



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

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

Pre-session working group

Thirty-eighth session

14 May-1 June 2007

**List of issues and questions with regard to the consideration
of an initial report***

Mauritania

1. The pre-session working group examined the initial report of Mauritania (CEDAW/C/MRT/1).

Articles 1 and 2

2. Please indicate any progress concerning withdrawal of the reservation of Mauritania to the Convention, within a given timeframe.

3. The report indicates that “discrimination against women as defined in the Convention is taken into account in Mauritanian law” (para. 83, p. 18), but it is not clear whether a definition of discrimination against women in accordance with the Convention is included in the domestic legislation. The report also indicates that “the provisions of the Convention may be invoked before national courts, and applied by them” (para. 81 and 82, p. 17). Please clarify if a definition of discrimination in accordance with article 1 of the Convention exists in national legislation. Also indicate whether, and to what extent, the Convention has been used directly in Court cases.

Article 3

4. Please provide further information about the level of authority and human and financial resources of the State Secretariat for the Status of Women, including in relation to its capacity to support implementation of the Convention.

5. Please provide more detailed information on the 2005-2008 National Strategy for the Advancement of Women (para. 99, pp. 19-20). In particular, indicate the steps that have been taken to implement it; and how implementation is being monitored and evaluated.

* The page numbering in this list of issues and questions refers to the English version of the report.

Article 4

6. Please describe whether, beside those in the health sector, the Government is taking any steps to adopt temporary special measures in line with Article 4, paragraph 1 of the Convention and with the Committee's general recommendation No. 25, to accelerate the *de facto* equality between men and women.

Article 5

7. The report mentions that "certain practices and customs" are among the factors that explain "the persistence of social constraints among a large majority of women" (para. 102, p. 20). Please further elaborate on these practices and customs, and indicate any measures taken by the Government to eliminate them, and the impact of these measures.

8. Following the 1999 Act on the reform of the educational system (para. 170, p. 30), has a review of textbooks and school programmes been undertaken in order to eliminate gender-based stereotypes? If so, how has the idea of equality between women and men been incorporated in the new curriculum?

Violence against women

9. Please provide detailed information on the forms and extent of violence against women in the family and in the community at large, including statistical data and information on legislative provisions, remedies, social support services and awareness-raising activities. Has the Government sought or considered seeking technical assistance from United Nations specialized entities in collecting statistical data?

10. The report describes measures undertaken to combat female genital mutilation and forced feeding (para. 223-227, pp. 39-40), including public information and awareness-raising campaigns (para. 226, p. 40). It also refers to the draft Penal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure for minors (para. 227, p. 40). Please indicate how these measures contribute to the elimination of these practices. Has the Government sought or considered seeking technical and financial assistance from the World Health Organisation (WHO)?

11. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has raised concerns over the persistence of slavery in Mauritania. Please provide statistics, if available, on the number of women and girls in slavery-like situations, and indicate the existing efforts to enforce the 1981 law abolishing slavery in Mauritania, as well as awareness-raising activities to curb this practice, and describe the impact of these efforts to date.

Article 6

12. In the light of the concerns expressed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its last concluding comments (CRC/C/15/Add.159) about the high number of children engaged in labour, girls involved in domestic service often not paid or underpaid and involuntary servitude existing in some isolated areas. Please provide information on how the Government is addressing this problem. Please indicate if the Act No. 025-2003 of 17 July 2003 on the suppression of trafficking in persons has entered into force.

Articles 7 and 8

13. According to information provided in the report, women are under-represented in decision-making positions in public and political life and in international activities. Please provide information on the participation of women, compared to men, at all levels and in all branches of the administration, the Parliament and the judiciary.

14. Please indicate the concrete measures that are envisaged to achieve women's full and equal participation and representation at all levels of Government, including temporary special measures in line with Article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention.

Article 9

15. The report states that the Mauritanian Nationality Code and its modifying texts "guarantee the same condition of acquisition, retention and termination of Mauritanian nationality to all citizens, without distinction, including distinctions based on gender" (para. 152). However, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has raised concern that the Nationality Code "lays down rules on access to nationality that differ depending on whether the children are born to a Mauritanian father or a Mauritanian mother, or whether they are born to a foreign father or a mother born in Mauritania" (CERD/C/65/CO/5, 10 December 2004). Please clarify the rights of women and men to pass their nationality to their children by further elaborating on the provisions of the Nationality Code.

Article 10

16. The report notes the 2001 Compulsory Primary Education Act and other measures described on pp. 28-33. It also notes the low enrolment and high drop-out rates for girls. Please elaborate on the social, economic and cultural factors impeding girls' access to education, and indicate whether specific programmes or measures have been put in place to increase school attendance for girls, including intended beneficiaries, as well as the obstacles encountered and impact to date.

17. Please provide information on the concrete measures taken to enforce the 2001 Compulsory Primary Education Act's provisions for parents and guardians who do not send their children to school (para. 91-94, pp. 18-19) and include statistics on the number of cases that have been prosecuted since 2001.

Article 11

18. The report states that "women enjoy almost all the rights provided for in the various laws (law on collective bargaining, Labour Code, Social Security Code), in the context of their jobs" (para. 259, p. 47). Please specify which rights women do not enjoy, and indicate how the Government intends to modify legislation, policy and practices to ensure women's full enjoyment of their employment rights.

19. Table 4 (p. 37) shows that the percentage of women earning wages remains extremely low compared to men. Kindly provide data on women's and men's wages by occupation in the public and private sectors.

20. Please provide information on the situation of women in the informal economy.

Article 12

21. In addition to the information provided on pp. 38-46 of the report, please describe the measures put in place by the Government to improve prenatal monitoring, assisted childbirth, postnatal monitoring and birth spacing, including detailed information on the maternal and child health policy (para. 110, p. 22).

22. Please provide more detailed information about women's access to affordable reproductive and sexual health services and educational programmes, including their substantive content and their availability to particular groups, such as adolescents, rural and nomadic women.

23. Please provide statistical information on teenage pregnancies, maternal mortality rate, women living with HIV/AIDS.

Article 13

24. The report mentions that women face obstacles accessing to credit because of "the unsuitable nature of the financial tools developed by formal institutions, especially in rural areas, which are increasingly prey to a kind of legalized usury by which traditional lenders grant loans at high interest rates" (para. 272, p. 49). Please indicate what measures are in place to increase women's access to formal credit.

Article 14

25. The report refers to Mauritania's Strategic Framework for Poverty Reduction, in response to the Millennium Development Goals (para. 20-22, p. 8). Please indicate which measures are put in place by the SFPR to address women's poverty. Also kindly provide information on how the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women has been used in the preparation of the SFPR and how the Framework's implementation will enhance implementation of the Convention.

26. Please provide recent statistical data and information on rural women's access to health-care, social security programmes, decent living conditions, drinking water, electricity, transportation and communication.

27. The report highlights the continuing high illiteracy rates among women and girls, especially in rural areas (p. 32). Please provide further information on measures being undertaken to improve female literacy rates in rural areas, including detailed information about the results achieved in the 2004-2006 literacy campaign being implemented in Mauritania (para. 179).

Articles 15 and 16

28. The Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences notes that "on account of the legal principles upon which the law and legal procedure are based, and the manner in which law is implemented in the country, courts do not treat women as the equals of men in all cases. For example, the testimony of two women is necessary to equal that of one man. In addition, when awarding an indemnity to the family of a woman who has been killed, the courts grant only half the amount that they would award for a man's death" (E/CN.4/2003/75/Add.1). Please indicate whether such discriminatory treatment finds its origins in the law itself, or whether it comes from the judicial application of

the law. What measures have been taken, including training of judicial personnel, to ensure courts treat women and men equally?

29. Please provide information on measures taken to bring the minimum legal age of marriage for girls into full conformity with article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and Article 16, paragraph 2, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

30. The Personal Status Code seems to contain provisions that directly discriminate against married women, in particular as regards management of property, freedom to work, and the legality of polygamy and repudiation. Please indicate whether the review and amendment of the Personal Status Code is envisaged so as to bring it line with the Convention.

Optional Protocol

31. Please indicate any progress made with respect to the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
