



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

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Tenth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 179th MEETING

Held at the Vienna International Centre, Vienna,
on Friday, 25 January 1991, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. TALLAWY

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of the Convention (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION (continued) (CEDAW/C/CRP.7)

Second periodic report of the Philippines (CEDAW/C/13/Add.17 and Corr.1, CEDAW/C/13/Add.17/Amend.1)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Licuanan (Philippines) took a place at the Committee table.

2. Ms. LICUANAN (Philippines) said that she would try to deal with the points raised in annex IV to document CEDAW/C/CRP.7.

General questions

3. Referring to the workshops on gender analysis mentioned in question 2 under the heading "General questions", she said that the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW), which she represented, had held eight workshops and was about to embark on the second phase relating to women in development, which would include consciousness workshops at all levels, including government level. A focal point, the Bureau of Women and Young Workers, had been created within the Government and was now conducting its own workshops and educating people throughout the Philippines on issues concerning women workers. In addition, a workers' development institute was soon to be established to educate workers on legislation, standards policies and the like. One of the main strategies of the entire campaign was to make people aware of the double burden on working women.

Article 2

4. All obvious discrimination was already outlawed de jure, and the challenge that remained was to analyse existing laws for more subtle and unintended discrimination. A gender analysis of existing legislation had been initiated; the first part had been completed, and a more in-depth analysis was shortly to be started. The legal status of Philippine women was very good, and efforts were being pursued to achieve de facto equality. Although many anti-discriminatory laws had preceded the Convention, they reflected its spirit. In court cases, Philippine law was invoked rather than the Convention, but all future legislation would be consistent both with the fundamental laws of the Constitution and with the Convention. The challenge was to make people, including people at government level, aware of the Convention.

5. With regard to question 3, only a few of the bills listed in the second periodic report had become law, the legislative process being very slow. Senate Bill No. 65 (see document CEDAW/C/13/Add.17, p. 13) had become Republic Act 6725, which strengthened the Labour Code. Republic Act 5667 guaranteed rural women rights, inter alia, to ownership of land. Senate Bill No. 20 had become Republic Act 6955.

6. As far as question 4 was concerned, NCRFW had a mandate to involve itself in that area, and worked very closely with the non-governmental organizations (NGOs). At government level, the Civil Service Commission, whose Chairman was a very active ally at NCRFW, had appointed "equality advocates" with central and regional offices whose job was to examine allegations of discrimination against women, including cases of sexual harassment. Two cases of discrimination and one case of sexual harassment were currently under examination.

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Article 3

7. The recent amendment to the second periodic report (CEDAW/C/13/Add.17/Amend.1) covered some of the questions under article 3. The necessary structures had been established for the regular updating of the Development Plan for Women. A report had been prepared which would provide a basis for evaluation of progress under the Medium-Term Development Plan. The Medium-Term Development Plan had achieved some results, but they had to be seen in the context of the country's serious political and economic problems.

Article 5

8. As far as question 1 was concerned, the concept of "complementarism of man and woman" was somewhat unfortunate in that it tended to support the status quo and rather specific roles for women; equality was a far more appropriate goal. In the Philippines, however, allies had to be chosen carefully because not everyone had the same awareness of women's problems, and constant efforts were needed in that area. When the second report was being prepared, it had been necessary to seek the views of various women's groups, and any achievements which they had acknowledged, however slight, had had to be included. She nevertheless agreed that complementarity did not necessarily mean equality.

9. On question 2, she said that, as had been pointed out in the second periodic report, sex-role stereotyping still existed and efforts were being made to counteract the problem. The Department of Education, Culture and Sport, one of the agencies in which a focal point for women had been established, was working on new guidelines for teaching materials, particularly textbooks, based on an array of core messages in relation to gender. The focal point for women had also developed a consciousness-raising programme which included a symposium on women's concerns each year. In March of each year all departments would be encouraged to initiate activities, aimed at increasing awareness.

10. With regard to question 3, there were few women in the media but they constituted a very visible group particularly in the broadcasting and print media. A group known as "Women in Media" had been organized and was very supportive of women's causes; women's groups knew who could best be relied upon to publicize women's programmes. With regard to the media in general, the majority of programmes focusing on women appeared during "Women's Month". There was also a weekly television programme called "Women's Watch" and children's television programmes were starting to show gender sensitivity. Other regular television programmes were also starting to include women's issues and, as indicated in the second periodic report, there was a strong lobby concerned with the way in which women were projected in the media.

11. The practical skills development courses referred to in question 4 were continuing as part of the high school curriculum. The programme was not aimed at enhancing the economic potential of women; as part of the academic programme, it served as an introduction to practical skills. Efforts were made to prevent sexist stereotyping by providing the same courses for boys and girls.

Article 6

12. For the time being no answer was available to question 1. As far as question 2 was concerned, poverty was undoubtedly the main reason why women engaged

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in prostitution, although other factors were also involved, such as the presence of large military bases, which hampered efforts to limit prostitution, and the Government's efforts to promote tourism, which had very high social costs, of which the Department of Tourism was aware and which it endeavoured to counteract wherever possible. Psychological factors were also involved, as well as the effects of the present economic climate.

13. Regarding question 3, there was no difference between the Ministry of Social Services and Development and the Department of Social Welfare and Development apart from the change of name; the Department continued to be the agency charged with the protection of young prostitutes. Although the success of its programme could not at present be evaluated, the programme itself was taken very seriously. However, the Department's resources were extremely limited and were insufficient to enable it to help all potential clients. The need to find alternative sources of livelihood as a means of combating prostitution caused the Department additional problems.

14. With regard to question 4, sanctions varied according to the nature of the offence but, after the payment of fines or a term of imprisonment, foreigners would be deported.

15. The information given under article 2 was also relevant to question 5.

Article 7

16. In reply to question 1, she said that efforts to have women represented in political forums had not proved very successful. In the executive branch of government, formal machinery existed in the form of commissions for women, youth, the urban population, including urban children, the poor and disabled persons. There were also informal arrangements, with disadvantaged groups being involved in sectoral or multisectoral consultations with the Government.

17. In reply to question 2, she said that NCRFW had proposed candidates for political appointments and would continue to do so, in consultation with women's groups. Nominations had been submitted to the President for Cabinet positions.

Article 8

18. The apparent discrepancy between the figures given in the tables on pages 65 and 73 of document CEDAW/C/13/Add.17 could be explained by the fact that the first set of figures referred to women working for the foreign service both at home and abroad, whereas the second referred only to women in the foreign service posted abroad.

Article 10

19. In reply to question 1, she said that in the Philippines, unlike in many other countries, girls were not disadvantaged in education; enrolment and literacy rates were the same for girls and boys, and girls dropped out of school for the same reasons as boys, namely because of socio-economic and geographical factors. Thus, for example, the higher-income urban population had lower drop-out rates. Although basic education was free, children from poorer families tended to leave school to

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contribute to family income and were also unable to afford the inevitable extra costs of such items as clothing and transport. They were also more prone to illness and malnutrition, which affected school attendance.

20. In reply to question 2, she said that there were literacy campaigns for women, including rural women, launched at the initiative of both the Government and non-governmental organizations.

21. She was unable to give any precise figures in reply to question 3 and was not sure that full figures were available, apart from those recorded by professional examination boards. Since, however, the occupations referred to were male-dominated professions, she surmised that the graduation rate would be below 25 per cent, with the exception of the medical profession, in which both sexes were almost equally represented. The Commission had been lobbying against admission quotas which were lower for girls than for boys in some medical schools. As to specialization in the medical profession, certain branches such as gynaecology and obstetrics tended to attract more women than men.

22. In reply to question 4, she said that scholarships, awards and grants were equally available to men and women, but there were by no means enough of them for less well-off students.

23. In reply to question 5, she said that the majority of primary and secondary school teachers were women, but that the proportion of women university teachers was undoubtedly lower. A serious problem was that, although women teachers were in the majority, the senior positions in educational institutions and administration were held by men.

24. On question 6, she said that although she did not know whether the law programme specifically included women's studies in the curriculum, since the publication of the report the University of the Philippines had established a Centre for Women's Studies offering a women's studies programme on its various campuses. It currently had an M.A. degree programme with a Ph.D. programme planned, and she presumed that the Law Centre would soon have a similar programme.

Article 11

25. In reply to question 1, she said that Senate Bill No. 65 had been enacted and guidelines were currently being implemented. A copy would be included in the next report.

26. Replying to question 2, she said that career and vocational guidance was not very highly developed in the Philippines as a whole, and more women counsellors were needed specifically to counsel women on careers. Guidance was still rather conventional, leading women into careers traditionally dominated by women. The Government was aware of the problem and was hoping to use women's studies programmes in universities to influence gender-sensitive career and vocational guidance.

27. In reply to question 3, she said that the tendency in her country, which could not afford a proliferation of administrative structures, was not to deal with gender discrimination through a separate mechanism. With regard to equal pay for

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equal work, any claims would therefore go through the normal channels in regard to violations of labour laws.

28. She was unable to give a specific reply to question 4 but would consult the relevant provisions for any discrepancies. Her country was a signatory to all ILO Conventions and, to the best of her knowledge, legal provisions and practice were in conformity with them.

29. Replying to question 5, she said that draft legislation in support of paternity leave had been brought before Congress at the initiative of a number of non-governmental organizations. There was some controversy over the idea, even among women's groups, where there was some doubt as to whether such leave would be properly used by men to help in the home.

30. In reply to question 6, she said that there were laws providing for the establishment of day-care centres, and such facilities did exist, but the supply fell far short of needs in a country with a very large young population. The shortfall was particularly acute among the lower-income groups. A number of non-governmental organizations were working actively to improve the situation. Many government departments now ran day-care centres at the workplace.

31. On question 7, she said that the inadequacy of statistics about women in general was a major concern of NCRFW. Gender data was seldom supplied or was not processed. The situation was even worse concerning overseas workers. Strenuous efforts were being made, however, to improve statistical data, with the willing co-operation of government agencies. The Government was also well aware of the need to protect overseas workers, especially those in domestic positions, but in the case of the latter protection measures were restricted by the difficulty of access to private homes.

32. In reply to question 8, she was glad to report that, on the initiative of a rural women's NGO, a code concerning the workers in question was currently being drafted and would be brought to the attention of the legislators, the aim being to afford them the same protection as regular workers.

Article 12

33. In reply to question 1, she said that it was seen as the right of the couple, and not the right of the State, to choose the number and spacing of children in the family. That principle was clearly enshrined in the Constitution and was applied in practice. Women's freedom of choice in the matter required consciousness-raising among both men and women; the latter were not very assertive about their rights in her country.

34. Replying to question 2, she said that there were general laws against violence, but draft legislation was also now pending specifically relating to violence in the home. The increasing awareness about a subject previously considered taboo was noteworthy, as was the fact that many of the authors of the bills were men.

35. She could provide no specific figures in reply to question 3, and suspected that government data would not be very eloquent, since awareness about HIV infection and AIDS was still at the very early stages.

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36. On question 4, she doubted whether there were any plans to revise the law on abortion, since there was a very strong lobby in her country against abortion.

37. Replying to question 5, she said that family planning facilities were available, but there were not enough of them. The policy was that all facilities receiving government funds must provide a full range of contraceptive methods.

Article 13

38. In reply to question 1, she said that, since the need for the husband's permission had been abolished as a general rule under the revised Family Code, she presumed that his signature was no longer required for an agricultural loan, but she would investigate the matter further.

39. The reply to question 2 was affirmative; social security was already available for most of the groups mentioned.

Article 14

40. She was able to make only a very general comment in reply to questions 1 and 2. The rural population was in general at a disadvantage in education compared with the urban population, a fact which certainly affected rural women.

41. In reply to question 3, she could not supply figures, but under inheritance procedures there was no discrimination. All children, even illegitimate children, had equal rights of inheritance under the law.

42. Regarding question 5, rural women did benefit from the activities of the Rural Improvement Clubs, but it should be said that the Department of Agriculture's focus in the clubs was on peripheral activities rather than mainstream farming. The point was that, traditionally, women were indeed in the mainstream of farming in her country. That fact should be recognized in planning and women should be trained in new agricultural techniques.

Article 16

43. In reply to question 1, she said that male and female children had an equal right to inherit.

44. Specific data about adoption, in reply to question 2, would be provided. She did know that there were very strict rules about the adoption of Philippine children by foreigners, relating in particular to their place of residence. A certain period of residence in the Philippines was necessary.

45. In reply to question 3, she said that she was aware of cases in the past of husbands filing complaints about the assignment of their wives to overseas posts. However, they dated back to the period when it was the prerogative of the husband to make decisions for his wife, and the law had since changed.

46. By way of general comment concerning the legal aspects of the question, she said that there had been laudable innovations in her country, and the problem now faced was the de facto implementation of the law and the Government's ability to

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act on violations. Greater gender-consciousness was required and, with that in mind, the Government was developing programmes to provide training for judges and other legal personnel to make them more sensitive to women's issues. Another aspect of the problem was the need for greater legal awareness among women themselves and a general change in attitude. In conclusion, she assured the Committee that a written report would be made available without delay and that any missing statistics would be forwarded from her country.

47. The CHAIRPERSON commended the efforts made in the Philippines to improve the status of women, especially the enactment of legislation in such areas as work at home and violence against women. She noted with interest the innovative idea of an awareness campaign and the training of judges in women's issues, an idea that might be taken up by other countries.

48. Ms. EVATT associated herself with the Chairperson's comments. As a citizen of Australia, she particularly commended the efforts being made to prevent advertising for and trade in wives between the two countries, a practice which resulted in many Philippine women suffering violence and oppression in a country alien to them. She was also gratified to note the steps being taken to introduce agrarian reforms, even though much remained to be done. She drew attention to the need, in a country with such a high fertility rate, to improve access to contraceptive advice, family planning services and safe abortion. Another question about which information would be welcome was the way in which women, in particular, suffered as a result of civil unrest, for instance as refugees.

49. Ms. AKAMATSU welcomed the progress that the Philippine Government had made in eliminating discrimination against women; however, she hoped that more statistics and details of court cases would be included in the third periodic report. From the information already before the Committee, it seemed that many women in the Philippines wished to work, but were hampered by the large size of their families, the lack of child-care facilities, and the attitudes of men.

50. Ms. QESER congratulated the Philippine delegation on its second periodic report, which dealt much more frankly with the problems and progress of women in the Philippines than the initial report had done.

51. The section of the report dealing with article 3 of the Convention (CEDAW/C/13/Add.17, p. 22) referred to a series of workshops to increase awareness of women's issues among key government planners and technical personnel. However, it was stated in a footnote that, out of 13 planned workshops, only one had been held. Why was that?

52. Ms. ABAKA said she understood from the Philippine representative's statement that the school drop-out rate among boys and girls was roughly equal, and was mainly due to economic factors. However, in many countries, including her own, the school drop-out rate was higher among girls because of teenage pregnancies. Did that problem not exist in the Philippines and, if not, how had it been avoided?

53. Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU said that, in her opinion, the Philippines needed a high-level government body to work on behalf of women and ensure that women were appointed to Cabinet posts and other high-ranking positions. Such a body should not be afraid to ask for the resources it needed and should harness women's

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organizations to act as pressure groups. It should draw up specific women's programmes for inclusion in the national development strategy.

54. She was particularly concerned about the position of Philippine women working abroad. In her own country, Philippine workers had no organizations to look after their interests; they earned very low wages and were open to all kinds of exploitation. There was a need for bilateral agreements between the Philippines and countries such as her own to protect the interests of those workers.

55. Ms. AQUIJ asked for more details concerning the action taken on the two cases of discrimination which, according to the representative of the Philippines, had been taken up, and what the terms of reference were of the body that considered the cases.

56. She noted with satisfaction that primary education was compulsory in the Philippines, but she would like to know what penalties were imposed if parents failed to send their children to school. What measures existed to encourage parents to do so, especially in rural areas?

57. She would further like to know whether contraception was available only to married women, or to unmarried women as well. Were contraceptives provided free of charge, and were they easy to obtain?

58. Ms. SCHÖPP-SCHILLING congratulated the Government of the Philippines on its efforts to improve the status of women, even in the current economic crisis. However, it seemed that there were still areas where the law discriminated against women, and it was essential for the Government to eliminate them.

59. Although women and men enjoyed many of the same rights in theory, those responsible for education and employment programmes in both the government and private sectors still seemed to feel that the roles of men and women were fundamentally different. For instance, school syllabuses designed to teach positive gender attitudes and avoid stereotyping still referred to the "complementarism of man and woman" (CEDAW/C/13/Add.17, p. 31), and the Practical Skills Development programme organized by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (see page 97) concentrated on subjects such as cosmetics and massage. Surely job creation programmes for women should concentrate on training for skilled jobs?

60. She was also concerned about the health of women industrial workers, particularly in the electronics industry, although in many cases the employers concerned were multinational firms rather than Philippine firms.

61. Ms. WALLA-TCHANGAI said that a large proportion of health-care workers in the Philippines were women (CEDAW/C/13/Add.17, p. 153). Did those women enjoy good conditions of work, and did the predominance of women in the health sector mean that fewer women entered more technical fields of work?

62. The section of the report dealing with the World Health Organization's Expanded Programme on Immunization (page 158) indicated that the main target groups for immunization against tetanus were children and pregnant women. However, women who attempted to conceal a pregnancy or underwent an illegal abortion were also at

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risk from tetanus; were there any plans to immunize all women of child-bearing age?

63. What part did women's organizations play in the preparation and implementation of health policies? Finally, what measures were taken to protect women against sexually transmitted diseases, especially AIDS?

64. Ms. NIKOLAEVA thanked the Philippine delegation for its comprehensive and valuable report. As the Vice-Chairperson of the Soviet-Philippine Friendship Society, she had visited the Philippines and had many contacts with Philippine citizens in the USSR. She had seen for herself how far Philippine women had progressed towards equality. She was proud to say that the USSR and the Philippines had worked closely together on the original draft of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

65. Ms. BUSTELO GARCIA DEL REAL thanked the Philippine delegation for its report. She hoped that the next report would contain more detailed statistics: in particular, she would like to see more information about legal measures to combat prostitution and the way in which they were implemented. For instance, how many people were convicted every year of the sexual exploitation of women, especially girls?

66. Her second question concerned illegal abortions. How many such abortions took place every year, and how many women were convicted of breaking the law against abortion?

67. Ms. LICUANAN (Philippines), replying to the questions put by members of the Committee, said that her Government appreciated the need for measures to protect women victims of civil unrest. The National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women was currently updating the Philippine Development Plan for Women to include measures to combat violence against women in the family and during clashes between rebels and the authorities. The latter was an area in which the Government had been unwilling to take any action, but non-governmental organizations had given it a great deal of attention. United Nations bodies, such as the Commission on Human Rights, had also discussed the problem in detail.

68. The 13 workshops referred to on page 22 of document CEDAW/C/13/Add.17 had all been held, 12 of them having taken place since the submission of the second periodic report, and all of them had contributed greatly to the preparation of the Philippine Development Plan for Women. Further gender-awareness workshops had been organized for key government agencies, and the Philippine Government had received a five-year grant from the Canadian International Development Agency so that the programme could continue. Eventually, such workshops would be held for government employees at all levels, right up to Cabinet level; President Aquino had also agreed to convene a Cabinet meeting every year which would deal solely with women's issues.

69. She had no statistics about the number of teenage pregnancies in the Philippines, but it was undoubtedly a factor in the school drop-out rate. However, she thought that poverty among both boys and girls was a much more important factor.

70. One member of the Committee had suggested that a high-level government body for women's questions should be set up, with its own funds. The possibility had

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been considered, but at present the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women had wide-ranging powers to ensure that other government agencies acted in compliance with the Philippine Development Plan for Women: there was a danger that a separate agency for women would not have so much influence over the activities of other agencies. There was no special budget for women's issues; all government agencies were expected to ensure that their programmes benefited women as well as men, within the constraints of their existing resources. However, a country programme for women covering certain key projects had been submitted to local and foreign funding agencies for approval in April 1990; if it was approved, funds would be allocated to projects specifically for women for the first time.

71. Her Government was aware of the exploitation suffered by Philippine women working abroad, and acknowledged the need for bilateral agreements with other Governments. In some countries, such as Canada and Hong Kong, Philippine women had succeeded in forming groups to represent their interests, and conditions of work had improved as a result.

72. In theory, contraception was available to both married and unmarried women, but in practice the social pressure on unmarried women might discourage them from taking advantage of the service.

73. She did not know the penalties for illegal abortion but, as far as she was aware, it was the person who performed the abortion who was prosecuted, rather than the woman concerned. However, that increased the risk that the abortionist might act in a way detrimental to the woman's health.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.