



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

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## Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Nineteenth session

### Summary record of the 386th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 23 June 1998, at 3 p.m.

*Chairperson:* Ms. Khan

### Contents

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

*Initial report of the Slovak Republic*

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.*

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

*Initial report of the Slovak Republic (CEDAW/C/SVK/1 and Add.1)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Suchankova (Slovakia) took a place at the Committee table.*
2. **The Chairperson** invited the Committee to continue with the questions to be posed to the Government of Slovakia.

*Article 5*

3. **Ms. Ferrer** requested further information on measures taken by the Government to reverse discriminatory cultural traditions and improve the image of women in the media. The reporting State should indicate whether work was being conducted in schools to eliminate negative stereotypes with regard to the role of women in society. Paragraph 41 of the report described motherhood and the role of women in very traditional terms. It would be interesting to know what was being done to promote awareness of the responsibilities of fathers in the rearing and education of children.

*Article 6*

4. **Ms. Javate De Dios** said that the statistics on prostitution and pimping provided in the report suggested either that those phenomena were negligible or that the laws were not strictly enforced. In general, trafficking in women had markedly increased throughout Eastern Europe. The reporting State should indicate to what extent Slovakia had been affected by that trend and whether the Government had conducted studies to determine the magnitude of the problem. More objective statistics should be provided to give the Committee a more realistic picture of the situation, particularly with regard to the causes of prostitution and its consequences for women and girls. More information would be appreciated on the role of men in prostitution and trafficking in women and the activities of crime syndicates in that regard. She inquired whether the Government had participated in initiatives to combat trafficking in women conducted by the European Union and regional organizations and what it

was doing to advance the social reintegration of women involved in prostitution and offer them alternatives.

5. **The Chairperson** said that it was difficult to see from the report how effectively the problem of domestic violence was being dealt with under the Penal Code. The reporting State should indicate whether prostitution was legal in Slovakia. If it was not, were both prostitutes and clients subject to penal sanctions? If prostitution was legal, the reporting State should indicate whether there were laws or regulations that protected prostitutes from exploitation. Lastly, the Committee would appreciate detailed statistics on trafficking in women.

*Article 7*

6. **Ms. Corti** said that paragraph 48 of the report indicated a very low level of participation by women in public life, particularly in decision-making occupations. It was surprising to see that the report failed to give information on any measures by the Government or political parties to redress that situation. The reporting State should provide more information on Slovakia's electoral system and the level of participation by women in political parties. It would be interesting to know whether political parties in Slovakia had taken any temporary measures, such as the introduction of a quota system, to increase women's participation in political decision-making. Further information should be provided on what the women in the Government and individual municipal functions were doing to enhance the role of women in political life and protect their rights with regard to employment. Lastly, it would be interesting to know whether women parliamentarians had introduced concrete measures to eliminate discrimination against women and increase awareness of the Convention and ways of implementing it.

7. **Ms. Yung-Chung Kim** said that annex VIII of the report indicated a very high percentage of women among judges and prosecutors. The percentage of female lawyers, however, was much lower and had decreased from 1980 to 1993. The reporting State should explain the reasons for the decline over that period and whether the high percentage of women in the judiciary had improved the everyday situation of women in Slovakia.

8. **The Chairperson** inquired to what extent the low participation of women in public life was due to drastic

cuts in the child-care support system and to the gender-biased educational system. The reporting State should also indicate whether the new law restricting the formation of civic associations had a negative impact on women's participation in public life.

#### *Article 10*

9. **Ms. Ryel** said that, according to a statement on page 20 of the addendum to the initial report (CEDAW/C/SVK/1/Add.1), within education in secondary schools, there were special schools for girls, which prepared the girls in three specialist fields. In the school term 1997/98, 65 special schools had been established. The reporting State should identify the three fields in question and indicate whether boys also received instruction in them. It would also be interesting to know the percentage of secondary schools that served as special schools for girls.

10. **Ms. Yung-Chung Kim** said that the reporting State should explain the reasons for the small proportion of women in technical departments at universities and the high percentage of women in the teaching profession. The Committee would like to know whether the Government was taking any measures to redress that imbalance and whether there was any plan to introduce women's studies into university curricula. Statistics should be provided on the percentage of women faculty members at universities and their areas of specialization. She also requested further information on career counselling for women university and graduate students and asked whether any scholarships were awarded to encourage women to specialize in non-traditional disciplines.

11. **Ms. Guvava** said that the special schools for girls, which prepared them in three specialist fields, seemed to be contrary to article 10 (c) of the Convention, which dealt with elimination of stereotyped concepts of the roles of women and men. Further information would be appreciated on the specialized fields and the reporting State should indicate whether boys were taught in the same fields. It would also be interesting to know whether there was a quota system for granting loans to female university students.

12. **Ms. Ferrer**, referring to paragraph 56 of the report, inquired whether the school orientation was different for boys and girls and what the objectives were for girls in terms of career selection.

#### *Article 11*

13. **Ms. Corti** said that according to paragraph 58 of the report, all citizens were entitled to work and to free selection of employment. The reporting State should explain how that principle was implemented in practice and what measures were taken by the Government to ensure that it was respected. Paragraph 59 of the report stated that the Labour Code guaranteed the right of equal status in work for women and men. The Committee would appreciate information on how equal status in work was guaranteed in practice. According to paragraph 69 of the report, the age at which women were entitled to pension benefits was reduced from 57 to 53 years, depending on the number of children raised. She inquired whether that meant that women who had several children could receive a pension earlier and whether steps were being taken to ensure equality between women and men with regard to the right to a pension.

14. The reporting State should provide information on the facilities for women referred to in paragraph 83 (a) of the report. She inquired whether paragraph 83 (c) meant that women were prohibited from working at night and she requested an explanation of the phrase "overnight work in exceptional cases" in paragraph 83 (d). Paragraph 83 (g) referred to worktime modifications for women caring for children. The reporting State should indicate whether there was flexible time in the workplace for women. Further information should be provided on the minimum wage in Slovakia and on measures to deal with the high rate of unemployment and reduce the gap in wages between men and women.

15. **Ms. Ryel** requested information on the number of women in high-level managerial positions in both the private and public sectors and on measures to increase the percentage of women in such positions. Since the retirement age was different for women and men, the reporting State should indicate whether there were different levels of pensions for women and men. The Committee would appreciate additional information on the unemployment rate among Romany women and measures to deal with that problem.

16. According to paragraph 77 of the report, in certain circumstances pregnant women were reassigned to other or lower paid work during pregnancy until the ninth month after childbirth and were allocated complementary pregnancy and maternity benefits

amounting to the difference between their average earnings before being reassigned to lower paid work, and the wages earned in the individual calendar months following such reassignment. The reporting State should indicate whether the benefits were paid by the social security system or the employer and explain why reassignment was delayed until the ninth month after childbirth. Lastly, she inquired whether women returning to their previous positions encountered difficulties in being promoted or were subject to discriminatory attitudes in the workplace.

17. **Mr. Yung-Cheng Kim** asked for gender-disaggregated data on current trends in employment and pay in Slovakia.

18. **Ms. Ferrer** asked how the recent economic recovery had affected women's employment rates and participation in business activities. She also wanted to know if women were availing themselves of opportunities to take part-time or second jobs, and if not, what measures the Government was taking to promote part-time employment opportunities for women. The Committee needed to know what percentage of the unemployed in Slovakia were women, as well as what specific types of protection were extended to women in the working environment.

19. **Ms. Javate De Dios** asked for more information on the specific impact on women of the transition to a democratic regime and the privatization of government enterprises, and whether poverty was being noticeably feminized as a result of that transition. She also asked for statistics on employment rates for women, an explanation of the wide gap in wages between men and women, and whether mechanisms existed to address discrimination in the workplace, particularly sexual harassment. Finally, she requested information on State assistance to women for child-rearing, the extent to which men were expected to participate in parental duties, what type of social safety nets existed for female-headed households, and the extent of women's participation in trade-union activities.

20. **Ms. Abaka** asked about the effect of social and health-sector privatization on women's reproductive health, what measures the Government was taking to address the health problems of Romany women, and the incidence of tuberculosis in the female population. She inquired whether the coerced sterilization of Romany women in eastern Slovakia was continuing, what government units were responsible for health

education, and how many women were dying as a result of abortion complications. Finally, she asked for information on rates of breast and uterine cancer, and on programmes to promote their early detection.

21. **The Chairperson** expressed her continued concern with regard to women's health in Slovakia, especially among ethnic minority women. She asked whether rates of infant mortality, HIV/AIDS and abortion among women of ethnic minorities significantly exceeded the national average, and if so, what access those women had to health services. Finally, she asked for data on health assistance available to Romany and other ethnic minorities under the new social system.

#### *Article 13*

22. **Ms. Ouedraogo** asked for more information on women's access to bank loans and mortgages, and whether women were encouraged to go into business on their own.

#### *Article 14*

23. **Ms. Ouedraogo** said that the report's treatment of issues arising under article 14 of the Convention was inadequate and asked for more detailed information on the condition of rural women and their rights to land ownership and use, as well as on government measures to support rural female-headed households.

24. **Ms. Ferrer** also expressed dissatisfaction with the report's treatment of issues arising under article 14 of the Convention, and asked for more information on the effects of privatization in rural areas as well as on government strategies to improve the status of rural women, particularly in the areas of employment retraining and technical programmes. She asked about the extent to which rural women were actively participating in development, and about the results, if any, of such participation.

#### *Article 16*

25. **Ms. Cartwright** asked about measures to address the issue of violence within the family and to assess the extent to which women and children were the victims of violence. She asked for more information regarding protective and preventive measures against violence, such as judicial protection orders, women's shelters, and victim counselling. Moreover, she said she would appreciate an elaboration of the Government's views

on women's rights to equal status with men within the family, and of laws and practices regarding the division of family property in the event of separation or divorce. Finally, she requested further information on what constituted actual grounds for divorce, on the current rate of divorce and on whether policies on child custody and division of property applied equally to married and unmarried couples.

26. **Ms. Aouij** asked for clarification of the means available, especially to women, to reconcile professional and familial responsibilities, and whether government social assistance and remuneration took account of work done within the family, i.e. child-rearing and education, by either spouse. She urged the passage of legislation severely punishing violence within the family, and asked for information about government efforts to integrate a gender perspective in social and family policies and eventually phase out social and cultural traditions which were incompatible with the provisions of the Convention. Finally, she asked whether existing national family legislation also applied to families of minority ethnic groups.

*The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.*