



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Fifty-fifth session

Summary record (partial)* of the 1137th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 12 July 2013, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Ameline

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* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

This record is subject to correction.

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

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

*Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of the Dominican Republic (continued)
(CEDAW/C/DOM/6-7; CEDAW/C/DOM/Q/6-7 and Add.1)*

Articles 7 to 9

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

2. **Ms. Graciano** (Dominican Republic) said that her Government was currently considering a national plan to regularize the status of undocumented migrants residing in the Dominican Republic which would cover all such persons; it did not focus specifically on any particular nationality. The Central Electoral Board was also working to have the status of such persons of Haitian descent formalized, in accordance with the relevant article of the Constitution, concerning nationality. As part of the plan, the Government intended to carry out a census of all persons in an irregular situation. The results of that census would then be used to establish their official status.

3. **Ms. Schulz** asked whether persons of Haitian descent who had previously considered themselves to be Dominican residents would have that status revoked under the new plan and would therefore be required to reregister as foreign nationals.

4. **Ms. Graciano** (Dominican Republic) said that a special commission of the Central Electoral Board assessed cases of undocumented migrants and decided whether or not they should be referred to the Board to declare them to be unlawfully present in the Dominican Republic or to another body to ensure that they were duly registered. Persons who were in compliance with the law did not need to come before the Board.

5. **Ms. Germán** (Dominican Republic) said that as the border between the Dominican Republic and Haiti was not strictly controlled Haitian women often crossed into the country without valid identity documents and were subsequently unable to register the birth of their children. The Government had implemented the national plan in an effort to address such a state of affairs and prevent children born to women in an irregular situation from being left stateless.

Articles 10 to 14

6. **Ms. Gbedemah** asked whether the State party had included provisions in the National Gender Equality and Equity Plan for 2007–2017 for all school-age children to receive comprehensive sex and reproductive health education. Noting that a significant number of girls did not complete secondary education, she asked what steps had been taken to address the school dropout rate. She also requested further information on the school dropout rate for girls of Haitian descent, many of whom were unable to continue their studies because they lacked official identity documents. She asked the State party to provide data disaggregated by sex on the number of children with disabilities attending school and requested further information on the current policy aimed at ensuring such children's right to inclusive education. Noting that two thirds of girls in secondary and post-secondary schools studied traditional subjects, she asked whether any measures had been implemented to encourage women to pursue a wider range of subjects and careers in the science and technology fields.

7. **Ms. Bailey** asked the delegation to provide further information on the steps taken to encourage pregnant girls to return to school after giving birth. She wished to know what

measures the State party had taken to enforce the right to education of pregnant girls who were expelled from school. Noting the critical role played by educational institutions in the prevention of stereotypical cultural attitudes and norms, she would like further information on the gender mainstreaming mechanism referred to in the State party report and the extent to which efforts to eradicate gender stereotypes had been successful. Had the Government evaluated teacher training courses on gender mainstreaming to determine whether the training had managed to change teachers' patterns of behaviour and the way in which they socialized children? She also requested further information on the impact of the National Gender Equality and Equity Plan for 2007–2017 on gender mainstreaming in schools.

8. **Ms. Pomeranzi** asked what policies had been put in place to provide women with better access to the labour market in view of the disconcertingly high numbers of unemployed women. She expressed concern at the continued existence of sexual discrimination in the country and the State party's failure to fully implement the principles of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100). Noting that around 96 per cent of domestic workers in the country were women, she asked the delegation to provide information on the steps taken to provide domestic workers with the same protection afforded to other workers, particularly in terms of the social security system.

9. **Ms. Schulz** asked whether new immigration legislation, which required health-care providers to carry out nationality checks before treating patients, discouraged vulnerable groups of women without identity documents from having access to health services. She also asked what steps had been taken to lower the rate of mother-to-child transmission and prevent the practice of sterilizing women with HIV/AIDS without their consent. She expressed concern at reports that children with HIV-positive mothers had been expelled from school and asked what efforts had been made to combat stigmatization. She also sought clarification on the measures in place to combat discrimination against lesbian and transsexual women and women with disabilities, particularly in the area of health care.

10. **Ms. Pimentel** said that the Government had made significant progress in terms of women's sexual and reproductive rights. Nevertheless, despite the decrease in teenage pregnancies reported over the 2002–2007 period, the number of cases remained worryingly high. She would appreciate additional information on the subject, including any updated statistical data available. She asked whether schools provided lessons on sexuality as well as sex education and requested details of the methodology, content and frequency of such classes. Turning to the issue of abortion, she welcomed the Government's recognition that article 37 of the Constitution concerning the inviolability of life from conception to death was incompatible with the full exercise of a woman's sexual and reproductive rights and urged the State party to take a well-balanced and careful approach to such matters.

11. **The Chairperson**, speaking in her capacity as an expert, congratulated the State party on its ratification of the ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) and asked how it intended to apply the Convention, in particular with regard to migrant workers. She asked what measures the State party had taken to tackle the issues faced by women and children who worked as seasonal workers.

12. **Ms. García** (Dominican Republic) said that a recent study had shown that the school and university dropout rate was the same for girls and boys, with the dropout rate for girls steadily decreasing the further they progressed with their studies. Some disparity in the dropout rate between boys and girls had been noted at technical and vocational colleges but the Government had taken steps to reverse that trend. Various awareness-raising campaigns had been conducted to break down cultural gender barriers that hindered women's employment in professions traditionally practised by men and significant progress had been noted.

13. She said that the Government had allocated 4.4 per cent of gross domestic product to education in 2013. Progress had been made in primary and university education but further efforts were needed to extend coverage at the secondary level. Policies had been introduced to improve the curriculum, and reduce the dropout rate and the number of students who were older than the average class age. Over 100 teachers had been trained and four special education centres had been set up to meet the needs of pupils with disabilities. Certain educational establishments had extended the school hours in order to further promote the right to education and women's employment. Lastly, an early childhood development programme entitled "Quisqueya comienza contigo" (Quisqueya begins with you) had been implemented to provide education and care to children up to the age of 5 years and enable women to reconcile work and family life.

14. The majority of unemployed women had a low level of education. Furthermore, the number of women actively seeking employment exceeded current vacancies, which explained the rise in the unemployment rate in 2012. Social security coverage had also increased and over half of women had social health insurance.

15. **Mr. Delancer Despradel** (Dominican Republic) said that there had been a significant reduction in mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS between 1999 and 2013. A joint programme with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), established in a number of hospitals since 2009, had contributed to the drop in the rate of transmission. Programmes to prevent transmission of HIV during labour and delivery had been put in place, including the provision of antiretroviral therapy, breast-milk substitutes and caesarean sections.

16. Voluntary sterilization was the most common contraceptive method for women in the State party; but there were no known cases of forced sterilization. Since 2004, a broader range of contraception methods had been made available through a joint programme with USAID. As a result, more women were using methods other than sterilization. All international and national research indicated a fall in the rate of teenage pregnancy. All women admitted to health clinics were asked about their nationality, but that information was not used to deny health services to non-national women in an irregular situation.

17. **Ms. Reyes** (Dominican Republic) said that articles 38 and 39 of the Constitution provided for the principle of equality and non-discrimination and a human rights unit had been set up under the Public Prosecutor's Office to follow up all cases of discrimination against vulnerable and minority groups, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons.

18. **Ms. Lizardo** (Dominican Republic) said that a road map had been drawn up to reduce and eliminate the worst forms of labour, child labour and poverty. The majority of the population were covered by either the State party's contributory or subsidized social security scheme. A subsidized contributory scheme that provided protection for female domestic workers in particular was under review and was soon expected to be implemented in full. Many female domestic workers had nevertheless already been covered by the subsidized contributory scheme.

19. **Ms. Germán** (Dominican Republic) said that figures showed that fewer girls than boys dropped out of school. Furthermore, while some girls still followed traditional careers, increasing numbers were opting to study subjects traditionally taken by male students. In order to raise awareness of and prevent teenage pregnancy, the Ministry of Women had implemented a programme at national level and a peer guidance scheme for 15- to 18-year-olds, which had both produced positive results. The last two years of the school curriculum covered teenage pregnancy, sexual and reproductive health and the role of women in professional and family life. Pupils with disabilities were integrated into the general education system and, where the disabilities precluded integration, the pupils were placed

in special schools. School curricula included gender equality at every level of education. Moreover, the curriculum was currently under revision and the Ministry of Women oversaw all proposed amendments in order to ensure that gender perspectives were fully incorporated in it. The Ministry had published three leaflets — for young people, women and teachers — to help stakeholders to identify parts of the curriculum that might be discriminatory and to submit them for revision. Studies showed that women were held in high regard in the State party; efforts were nevertheless being made to change certain attitudes towards women. In order to address the dropout rate, fast-track and distance-learning courses had been developed to assist adults who had completed basic education in obtaining higher education qualifications.

20. Although the unemployment rate was higher among women than men, there were more women professionals in both the public and private sector. Funding was provided for women's micro-businesses to enable them to manage their own companies and enter the formal economy.

21. **Ms. Schulz** asked whether pills and condoms were easily available in pharmacies in the State party. Were children of HIV-positive mothers expelled from schools? She would like further information on any preventive measures in place to guarantee accessible and user-friendly health services for women from vulnerable groups, such as LGBT persons.

22. **Ms. Bailey** said that it was essential to identify which girls were not in school and why, given that education was the key to employment. Were pregnant girls expelled from school and, if so, what was the impact on their education?

23. **Ms. Pimentel** expressed concern at the reported high levels of teenage pregnancy and abortion in the State party, which demonstrated that the measures in place were not having the desired effect.

24. **Ms. Germán** (Dominican Republic) said that she was unaware of any cases of children with HIV being expelled from school. The National Council on HIV and AIDS was working to prevent the spread of HIV and to support persons born with the virus. Schools were prohibited from expelling teenage girls who became pregnant, who could attend school in the morning or afternoon or even attend night school. While some parents chose to withdraw their daughter from school in such cases, the educational authorities had no part in such a decision. The financial situation of families also had a bearing on the school dropout rate. Children from low-income families often dropped out to begin working or to learn a trade. The high dropout rate in middle schools could be attributed in part to children who were taught subjects that did not interest them and to children older than the average age who had failed their end-of-year examinations and felt too old for their year group. In addition, the interruption of a pregnancy was permitted when the life of the mother was at risk.

25. **Mr. Delancer Despradel** (Dominican Republic) said that the contraceptive methods most widely used included voluntary surgical procedures, birth control pills, intrauterine devices, female condoms and contraceptive injections, all of which were covered by the Dominican social security scheme. However, his Government recognized that work still needed to be done to raise the awareness of women about their availability. While contraceptives were normally freely available, there were periods in which they were in short supply owing to logistical problems. A number of NGOs also distributed contraception, which could help to make up for any shortfall in supply.

26. **Ms. Pomeranzi** asked whether the State party planned to ratify the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) in view of the large number of domestic workers in the country; whether there were specific measures in place to assist women working in the informal sector; and whether the country's social security scheme covered informal workers

and micro-entrepreneurs. She also requested additional information on sexual harassment in the workplace in export-processing zones.

27. **Ms. Zou** Xiaoqiao welcomed the land reform undertaken by the State party. However, despite the fact that Dominican legislation afforded men and women equal access to land, inequalities in landownership persisted. She wished to know of the mechanisms in place to monitor the application of the relevant legislation and of the measures adopted by the Government to remedy the inequalities in landownership.

28. Despite the fact that many people had escaped poverty during the period 2005–2008, certain groups of women, including women heading households, women with disabilities, older women and women refugees were still impoverished. She asked what measures had been adopted to tackle poverty among vulnerable groups and whether programmes tailored to the specific needs of those groups had been developed. She also requested statistical data on the number of men and women lifted out of poverty since 2008.

29. Noting that rural women were often subjected to different forms of abuse, including violence, she asked what the State party had done to curb that tendency; whether rural women enjoyed easy access to legal assistance; and whether there were shelters for victims of violence. Also noting that the literacy rate of rural women tended to be low, she wished to know whether any literacy programmes targeting those for women had been launched. She also requested additional information on access to credit and loans for women.

30. **Ms. Lizardo** (Dominican Republic) said that a programme to provide special financial assistance to impoverished households had been established. That programme also benefitted many households headed by women. In addition, her Government had launched a number of capacity-building programmes in impoverished rural areas, including literacy drives. It was also working to ensure that there were sufficient classrooms to guarantee a basic level of education in rural areas.

31. Her Government had also developed programmes aimed at increasing access to microcredit and funding for rural dwellers and promoting agricultural development. She added that a considerable number of people had thus been lifted out of poverty in recent years.

32. **Ms. Germán** (Dominican Republic) said the fact that women now had equal rights to access to credits and landownership in the Dominican Republic was a great achievement. However, in the case of both married and unmarried couples, the man was often the owner of the land.

33. **Ms. García** (Dominican Republic) said that the Agricultural Bank and the Dominican Agrarian Institute, together with the Ministry of Women, had set up an office to ensure that a gender perspective was incorporated into all plans and policies. Turning to the question of violence against rural women, she said that there were offices at the provincial and municipal levels to assist victims. The two shelters available for women were part of a wider network of support. In certain provinces there was a driver available 24 hours a day to transport women who felt that they were at risk to a shelter.

34. **Ms. Germán** (Dominican Republic) said that her Government had recently ratified ILO Convention No. 189 but that it would be some time before it could be effectively applied. The Labour Code would also be amended to incorporate the provisions of the Convention.

Articles 15 and 16

35. **Ms. Leinarte** asked whether the new Civil Code had made it easier for women to keep a fair share of the marital property following a separation or divorce or for women in de facto partnerships an equitable share of cohabitation assets on the breakdown of their

relationship. Noting that divorced women had to wait for nine months before they could remarry, she asked whether that was also the case for divorced men and what happened if, during those nine months, a woman happened to be pregnant. She also asked whether prior public notice of a marriage still had to be posted by a civil registry official before a wedding ceremony could take place and whether objections raised to the prospective marriage could result in a marriage not being registered.

36. **Ms. Reyes** (Dominican Republic) said that under the Civil Code, as amended, unmarried couples in de facto relationships enjoyed equal social security and property rights. The nine month waiting period was a remnant of the paternalistic legacy inherited from Napoleonic law.

37. **Ms. Fernández** (Dominican Republic) said that divorced men were entitled to remarry immediately after a divorce. While the law required women to wait nine months before they remarried, they could apply to the courts to have the requirement waived provided that they furnished proof that they were not pregnant. The courts would then inform the civil registry of the waiver and the registry would allow them to remarry.

38. **Ms. Bareiro-Bobadilla** asked whether it was possible for persons in a union to receive a land title, particularly when the couple was unmarried.

39. **Ms. Zou** Xiaoqiao requested clarification on whether, under the land reform, plots of land were allocated to the head of a given household or to individuals in their own right.

40. **Ms. Germán** (Dominican Republic) said that the Dominican Agrarian Institute determined who received the land title. Land titles were given to the head of household, which tended to be the man in the case of most couples. They were always given to an individual and never to a couple.

41. She expressed her appreciation on behalf of the Government of the Dominican Republic for the work done by the Committee. The frank and constructive dialogue that had taken place would assist her Government in fully implementing the Convention.

42. **The Chairperson** thanked the delegation for what had been a fruitful dialogue and commended it on its efforts to promote women's rights in the Dominican Republic. She hoped that the Government of the Dominican Republic would give due consideration to the recommendations formulated by the Committee.

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 5.05 p.m.