



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

Distr.: General
28 March 2001

Original: English

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

Summary record of the 479th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 21 June 2000, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Schöpp-Schilling (Vice-Chairperson)

Contents

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

Initial report of the Republic of Moldova (continued)

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of this document* to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza.

Any corrections to the record of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.



In the absence of Ms. González, Ms. Schöpp-Schilling, Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

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)

Initial report of the Republic of Moldova (continued) (CEDAW/C/MDA/1)

Article 4

1. **Ms. Hazelle** requested details on the length of maternity leave and the extent to which it was paid. She also wondered whether women who chose to take three years' unpaid maternity leave and resume their jobs (CEDAW/C/MDA/1, para. 50) received any financial assistance. Were they entitled to the unemployment benefits described in paragraph 122 of the report? She would appreciate clarification of the distinction in the labour legislation, for purposes of recruitment, between women with children under three years of age and single mothers with children up to 13 years of age (para. 60). It would be interesting to know whether married women with children over three years of age were protected by the labour legislation as well.

2. **Ms. Corti** suggested that the introduction of temporary special measures under article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention could reduce the high unemployment rate among Moldovan women, who, according to the report, demonstrated sound entrepreneurial skills (only one out of five female-headed small businesses had closed down compared to three out of five headed by men). While she understood that quotas could not be imposed on political parties in a democratic system, she nonetheless urged the Government to assign advisers to political parties to promote and support women candidates. Temporary special measures could also increase women's presence in high-level government posts. Lastly, she hoped that the State party would provide special assistance to women's non-governmental organizations, which were particularly helpful in reintegrating trafficking victims into society.

3. **Ms. Khan** supported Ms. Corti's remarks on the importance of introducing special measures to increase the number of women in high-level governmental posts. Such measures were particularly necessary in strong patriarchal societies. Perhaps a certain

percentage of seats in the Parliament could be set aside for women candidates.

Article 5

4. **Ms. Ouédraogo** expressed concern that working women were being overburdened by household chores and wondered if the introduction of appropriate labour-saving technology, such as dishwashers, would afford them more rest, leisure time and opportunities to continue their education. It would be interesting to hear statistics on the use of such household appliances. She also hoped that, in its education and awareness-raising programmes, the State party was encouraging men to share parental responsibilities and household chores and promoting the elimination of cultural stereotypes.

5. She welcomed the introduction of penalties for rape but wondered why it was so prevalent and whether any specific studies had been carried out in that regard. The State party should indicate whether any studies had been carried out to determine the reason for the increase in the number of murders. Noting that women accounted for half the number of drug addicts in Moldova in 1998, she recommended an intense awareness-raising campaign on that issue.

6. **Ms. Abaka** said that the re-emergence of patriarchal values and the stereotyping of women in Moldova's unstable socio-economic environment seemed to be having an extremely adverse impact on women's health and employment situation. Referring to paragraph 64, she said that domestic violence must never be dismissed as a private family matter. She expressed alarm that, under the Penal Code, violence was not criminalized unless beatings were systematic (para. 65 (d)) and urged the State party to amend that provision. The Committee's general recommendation No. 19 on violence against women and the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, adopted in 1993, would be helpful in that regard.

7. **Ms. Cartwright** supported the previous speakers' remarks concerning violence against women and the relevance of the Committee's general recommendation No. 19 and the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. The Moldovan Government must draw up a comprehensive strategy for eliminating domestic violence, not only because such violence was a serious violation of a woman's right to life and physical integrity, but

because it involved a direct cost to society in terms of health care, women's inability to work or participate in community life and the operation of the criminal justice system. Such a comprehensive approach should include a review of the Penal Code in order to facilitate the issuance of protection orders and ensure that every case of violence — not only systematic incidents or murder — was prosecuted. It should also provide ongoing education and awareness-raising for the police and the public and emotional and financial support to victims through, inter alia, shelters for women. Vigorous measures to combat sexual abuse of women and girls would also be necessary.

8. **Ms. Corti** asked whether public television, the radio and even advertising were put to use in order to change mentalities and project a new image of women.

9. **Ms. Hazelle** asked what was being done to address the problem of rape, particularly where the victim was a minor or a younger woman; what was the conviction rate in such cases, and whether convictions and sentences in such cases were publicized, which could act as a deterrent. In that regard, the Government should seriously consider including serious measures in any future plan of action, and should look at the provision of counselling and other services to rape victims. Public education could help to raise awareness of the fact that rape was a crime, and to dispel the erroneous belief that the problem should be dealt with within the family and that victims had to suffer alone. In the legislative sphere, consideration should be given to the possibility of increasing the penalties for rape.

Article 6

10. **Ms. Goonesekere**, referring to paragraph 69 of the report, asked whether the increased incidence of child kidnapping was related to child prostitution or the sexual exploitation of children; also, insufficient information had been provided regarding the age of sex workers and the exploitation of young girls in both prostitution and trafficking. A favourable environment for trafficking tended to arise in many countries where the economy was in transition; the reporting State should provide information as to what preventive measures were being taken in that regard.

11. **Ms. Manalo** said that the Government should be more aware of the problem of sexual harassment in the workplace; and in reference to the problem of drug addiction among women, information should be

provided regarding the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS among drug addicts and the incidence of that disease in Moldova. Paragraph 83 of the report referred to the role of advertising and the mass media in the exploitation of prostitution; that was a serious cause for concern, and the Government should consider the need for reforms and for the infusion of ethical values in advertising and the media.

12. She hoped that the next report would show that action had been taken to enact legislation against trafficking in human beings and to implement programmes in the areas of prevention, training, rehabilitation and law enforcement.

13. **Ms. Corti** emphasized that the Government should take urgent measures to stop trafficking in women for prostitution. She requested clarification as to whether prostitution would be dealt with under criminal legislation; whether there were any plans to close down the country's numerous brothels; and what measures were being taken to remedy the situation whereby many young women, being unable to find any means of subsistence in Moldova, were constrained to migrate and earn a living by prostitution in other countries.

14. **Ms. Khan** asked whether the draft legislation currently under consideration included provisions to protect women and young girls from labour and service agencies which were essentially engaged in prostitution and trafficking; why no sanctions or censorship were applied in cases where the mass media were used for indirect advertising of prostitution; what was the incidence of child prostitution and child pornography; and, in the light of the large numbers working illegally in other countries, whether there was any penalty for nationals who exploited women and young girls outside the country.

15. She also wondered whether the high incidence of rape reflected a general breakdown of law and order, whether the problem was particularly severe in certain geographical areas, and whether the statistics included rapes occurring in rural areas; what proportion of rapes took place within the family or in the workplace; and what was the percentage of women in the police force.

16. **Ms. Acar** called for more effective measures regarding the increasing numbers of women from Moldova who were trafficked for purposes other than prostitution, such as those who worked as domestic servants in other countries, without legal status,

insurance or social security, and were often deprived of other fundamental rights and grossly exploited; they were often highly educated young mothers who were working to support their families in times of great economic difficulties. The agencies which were exploiting those women should be investigated and their operations should be monitored and regulated; statistics should be made available regarding the numbers of women in such situations and the countries they were sent to, and there should be effective legislative and policy measures and better cooperation between the sending and receiving countries.

Article 7

17. **Ms. Gabr** said that the Government should do its utmost to improve the very low levels of women's participation in decision-making in the economic, social and political spheres. That, in turn, would help to reduce stereotyped views of women's role in society, and would also have an impact on their economic situation and on issues such as violence and employment.

18. **Ms. Myakayaka-Manzini** requested information as to the strength of the trade union and women's movements in Moldova. If they were strong, they could contribute to progress in areas such as training, monitoring and women's political participation, and could help women to become more assertive.

19. **Ms. Corti** asked what practical arrangements existed for cooperation between civil society and government, and what support was provided to non-governmental organizations. She would also welcome more details regarding the rights of the country's various ethnic groups in areas such as education and languages.

20. **The Chairperson**, speaking in her personal capacity, noted that most of the funding for women's associations was currently provided by international organizations and donors. She wondered whether there were any plans for financing those associations in future, if and when the international funding ended. Governments could not devolve part of their responsibilities to civil society bodies without providing any support.

Article 10

21. **Ms. Shalev** commended the Government for introducing the topic of gender equality in schools, and

asked whether the subject was taught as part of the law curriculum; she suggested that the texts of the Convention and of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should be included in the educational programme. Noting that a high proportion of economics students were women, she asked whether that discipline included the study of information and communications technology, which could lead to careers offering considerable flexibility in working hours; she also wondered what was being done in the school system to encourage entrepreneurship among young women.

22. The statistics contained in the report under article 12 showed an unusually high incidence of sexually transmitted diseases such as syphilis and gonorrhoea; she wondered whether the Government had considered including health education, including education on reproductive and sexual health, in the school curriculum. In that regard, assistance could be obtained from United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Population Fund and the World Health Organization.

23. **Ms. Kim Yung-Chung** welcomed the statistical information provided under article 10, in relation to the proportion of women students in various courses of study. However, she regretted that there were no corresponding data on the distribution of jobs once those students entered the labour market.

24. It would also be useful to know whether education was free and compulsory, and if so, up to what age; what percentage of school principals in primary and secondary schools were women; and how many women held responsible positions in the educational system.

25. In view of the winter layoffs of school teachers, mentioned in paragraph 109, it would be useful to know whether Moldovan teachers were unionized, and, if so, what main issues the unions argued in their behalf. More information would be useful on the loss of pensions and sick leave, referred to in the same paragraph. It behoved the Government urgently to improve the financial and health conditions of teachers, particularly since most were women.

26. **Ms. Taya** said that the report provided vague statistics regarding the temporary closing of schools. The Government should explain the real impact of economic restructuring on children of school age, and

describe what measures, if any, it had taken to tackle the problems such children currently faced.

27. **Ms. Manalo** said that it was commendable that over half the Moldovan teaching staff were women, since teachers had the ability to affect the future characteristics of a country. The Government should provide literacy statistics, and describe any measures it had taken to eliminate stereotyping in school textbooks. It would be useful to know whether “gender education”, a term used by the delegation, meant women’s studies. She would also like to know on what ground the predominance of women in the teaching profession was considered a disadvantage in the labour market, an assertion made in paragraph 112 of the report. Clarifications on the meaning of the first sentence of paragraph 111 would also be welcome. With reference to the same paragraph, she enquired why and in what context parents needed psychological advice, and whether “teaching support programmes” meant continuing adult education for parents.

Article 11

28. **Ms. Corti** asked for information on women’s earnings as compared to those of men, in the principal fields of employment. She would also like to know how the childcare system worked, and what measures were taken to ensure that women were able to reconcile a working life with parental responsibilities. When a Moldovan couple did not have access to childcare, which parent stayed at home to care for the children?

29. It would also be useful to know what measures, if any, had been taken to prevent the exodus of professionals from Moldova and, in particular, how the Government ensured decent employment conditions and remuneration to such persons.

30. **Ms. Gabr**, remarking that the employment situation of women reflected the general economic situation, said that she would like further information on the implications for women of the economic restructuring, especially since the process of liberalizing the economy was sure to have a negative effect on the market and consequently on women.

31. **Ms. Khan** said that unemployment in Moldova, especially among skilled professionals, was a serious cause for concern. According to statistics, 56 per cent of the registered unemployed were women; in the restructured job market, women were experiencing more difficulty finding jobs. The report described a

wide range of unemployment measures, including the payment of compensation; she would like to know whether such compensation was, in fact, paid. In view of the brain drain to other countries and the closing of rural schools, Moldova ran the risk of seeing a sharp increase in illiteracy. She enquired whether any measures had been taken to create new job opportunities for skilled professionals, and what happened to the rural children whose schools had closed. It would also be useful to know whether women agriculturists, mentioned in paragraph 173, had been or were now employed.

32. She would also like to know whether the special parliamentary fund to support family enterprises had, in fact, been set up, and what other measures had been taken to generate employment; whether Moldovan sexual harassment legislation covered women in the workplace; and whether childcare facilities had been created in the newly privatized economy.

Article 12

33. **Ms. Abaka** said that neither the Convention nor the Beijing Platform for Action condoned the use of abortion as a contraceptive measure, a serious cause for concern in Moldova. The Government must provide adequate family planning, including contraceptives, so that women were not forced to resort to abortion for purposes of birth control. She suspected that the increase in infections and toxic complications, cited in paragraph 142, were related to attempted abortions. It would be useful to know how many times during the course of their reproductive lives Moldovan women underwent abortion procedures.

34. She would also like information regarding the smoking habits of Moldovan women, particularly those in their reproductive years. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), women who smoked tended to give birth prematurely or to produce babies with low birth weights. Data on alcohol and drug use would also be welcome. What programmes, if any, had been set up to assist and rehabilitate female alcoholics? In addition, the Government should supply information on the incidence of tuberculosis and AIDS. It would be helpful to know how many AIDS patients also suffered from tuberculosis, and whether such patients died sooner than the others.

35. She had been saddened to learn, from paragraph 77, that the number of murders committed with the

participation of women had been increasing; research should be conducted into the reasons for that shocking phenomenon. In addition, it would be useful to know whether the Government had studied the reasons for the high rate of suicide among women, in particular at what age they committed suicide, whether and how they were employed, and whether they were alcoholics or drug-users.

36. She hoped that the next report would include information on programmes established to tackle the problems of occupational health and environmental sanitation, particularly since prevention was less costly than treatment. Despite Moldova's financial difficulties, greater attention must be paid to health. The health of the economy depended on the health of the citizens, especially that of women.

37. **Ms. Shalev** expressed concern at the news that the Government planned to privatize the health-care system. Many countries had found that privatization was not the answer, since it created a two-tiered system under which only the rich had access to adequate health care, and that Government expenditures increased under privatized health-care schemes. She urged the Government to reconsider its decision.

38. The national health-care system should place greater emphasis on preventive care and on health care for the elderly. Other priority areas should include prevention of communicable diseases, such as tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, provision of emergency health care, including obstetric services, and assistance to victims of domestic violence.

39. **Ms. Khan** said that the difficult economic situation in the Republic of Moldova had contributed to the decline in birth and the increase in mortality rates. The demographic situation had been further compounded by high rates of emigration. She wondered what measures were being taken to address the problem. It would also be useful to know whether high rates of suicide were common among women of reproductive age and, if so, whether any studies had been done to determine the reasons.

40. It would also be interesting to know whether there was any connection between the low marriage rate and the decrease in the population and whether the lack of family planning services contributed to the high infant mortality rate. She wished to know whether legislation was in force to require fathers of children born out of wedlock to assume financial responsibility

for their support, whether mothers received special social security allowances and whether national poverty alleviation programmes made special provision for single mothers.

Article 13

41. **Ms. Myakayaka-Manzini**, noting with satisfaction that disadvantaged families benefited from a one-time allowance upon the birth of a child, a monthly allowance for children aged 18 months to 16 years and a monthly allowance for single mothers with children between those ages, said that it would be useful to know the amount of the allowances, whether the allowance for single mothers was higher than that for married mothers and whether all women were entitled to the allowances or only those who were unemployed. She would also welcome information on whether both married and unmarried women had access to health insurance and to public housing, whether women had access to credit and whether there was any agency to which women could have recourse if such access were denied them.

Article 14

42. **Ms. Ouédraogo** noted with satisfaction that a relatively high percentage of university graduates in the specialties of agriculture and construction were women. She wondered how many of them went on to have successful careers and to hold leadership positions in their fields. She would welcome additional information on the economic activities of rural women, whether they were covered under social security schemes and whether they benefited from agricultural training programmes. The information provided under article 14 was rather sketchy and she hoped that more comprehensive replies would be forthcoming in the second periodic report.

Article 16

43. **Ms. Aouij** expressed disappointment at the little attention devoted in the report to article 16, which governed relations between spouses within the family. The status of women within the family was closely related to their status within society. If women were treated with respect and dignity within the family, it would be much easier for them to assume their rightful places in the broader society. The right not to be physically and mentally abused was a fundamental

human right which should be guaranteed by law and protected by the Government.

44. She noted that the law allowed divorced women to retain assets acquired after marriage. It would be useful to know whether that law was respected in practice and fairly applied by the courts. In general, she would welcome information on the legislation that guaranteed equality between men and women and, more specifically, on whether the courts ordered the payment of child support in cases where custody was awarded to a mother.

45. **Ms. Hazelle** asked whether, in view of the provision contained in article 48 of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova that the family was created through free marriage between a man and a woman, recognition was given to other types of family structure that did not involve marriage. It would be useful to know, for example, whether one-parent households enjoyed equal rights and privileges, whether the law recognized illegitimate children born to single mothers or unwed parents, and whether legislation was in force under which mothers of children born out of wedlock received financial support.

46. **Ms. Abaka** said that the different ages at which men and women were allowed to marry was a violation of the right of women to equality of opportunity. She noted, moreover, that, under special circumstances, women up to two years younger than the prescribed age could be allowed to marry. She would welcome clarification of what might constitute those special circumstances.

47. **Ms. Apostol** (Republic of Moldova) thanked Committee members for the understanding they had shown of the problems facing her Government and people and assured them that the Government would take seriously their advice and recommendations.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.