's questions. She noted that there was no separate ministry for women's affairs in the German Democratic Republic, but that each ministry was responsible for taking women's issues into account in its work.

42 She would be interested to learn whether any study had been made of the relationship between prostitution and violence against women, since the number of rape cases seemed rather high. With regard to training, she considered that the percentage of women taking part in courses was not altogether satisfactory. The participation of women in international life and the diplomatic service, on the other hand, was most encouraging.

43 Ms SCHÖPP-SCHILLING thanked the German Democratic Republic's representatives for their presentation of the report and their replies. She wished to draw attention to the fact that, in spite of the efforts made to allow both men and women to combine family and working life, in most countries it was generally the woman who stayed at home to look after the children, with the result that she lost touch with working life and found it increasingly difficult to return to her job at a later stage. Had any measures been taken in the German Democratic Republic to cope with that problem?

44 With reference to the issue of equal pay for work of equal value, she pointed out that difficulties arose in many countries because of a segregated labour market, in which certain sectors, such as education and health, were traditionally reserved for women, whereas other sectors were male-dominated. Had any comparative studies been made of wage differentials between traditionally male and female areas of employment? In agriculture, for instance, it would be interesting to know whether women in the German Democratic Republic tended to work in crop farming, while men preferred stock raising.

45 Ms UKEJE congratulated the representatives of the German Democratic Republic on the presentation of the report and on the replies made to questions. She asked the members of the delegation to convey the Committee's thanks to their Government.

46 Ms BERNARD said that the second report of the German Democratic Republic excelled even the first one, which had been of the highest quality. It contained the kind of statistical information the Committee needed in order to fulfil its

(Ms Bernard)

task and amply demonstrated the Government's commitment to enhancing the status of women. She particularly applauded the forthcoming award of the Clara Zetkin medal on the occasion of International Women's Day.

47 Ms LAIOU-ANTONIOU said that the information contained in the report and the replies made her optimistic about the prospects for women in the German Democratic Republic. She considered it particularly encouraging that a Supreme Court judge should be a member of the delegation, since the administration of justice had a primordial part to play in the promotion of women. In her own country difficulties had arisen out of the failure of some judges to comply with the spirit of the new legislation introduced since the election of a socialist government in 1981. Some traces of stereotyped roles for men and women still persisted in the German Democratic Republic, but they would gradually be eliminated through education.

48 Ms FENGER-MÖLLER, after thanking the representatives of the German Democratic Republic for presenting a comprehensive report and giving detailed replies to questions, noted the statement that accession to the Convention did not give rise to any new tasks for the country (CEDAW/C/13/Add 3, p. 3), which meant, presumably, that no special measures had been introduced on behalf of women in the labour market. It appeared from the report that a very high proportion of women were either working or studying in the German Democratic Republic, where they faced the same problems as women in other countries with regard to equal pay for equal work. She wondered whether that problem arose because of a sex-oriented labour market or as a result of the comprehensive social benefits available to women in the German Democratic Republic. She would also like to know what steps had been taken to bring about the very high participation of women in local and national politics, although not at the topmost level.

49 Ms THIELE (German Democratic Republic), replying to the supplementary questions asked, acknowledged that a whole host of problems still existed in her country and assured members that measures would continue to be taken to deal with them. The Committee's comments would be helpful in that respect and she thanked the experts for their interest. Co-operation between countries in the form of exchanges and study tours, as indicated by Ms Guan Minqian, were of great value in furthering the cause of women.

50 A question had been raised about special schools for handicapped children. The policy of the German Democratic Republic in that respect was not to remove the handicapped from society, but to attempt, through the media and by other means, to integrate them into society. In the case of physically handicapped children a special effort was made to provide education and training in keeping with the degree of disability. In the case of psychologically and mentally handicapped children, it was felt that specialized care was needed and over 300 pre-school institutions existed for that purpose. In addition, 57,500 pupils who were not capable of attending ordinary schools received general education at 443 specialized schools. They did, however, take part in the regular activities of children's organizations and pioneer groups, including sports. Every effort was made to encourage and train handicapped people to take their place in society and the vast majority of them were in fact able to lead independent lives and earn their own living.

51 With regard to the questions raised concerning the labour market in the German Democratic Republic, she agreed that traditional sectors, such as textiles for example, continued to exist side by side with the new technologies. However,

(Ms Thiele)

conditions were changing fast and so were qualifications and attitudes. The issues were widely publicized and discussed, particularly in the media, and women were encouraged to take action themselves in order to bring about change. Nevertheless, problems necessarily arose within families, where it was difficult for both husband and wife to occupy top executive positions and to look after their children as well. Such problems were personal and individual and could not be solved by government decree. As a long-standing official of a women's organization, she knew how important it was to draw up appropriate programmes for educational establishments and business enterprises, so that people were alerted to the need to improve the status of women.

52 Although the majority of teachers were women, teaching was regarded as the responsibility of both men and women, and strenuous efforts were being made to increase the number of male students of the educational sciences and not to increase the number of female students entering the teaching profession.

53 The situation with regard to the health sector had changed completely in that the occupation of creche nurses, which used to be one that needed little training and was done by women simply because they were women, was now a skilled occupation requiring a certificate. Creche nurses now had to be trained to look after small children and babies, and consequently received higher wages and enjoyed greater social prestige. That development had brought the health sector closer to achieving the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, which was regarded as of such importance in the German Democratic Republic.

54 As for the international women's movement, that provided broad possibilities for women to co-operate in various fields and occupations regardless of where they came from.

55. Mr STRASBERG (German Democratic Republic) agreed with Ms Laiou-Antoniou that there was a close relationship between the administration of justice and the advancement of women, and said that in the German Democratic Republic the highest priority was given to issuing guidelines on implementing the letter and the spirit of the laws that had been passed.

56. He said that although detailed statistics did exist he regretted that he could not provide precise figures concerning work disputes discussed at grievance committees or in the social courts, but great importance was attached to cases concerning wages, bonuses and remuneration in general being dealt with as speedily as possible, and the Supreme Court had issued guidelines to that effect to lower-level courts. A work dispute must not be drawn out over many years, it was essential that such cases be handled in the minimum possible time.

57 Studies conducted in the German Democratic Republic indicated that there was no relationship between prostitution and violence, but since prostitution was not a social problem of any great magnitude in his country its causes had not been studied in depth. However, any possible relationship between violence and prostitution would be looked into more closely for future reference.

58 The principle of equal pay for work of equal value, laid down in the Constitution as a basic right, was being implemented in the German Democratic Republic, but it had not been implemented completely. It was a question that was taken very seriously, but new problems were cropping up all the time. The Supreme

(Mr Strasberg)

Court, together with the trade unions, had analysed the implementation of the Labour Code, and after receiving its report the Government had decided that certain areas required further analysis because legislation would probably have to be redrafted in view of the changing situation. In order to make progress in implementing the principle of equal pay for work of equal value it was essential to take into account the scientific and technological revolution, in that respect the advice received from members of the Committee had been very important, and it was to be hoped that there would be practical achievements to report in future.

59 In the Supreme Court only one third of the judges were women, and that was not a satisfactory situation. However, in the Supreme Court body dealing with family law 70 per cent of the judges were women, and it was chaired by a woman.

60 On the question of divorce, he said that a lengthy report had recently been published in the German Democratic Republic, providing useful statistics.

61 Ms THIELE (German Democratic Republic) said she hoped that it would be possible to improve the unsatisfactory situation with respect to employment opportunities for women, many of whom stopped work when they had babies but wanted to get back as soon as possible so that they could continue to advance in their careers. Their jobs were held open for a year, but if they were away for too long they lost touch and found it more difficult to resume their careers. A number of women opted for working reduced hours because they believed they would thereby be able better to cope with their domestic responsibilities, but great efforts were made to encourage them to work the full mandatory working week and make use of the neighbourhood support facilities and the help of friends and relatives. Some 25 per cent of all working women worked reduced hours, although she did not know the breakdown by profession. Managers should encourage women employees to combine their family responsibilities with their employment duties once their children had reached a certain age, they should try to find out what difficulties were preventing them from increasing their working hours, and help them to overcome them.

62 She thanked the Committee for a useful discussion which had provided much food for thought. In its future work to implement the provisions of the Convention and improve the status of women, the German Democratic Republic would make great use of the experience of other countries.

63 The CHAIRPERSON thanked the representatives of the German Democratic Republic for their prompt replies to the Committee's questions, and praised the serious intent and commitment to the cause of women shown by the German Democratic Republic, which was clearly aiming to achieve the very highest standards. She hoped that the questions and comments of Committee members had thrown some light on the problems of women in the German Democratic Republic and would help in the formulation of future periodic reports.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.