



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
Twentieth session

Summary record of the 419th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 1 February 1999, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. González

later: Ms. Kim Yung-chung (Vice-Chairperson)

later: Ms. González (Chairperson)

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

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

Combined third and fourth periodic reports of China (CEDAW/C/CHN/3-4 and Add.1 and 2; CEDAW/C/1999/I/CRP.1/Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Qin Huasun, Mr. Wang Jun, Ms. Xue Hanqin, Mr. Zhang Chonggen, Ms. Zhang Jianmin and Ms. Zou Xiaoqiao (China) took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Qin** Huasun (China) said that China had been one of the first States to accede to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. His Government attached great importance to its implementation and to the Committee's work. His delegation included representatives of both the Chinese central Government and the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China. They looked forward to a constructive and open dialogue with the Committee.

3. The combined third and fourth periodic reports of China (CEDAW/C/CHN/3-4), which covered the period from 1989 to 1995, had been prepared by the National Working Committee on Women and Children, the organ established to coordinate the work of government departments to protect the rights and interests of women and children.

4. The use of the terms "act" and "code" in the English version of the report was incorrect, the term "law" being the most accurate rendering of the Chinese.

5. The report consisted of three parts. Part I presented basic facts and figures about Chinese women, focusing on their political participation and on education, health care and employment. While there had been gradual progress in all those areas, the goal of gender equality had not yet been attained. His Government was committed to developing the national economy and strengthening the legal system to that end.

6. Part II described China's implementation of the Convention and, in particular, the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Women (Women's Law) and the Programme for the Development of Chinese Women for the period from

1995 to 2000. The Women's Law, adopted in 1992, had been the first basic law to protect women's rights and interests in a comprehensive and systematic manner. It set out women's political, economic, social and cultural rights, and their rights with respect to marriage and the family. The Programme was aimed at giving effect, through practical measures, to the principle of gender equality enshrined in the Women's Law and other national legislation. It had been developed on the basis of the Beijing Platform for Action, while taking account of the specific conditions obtaining in China.

7. Part III outlined China's follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women.

8. His Government valued the work of non-governmental organizations in protecting women's rights and interests, and the report also highlighted their activities. Addendum 1 contained information on the latest developments with regard to China's implementation of the Convention from 1996 to 1998. His delegation had also circulated informally a document containing statistics disaggregated by gender on employment, education, health and sports for 1997.

9. Addendum 2 described the implementation of the Convention in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. China had resumed the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong in July 1997. In accordance with the "one country, two systems" policy, the people of Hong Kong enjoyed a large measure of autonomy. Its social, economic and legal systems differed from those of mainland China. Its Government therefore had prepared a separate report on the implementation of the Convention in Hong Kong. The Committee's questions concerning addendum 2 would be taken up by the representatives of that Government at a later meeting.

10. His Government was aware that, despite its efforts to enhance the status of women in China, much remained to be done. More than 100 million women were still illiterate, and there was a wide disparity between the educational level of women in the cities and those living in rural areas, where vestiges of feudal thinking persisted. In the course of the transition from the planned economy to a market-based system, large numbers of women workers were being laid off. Women's participation in political life was still low. Nevertheless, his Government remained committed to the goal of achieving gender equality, and it welcomed the support of the international community in that regard.

11. Turning to the questions contained in the report of the pre-session working group (CEDAW/C/1999/I/CRP.1/Add.1), he said, in connection with question 3 on the implementation of the Programme for the Development of Chinese Women for the period from 1995 to 2000, that by early 1997 some 30 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities had formulated programmes for the development of women, taking account of local conditions. Decision makers at all levels of government had been familiarized with the Programme's objectives, and nationwide publicity campaigns had been conducted through the mass media. The National Working Committee on Women and Children had convened meetings to discuss the progress made and the difficulties encountered in implementing the Programme. Local working committees on women and children had compiled guidelines on the monitoring and evaluation of the Programme.

12. Most of the Programme's major objectives had been achieved. Women were now present in the leadership of all provinces and autonomous regions. The number of women participating in local government at the various levels had increased by at least 42.5 per cent and as much as 84.4 per cent.

13. The number of people living in poverty had been reduced from 65 million in 1995 to 42 million in 1998. They were mostly residents of remote mountainous or arid areas where the climate was harsh and economic and cultural development slow. Some 60 per cent were women. His Government had sought to alleviate poverty in those areas by enhancing the infrastructure, implementing microcredit programmes and promoting cooperation with the fast-developing eastern regions.

14. With regard to employment, over the past few years more than 7 million new jobs had been created annually, 40 per cent of them held by women. At the same time, many female workers had been laid off. His Government was providing free vocational training and guidance to facilitate their re-employment and guarantee them a minimum standard of living.

15. The disparity between the enrolment rates for boys and girls in primary schools had been reduced from 2.91 per cent in 1990 to 0.21 per cent in 1997. During the same period, 37.73 million people aged 15 to 45 years had benefited from literacy programmes, although more work would need to be done to reach the goal of eradicating illiteracy among young and middle-

aged women by 2000 because of the large base number of illiterate women.

16. The health-care targets had been achieved in all the eastern regions, whereas in the rural western regions indicators such as the rate of child delivery in hospitals had remained low (45 to 65 per cent), leading to relatively high rates of maternal and infant mortality.

17. There had been a reduction in the number of cases of forced prostitution and trafficking, while the incidence of rape had remained unchanged and cases of domestic violence against women had increased. Educational and awareness-raising campaigns had been conducted and measures adopted in the localities in order to address that problem.

18. His Government was currently examining means of enhancing the implementation of the Programme in China's poorest regions. It was also drafting a programme for the development of Chinese women for the period from 2001 to 2010.

19. With respect to the question raised in paragraph 6 of the report of the pre-session working group, he said that the positive changes brought about by the reforms instituted since 1979 included the reinforcement of women's awareness of their equality, self-reliance and participation. Women had become involved in activities such as elections, community work, literacy campaigns, poverty alleviation, technical training and anti-pornography campaigns, and women who held political office had put forward new proposals for action in the context of the reform. Currently, the Ministries of Education and of Science and Technology were headed by women.

20. In addition, the range of employment for women had expanded, so that the number of women employed in new industries such as information technologies, environmental protection, engineering, finance and law was currently five to 10 times the number before the reforms. The number of women entrepreneurs, managers and professionals had also increased. The introduction of the household responsibility contract system had enhanced the autonomy, income and status of rural women. Women's level of education had improved, and women had represented over 30 per cent of those working in scientific and technological fields in 1997. The spread of the mass media and the country's legal education campaign had broadened women's vision and awareness. Between 1978 and 1997, net incomes in rural and urban areas had

increased by an average of 8.1 and 6.2 per cent, respectively.

21. The reform's adverse effects on women included an increase in the number of laid-off women workers, which sometimes lowered women's status in the home and even led to domestic violence in some cases. The challenge of market competition was particularly stressful for many women. Some private businesses and jointly funded, foreign-funded and jointly operated enterprises failed to protect women in the workplace from long hours, poor working conditions and violations of their human rights. Social problems such as trafficking in women, prostitution and mercenary marriages still existed, and domestic violence was on the rise. The Government was currently taking vigorous measures to address those problems.

22. With respect to changes in social services, the State had reformed the pension, medical care, maternity benefits and housing systems to reflect the principle of socialized pooling, under which the costs of benefits were reasonably shared among the State, enterprises and individuals. The new practice in respect of maternity benefits, which was described in the report (CEDAW/C/CHN/3-4), had improved women's employment environment and the protection of women's health.

23. In reply to the question in paragraph 8 of the report of the pre-session working group, he said that, since the promulgation of the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Women, the National People's Congress had conducted two inspections on the Law's implementation. The 1997 inspection had found, *inter alia*, that women cadres in government institutions and enterprises accounted for 33.8 per cent of the total, representing an increase of 2.3 per cent since the Law's promulgation. The number of women in government organs at all levels, who were recruited on the basis of equal competition with men, had risen steadily. Although the number of women in the workforce had risen by only 0.9 per cent between 1992 and 1996, structural adjustment had made it difficult to achieve even that modest increase.

24. Since the promulgation of the Women's Law, the Government had paid more attention to the main problems faced by rural women, such as those involving their right to hold agricultural land and the right of divorced women to own their homes and property and to have custody of their minor children,

and some local governments had included provisions to solve those problems in local laws and regulations. In divorce proceedings brought by women as a result of maltreatment and in cases in which child support and alimony payments were requested, judicial protection of women had been strengthened. Gross violations of women's human rights had been deterred by crackdowns on criminal activities that could be physically harmful or fatal to women. Consequently, the incidence of trafficking in women and children had decreased for five years in a row.

25. Nevertheless, the inspection had also revealed a number of problems. Women's participation in leading political positions was not commensurate with their participation in social and economic development. The problems of re-employment of laid-off female workers, their unequal access to employment opportunities and inadequate labour protection had become more acute. Many institutions and enterprises set higher standards for the recruitment of women because they viewed women's physiological characteristics as weaknesses. Those and other problems had become a cause of concern at all levels of government, and were the subject of numerous studies aimed at devising solutions.

26. With respect to paragraph 10, he said that the Working Committee on Women's and Children's Affairs was responsible for coordinating the work of the relevant government departments in protecting women's and children's interests and rights and in implementing the Programme for the Development of Chinese Women, and for supervising the implementation of the Women's Law by ministries, commissions and local governments. The Committee consisted of 23 ministries and commissions and five non-governmental organizations, one of which was the All-China Women's Federation. All the member organizations of the Committee carried out activities to promote gender equality in the context of their specific functions. For example, the Ministry of Education was responsible for girls' education and literacy; the Ministry of Public Health, for maternal and child health care; and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, for the vocational training and re-employment of laid-off female workers. The Committee was funded by the Government, while the All-China Women's Federation, which was the largest Chinese women's organization, received one fourth of its funding from

the Government and relied on its own fund-raising for the remainder of its budget.

27. In reply to the question in paragraph 11 he said that the print and broadcast media had been used to advocate gender equality by means of dynamic and educational programmes that spread awareness of outstanding women in all fields and denounced traditional discriminatory attitudes and practices. The legal guarantees of gender equality in China's Constitution, Women's Law and other laws provided an important underpinning for efforts to modify social and cultural patterns of behaviour. The Programme for the Development of Chinese Women and similar initiatives to ensure women's full participation in social development also helped to promote changes in behaviour patterns. The Government emphasized education and training for women and encouraged women to study non-traditional subjects.

28. Since discriminatory attitudes and practices were related to the level of economic development and to the idea that sons were a valuable source of care and support in their parents' old age, the State had promulgated a law in 1996 to protect the interests and rights of the elderly, which provided for support and social security for them and for their participation in social development. Lastly, the Government had embarked on the revision of primary- and middle-school textbooks to remove gender stereotypes.

29. **Mr. Zhang Chonggen** (China) said, in reply to the question in paragraph 4, that his Government had always respected and protected the right of all citizens, including members of ethnic minorities, to freedom of religious belief. China's Constitution and a number of national laws protected that freedom and prohibited discrimination on the basis of religious belief or non-belief. In addition, China had taken a number of steps to protect the cultural and religious rights of minority groups, including efforts to preserve their cultural heritage, to study and publish their ancient writings and traditional arts and to protect their cultural relics. The Government had earmarked large sums of money to restore and maintain the historical and religious sites and buildings of ethnic minorities.

30. News and publishing agencies for minorities had been set up at the central and provincial levels. The traditional medicines of ethnic minorities were being systematized, studied and applied, and 121 hospitals practised the traditional medicine of different minority

groups. The development of the culture and folk arts of minority groups was encouraged through activities such as art, music and dance festivals, traditional sporting events and cultural contacts and exchanges with foreign countries. Ethnic minorities in autonomous regions had the right to use their own languages in their local administrative organs.

31. The rights of religious minorities such as Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists and Christians were fully protected; for example, China had some 32,000 mosques and 1,780 Tibetan Buddhist monasteries. Ethnic minorities from religious circles were guaranteed the right to participate in State affairs and decision-making. Currently, 23 such persons were deputies to the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). Persons who committed serious violations of the laws concerning the freedom of religious belief were subject to imprisonment.

32. Schools in which the majority of students were of minority nationality could use the languages of those nationalities in instruction. Many minority ethnic groups had their own college and university departments that taught in their respective languages. Over 6 million students were enrolled in the country's 10,000 bilingual schools for 21 minority nationalities, and textbooks were published in 30 minority languages.

33. Women belonging to ethnic minorities in China accounted for 8.05 per cent of the country's total female population. Great improvements had been made in their political, economic and cultural participation; for example, many minority women were deputies to the National People's Congress. Lastly, local governments in areas populated by minorities conducted educational campaigns on maternal and child health. However, the Government imposed no mandatory policies on minority nationalities in that regard.

34. **Mr. Zhang Chonggen** (China), in reply to questions regarding the Tibetan Autonomous Region, said that at the end of 1997 the population of Tibet was 2,393,000; 96.3 per cent of the total population were Tibetan. In carrying out family planning policy in Tibet, Government regulations provided that full respect must be shown for Tibetan cultural tradition, ethical values and religious beliefs. No part of the family planning policy was mandatory. It was based on

the principles of offering information and education, providing quality care and giving people informed choices. In Tibet, couples working in the cities were encouraged to have two children, and those in rural areas were encouraged to have fewer and healthier births and to space children reasonably. Couples with three children were not encouraged to have more, but there was no birth quota. Efforts were concentrated on publicizing the Marriage Law, introducing safe motherhood skills and dissemination of information.

35. *Ms. González, Chairperson, resumed the Chair.*

36. **Ms. Xue Hanqin** (China) said that, concerning a legal definition of discrimination, the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Women did not contain a definition of discrimination in specific terms. However, international conventions, for instance, the Convention, had the force of domestic law in China and contained such definitions.

37. Women enjoyed the same rights to land ownership as men, and in rural areas, the Villagers' Committees were responsible for ensuring that those rights were respected. They could not discriminate by reason of sex in the amount of farmland assigned to an individual, and in setting the amount of yields to be turned over to the State, unequal requirements could not be imposed on women. Women's legal rights to responsibility farmland or grain-ration farmland after marriage or divorce would be protected by the Villagers' Committee in the village where the women's residence was registered.

38. If a woman's legal right to farmland was violated, she was entitled to compensation under the law. China had 22 per cent of the world's population, but only 7 per cent of its arable land, explaining the land shortages. Contract farmland was initially distributed to each family as a unit according to family size. However, with changes in marriage there had been cases where women's legal rights to hold land were not well protected. A new round of farmland contracts in rural areas of China was under way, and the problems encountered regarding women's rights to land had received serious attention from the Government.

39. In reply to questions on complaints relating to violations of women's rights under the provisions of the Women's Law, she said that the judiciary had dealt with a total of 156,000 cases of infringement of women's rights from 1994 to 1998. Among those cases were violations including abduction, trafficking in

women and rape. Most of the complaints were in the categories of domestic violence, rural women's right to land and labour protection for women workers in some joint ventures, foreign-owned businesses and private enterprises.

40. Concerning the composition of the diplomatic service, she said that according to statistics at the end of 1998, there were 1,344 women in the diplomatic service, bringing the proportion up to 28.5 per cent of the total. Currently 20 per cent of the diplomats at or above deputy division director level were women. There were 29 women ambassadors and counsellors and 355 first and second secretaries, still a low proportion of participation at those levels.

41. In reply to a question regarding sexual harassment in the workplace, she said there was no explicit definition of sexual harassment in China's laws and regulations, but protection against that behaviour was provided through other laws.

42. **Mr. Wang Jun** (China) said that violence against women was a direct result of discrimination against women. In recent years there had been a major increase in cases of domestic violence for a number of reasons. First, China had a long history as a feudal society, and patriarchal ideas still had some influence. Women victims mistakenly believed that being beaten by their husbands was a family stigma and endured the abuse in silence. In addition, there were still many women who did not have an independent income, and their fragile economic status and dependence left them powerless. Ideas about family life which had arisen during the transitional period had led in some cases to a lack of responsibility towards the family, which in turn had led to domestic violence. Finally, in remote rural areas, there were still cases of arranged marriages and mercenary marriages; it had been shown that domestic violence occurred more frequently in such marriages.

43. Violence against women as a universal social issue had become a matter of serious concern in China. The relevant government departments, social organizations and non-governmental organizations were making efforts to reduce and eliminate such violence. The Women's Law, the Criminal Law and the Regulations on Administrative Penalties and Public Security all contained provisions on violence against women. In urban areas, victims of domestic violence could go to the police stations, neighbourhood offices or the neighbourhood committee for help. In rural areas

the police station or the Committee for Public Security could offer assistance. Victims could also seek help through legal aid services, hotlines for domestic violence complaints and formal letters of complaint regarding domestic violence and infringement of their personal dignity.

44. The Government was greatly concerned with the high incidence of suicide among rural women, and some social institutions had undertaken studies of the phenomenon with a view to making suggestions and recommendations. Counselling and support services had been made available to women in both urban and rural areas, and legal aid centres specifically for women had been set up.

45. Prostitution was illegal in China. Both prostitutes and clients received administrative penalties including detention and fines for violating public security. No law in China permitted the opening of a brothel, and organizing, forcing, seducing, sheltering or introducing a woman to engage in prostitution or soliciting a man as a client violated criminal law. Intercourse, whether voluntary or not, with a girl under the age of 14 constituted statutory rape.

46. With regard to the questions in paragraph 16, he said that in 1991 activities associated with the abduction or selling of women had been made criminal offences in their own right. Various levels of government were responsible for rescuing women and children who had been abducted and sold; officials who failed to do so were committing an offence. Discrimination against women who had been rescued was forbidden, and the local government was obliged to provide them with a living. Any person who obstructed the functionaries of a State organ from rescuing a woman or child who had been sold was liable to between two and seven years' imprisonment.

47. Following a major crackdown on trafficking, there had been a remarkable reduction in the number of cases: in 1995 there had been 10,531 cases of abduction and selling of people — a 6 per cent drop from the year before — and 13,934 women victims had been rescued. The corresponding figures for 1996 were 8,290 (a drop of 21.4 per cent), with 11,000 women rescued, and for 1997 6,425 (a drop of a further 22.5 per cent), with 7,051 women rescued. Since 1998 special funds had been allocated for the rescue of trafficked women.

48. In recent years some Chinese traffickers had colluded with foreigners in luring young Chinese women in border areas with the offer of working abroad, marrying a foreigner or working in tourism. The women were taken through Burma to be prostitutes in Thailand. Almost 100 — mostly from Shanghai, Hong Kong and Macao — had been rescued by Thai police in 1995 and 1996 and had been returned to China by Thai charitable organizations. Six young women from Shanghai who had been forced into prostitution in Macao had been rescued in 1997. Vietnamese, Burmese and Korean women had been sold into China.

49. **Ms. Zou** Xiaoqiao (China), replying to the question in paragraph 17, said that since the establishment of the women's talent bank in 1991, the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF) had recommended 317 women candidates for high government posts. Resulting appointments included the Deputy Minister for Civil Affairs, the deputy governors of Shandong, Liaoning and Jiangsu provinces, the director-general of a department of the government of Jilin Province and the deputy mayors of two municipal governments. From 1992 to 1997, ACWF had recommended 1,710 women to serve in local government in Guang Xi Zhuang Autonomous Region and 714 had been appointed.

50. With regard to question 18, she said that the ACWF Executive Committee was elected by the National Women's Congress, which had met most recently in September 1998. The plenary session of the Executive Committee elected a president, vice-presidents and members of the Standing Committee. ACWF made its own work plans, in accordance with its constitution and in the interests of Chinese women. It worked independently, reflecting women's opinions and concerns, monitoring the Government's implementation of policies and laws relating to women, making recommendations for improvement, conducting poverty-alleviation programmes for women and carrying out re-employment projects for redundant women workers. All its work was aimed at the further advancement of women. Its funds came from three sources: from its own entities — a travel agency, a publishing house and women's newspapers and magazines; from a government allocation — amounting to about a quarter of the total — and from contributions from domestic and overseas enterprises, organizations and individuals.

51. There were many women's organizations and groups that were not sponsored by ACWF, such as the Chinese Women's Health and Development Association, the Chinese Women's Intellectual Association, the Young Women's Christian Association and others. National or local women's organizations could become members of women's federations. Each organization had its own constitution. The relationship with ACWF was one of cooperation and friendship, not of leader and follower.

52. In reply to the questions in paragraph 20, she enumerated the measures taken by ACWF to promote women's participation in decision-making. The Federation had put pressure on government departments to formulate training programmes and set quotas for women's appointment to leading positions. It had contributed to the drafting of the Programme for the Development of Chinese Women, which set targets for women's political participation by 2000. Secondly, it had organized training courses and workshops in women's colleges and schools across the country on improving management skills. Women leaders were also given education in self-respect, self-confidence, self-reliance and self-improvement. Thirdly, the Federation had built an information network of women's talents, on the basis of which women candidates had been recommended to various government departments. Some 20 to 30 per cent were appointed, as a rule. Fourthly, it used the 47 newspapers and magazines of the women's federations to carry out extensive publicity campaigns on gender equality and the significance of political participation by women. The aim was to reach the whole of society, expanding public knowledge, changing social prejudices and creating a favourable environment for women's participation in decision-making.

53. Women represented 16.3 per cent of the membership of the Communist Party. Women deputies to the Fifteenth Congress of the Party in 1997 numbered 344, or 16.8 per cent of the total. There was one female alternate member in the Political Bureau. Among the reasons for the slowness of the increase in the number of women deputies to the National People's Congress was the fact that, with the adoption of a market-oriented economic system, the administrative system had undergone a similar change, including the introduction of competitiveness among personnel. That had affected women's political participation and there were no fixed targets for their future participation.

Secondly, women still faced various forms of constraint and discrimination. Traditional notions of male superiority continued to influence the evaluation of women's ability, and promotion tended to go to men rather than women. Thirdly, women lacked self-confidence. The equal competition mechanism was still not good enough.

54. Since the passage of the Women's Law in 1992, more and more women from the national minorities had joined public decision-making bodies. For economic reasons, however, there were few statistics on rural women, including women from the minorities. There were currently 607,600 women from the national minorities in leading positions nationwide, or 26.6 per cent of the total. They included deputies to people's congresses, members of decision-making bodies of governments at every level or judges, prosecutors and lawyers. The President of the People's Court in one province was from the Dai national minority. In the Linxia Autonomous Prefecture of Gansu Province, an area inhabited mainly by national minorities, 33.2 per cent of the 8,864 women leaders of the region (themselves 29.8 per cent of the total of local leaders) were from the national minorities. National minorities provided 48.3 per cent of the 58 women leaders above county level and 54 per cent of women leaders at section level. Of the 19 women promoted to leading positions at county level in 1996, 40 per cent were from the national minorities.

55. The Internal and Judicial Affairs Committee of the National People's Congress had an office dealing with women, children and young people. Its tasks were to carry out research and draft relevant legislation, to prepare comments for the consideration of draft laws by the presidium of the Congress sessions, to monitor the implementation of such laws and of local regulations, and to deal with correspondence from the public concerning women, children and young people.

56. **Mr. Zhang** Jianmin (China), replying to the questions raised in paragraph 22, said that illiteracy among some 185 million people had been eliminated. Each year five million people became literate, of whom over 65 per cent were women. In 1997 there had been 148 million illiterates aged 15 and above, over 100 million of whom — 70 per cent — had been women. The female illiteracy rate had fallen from 90 per cent in the period just after the founding of the People's Republic of China to 23 per cent in 1997. Most illiterates were currently found in poverty-stricken

rural areas, the majority being women and older people. Eliminating illiteracy had thus become more difficult.

57. Measures taken to promote literacy included extensive campaigns, sometimes combined with technical-skills training or courses in legal knowledge. Help had also been received from the All-China Youth League: university students went to remote and mountainous areas to publicize technical know-how and carry out cultural activities. ACWF had instituted awards for women who had made a significant contribution to literacy campaigns.

58. With regard to compulsory education, she said that by law children would have to attend school for nine years. Local authorities would decide on measures to promote such education, depending on the economic and cultural conditions in their localities. Compulsory education would be divided into two stages: primary and junior middle school. The Government had set up a special fund, to which Y3.9 billion would be allocated in the period from 1995 to 2000. The contribution of local government would be in the ratio of 2:1, so the total amount would exceed Y10 billion. In 1997 the Government had set aside the sum of Y130 million from the fund to establish national compulsory education grants for rural poor students. Each year the grants benefited over 600,000 children.

59. The drop-out rate among girls at primary school had fallen from 2.77 per cent in 1990 to 1.49 per cent in 1995 and to 1.01 per cent in 1997. The rate was, nevertheless, higher than that among boys, the main reasons being poverty, the insufficient number of schools in some remote areas and some parents' persisting preference for boys over girls. In 1996 the State Education Commission had put forward 10 proposals for enhancing the education of girls living in areas of poverty. Various social sectors had also extended their support to rural girls. Hope Project, launched by the China Youth and Child Fund, had received Y1.6 billion in donations, which had made possible the building of over 7,000 Hope schools and the attendance of 1.85 million children. The Spring Bud Plan established by ACWF and the China Children and Teenagers Fund had raised Y200 million and helped 750,000 girls who had dropped out in poor areas to return to school.

60. With regard to the questions in paragraph 23, she said that only 2 per cent of women had had further

education, as against 3.4 per cent of men in 1997. For both genders the percentage was very small, owing to the large population, economic constraints and insufficient facilities. The lower percentage of women was due to the fact that women formed over 70 per cent of the still large number of illiterates and that in many families less was expected of girls, with the result that often they considered themselves inferior to boys and did not compete. Much attention was given to nurturing and building up the sense of gender equality among children and older students. Girls were encouraged to study non-traditional subjects.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.