



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

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

**Summary record of the 475th meeting**

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 19 June 2000, at 3 p.m.

*Chairperson:* Ms. Gonzalez

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*Fourth periodic report of Cuba (continued)*

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*The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.*

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

*Fourth periodic report of Cuba*  
(CEDAW/C/CUB/4;  
CEDAW/PSWG/2000/II/CRP.1/Add.2  
and CEDAW/PSWG/2000/II/CRP.2/Add.1)  
(*continued*)

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

2. **Ms. Aguilar** (Cuba), continuing the replies to questions asked by members of the Committee at the previous meeting, said that much progress had been made towards the goal of a balanced image of women and of their prominent role in all areas of society, and the media had helped to promote a redefinition of gender roles and stereotypes. The National Plan of Action for Follow-up of the Fourth World Conference on Women included 11 articles on measures to be implemented by the media in relation to gender issues. The National Plan of Action had led to the creation of an intersectoral, multidisciplinary body for the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action, and audience surveys were used in order to assess the impact of media messages in that regard. The media now provided considerable opportunities for women's professional development and women were now more prominently featured in the news.

3. Training was imperative for the updating of skills in journalism and other media professions, and gender-related courses were seen as an important way of broadening and enriching output. Numerous civil society bodies were working to mainstream the gender perspective in literature and the media. With the beginning of the coming school year, courses in social communication would be reviewed completely, placing greater emphasis on gender issues and the analysis of the nature and causes of gender discrimination.

4. Intense efforts were being made to eliminate denigrating and sexist images of women from all advertising material produced in Cuba; however, much remained to be done. Moreover, Cuba continued to be the target of considerable aggression from the foreign media; one aspect of that was the portrayal of sex tourism. Her Government was endeavouring to

promote a safe, culture- and family-oriented tourist industry.

5. **Mr. Reyes Rodríguez** (Cuba) said that the principle of equal pay for work of equal value was fully guaranteed in Cuba and, since pay scales were made public, there was no possibility of concealing unequal treatment in that area. Since women in Cuba tended to be highly qualified, there was a high proportion of women in the upper income brackets. Women and men had equal rights in terms of the right to inheritance and property and access to different types of credit. Special low-interest loans were available in areas where the private sector was present, such as rural areas, and women who were landowners or members of cooperatives had the same access as men to such loans. As for women entrepreneurs and executives, the State-controlled sector was predominant in Cuba and they therefore mostly worked in State-owned enterprises; considerable efforts were under way to increase the percentage of women in such posts.

6. As for access to those parts of the economy where the United States dollar was used, there were indeed serious disparities, but the State was working hard to ensure that those inequalities did not increase. Because social justice and equality had been the fundamental principles of the Cuban revolution, a surcharge of 2.4 per cent was applied to prices in shops and service industries where the dollar was used, and the funds obtained were redistributed, particularly to social programmes and to improve the incomes of highly qualified persons.

7. His delegation wished to draw attention to the inaccuracy of certain statistics which were circulating on the subject of average incomes in Cuba; those statistics failed to take into account the fact that foodstuffs were subsidized or that most families owned their own homes and consequently did not pay rent. Cuban citizens enjoyed freedom of speech, and anyone who was not serving a prison sentence could enter freely into any conversation, as the numerous tourists visiting Cuba could observe.

8. Intellectuals, scientists and other highly qualified persons did, indeed, have access to United States dollars; the Government had created programmes to provide motivation and encouragement for that sector of society, which was very important for the country's future. As for unemployment, the overall

unemployment rate was about 6 per cent, and the rate for women was 8 per cent; the higher unemployment among young women was due to the fact that many young women were more highly qualified than young men and it was more difficult to generate jobs for such persons. The State offered retraining programmes for young unemployed persons; this generally provided them with incomes until they found jobs. University students were guaranteed employment after graduation, and attempts were being made to do the same for middle-level technicians.

9. There were certain jobs which many young women preferred not to do, and efforts to eliminate such stereotypical attitudes had not yet fully succeeded. While some employers might still be discriminating against women, they would be vigorously prosecuted and heavily penalized for doing so.

10. **Ms. Ouedraogo**, while congratulating the Government of Cuba for its social and health programmes and its considerable efforts to achieve gender equity, said that the report should have provided more analysis of the impact of the programmes, the strategies and priority goals for their implementation, the difficulties and obstacles to be overcome, and the means by which results would be assessed. As for special temporary measures, she encouraged the Government to apply a quota system. Paragraph 429 of the report stated that women were treated on an equal footing with men in relation to credit and bank loans; the Government should also consider introducing positive discrimination in favour of women in that area.

11. In its next periodic report, the Government should provide more details on the situation of rural women, including comparative statistics, to provide a better picture of their situation in practical terms; she would particularly appreciate more information regarding social security entitlements for rural women. It was most regrettable that the information provided in the statistical summary (pp. 55-124 of the English language version of the report) had not been translated.

12. **Ms. Manalo** asked whether Cuba had enacted a law against trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and what concrete measures had been taken to make tourism more woman- and child-friendly. Since prostitution was essentially an economic problem, the reporting State should specify whether consideration had been given to measures to help

prostitutes find alternative sources of income. It should also explain what concrete measures were in place to protect elderly women from violence, whether in the home or in hospitals or other institutions, and to protect children from commercial sexual exploitation and enable its victims to be rehabilitated and reintegrated into society.

13. The Government should also study the role that gender mainstreaming could play in overcoming the machismo culture in Cuba, and provide details regarding measures to address the problems of teenage or unwanted pregnancies and sexual behaviour among teenage boys, and to broaden the coverage of reproductive health education in order to reduce the incidence of abortion and to combat HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. She also wondered, what specific measures had been taken to address the mental health of women.

14. Lastly, in light of the current economic and social difficulties, she would welcome information on programmes to maintain the already high literacy rates in Cuba, and on how the Government induced young women to continue their studies to the tertiary level despite the shortage of employment opportunities for graduates.

15. **Ms. Corti** expressed her personal solidarity with the women of Cuba, who were the real victims of the blockade and who nonetheless had reacted positively, achieving great results in important areas of women's empowerment such as education, health and employment. She also congratulated the Government for having given the force of law to the Beijing Platform for Action, and wondered how it was being implemented in practical terms, and what would be the legal consequences if it was determined that certain parts of the Platform for Action had not been implemented.

16. The reporting State should clarify how the Federation of Cuban Women, which was a grass-roots organization, could act as a "national mechanism", as had been stated earlier in oral replies to questions, and whether it did so in conjunction with any State body. She also asked whether legislation had been enacted to include procurement and trafficking in women in the Criminal Code, as mentioned in paragraph 145 (2) (g) of the report.

17. It seemed that much remained to be done in terms of women's participation in the political system and

decision-making. The machismo culture was one of the major problems for Cuban society; in many cases that culture was reflected in the behaviour of women themselves, since they tended not to report instances of domestic violence. The delegation should explain more clearly how domestic violence was dealt with in the Cuban legal system.

18. **Ms. Feng** Cui expressed admiration for Cuba's achievements in promoting equality for women, despite the trade embargo imposed by the United States of America. She would welcome additional information on national policies towards rural women who were self-employed or were members of agricultural or other types of cooperatives.

19. **Ms. Acar** said that the well known activism of Cuban women was reinforced by the enlightened policies pursued by the Government in the field of the advancement of women. She remained concerned, however, at the machismo which still appeared to be deeply rooted in the society. She had the impression that verbal and psychological abuse of women was not taken seriously. Such abuse was simply not acceptable for it destroyed a woman's self-confidence, and precluded the development of an enabling environment for promoting gender equality in the home, in the workplace and in politics.

20. Also of concern was the high level of verbal and psychological abuse of children by their mothers. Studies showed that such mothers were themselves often the victims of violence. She wondered whether the Government recognized the extent of the problem, whether any research had been carried out to determine its causes and whether any programmes had been developed to sensitize law enforcement officials to the problem.

21. It was unclear whether legislation was in force to protect women against sexual harassment and whether statistics on the incidence of the phenomenon were available. She was concerned that sexual harassment of women, including verbal and psychological abuse, might be overlooked because of cultural factors. Programmes should be implemented to protect women from less obvious forms of exploitation.

22. **Ms. Kim** Yung-Chung sought information on the sources of funding of the large number of non-governmental organizations that were reported to be active in Cuba. She also wished to know whether all universities in Cuba had departments of women's

affairs, whether the courses offered by those departments were mandatory and what was the content of the syllabus. It would also be useful to know whether textbooks and other teaching materials were regularly updated to eliminate stereotypes about the respective roles of men and women in society.

23. The Committee would welcome more information on how the "Women Creators" movement was able to promote greater involvement of women in economic development and on the action that was taken following determination of the paternity of children born to adolescent mothers. She wished to know, lastly, how many teenage boys participated in national sex education programmes, whether drug and tobacco use was a serious problem in Cuba and, if so, what programmes were in place to curb their use.

24. **Ms. Abaka** noted Cuba's impressive achievements in the fields of education and public health, including control of the spread of HIV/AIDS. Many developing countries, including her own, had benefited from generous Cuban support in the field of public health. However, she wondered whether any studies had been carried out to determine the impact of prostitution and HIV/AIDS on the society. She was concerned at the prevalence of suicide among the elderly population and wondered whether any research had been conducted to determine the causes and whether programmes were in place to combat the problem.

25. **Ms. Diaz** (Cuba), responding to the questions posed by the experts, said that public health had been a priority area in Cuba since the early days of the revolution. As a follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, a national reproductive health programme had been launched to promote responsible sexual behaviour, including family planning, and to provide both prenatal and post-natal care. As a result, 99 per cent of all births in Cuba took place in institutions.

26. While sexual relations among adolescents were not socially acceptable, in practice many adolescents were sexually active by age 15. The family, school and media were in the vanguard of society's efforts to promote more responsible sexual behaviour among adolescents. The family doctor and family nurse also played an important role in that area and in the public health system in general.

27. Though still high, abortion rates were now declining. Relative to other countries, the incidence of HIV/AIDS was also low and increasing at an arithmetic and not geometric rate, largely because the problem was viewed as a public health problem requiring the mobilization of society as a whole. From the time that the disease first appeared in Cuba, sanatoriums had been created to isolate victims from the rest of the population in order to provide more effective care. Treatment continued later on an out-patient basis after patients were reunited with their families. Multidisciplinary groups had also been established at the national, provincial and municipal levels to promote greater public awareness of the problem in general and, in particular, to educate the victims and their families about the disease.

28. Suicide was indeed a major public health problem, although the rates had been declining in recent years. The rates for women were lower than the national average. Some of the reasons for the high incidence of suicide among older women included the economic hardship that resulted from, inter alia, their failure to plan for the years after retirement, their longer life expectancy and the debilitating effect of the loss of their spouses or companions. Programmes were in place to provide help to potential suicides through their families and by way of psychiatric counselling. Treatment was differentiated to take into account the particular risk factors involved in each specific case.

29. On the question of violence by mothers towards their children, her own experience of many years as a paediatrician was that such violence was rare in Cuba and that, where it did occur, it was more often than not due to personal factors. If anything, Cuban mothers were usually overprotective of their children, who were generally cheerful and happy. It was true, however, that the longstanding United States trade embargo against Cuba subjected Cuban women to unusual psychological and emotional stress and that individual cases of violence towards children might be related to that factor.

30. **Ms. Miranda** (Cuba) said that sexual harassment was regulated under Cuban criminal law. Any person who harassed another person with sexual motives, offended standards of decency, participated in obscene acts, or produced or distributed pornographic materials was subject to three months to one year imprisonment. If a public official proposed sexual relations to a woman under his supervision, or to the mother, wife or

sister of a person under his supervision, he was subject to two to five years imprisonment. When power, authority, trust or friendship was used as a form of pressure, the punishment was more severe. A person who used force or intimidation to have sexual relations with a woman, or whose victim was pregnant or mentally incapable of comprehending the nature of the act, or who knew he was carrying a sexually transmitted disease, was subject to 4 to 10 years imprisonment.

31. Sexual procurement and trafficking were also punishable under Cuban law. Any person who induced another person to engage in prostitution, or who arranged for any person to enter or leave the country for the purpose of prostitution or other form of sexual commerce, was subject to a term of imprisonment.

32. Under Cuban law any person who used violence on another person, used threats or intimidation to induce him to do what he did not wish to do, whether the action was just or unjust, or allowed another person to do so, or prevented a person from carrying out an act that the law did not prohibit, was subject to two or more years imprisonment. A person who threatened another person to his detriment or to that of a family member, or roused extreme fear in that person, was subject to punishment for one or more years. If the victim of violence was a pregnant woman, the punishment was more severe.

33. Laws had also been established to protect minors from all conduct of a sexual nature. Any person who committed acts that interfered with the normal development of a minor, who failed to attend to the upbringing and education of a child in his care, or induced a minor to leave home or not to attend school, was subject to one or more years in prison or a fine, depending on the gravity of the offence.

34. Any person who encouraged prostitution or child prostitution was severely punished. Moreover, sex tourism was categorically prohibited. Any tourist agency or travel agent found to be trading in such services would have their licence revoked, and be forced to close their business. The Government monitored the images of women used in travel brochures, produced both in Cuba and abroad. Furthermore, all hotel guests were provided with information, either posted on the back of the door or enclosed in the guest folder, regarding the legal prohibitions against those forms of behaviour.

35. **Ms. Beretervide** (Cuba) said that there were programmes at the national, provincial, municipal and community levels dealing with prostitution, from the point of view of awareness, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation, and the relationship between prostitution and violence. The Federation of Cuban Women had also done a considerable amount of work in that area.

36. Persons who trafficked women or drugs were subject to heavy sentences. Furthermore, Cuba had a large corps of social workers with experience in dealing with prostitution. In some cases, whole families were involved in prostitution, and daughters were used for economic gain. Often such families were entirely isolated from the educational and economic system, since no member either worked or studied. Efforts were made to treat the family as a whole.

37. In an effort to combat sexual tourism, the Government disseminated dissuasive materials through television, radio and the press at the community level. The National Sex Education Centre, working with non-governmental and student organizations at the community level, sponsored programmes in prostitution and reproductive health, involving doctors, nurses and families. The Government, the ministries, and the Cuban population as a whole were working to identify a congruent, effective approach to the problem.

38. Regarding the situation of violence, she said that before the revolution it had been not uncommon for people to be murdered in the street, tortured or simply to disappear. That was no longer the case. In 1997, a national multisectoral and multidisciplinary group had been created to study and analyse violence in society, and to develop a national strategy covering such areas as education, prevention, training, investigation and the dissemination of information. Although Cuban law contained no special provisions on intrafamily violence, it contained all the elements necessary to protect women from violence. She agreed that more must be done to address the matter of both verbal and physical abuse and that all personnel who had to deal with victims of violence, including judges, police officers and health workers, should receive special training. Cuban society as a whole was working towards the establishment of equality between men and women, and violence was an integral part of that question.

39. Finally, her delegation hoped to be able to provide the requested statistics by the time of the next report.

40. **Ms. Santana** (Cuba) said that the number of prostitution-related cases of AIDS that had emerged in Cuba were statistically insignificant. AIDS occurred mostly in young people between the ages of 15 and 25, and in persons who engaged in homosexual and bisexual relationships. The most severe addiction was to tobacco; since Cuba was a producer of high-quality tobacco, its use was rooted in cultural tradition, and passed from generation to generation. The Government was taking measures to combat tobacco use, and smoking would soon be prohibited in public buildings and social centres. Although alcohol consumption was not high, its increased use was associated with the rise in tourism and the drug traffic. Over the previous two decades, national treatment centres had treated many more foreigners than Cubans. A national multidisciplinary group was developing a programme designed to raise awareness among health and educational staff about the use of addictive substances.

41. **Ms. Arocha-Domínguez** (Cuba) said that, in 1996, the Federation of Cuban Women had organized a national conference, which had submitted 150 proposals to the Government for the National Action Plan of the Republic of Cuba for Follow-up of the Fourth World Conference on Women. That had led to the establishment of a governmental commission, headed by the Secretary of the Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers, which had adopted 90 measures in critical areas of concern, including employment, women's participation in political life, women in the media and health and social policy at the grass-roots level. The commission was also systematizing and updating legislation concerning women's rights. The National Action Plan had been widely disseminated in Cuba, including at the grass-roots level, and was being implemented by government ministries. In 1999, a partial evaluation, carried out by the Council of Ministers, had determined that the greatest obstacle to its implementation had been insufficient training of the government officials concerned; in response, the Federation of Cuban Women provided them with accelerated training.

42. The Federation of Cuban Women had been established in 1970 as an umbrella organization for already existing women's organizations. It represented 76,000 grass-roots organizations and had 3.7 million

individual members. The Federation received feedback from its members on government policy and ensured that women had a say in the political, economic and social life of Cuba. Contrary to what some people alleged, the Federation's platform was not just an echo of government slogans although it espoused the same principles of socialism, justice and equity. Indeed, the Federation's proposals had been at the origin of much of the legislation on, inter alia, child care, labour and maternity benefits. If anything, the Government of Cuba supported the Federation and not the other way around.

43. The Federation, like other non-governmental organizations representing women's rights, was self-financing, but it received assistance, including in-kind assistance, from the Government, and from United Nations agencies and programmes for its participation in special activities. For example, the national conference in anticipation of the special session had been held with support from the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Under Cuban law, organizations were not permitted to rely wholly on external assistance for their operations.

44. **Ms. Aguilar** (Cuba) acknowledged that machismo was still very much a part of Cuban culture and that attitudes were changing slowly. She stressed the need for education and awareness-building, in both formal and informal contexts, sufficient resources and a multilateral perspective in order to accelerate that change. Under the revolutionary Government, women's studies had acquired increasing importance; they were now offered in universities, including at the doctoral level and as part of social science and medical courses, and in teacher training institutes. Traditional roles were also being redefined through practical training courses conducted in outreach centres.

45. **Ms. Cardoso** (Cuba) said that a number of decisions taken since the revolution had benefited rural women, in particular the general agrarian reform and the decision to limit landholdings to 10 hectares per owner. Farmers, both female and male, were seeking greater access to the benefits of science and technology, including higher quality seeds and motorized tools and equipment. In the production cooperatives, producers pooled their lands and resources, and distributed their earnings equitably. In the credit-service cooperatives, producers maintained ownership of their own land and shared resources with other producers. Women made up 17 per cent of

participants in production cooperatives, and 8 per cent of participants in credit-service cooperatives. Women generally inherited their land from a parent or a spouse, and the number of women landowners was slowly increasing. Many of the men who had benefited from the revolutionary land reforms were now old or deceased and their plots had passed to their wives or children. Many of their children, however, had been trained in other professions and had lost interest in agriculture; 70 per cent of the population of Cuba was currently urban.

46. Women landowners were associated with the Federation of Cuban Women, and with other non-governmental organizations that represented their social and political interests. Women played an important role in national and provincial committees; 24 per cent of the directors of production cooperatives were women. In fact, the situation of the rural population of Cuba was far superior to that of the rural populations of most other countries of the world. Efforts were under way to promote women to leadership positions, to incorporate women into agricultural activities and to improve childcare facilities. Furthermore, a number of institutes and universities provided agricultural training. Women farmers were eligible for Government loans and subsidies, and had access to social security and insurance plans that protected their harvests against all natural disasters. Participants in cooperatives enjoyed retirement benefits, maternity benefits and hospitalization services.

47. **Ms. Beretervide** (Cuba) said that Cuba had managed to maintain its high literacy levels, despite economic hardship, through compulsory education and an adult education programme in which members of the Federation of Cuban Women worked with housewives, even in the remote rural areas.

48. **Ms. Shalev** regretted the lack of data on the impact of the programmes, plans and legislation described in detail by the members of the Cuban delegation. In particular, there were no gender-disaggregated data on HIV/AIDS-related morbidity and mortality. The Government should study the Committee's General Recommendation No. 24 before preparing its fifth report. More information was needed on the rates of infection in women, especially in the 15 to 19 age group. The report mentioned that studies had been conducted to identify high-risk groups and zones of risk, but she had not heard what those groups were

or where such zones were located. It was also not clear how the comprehensive prevention programme mentioned correlated with the reported shortage of condoms. She would also like to know if the “cocktail” of drugs used to treat persons with AIDS was available, and if not, how sufferers were treated. There was also no information in the report describing how the confidentiality and privacy of patients were protected. Under WHO guidelines, mandatory testing for HIV/AIDS was prohibited; she would like to know about the situation in Cuba. There had been reports that persons with AIDS were not permitted to move around freely or were confined to sanitoriums. She would like to know the conditions under which they were confined or treated in such institutions.

49. **Ms. Goonesekere** congratulated Cuba for its impressive social indicators and the fact that it had sustained its commitment to social development despite the difficulties caused by the blockade. To sustain those gains, however, transparency, free flow of information and accountability in governance were necessary. Thus it would be useful for the delegation to address the concerns raised by Ms. Taya and by the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women.

50. In politics, using quotas usually meant setting aside a fixed number of seats for women, but a new system was needed to increase the number of professional women in management positions. The report had stated that women’s participation in politics was low because they were overburdened by their professional and domestic responsibilities, coupled with a male model of management. In her view, women were being held back because society imposed on them the role of caregiver. It was up to the Government to make it clear that caregiving was a joint responsibility.

51. With regard to constitutional procedure, no information had been given about government accountability for violations of equal rights. She would also like to hear more about the consent process in divorce cases, as it had been her experience that such processes often prevented women from exercising their rights.

52. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** recommended that Cuba should include more coherent statistics in its fifth report, along with more information on the results of the programmes described. She applauded the Government for its explicit recognition of the

relationship between the Convention and the Beijing Platform for Action.

53. The negative impact on women’s employment of the blockade and of the collapse of the former Soviet Union was compounded by sexual stereotypes. The labour market was segregated by sex to a great extent, and she wondered if the Government was using any temporary special measures to counteract that trend. She also asked if unemployed women, who outnumbered unemployed men, were receiving any preferential treatment in the creation of new jobs. More information was needed on the kind of jobs women held in the mixed and trading-company sector and the percentages of women at higher management levels in that sector.

54. She was concerned that women engaged in “own account work” were found largely in such traditional occupations as hairdressing and dressmaking, and were not moving into technical areas with more growth potential. She was very concerned that women working in that sector did not earn pension benefits and sick leave, as they could face serious problems when they retired. She was confused by the use of the term “housewife” and asked for details on the number of women below the age when they could receive a pension who were not employed. Availability of childcare was instrumental in alleviating the double burden on women, and in the next report she would like to know the percentage of unmet demand for childcare, broken down by the age of the children.

55. **Ms. Regazzoli** said that a plan of action was needed to give women greater access to municipal jobs, and she would like to hear more about efforts of the Federation of Cuban Women in that regard. In the next report, she would like to hear more about the system for child-support payments in divorce cases.

56. More information was also needed on the situation of non-governmental organizations, whether they were subject to monitoring by the party or the Government, how their finances were administered and an explanation of the apparent disappearance of Masonic groups, which had been very active in Cuba before the Revolution.

57. In the next report, she would like to hear a full discussion of the situation of drug trafficking, transit and addiction in Cuba, available treatment options, and whether the rehabilitation clinics open to foreigners were also available to Cubans.

58. She would like to know when the next census was planned in Cuba, for it would provide important data. Finally, she would like to learn what happened to the children of women prisoners and until what age they were allowed to remain with their imprisoned mothers.

59. **Ms. Aouij**, stressing the all-important role of forward-looking legislation, asked whether, as part of the effort to harmonize national and international law, the Federation of Cuban Women had been provided with a list of women's demands and remaining discriminatory legislation that needed to be changed. It would be useful to know what action the Federation planned to take.

60. She echoed previous speakers' concerns regarding divorce cases adjudicated by notaries public and wished to know, in particular, whether women were afforded the same protection under that system as by the courts. The delegation should report on the findings of any studies on the matter as well as on the number of divorces granted by notaries. Commending the State party on its broad programme to combat entrenched stereotypes, she enquired whether the Convention had been integrated in primary-school, secondary-school and university textbooks and curricula.

61. **Ms. Santana** (Cuba) said that the delegation could provide the Committee with morbidity and mortality statistics for men by age group. Of course, prostitutes were at a higher risk of contracting AIDS; what she had meant was that the number of prostitutes suffering from AIDS was very low — 33 cases among females between 15 and 24 years of age, equivalent to a rate of 40 per million.

62. There had, indeed, been problems with the supply of condoms. Cuba had turned to international organizations for assistance, and a governmental group responsible for AIDS control was according priority to the matter. All Cuban citizens, both high-risk and low-risk groups, including pregnant women, were given AIDS tests if they so wished. As for the sanatoriums, she wished to assure the Committee that they were operated in close consultation with the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), and that the only violation of human rights in that regard was the long-standing embargo against Cuba. Sanatorium patients were there voluntarily to receive care that might not be available at home. Education was also provided, not only to the patient but also to the patient's family,

community and colleagues. The State party's difficulties in dispensing AIDS medication were wholly attributable to the economic embargo. However, Cuba had a reputable pharmaceutical industry which would soon begin producing the necessary medicines.

63. There was no discrimination in Cuba based on sexual preference; in fact, the Government sponsored AIDS prevention and education programmes for all high-risk groups, including prostitutes, with support from international organizations and on the basis of exchanges with scientific organizations.

64. The drug rehabilitation and referral centres had been established, in part, to maintain the high professional standards of Cuban medical personnel through an exchange of information with their international counterparts. At both the national and provincial centres, the cost of care for Cuban nationals was fully covered. In view of the low rate of drug-related deaths, perhaps the centres were not entirely necessary. She conceded that the whole area was one in which statistics needed to be developed.

65. **Mr. Reyes Rodríguez** (Cuba) said that, in Cuba, prostitution was not characterized as a crime and that prostitutes in rehabilitation centres were there because of their involvement in other illegal activities. Prostitutes were not subjected to forced labour in the centres; however, they had an opportunity to work if they chose to do so.

66. Prostitution should be viewed as a product of the moral values of the individuals concerned and not as a consequence of economic necessity. Education was therefore the principal means used to combat the phenomenon. He rejected the suggestion that machismo in Cuban society was in the mould of Hollywood stereotypes of Latin American societies. In fact, Cuba had done more than most other societies to address that problem.

67. On the question of statistics, his delegation had earlier provided the Committee with statistical data, some of them gender-disaggregated, on the situation of women in Cuba. Translation of the documents from Spanish, which was an official language of the United Nations, was the Committee's responsibility. The cost of implementing the General Assembly's resolution on multilingualism should not be transferred to developing countries with limited resources, especially one against which a trade embargo had been in force for many years.

68. On the question of discrimination against homosexuals, all homosexuals in Cuba, including those suffering from HIV/AIDS, enjoyed complete freedom. One of the reasons why Cuba had joined a number of other States in opposing the endorsement by the Commission on Human Rights of the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines in that area was the absence from the guidelines of any provision for universal access to treatment. Cuba was doing everything it could for the victims of HIV/AIDS and had even begun to produce anti-AIDS drugs after it had been denied access to certain types of medicines.

69. The report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cuba (E/CN.4/1998/69) was extremely subjective and showed utter disregard for due process. The report was based on the stereotypes peddled in the international press and had been subject to political manipulation. In political terms, Cuba was a plural society, even though there was only one political party. Political pluralism and multipartyism were two different concepts.

70. Oversight of non-governmental organizations operating in Cuba was limited to the monitoring of the organizations' accounts and finances in order to prevent corruption and diversion of funds into illegal activities. Many other States had enacted legislation for that purpose.

71. Drug use in Cuba was not a social problem and the country could by no means be described as an important point of transit for drug trafficking operations. Because of its geographic location, however, it had the potential to play an important role in combating drug trafficking.

72. Lastly, infants of women prisoners were allowed to stay with their mothers until the age of one year.

73. **Ms. Diaz** (Cuba) thanked the experts for their profound and professional analysis of the report and for their candid comments. Her Government had institutionalized non-discrimination against women at every level of society and was devoting substantial economic resources to the promotion of equality for women. State resources were also being allocated to research on HIV/AIDS, since Cuba believed that public health was a human right that should be guaranteed by the State. She hoped that it would be possible to address in the fifth periodic report all those questions to which the delegation had been unable to provide satisfactory responses.

74. **The Chairperson** said that the high-level delegation was proof of the Cuban Government's commitment to cooperate with the Committee and with other human rights treaty bodies. Cuba's success in promoting gender equality provided an example for other Latin American States to emulate. The delegation should be aware, however, of the Committee's continuing concerns in such areas as domestic violence and violence against women, working conditions for women workers, including those employed in the informal sector, and measures to protect the population from HIV/AIDS.

75. Speaking in her personal capacity, she had had the pleasure of visiting Cuba on numerous occasions and therefore had first-hand knowledge of the obstacles that had to be overcome in order to consolidate the Cuban revolution and promote the advancement of women. Those obstacles included the departure of large numbers of professionals in the early years of the revolution and the trade embargo imposed by the United States of America. Despite that, however, Cuba was currently ranked among those countries enjoying the highest rates of literacy and health care coverage in the world.

*The meeting rose at 7.10 p.m.*