



**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 750th meeting (Chamber B)

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 16 August 2006, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani (Vice-Chairperson)

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In the absence of Ms. Manalo, Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani, Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

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

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

Combined second and third periodic report of the Republic of Moldova (continued)
(CEDAW/C/MDA/2-3, CEDAW/C/MDA/Q/3 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of the Republic of Moldova took places at the Committee table.*

Articles 10 and 11 (continued)

2. **Mr. Flinterman** said that the high number of female students enrolled at university was commendable, though most were enrolled in subjects such as education and health, which had traditionally been viewed as suitable for women. It would be interesting to have additional information on that unique situation and to learn whether female students studied medicine or trained to be nurses. Furthermore, it should be clarified whether the Government had implemented policies to encourage women to enrol in courses that had not been traditionally viewed as suitable for women. It was unclear whether women were enrolling in higher education courses because it was difficult for them to find employment.

3. Following its consideration of the initial report of the Republic of Moldova, the Committee had been concerned about the statistical data relating to the representation of women in teaching. Further data should be provided about the representation of women in administrative and higher level posts in all areas of education. It would be useful to have information on the steps taken by the Government to eliminate gender stereotypes in curricular and teaching materials at all levels of the education system, with a view to promoting gender equality.

4. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** said that in the responses, the statistical data relating to the number of men and women in employment between 2003 and 2004 differed from the figures provided by the Statistical Office of Moldova. However, it was significant that both sets of data showed the same

overall trend, which was that the percentage of women in the labour force was higher than the percentage of men. It should be clarified why the number of men and women in employment had decreased between 2003 and 2004.

5. In relation to the presence of women in various sectors of the economy, there was evidence of gender stereotyping in sectors such as public administration, education, health care and the service industry. The Committee would welcome additional information on the measures that the Government was taking to ensure that women were able to work in other sectors, such as mining and industry. The number of women working in agriculture seemed to be the same as the number of men. However, in many countries it was common for women in agriculture to be employed on a seasonal basis; further clarification was needed on the number of women who had permanent jobs in agriculture. The Committee would be grateful for more details about the presence of women in the informal sector.

6. **Ms. Gribincea** (Republic of Moldova) said that there were centres for refugees in Chisinau and the Government would open centres offering social protection services for refugees in other cities. The services provided to refugees were described in a new law. In relation to the elimination of stereotypes in educational material, the Ministry of Education had conducted a gender survey of textbooks and had made recommendations to authors and publishers. In 2006, seminars were held to raise gender awareness among publishers and editors. In addition, the Law on Gender Equality would ensure that textbooks respected the principles of gender equality.

7. The labour legislation in Moldova did not discriminate against women and it ensured that there was equality between men and women in the workplace. Women were free to choose their profession and place of employment and they received social security and unemployment benefits. While there were more women than men in the work force, it was true that women were concentrated in certain sectors, including the service industry, education and health care. In rural areas, about 51 per cent of women worked in agriculture and 12 per cent in construction. In 2005, unemployment had dropped to 7.3 per cent and the number of unemployed persons was approximately 200,000, most of whom were women living in urban areas. Measures had been taken to generate employment. Job fairs were organized,

training was provided and paid public work was available to unemployed persons. There was a programme to assist women in rural areas. In relation to the measures to prevent discrimination in the labour market, the Labour Code was being amended by means of the inclusion of an additional paragraph that made it illegal to discriminate in the recruitment process on the grounds of nationality, race, gender, age, political beliefs or social origin.

8. **Ms. Pascal** (Republic of Moldova) said that the Government had adopted a national plan on gender equality for the period 2005-2006, with a viewing to promoting increased awareness about gender equality. By raising awareness about gender issues in the mass media and by organizing gender workshops and including a gender component in all education courses and teacher training programmes, it would be possible to make important gains in the area of gender equality.

9. **Ms. Patten** said that she would appreciate further details on the Moldovan strategy for economic growth and poverty alleviation and the extent to which it addressed the feminization of poverty. Women's poverty was related to the absence of economic opportunities, lack of access to economic resources and education and minimal participation in the decision-making process. More information was needed on how Moldovan economic policies covered both the formal and informal sectors.

10. Regarding the implementation of the new Labour Code and legislation on gender equality, it would be useful to have data on the number of complaints filed. She would like to know whether the Republic of Moldova had a Labour Inspectorate or other mechanisms in place to monitor implementation of the law and, if so, whether there had been an evaluation of those mechanisms. She would welcome information on any campaigns to inform women about the relevant labour laws, legal aid available to women in cases involving violations of those laws and specialized tribunals to adjudicate employment-related cases.

11. She noted that the principle of equal remuneration for women and men for work of equal value had not been included in the Labour Code. As the Committee had received reports of wide pay gaps, information was needed on any mechanisms in place to adjudicate matters involving wage discrimination and to close the gaps.

12. Concerning Moldovan social security benefits, there were reports of large-scale violations of labour rights in the private sector, including the failure to report the full salary of employees or to register them in work books (record of employment). Women had been affected in particular by that practice and had been denied social security benefits, including retirement, health-care and disability benefits, as a result. In addition, the difference in retirement ages based on sex impeded women's ability to accumulate more than 35 years of contributions to the pension fund and thereby obtain a pension equal to the pension of men who had done so. Information was needed on how such discrimination was being addressed.

13. Lastly, she would be grateful for information on policies or programmes to create an enabling environment for special groups of women, including elderly women and women with disabilities. It would also be useful to have information on women who did paid work at home as well as policies envisaged to extend the protection of labour law and social security provisions for those women. Considering the difficulties of implementing labour legislation in the private sector and the precarious situation of women in the labour market, including their working conditions, she would like to have details on the Moldovan trade union movement and the efforts being made by the Moldovan Government to promote the election of women trade union officials.

14. **Ms. Gribincea** (Republic of Moldova) said that with respect to her Government's strategy for economic growth and poverty eradication a special programme was being developed for persons seeking employment. The State Employment Service was conducting job fairs and providing professional training to the unemployed. There was indeed a Labour Inspectorate in the Republic of Moldova, which monitored the implementation of the Labour Code. Although her Government had not kept data on complaints of sexual harassment to date, the Labour Inspectorate was currently making provisions to monitor instances of such harassment.

15. **Ms. Pascal** (Republic of Moldova) said that although her Government's current strategy for economic growth and poverty eradication did not include a gender dimension, efforts were being made to do so. Her Government was making small but significant strides towards strengthening the trade union movement and its impact on the private sector. A

programme to provide social services to women with disabilities and disadvantaged women was also being developed, including a social support fund.

Article 12

16. **Ms. Popescu** said that the reports and information from various available sources showed that health was a problem area. The Republic of Moldova had one of the highest rates of women with anaemia in the region. The maternal mortality rate, although it had improved somewhat, was still very high. She would appreciate receiving the most recent information on the situation of women living with HIV/AIDS, noting that drug use had been mentioned in the reports as a cause of the disease. More information was needed, however, on mother-to-child transmission. In 2005, women represented 42.9 per cent of infected persons. Further details were also needed on the treatment provided to women affected by HIV/AIDS, including any costs incurred by those seeking such treatment.

17. She also noted with concern the increase in the consumption of tobacco and narcotic drugs. Further details were needed on the impact on women of such use and the steps taken by the Moldovan Government to raise awareness about the risks involved, including for pregnant women.

18. She failed to understand why unsafe abortion still accounted for 10 per cent of maternal mortality, if abortion services were free in the Republic of Moldova. Clarification was also needed on the 2 per cent of women who underwent voluntary sterilization.

19. In addition, there were no data on women belonging to ethnic minorities. She would appreciate information on those women, in particular Roma women, as quite often they lived under worse conditions than women belonging to the majority.

20. As the Republic of Moldova was still considered by institutions like the World Bank to be the poorest country in Europe, she would like to know what measures had been taken to assess the specific situation of women living in poverty and to design policies to address the situation. Lastly, she noted with concern that there was no strategy or policy to support the establishment of women's enterprises.

21. **Ms. Dairiam** said that many actions had been taken in the area of health, including the introduction of compulsory health insurance, the law on

reproductive health care and family planning of 2001 and national programme on reproductive health. Concerning medical insurance, it was unclear whether the implementation of the scheme was being monitored and whether it was accessible to the most vulnerable groups of women. She would like to know whether there were any restrictions in the insurance scheme which prevented access to certain kinds of procedures, treatment and drugs. It was unclear whether vulnerable groups were aware of the scheme and it would be useful to know about the information being disseminated about it. Some explanation was also needed on the ways in which the Moldovan Government was monitoring the quality of services in rural and urban centres.

22. She understood that post-natal and antenatal care was provided free for unemployed and socially disadvantaged women. Employers were responsible for providing such care to their workers. She would like to know whether there were any data on the actual payments by employers to women for such care and whether efforts were made to monitor the situation.

23. She also understood that breast cancer was a leading cause of death among women. Information was needed on the measures being taken to combat breast cancer, which was preventable, including data on breast examinations. She urged the Moldovan delegation to look at general recommendation No. 24.

24. She noted that the report stated that abortion services in the Republic of Moldova were free. She had alternative information, however, which stated that because it was not always free, women resorted to illegal abortions. It was not clear whether the incidence of illegal abortion was being monitored.

25. Concerning sexually transmitted diseases, the report had mentioned the incidence of syphilis and gonorrhoea, especially among young persons. She would welcome data disaggregated by gender and age on such diseases and more information on any programmes to combat them, especially among the young, who were greatly affected by them.

26. **Ms. Gribincea** (Republic of Moldova) said that the health of women continued to be one of the most pressing issues for her Government. In 2005, her Government introduced a national programme on reproductive health to protect the reproductive and sexual rights of citizens. In 2003, the Ministry of Health adopted an action plan for the period 2003-2007

involving ongoing training of doctors and nurses in family planning to provide for effective, modern antenatal services in accordance with the recommendations of the World Health Organization. Efforts had been made to modernize maternity institutions and ensure that hygienic conditions prevailed. In 2006, her Government launched a national campaign to promote the health and well-being of children. During the first six months of 2006 the number of pregnant women who received care during the first 12 weeks of their term was 81 per cent, as compared to 69 per cent during the same period in 2005; 88 per cent of pregnant women took iron supplements compared to 62 per cent in 2005; 76 per cent of women took folic acid compared to 32 per cent in 2005; and 91 per cent of women were aware of the signs of potential complications during pregnancy compared with 59 per cent in 2005.

27. To reduce maternal mortality, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection had launched a new World Health Organization (WHO) initiative to investigate each case. In 2005, a national conference had been held on risk-free pregnancy, where case studies on maternal mortality had been examined. Special norms had also been drawn up on attention to women during their pregnancies and on treatment when there was a risk of mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS.

28. The Ministry had established centres to provide attention to women with HIV/AIDS, where appropriate technology was provided to minimize the risk of mother-to-child transmission. In addition, with the Ministry's support and financial assistance from the Financial Stability Institute and the World Bank, special training had been offered to health care providers at all levels throughout the country and the course material had been included in the curricula of the country's medical schools. Pamphlets had been widely circulated with information on women and HIV/AIDS and, as of 2003, at the indication of their family doctor, pregnant women were tested for HIV/AIDS.

29. Youth-friendly training was an important element in the approach to the health and development of adolescents; it was also an element of the promotion of healthy living, and the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and other health risks. In the Republic of Moldova, there were 12 health centres specifically for adolescents. In early 2006, the

Government had published a document on the State's youth-friendly health services and work continued in that area. The activities under way included campaigns to increase awareness of the negative consequences of smoking on health. Starting in 2005, the country was organizing awareness-raising campaigns on healthy living and other health-related activities in the context of the WHO World Health Day. Also, the information needed for ratification of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control had been submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

30. Measures to counteract the use and trafficking of drugs had been reinforced in 2005 and 2006. The situation had been analysed and priorities established for relevant activities, such as information campaigns and dissemination of information on the negative consequences of drug abuse. In 2004, criteria had been elaborated for a treatment of drug addicts to replace methadone therapy.

31. In that context, HIV/AIDS infection was a very important problem in the country. Between 1986 and 2005, more than 2,000 HIV-infected persons had been identified; 60 per cent of the cases were transmitted through sexual contact, which explained the increase in the number of women infected (42 per cent in 2005), including pregnant women. To improve the situation, the State had adopted an HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases prevention and control programme for 2006-2010. A training and education programme was under way for such sectors of the population as drug users, prostitutes, and members of security forces.

32. In February 2006, the country had submitted a country report on the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS to the United Nations. Social networks were also in operation and the country had entered the third phase of the State-run HIV/AIDS campaign addressed at young people of 20 to 28 years of age. A draft law on preventing infection with HIV/AIDS had been prepared and, following discussions with representatives of civil society, had been adopted in May 2006.

33. With regard to the health of women in rural areas, the State had adopted a programme entitled "Moldovan Villages", which included the concept of equality for men and women.

34. **Ms. Pascal** (Republic of Moldova), referring to the issue of abortion, said that services for pregnant women were free and guaranteed by the State before

and after abortion. Women from ethnic minorities had the same right to medical services as all other women.

Articles 13 and 14

35. **Ms. Dairiam** said that, according to the report, women could access credit through the commercial banks; however such banks had their own credit policies and procedures. They required documentation to be presented attesting to the customer's capacity to repay the loan. It would be interesting to know what type of documents had to be presented and whether that requirement prevented women from accessing credit. She asked whether the situation had been monitored and whether there were plans to introduce alternative credit schemes that would facilitate access to credit for women. The issue was linked to the question that had been raised on women and business. Credit was very important for women in business and although, according to the report, women were interested in becoming involved in business, very few were actually able to do so; perhaps that was related to the difficulty in obtaining credit.

36. The Government of Moldova, in reply to the Committee's questions, had indicated some poverty reduction goals for the period 2005 to 2015, including that of increasing women's income levels. However, poverty eradication had to go beyond increasing income and it would be useful to have details of the components of the poverty alleviation programmes and whether it incorporated elements such as decision-making, health, housing, and living conditions, as well as whether the Government was taking an integrated approach to poverty alleviation.

37. The delegation had stated that the "Moldovan Villages" programme provided equal opportunities for women and men; further information on the contents of the programme would be useful.

38. In its written answers to the Committee's questions, the Republic of Moldova had indicated that there was an organic law regarding the rights of the persons of different national minorities. She enquired about the content of the law and the rights it referred to, how the law would be enforced and monitored, and what assistance would be given to national minorities, especially women, so that they would benefit from the law.

39. The Republic of Moldova had also indicated that some programmes for Roma women were being

implemented over the period 2001-2010, but that such programmes were not very successful and she wondered why. Likewise, it had mentioned a study on the Roma that looked at qualifications and employment and it would be interesting to know how the Government had used the findings of the study to make the programme for minorities, and for Roma women in particular, more effective.

40. Lastly, she urged the Government to reconsider the approach that it was impossible to assess the situation of the Roma in Moldova separately from the social and economic situation of the rest of the population, because minorities, especially women who were members of minority groups, had special needs.

41. **Ms. Gribincea** (Republic of Moldova) said that, to improve the health of women in rural areas, the Government had elaborated an equal opportunities programme to ensure socio-economic development through the diversification of activities and the solution of problems at the local level. The programme put in practice the principle of equality between men and women in all areas to ensure that women had equal access to the exercise of their human rights and to a life without violence.

42. In the case of the ethnic minorities, in 2005, the Bureau for Inter-ethnic Affairs had prepared a report on the implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which confirmed that the Convention was being implemented throughout the country. According to all the governmental and non-governmental agencies working with minority groups, cases of racial discrimination in the context of the Convention had not been observed. The report also referred to the situation of women in that context and determined that, in the Republic of Moldova, there were no cases of gender-based discrimination with a racial element. The issues of gender equality and equal opportunities were under discussion at all levels and, to date, racial discrimination had not been observed. The State was monitoring the situation closely in order to deal with any possible discrimination when it arose.

43. **Ms. Pascal** (Republic of Moldova) said that there was no discrimination with regard to credit, which was available to both men and women, provided they complied with the conditions established by the banks. Nevertheless, if the applicant could not provide collateral, credit was evidently refused.

44. The Republic of Moldova had a national poverty reduction strategy aimed at economic growth and poverty reduction, but it was difficult to implement the social aspects, because that called for important financial resources which were not available.

45. Regarding minorities and discrimination against women of ethnic origin, and in particular the Roma and their integration into Moldovan society, any discrimination was based on their behaviour and not on their ethnic origin. In the case of the Gagauz population, their situation was no different from other ethnic minorities. Moreover, the Republic of Moldova had created an autonomous region where the Gagauz lived and where they represented the overwhelming majority of the population. There was no information to show that there had been any strong discrimination towards them, even in rural areas.

46. **Ms. Dairiam** noted that earlier questions about whether all women had access to health care and about monitoring employers responsible for paying for female employees' prenatal and post-natal care had not been answered.

47. Women who lacked assets were at a disadvantage when applying for credit. Simply saying that the Government did not have the capacity to respond was inadequate. The Government could make an effort to negotiate with banks on the issue to ensure that women were given an advantage. That did not require massive resources.

48. **Ms. Popescu** said that since there was often de facto discrimination against women from ethnic minorities, legislation which was merely non-discriminatory was not sufficient. Women from ethnic minorities, especially Roma women, suffered from multiple discriminations. The next report should provide detailed information on the situation of women from ethnic minorities, especially Roma women, and their access to education, health care, political representation, etc. The Transdnister region had illegally seceded but was still under the jurisdiction of the Republic of Moldova. It would be helpful to know whether there was any information available on the situation of women living there.

49. **Ms. Tavares Da Silva** said that it was necessary to go beyond gender-neutral provisions for minority groups to address the specific problems faced by the women in those groups.

50. **Ms. Patten** asked why there was no gender perspective in a major policy like the strategy for economic growth and eradication of poverty. Policies on women in the formal and informal sectors were an important issue, given the large numbers of women employed in the informal sector. She asked what mechanisms existed to adjudicate wage discrimination and what other efforts were being undertaken by the Government to close the pay gap. The current practice in the private sector of employing women off the books, resulting in denial of social security should be discussed.

51. **Ms. Pascal** (Republic of Moldova) said that when credit decisions were made, it was not only women without property whose applications were declined; men without property could not get credit either. However, a programme did exist to give small grants to women who had no property so that they could open businesses, mainly in rural areas.

52. In regard to pregnancy-related services covered by employers, no cases of employers violating the obligation to pay had been recorded. Women who did not work received government assistance for pregnancy-related care. If a woman was not employed and was supported by her husband, the services were paid for by the husband.

53. No information was available about the situation of women in the Transdnister.

54. The Ministry of Labour did not monitor the shadow economy. There was no data and no research done on the subject. A wage gap was typical of Moldovan society because women tended to choose low-paying fields such as medicine, education and social services, and because women were clustered in lower-ranking jobs. There was no wage discrimination enshrined in the law. Mechanisms were being developed to regulate sexual harassment. The retirement age for women was 57 and for men, 62. The seniority requirements for receiving a pension were the same for men and women.

55. **Ms. Gribincea** (Republic of Moldova) said that the Government provided medical services for vulnerable groups and children up to the age of 18. While the delegation believed that Roma women were not subject to discrimination, the problem should be studied and a special section would be included in the next report. Data on women in Transdnister would follow.

Articles 15, 16

56. **Ms. Popescu** asked whether members of vulnerable groups, such as women victims of domestic violence and trafficking and Roma women, received the free State-funded legal aid mentioned in the report.

57. Migration was a widespread and growing phenomenon, with large numbers of people going abroad both legally and illegally. It would be helpful to know the impact of migration on family stability. As it was primarily men who migrated and worked abroad, she wondered if that created additional difficulties for women at home taking care of their families, and if there were mechanisms obliging men to send money home.

58. Under the Family Code, the age of marriage was 16 for women and 18 for men. She would like to know if there was a plan to equalize the marriage age at 18, since, under the Convention of the Rights of the Child, which the Republic of Moldova had ratified, the legal age of marriage was 18.

59. **Ms. Pascal** (Republic of Moldova) said that people who wished to receive the State-funded free legal aid were required to present information about their income and that members of vulnerable groups did receive such assistance. Migration did have a very negative impact on families. There was no instrument obligating men to send money home, and some children were left at home without either parent due to migration. The Government was developing services for children who had been left at home without either parent. In 2004-2005, a bill had been initiated to raise the age of marriage for women to 18. Unfortunately it had not been adopted.

60. **Ms. Gribincea** (Republic of Moldova) said that the number of early marriages entered into did not appear to be increasing; rather, the trend was towards marriage at a later age. In the next report, information would be provided on that subject, as well as on the situations of Roma women and women living on the left bank of the Dniester River.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.