



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Pre-session working group

Thirty-ninth session

23 July-10 August 2007

List of issues and questions with regard to the consideration of periodic reports

Singapore

1. The pre-session working group examined the third periodic report of Singapore (CEDAW/C/SGP/3).

General

2. The executive summary of the report states that input for its preparation was sought from relevant Government ministries and agencies and from women's groups. Please provide further information as to which ministries and other Government bodies were involved in the process; the role played by the Interministry Committee on the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Women's Desk of the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports; the outcome of consultations with non-governmental organizations; and whether the report was adopted by the Cabinet and presented to Parliament.

3. The Committee requested the wide dissemination in Singapore of the concluding comments on the consideration of the second periodic report.¹ The report indicates (para. 7.15) that the concluding comments were shared with women's groups at an event in May 2003. Please provide information about what has been done to make governmental administrators and parliamentarians aware of the steps that have been taken to ensure the de jure and de facto equality of women and what remains to be done.

¹ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/56/38)*, part two, chap. IV, sect. B, para. 96.



4. In its previous concluding comments, the Committee considered that the State party's reservations impeded full implementation of the Convention.² Does the Government of Singapore intend to remove its reservations, as recommended by the Committee, within a specific time frame?³ Has the Government of Singapore continued the process of law reform with a view to withdrawing reservations to articles 2 and 16 of the Convention and, if so, has the process included consultations with members of different ethnic and religious groups, as well as women's groups and organizations?

Constitutional, legislative and institutional framework

5. Since the initial report, no information has been given that would indicate that the Convention has been incorporated into the legal system or that any definition of discrimination against women modelled on article 1 of the Convention has been included in the Constitution or in other legislation. Please provide information as to whether the Government of Singapore intends to incorporate the Convention into its domestic legal system and/or include a definition of discrimination against women in relevant legislation and, if so, what steps it has taken in this regard.

6. What action has been taken to improve the State party's complaints procedure with respect to violations of the constitutionally guaranteed right to equality so that acts of discrimination can be challenged by women, as recommended by the Committee in its previous concluding comments⁴ and what has been the impact of any measures that might have been taken in this regard?

7. The report notes that the Women's Desk of the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports is to serve as Singapore's National Women's Machinery. Please provide further information on its mandate, financial and human resources, and whether it has sufficient capacity and authority to influence policies in various areas of Government from a gender perspective.

8. Considering the Committee's concern about the lack of a clear understanding by the Government of Singapore regarding gender mainstreaming,⁵ please provide information on what steps the Government is taking to make sure that legislation, policies and programmes that various Ministries initiate, formulate and implement incorporate a gender perspective and guarantee substantive gender equality.

Violence against women

9. The Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, acknowledged the many initiatives taken to reduce domestic violence but considered that it was still a problem faced by many women (E/CN.4/2003/75/Add.1, para. 1180). The report describes that when making a personal protection order, the Court can order the perpetrator, victim and/or family members of a victim to attend counselling or any other related programme such as a rehabilitation or recovery programme for perpetrators or victims of trauma

² Ibid., para. 72.

³ Ibid., paras. 74-76.

⁴ Ibid., para. 89.

⁵ Ibid., para. 83.

(para. 2.16), which is compulsory. Please provide information on the number of such court orders for counselling, and the contents and duration of the counselling over the years, and evaluate the effects in reducing violent behaviour of the perpetrators on the one hand, and trauma of the victims on the other.

10. Please provide information that would allow the Committee to gain insight into the extent and prevalence of various forms of violence against women in Singapore, including rape, marital rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment. Please include the results of any population-based surveys on violence against women or through any other available statistical data or information.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

11. With respect to the trafficking of women, the Committee urged the Government of Singapore in its previous concluding comments to enforce strictly its criminal law against traffickers and called upon the State party to include information on trafficking in its next periodic report.⁶ Little information was included in the report in response to the Committee's request. Please provide information about the trafficking cases that were successfully prosecuted, the sentences imposed on the perpetrators, and the provision of adequate assistance and remedies to women victims.

12. The Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (E/CN.4/2005/78/Add.3, para. 117) and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences (E/CN.4/2005/72/Add.1, para. 192) refer to cases of trafficking of pregnant women so that their babies can be sold after they are born and provide some details about how the network operates. Both rapporteurs report that for one trip to Singapore with babies for sale, the trafficking network reportedly receives around US\$ 3,000-\$3,500. Has the Government of Singapore prosecuted any such cases? If so, please provide information about them, as well as about other strategies to prevent this type of trafficking.

13. The report states (para. 6.3) that substantiated cases of forced prostitution are very rare (2 substantiated cases out of 26 reported cases, between 2002 and 2004). Please provide an explanation for the low success rate in prosecuting such cases and provide information as to whether the trend has continued in 2005 and 2006.

Participation in political and public life

14. In its previous concluding comments,⁷ the Committee recommended that the Government enhance its efforts to increase women's representation in politics and decision-making through a gender-sensitive application of the meritocracy principle and by taking measures to guarantee the equal opportunity of women to participate in these areas. Despite the appointment of three women political office-holders by the Prime Minister in August 2004 and some gains in the numbers of women in Parliament, women continue to be underrepresented in political life and there have been declining numbers of women in senior positions in the diplomatic service.

⁶ Ibid., para. 91.

⁷ Ibid., para. 88.

Please indicate whether there has been any discussion on the use of temporary special measures to allow for preferential treatment of women, including through quotas, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1 of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations Nos. 23 and 25.

Education and stereotypes

15. The report states that conscious attempts were made to ensure that all textbooks and other educational materials approved by the Ministry of Education do not stereotype the position of women in a derogatory manner ... (para. 5.7). It also states that "sexual stereotyping which can be hurtful and/or demeaning must be avoided" (para. 5.12). Please describe any specific efforts that have been made to project a positive image of women in textbooks, other educational materials and in the media, and the impact of such measures.

16. What has been the impact of the lifting of the quota on the intake of female medical students at the National University of Singapore with effect from academic year 2003?

17. Please provide information about any study or discussions on the potential relationship between the legal status of the husband as head of household and gender role stereotypes in the family and in society.

Employment and reconciliation of work and family life

18. Please provide information about any follow-up action in response to the Committee's previous concluding comments pertaining to women domestic workers.⁸ Moreover, has the Government of Singapore put in place any mechanisms to monitor the situation of women domestic workers, and what are its experiences in the implementation of such efforts?

19. What action is being taken to address the wage gap between women and men, which is said (para. 11.4) to have remained at a steady rate since the previous reporting period? Furthermore, what are the reasons for this lack of progress?

20. Has the Government of Singapore analysed the recommendations of the Economic Review Committee on the country's development strategy and the changes made to the Central Provident Fund system from a gender perspective and possible implications for the implementation of the Convention and, if so, what have been the findings and action taken in response?

21. Please provide information about the prosecution of employers who ill-treat or abuse their women foreign workers, including the sentences imposed, as well as about the provision of assistance and support to the women victims.

22. Has the Government of Singapore considered allowing married male officers to take unpaid leave for children below the age of four, as it does for married women officers (para. 11.64) in enhancing efforts to promote gender equality and assist couples in reconciling work and family life?

⁸ Ibid., paras. 77 and 78.

Health

23. Please provide statistical data about the incidence of HIV/AIDS, broken down by sex and ethnicity, and indicate what national programmes are in place to prevent and combat HIV/AIDS among women, including awareness-raising and preventive measures.

Situation of particular groups of women

24. Please provide statistical information on the different groups of Singaporean women, including those of Malay and Indian descent, in the civil service, and on their participation in political life, including in Parliament, and describe trends in their participation since the second periodic report.

25. The report indicates (para. 2.9) that the rapidly ageing population is a key social concern. Please describe the policies or programmes that have been designed to address the economic security of the elderly and assess their impact on older women.

26. Please provide information on disabled girls and women and on measures taken to deal with their particular situation, as recommended in the Committee's general recommendation No. 18 on disabled women. This information should describe any proactive measures taken to ensure that the rate of disabled girls who drop out from primary and secondary schools is reduced.

Marriage and family relations

27. Please provide clarification about the scope of the Women's Charter, in particular which of its provisions can be/have been applied to Muslim women in the areas of division of matrimonial assets, enforcement of maintenance orders, legality of marriages and protection from domestic violence. Are Muslim women given a choice as to whether the Administration of Muslim Law Act or the Women's Charter should apply in a given situation or in general?

Optional Protocol

28. Please indicate any progress made towards ratification of/accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention. Please also describe progress towards acceptance of the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention.