



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
Thirty-sixth session

Summary record of the 739th meeting (Chamber A)

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 8 August 2006, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Schöpp-Schilling

Contents

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the
Convention

Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Cuba

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention

Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Cuba (CEDAW/C/CUB/5-6; CEDAW/C/CUB/Q/6 and CEDAW/C/CUB/Q/6/Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the representatives of Cuba took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Moreno** (Cuba), introducing the fifth and sixth periodic reports of Cuba (CEDAW/C/CUB/5-6), said that, important qualitative changes had occurred since the presentation of the fourth periodic report, both nationally and internationally, in view of the complex conditions facing humanity as a whole and the Cuban people and women in particular. When preparing its reports, Cuba had always taken into account the observations and recommendations of the Committee. Each report showed clear progress in the promotion, protection and guarantee of the rights enshrined in the Convention, in keeping with the objectives of social justice and equality underlying the Cuban Revolution. While Cuba implemented comprehensive, ambitious and effective socio-economic programmes to boost citizen participation, equity and social justice, it faced increased external threats as the United States administration unilaterally implemented a policy of hostility, genocidal blockade and aggression against the Cuban people, women and girls in particular, impeding their right to development, self-determination and peace. That blockade was the most brutal manifestation of violence against Cuban women.

3. The reports, covering the period 1996-2005, described how Cuba fulfilled its obligations under the Convention, and the participation of the State and non-State actors in the achievement of gender equality. The National Action Plan for Follow-up of the Fourth World Conference on Women, adopted by the Council of State in April 1997, had played an essential role. Its preamble stated that the plan demonstrated Cuba's political will to develop policies for women and to continue to advance and develop gender equality. The Plan not only reflected the 12 areas of special concern contained in the Beijing Platform for Action, adapted to the conditions and needs of Cuban women, but also encompassed the main purposes of the 16 substantive

articles of the Convention, which was why one of the priority areas was legislation.

4. Although the Plan and all public policies relating to women's equal integration into society were State responsibility, the decisive participation and contribution of the Federation of Cuban Women and other social, political and grass-roots organizations were acknowledged. The principal strengths of Cuba's pro-women policies lay in their representativity and the Federation's capacity to mobilize, organize, criticize and improve them and to oversee those policies while maintaining a critical distance.

5. Following the constructive dialogue between the Cuban Government and the Committee in June 2000, the Committee's observations, recommendations and final comments had been analysed and disseminated. They had been conveyed, in a special publication, to each central State administration, provincial and municipal administration council and the national, provincial and municipal offices of the Federation of Cuban Women, along with other associations, institutions and organizations.

6. On 15 February 2001, the Executive Secretary of the Council of Ministers had sent a circular to all ministries, central institutes and provincial and municipal governments indicating the steps to be taken to assess the Action Plan for Follow-up of the Beijing Conference, in response to the Committee's recommendations. Attention had also been drawn to issues requiring intersectoral coordination for compiling statistics and carrying out research and studies for the fifth periodic report. That was in response to the Committee's main recommendations issued in 2000 relating to violence against women. A comprehensive explanation of each aspect was provided in the report along with an update of the data and trends that had changed since its preparation in 2004. Data from 2002 had recently been provided by the General Population and Housing Census, on the basis of which the National Statistical Office had extrapolated information to evaluate the status of women in all areas. The results of the first comparative study to assess the progress made in and challenges to gender equality, as recently requested by President Fidel Castro, had also been included in the report.

7. Moreover, the Federation of Cuban Women had carried out a wide-ranging process of discussion and analysis at its municipal and provincial committees in

2005. State governing bodies had participated in the discussions and had had an opportunity to hear women's concerns, complaints and recommendations regarding the main achievements and challenges with regard to all their rights.

8. Accordingly, the process of drafting the report had been comprehensive and participatory and the report included up-to-date information on the outcomes, endeavours and experiences of institutions interested in and committed to the fulfilment of the Convention's aims. Once it had been drafted, the grass-roots and social organizations, along with professional associations, had been invited to express their views, some of which had been included while others would enrich the following periodic report.

9. The previous five years had undoubtedly been very fruitful: the general conditions had changed, with sustained and sustainable economic growth and a solid alliance with new trade partners that had not yielded to the threats and extraterritorial implementation of coercive measures that were part of the United States Government policy against Cuba. Despite the encouraging growth of the national economy, it had not been possible to reverse the grave impact on areas of social production, trade and finance caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the socialist bloc in Eastern Europe, which had affected life in general and households in particular. The opportunistic escalation of the United States blockade, an all-out economic war, had also taken its toll. Economic losses were estimated at over \$80 billion, and the consequent material shortages had affected food and medical supplies, hindering important social programmes and affecting community services. In its determination to create and strengthen legal, institutional and cultural mechanisms, Cuba had tackled all those difficulties in order to protect women's rights and their equal participation and opportunities. All indicators concerning the status and position of women had improved since 2000: women made up 45.6 per cent of the civil service workforce, 1.2 per cent more than in 2000; 63.3 per cent of higher education graduates and 66 per cent of the technical and professional workforce were women; 36.9 per cent of leaders and decision-makers at all levels were women, compared with 31.1 per cent in 1999; the number of women members of parliament had risen from 27.6 per cent to 35.95 per cent, placing Cuba in seventh place in the world ranking; women represented the vast majority of law-school graduates

and held top positions in the courts and prosecutor's offices, 60.3 per cent of judges and 71 per cent of prosecutors being women.

10. Cuba had met all its health goals for 2000 and had adopted new strategies to attain the United Nations Millennium Goals. It had revitalized structures and techniques, while improving human resources. It was decentralizing the health services by extending and reorganizing specialization and health assessment in the community, allowing new global strategies to be adopted, including family polyclinics, to improve the quality of comprehensive medical care and the situation of children, with specific programmes for women. Women made up 56 per cent of physicians and 51.7 per cent of the staff of the Cuban cooperation programme currently providing health services in 68 developing countries to the neediest or people affected by natural disasters. Members of the Henry Reeve International Contingent of Doctors Specializing in Disaster Situations and Serious Epidemics, 48.6 per cent of whom were women, had recently provided assistance to earthquake victims in remote areas of Pakistan.

11. All disabled persons received special care and, thanks to new programmes, Cuba was working to increase their social integration. Nationwide research conducted between 2001 and 2003 had supplied a good deal of information on 366,864 persons, of whom 52.27 per cent were aged over 60 years and 48 per cent were women. The new challenge was to meet the needs and demands identified in the research, from which disabled women and their relatives had already benefited. The size and weight of boys and girls had been the subject of nationwide research aimed at eliminating malnutrition and other anomalies.

12. The major premise underlying the process of economic downsizing in Cuba was the creation of a more just society, despite the difficult conditions of the Special Period. As the level of economic development began to rise slightly, Cuba strove for a society that combined macroeconomic growth with accelerated social development, with emphasis on cultural progress which could create the strategic basis of the knowledge society. The aim was socio-economic development based on the high quality and training of human resources and enhanced tourism, biotechnology, medicine, pharmaceuticals, information technology and communications.

13. The Cuban State was concerned that women should be integrated into those programmes on an equal footing. For example 41.3 per cent of tourism workers were women, up from 36 per cent in 1996; women accounted for 51 per cent of those working in science and technology units and 48.9 per cent were researchers, while 23.1 per cent of directors at major scientific research centres were women. Promoting the development of new information and communication technologies with a proper gender perspective and nationwide coverage had posed a huge challenge but proof of Cuba's political will to do so was the new University of Information Sciences, at which 8,000 students, 47.76 per cent of them women, had enrolled in 2004-2005. Women made up 46 per cent of the total working in the information and communications technologies sector and 46.9 per cent of all higher and intermediate-level graduates. Women were the direct beneficiaries and protagonists of the energy revolution, aimed at improving not only efficiency in the rational use of resources but also the quality of work and material conditions in households. The revolution was helping to redesign family roles, providing a fairer distribution of household chores, which continued to overburden women.

14. The positive economic changes in Cuba were accompanied by new social policies aimed at eliminating the inequalities resulting from the survival measures taken in the early 1990s. The entire social policy of the Cuban Revolution had been overhauled, with maximal results and minimal use of resources, while the long upheld aspirations of social justice remained valid. Comprehensive training courses had been created for young people who were neither studying nor working, 63.4 per cent of whom were women under 30. A programme to universalize higher education had been implemented, with branches in every municipality, rendering the conditions of access universally more flexible, in particular for young mothers with small children. The national currency had been revalued, thanks to which salaries and pensions had risen, benefiting both women and men.

15. As a result of their own drive and the Government's determination to guarantee their full development through better and fairer policies, Cuban women had academic training, vocational, health, and political and social participation rates comparable to those found in many developed countries. Yet Cuba was a small country, poor in natural resources,

unilaterally and unfairly blockaded, attacked and besieged. It had suffered the loss of more than 3,400 lives and the mutilation of 2,099 of its best men and women as a consequence of terrorism. Although it had made huge efforts to fulfil its aspirations of justice and equality and had achieved important results, there was still considerable room for improvement. Cuba had to continue to strive to eliminate persisting stereotypes, to create values and greater awareness of gender equality, and to eliminate any remaining undervaluing or disqualifying of women and unfair distribution of household responsibilities.

16. Frank, objective and constructive dialogue with the Committee would enable Cuba to eliminate any obstacle, subjective or objective, to full compliance with the Convention and to its goal of justice for all women and men.

Articles 1 to 6

17. **Ms. Šimonović** asked for information about progress towards Cuba's ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention, which the country had signed on 17 March 2000. Since the National Action Plan had been adopted in 1997, she wished to know whether the Beijing +5 Process had been incorporated into the existing action plan or whether a new plan was contemplated for that purpose. Since the Cuban Constitution stipulated that international treaties were directly applicable under national legislation, she sought confirmation that the Convention was applied directly in Cuban courts. Furthermore, were Cuban lawyers and judges given specific training on the subject of the Convention? Although equal rights for women and men were enshrined in the Constitution, she asked whether the specific issue of discrimination, both direct and indirect, was also addressed, as required by the Convention, and whether indirect discrimination was included in Cuba's official definition of discrimination against women. If so, was it implemented in every field covered by the Convention, what remedies were available and could the Committee be provided with statistics on anti-discrimination legal cases?

18. **Ms. Tan**, also referring to the Optional Protocol, asked for a clear explanation of the discrepancy between the Cuban Government's expression of its political will to support the Protocol and the text of its reservation in which the Cuban Government declared that it did not recognize the Committee's competence

established by virtue of articles 8 and 9. She called on the Cuban Government to consider withdrawing its reservation, in view of its record on cooperation with the Committee, and to ratify the Protocol. Referring to the second paragraph of the response to the first question in the responses to the list of issues and questions for consideration of the combined fifth and sixth periodic report (CEDAW/C/CUB/Q/6/Add.1), which quoted from article 12 of the Constitution, she asked in how many cases domestic courts had invoked the Convention.

19. **Ms. Saiga** noted that the Federation of Cuban Women, unusually for a civil society NGO and despite being funded by membership fees rather than by the Government, had expressed no criticism of State policy on women's issues. While it could be seen as positive that the NGO had only praise for the Cuban authorities, it could also be seen as dangerous that civil society failed to criticize government policy. She asked for an explanation.

20. **Mr. Moreno** (Cuba) said that the Treaty Coordination Committee brought together all the central State bodies and other institutions and was responsible for reviewing international instruments to determine whether they should be ratified by Cuba. The Committee was currently considering the Optional Protocol to the Convention. Cuba had participated in the negotiation of the Optional Protocol and viewed it as a useful tool. Moreover, it had always given priority to strengthening national mechanisms for the protection of women's rights. However, it had not yet undertaken a commitment to any international instrument that recognized the right to bring individual petitions in a supranational context, although it acknowledged the merits of such mechanisms. The Committee would need to address that issue in its discussions on the Optional Protocol. Ratification of the Optional Protocol could represent a significant step forward for the international protection of human rights in Cuba, but an in-depth analysis would be needed first.

21. **Ms. Ferrer Gómez** (Cuba) said that the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) was a political organization that had been established in the early years following the Revolution. More than 86 per cent of women over the age of 14 were voluntary members of the Federation. It was a self-financing organization, since most of its funding was made up of contributions from its members. It had achieved considerable

influence and respect over the years in its efforts to represent the interests and views of women in all aspects of life and in all areas of the country. Its leadership at all levels was elected democratically. Its workplans were drawn up at grass-roots level, by the more than 75,000 local branches of the Federation. The Federation also ran a Women's Study Centre, which engaged in awareness-raising and training and also collaborated with other civil society organizations on various issues.

22. The Government's action plan for women had been drawn up in 1997 on the basis of the Beijing Platform for Action and an in-depth analysis of the national situation, although some of the aims outlined in the Beijing Platform had already been achieved in Cuba at the time of elaboration of the plan. The plan gave priority to achieving gender equality and equal opportunities for women and men. It was still in force and was reviewed periodically. The most recent review had resulted in the adoption of some 90 measures, implementation of which was assigned to a variety of State agencies. The Federation of Cuban Women, which was recognized in the plan of action as a crucial partner in promoting the advancement of women, was responsible for evaluating the implementation of those measures and offering proposals for improvements. A fresh review of the implementation of the plan of action was due to be carried out soon. Furthermore, specific measures had been introduced in response to the Committee's concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Cuba. The Federation, besides levelling criticism where necessary, also commended, where appropriate, the Government's efforts to promote the rights of women in the face of the rigid blockade imposed on Cuba by the United States of America.

23. **Ms. González Ferrer** (Cuba), referring to the relationship between national legislation and the Convention, said that article 12 of the Constitution prescribed respect for the principles proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations and the other international treaties to which Cuba was a party. In addition, article 20 of the Civil Code provided that international agreements to which Cuba was a party took precedence over domestic law. Article 1 of the Family Code provided for equality between men and women in family relations, while article 295 of the Penal Code established penalties for any violation of the right to equality and provided for the lodging of

complaints of discrimination. A number of other procedures existed for lodging complaints with various State agencies and organizations, and time limits were laid down for the investigation of such complaints.

24. The National Action Plan of the Republic of Cuba for Follow-up of the Fourth World Conference on Women provided for the rigorous implementation of measures to prevent discrimination against women, particularly in employment. The Penal Code also established penalties for anyone who prevented another person from submitting a complaint to the authorities. In 2005, the public service offices of the Federation of Cuban Women had handled more than 38,000 cases, of which more than 86 per cent had been initiated by women. In Havana province, most cases relating to labour rights brought by women so far in 2006 had been decided in favour of the women in question.

25. Turning to the question of the training of judges and legal personnel in matters relating to the Convention, she said that progress had been made but further efforts were needed. For example, though the large numbers of law students in Cuba all received training in women's rights, similar training for those legal professionals already in practice needed to be improved. The National Union of Jurists and the Federation of Cuban Women had concluded a joint work agreement on gender-sensitizing, and the Convention had been disseminated to the provincial chapters of the National Union of Jurists, giving rise to rich debate. Women themselves were also being given training with regard to their own rights.

26. **Ms. Gaspard** said that she had information that 36 per cent of heads of household were women and asked what the implications of that figure were for both men and women, in particular whether women heads of household suffered increased discrimination in that connection. Referring to article 4 of the Convention, she said that the information provided in the report described only the country's general policy on achieving equality. There seemed to be insufficient understanding of the possibility of using temporary special measures to accelerate de facto equality between men and women. She would like to know whether the Federation of Cuban Women was considering the introduction of such measures, which could help to tackle the discrimination that persisted in certain spheres, in particular the disparity between the number of men and women in decision-making positions.

27. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, also emphasized the importance of temporary special measures and asked whether there was any law in Cuba expressly mandating such measures. She also wished to know whether specific timetables and targets were provided for in that regard.

28. **Ms. Coker-Appiah** said that the report outlined some of the immediate causes of domestic violence but did not pay sufficient attention to its root causes. Given that few women reported abuse, she would like to know what steps the Government was taking to tackle the root causes of domestic violence, namely the patriarchal culture and the subordinate position of women.

29. With regard to the recent increase in prostitution, it was a matter of concern that most new prostitutes were young women with a high level of education. She would like to know why such women were becoming involved in prostitution and what was being done to address the problem.

30. Lastly, she requested information about the results of the study that had been conducted of the image of women in advertising for foreign tourists and what success had been achieved in combating the portrayal of women as sex objects.

31. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, expressed surprise that the Government of Cuba would not sign the Optional Protocol but would discuss it in the Committee. The Protocol did not give the power of courts to the Committee but helped the country to better understand its laws and persistent causes of discrimination. She encouraged Cuba to refer the issue to the relevant body for discussion, as its stance seemed contradictory.

32. She drew attention to the persistence of certain phenomena in Cuba: large numbers of female heads of household, fathers not paying child support, a culture of abortion which placed responsibility for contraception on women, a low 9.3 per cent of female individual landowners, a very low percentage of women working in agrarian national committees and women in the National Assembly heading committees on "soft" issues. Article 8 of the Labour Code of 1984 provided for preferential employment for women. Did that preference contribute to the persistence of stereotypes? For which jobs were women given preference? How many fathers had taken paternity leave since 2003? What was the percentage of

housewives? Was the image of the housewife positive or negative? The labour policy from 1995 to 2002 had not generated jobs in equal numbers for men and women. Was there sufficient assessment of laws and Government policies, measures and programmes? Did those measures inadvertently support sex role stereotypes? Had there been any assessment of the women's affairs departments and their work to combat sex role stereotypes? Had there been any time studies to evaluate whether the division of labour in the home had changed over time?

33. **Mr. Moreno** (Cuba) explained that the Cuban Government needed time in order to study in depth the sensitive issue of the Optional Protocol. Cuba could not be assessed in the same way as Germany, France or Japan, because those countries were under no political, military or economic threat.

34. **Mr. Fraga** (Cuba) said the Cuban census placed the number of women heads of household at 40.6 per cent. Of those women, 43 per cent were married or in a committed relationship, which indicated that their partners recognized them as heads of household. The remainder were divorced or separated, which could indicate inequality, or widowed, as Cuba was an ageing country. Households had an average of 3.2 members and the number of women heads of household was on the rise.

35. Among women 14 years and older, 42 per cent were housewives. In some cases there were up to three women in one household undertaking household tasks. Approximately 50 per cent of Cuban women worked, studied or were retired. A positive or negative assessment of household situations depended on the context, age, educational level and development of each family. The majority of professionals and technicians were women.

36. **Ms. Ferrer Gómez** (Cuba) said that the Cuban concept of the housewife had changed substantially since the triumph of the Revolution and was not the traditional concept of the woman engaged solely in household tasks. Housewives were also involved in various voluntary social tasks, as Health Brigade workers and also in civil society. Their work was highly valued by society. There was still progress to be made in terms of sharing household labour, which was a great challenge.

37. **Ms. Columbié Matos** (Cuba), referring to paragraphs 160 and 161 of the report, said that the

incorporation of women into the labour market had been successful: there were more women working.

38. **Ms. Beretervide Dopico** (Cuba) said that the patriarchal system was the cause of intra-family violence. Measures to address the issue included the National Group for Prevention and Treatment of Violence in the Family, created in 1997, and Government action implemented through the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Public Health, the media and the judicial system, among others. There had been progress, which must be continued. The Government needed to apply its theoretical policy in practice. The problem that women who filed complaints feared their husbands' reactions was not unique to Cuba. Her country was working on awareness-raising and empowerment. An evaluation was made of the number of complaints filed and withdrawn, and reasons for withdrawal.

39. **Ms. Enriquez Charles** (Cuba) stated that each organ of the Central Administration was responsible for the development of new employment and study programmes for women that targeted particular regions. The female unemployment rate had been 8 per cent 10 years ago; in 2005 it had been 2.2 per cent; 45.6 per cent of women were working. There was also systematic analysis of employment programmes. The number of men taking paternity leave was 17 and rising.

40. **Ms. Moya Richard** (Cuba) said that gender stereotypes were persistent, particularly in private life. The Government had confronted the issue with measures that affected the principle institutions influencing social values and ideology, such as schools, the family and the media. Hybrid masculinities could be discussed, because the issue had been raised at the first Masculinity Forum. Fathers were taking greater responsibility for children, as evidenced by their increased presence to provide emotional support for hospitalized children. Household labour was increasingly done by men, though most would not admit to it in public. Media campaigns, such as the "Para la Vida" ("For life") campaign and other television programmes, and the weekly talk programme of the Federation of Cuban Women, had been created to raise pride in household labour.

41. The Federation and the Government had established an ethics code to prevent the use of demeaning images of women to promote tourism.

International tour operators could lose their contracts if they portrayed women as sexual objects. The media were also undergoing sensitivity training. The process was complex and lengthy and included awareness-raising, research and evaluation.

42. Schools needed to change role allocation in the hidden curriculum as well. Tasks given to boys and girls in the classroom were currently under debate by parent associations. Teachers were evaluated on their ability to promote respect for equality in all its aspects.

43. **Ms. Zou** Xiaoqiao inquired whether any research had been conducted to identify the root causes of prostitution and to determine why some Cuban women continued to work as prostitutes. Alluding to the re-education opportunities for prostitutes mentioned in the report, she asked whether those opportunities included vocational or skills training that would enable the women concerned to reintegrate into society and obtain gainful employment, thereby achieving economic independence. She noted that the report mentioned sanctions for those who acted as pimps, but she wondered whether there were also sanctions for those who solicited the services of prostitutes.

44. She would like to know whether there were any organizations in Cuba that assisted victims of domestic violence. Additionally, paragraph 259 of the report mentioned the possibility of drafting a legal norm or law that would integrate concepts and treatment of domestic violence through a preventive and educational approach. She would appreciate an update on progress in that area, particularly with regard to any plans to formulate a law against domestic violence.

45. **Ms. Simms** noted that the report mentioned the connection between prostitution and foreign tourism. It also indicated that most new prostitutes were young women who were healthy and highly educated. She would like to know what the Government was doing to dissuade such women from turning to prostitution and to determine what prompted them to do so. Was it, for example, because they could earn more as prostitutes than in other lines of work? Or did the causes have to do more with low self-esteem and poor self-image among the women, or with stereotypes that caused the Cuban men who acted as pimps to see women as objects for sale? Whatever the causes, it was essential to address them and to look very carefully at the implications of the development of foreign tourism for Cuban women. While tourism could bring undeniable

economic benefits, it also had some potentially negative consequences in terms of discrimination and oppression of women.

46. It was also essential to take action to address the related issues of sex tourism, child prostitution and pornography, especially child pornography, and to see that the clients buying the sexual services of Cuban women and Cuban children of both sexes were brought to justice. In that connection, she wondered whether the Government was doing anything to monitor entertainment programmes in hotels and to ensure that children were not being used to entertain foreign tourists.

47. Finally, the potential problem of trafficking of Cuban women could not be ignored. Cuban women were appearing in other territories in the Caribbean region, and while the numbers might not be particularly large, the issue was real and could not be ignored. She would like to hear the delegation's thoughts in that regard.

48. **Ms. Šimonović** asked whether the Cuban Government regarded violence against women as a human rights violation and a form of discrimination against women covered by article 1 of the Convention and by General Recommendation 19. Noting that, in its concluding comments on the fourth report of Cuba, the Committee had recommended that Cuba should increase the availability of support measures for women who were victims of violence, such as telephone help lines and shelters, she inquired what progress was being made in that respect. She would also like to know, in the light of the State party's response to the list of issues and questions (CEDAW/C/CUB/Q/6) concerning plans for legislation against domestic violence, what amendments of the penal and family codes were envisaged in order to improve the existing legislation in relation to the problem.

49. The Special Rapporteur on violence against women had indicated in her report (E/CN.4/2000/68/Add.2) that the Federation of Cuban Women had begun programmes of research and community intervention to address violence against women. She would appreciate an update on those activities. The Special Rapporteur had also recommended the dismantling of the special rehabilitation centres for women who engaged in prostitution. In its responses to the issues and questions

posed by the Committee (CEDAW/C/CUB/Q/6/Add.1), the Government had said that it had no plans to dismantle the centres. She wondered whether similar centres existed for men, and, if not, whether the rehabilitation centres constituted a form of different treatment for women.

50. Regarding measures to discourage prostitution, like the previous speakers, she would like to know what measures were in place to penalize clients of prostitutes.

51. **Ms. Beretervide Dopico** (Cuba) assured the Committee that prostitution was of great concern to her Government and had been the focus of intense attention since the early 1990s. The Government was indeed seeking to determine the causes of the problem. As the report indicated, it was not possible to pinpoint a single cause, as multiple factors were involved, including the economic situation and the persistence of a patriarchal culture and unequal power relationships between men and women. The influence of the media and access to information might also be a factor. As had been suggested, the decision to engage in prostitution had to do with a woman's self-image and with her background, especially a history of family violence. Values and attitudes towards prostitution were also important contributing factors. The Government was working actively to strengthen values and was carrying out educational efforts aimed at ensuring that prostitution was viewed as a crime.

52. Regarding the special rehabilitation centres, while the vast majority of the women treated at the centres had at some time worked as prostitutes, they were not intended exclusively for prostitutes. The centres served women who, because they had engaged in some anti-social behaviour, were considered to pose a risk to society. They provided training for employment and also education for parenting. In addition, they sought to educate women about their rights and to address the patriarchal attitudes and exploitation of women that contributed to the persistence of prostitution. Similar centres existed for men who were deemed to be a threat to society, and they also offered rehabilitation and training programmes. In fact, a very large proportion (87 to 90 per cent) of prostitutes were treated in their communities, not in rehabilitation centres. Those who were confined to rehabilitation centres were allowed to visit their families during their confinement.

53. The link between tourism and prostitution was clear. The report mentioned the action that the Government of Cuba was taking to regulate the tourist industry, train tour operators and prevent sex tourism. In addition to those actions, the Government was endeavouring to create the necessary infrastructure for the development of health and family tourism and ecotourism.

54. Trafficking of women was not a problem in Cuba at present. Nevertheless, the Government recognized that the problem existed elsewhere in the Caribbean and was conscious of the need to take measures to prevent its occurrence in Cuba. Accordingly, it had been working to raise awareness of trafficking and to put in place preventive legislation, which applied both to Cubans and to foreign nationals. A national commission composed of representatives of 19 ministries and organizations conducted periodic evaluations to identify areas, such as trafficking and prostitution, in which new legislation was needed to protect the rights and dignity of women.

55. **Mr. Moreno Fernández** (Cuba) wished to emphasize that, while prostitution was a relatively minor problem in Cuba, it was not an issue that the Government had neglected. On the contrary, the Government attached high priority to addressing prostitution and the phenomena associated with it. As for the causes of prostitution, one of the chief ones was the dissolution of the Soviet Union — formerly the country's main trading partner — as a result of which the gross domestic product of Cuba had dropped 35 per cent. The ensuing economic decline had led to a multitude of social problems, including an erosion of values, from which the country was still struggling to recover. In his view, that complex set of economic and social phenomena explained the resurgence of prostitution in the 1990s.

56. The Government was pursuing various measures to eradicate problems such as prostitution and paedophilia. It had enacted strong legislation to prevent their occurrence and to penalize perpetrators. It was also carrying out education programmes and striving to improve the economic status of all strata of the population, but particularly the most vulnerable segments.

57. **Ms. González Ferrer** (Cuba) said that recent modifications of the Penal Code included criminalization of both pimping and trafficking of

persons, for which there were severe penalties. The sale and trafficking of minors had also been criminalized, and the penalties for corruption of minors had been stiffened. Like many countries, Cuba had no specific legislation establishing sanctions for clients of prostitutes, but the Government was studying the issue.

58. People were sent to the special rehabilitation centres not specifically for engaging in prostitution, but for engaging in anti-social behaviour that disturbed the social order. Part of the purpose of the centres was to stop the anti-social behaviour before it became criminal behaviour that would result in criminal sanctions. Judges at the municipal level were responsible for ensuring that men and women who were sent to a centre received education and training as part of their rehabilitation.

59. **Ms. Martínez Piti** (Cuba) emphasized that the Cuban Government attached great importance to the issues of violence and prostitution. Regarding the questions concerning the non-existence of a specific law on domestic violence, Cuba had taken part in an in-depth study of domestic violence in Latin America and the Caribbean, which had found that, even in countries that had separate laws on domestic violence, the problem persisted because the laws were not being enforced. The Cuban Government had therefore decided to focus on strengthening existing legal provisions and ensuring their enforcement, as the most effective way of addressing domestic violence.

60. **Ms. González Ferrer** (Cuba), responding to the questions concerning modifications of the family and penal codes relating to domestic violence, said that the issue was addressed in the chapters of the Family Code concerning conjugal rights and duties and the rights and duties of mothers, fathers and children and in a new chapter on the rights of male and female children. The modifications also sought to reinforce the principles of respect, consideration, mutual assistance and responsibility among family members. With regard to the Penal Code, as the report indicated, having a conjugal or blood relationship with the victim was considered an aggravating factor in cases of physical violence. That provision now extended also to cases of psychological and economic violence. In addition, provisions on sexual harassment and other sexual abuse crimes had recently been introduced into the Penal Code.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.