



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
Twenty-fifth session

Summary record of the 526th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on 17 July 2001, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Regazzoli (Vice-Chairperson)

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Ms. Regazzoli, Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

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

Fourth and fifth periodic reports of Nicaragua (continued) (CEDAW/C/NIC/4 and 5); CEDAW/PSWG/2001/11/CRP.1/Add.3 and CRP.2/Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Nicaragua took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Aguirre** (Nicaragua), replying to questions about programmes and plans to eradicate poverty, said that the Government, as a result of studies and broad consultation with civil society, had established an anti-poverty strategy. The four pillars of that strategy were job creation, investment in human capital to improve competitiveness, strengthening of the system of protection for vulnerable groups and reform of the legal and institutional framework.

3. Replying to questions regarding the comparative budget allocations for education, defence and health care, she noted that Nicaragua had experienced several crises in the years since the end of the armed conflict, including natural disasters and the impact of the global economic crisis. Economic reform had led to a decline in the size of the civil service and the armed forces had been reduced from 83,000 members to 15,000. Budgets for health care and education had increased significantly; the budget of the Ministry of Education had increased threefold since 1996. Specific information on spending for programmes and projects targeted at women would be transmitted to the Committee in writing as soon as possible. More detailed information on women's employment would also be supplied to the Committee in writing.

4. **Ms. Pérez** (Nicaragua), replying to questions on education, said that the Nicaraguan Institute for Women had begun efforts to provide training on both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. With support from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), it was preparing educational materials on the Conventions, aimed at women, students, educators and parents, for

dissemination through the educational system, particularly in rural areas. High illiteracy rates could pose an obstacle, but the materials were being made accessible to ensure that they produced the desired results. In replying to questions about informal and distance education, she said that informal education was defined as that acquired through the social environment and the community. Distance education involved programmes designed to professionalize teaching by providing self-study guides and continuing education to teachers.

5. Gender stereotypes had been addressed in the curriculum reform begun in 1994, which had incorporated a gender perspective, along with human rights and environmental education, into the national curriculum in an attempt to shape new attitudes. The First National Plan for the Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence 2001-2006 included a project to provide models for the prevention of domestic violence at all educational levels, from primary to university. Efforts to provide greater access to technology for girls were being made through the public and private educational systems. Gaps still remained in women's access to education and health care, but the long-term investment in human capital would, in time, show results in those areas. In fact, a general education act currently being considered in the National Assembly would provide the legal framework for implementation of a national education strategy for the next 15 years.

6. In answer to questions concerning the budget allocation for programmes to combat domestic violence, she said that, since its inception in 1993, the National Plan on Violence against Women, Children and Young Persons had received a total of \$10 million in funding through international cooperation. Funding of \$10 million had been received for its second phase, covering the next three years and a range of activities in areas such as police training, health care and education. In addition, with assistance from the Inter-American Development Bank and the German Government, a five-year plan on family violence was being drafted that would require \$15 million for its implementation.

7. Lastly, education was a crucial component of the poverty reduction strategy and efforts were under way to improve basic education coverage and modernize the education sector as part of the strategy's investment in human capital.

8. **Ms. Vela** (Nicaragua), replying to questions regarding health care, said that the Ministry of Health had a department dealing specifically with mental health. In the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch in 1998, a number of non-governmental organizations had begun mental health programmes specifically for women to help them cope with the loss of homes and family members.

9. The Government was taking a three-pronged approach to reducing the high rates of cervical and uterine cancer, consisting of prevention, early detection and treatment. It had made progress in equipping health centres to perform Pap tests and was working with groups at the community level to provide follow-up for women with abnormal test results. Community health centres also provided contraceptive education and distributed condoms, although the level of contraceptive use by men was low.

10. **Ms. Ortega** (Nicaragua) said that the Government was taking steps to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention in the near future. She confirmed that the Nicaraguan Constitution established the right to life in its article 23. With regard to protection for victims of domestic violence, Act No. 230, adopted in 1996, contained 11 measures of protection for victims. She reviewed the information on the general normative framework for the protection of human rights given on pages 15 and 16 of the fifth periodic report (CEDAW/C/NIC/5) and on prostitution and trafficking (pp. 41 and 42). Lastly, the Constitution had been amended in 1995 and a further review of some 60 articles was being conducted and should be completed by 2002.

11. **Ms. Frech de Alemán** (Nicaragua) reminded the Committee that her delegation was responding for both the current and the previous Governments. It had been asked what would happen to the Nicaraguan Institute for Women if and when international support diminished. First, she wished to thank the donor organizations, United Nations agencies and Governments that had provided support and cooperation to the Institute. Without their support, the Institute would be forced to rely on funding from the Nicaraguan Government. It was, after all, the responsibility of all Nicaraguans to fulfil the terms of the Convention that Nicaragua had ratified. Progress had been made, but much remained to be done. In order to move ahead, resources would be necessary.

12. Having travelled abroad and participated in regional and international forums and symposia, she had discovered that, despite its devastating poverty and culture of machismo, Nicaragua paid more attention to the problems of domestic violence and sexual violence than did other Latin American countries. Nicaragua had a tripartite framework for combating violence against women, consisting of the Women's Anti-Violence Network, which cared for victims of violence, the National Police, which received complaints, and the Nicaraguan Institute for Women, which provided follow-up, monitoring and training. Furthermore, the mandate of the National Commission on Violence against Women, Children and Young Persons, had been established by presidential decree. Legislation provided guarantees which not only solved problems but provided direction for the future.

13. There was wide agreement that the Nicaraguan Institute for Women should be raised to the rank of a Ministry. Currently, it formed part of the Government's social cabinet and enjoyed the support of the First Lady of the Republic, as well as that of former President Violeta Chamorro. She assured the Committee that, were a change of Government to occur, the Institute's programmes would not be substantially altered. Too much had been accomplished to turn back now.

14. Responding to the question as to whether the Institute had any influence on other areas of government, she said that various ministries now had units with a gender perspective, including the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources, as did the Rural Credit Fund. The National Commission on Violence against Women, Children and Young Persons, the Inter-institutional Committee for Women and Rural Development, the Advisory Council of the Nicaraguan Institute for Women, the Women's Anti-Violence Network, the Public Prosecutor for Human Rights, the National Assembly and the Supreme Court of Justice were all working to promote and protect the rights of women.

15. Although 80 per cent of Nicaraguans were Catholics, the Nicaraguan Institute for Women, which was a governmental body, had no link whatever to the Catholic Church. In Nicaragua, Church and State were separate and independent; the Church had no influence on the policies and programmes of the Institute.

16. She thanked the Committee for its interest in the women of Nicaragua and assured it that the Nicaraguan Institute for Women would do its utmost to improve the situation of Nicaraguan women. Her delegation would forward the requested statistics the following week and would welcome any and all suggestions and recommendations from the Committee.

17. **The Chairperson** noted that, despite its history of civil war, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, Nicaragua had made considerable efforts in advancing the rights of women and had been among the first countries to ratify the Convention. She was sure that the Nicaraguan Institute for Women would achieve its goal of becoming a full-fledged ministry. In both human rights and women's rights, Nicaragua was well ahead of other countries in the region. Nicaragua's participation in the drafting of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women had also been noteworthy. She was aware that gender-disaggregated statistics were difficult to obtain and felt that Nicaragua was to be commended for carrying out a census in 1996 despite its limited budget. Lastly, she requested the State party carefully to consider the Committee's recommendations, which should provide the impetus for further progress.

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.