

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

CEDAW A/39/45 (1984)

90. The Committee considered the initial report of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (CEDAW/C/5/Add.12) at its 14th and 19th meetings, held on 3 and 8 August 1983 (CEDAW/C/SR.14 and 19).

91. The report was introduced by the representative of the State party who underlined that the legislation of the Soviet Union conformed in letter and spirit to the Convention and even went beyond its provisions. Article 35 of the Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics embodies the principle of equality of rights between men and women in all areas of culture, social, political and economic life. The exercise of those rights was guaranteed through equal opportunities for women in education and training, and in social, political, economic and cultural activities as well as through the adoption of special measures to protect the health of women in the workplace and to enable them to combine motherhood with work.

92. She gave a detailed account of the historical factors which had put an end to the exploitation of man by man. In 1918, the first Soviet legislation to be enacted proclaimed the equality of political rights of all Soviet citizens. Subsequent legislation 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. The Constitution in force not only reaffirmed the principle of equality between men and women, but guaranteed their equality by legislative, administrative, economic and other measures, 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.

93. The representative of the State party provided the experts with comprehensive statistics on employment and education of women and their representation in the country's parliament, the Supreme Soviet. She also reported on family relations in the Soviet Union which 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. She pointed out that socialism had created economic and social conditions that made possible a mass participation of women in all spheres of the political, economic, social and cultural life of the country and in the family.

94. The Soviet political system is developing in the direction of increasingly broad participation of the citizens in the government of the State and in society.

95. In 1982, 1,146,000 women were elected to local Soviet (50.1 per cent of the total). Women deputies are widely represented in the various committees of the Supreme Soviet, including the Foreign Affairs Committee, Youth and Health committees, etc. Women participate, on equal footing with men, in the discussion of bills, adoption of laws, approval of plans for socio-economic development, for national budget and in deciding major issues of the USSR's domestic and foreign

policy. Women hold 65 per cent of all jobs in the management of public affairs, the economy and in the running of co-operative and community organizations.

96. At the present moment, there are over half a million women factory and state farm directors and managers of building sites and collective farms. Women occupy responsible positions in the Council of Ministers of the USSR. Nine women are Deputy Chairmen of Council of Ministers in Union Republic and autonomous republics. Twenty-seven women stand at the head of ministries in Union Republics and autonomous republics: among them there are ministers of industry, foreign affairs, training, health, etc. At the present time, the ranks of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union contain over 4.7 million women. Soviet women are guaranteed full employment. Women in the USSR not only enjoy equal rights to work, but also equal pay for equal work.

97. There is a state-established system of guarantees and privileges allowing women to combine work and motherhood. The State protects women's labour and health by prohibiting the use of women on hazardous and hard jobs and by providing them with free medical service in special institutions of the State health system, as well as by developing the system of pre-school children's facilities. Material and moral support to motherhood and childhood in the USSR is secured through payment of maternity and post-natal benefits, provision of paid leave to care for sick children, benefits to large families and single mothers, and partially paid leave to mothers until the child reaches the age of one year, and so on. The rent for homes in the USSR remains unchanged since 1928 and now constitutes, including public utilities, 3 per cent of the income in workers' families.

98. Noting the importance of the political participation of women, several questions were raised regarding women's leadership positions and, specifically, whether there were women at the Politburo level, in the Central Committee, as ministers, as heads of universities, technical institutions and higher courts, as directors or general managers of State enterprises and as heads of trade unions. It was also asked whether special measures such as set percentages or quotas had been established. It was remarked that only 27 per cent of women belonged to the Communist Party, and it was questioned whether that in any way hampered the participation of women in the political, social and economic life of the country. Questions were asked regarding the qualifications to be met in order to become a member of the Party, as well as on the organization of elections and whether membership was necessary in order to participate in elections.

99. Other members inquired about the various established organizations and their co-ordination and interrelationship concerning the monitoring of the status of women, for example, among the Committee of Soviet Women, the Special Women Affairs Commission of the All Union Central Trade Unions Council, youth organizations and the recently created Permanent Commission of Deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on the Problems of Life and Labour of Women and the Protection of Mother and Child.

100. Information was requested concerning the composition and functions of the latter, which was created in 1976, and it was asked whether its establishment was not required because inequalities existed in the status of men and women. Concerning the power of that Commission to make recommendations on all questions relating to women, more details were requested as well as clarification on the meaning of the expression "binding recommendations".

101. Several experts remarked that there seemed to be a general emphasis on the role of women as mothers rather than on the status of women themselves, since there was an impressive amount of legislation and social security benefits covering the rights of mothers and children. Interest was shown in the family-planning policy of the USSR. In the report, it was mentioned that abortion was legal and yet reference was made to measures against illegal abortions. It was also asked what was the actual role of fathers in the upbringing of children, since that was the joint responsibility of both parents under the law, and whether fathers received the same benefits as mothers regarding parental leave. A question was asked about the total amount of State grants to women and children, since a substantial increase had been noted from 1970 to 1980. Information was also requested regarding adoption and whether a single parent, either man or woman, could adopt a child. Noting that there existed a provision regarding the choice of the family name by the spouses, it was asked whether, upon divorce, a husband who had chosen to take his wife's maiden name could retain it. The experts were most interested in knowing more on the attitudes of husbands vis-à-vis their working wives and whether there was an equitable sharing of responsibilities in the home. The experts asked for further information on specific measures and privileges which allowed the working mother to combine motherhood and work successfully and whether such measures and privileges applied to the father.

102. In connection with divorce, the experts commended the law which forbade the husband to initiate procedures during the first year of a baby's life or while the mother was pregnant. It was asked what the practical results of that legislative provision had been. Another question asked was whether the system provided for an equal sharing of responsibilities at the dissolution of a marriage, particularly as regards parental rights and duties.

103. Some experts expressed interest in the working of the judicial system, which dealt specifically with the problem of financial provisions for children, asking whether the problem of compelling the divorced husband to contribute to the support of his child had been resolved.

104. Some members of the Committee asked about the position of single mothers and if they could initiate paternity procedures.

105. Concerning the nationality of the married woman, information was sought regarding provisions governing the acquisition or loss of nationality.

106. There was scant information in the report, some experts noted, regarding provisions of the Penal Code, and it was asked what provisions or regulations were in force regarding rape and prostitution and also whether there existed special rehabilitation programmes for women and what was the incidence of prostitution.

107. Regarding education, some experts noted that 60 per cent of the State expenditure on education was devoted to schooling and asked what was the overall amount of the education budget. They also requested additional information on the participation in women in higher institutions and, particularly, on the number or proportion of them holding executive or managerial offices.

108. In the field of employment, the experts noted the extent and importance of the participation of women in various economic sectors and commended the Soviet Union for the realizations achieved.

A question was asked about the spheres and extent of the “considerable scope for further advancement of women to leading positions” referred to in the report and whether the Government was taking immediate steps in that regard, for instance, by granting preference to women over men when they had the same qualifications.

109. Regarding the principle of equal pay for equal work, several experts inquired whether such a right was implemented in practice even when it was embodied in labour law. Taking into account the high number of women working in the fields of education, health care, social work and textiles, some experts wondered whether those figures did not reveal stereotype attitudes. In that respect, additional and comparative figures on the respective levels of wages of men and women were requested, particularly concerning the increases accorded to women working in the textile sector.

110. Concerning the special and favourable status granted to working women regarding their working conditions and their social security advantages, some experts asked whether such privileges could not impair equality.

111. Concerning protective labour legislation, it would be helpful to the Committee to receive more information, together with copies of the relevant laws, since it was said that certain professions were considered harmful to women.

112. Replying to the questions, the representative of the State party noted that the Soviet Union placed a high value on the political significance of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which dealt with the vital interests of women throughout the world, with their equality in all spheres of social activity and within the family.

113. As requested, she informed the members of the Committee that the Constitution of the Soviet Union fully reflected the requirements of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Many of the Convention’s provisions were developed and given detailed interpretation by other legislative instruments passed in the Soviet Union, such as the Fundamentals of Labour, Public Health, and Public Education Legislation in the USSR and the Union Republics, as well as the Law on Elections to the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union, Fundamentals of Marriage and Family Legislation in the USSR and the Union Republics, the Law on Citizenship of the USSR and other legislation. She assured the Committee that Soviet legislation relating directly to women was comprehensive and at the same time specific.

114. Special guarantees of equality which women enjoyed in the Soviet Union were contained in article 35 of the Constitution. Women were guaranteed equal rights to education and vocational training, employment, remuneration for employment, and promotion in all social, political, economic and cultural activities. She pointed out that in the Soviet Union the principle of equal pay for equal work was vigilantly observed and that there was no discrimination as regards remuneration. Wage scales were fixed and the trade unions participated in the determination of wages and conditions of work. There was a listing of occupations harmful or dangerous to women’s health where employment was forbidden. In that respect, the USSR State Committee on Labour and Social Affairs adopted appropriate regulations in collaboration with the USSR Health Ministry with regard to women’s employment to these occupations. There were 32 professions in agriculture and industry

where those new standards had been introduced. Specific measures had been adopted to protect the jobs and health of women and to enable women to combine work with motherhood.

115. With reference to social security, she explained the pension provisions for married and widowed women. Regarding marriage, she explained that the minimum age for marriage for a woman was 18, but that under very exceptional circumstances the court could lower it to 16. When a husband failed to fulfil his parental obligations, the Criminal Code established different measures of penalties. The sharing of household tasks was left entirely to the couple to solve in a friendly manner. There was also flexibility as to whether the children took the surname of the father or of the mother if the marriage was dissolved. In no agreement was possible, the Family Court would decide. The same applied to the domicile of children. Both mother and father had the same rights and duties. Paid leave for caring for a sick child was given to men and women alike. However, only the mother was given paid maternity leave and partially paid leave to take care of a child for up to one year. The Marriage and Family Code stipulated that adult men or women could adopt children. If the parties concerned were married, the consent of both partners was required.

116. When a marriage was dissolved, the Marriage and Family Code stipulated that both the mother and the father retained equal rights and obligations in connection with the raising of children. If no agreement could be reached on custody, the court that had ruled on the dissolution of the marriage determined which parent had custody of the children. Concerning paternity, the same Code stipulated that, in the absence of any joint statement on the paternity of a child born out of wedlock, paternity was determined by the court.

117. There was no prostitution in the USSR and rape was severely punished. The latter carried a penalty of imprisonment of up to 10 years in cases of physical violence or threat of murder. Rape of minors or gang rape was punished with 8 to 15 years' imprisonment.

118. There was a clear and upward trend in the employment of women at the highest levels although no women are members of the Politburo at the present. There were, however, 487 women in the Soviet Presidium or 33 per cent of the total, and membership of the Central Committee of the Communist Party was by election at the Party Congress. An even larger percentage (47 per cent) of women members could be found in the Supreme Soviets of Union and autonomous republics and in the local Soviets of People's Deputies. Four thousand two hundred and four women have been elected to serve as judges in People's Courts, whereas among court assessors over one half were women. More than half a million women were factory and state farm directors, managers of building sites and collective farms and heads of government departments. There were two women on the Council of Ministers of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic and nine women held ministerial positions. Many of the deputy-ministers and chairmen of State committees were women. There were 106,000 women as either directors or deputy directors of secondary schools. Although women were not conscripted for military service, there were employed by the Ministry of Defence in hospital services attached to the military and in other social positions. The representative of the State party explained that secretaries of party organizations were elected political leaders and that 27 per cent of them were women.

119. Clarification was provided regarding women's involvement in the shaping of foreign policy, as

well as in peace and disarmament efforts. Soviet women were making a major effort to promote peace in the world. Labour collectives played an important role in policy formulation. Many activities such as the holding of rallies were financed through the Soviet Peace Fund which relied on voluntary contributions from citizens. Women were included in delegations to foreign countries and often were the heads of those delegations. As to a woman becoming Head of State, that eventuality depended not only on the educational background and personal ability of the person, but also on the specific outstanding qualities which would enable that person to carry out the varied obligations which the people expected of a leader.

120. Soviet women also had an organization of their own: the Committee of Soviet Women. The Committee actively co-operated with the Permanent Commission of Deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on the Problems of Life and Labour of Women and the Protection of Mother and Child and with women's commissions in the trade unions. The commissions have the right to originate legislative measures provided for in the Constitution of the USSR and participate in work on draft legislation concerning further improvements in the status of women. Regarding the purpose and functions of the Permanent Commission, she explained that it had been decided that all matters relating to women should be dealt with by the Permanent Commission. The membership of the Permanent Commission was determined by the Supreme Soviet and comprised both women and men. It could review the activities at the local level, require the submission of reports and make recommendations on matters concerning women and children. Similar commissions had also been established in all the Union and autonomous republics as well as at the local level. Members of the Permanent Commission were deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, at the Supreme Soviets of the Union and autonomous republics and of the local Soviets.

121. The Committee thanked the representative of the State party for her thorough reply. Some experts stated that the USSR fully implemented the provisions of the Convention and that the Soviet women played a very important role in the life of their people. It was recognized that there were some questions which, for lack of time, had been impossible to answer.

122. Some experts recommended drawing the attention of States parties to the desirability of using the positive experiences referred to in the above-mentioned report in order to make further progress in eliminating discrimination against women, not only de jure, but also de facto.

CEDAW A/44/38 (1989)

337. The Committee considered the second periodic report of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (CEDAW/C/13/Add.4 and Amend.1) at its 145th and 147th meetings, on 1 and 2 March 1989 (CEDAW/C/SR.145 and 147).

338. In introducing the second periodic report and responding to questions presented by members of the Committee, the representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics noted that her Government had taken an active role in elaborating the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which contained the minimum standards to ensure the equality of rights for women. She said that the equality of rights was also underlying principle of all legislation in her country. Since the consideration of the initial report, a revolutionary restructuring had taken place in the country and perestroika had introduced radical changes into the lives of women. Women were a socio-demographic group and their place and role in society had radically altered over the years of socialist construction. The major change was their higher level of general education. She mentioned the fact that 88 per cent of the female population received higher secondary education, 92 per cent was working outside the home or studying and 51 per cent of the national economic activities were undertaken by women. She also gave statistical data on the percentage of women in politics, trade unions and the judiciary. Although the country was experiencing difficult times, the situation of women continued to be a subject of major importance.

339. The representative explained that perestroika was putting an end to the marginalization of the common women and man in the decision-making process. One of the most important amendments to the Constitution was the article that had put an end to punishment for criticism and introduced the right to discuss vital issues openly. Perestroika, she said, corresponded to the desire of all Soviet citizens. It involved an expansion of the rights of the different republics and high-level cultural discussions. She also said that the broad strata of Soviet society, including women, should be made aware of all the changes that were taking place and that women's councils were one of the most important elements in the democratic structure of society. They had been given the opportunity of taking a more active part in the management of public affairs.

340. The representative stated that more efforts were needed to promote women to leading posts. Currently, women constituted only 12 per cent of the top engineers, 2 per cent of the members of the Academy of Sciences, 14 per cent of the heads of workshops and 40 per cent of the scientific workers. Perestroika was helping to do away with old stereotypes and attitudes as regards household duties, and the new thinking was entering the consciousness of more and more people. The country was still in a transitional period, but positive advances were continuously being made. In highlighting the most important changes taking place in the socio-economic sphere, the representative said that by 2000, 16 million workers would be released from the agricultural and industrial sectors into other sectors, and half of them would be women. That process would require vocational training to equip women with the necessary higher qualifications. Under a new law, women with children under eight years of age were allowed to take training courses during working hours without loss of pay.

341. Matters of major concern were the supply of food and the importance of rural workers increasingly acquiring control of the soil, which would lead to an improvement in the status of women

and their families, as were housing problems, an increase in the production of consumer goods, a restructuring of all branches of industry, an increase in real wages and the reduction of manual labour. As a result of the recent reform of the educational system, women would be able to embark upon any profession in future. Funds totalling 11 billion roubles had been allocated from the State budget, of which 3.5 billion roubles were for the annual expenditure needed to increase the salaries of teachers, 75 per cent of whom were women.

342. The representative said that improvements had been made in the health sector as regards obstetric, therapeutic and paediatric care. The rate of mortality had decreased, medical complexes had been set up throughout the country and, since 1988, prescriptions for medicines for children under three years of age had been free of charge. She also said that a programme on the prevention of AIDS had been introduced.

343. The representative said that there was a broad system of guarantees and benefits for women. Certain measures, such as increased family allowances, higher salaries for medical doctors and higher wages in light industry, benefited women equally. The increase in housing allowances and allowances for children were part of the general improvement of social welfare measures. The working woman had assumed a new image and her interests were among the main concerns of current national policy. She said that the success of perestroika depended on the participation of women and the improvement of their status.

344. The representative drew the attention of the Committee to an expert group meeting on social support measures for the advancement of women, which had been held in November 1988. Participants in the meeting had proposed that a protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women should be prepared. It should consist of government measures for the social support of women and their families. The representative felt that the proposal deserved the most serious attention and that it would be an important step towards the advancement of women and increasing the efficiency of the implementation of the Convention.

345. The members of the Committee acknowledged the prompt submission of the second report, the detailed presentation and the statistical data provided. Some of the members noted that the representative had been one of the main participants in the drafting of the Convention and found the improved economic situation under perestroika encouraging. They welcomed the critical view of the remaining problems. The Committee recognized that the country was undergoing a major process of reform aimed at the improvement of all facets of life. They welcomed the proposal for a protocol to be added to the Convention and suggested that a draft should be circulated soon and brought to the attention of the Commission on the Status of Women.

346. Members of the Committee said that perestroika and glasnost would certainly make it possible for the final obstacles to equality to be overcome. One member noted especially that Soviet women's organizations had provided assistance to developing countries in the educational sector.

347. Some members of the Committee asked whether Soviet women were aware of the discrepancies that still existed as regards wage levels and whether the Government or women's organizations contemplated introducing any measures to encourage women to change their still disadvantaged

status. Others asked whether Soviet women were aware of their new rights under perestroika.

348. Several members of the Committee asked what was being done to change conservative male attitudes towards housework. Some members said that women still seemed to be seeing as mothers rather than consumers and asked whether anything was being done to improve the recreational and leisure aspects of the women. Other members asked whether the subject of violence against women, which was a world-wide phenomenon, was discussed by women's organizations under the influence of glasnost, whether the abuse of alcohol played a role in such violence and what was being done to protect abused women.

349. One member of the Committee asked whether prostitution was practised in the country and whether any legal provisions existed to prevent or suppress it.

350. Interest was expressed in the initiatives taken by women's councils. Some members of the Committee asked what was being done to promote the status of women in political life. They commented on the declining representation of women in politics and decision-making posts. One member referred to the few women in leading positions as tokens and inquired whether affirmative action was planned to alter the situation. Considering the role played by Soviet women in the struggle for peace, it was asked whether there were women officers in the Soviet army, and if not, why not.

351. Regarding the statement made by the representative that 16 million workers, half of them women, would change their jobs, it was asked whether those women would be retrained and whether their redeployment would bring about an improvement or deterioration in their situation, in view of the fact that the introduction of advanced technology had been detrimental to the status of women in other countries. Inquiries were made about the reasons for the extremely low percentage of female heads of academic institutions. A member asked whether the reasons were a lack of enthusiasm on the part of women, a lack of qualified women or whether it was difficult for women to enter academic fields.

352. One member of the Committee wanted to know what the minimum level of remuneration in the Soviet Union was and how it compared with an average family income. She also asked whether there were sufficient child-care facilities in the country. Another member inquired whether mechanisms existed to monitor the socio-economic rights of working mothers, such as child-care leave or shorter working hours, and to ensure that the new system was not detrimental to them rather than advantageous. While appreciation was expressed for the statistical data provided in the report (CEDAW/C/13.Add.4/Amend.1), it was said that the picture would have been clearer if, in addition, the total figures for women and men had been supplied.

353. Regarding birth control, it was asked whether it was true that many women resorted to abortions, and what were the conditions under which such abortions were performed and which methods were used. It was asked further whether the existing misconceptions about chemical contraceptives were being dispelled and whether such contraceptives were available.

354. Further information was sought about the involvement of women in agricultural communities.

355. Members of the Committee asked whether the number of divorces had increased since the presentation of the country's initial report, whether the number of unmarried mothers and of de facto unions was high in the Soviet Union, and what the opinion of Soviet society about them was. A member inquired how the Government was tackling the problem that many divorces were precipitated by the abuse of alcohol. One member inquired whether the father's statutory liability to pay maintenance applied to all his children and what the sanctions in the case of non-compliance were. A question was raised about the existence of inheritance and succession laws and whether they applied also to unmarried mothers.

356. In reply to questions presented by members of the Committee in writing or raised orally, the representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics stressed the interrelationship, to which she had previously referred, between the improvement of the status of women and the recent socio-economic changes and said that, under glasnost, women had become more active and were no longer prepared to accept shortcomings in their conditions. In earlier days, she said, it was normal for women to work on night shifts but, since perestroika, women no longer wished to perform night work. She said further that the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women 13/ coincided with the provisions contained in the Soviet Development Plan for Social and Economic Services.

357. The most important fundamental rights and freedoms of women were enshrined in article 48 of the Constitution. Women had the right to elect, and to be elected to, the national councils. In key organs, different standing commissions dealt with a variety of problems peculiar to the lives of women, worked out measures to protect women and took part in the drafting of new laws. She explained that the Committee of Soviet Women had been in existence for a long time, but its functions were changing and it was concentrating on women's domestic life. Perestroika had also improved the work of women's councils. Women could also be seen among the 1,200 delegates at the All-Union Conference of Soviet Women in 1987 at which new women's councils had been created. In all, there were 237,000 women's councils, with a membership of 2.3 million women. The councils worked in close contact with the trade unions and the authorities. Their role in promoting women to key posts, however, was still poorly developed.

358. The representative said that the text of the Convention had been published, but not in large quantities. The work of the Committee, its discussions and recommendations were conveyed to Soviet women through the press.

359. As regards the role of women in the family and in child rearing, she said that women did not play a subordinate role. She said that the question of education for young women was taken very seriously; it was important, however, that in being promoted, women should not lose the femininity and motherliness. Great emphasis was placed on mutual respect between the sexes. Although the

13/ Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E. 85. IV. 10), cap. I, sect. A.

health authorities and women's councils were gaining in strength, it took a long time to change

prevailing attitudes enshrined in culture and traditions, especially in the Central Asian Republics. The representative said that most women shared domestic responsibilities with their spouses and the idea was also incorporated in school curricula. The sharing of responsibilities could be increased by the wider availability of modern household appliances and the social protection of the family.

360. As most women were employed in the national economy, it was important to alleviate their household burdens by developing modern appliances in order to provide them with more leisure time. Specific targets had been set for various enterprises to produce better appliances.

361. Violence in the family was a punishable offence and alcohol abuse was considered an aggravating circumstance in such a case. Serious steps were being taken, however, to reduce alcoholism. Prostitution existed, but it was not a major problem; although it had caused some concern in relation to the danger of spreading AIDS. Administrative and legal measures were envisaged to tackle the problem.

362. Women were also included among the members of the Supreme Soviet of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Although the actual number of women at the decision-making level was in itself quite high, women constituted only 12-14 per cent of personnel at that level and the Government wanted to see that percentage increase. One of the reasons for the low percentage could be a lack of solidarity among women themselves. There were women in high positions in the Government and the reason for the decrease of women ministers from 27 to 22 lay in the overall reduction of ministerial posts. The Soviet Union had no quota system, but it followed a firm policy to promote women to managerial positions. In professions in the mass media, 30 per cent of the employees were women. The representative acknowledged the fact that the percentage of women members of the Academy of Sciences was low, but said that the Government had no influence in that sphere: the Academy members themselves elected new members.

363. Traditionally, women played a key role in the struggle for peace. As regards their position in the army, the representative explained that women occupied auxiliary positions. The Government's policy was to reduce all armaments and related expenditure in order to release resources for social development.

364. Eight women were working in the foreign service in Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, France and Germany, Federal Republic of. There was one woman ambassador in Switzerland, as well as two women at a high level in the Secretariat of the United Nations. In 1987, 12 women candidates were presented to the United Nations to occupy Professional posts, and two of them were accepted and appointed. One of the reasons for the low percentage was that Soviet women did not like living abroad because of marital and family considerations.

365. Retraining activities were currently being undertaken in many enterprises and women and men were entitled to participate equally. There were no illiterate people in the country.

366. The representative stated that the functions of trade unions were far-reaching, covering all aspects of life. There were no statistics on the number of fathers who took parental leave to care for sick children and, in any event, it was for both parents to decide on the matter. Maternity leave for

the first year after the birth of a child, however, was given only to mothers. Additional leave to care for a child was given to the father only if he was the sole provider of care in the family. The number of child-care facilities was not yet adequate, but there were plans to increase it. In the urban areas, the demand for places in crèches and kindergartens could be met by up to 70 per cent. It was in the interest of the family that women could, for a certain time, receive part of their wages as compensation and, therefore, could afford to stay at home and look after their children. As regards work that was considered harmful to women, she said that the Soviet Union adhered to the provisions contained in the conventions of the ILO and prohibited women to undertake such occupations.

367. The question of equal pay for equal work was currently being dealt with by a Committee on labour issues and by the trade unions. Job classifications were being undertaken and the average wage was 220 roubles a month and the minimum wage was set at 70 roubles a month. The list of professions considered too arduous for women was consistent with the conventions and standards of ILO. As regards the changes in the work-force that would result from the introduction of new technologies, the representative said that new technologies were introduced by agreement between the work-force and the trade unions. Some women would have to change their places of work and would have to adapt to the new situation.

368. Concerning possible disadvantages for young women inherent in the new socio-economic improvements at the place of work, the representative said that women would have to undergo occupational retraining and had to be encouraged to take advantage of the possibilities offered to working mothers.

369. The high rates of infant mortality in Tadzhik SSR, Turkmen SSR and Uzbek SSR, which were mainly rural areas, were attributable to the fact that families were large in those regions. The rapid increase in the number of children had outstripped the State's ability to provide medical services. Solutions were being sought and some reductions in infant mortality had been achieved. Family planning was included in the health programme for up to the year 2000 and the number of contraceptive devices, as well as consultation offices for women, was being expanded. In reply to the question raised by one member of the Committee as to whether the Soviet Union still encouraged large families and presented awards to mothers of many children, the representative said that such a policy had been practised in the past and that mothers of large families received equivalent benefits and allowances. Recently, however, the family planning policy had been changing and a family with a maximum of three children was encouraged.

370. Rural women enjoyed full equality, but some differences in comparison with urban women existed in the social sphere. Currently, social and economic programmes had been directed at better meeting and needs of rural women.

371. Under the code of Marriage and the Family, all citizens had equal rights in family relations. Those rights were safeguarded and thus women were in no way placed in an inferior position. Special attention was given to improving policy regarding the family and to strengthening the family. The representative said that both spouses had to provide each other with support in the case of the other's incapacity to work. The divorce rate was 30 per cent and had remained static during recent years. The representative acknowledged that there was a connection between the abuse of alcohol and the

high divorce rate, but there was reason to hope that positive changes would be introduced. No statistics on the number of unregistered marriages were available. Laws provided for the equal rights of children born within and outside wedlock.

372. In answer to a specific request, the representative said that no final document had been circulated on the World Congress of Women, which had been held in June 1987 in Moscow.

373. The representative acknowledged the need for improving statistics and indicators and said that the statistical authorities of the Government were expanding their coverage.

374. Members of the Committee acknowledged the detailed and frank replies provided, as well as the fact that information on the work of the Committee had been disseminated to Soviet women. The Committee noted the recognition of the Government that there were still goals to be achieved.

CEDAW A/50/38 (1995)

496. The Committee considered the third and fourth periodic reports of the Russian Federation (CEDAW/C/USR/3 and 4) at its 274th meeting, on 26 January 1995.

497. Introducing the fourth periodic report, the representative of the State Party outlined the current economic, political and social situation in the Russian Federation and stressed that the position of women should be viewed within the context of the problems generally encountered in those areas. She stressed the depth and permanent nature of the current reforms in the Russian Federation and their international implications. She also pointed to the high economic and social costs of restructuring and to a whole new set of issues that the Russian Federation has had to deal with in the context of that process. Among the most acute issues were the continuing economic deterioration, the decline in real incomes, the spread of poverty, unemployment, massive migration and a sharp worsening of living standards for what appeared to be the majority of the population. Those problems were further complicated by serious ecological problems and the deterioration of the physical and social infrastructure caused by the sharp decline in capital investment.

498. Poverty had become a widespread and self-perpetuating condition for many strata of the population. There was a real danger of inter-generational transfer of poverty, since many children in poor families, particularly in single-parent households, were faced with a limited opportunity to develop as they lacked books, toys and other aids to intellectual and spiritual growth. Poverty in Russia was becoming increasingly feminized and women comprised 70 per cent of the country's unemployed. The high rate of unemployment among Russian women was primarily due to the rapid restructuring and privatization of industries employing a large proportion of female labour. The majority of unemployed women were highly educated, but the duration of their unemployment was twice as long as that of men. Social tensions, intensified by reform, had led to a resurgence of stereotyping of the role of women and to calls for their return to their "natural functions". Although national machinery for the advancement of women had been established and its functioning had protected women from some of the adverse consequences of reform, it had not as yet been able fully to articulate women's interests so as to affect the course of reform. Women remained debarred from economic and political decision-making.

499. The representative informed the members of the Committee that the Government of the Russian Federation, having realized that the monetarist underpinning of the first wave of economic reform provided only a limited set of social protection measures, had emphasized the provision of a proper level of social protection as the main requirement for the continuation of economic reform. She assured members of the Committee that, in spite of the current economic and political crisis in the Russian Federation and the sharp reduction in the capacity of the State to achieve the goals set by the Convention, the Government remained dedicated to the goals of women's advancement and the elimination of discrimination against them and would continue to take measures directed to alleviating the negative impact of transformation on women and improving their economic and social position.

General observations

500. Members thanked the Government for its report and noted its comprehensive and frank nature. They noted, however, that the fourth periodic report had a number of major weaknesses, among which the following should be mentioned. Firstly, there were few references to specific policies, programmes and activities being undertaken by the Government in connection with the provisions of the Convention. In addition, the limited number of statistics provided did not make it possible to grasp the real dimensions of the situation. Thus, the report was largely theoretical and, to some extent, incomplete in nature. It was rather difficult to assess how the status of women had evolved and what initiatives had been undertaken by the Government since the restructuring of the country had begun.

501. Members expressed concern that the special temporary measures adopted did not cover issues like increasing women's influence in policy or the market economy, their possibilities in higher positions, pay differences and other forms of discrimination in working life and the health situation of women. It seemed to be a fact that poverty in the Russian Federation was a female phenomenon.

502. Members noted with concern that with the end of communism and the introduction of the new system, changes had taken place in the political and economic spheres. While the restructuring process had entailed a series of progressive developments in society as a whole, women were encountering greater disadvantages as a result of the increase in their workload, inadequate child-care services and shrinking job opportunities; social changes were leading to a stratification that went beyond the social plane and was also directly apparent between the sexes. Yet the report said little about the economic crisis and the impact of stabilization and adjustment policies on women. A more detailed explanation should have been given of the way in which the burden of inflation had fallen on women's shoulders and increased their workload, given that the adjustment programmes had caused prices to rise and wages to be frozen, presumably forcing women to forego certain common services that were formerly available to them.

Questions relating to specific articles

Article 3

503. Responding to a question on national machinery for the coordination of policies dealing with women and on its responsibilities, status and authority, the representative, referring to the fourth periodic report, informed members of the Committee that such machinery, with mandates for women, the family and children, had been established within federal, regional and local governments and that it cooperated with public organizations. A Commission for Women, the Family and Demography had been established in the office of the President of the Russian Federation. The Commission was a collective advisory body for the formulation and coordination of government policy for achieving equal rights and opportunities for men and women. A Committee on Women, the Family and Youth had been established in the State Duma. A Department for Women, the Family and Children's Questions existed within the Ministry of Social Defence. It coordinated State policy on the family, the social equality of women and child development. The Department worked in cooperation with the federal executive and legislative branches of the State. A National Preparatory Council for the Fourth World Conference on Women had been established. It consolidated the efforts of the State and of non-governmental organizations to improve the situation of women and to develop the State's

social policy and its legal base.

504. Concerning a question raised on State programmes for the advancement of women, the representative replied that the aim of those programmes was to create conditions for the realization of the principles of equality between men and women in terms of their access to legal rights and freedoms. Such programmes included the provision of support to women candidates for election, the nomination of women as candidates for posts at various levels of executive and legislative branches, a system of control of the implementation of decisions, and cooperation with the Government and with trade unions and non-governmental organizations. One of the main goals of those programmes was to help women with their family obligations and to achieve an equal distribution of family responsibilities between men and women.

505. Replying to a question on the role of women in economic and social decision-making and the integration of their concerns into economic and social planning, the representative, referring to the fourth periodic report, informed the Committee that women in the Russian Federation were not adequately represented at the decision-making level. The problems of women's participation in economic and political decision-making had been discussed at a National Conference on Women in Development in December 1994. She further stated that the current strategy for increasing the participation of women in decision-making was directed at the restructuring of the existing system of societal governance by the enactment of the necessary laws, the creation of the necessary conditions and the development of special programmes for the training of women.

506. In reply to questions by members of the Committee concerning the resettlement of refugees, including women, the representative recalled the extent, dimensions and causes of migration in the Russian Federation. She stated that the Federal Migration Service of the Russian Federation had been established in 1991. As at 1 January 1994, 447,900 refugees had been registered, of which women accounted for 53.4 per cent. Refugees received payments equal to the minimum wage and were entitled to interest-free, long-term credit, which had been paid to 6,700 refugee families in 1992 and 1993.

Article 4

507. With regard to special measures to guarantee de facto equality, the representative stated that the law did not allow discrimination on the basis of sex. She also informed them that reform of the legislation of the Russian Federation for purposes of ensuring equality was under way.

Article 5

508. In response to a question on what had been done to ensure that women were fairly portrayed in the media, the representative stated that that issue, among others concerns of women, was systematically addressed by the programmes on State television and radio. The purpose of those programmes was to inform women of their rights and to draw public attention to women's problems. She named a number of popular programmes that addressed women's issues and concerns. She noted, however, that the stereotyping of the role of women and their place in society sometimes took place in the media and in the press.

509. Members of the Committee wanted to know whether the Government made systematic studies of forms of violence directed against women and the consequences of abuse suffered by them. In reply, the representative stated that her Government interpreted violence against women as a violation of their human rights. She provided the Committee with statistics on various forms of violence against women and information on the consequences of such violence for the lives and health of the women subjected to it. In September 1994, the National Preparatory Council for the Fourth World Conference on Women had convened a meeting to discuss the 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. The National Platform for the Advancement of Women contained a separate section dealing with action for the prevention of violence against women. She also informed the Committee that in 1993, 14,400 rape cases had been registered. In that year, the total number of crimes involving women as victims was 331,800. As a result of those crimes, 14,500 women had died and 56,400 had suffered mutilation or other bodily injury. The representative stated that the legislation of the Russian Federation regarded rape as a criminal offence punishable by long-term imprisonment. She recognized the need for shelters and mentioned the attempt to establish rehabilitation centres for the victims. Attention was given to the identification of the profiles of violators in order to improve the prevention of such crimes. She also said that, in order to combat violence against women, solutions should be found to current economic and social problems, inter-ethnic conflicts and decline in the living standards of the population.

510. Responding to the question concerning the role of the family during the period of transition and the increase of the burden of family responsibilities on women, the representative said that although her Government considered the distribution of family responsibilities as an internal family matter, it nevertheless viewed equalitarian distribution of those responsibilities as desirable and conducted policies directed at the encouragement of equal participation of men and women in parenting and caring for family members. She also stated that the expansion of economic freedom of Russian women would help to liberate them from the everyday burden of domestic work.

Article 6

511. One expert cited an independent non-governmental organization source of information on prostitution in the major cities of the Russian Federation, and requested more information on prostitution and on measures that the Government had taken to address those problems. In response, the representative stated that although it was not appropriate to refer to a source other than the report under discussion, she nevertheless was willing to comment on some aspects of that phenomenon. She referred the Committee to the fourth periodic report, where the legislation dealing with prostitution was described. She stated that the law did not establish criminal liability for prostitution, but corruption of minors, keeping of brothels and procuring for pecuniary gain were considered criminal offences. She also informed members that there was no department in the Russian Federation dealing with prostitution and, therefore, there was no reliable source of information and statistics on that issue. She stated that prostitutes did not undergo any additional medical examination and could be held responsible for their actions only in an administrative way, in other words, they could be fined.

512. The representative stated that the Government did not seek to determine whether marriages between Russian women and foreign citizens were genuine. She also pointed out that because legal illiteracy was quite widespread, it was conceivable that some Russian women could have been taken

abroad on fictional contracts. She referred to the fact that the Russian Federation had joined Interpol, which might help to address problems of prostitution and associated criminal acts.

Article 7

513. In response to a question concerning the representation of Russian women in Parliament and the generally undemocratic situation with respect to women's participation in political decision-making, the representative replied that, after a decrease, there had lately been a notable increase in the activities of women and in their self-confidence. There were now more women leaders in public movements and political parties in the Russian Federation. The political movement "Women of Russia" had been founded in October 1993 and was represented in the Parliament. Its main goal was to promote the socio-political role of Russian women and to advance them to decision-making positions. Although women's representation in the legislative organs of the federal Government had somewhat improved, they were still significantly underrepresented in the upper echelons of federal ministries. In 1995, there were only two women ministers. The strategy for the integration of women in decision-making was directed at the development and implementation of special programmes for the training and promotion of decisive, able and competent women.

514. In her answer to the question concerning measures taken by her Government to ensure that the level of women's representation in public life did not decline, particularly in rural areas, the representative said that legislation in the Russian Federation contained no discriminatory rules limiting the participation of women in the political life of the country. She pointed out that the old system of quotas, although helping to soften the effects of discrimination on women, was an old-fashioned way to address the problem and new methods should be sought. In that respect, she emphasized the greater political participation of women, which was rising. Women's organizations were an integral part of the country's socio-political structure, but many of them were still in the process of being built and were faced with a variety of difficulties. The representative informed members of the Committee that special measures had been formulated to find competent women to stand for election to executive bodies.

Article 10

515. In response to the question on government initiatives to evaluate sexism in the educational system, the representative responded that article 5 of the Education Act of the Russian Federation guaranteed access to education regardless of various factors, including sex. Women in the Russian Federation had equal access with men to higher and technical education with the exception of some occupations where operation of hazardous machinery or performance of physically strenuous tasks were required. Some restrictions on women's participation in those occupations were spelt out in job descriptions. The representative informed the Committee that the proportion of women in higher educational establishments was stable.

Article 11

516. Responding to the question on the high rate of unemployment among Russian women, the representative said that the right to work and the right to non-discriminatory treatment in the labour

market were the most difficult and contradictory questions to be addressed under the conditions of the fledgling market economy. She stated that women had accounted for almost 70 per cent of the unemployed in 1993 and explained that it was the result of the restructuring of “women’s branches of the economy”. She pointed out, however, that the proportion of women among the unemployed was expected to decline to 60 to 65 per cent as the first stage of the reform had now been completed. She also informed members that the Government had just begun to regulate labour relations under the conditions of a market economy and based its policies on the principles of assistance to the needy and of strengthening conditions for the development of employment opportunities.

517. Regarding discrimination against women in the labour market, the representative informed the Committee that the Government had never stated explicitly or implicitly that women should confine themselves exclusively to matters of family and home-making. At the same time, freedom of expression allowed some journalists and politicians to express their personal views regarding the role of women in the economy and society. She noted that there was unequal treatment of women and men in the private sector, though women who had been discriminated against were free to turn to the courts for the resolution of discrimination cases, even when companies were closing.

518. As regards the disparities in remuneration between men and women, the representative informed the Committee that salaries of women were lower not because of discrimination, but because they were employed in the sectors dependent on the State budget. The average salary of a woman in the Russian Federation was one third lower than that of men. On the other hand, when women held jobs comparable to those of men, they were paid at the same rate.

519. Concerning special treatment given to pregnant women, members asked how the policies of maternity leave and benefits had been implemented under conditions of scarcity. In response, the representative said that such measures had been taken and were discussed in the fourth periodic report.

520. Members of the Committee wished to know the value of family allowances in real terms compared with the period before economic reform. The representative said that the analysis of changes in the real value of family allowances was complicated because of the difference between the purchasing power of the family income and its nominal value. Changes in the structure of allowances constituted the other source of complexity. She informed the Committee that as at the end of 1993, there were several types of allowances available to families with dependent children. The size of the allowance was determined on the basis of the age of dependent children and the number of income-providers in the family. She also informed the Committee that since 1992, families with dependant children were entitled to a tax deduction per dependant child.

Article 12

521. In response to the question on the impact of structural adjustment on the provision of and access to health care by women and children, the representative informed the Committee that access to health care in her country was guaranteed by the Constitution. The health care system was being transformed from a system based on the State budget to one based on private insurance. The State guaranteed access to free health care to women and children.

522. In connection with the question regarding the impact of the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) on women in the Russian Federation, the representative said that the Government considered this a priority task and a matter of national security. She informed the Committee that in January 1994, 264 cases of women with HIV had been registered in the Russian Federation of whom 42 per cent were girls and of whom 33 had been pregnant when diagnosed with the virus. The Government had drafted a law on the prevention of the spread of HIV/AIDS in the Russian Federation, which was now being considered by legislative organs of the Government.

523. Responding to the question on family planning and the request for recent data on that issue, the representative stated that the Government was financing a federal programme to establish family-planning offices in all medical establishments. The programme aimed at greater availability of contraceptives and a reduction in the number of abortions. She informed the Committee that in 1994 25 family-planning centres were operating throughout the Russian Federation and, as a result of that, the abortion rate had declined to 94 per 1,000 women from 114 per 1,000 in 1990.

Article 14

524. Concerning the impact of fertilizers and pesticides on the health of women farmers and their children, the representative stated that her Government had taken a number of measures directed at improving the life of rural women. Women in rural areas were in some cases entitled to additional benefits. Women below the age of 35 were not allowed to be assigned to work with poisons, pesticides and disinfectants. There was a specific list of occupations and places where women were not allowed to work. The Ministry of Agriculture and Food had developed a programme directed at the introduction of greater automation and reduction of manual work in the areas that were especially harmful to human health.

525. Experts requested some additional information on rural-urban migration involving women. The representative replied that migration from rural areas was caused by the lack of prestigious employment opportunities in those areas. She stressed that unemployment could not be viewed as the single most important cause of migration because women from rural areas had little chance of finding employment in the cities. She also pointed out that migration from rural to urban areas had always been typical for the Russian Federation and in the past had been the result of the urbanization policy.

526. In connection with the question on the marketing infrastructure available to rural women, the representative replied that such infrastructure was at the initial stage of its development. The Government expected that in the future it would be widely accessible to all people employed within the agro-industrial complex.

Article 16

527. One expert commented that, according to various media report, there had been an alarming increase in the number of homeless children in the Russian Federation. She wanted to know what the reason for that was and what measures had been taken by the Government to address the problem.

The representative responded that every year in the Russian Federation 60,000 unsupervised minors were arrested for vagrancy and criminal activity. She informed the Committee that at present there were 59 social rehabilitation centres, 151 orphanages and 5 centres for assistance to children operating in the country. The activities of those institutions were directed at finding caring homes for children without families.

Additional comments and questions

528. Members of the Committee applauded the in-depth, substantive answers provided by the representative in response to questions posed by the Committee. One member expressed her concern about the system of quotas and the fact that the Government seemed to have completely discarded the potential usefulness of quotas as a tool for the facilitation of the advancement of women. She said that she could not see how the Russian Federation could improve women's participation in decision-making without obliging political parties to incorporate women into politics. She further stated that quotas had been used successfully in many countries. She expressed her hope that the creation of women's organizations and the greater involvement of women in politics could help the incorporation of their interests into the economics and politics of the transition.

529. In response to that comment, the representative said that although quotas might be of some use in the facilitation of women's advancement, Russian women felt demeaned by them. She said that her Government saw more opportunities for the improvement of the situation of women in the Russian Federation through encouraging women's political participation. She said that it was essential to get more women involved in the work of women's organizations and political parties.

530. Another expert expressed her concern that women in the Russian Federation, like in many other countries that underwent structural adjustment, were the main victims of the negative effects of the transition process. She said that during the period of transition, Russian women were exposed to discrimination from both the old and new systems. She further expressed her concern over the feminization of poverty and its devastating consequences. She commented on the segregation of the labour market and expressed her hope that the new system would be able to overcome that impediment to the advancement of women.

531. Another expert was concerned with the resurgence of stereotyping. She pointed out that the stereotyping of the role of women was not addressed under the old system and there existed a real danger of its perpetuation. She stressed the need for addressing women's individual and not just family-related needs. She also expressed her concern about the current internal war in the Russian Federation and its consequences in terms of loss of life and drain of much-needed financial resources.

532. One expert made a comment about the impact of structural adjustment on social services and the deteriorating health of the Russian population. She was especially concerned about widespread illnesses of the lungs, the digestive system and the nervous system among Russian children. She requested more information on the causes of those illnesses, particularly nervous disorders.

533. In response to that comment, the representative cited ecological reasons, poverty and worsening nutritional standards and possible causes of the widespread deterioration in the health of Russian

citizens.

534. A comment was made concerning the scope of new social and economic problems that had to be dealt with by the Government in the context of transition. The problems of poverty, the deterioration of the health system and the decline in the provision of social services were mentioned. In that context, the expert expressed her fear that continuation of the reform would lead to further deterioration in standards of living in the country. She felt, however, that there were some positive developments as well. She thought that economic and political crises brought a greater awareness of women's problems and encouraged women's political participation. She advised the Government of the Russian Federation to use the Committee in its efforts to reform the economy and society.

535. One member commented on the need for more special temporary measures to help Russian women achieve full integration of their interests into economic and social policy-making during the period of transition.

536. Another expert expressed her concern about the growing number of prostitutes in the Russian Federation, who operated not only in the Russian Federation but also in other countries where their human rights were constantly violated. She said that there were many Russian prostitutes in Turkey and some of them were infected with HIV. She requested some information on what happened to Russian prostitutes who were deported from Turkey and other countries. She felt that such information was needed for better monitoring of women's human rights.

Concluding comments of the Committee

Introduction

537. The Committee appreciated the frank appraisal of the situation in the fourth periodic report of the Russian Federation, as well as the frank oral presentation. In contrast to the third periodic report, it revealed that the excellent legal framework for the advancement of women in the Russian Federation neither automatically guaranteed nor led to the realization of non-discrimination and equality of rights and opportunities between men and women. Furthermore, as was clearly indicated in the fourth periodic report, achievements by and for women, made in the past were being threatened by the current social and economic upheavals.

Positive aspects

538. The Committee appreciated the inclusion in the fourth periodic report of a list of laws that revealed that, between 1990 and 1993, the Government of the Russian Federation had seriously endeavoured to adhere to the gender principle in most aspects of law, from the Constitution (1993) to Presidential Decrees and Ministerial Regulations and Instructions.

539. In spite of all the problems faced by the Russian Federation, the Committee appreciated the substantial changes being introduced in the educational system of the country.

540. The Committee also noted with satisfaction the statement that the Government of the Russian

Federation had the intention of applying the spirit and letter of the Convention in order to ameliorate the situation of women during the period of transition.

Principal subjects of concern

541. The Committee considered as the most critical matter whether all the laws and regulations, which had been listed in the fourth periodic report had actually been implemented to women's benefit.

542. The Committee expressed its concern as to the deterioration in the lot of women and children (e.g. in their health, life expectancy, employment opportunities, and educational opportunities), which seemed to be profound, despite recognition of women's political, economic and social rights.

543. The Committee also expressed its concern over the following consequences of the transformation from a Marxist society to a market economy with deregulated and privatized property and the inherent economic, political and social changes:

- (a) Difficulties in achieving the goals of the Convention;
- (b) Increase in the social vulnerability of part of the population;
- (c) Severe constraints on women's ability to exercise their equality of opportunity.

544. The Committee expressed serious concern about the deterioration of the structure of the society as a result of restructuring of the country leading to mass migration.

545. The Committee also expressed concern about the transition's negative impact on the health of the population, especially women and children, in particular as regards tuberculosis, and the decline in the birth rate, being in fact exceeded by the death rate, which affected the growth of the population. The Committee was equally concerned about the quality of the population's diet and the subsequent increase in maternal mortality.

546. The Committee expressed its deep concern that all those problems had a serious impact on women in their roles in the family and affected their ability to earn an income and participate in education and all facets of the society.

547. The Committee was also concerned that inadequate public health financing had led to a reduction in guaranteed state medical aid to women and children, while state expenditure for education in general was being curtailed.

548. The Committee was equally concerned that women's unemployment had increased ninefold and that it equally hit women with little as well as with high level training. Concern was also expressed about the fact that women received on average 30 per cent less pay than men.

Suggestions and recommendations

549. The Committee strongly recommends that in the light of the serious consequences of the current economic restructuring during the period of transition the Government should implement, as a matter of priority, emergency economic measures to alleviate the acute suffering of Russian women.

550. The Committee recommends that the Russian Federation have a mechanism within its federal administration with sufficient staff and resources encharged with initiating and coordinating the overall policy level for women and with implementing the content of the Convention. The person heading such mechanism should be at the highest possible level in order to have an impact on all the decisions of the Government which affect women. In view of the size of the country and the great number of inhabitants, the Committee considered as appropriate the need for such mechanisms at all levels.

551. The Committee suggests that special temporary measures be taken to promote the participation of women at the decision-making level in different fields, including at the highest levels.

552. The Committee recommends that the subsequent report provide information on the consequences of the political restructuring on women.

CEDAW A/57/38 (Part I) (2002)

354. The Committee considered the fifth periodic report of the Russian Federation (CEDAW/USR/5) at its 543rd and 544th meetings, on 25 January 2002 (see CEDAW/C/SR.543 and 544).

(a) Introduction by the State party

355. Introducing the report of her country, the representative of the Russian Federation analysed the implementation of the Convention for the period from 1994 to 1998 and the situation of women within the framework of the current socio-economic climate and political situation in the Russian Federation. The country had experienced an unprecedented transition from a planned economy, a totalitarian regime and a one-party political system to a market economy, a democracy and a multiparty system. Such changes had had a profound impact on all aspects of life of the Russian population in general, and on women in particular, with the despair and fear of the early 1990s being replaced by a sense of optimism and hope.

356. The representative noted that the standard of living and personal incomes of the Russian population had started to rise, emphasizing that those positive developments in the economic sphere had allowed the Russian Government to begin to focus on social policy and programmes. For example, in the 2002 federal budget, more resources were reallocated to all social spheres. The priority was to increase investment in human capital, especially in terms of improving education and health care.

357. During the period covered by the report, the Government had introduced various legislative and administrative measures to improve the status of women, protect their rights and cushion the impact of the transitional period. Women had taken an active part in the reform process, resulting in the expansion of the women's movement, especially over the past three years. Women's non-governmental organizations had participated in all major national events and discussions on socio-economic and political issues. The national discussion on the theme "Initiatives of women citizens as a factor of sustainable development" had been organized within the Civil Forum which was held in November 2001. The representative noted that, with the increased dialogue between women's non-governmental organizations and the Government, there was now a real chance of improving the status of women in the country.

358. Pursuant to the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, the Government had identified five main priorities for the advancement of women in the Russian Federation. They included women's participation in decision-making, women and the economy, human rights of women, women and health, and the elimination of violence against women. The second National Plan of Action for the advancement of women had been adopted for the period from 2001 to 2005.

359. The representative indicated that, as a result of the efforts of the Government, women's participation in political life, especially at the regional and municipal levels, had increased. She emphasized the importance of the adoption, in 2000, of a Law on Political Parties, which in its article

8 ensured equal rights for women and men to be elected to all political positions. Despite new measures and initiatives, the level of women's participation in the legislative branch of power remained low, and out of 442 members of the State Duma (the lower chamber of Parliament) there were 35 women, while out of 175 members of the Federation Council (the upper chamber of Parliament) there were only four women. The level of women's participation in the executive branch of power was also low. To address that issue, the "Concept of the State Civil Service", currently under development, envisaged the introduction of gender-sensitive training to improve the participation of women at all levels of decision-making.

360. The representative informed the Committee of the adoption of the new Labour Code, which reflected the request of women's non-governmental organizations to limit the number of occupations barred to women. In addition, the Government had developed federal employment programmes for the population that envisaged quotas for women and included social security provisions for the most vulnerable groups of women. She also described plans to conduct a gender analysis of labour legislation and to develop monitoring procedures on women's participation in the labour market. She shared the Government's concern regarding existing discriminatory practices in the recruitment and dismissal of women, especially pregnant women, and the persistence of occupational segregation. Another source of concern was the substantial deterioration in the situation of rural women.

361. In order to reduce poverty, the Government was planning to increase the minimum wage by a factor of 2.5, expand the system of compensation for housing, review tax legislation, increase subsidies and allowances for mothers and children, and proceed with pension reform. Beginning in 2002, maternity allowances would be increased threefold. The representative described efforts to bring the country out of its demographic crisis by implementing measures to stimulate the birth rate, provide assistance for families, improve the health of the population and reduce maternal and infant mortality.

362. The representative described the health situation in the country. In the period of transition, the quality of health of the population had generally deteriorated, but there had been improvement in the reproductive health of women. The efforts of the Government had resulted in a decrease in the number of abortions, with the absolute number of abortions being reduced by a factor of 1.3, with 1,961 abortions in 2000 as compared, for example, with 2,498 in 1997. However, only 23.6 per cent of women used effective methods of contraception. Among other achievements were the reduction of birth pathology, as well as maternal and infant mortality. Efforts were under way to improve access to health services for rural women. Concern existed with respect to the spread of HIV/AIDS and drug addiction among women, and measures aimed at combating those problems had been introduced.

363. The representative indicated that the issue of violence against women, including domestic violence, continued to be a serious problem for society. Surveys suggested that about 70 per cent of women experienced violence at some time in their lives, and women constituted 40 per cent of the victims of premeditated murders. The Government, together with non-governmental organizations, was designing and implementing a wide range of measures and initiatives aimed at eliminating violence against women. They included the establishment of crisis centres, the introduction of new legislation together with

the revision of existing legislation, awareness-raising campaigns, the collection of information and statistical data, gender-sensitive training of law officials and other programmes. The Government had also started to pay very serious attention to the growing problem of sex exploitation and of trafficking in women and girls.

364. She reported on further steps undertaken by the Government to strengthen the national machinery for the advancement of women and mainstream a gender perspective into policy decision-making at the national and regional levels. The role and functions of the Women's Commission, which was responsible for mainstreaming a gender perspective into State policies and programmes in all areas, within the Government had been strengthened and expanded.

365. The representative indicated that the Commission on the Status of Women had been established in the upper chamber of Parliament, and the Department of Women's and Children's Affairs had been established in the Office of Ombudsmen on Human Rights. Many regional governing structures had also created women's commissions, departments or councils. The newly created inter-ministerial commission was responsible for the implementation of regional plans for the advancement of women, while the newly established "Round Table" within the Labour Ministry included representatives of non-governmental and non-commercial organizations and contributed to the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in governmental decisions. It also operated an ongoing negotiating forum between the authorities and women's organizations.

366. In concluding her presentation, the representative noted that, despite some definite progress in the implementation of the Convention, the Government was aware that much more needed to be done to ensure the advancement of women and the achievement of gender equality. She articulated her Government's commitment to further efforts in that regard.

(b) Concluding comments of the Committee

Introduction

367. The Committee expresses its appreciation to the State party for the presentation of its fifth periodic report, which followed the Committee's guidelines. It commends the State party on its informative responses to the list of issues and questions and the frank and comprehensive oral presentation, which updated the Committee on developments in the country since the submission of the report in 1999.

368. The Committee also commends the State party for sending a delegation headed by the First Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Development.

Positive aspects

369. The Committee welcomes the fact that international treaties, including the Convention, are considered to be a component part of the State's legal system and can be directly invoked in domestic courts.

370. The Committee welcomes the enactment of the 1995 Family Code and the 2001 Federal Act on Political Parties. It welcomes the Government's adoption of the 1996 Outline on the advancement of women's socio-economic status and the National Action Plan to increase women's representation in decision-making positions.

371. The Committee also welcomes the publicity given to the Convention in the Russian Federation and the steps taken to distribute the State party's reports and the concluding comments of the Committee.

Factors impeding the implementation of the Convention

372. The Committee considers that the State party's ongoing transformation has had a negative effect on women and has posed an impediment to the full implementation of the Convention.

Principal areas of concern and recommendations

73. The Committee is concerned that the Constitution which recognizes women's right to equality before the law does not contain a definition of discrimination or expressly prohibit discrimination on the ground of sex. The Committee notes that the Constitution has not become an effective instrument to prevent discrimination.

374. The Committee urges the State party to incorporate in the Constitution a specific right of non-discrimination on the ground of sex, and a definition of discrimination, in conformity with article 1 of the Convention. It calls on the State party to introduce effective enforcement procedures and take necessary measures, including public awareness-raising campaigns to ensure effect implementation of women's right to equality.

375. The Committee notes that there is a lack of legislation in critical areas where there is discrimination against women. It is concerned that women are not invoking court procedures to combat sex discrimination because of gaps in the law, evidentiary barriers, a general lack of legal awareness and distrust of the legal system.

376. The Committee recommends that specific legislation and effective enforcement procedures be adopted to combat and eliminate discrimination and respond to violence against women. All such legislation and enforcement procedures should be accompanied by access to legal aid and a vigorous awareness-raising campaign to inform women of their rights.

377. The Committee is concerned that the national machinery for the advancement of women, including the Commission on Enhancement of the Status of Women, may be weakened through its lack of clear legal status and mandate, and insufficient financial and human resources.

378. The Committee urges the State party to confer a clear mandate on, and allocate sufficient financial and human resources to, the national machinery for the advancement of women to enable it to ensure the practical realization of equality for women.

379. The Committee notes with concern the persistence of stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes with respect to the role of women and men in the family and society.

380. While commending the introduction of human rights education in school curricula, the Committee urges the State party to emphasize women's rights as human rights, to increase awareness-raising programmes, including those directed towards men, and to take measures to change stereotypical attitudes and perceptions about the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society.

381. The Committee is concerned that the representation of women in the political arena at all levels has been decreasing steadily.

382. While acknowledging the Federal Act on Political Parties of July 2001, the Committee recommends that the State party take further measures to give practical and concrete effect to the Act. It requests the State party to adopt additional temporary special measures in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1 of the Convention, in order to increase the number of women at all levels of political decision-making.

383. The Committee is deeply concerned at the deteriorating situation of women in employment and that women are the overwhelming majority of workers in lower level and low-paying jobs in the various parts of the public sector. It is concerned that women experience significant discrimination in the private sector, and have a low share of the high-paying jobs in that sector. It is also concerned that women constitute the majority of the long-term unemployed.

384. The Committee urges the enactment of an equal employment opportunity law, prohibiting discrimination in hiring, promotion, employment conditions and dismissal, requiring equal pay for work of equal value and providing for effective enforcement procedures and remedies. It recommends that such legislation include temporary special measures, with time-bound targets, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention, to increase the number of women in higher-level jobs in the public and private sectors.

385. While noting the State party's policy of protecting women against unsafe working conditions, the Committee is concerned that 12 per cent of women work in conditions which do not meet health and safety standards. It is also concerned about the exclusion of women of childbearing age from a list of 456 jobs, which may result in the effective exclusion of women from certain employment sectors. The Committee notes that the list is under reconsideration and also notes that employers may employ women in the prohibited jobs if the necessary standards are in place.

386. The Committee recommends that the State party require all employers to conform to the mandated standards, which would allow both women and men to work in proper conditions of health and safety. Bearing in mind article 11.3 of the Convention, it recommends continued review of the list of prohibited jobs, in consultation with women's non-governmental organizations, with a view to reducing their number.

387. The Committee is concerned at the feminization of poverty and, in particular, that women

constitute a large proportion of single-parent families and of the working poor, and at the disproportionate impact of the remaining debt in unpaid back-wages on women in public employment and the poverty of older women.

388. The Committee recommends that, in addition to the measures to reduce poverty in the Programme for Socio-Economic Development of July 2001, the State party collate accurate data on the extent of women's poverty and its causes and, urgently, take special positive measures to alleviate women's poverty as a distinct structural problem.

389. The Committee is deeply disturbed at the high level of domestic violence and of murder of women in this context. It is very concerned that law enforcement officials, in particular tend to view such violence as a private matter between spouses and family members and not as grave crimes. The Committee also regrets that the State party has not taken urgent necessary effective measures to combat domestic violence and that none of the numerous draft bills on domestic violence has been adopted.

390. The Committee urges the State party to place a high priority on measures to address violence against women in the family and society, and adopt laws, policies and programmes in accordance with its general recommendation 19 and the United Nations Declaration on Violence against Women. The Committee recommends that the State party increase its programmes on violence against women, in particular awareness-raising campaigns. It also urges the State party to provide training for law enforcement personnel at all levels, lawyers and judges, health-care professionals and social workers with respect to violence against women in the household and society.

391. The Committee is concerned about reports of ill-treatment of women in pre-detention centres and in prisons. The Committee is deeply concerned by the fact that, despite credible evidence that police officials have used violence against women in custody, the State party has not, as a rule, investigated, disciplined or prosecuted offenders. The Committee is also disturbed by the fact that, despite strong evidence that members of the Russian forces have committed acts of rape or other sexual violence against women in the context of the armed conflict in Chechnya, the State party has failed to conduct the necessary investigations or hold anyone accountable in the vast majority of cases.

392. The Committee urges the State party to take necessary measures to ensure that custodial violence by officials, including acts of sexual violence against women and girls in detention or under investigation, are prosecuted and punished as grave crimes. It also urges the State party to adopt preventive measures, including swift disciplinary inquiries and human rights education programmes for the armed forces and law enforcement personnel.

393. The Committee is concerned about reports regarding the great increase in prostitution and, in particular, at the number of girl street children who are exploited as prostitutes. It is concerned that the poverty of women and girls is the major causal factor.

394. Noting the State party's programmes of action to provide street children with shelter, subsistence and education, the Committee urges the State party to continue and extend such

programmes and to apply them, appropriately modified and strengthened, to women forced into prostitution by poverty. It also urges giving priority to the prosecution of those who exploit prostitutes and of adults involved in the exploitation of child prostitutes, with the introduction of special legislative provisions, if necessary.

395. The Committee is concerned at the extent of trafficking of Russian women to foreign countries for sexual exploitation. It notes that, in the period from 1994 to 1997, only four court cases were brought and seven persons were convicted for such offences. In addition, the Committee is concerned that the Russian Federation itself has become a country of destination for trafficked women.

396. The Committee recommends the formulation of a comprehensive strategy to combat the trafficking of women, which should include the prosecution and punishment of offenders, increased international regional and bilateral cooperation, in particular with countries of destination and transit, witness protection and the rehabilitation of women and girls who have been victims of trafficking. The Committee requests the State party to provide, in its next report, comprehensive information on the trafficking of women and girls.

397. Noting the measures taken by the State party to combat the effect of HIV/AIDS on pregnant women, the Committee is concerned that the State party regards HIV/AIDS as primarily resulting from the conduct of individuals in the context of drug abuse and alcoholism.

398. The Committee urges the State party to address the gender aspects of HIV/AIDS, including the power differential between women and men, which often prevents women from insisting on safe and responsible sex practices. It encourages the State party to strengthen its efforts to raise awareness and educate women and girls on ways to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS. The Committee urges the State party to ensure the equal rights and the access of women and girls to detection, health care and social services.

399. The Committee is concerned at the deterioration of the health-care system, which severely limits women's access to health care. It is also concerned at the state of women's health, in particular the increase in gynaecological problems and pregnancies among teenage girls. The Committee also notes with concern that, although there has been a decrease in the rate of abortions, abortion continues to be used as a method of birth control and the number of women using effective contraceptive measures is low.

400. The Committee recommends in accordance with general recommendation 24 on article 12 - women and health that the State party fully implement a life-cycle approach to women's health and urges the State party to strengthen family planning programmes and provide affordable access to contraceptive measures for all women in all regions. It also urges the State party to include sex education in the school curriculum.

401. The Committee expresses concern with regard to the situation of rural women and, in particular, their degree of access to income-generating activities.

402. The Committee requests the State party to provide more information and data on the situation of rural women in its next periodic report. It recommends that the State party pay greater attention to the situation of rural women and develop special policies and programmes aimed at their economic empowerment, ensuring their access to capital and productive resources.

403. The Committee welcomes the State party's commitment to ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention in 2003, and to deposit as soon as possible its instrument of acceptance to the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention.

404. The Committee urges the State party to respond in its next periodic report to the specific issues raised in the present concluding comments and to provide updated data and statistics disaggregated by sex and age.

405. The Committee requests the wide dissemination in the Russian Federation of the current concluding comments in order to inform the public in general, and government administrators and politicians in particular, of the steps that have been taken to ensure the de jure and de facto equality of women as well as of further steps that are required in this regard. It also requests the State party to continue to disseminate widely, in particular to women's and human rights organizations, the Convention, its Optional Protocol, the Committee's general recommendations, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the results of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".