



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women
Fifty-fourth session**

Summary record of the 1114th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 20 February 2013, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Neubauer (Vice-Chairperson)

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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)*

Sixth periodic report of Angola (continued) (CEDAW/C/AGO/6; CEDAW/C/AGO/Q/6 and Add.1)

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

Articles 7 to 9

2. **Ms. Bareiro-Bobadilla** asked whether “zebra” lists, or party lists in which every other candidate was a woman, were expressly required by law and whether an enforcement mechanism was in place to ensure that political parties complied with any legal requirements governing the placement of women on candidate lists.

3. **Ms. Manuela** (Angola) said that a law governing the activities of political parties prescribed sanctions in the event of non-compliance with its provisions. She would research the matter and inform the Committee in due course as to whether any political parties had been sanctioned for failure to respect gender quotas and, if so, which ones.

Articles 10 to 14

4. **Ms. Bailey** said that, in spite of a significant increase in the proportion of the national budget allocated to education, girls still lagged behind boys in school attendance and literacy rates, with the lowest rates reported for girls in rural areas. For that reason, the Committee’s previous concluding comments had highlighted the importance of ensuring the equal access of girls and women to education in both urban and rural areas, including through temporary special measures. She would be interested to know what factors contributed to the creation of obstacles to girls’ education and what measures were being taken to address them. She asked what projects were under way to rehabilitate schools or build new ones, particularly in rural communities; whether such educational infrastructure projects ranked high on the national agenda; and whether the projects included plans for basic amenities that accommodated the needs of adolescent girls.

5. Priority should be given to reducing the distance between home and school, most urgently in the case of adolescent girls, who were exposed to the risk of sexual violence as they travelled to and from school. She asked whether protocols were implemented in schools to prevent violence against and sexual harassment of girls by teachers and students, especially in secondary schools, and to ensure that perpetrators were prosecuted and adequate sanctions were imposed.

6. She was concerned at the alarming rate of teenage pregnancy, which, together with early marriage, was a contributing factor to low school attendance by girls, particularly at the secondary level. She asked whether there was a policy that enabled girls to return to school after pregnancy and childbirth, and how effective it was. If there was no policy, was one under consideration? Finally, she wished to know whether sexual and reproductive health education was offered at all levels of the education system, using the relevant age-appropriate approach.

7. **Ms. Patten** said that she wished to commend the State party for having ratified all eight of the International Labour Organization (ILO) core conventions on fundamental human rights. She was concerned, however, that young women in Angola entered the labour market with limited skills and few opportunities as a result of gender disparities in education. She asked what was being done to ensure women’s equal access to effective job

training, counselling and placement services that did not limit them to traditional employment areas. Given that Angola had intensified the exploitation of its rich natural resources, she wished to know whether action had been taken to eliminate occupational segregation and to promote the equal participation of women in highly skilled jobs and senior management positions in the oil and gas industries, for example.

8. With regard to protective measures that prevented women from performing certain types of work by law, she asked how regularly the list of prohibited jobs was reviewed and whether the measures were limited strictly to maternity protection. She recalled that protective measures for women that were based on stereotypical perceptions of their abilities and role in society violated the principle of equality of opportunity and treatment.

9. She wished to know how the Government monitored pay equity, especially in the private sector, and what mechanism it had set up for the settlement of cases relating to wage discrimination. How did the Government ensure that minimum wage rates established for female-dominated occupations were not set below the level of those for male-dominated occupations involving work of equal value? Owing to a lack of bargaining power resulting from gender inequality, many women were forced to accept low pay and poor working conditions. She requested information on how labour laws were enforced, particularly in the private sector, and the extent to which labour inspectors monitored and reported cases of non-compliance with labour standards that affected women in the workplace.

10. Women accounted for a large percentage of persons working in the informal sector and made up some two thirds of the active agricultural workforce. However, the absence of regulation regarding social protection for workers in the informal sector, which affected domestic workers and street vendors in particular, prevented their access to retirement, old-age and accidental disability benefits. What measures were in effect or were envisaged to correct that situation?

11. **Ms. Zou Xiaojiao** said that she was gratified that the overall maternal mortality rate in Angola had been reduced in the period 2005–2010. Nevertheless, the rates of both maternal and infant mortality remained high, especially in rural areas. She asked whether an action plan accompanied by time-bound targets had been implemented in order to further reduce those rates. Had the Government earmarked funds for maternal and child health or implemented a safe motherhood programme for women in rural areas? What steps had the Government taken to improve women's access to basic health-care services and to ensure that health-care facilities were adequately equipped and staffed by trained personnel?

12. She was concerned that the strict prohibition of abortion, except in a few specific circumstances, might lead to an increase in unsafe abortions. Did the Government have any statistics on abortion, especially illegal abortion? What was the status of the draft criminal code amending the previous Code?

13. **Ms. Pimentel** said that separate budget funds should be set aside to address the continuing poor state of women's health in Angola. Given the number of illegal and unsafe abortions, criminal penalties for abortion should be eliminated. Was it likely that the draft criminal code would result in the legalization of abortion? She asked whether sex education in Angola was presented strictly from a biological point of view or whether it was taught using a rights-based approach. Given the extreme poverty in which many women lived, the high fertility rate in Angola had the effect of undermining efforts to empower women. She requested information on the incidence and causes of obstetric fistula among young women in Angola and asked whether there was any connection between that condition and female genital mutilation.

14. **Ms. Gabr** said that it was essential for women to participate more fully in the development process. There were large numbers of women working in the informal and agricultural sectors, but they were often prevented by cultural attitudes from achieving their

full economic potential. She asked whether the Government was carrying out any programmes to promote women's entrepreneurship in farming and whether it was taking any action to break down social and cultural barriers to their enjoyment of the right to own property. She wished to know what measures were envisaged for reducing poverty among women and whether they included the implementation of social protection programmes.

15. **Ms. Pomeranzi** said that the economic empowerment of women in rural areas was a key means of fighting poverty. She wished to know whether an evaluation had been made of the microcredit schemes that had been introduced by the Government and how they related to agricultural programmes implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. Was the Government carrying out programmes designed to empower women in rural areas, in particular by helping them to set up small cooperatives? Given the crucial role of women in ensuring food security, did such programmes provide access to water, land and other resources?

16. **Ms. Buta** (Angola) said that the Criminal Code prohibited abortion as part of an effort to protect and preserve human life during pregnancy. Exceptions were made when the mother's life was endangered or where there were strong reasons to believe that the child would be born with a severe disease or malformation.

17. **Ms. Manuela** (Angola) said that abortions were also allowed by law in the case of pregnancy resulting from rape; in such cases, women could choose whether or not to terminate the pregnancy.

18. The draft criminal code was currently under consideration by all relevant Government bodies and had been made available online. All parts of the code were being reviewed. The Government was conducting public consultations and would give serious consideration to all valid opinions. It should be borne in mind, however, that amending the Criminal Code was a long and difficult process because it affected many other areas of the Angolan legal system.

19. There were no legal obstacles to women's access to land ownership, but cultural obstacles persisted, such as a belief that all land belonged to either fathers or husbands. The Government was endeavouring to overcome those obstacles in rural areas by means of awareness-raising and education programmes. Part of the problem was the fact that women themselves did not assert their rights. The situation was gradually improving as more women gained access to education and became aware of their rights to own property, including land.

20. **Mr. Pimentel da Piedade** (Angola) said that the Ministry of Education had developed a number of initiatives aimed at improving the country's educational system, involving a variety of stakeholders and including in the school curricula such subjects as gender, family life, HIV/AIDS and the rights of the child. Access to education had significantly improved in the period covered by the report and policies were in place to prevent discrimination and harassment in schools. The Government school-building programme had reduced the number of pupils per classroom significantly, with more than 50,000 classrooms currently accommodating students in the country.

21. The Government had also introduced schemes to help women to integrate successfully into the labour market once they had completed their studies. A skills training programme had been developed to help young women school leavers, particularly orphans and victims of sexual violence, to find employment and support themselves.

22. **Mr. Marcolino Pombal** (Angola) said that the Government poverty reduction strategy placed a strong emphasis on developing the private sector and encouraging entrepreneurship, particularly in rural communities. Men and women had equal access to economic development projects, and all Government-sponsored small business and

microcredit programmes took a non-discriminatory approach. Nevertheless, women had proved on the whole to be more successful than men in developing small businesses under those programmes.

23. **Ms. Nacachenhe** (Angola) said that the Ministry of Public Administration, Work and Social Security had also implemented training and literacy programmes, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, to help to increase employment among rural women and girls. Awareness-raising programmes had been introduced to counter traditional gender stereotypes in the labour market, but the number of women working in certain sectors, such as the oil and gas industry, still remained low. However, the Government was in the process of collecting and analysing the relevant data in order to address the situation.

24. Although the General Labour Law explicitly prohibited gender-based pay discrimination, there had been isolated cases of women being paid much less than men, mostly in small private companies. However, the General Labour Inspectorate was responsible for identifying irregularities, such as violations of provisions on equal pay for equal work, and could apply sanctions in cases of discrimination. The national social security system had undergone a reform, including pensions, maternity leave and family subsidies, to address gender discrimination and increase the employment of women.

25. **Ms. da Silva Sacramento Neto** (Angola) said that despite recent improvements in basic health infrastructure, more community-based facilities were required to provide rural women with better access to health care. The Government had taken steps to train more doctors and health-care professionals, but there was still a shortage of qualified staff in some areas. The problem of the long distance to care and inadequate service had been compounded by harmful cultural practices. The Government had been seeking the advice of countries in the region on how to improve the health-care system in Angola and had employed doctors from abroad to fill gaps in the short term.

26. The proportion of women affected by female genital mutilation had decreased, but the issue remained a matter of concern. In partnership with other organizations, the Government had been striving to eradicate the practice.

27. Turning to the issue of access to education in rural areas, she said that it was sometimes a bigger problem for children in urban centres, as they did not have the support of a wider community network and were often left to fend for themselves while their parents worked. The Ministry of Agriculture together with the Ministry of Family and Promotion of Women had launched a housing project to develop rural areas, strengthen communities and improve working conditions.

28. The Government had taken several steps to improve girls' attendance at school. An awareness-raising initiative had been undertaken to address the cultural bias in favour of boys' education and against girls'; a campaign had been introduced to provide additional support to families so that girls did not take on a disproportionate amount of household chores alongside school work; and a free school meals programme had been introduced. The Government had also been working together with a women's group of trade unionists on legal measures to protect women workers, especially in the informal sector, covering issues such as unfair dismissal and excessive working hours.

29. **Ms. Pimentel** requested clarification on the grounds on which abortion was permitted under the law and whether there were plans to amend the law to broaden those grounds.

30. **Ms. Nwankwo**, commending the State party on its efforts to reduce maternal mortality, said that the Government had provided inconsistent national data on maternal and reproductive health. What did it plan to do to improve its collection, monitoring and

evaluation of such data? She asked how Government spending on the health sector compared with spending on other sectors, such as defence.

31. **Ms. Patten** asked whether the Government planned to amend legislation that set the maximum age for public administration recruitment at 35 years. Otherwise, what measures had been taken to prevent indirect discrimination against women wishing to take up or resume work in public administration after child-rearing.

32. **Ms. Bailey** asked whether there was any comprehensive strategy in place for keeping girls in school, beyond efforts to raise parental awareness.

33. **Ms. Manuela** (Angola) said that abortion was one of the most controversial issues in contemporary Angola. Although prohibited by the Criminal Code, many women were undergoing the procedure. The Government was reviewing the criminal penalties for abortion, bearing in mind that the Criminal Code was now more than a century old, and any amendments would have to take account of the varying opinions in Angolan society.

34. **Mr. Pimentel da Piedade** (Angola) said that keeping girls in schools was a major concern for the Government. Many programmes had been put in place to increase girls' attendance rate, including school-meal programmes and others. The State had also sought to reverse negative cultural trends and promote the educational rights of girls by incorporating its national gender policy in the school curriculum, beginning in preschool and continuing throughout primary and secondary education.

35. **Ms. Nacachenhe** (Angola) said that the 35-year age limit for public administration recruitment had been set at a time when life expectancy in Angola was only 45 years. The provision was under review now that life expectancy had increased. There was already some flexibility in applying the limit, with emphasis being placed on the skills and experience, rather than age, of candidates.

36. **Ms. da Silva Sacramento Neto** (Angola) explained that public administration recruitment was based on a competitive examination, which was open only to 18 to 35 year olds. The discrepancy in infant mortality statistics was due to a flaw in the data-collection system. Hospital records had to be combined with burial records to compile such statistics, as hospitals kept records only of infants who died in their care.

Articles 15 and 16

37. **Ms. Al-Jehani** asked whether any complaints had been filed or cases prosecuted under the new legislation to combat domestic violence. Did early marriages require the approval of a civil court judge or were they contracted under customary law without such approval? Could the delegation provide statistics relating to early marriage and the rate of divorce in such marriages? Had the practice been abolished in some regions? Though polygamy was prohibited under the Family Code, the practice continued in certain areas of the country. What rights did women in polygamous marriages and their children have? Were measures being taken to put an end to the practice of purchasing brides known as *alambamento*? She asked how women's inheritance rights under customary and civil law differed, particularly with regard to land. Was legal assistance available to widows seeking clarification of their rights?

38. **Ms. Manuela** (Angola) said that since the adoption of the law on domestic violence, there had been an ongoing need to raise awareness of the collective responsibility for preventing and dealing with such violence, as it was traditionally considered a family affair. Third parties were, however, increasingly reporting cases of domestic violence. The Ministry of Family and Women Promotion was working with the Organization of Angolan Women to provide legal advice to victims of domestic abuse. Reported cases of domestic

violence were prosecuted in accordance with the law regardless of whether a complaint was withdrawn or report of a third party denied by the alleged victim.

39. Exceptions to the minimum age for marriage, which was set at 18, were permitted for girls aged at least 15 years only if such early marriage was in the best interests of the children concerned. Parental consent was usually required, although an appeal could be made to the courts to permit a marriage even without that consent. In some regions, a girl was promised in marriage even before birth and sent to live with the groom's family at the age of 15 years. Such arranged marriages often ended in divorce.

40. While only monogamous marriages were recognized as formal unions in accordance with the Family Code, polygamy was common in certain communities where there was a higher ratio of women to men. The husband was traditionally obliged to provide for each wife and child equally. Bride-purchasing, as such, did not exist; rather, marriage practices in Angola involved drawing up a formal contract between two families, under which a symbolic dowry was offered to the young woman's family.

41. Turning to the issue of inheritance, she clarified that when a husband died, his assets were automatically bequeathed to his wife and children. In informal marriages, women tended not to inherit land rights and only had access to land through a male relative, usually a father or husband. Efforts had recently been stepped up to ensure that widows had access to advice concerning inheritance rights, either through lawyers or legal advice centres, regardless of their means. It should be borne in mind that customary law continued to exist in Angola alongside the formal legal system inherited from the colonial powers. However, it was superseded by national law if considered to undermine human rights.

42. **Ms. Pimentel** requested further information on dowries in Angola as it seemed to be an economic rather than a purely symbolic practice. Was a widow also given the necessary resources to ensure that marrying her late husband's brother was not her and her children's only chance of survival?

43. **Ms. Manuela** (Angola) said that dowries constituted nothing more than a symbolic contract between two families who wished to unite. Widows were sufficiently informed to be able to choose whether or not to remarry, and efforts were made to ensure they had access to housing.

44. **Ms. da Silva Sacramento Neto** (Angola) said that the discussion with the Committee would help Angola to improve its efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.

45. **The Chairperson** encouraged the Government to take all necessary measures to address the various concerns raised by the Committee to ensure a more comprehensive implementation of the Convention.

The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.