



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

Distr.: General
21 September 2001

Original: English

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

Summary record of the 428th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 9 June 1999, at 3 p.m.

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

later: Ms. González (Chairperson)

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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 Georgia (continued)
(CEDAW/C/GEO/1 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Beridze (Georgia) took a place at the Committee table.*

Article 11

2. **Ms. Khan** noted with interest that women accounted for 53 per cent of the labour force in Georgia and commended the extensive maternity protection and other benefits granted under the Labour Code. Referring to paragraph 81, she said that the report did not really discuss or provide sufficient data on discrimination in employment, particularly with regard to remuneration, and enquired about the problem in Georgia. In that connection, she noted that women held 52 per cent of low-wage jobs (81.3 per cent of women were employed in the agricultural sector) and that women, including highly qualified professional women, had fewer employment opportunities in the private sector. She feared that the significant presence of women in the labour force might be attributable to their willingness to accept lower wages. Were the agricultural and newly emerging private sectors covered by the labour legislation?

3. It would be interesting to hear whether economic globalization had created employment opportunities for Georgian women and whether the Government had formulated programmes to minimize the negative impact of structural adjustment through increased social services, particularly child-care facilities. Had there been a decrease in child-care centres since the Soviet regime and were private-sector child-care facilities affordable? She enquired about legislation to deal with sexual harassment at the workplace and about retraining programmes, modelled on those of certain Eastern European countries in transition, for preparing public-sector female employees to enter the private sector.

4. **Ms. Abaka**, referring to paragraph 74, voiced concern at the restrictions placed on night work,

overtime and business travel for women, which seemed to contravene both the CEDAW Convention and the conventions of the International Labour Organization. Furthermore, the representative of Georgia should reassure the Committee that the prohibition of female labour in hazardous or overly demanding jobs (para. 75) was not used as a pretext to deny women employment.

Article 12

5. **Ms. Shalev** congratulated Georgia on the adoption of a Patients' Rights Act and enquired about its content. It would be interesting to know whether the principles embodied in the Act were consistent with the Committee's general recommendation on article 12, which advocated, inter alia, the rights to informed choice, confidentiality and privacy. She expressed concern at the rise in maternal and infant mortality rates (paras. 102 and 108), particularly since a Medical Insurance Act had been adopted in 1997, and wondered whether the transition to a fee-for-service system in hospitals as a result of privatization was responsible for the problem. The representative of Georgia should describe community prenatal services available to women, including those covered by the Medical Insurance Act. In that connection, she drew attention to article 12, paragraph 2, of the Convention, which mentioned the need to provide free services where necessary.

6. Turning to the issue of abortion, she commended Georgia on its partnership with the United Nations Population Fund in promoting the use of modern contraceptives and stressed the need to educate young people on alternatives to abortion. She requested clarification of abortion legislation in Georgia and further details on the cases of illegal abortion mentioned in the report (para. 101). Referring to paragraph 44, she cautioned against the ineffective policy of targeting prostitutes in order to contain the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. The Committee had received information on the high incidence of sexually transmitted diseases among Georgian youth between 19 and 25 years of age, including heterosexuals. The State party should describe any existing sexual health programmes for that age group.

7. She wondered whether the Georgian authorities contemplated requiring health professionals to inform the police of incidents of violence against women. Lastly, she would appreciate further details on the

programme for the year 2010 on the promotion of women's health.

8. *Ms. González, Chairperson, took the Chair.*

9. **Ms. Abaka** enquired about nicotine consumption among women, particularly in view of Georgia's economic difficulties, and about the linkage between smoking and the high maternal and infant mortality rates. She would welcome additional information on the State party's policy on tobacco and, in particular, any programmes designed to address its abuse by women and youth.

10. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** said that, in reading the State party's report to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, she had learned that the number of hospitals in Georgia had been drastically reduced as a result of the privatization of medical care. The State party should explain its decision to abandon its former, very effective system and the impact of privatization on women's health, including their reproductive health. The reduction in medical services was particularly disturbing at a time when the breakdown of agricultural production was affecting the food supply.

Article 14

11. **Ms. Feng Cui**, noted that rural women comprised one quarter of the country's population and that 81.3 per cent of women were engaged in agricultural work. She requested further details on the situation of rural women, including the impact of land reform; the existence of de facto, if not de jure, discrimination; the percentage of impoverished rural women; and their situation with regard to health and education. She wondered whether the Action Plan for the Advancement of Women for the period 1998-2000 (CEDAW/C/GEO/1/Add.1, para. 6) contained specific objectives relating to rural women and expressed the hope that the State party's next report would provide more statistics on them.

12. **Ms. Ouedraogo** noted the lack of details or statistics to substantiate the assertion that there was no discrimination against rural women (para. 121). The report should have provided information on rural women's access to health and family planning services and on literacy rates. She hoped that the State party's second periodic report would address all aspects of the situation of rural women, including land ownership, and their access to vocational training and information.

It should also indicate whether the Convention was disseminated among rural women and whether they were able to exercise the same rights as urban women.

Article 16

13. **Ms. Goonesekere**, noting the report's frequent references to stereotyping and gender discrimination within the family, inquired about the forces behind the adoption of the 1997 Family Code establishing absolute equality between men and women in family relations. She would welcome information on measures to enforce the Family Code and to disseminate it among women. Given the high percentage of female judges in Georgia, it would be interesting to know whether the Family Code was highlighted in judicial training programmes. She would appreciate clarification of the concepts of "property" and "non-property" in paragraph 125. Lastly, she wondered how the concept of the male breadwinner and that of equal responsibility for child support were reconciled in practice.

14. **Ms. Aouij** requested additional information on the number and status of religious marriages and on the marriage laws applicable to the Muslim community. She commended the adoption of the joint property regime. With regard to divorce, she wished to know whether it was granted by a judge, and how custody issues were decided. She expressed concern about the protection of the child's interests in instances where custody decisions were taken by judges.

15. **Ms. Beridze** (Georgia) thanked Committee members for their very interesting and substantive questions, to which her delegation would respond during the scheduled answer session. The issues raised during the current session would be taken into account in the preparation of her country's second periodic report.

The meeting rose at 3.50 p.m.