



**Convention on the Elimination
of all Forms of Discrimination
Against Women**

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Second session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 14th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 3 August 1983, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. IDER

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

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

Initial report of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (CEDAW/C/5/Add.12)

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

2. Ms. NIKOLAEVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), in introducing the report of the Government of the Soviet Union, said that her country had been one of the first States to ratify the Convention and that the legislation of the Soviet Union conformed in letter and in spirit to the Convention and even went beyond its provisions. Article 35 of the USSR Constitution embodied the principle of equality of rights between men and women in all areas of cultural, social, political and economic life. The exercise of those rights was guaranteed through equal opportunities for women in education, training and social and cultural activities and through the adoption of special measures to protect the health of women in the workplace and to enable them to combine motherhood with work.

3. The headway made had not been achieved overnight; it had its roots in the October Revolution, which had put an end to the exploitation of man by man and thus paved the way for genuine freedom for individual development and civil, economic and political equality between men and women. The programme of the Communist Party for the emancipation of women was based on the teachings of Lenin inasmuch as, unless women participated in the labour force, there could be neither equality nor freedom for them.

4. In the early years of the new State all provisions which demeaned women were repealed and in 1918 the first Soviet legislation to be enacted proclaimed the equality of political rights of all Soviet citizens. Subsequent legislative measures introduced radical changes in civil, labour and family matters with respect to equality between men and women. Women workers became fully entitled to participate in the social, economic and political life of the country.

5. The report provided statistical data reflecting a clear picture of social progress. Multifaceted work was being carried out to educate women politically, socially and technologically in order to ensure that they were able to participate fully in the production and the development of the country. The Constitution in force not only reaffirmed the principle of equality between men and women but guaranteed as well legislative, administrative and other equality, and it placed emphasis also on the necessary material conditions for achieving that equality, namely, equality of social and economic conditions, equal pay for equal work, equal opportunities to receive education and training, free medical care and protection of the interests of mother and child. An effort was made to create the best possible conditions in which women could participate creatively in the social, political, economic, scientific, cultural and administrative life of the country.

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(Ms. Nikolaeva, USSR)

6. That meant that the Soviet system did not give rise to economic depressions or phenomena like inflation and unemployment and their consequences, which in other countries affected women in particular. Women participated in all areas of economic activity and played an important role in family life and in the socio-economic life of the country.

7. Forty-six per cent of the workers in agricultural co-operatives were women; 75 per cent of women had received secondary education and were therefore able to enter the professions and hold administrative and managerial posts. An extremely large number of women had received higher and specialized education. Women made up between 40 and 55 per cent of the total work force. That widespread participation of women was a realistic basis for guaranteeing equality in practice.

8. The 487 women deputies in the Supreme Soviet, constituting a third of all the deputies, resolutely protected the rights and interests of women. The representation of women in the parliaments of the capitalist countries had never been so high. Women participated in the economic development plans of the country and in political life in general. The Committee of Soviet Women, in addition to catering to the particular needs of women, supported the peace policy of the Soviet Union and maintained relations with women's organizations in various countries.

9. The Government valued at its true worth the contribution of women to the construction of socialist society and endeavoured to ensure that women were able to combine their duties as mothers with their obligations at work. The State concerned itself with maternal and child health. Working women were given 112 days of maternity leave with pay, irrespective of the nature of the job or the time worked. In addition, there was leave with partial pay until a child reached one year of age. Those measures had been introduced after the ratification of the Convention. Under labour legislation, the pay of pregnant women was maintained and they were not required to work overtime; nursing mothers were given time to feed their infants; and penalties for the breach of those provisions were being contemplated.

10. Family relations in the Soviet Union were developed under the influence of the existing moral and ethical standards of society and great importance was attached to the improvement of legislation designed to strengthen further the Soviet family. With regard to civil status and divorce, the Decrees of Lenin had laid down the legal principles and the basis of regulations governing family relations. Those principles continued in force. During the construction of Soviet society, considerable advances had been made with respect to social relations, and the necessary changes had been made in the relevant legislation. Regarding marriage and the family, the Fundamentals of Legislation of the USSR and the Republics of the Union, adopted in 1968, had strengthened the most important principles for the legal regulation of family relations and marriage. Marriage was voluntary once the marriageable age had been reached and the equality of women in marriage was provided for, irrespective of their nationality, race or attitude to religion. The principle of monogamy was respected. There was equality between the spouses with respect to personal relations and property, women were free to choose their occupation, profession and place of residence, and parents, including divorced parents, had equal rights in matters pertaining to the education of their children.

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(Ms. Nikolaeva, USSR)

Equality of rights for children born in or out of wedlock was also guaranteed. The material responsibility of the spouses entailed mutual help and support in cases where one of them became incapacitated. The husband could not file for divorce while his wife was pregnant or in the year following the birth of a child, unless she gave her consent. The basis of the responsibility of parents for the physical and spiritual development of their children was also laid down in legislation.

11. In the USSR many of the causes for the break-up of the family had been eliminated. However, socialism had not completely succeeded in freeing families from the contradictions generated by the development of the forces of production and the incorporation of women into social production. In particular, women experienced difficulties in combining harmoniously their roles as mother and worker. That difficulty was compounded by the unequal distribution of domestic chores and the normal distribution of work in enterprises. The problem of placing women with family responsibilities continued to receive special attention and State policies endeavoured to ensure that women enjoyed increasing opportunities with respect to the upbringing of their children, participation in public life, training and recreation.

12. State plans for the socio-economic development of the country provided for the necessity of improving economic conditions and ethical standards in the lives of families, women and children. The comprehensive social welfare programme begun during the past five years had enabled real per capita income to grow by almost 25 per cent. Eighty million workers and employees had received pay increases and more than 50 million Soviet citizens had been provided with modern apartments free of charge. As the Soviet economy grew, State efforts on behalf of mothers and children increased and more favourable conditions for bringing up new generations were created. Expenditure from the State budget on subsidies to mothers who brought up and provided for their children amounted to 9 million roubles. State enterprises, co-operatives, trade unions and collective farms spent almost 7.6 million roubles for the same purpose.

13. In conclusion, the historical experience of the Soviet Union seemed to refute the ideas of bourgeois ideologies which had always sought to justify the inequality of women in society and in the family and to prove that they were inferior and incapable of independent thought, having resort to so-called "scientific evidence", the biological characteristics of women deriving from their function as mothers and from their responsibilities in the home and the raising of children. Socialism had created economic and social conditions that made it possible to utilize to the maximum the initiatives and energies of Soviet women. It should be understood, above all, as a mass participation of women in all spheres of the political, economic, social and cultural life of the country and in the family. At all times, in certain societies, the women of the élite had occupied high posts and positions in society. That situation was characteristic of many countries at the present time. However, the mass participation of women in all areas of the activity of the State on a footing of equality with men had been achieved only in the socialist countries. There might be a situation where one half of the members of a ministerial cabinet were women, but that did not necessarily mean that there was equality between the sexes if women did not participate to the same degree and at the same level as men in economic, social and political life.

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(Ms. Nikolaeva, USSR)

14. The full emancipation of women in all countries, the guaranteeing of their equality of legal and real rights, their incorporation in the development process of their countries, the struggle for peace and international co-operation on terms of equality continued to be fundamental social problems of the contemporary world. The international community should do everything possible in order to achieve fulfilment of the norms laid down in the Convention, bearing in mind that only if socio-economic, material and legal guarantees existed would it be possible for women to play an active role in the development of society.

15. She hoped that, through its constant activity, the Committee would manage to promote broader implementation of the provisions of the Convention in all countries, and she urged those States which had not yet ratified the Convention to do so.

16. Ms. DE REGO DA COSTA SALEMA MOURA RIBEIRO thanked and commended the USSR representative for her introduction of the report of her country. In the section of the report giving a general appraisal of progress made, reference was made to "state protection of women's labour and health, secured through the prohibition against using women for work involving hard or harmful conditions". She asked what kinds of work were considered hard or harmful in the Soviet Union. It was also stated in the report that there was legal protection of the rights of women against discrimination of any kind by individuals, institutions or organizations. With regard to such protection, it would be appropriate for the Committee to be informed whether there were any penal liabilities or other sanctions provided for in the case of those practising such discrimination.

17. With regard to the participation of Soviet women in the struggle for peace, it would be interesting to know whether there were women in the army of the Soviet Union and, if so, whether those women could take decisions on the subject of disarmament and the arms race.

18. In the section of the report on the participation of Soviet women in the socio-political life of the country, it was pointed out that almost 50 per cent of the members of the selection committees were women. She would like the Committee to be told what the specific work of those selection committees was. In that regard, it would also be interesting to know whether there were women in the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. In the same section of the report, it was stated that there was a large proportion of women in the trades unions committees. It would be useful to know what was the specific work of those committees.

19. In the report, no information was given about the role of women in cultural life, although the representative of the Soviet Union had referred to it. Regrettably, men all over the world said that women were incapable of formulating new ideas on philosophy, politics or legal systems and that all the important systems of thought had been conceived by men. In that context, it would be useful if the representative of the Soviet Union would indicate whether, in her country, there were many women active in the field of literature, what kinds of books they wrote and what was the tenor of their ideas.

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20. Ms. CARON said that it was interesting that, in the Soviet Union, the education of children was regarded as the joint responsibility of the father and the mother and that legislative measures had been adopted to that effect. It was interesting also that, in the Penal Code, express sanctions were provided to punish the infraction of the laws prohibiting discrimination, rape and illegal abortion, inter alia. The report gave a very complete view of the legislation and statistics. However, with regard to the political aspect, she would like to know how many women ministers there were in the Soviet Union. She agreed with the representative of the USSR that, even if one half of the ministers were women, that was not sufficient grounds for saying that there was equality between the sexes. Nor was it sufficient, however, to state that all the members of the cabinet might be women; it was necessary to have women ministers in actual fact also. The report stated that 36.5 per cent of all the People's judges were women. It would be interesting to know what was the legal system in the Soviet Union, whether there were different levels of courts and how many women were judges of higher courts. It would also be useful for the Committee to be informed how many women, by comparison with men, headed institutes of higher education. The report stated that nearly 3 million women were members of sectoral scientific and technical societies. She asked how many women held executive posts in those societies, by comparison with men.

21. Ms. OESER said that it was very useful if reports included a general assessment of the progress made in the elimination of discrimination against women. The report of the Soviet Union should be regarded as a model for other reports.

22. In the section of the report on the participation of women in the struggle for peace, mention was made of the creation of the Soviet Fund for Peace, and it was stated that 350,000 Peace Fund Support Committees had been set up, with a membership of approximately 5 million. However, in the following paragraph it was stated that approximately 80 million people were members of the Soviet Peace Fund. She did not understand what those figures meant and would appreciate more information on the organization of the Peace Fund and the participation of women in it. In the report, it was stated that there were still ample possibilities for the continued promotion of the access of women to higher posts. She would like to ask the representative of the Soviet Union whether there were plans or programmes envisaged to prepare women for managerial posts or whether it was considered that that was a problem that would resolve itself with time.

23. Ms. MARTINEZ expressed appreciation for the full and illuminating report of the Soviet Union. Although she did not have a thorough knowledge of the social and political apparatus of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, she considered that its outstanding measures of protection for motherhood could, unquestionably, serve as an example to many countries. However, those measures did not necessarily guarantee socio-political equality between men and women in society. It would be useful if the Committee was told in which articles of the Soviet Constitution equality between men and women was expressly guaranteed. It would be useful also to know how the Soviet education system ensured women free choice of a profession.

(Ms. Martinez)

24. In the report, emphasis was placed on the special measures adopted for the protection of women in hard or harmful working conditions. It would be very interesting to know what those conditions were specifically, particularly since it was public knowledge that, in the Soviet Union, women often performed extremely difficult tasks, which in other countries would, unquestionably, have been reserved for men.

25. The participation of Soviet women in the world peace movement was a source of encouragement and hope. It might be hoped that that movement would be successful in its undertaking and be able to influence the positions of the major Powers in matters relating to peace and disarmament.

26. She would like to know what was the meaning of the term "non-manufacturing", used on page 3 of the report of the USSR. She would also like to know the level of women's participation in the armed forces, the police, the ministries and the foreign service of the Soviet Union.

27. In view of the impressive achievements made with regard to the full equality of women in political, social and economic life of the country, it seemed curious to her that it had been considered necessary, in 1976, to establish a permanent committee of deputies of the Supreme Soviet to study the living and working conditions of women and to make recommendations for improving those conditions.

28. Mr. NORDENFELT commended the report submitted by the Soviet Union upon its concise format and clarity; it clearly indicated that work and economic freedom were the basic prerequisites for equality between men and women.

29. The report stated that Soviet women perceived the upbringing of the young generation as an important task in the attainment of peace. He wished to know how men, as fathers, shared in that task. The report also stated that the ideals of peace were instilled in children together with notions of patriotism and internationalism. However, it should be pointed out that it was not always possible to reconcile patriotism with nationalism and that emphasis on the former often worked to the detriment of the latter.

30. Although the achievements of Soviet women with respect to work were obvious, the report stated frankly that much remained to be done concerning the promotion of women to positions of leadership; the report also stated that women tended to be employed in various types of factory work and especially in the health, education and social services sectors. However, the high number of women in engineering should be noted.

31. The report stated that the salaries of women in the textile industry and other light industries had recently been increased. It would be interesting to know whether the increase had been intended to bring women's salaries up to the level of men's in the same industries, or whether it had been a general measure applicable to all workers.

32. In the social domain, it would be interesting to know whether fathers as well as mothers had the right to take leave to care for a sick child when necessary, and

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(Mr. Nordenfelt)

whether unmarried persons, men and women, could adopt children if they so desired. Finally, in the dissolution of a marriage, it was unclear whether a husband who had taken his wife's surname when he married was entitled to retain that surname or resume his own name upon termination of the marriage, as women did.

33. Ms. SMITH said that the report of the Soviet Union was excellent. There could be no doubt that that country had been highly successful in ensuring equality of women and achieving high rates of employment for women in areas which, in other countries, remained the sole province of men.

34. It was also evident that women in the Soviet Union had made great strides in the political and social spheres. In that connection, she wished to know what authority was vested in the Permanent Committee of Deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on the Problems of Life and Labour of Women, mentioned on page 10 of the report, and whether its recommendations were binding. She also wished further clarification as to why women constituted only 27 per cent of all Communists.

35. With regard to the promotion of women to positions of leadership, it would be interesting to know whether specific measures had been adopted to that end specifying, for example, that, all other conditions being equal, preference should be given to women candidates.

36. With regard to paid employment, she asked whether, despite the acceptance in practice of the principle of equal pay for equal work, there were still, as was the case in many countries, poorly paid jobs that were generally held by women. It was also important to understand the situation with regard to the division of labour within the home and the participation of husbands in household tasks.

37. Finally, she wished to know whether spouses had equal rights and obligations with respect to their children in the event of dissolution of the marriage.

38. Ms. MUKAYIRANGA thought that the progress achieved by the Soviet Union in promoting women's rights was remarkable and commendable. Soviet women's contribution to the world peace movement was undisputably of fundamental importance and worthy of praise. However, it should not be forgotten that the struggle for peace should also have a domestic component and should influence a country's national policy. She wished to know whether women in the Soviet Union had the same rights to transmit their nationality as men and what laws were applicable in cases of discrimination against women.

39. Ms. MACEDO DE SHEPPARD, referring to the report of the Soviet Union, wished to know what system of guarantees the Constitution provided for the practical exercise of equal rights for men and women, the total expenditures for social assistance for mothers and children and the proportion of the budget allocated by the State for education. In addition, she wished to know if war propaganda was really considered in the Soviet Union to constitute a crime against humanity. She thought it was important to have more information about how the Soviet Peace Fund was used to support the peace movement and the national liberation movements in various parts of the world.

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(Ms. Macedo de Sheppard)

40. She asked what percentage of the members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party were women. It would also be interesting to have more information on the structure of the judicial system in order to assess the practical effects of women's participation in the courts. She also wished to know the percentage of women belonging to scientific and technical societies and whether workers in all sectors in the Soviet Union were paid equally, since the principle of equal pay for equal work was frequently insufficient to guarantee equality when there were sectors in which women workers predominated and those sectors were the lowest paid.

41. In addition, it would be useful to know what constituted the differentiated work patterns and production norms in jobs which were mainly performed by women, and the type of sanctions imposed in cases of non-compliance with labour legislation covering pregnant or nursing women. She also wished to know if there was any difference in the USSR between old-age pensions and retirement pensions. Finally, she wished to know under what conditions an abortion was considered to be illegal.

42. The report was not clear as to what types of work were considered difficult or hazardous to women in the Soviet Union, nor did it say whether that classification had anything to do with the provisions of the relevant ILO Conventions. The report stated that 70 per cent of those employed in the textile industry were women, but did not specify how many of them held administrative positions. With regard to housing construction, she asked whether housing units were planned for families with children, or whether steps had to be taken when children were born to ensure that they would be provided with adequate space.

43. It would be useful to know what proportion of the 72 per cent of women in the educational system was involved in secondary and in primary education, and how many of them were teachers or principals. She was also interested in finding out how many women there were in the Soviet Union, since she had been surprised to learn that there were 5 million women working as public inspectors. She also wished to know what functions they performed. She concluded by asking what proportion of women were unmarried and whether paternal consent was required for the marriage of minors.

44. Ms. EL-FETOUH wished to know through what channels women could express their commitment to activities to promote peace. The report had given examples of textbooks promoting the cause of peace; it would also be interesting to have examples of texts promoting equality between men and women. With regard to women's participation in social and political life, she wished to know the programmes of bodies having women members, such as the Permanent Committee of Deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on the Problems of Life and Labour of Women.

45. She also wished to know why the fact that 5 million women were public inspectors was considered to be a manifestation of democracy; and what their duties were. She inquired further what were the penalties for non-compliance with labour laws which prohibited employers from refusing work to pregnant women and nursing mothers. In view of the fact that the report stated that a husband was obligated to support his wife during pregnancy and in the first year following the birth of a child, even though the wife was still able to work, she asked what happened after that period.

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46. Ms. PEYTCHEVA said that the report of the Soviet Union accurately reflected the legislative, economic and social measures adopted in that country to implement the Convention. It was evident from the report that the majority of women in the Soviet Union had achieved both de jure and de facto equality. Moreover, it was obviously not a coincidence that the Soviet Union had been one of the proposers of the Convention. There could be no doubt that, as stated in the preamble of the Convention, peace and disarmament were necessary to achieve full equality between men and women.

47. In that connection, the role of Soviet women in activities to promote peace merited special attention, and she accordingly asked the representative of the Soviet Union to provide more information on that subject, particularly in view of the seriousness of the international situation.

48. Paragraph (b) of article 7 of the Convention called for the participation of women in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof. In that context, it was interesting to note the existence of the Permanent Committee of Deputies of the Supreme Soviet established in 1976 to deal with the protection of mother and child. She wished to know whether there were similar bodies at other levels of the system, and what their functions were.

49. Ms. CORTES noted that the fact that 74 per cent of the teaching staff in the Soviet Union were women suggested the persistence of a conventional approach towards the kind of work women were expected to perform in that country. The report seemed to suggest that there had been problems regarding equal pay for men and women and it would therefore be useful to have the relevant figures for a clearer idea of the degree of equality between men and women in employment. It would also help to have a breakdown of the USSR population by sex. According to the report, women made up 52.5 per cent of the student body of centres of higher education, which would seem to indicate that more women than men went on to higher education. With 65.4 per cent of administrative personnel consisting of women, the question arose whether the participation of men in those sectors was not in jeopardy.

50. It would be useful to know whether the political participation of women in elections was related to their membership in the Communist Party. Since no more than 27 per cent of women were Party members, it was not clear to what extent the rest of the female population participated in political life.

51. Ms. BERNARD said that it would be most useful for the USSR report to include an annex showing the legislative measures adopted to guarantee equality of men and women. With regard to the structure of the judiciary, she wanted to know whether there were family courts and whether everyone had free access to the courts for all kinds of legal problems. Women in the Soviet Union appeared to enjoy a privileged position with respect to social security. In her own opinion, everyone should enjoy the same rights and benefits on a basis of equality. There also seemed to be special privileges for mothers and she would like to know whether women who were not mothers also enjoyed privileges. Women were apparently entitled to a pension after 20 years of service; it would be interesting to know whether those with fewer years of service were also entitled to a pension.

(Ms. Bernard)

52. Lastly, it would be interesting to know the figures on prostitution in the Soviet Union as well as those on rape; it would also help to know whether, in addition to criminal penalties for rape, there were social and rehabilitation programmes for women victims of rape. The report indicated that free abortions were available to women. She wondered whether there were any restrictions or whether any woman could get an abortion at any stage of pregnancy. As a final question, she wanted to know the minimum age of marriage.

53. Ms. NGOC DUN said that the advances in the status of women in the Soviet Union clearly demonstrated that they could only be achieved when all the organs of the State gave priority to that task. The achievements of women in the Soviet Union had always been a source of inspiration and encouragement for women in many other countries.

54. The report mentioned various mechanisms for stimulating the process of the advancement of women such as the Permanent Committee of Deputies of the Supreme Soviet on the Problems of Life and Labour of Women and the Protection of Mother and Child, the special committee of the Presidium of the All-Union Central Trade Unions Council and the Committee of Soviet Women. It would be interesting to hear from the Soviet representative how those bodies were interrelated, whether they had a co-ordinated plan of action, whether there were other organs, institutes or committees doing study and research on women's problems and what criteria were applied in evaluating their effectiveness.

55. On the other hand, despite the evidence of equality achieved by the Soviet woman, she wondered whether there were still some problems of discrimination against women.

56. Mrs. REGENT-LECHOWICZ agreed with other experts that the report of the Soviet Union should be regarded as a model for other reports. In reading it, she was again reminded that the USSR had lost 22 million people in the last world war and much of the country had been destroyed. Reconstruction could only begin after peace had been restored and favourable conditions for progress could be created. That explained why Soviet women were active in the struggle for peace and disarmament. The section of the report on that subject was particularly important and was fully in accord with the principles stated in the preamble of the Convention. It was also interesting to note that in bringing up young people in the Soviet Union, emphasis was placed on peace and brotherhood among peoples. That policy reflected the ideas contained in the United Nations Declaration on preparing nations for peaceful coexistence.

57. The report presented a favourable picture of the status of Soviet women in political life and provided vital information on social policy and the protection of the family. It offered innovative solutions of great value to large families, women who had been deserted and single mothers. Development of family protection policy had led to recognition of motherhood by the State and by society as a social function of women.

(Mrs. Regent-Lechowicz)

58. With regard to divorce, she had been interested to note that during the wife's pregnancy and for one year after the birth of the child, the husband could not petition for divorce without his wife's agreement. She would like to know whether that provision was included in existing family law and what its practical effects were, that is, whether compliance with the law could help to avoid divorce and strengthen marriages. She would also like to know what measures had been taken to reduce divorce, particularly in families with children.

59. Ms. LAMM drew attention to the important section of the report dealing with the participation of Soviet women in the struggle for peace and, like other members of the Committee, requested additional information on the Soviet Peace Fund and the participation of women in that body. Bearing in mind that the USSR was a federated State, the Committee should have more information on the status of women in the Republics of the Union, particularly on the education of women and their participation in the peace movements in those Republics. Lastly she would like to know the divorce rate in the Soviet Union.

60. Ms. NIKOLAEVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) expressed appreciation for the interest shown in her country's report and said she need a little time to prepare her replies to the many questions put by the members of the Committee.

61. Ms. Nikolaeva (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) withdrew.

62. Ms. MARTINEZ pointed out that the expert from Cuba had been unable to attend the Committee's meetings because she had been denied the necessary visa and asked why the experts from China and Sri Lanka were not present. She also wanted to know what had happened to the contributions requested from agencies like FAO, UNESCO, ILO and WHO.

63. The CHAIRPERSON explained that the expert from Sri Lanka had been unable to travel to New York owing to the political situation prevailing in that country.

64. Ms. DE REGO DA COSTA SALEMA MOURA RIBEIRO said that the expert from China had been unable to attend the session because elections were being held in that country. She thought it important for the Committee to take appropriate steps with regard to the absence of the expert from Cuba.

65. Ms. BIRYUKOVA expressed disappointment at the absence of the expert from Cuba resulting from an act of discrimination and failure to comply with the agreements of the host country with the United Nations and asked the Committee to demand that the required visa be granted.

66. Ms. MARTINEZ pointed out that the expert from Cuba was participating in the Committee's work in her personal capacity and not as the official representative of her country.

67. Ms. CANON also considered it important for the Cuban expert to be granted a visa.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.