



Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Eighth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 145th MEETING

Held at the Vienna International Centre, Vienna,
on Wednesday, 1 March 1989, at 9 30 a m

Chairperson Ms. EVATT

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The meeting was called to order at 9 35 a m

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION (continued)

Second periodic report of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
(CEDAW/C/13/Add 4 and Amend 1)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms T N Nikolaeva (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) took a seat at the Committee table

2 Ms NIKOLAEVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), introducing her country's second periodic report (CEDAW/C/13/Add 4 and Amend 1), said that the adoption by the General Assembly of the United Nations of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had been an important step towards achievement of the goal of genuine equality for women in society and in the family It was gratifying to note, in the tenth anniversary year of its adoption, that the Convention formed one of the most important elements of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, which had become a programme of action in many countries The framers of the Convention had seen it as a foundation for wide-ranging international co-operation, its provisions constituting minimum standards for achievement of real equality

3. Her Government's second periodic report reaffirmed that the legal basis for women's equality had been reinforced in the Constitution of the USSR and in the Constitutions of its constituent republics Equality among Soviet citizens irrespective of their sex was a fundamental principle of her country's administrative, State, family, civil, labour and other legislation

4 The period since the submission of the initial report of the USSR had been characterized by revolutionary processes of perestroika (reconstruction), and it was on the success of perestroika that the future progress of society and any improvement in the position of women and families depended Perestroika in the Soviet Union was based on the principles of public ownership of the fundamental means of production, on planned development of the economy with wide-ranging participation by the workers in the government of the State, on strengthening the position of the working class and on the leading role of the Communist Party The Party had taken it upon itself to promote the process of change Its task would be to transform the concept of perestroika into real policy and to affirm its capacity to guide the process of renewal

5 In the first few years of perestroika, there had been a turn away from economic, political and intellectual stagnation and towards a renaissance, with healthy forces gaining strength and a renewal of socialist ideas and their revolutionary, Leninist content The Twenty-Seventh Congress of the Communist Party had given significant impetus to the renewal process the situation in the country had been the subject of a critical analysis and the perestroika programme had been developed together with strategies and tactics for practical action Perestroika in all areas of Soviet society and faster socio-economic development would be unthinkable without the benefit of a constructive input from Soviet women That was not simply because they accounted for 53 per cent of the country's population. Qualitatively speaking, women as a socio-demographic group and their place and role in society had altered radically over the years of socialist

(Ms Nikolaeva)

construction. The major change had been their higher level of general education out of every thousand working women, 888 had received higher and intermediate education (the comparative figure for men was 890) Almost 92 per cent of women of working age were working or on study leave from productive work Women accounted for 51 per cent of the economically active population

6 Women had also become more active in social and political affairs and their participation in control over social matters had expanded 33 per cent of the members of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR were women, while the figures for the Supreme Soviets of the constituent republics and local authorities were 36 per cent and 49 per cent respectively Women played a significant role in the courts, 44.5 per cent of judges and 56.4 per cent of assessors being women About 30 per cent of the members of the Communist Party were women and 27 per cent of the delegates to its Twenty-Seventh Congress and 25 per cent of the delegates to the Nineteenth All-Union Party Conference had been women Women made up more than half the membership of the Komsomol and of the trade unions and there were over half a million women in managerial work in industry Every second health unit was headed by a woman It was therefore clear that women were a major force in the country

7 It could not be said, however, that development was proceeding smoothly and without contradictions or that there were no problems which needed to be solved in order to improve the social position of workers, most of whom were women The country was going through a difficult period and a quantum leap forward was required in order to achieve improvement at the economic, social and intellectual levels Whatever area of the life of the country was touched by perestroika, the role and position of women as individuals would always be at the centre of attention

8 The aim of the new policy was to seek to implement an active social programme for improving the welfare of the Soviet people Great efforts were being made to give the Soviet economy dynamism and a spirit of innovation in order to speed up the tempo of scientific and technological progress and increase the efficiency of production

9 No one could be unaware of the transformation taking place in the whole atmosphere of Soviet society open and interested discussion was taking place everywhere, the process of democratization was moving ahead in various areas of public life and it had been echoed in the media, which had become the forum for glasnost (openness) and diversity of opinions The influence of public organizations and movements was growing The dramatic nature of the latest developments stemmed from the fact that the person in the street had formerly been distanced from the exercise of political power perestroika was changing that situation radically

10. There had been radical political reform with the aim of giving power back to the people and ensuring general participation and involvement in the affairs of the State.

11 A number of changes and additions had been made to the Constitution of the USSR in order to develop socialist democracy and people's control and to improve the electoral system and the structures and activities of the Soviet of People's Deputies, as well as the judicial organs The year 1987 had seen the adoption of a

(Ms Nikolaeva)

law on the general discussion of important public issues and similar laws had been adopted by the republics. Under article 49 of the Constitution, persecution for criticism was now illegal.

12. In 1987, over 100 million people had taken part in a general discussion of the draft basic guidelines for the health-care service and over 13,000 suggestions had been made for elimination of shortcomings in health care and improvement of its quality. In that discussion, women had played a very active and interested role.

13. Another recent development of significance was the new procedure being applied in the election of members of the Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR. The election, which would be held for single- or multi-member constituencies on the basis of universal, equal and direct suffrage in a secret ballot, would make it possible to embark on the next stage of political reform, which would consist in reorganizing the Soviets at republic and local levels and giving them sovereign rights that would be done by means of a law on local autonomy and self-financing.

14. The renaissance of people's power would be accompanied by the reform of legislation on many subjects including youth, the press and freedom of conscience. All those changes would increase the degree of answerability of the State to its citizens and vice versa, and would strengthen the guarantees of human rights and of equality before the law. Perestroika was a response to the aspirations of all the peoples of the multinational USSR, which was developing a relationship of respect for national interests and the specificities and dignity of each nation and people.

15. Perestroika was also enriching the intellectual life of Soviet society. In place of a levelling out of individuality, the Soviet Union was seeing the discovery of individual capacities, with minds and talents being stretched, in place of unanimity by decree there was a wide spectrum of opinions and views and a high level of cultural discussion and citizens were taking an active part in decision-making.

16. The Soviet Union intended to pursue efforts to improve the moral climate and to promote truth and equity, compassion and fraternity. Active measures were being taken to root out hypocrisy, criminality, alcoholism, drug addiction and other social and moral ills.

17. An awareness by Soviet society, including women, of the importance and necessity of the changes which were under way was of primordial importance. Efforts were being directed towards helping women to participate in public affairs and combine their role as mothers with their role as active citizens. Among the most important elements in Soviet society were the Women's Soviets, which functioned at all levels and whose tasks were now much broader than in the past. They were foci and reservoirs for women's energies and initiatives, they knew better than anybody what problems women and their families faced and could provide timely help and intercede with the authorities whenever necessary. The activities of the Women's Soviets were guided by the Committee of Soviet Women, which could make legislative proposals and could elect 75 people's deputies to the highest organ of the State. It also had its own periodical, with a circulation of about 40 million.

18. At the Twenty-Seventh Congress of the Communist Party, the question had been raised of increasing the number of women in managerial posts, an urgent task since at present only 12 per cent of managers in industry and independent concerns were

(Ms Nikolaeva)

women and the figure was the same for chief engineers and their deputies, while 14 per cent of shop-foremen and their deputies were women. About 40 per cent of scientific workers were women, but women constituted no more than 2 per cent of academicians and corresponding members of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR.

19 Perestroika in ways of thinking was actively promoting the breakdown of the old stereotypes affecting women's status in the family and society as well as the role of the father. Those stereotypes influenced attitudes in matters such as housework, the idea that it was a purely feminine function to be responsible for the family and that only mothers should feed children, the clash between professional and social activities and the family, domestic roles and the undervaluation of, and prejudice against, women bosses. The new thinking, a component of the process of perestroika, was becoming ever more firmly anchored in public awarenesses and was being reflected in the everyday conduct of the people.

20 Major changes were taking place in the socio-economic field. The earlier years of stagnation had in fact brought the country to the brink of economic crisis. The extensive, as opposed to the intensive, method of managing the economy, which had been essentially wasteful, had become totally entrenched. The structure and technological level of the economy ran counter to contemporary needs. The command method of control had become a serious hindrance, and growth in production and productivity and improvement of living standards had staggered to a halt. Many social problems had been ignored, while the situation of women depended directly on their solution. The economic management of the country had gone seriously awry, and labour responsibility and discipline had declined. The challenge was therefore a major one.

21 As a first step, much work was being done to restore basic order and discipline in the economy and to eliminate the most intolerable manifestations of those bureaucratic methods which prevented people from living and working normally. The creation of a new political structure had begun and emphasis was now placed on scientific and technological progress and modernization of industry, as well as on increasing the interest of collectives and individual workers in the results of their work. The numerous measures which were being taken were laying the material foundations for the democratization process. Three or four years was too short a time for radical socio-economic transformation but the Soviet Union was already in a phase of transition.

22. The modification of the economic machinery had naturally affected the interests of many working women. The reforms undertaken would, by the year 2000, free some 16 million workers from industry and agriculture, and first to go would be those in low-skill jobs. More than half of those 16 million would be women. Furthermore, the extensive introduction of new technologies would require highly-skilled workers, able to adapt rapidly to changing working conditions. The improvement of vocational training for women and enhancement of their qualifications was therefore vital. Young women currently accounted for some 30 per cent of students at vocational and technological training institutes. At present female workers with children up to the age of eight could study during working time without loss of pay. Women returning to work after having children found that facilitation of studies particularly convenient.

23 At a time when a new set of economic rules were being introduced, with a massive reduction in labour forces, it was particularly important to ensure that social guarantees were increased. A Decree issued in January 1987 provided for

(Ms Nikolaeva)

ensuring effective employment, improving the labour allocation system and strengthening social guarantees for working people That Decree had highlighted the need to pay special attention to women and young people who were laid off work The labour force reduction would take place gradually, thus making it possible for labour resources to be redistributed in a planned manner There were in fact labour shortages in some regions Also, massive development of the non-productive sectors - primarily services, recreation and leisure - would create conditions where the workers released, including women, would find occupations All the conditions for full employment and a genuine right to work therefore existed

24. The situation in the social sphere had also begun to change The most urgent needs of the people had been put at the centre of domestic policy and efforts were being made to ensure a better life for all the Soviet people within the next few years The primary concern was to find a solution to the most acute problem that of production In that respect, the country was faced with the need to transform the worker labouring on the farm into a real land manager and to re-establish the balance between town and country, with a social reconstruction of the village in order to bring about a radical improvement in the position of rural women and their families She believed that the measures which had been taken would soon allow the food demand to be met by production

25 The housing problem was still acute, but progress was being made in solving it and the aim was to provide every family with its own flat or house by the year 2000

26 Another target set was the achievement of a significant increase in the output of consumer goods, with massive expenditure on modernizing light industry All sectors of industry, including defence enterprises, were being oriented towards that goal A programme for developing consumer goods production and the services sector included plans for increased production of modern household appliances and modernization of the domestic service and repair sector, where most workers were women Indeed, 20 per cent of household goods production was being carried out at converted defence plants

27 The basic guidelines for the USSR's economic and social development during the period 1986-2000 included measures to ensure a growth in real incomes of 13 to 15 per cent, an increase in public consumption funds of from 20 to 23 per cent and a reduction in the labour force in manufacturing by 10 to 15 per cent

28 Reform of general and vocational schools had been under way since 1984 with a view to further developing the principle of polytechnical education Funds totalling 11 billion roubles had been allocated from the State budget, of which 3.5 billion roubles were for annual expenditure on increasing the salaries of teachers, 75 per cent of whom were women A new law was aimed at radically improving the whole system of education It offered girls and young women new, additional opportunities to exercise their right to vocational and technical, intermediate, specialized and higher education With full social equality, Soviet women could exercise any profession which they were capable of practising To that end, the State had established a range of benefits for women wishing to combine work and study.

(Ms Nikolaeva)

29 The process of perestroika in health care had begun and was aimed mainly at improving health care for women and children. An allocation of 20 billion roubles was planned for that purpose. Under the programme "Health for All by the Year 2000", a national mother and child-care programme had been developed. It was planned to achieve improvements in health care by integrating midwifery and therapeutic and paediatric services for women and children and by providing sanatoriums and health resort facilities.

30. Measures were being taken to reduce infant morbidity and mortality. The mortality indicators had recently shown a downward trend, but were nevertheless still high at 25.4 per thousand. The birth rate was 19.8 per thousand, and the death rate 9.9 per thousand. In hospitals, special departments for pregnant mothers, pre-natal diagnostic surgeries, genetic surgeries and children's convalescent centres were being set up. Radical reform was under way in out-patient clinics for women and children, maternity homes and children's hospitals. Seventeen thousand children's polyclinics were in operation, and in 1987, the number of beds for children in hospitals had reached 615,000, with another 167,000 in sanatoriums. Construction of medical complexes was being increased. In 1987, a medical complex had been constructed in Chelyabinsk in one year, whereas construction time had previously been between five and seven years. As a result of initiatives by working people, part of the perestroika process, public organizations had been set up which participated in financing mother and child health-care services. Since January 1988, medicines for children up to the age of three had been provided free of charge and for children in the first and second years of life, baby foods were also supplied at no cost. The norms for expenditure on children's food in hospitals had been raised.

31. In connection with the international programme to combat the disease AIDS, the Ministry of Health of the USSR had organized a system of prophylaxis centres and was co-ordinating scientific research work. A few tens of cases of HIV infection had been recorded.

32. Despite the existing shortcomings, there was now an extensive system of social protection for women. New benefits had been introduced under each five-year plan, and there were special benefits for women with children. Further measures to improve women's lives were included in the current five-year plan and for the period up to the year 2000. A number of wage increases had been granted in occupations where women predominated. A 30 per cent increase had been given to teachers in vocational training establishments and in technical and ordinary schools, and the pay of doctors, nurses, and other workers in the health and social services was now being improved. Wage levels in light industry had also been increased. Improved benefits were being paid to those permanently incapacitated, and to children of war veterans and of those who had died in the Second World War. Married couples in their first year of marriage were being exempted from the tax payable by the childless, and the period of paid leave allowed for looking after a sick child had been increased to 14 days. A minimum maintenance payment had been introduced for dependent children, and a State benefit was payable if a liable parent evaded payment. Extra benefits were granted to one-parent families, such as a free school uniform and school meals, and free holidays in children's camps. The benefits paid out in 1987 had totalled 576 roubles per capita, almost 25 per cent more than in 1980. Further labour legislation had been brought in to protect mothers and children, and to enable working mothers to spend more time bringing up young children.

(Ms Nikolaeva)

33. The new law on work collectives opened up the prospect of additional social protection measures. The collectives could now decide on measures for the improvement of working conditions, the further training of women workers, and the enhanced protection of mother and child. In one enterprise in the Latvian SSR, the mothers were given a single payment of 200 roubles for a third child, in addition to State benefits, plus a monthly allowance until the child reached the age of 18 months, for a fourth child, 300 roubles was paid, plus 200 roubles a month. Other benefits included allowances of up to 10,000 roubles towards the cost of building or repairing houses or flats.

34. The social insurance budget for 1989 included benefits for needier families with children under 12, and an increase in paid leave for mothers with children under the age of 18 months, with the right to additional unpaid leave until the child was two or three years old. The additional payments would total 3.4 billion roubles. It was now recognized that there must be a coherent State family policy, whereby economic, legal and ideological support would be given to the family by the State, social institutions and work collectives. Guidelines for such a policy, to last until the year 2000, were now being developed, in consultation with State organs and individual citizens.

35. Conditions for women in their triple role as workers, mothers and citizens had improved considerably, but it was still difficult for women to combine the three functions. Almost 3.5 million women were working in unsatisfactory physical conditions. Yet the success of perestroika would depend on the active participation of the millions of women in the USSR. The interests of working women were a major focus of social and economic policy and it must be an essential goal of society to achieve equality between men and women in the cultural, occupational and material fields. In seeking to carry out perestroika, the Soviet Union was particularly mindful of its international legal commitments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. A meeting of experts held in November 1988 had issued a recommendation on "measures of social support for women". The participants in the meeting had recommended the preparation of a protocol to the Convention, providing for State measures of social support for women and their families. The proposal warranted the closest attention, since a protocol of that nature would be a major step in improving the situation of women and making the Convention more effective.

36. Ms. GUAN Mingqian welcomed the progress that was being made in the Soviet Union in improving the status of women. She had been able to see for herself, on a visit there in 1984, some of the changes that were taking place. She had noted with interest the Soviet representative's references to the particular problems and difficulties facing women and society as a whole in her country, as well as to the new achievements. The improvement in relations between the Soviet Union and China were a welcome sign, and it was likely that a woman would be heading a Chinese delegation to the Soviet Union during the current year in return for an official visit from that country which had taken place in 1988.

37. Ms. LAIYOU-ANTONIOU said that she was optimistic about the beneficial effects of perestroika and glasnost on women. While women in the Soviet Union did not face the terrible problem of unemployment, there was still no real equality in work there, because of the prejudice that existed concerning the respective roles of men and women in society. The mother was responsible for her children until they

(Ms Laiou-Antoniou)

reached the age of 14, while her profession occupied a secondary role, but nothing appeared to be said about the father's duties in respect of the children and the home

38. She would like to know whether and to what extent prostitution existed in the Soviet Union and whether it was subject to legislation. She also asked whether the number of divorces had increased since publication of the USSR's initial report

39. Ms TALLAWY, noting the remark by the USSR representative that the success of the perestroika process would depend on the participation of women, asked whether any measures were envisaged by the Government or by women's organizations to encourage women to seize the opportunity to improve their situation. Were women in the USSR aware that they were not always paid as much as men and tended to be in lower-level jobs?

40. She also noted that 16 million workers in agriculture and industry, 8 million of them women, were to be assigned to work elsewhere. Would they be working to improve production, for example, and would they receive training to fit them for it? If so, would women's status improve or deteriorate? It had been said that advanced technology had proved detrimental to women because they lacked the training to apply it. Was that the case in the Soviet Union?

41. She was surprised to learn that only 2 per cent of heads of academic institutions were women, particularly in view of the facilities the Government provided for mothers. Why was the percentage so low? Was it due to lack of interest on the part of women or reluctance to compete for such posts, or was it difficult for women to gain access?

42. She welcomed the suggestion concerning a protocol to the Convention and urged that it should be submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women for serious consideration.

43. Ms FORDE, referring to the measures of State aid for families (pages 19-24 of the initial report (CEDAW/C/5/Add 12) and pages 15-19 of the second periodic report of the USSR), pointed out that single mothers might be widows, divorcees or unmarried women, and asked whether there were many unmarried mothers in the Soviet Union or many de facto unions. How were those women and those unions regarded? The initial report (page 28) indicated that the law made malicious refusal to pay alimony for the maintenance of children a criminal offence. She wished to know whether such children included the children of an unmarried mother, what was the penalty and whether the father was in fact punished or made to pay in those circumstances.

44. With regard to the family rights described on pages 18 and 19 of the second periodic report, it was not clear what inheritance and succession rights were now available under the law and whether the provisions referred to covered unmarried families

45. Ms AKAMATSU said that it appeared from the Soviet representative's statement and the second report of the USSR that women in that country enjoyed equality with men in nearly all aspects of society but at the domestic level bore a heavier burden. She would like to know how that domestic burden could be lightened and whether there had been any change in men's attitude to that problem

46 Ms ALFONSIN de FASAN said that she was particularly interested in the Soviet Union's provision of training for working mothers without loss of earnings. That example might well be followed by other countries. She had also been interested to learn about the women's councils set up on the initiative of women.

47 She would like to know what was being done to deal with such problems as the desire of women for full equality in family life while some men stubbornly resisted involvement in household chores, thus often causing family conflicts and endangering the stability of the family, and the further problem that it was mainly women who sought divorce, in nearly 50 per cent of cases on the ground that the husband had become an alcoholic. She supported the idea of a protocol to the Convention mentioned by the Soviet representative.

48 Ms CORTI said that all eyes were currently on the Soviet Union because what was happening there was important to the world situation and to global peace.

49 The Soviet representative had referred a number of times to perestroika and glasnost, but it was not entirely clear how those processes applied to women. She would like to have more specific information on how the situation in the USSR related to implementation of the Convention, and on the situation of women since the advent of perestroika. There had certainly been a great change, as was clear from the representative's introductory statement and the frankness with which the difficulties still facing women in the Soviet Union had been described. She would like to know whether promoting perestroika for the benefit of women would improve their status or whether women themselves should press for perestroika.

50. She also asked what was being done to give women access to key posts of authority in political life. She was surprised to observe that, despite the new policy, the number of women in such positions, far from increasing, had diminished since publication of the Soviet Union's initial report. She had the impression that there were in that country many "token women", as they were described in Italy: women capable of and meriting political power but serving only as a token representative of their sex or as a symbol only of the entry of more women into key posts.

51 She also wondered whether any positive action was planned in respect of the situation where, despite women's contribution to the country's economy and their participation in intellectual and cultural society, the number of women managers in industry and agriculture was far too low. She was also interested in women's position in State farms and collective farms, since agriculture as a whole was an extremely important sector of the country's economy and involved a large number of women.

52 Lastly, she could see no change in policies concerning women between the initial and the second periodic report of the USSR. In both reports the main emphasis was placed on the woman as mother. Was protection envisaged for women as consumers? Was there any political commitment to improve women's situation from the standpoint of free time and leisure? Those aspects were important from the political point of view and for the well-being of the country.

53. Ms SOUMARÉ congratulated the USSR representative on a candid report, which contained a wealth of information.

54 She would like to know whether Soviet women were fully aware of the opportunities now open to them under the new climate of perestroika to overcome the last remaining obstacles to their advancement. What action did the Committee of

(Ms Soumare)

Soviet Women intend to take in order to ensure that more women gained access to managerial positions? In view of the important role played by Soviet women in the struggle for peace, could women now be appointed as officers in the Soviet army? If not, why not, and what did the Committee of Soviet Women intend to do to remedy that situation?

55 Ms. PILATAXI de ARENAS said that the comprehensive report submitted by the Soviet Union showed great awareness of the true situation of women in that country. Although great advances had been made, it was clear that much still remained to be done.

56. She had noted with concern from the figures given in the report that over the past decade there had been a decline in the number of women members of decision-making bodies in the Government. She agreed with the Soviet representative that success in the struggle for the advancement of women would be crucial for the success of the policy of perestroika. She supported the proposal for a draft protocol to ensure that States parties were in fact giving effect to the provisions of the Convention. She would welcome an opportunity to see the text of any proposal put forward. Any programme of action planned should have as its focal point the Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women adopted in 1985 in Nairobi.

57 Ms. WALLA-TCHANGAI joined in commending the report and in congratulating the Soviet Government on its signing of the Convention, which had demonstrated its willingness to work to improve women's status. The results achieved so far had been in large measure due to the tireless efforts of women's organizations in the Soviet Union. The willingness of Russian women to work alongside men at heavy manual tasks showed their determination to prove that they were men's equals not only intellectually but also physically.

58. She wished to take the present opportunity to thank the women's organizations in the USSR for the part they had played in assisting women in the developing countries through the granting of scholarships for higher education.

59 Ms. OESER said that the efforts made in the USSR to implement the provisions of the Convention showed a serious commitment to the cause of women's equality.

60. The report referred to a "minimum level" of wages for women's labour. What was that minimum level, how did it compare with the level of income of an average family? It was also stated that single and working mothers were given priority entitlement to place their children in pre-school establishments. Were all parents who wished to place their children in such establishments able to do so, or was there a lack of child-care facilities?

61. Ms. SCHÖPP-SCHILLING noted that in the Soviet Union working mothers were now granted extensive benefits, including shorter working hours and special child-care leave. She wondered whether there was a danger of conflict between that trend and the trend towards a more profit-oriented, commercial economy under perestroika. Could firms which were chiefly concerned with profits afford to continue to employ a large female work-force, including working mothers? It had been stated that many thousands of female workers would have to be retrained. Would the need for such retraining operate to women's disadvantage where their jobs were concerned? Was

(Ms Schopp-Schilling)

that problem being discussed by women's organizations in the USSR and had any machinery been set up to monitor developments and seek to ensure that economic progress was not achieved at the expense of working women?

62 The two closely related problems of violence towards women and alcoholism were not touched on in the report. Were those issues too being studied by women's organizations? Were any special measures, either legislative or practical, being taken to protect women in that area?

63 She would also like to know whether many women in the Soviet Union resort to abortion as a form of contraception. Under what conditions were abortions performed - for example in day clinics, or in hospitals? What was the normal length of stay, and what methods were used? Was the operation performed under anaesthetic? She had the impression that there was a mistaken belief among Soviet women that use of chemical contraceptives might lead to sterility. Were efforts being made to dispel such misconceptions, and were contraceptives of that type freely available?

64 Ms UKEJE also endorsed the proposal for a draft protocol mentioned by the Soviet representative. The more favourable climate of perestroika should now enable Russian women to achieve full equality in the not-too-distant future, and she wished them all success in that endeavour.

65 Ms SAJOGYO noted that the statistics given in the addendum to the report (CEDAW/C/13/Add 4/Amend 1) did not include total numbers of both men and women occupying specific posts. Knowledge of those totals would have made it easier to evaluate the increase in the share of women over the years in each particular area.

66 Ms SINEGIORGIS expressed the hope that the Soviet representative would give replies to the questions of members of the Committee related to article 16 of the Convention. Was the role of women in the Soviet Union still regarded as a traditional, supporting role, or had attitudes changed in that regard?

67 Ms Nikolaeva (Union of Soviet Social Republics) withdrew.

The meeting was suspended at 11 45 a.m. and resumed at 12 noon.

Initial report of Finland (continued) (CEDAW/C/5/Add 56)

68 At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms Halonen (Finland) took a place at the Committee table.

69. Ms HALONEN (Finland), replying to questions put by members of the Committee, said they correctly identified those aspects of Finnish society which posed problems for the achievement of equality.

70. With regard to the position of women in the labour market, the disparity between the wages of men and women was reflected in the wage statistics. Occupational differences had changed little in the past 30 years, with women tending to work predominantly in personal services. Two thirds of all public employees were women, and women represented more than half of those using new

(Ms Halonen)

technology in their work. In many female-dominated sectors, working hours totalled only 37 per week. Eleven per cent of women worked part-time, either 30 or 20 hours per week, but the majority of part-time workers were women. Annual holiday entitlements of part-time employees were fixed on the same statutory basis as those of other employees. An employee who switched from full-time to part-time working did not lose pension security.

71. As for the question of equal pay, Finland had ratified ILO Convention No 100 in 1961. Many problems had yet to be resolved for equality of remuneration to be achieved. Male dominated sectors had a higher level of wages than female dominated sectors. Only 12 per cent of women worked in manufacturing industry, and those women were older than the average of the working population. Disparities in pay between women and men were most pronounced between the ages of 20 and 40, when both careers and families were established. It was now officially recognized that pay was partly determined by gender, and a special "equality bonus" had been introduced in the autumn of 1988. For women, higher pay was a more important goal in collective bargaining than it was for men, however, there was a tendency in collective bargaining to treat men as the chief wage-earners. All four trade union confederations were now tackling the question of equal pay, and the female dominated unions were developing their own collective bargaining practices. A five-year project had been started to achieve equal pay in the Nordic countries. Women now constituted the majority of unionized wage-earners, and the female trade union leaders, who included the Chairperson of the Equality Board, were now discussing how to improve their negotiating tactics.

72. Turning to the question of women in politics, she said that the number of women elected to office could be improved only by increasing the number of women candidates. In the 1987 parliamentary elections 36 per cent of the candidates had been women and 31 per cent of the MPs elected were women. The reason for the lower proportion of women in municipal councils, as compared to the Parliament, appeared to lie in the more conservative voting behaviour in rural areas, women were in a stronger position in the Helsinki area. Some municipalities had equality commissions, which were voluntary bodies comprising 10 to 14 members, appointed by the municipal board of directors. Their task was to investigate the status of women within the municipality, and especially social services to families and the position of women as municipal workers, and to propose measures to promote equality. Equality plans could also be drawn up in companies and enterprises.

73. It had been asked what functions the women's organizations performed under the Equality Law. At the municipal level both political and non-political organizations worked together to implement equality plans. At the national level there was now a co-operation committee with representatives of both the political women's organizations and the other women's organizations. Its purpose was to promote co-operation among women in international relations and in Finnish development policies. Political women's organizations received Government support from the State budget for political parties, and they were also subsidized from other State sources. Approximately 300,000 Finnish marks had been given to the women's organizations to finance the Nordic Forum held in Oslo in the summer of 1988. In the past two years, four women had been elected as general secretaries of political parties. The official goal was to have 40 to 60 per cent representation of both sexes in municipal bodies and in Government commissions, but no sanctions were imposed if the target was not met. However, the number of Government

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committees without any female members had fallen in recent years. In the political parties, women were seeking a share in decision-making commensurate with their numbers.

74 Turning to education, she explained that the system of quotas had been found less than satisfactory. By tradition, Finland had separate teacher training colleges for men and women. When the system had been updated in the early 1980s, the 40 per cent entrance quota for men had been retained, with the result that male students entered the colleges with lower grades than women. The distribution of the sexes in school staffs remained unbalanced, very few men taught seven and eight-year-olds, whereas most school heads and senior school administrators were men. The Ministry of Education had now decided to dispense with quotas for teacher training, both to bring about a better balance of the sexes in the schools, and to remove discrimination against better qualified women. The Council for Equality had decided against the use of quotas in other areas of education. The five-year plans for education did, however, include goals for gender distribution among students. An attempt was being made to eliminate sex stereotyping from the text and pictures of school textbooks. In Finnish schools, boys as well as girls studied domestic science, and all children were given family and sex education. Girls and boys studied physics in separate classes, and a research project at the University of Jyväskylä was investigating the study of physics by women. As for sport, female athletes were more successful than men in international athletic events, and it was therefore surprising that public sports subsidies were concentrated on male-oriented sports.

75 On the question of taxation, she explained that women and men had been taxed separately since the mid-1970s. A reform of personal taxation was in progress, and the Parliament had decided that parents could elect to share all the tax deductions granted for child-care expenses, otherwise, the relief would automatically be granted to the parent with the higher income. Certain problems related to the taxation of farming families had still to be resolved. The Minister responsible for taxation was a woman, one of the four women in the Finnish Government.

76 Questions had also been asked concerning the Finnish day-care system for children, a system which was a century old and had been placed on a legal footing in 1973. Municipalities were responsible for day-care services, which were partly Government funded. Each municipality could organize its own services, or buy in services from the outside. Most chose to organize their own services, and only about 5 per cent of kindergarten places were private. In addition to kindergartens, the municipalities provided family day-care centres. Parents of children under three could choose between a municipal day-care place or a home-care allowance. If the latter alternative was chosen, the allowance could be used to pay the cost of non-municipal day care. From 1 January 1990, all municipalities would be legally obliged to provide day care. However, there were not yet enough places in the Greater Helsinki area, and extra effort would be needed to meet the legal obligation. A recent topic of debate in Finland was how fathers could be encouraged to play a part in the upbringing of children.

The meeting rose at 12 30 p m