



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

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

Summary record of the 931st meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 15 July 2010, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Gabr

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

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

Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of the Russian Federation (CEDAW/C/USR/7, CEDAW/C/USR/Q/7 and Add.1) (continued)

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

Articles 7 to 9

2. **Ms. Murillo de la Vega** welcomed the additional data provided by the delegation regarding the participation of women in public and political life. While the electoral law was very detailed with respect to rules for participation by political parties, no mention was made of any assistance available to women candidates. She wished to know how many women were in positions of political power in the federal, regional and municipal governments.

3. Noting that Russia occupied 108th place in the Global Gender Gap Report of 2006, she called on the Government to work towards achieving greater political empowerment of women. Citing examples of women who had been accused of falsifying signatures and cases of male politicians raising doubts of the legitimacy of women running for public office, she asked whether there were any measures in place to protect women in politics and to condemn such practices.

4. **Ms. Popescu** noted with interest the creation of a national reserve list of high-potential administrative personnel. However, the number of women on that list remained low. She wished to know what the criteria for inclusion were and how the list was used. She wondered how the discrepancy between the low number of women in the Russian diplomatic service and the fact that 40 per cent of the graduates of international relations and diplomacy study programmes with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were females could be explained and what measures were being taken by the Ministry to increase the proportion of women in diplomatic service.

5. **Mr. Topilin** said that there were only two female governors in the Russian Federation, but it was hoped the number would grow.

6. The reserve consisted of an annually revised list comprising 100 top-tier candidates, of whom 11 were women, and 1,000 second-tier candidates. Following recommendations by political experts, candidates were reviewed by a commission and included in the reserve list. Women accounted for 30 per cent of the candidates included in the regional lists. Individuals who were not on lists could still be appointed to government positions.

7. **Ms. Viktorova** said that four high-level diplomatic posts were occupied by women. She expressed confidence that the proportion of women in the diplomatic corps would continue to grow steadily over the coming years.

Articles 10 to 14

8. **Ms. Zou Xiaoqiao** said that it was difficult to evaluate the education data, which in the next report should be disaggregated by gender, ethnicity and region. Noting the trend towards gender grouping by specialty mentioned in the report, she asked what measures had been taken to correct it and to encourage female students to enter fields other than humanities.

9. Noting that most female teachers taught at primary school level, she wished to know what obstacles prevented women from teaching at the higher levels and whether any temporary special measures had been taken to encourage and promote female participation in decision-making in the field of education.

10. She was curious to know what conclusions had been drawn from the assessment of gender issues in textbooks and what amendments had been made to the textbooks. She asked whether the assessment included private schools and what entity had provided oversight. Finally, she wished to know if a course on gender equality existed that raised awareness of gender issues among students and teachers.

11. **Ms. Arocha Dominguez** said it was clear from the report that, in terms of literacy, girls were better prepared than boys at secondary through university levels. However, girls accounted for 43 per cent of students at the primary level, which indicated a lack of access for girls to that level of education and could explain the high level of illiteracy. She would appreciate clarification in that regard.

12. Bearing in mind the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in 2008 (CERD/C/RUS/CO/19) regarding the social and economic marginalization of the Roma population, she was troubled by the fact that children of minorities were being educated separately in school. She asked the delegation to respond to that concern.

13. Referring to the proclamation of the Year of the Family in 2008 and measures that had been taken to address demographic concerns, she wished to know whether such measures were accompanied by an educational component; otherwise, they could strengthen gender stereotypes.

14. Referring to the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2005 (CRC/C/RUS/CO/3), she suggested that the decrease in institutional support for childcare centres, together with the promotion of higher birth rates, could lead to women taking longer to return to economic, social and political spheres of activity. She wished to know how such effects of the demographic strategy were being addressed.

15. **Mr. Bruun**, stressed that the report and alternative sources confirmed that a clear problem existed with respect to the implementation and enforcement of legislation governing employment in Russia. Recalling that in 2002 the Committee had called for the enactment of an equal opportunity law in Russia (A/57/38), he asked why no special legislation had been enacted. He also wished to know why a large pay gap continued to exist despite the existence of the principle of equal pay. Female wages were 60 per cent of men's, despite the fact that women were very well educated in Russia.

16. The long list of professions banned for women, more than 400, including some in which women had previously worked and excelled, was indefensible under the Convention which obliged the State party to review protective measures in light of new scientific and technological knowledge.

17. **Ms. Patten** expressed concern that the Labour Code did not specifically address sexual harassment in the workplace; its articles 132 and 133 did not apply to, and were inadequate for addressing, that problem. She wished to know whether the Government had envisaged the adoption of a law on sexual harassment. With respect to the implementation of the Code, she

noted the low number of inspections and the very high number of detected violations of labour laws, based on the nine months' worth of data provided in the report. Additional information on penalties under the Labour Code to address violations would be useful.

18. She would appreciate seeing data regarding the number of women who had benefited from credit and capital programmes. Also, she wondered whether women's needs received special attention and training when market, trade and resource information was being disseminated. Had other measures been taken to facilitate women's equal access to and control over other productive resources such as land? With regard to occupational segregation, she wished to know what measures were being taken to gear women towards non-traditional fields and higher-paying jobs and whether any temporary special measures were under consideration.

19. **Ms. Murillo de la Vega** asked whether the Government had plans to study the impact of excluding women from the high number of jobs not available to them.

20. Noting the attention given to the role of women as mothers, she pointed out that the goal was for family responsibilities to be shared. She asked whether the topic of paternity leave was going to be addressed: while men were viewed as workers, they also needed to be viewed as fathers.

21. For women to have access to social security funds and retirement benefits in the Russian Federation, they needed to be in full-time, long-term jobs. The report mentioned the possibility of women who stayed home to raise children having access to such benefits. She asked what social security and retirement was available for them and whether there was a day-care system that could help women return to work. She wished to know whether there had been studies of regional and municipal differences that made it easier for women to work. She also wanted to know what specific assistance was available for women with disabilities and what special temporary measures were in place.

22. **Ms. Rasekh** said that despite many efforts by the Government to support pregnant women and prevent the termination of pregnancies, abortion rates remained high; over one million were performed annually, of which 200,000 were illegal. Reiterating an unanswered question submitted by the Committee in writing, she asked what concrete measures had been taken to

prevent unwanted pregnancies. The State party needed to elaborate on what it had done to increase easy access to free and affordable family planning and contraception and what measures were being taken to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS among women in high-risk groups, particularly sex workers and intravenous drug users.

23. **Ms. Pimentel**, referring to the Give Me Life campaign described in the response to the list of issues, asked whether there had been follow-up to the campaign. No answer had been provided to the question about increasing access to contraceptives in rural areas. She asked what steps the State party had taken to ensure that proposed reforms to sexual and reproductive rights were scientifically-based and not based on religious beliefs or misinformation. Remarking that transgender-related medical services were not available in many regions, she asked whether the State had a plan or programme to overcome the difficulties encountered because of their omission from public insurance coverage.

24. **Ms. Zou Xiaoqiao** said that while the report acknowledged that rural women continued to face hardships and provided a good analysis of the reasons, she would appreciate more information regarding the life of rural women, including their main occupations, their proportion in the workforce, their access to education and health care, and their participation in the administration of rural affairs. She asked the delegation to clarify whether the programmes mentioned in the report were specifically focused on improving the livelihoods of rural women, and how many women had benefited from those that had been concluded in the past year.

25. It would also be interesting to know how many women participated in cooperatives and in their management. What measures had been taken to include women at the management level?

26. She asked whether women had access to microcredit and whether Russian women, and rural women in particular, enjoyed the same access to credit as men. Did the Government give favourable treatment to credit applications from women?

27. **Ms. Begum** said that she would also like to hear about any budgetary allocations to ensure rural women's access to education, health services, employment, capital and productive resources, as well as their involvement in decision-making processes, and

about measures to improve their legal literacy, including their awareness of human rights and knowledge of the Convention. Information should be provided on any legal remedies available without cost to rural women, including women from ethnic minorities, in relation to domestic violence, gender-based violence and trafficking in persons. She also asked whether there were any women's shelters or crisis centres in rural areas, and whether they were accessible to women from ethnic minorities.

28. As women accounted for 54 per cent of the population, they would presumably be the major beneficiaries of the 40 per cent increase in pension levels. She wondered whether non-contributory pensions were provided for older women who had never worked outside the home and also asked about policies for the long-term health needs of older women.

29. She requested clarification of reports that the Russian authorities used harassment, threats and the reduction of humanitarian assistance to force Chechen refugees to return to Chechnya. Were there any programmes for post-conflict adaptation and reintegration for women in Chechnya?

30. With regard to HIV/AIDS, it would be interesting to hear what steps were taken in rural areas to protect women and whether there were any educational campaigns in rural areas to raise awareness of the epidemic. In conclusion, she noted that there had been no response to the question about Muslim minorities.

31. **Ms. Rasekh** said that Muslim women who wore headscarves and who had relatives fighting in Chechnya had been detained under Operation Fatima. She wondered whether that policy was still in place.

32. **Mr. Topilin** (Russian Federation) said that there had never been any de jure or de facto discrimination or limitation on girls' access to primary education in the Russian Federation. Occasionally, children in a difficult situation were unable to finish school, but evening classes or other solutions were available to enable them to complete their education. The federal education oversight agency, currently headed by a woman, monitored educational standards and programmes. Compulsory education was provided to all citizens of the Russian Federation and there were no separate classes for Roma children.

33. With regard to the Year of the Family and demographic concerns, family support measures

included a capital payment of over \$11,000 which was made available after the birth of a second child. The payment was not given directly to the family but could be used to improve its living conditions, to pay for the child's education or as a contribution to the woman's pension fund. It was not discrimination but a means of strengthening the family and the financial situation of women.

34. In the 1990s, many preschool institutions had closed down because of the economic conditions. Special programmes had therefore been launched to help develop preschool services by providing subsidies for them according to the number of children served. In the context of programmes to support women with small businesses, alternative group kindergartens had been established in many regions.

35. As a result of court decisions relating to equal rights, a number of changes had been made to legislation in recent years, which showed that the Russian Federation was following the Committee's previous recommendations. Men now had the same rights as women with regard to receiving child benefits.

36. Turning to employment, he said that special legislative measures had been adopted in 2009 in response to the economic and financial crisis. Measures for employment protection mostly consisted of subsidies for small business start-ups, but the Government also financed retraining programmes for workers at risk of unemployment when their employers were forced to shorten their working hours.

37. There were still limitations on women's employment in difficult conditions, and such measures were not considered discriminatory in view of the need to protect reproductive health. However, some of the excluded occupations had been removed from the list, which in future would be based on different principles. Employers would be encouraged to eliminate such jobs or improve working conditions and offer higher levels of social benefits. Anyone who lost their job in that way would be offered a place in a special retraining programme. There were currently only 3,500 labour inspectors and more were needed but efforts were being made to improve inspections and ensure that work places were properly equipped. The Labour Code did not contain a specific article on sexual harassment because it regulated labour relations in areas such as hiring, firing, wages and conditions of work. Sexual harassment was covered by the Criminal Code.

38. All women workers were entitled to paid sick leave, maternity leave and other benefits. For women who were not working, such benefits were available under another mechanism. Workers' health benefits were related to salaries and depended on the labour relationship with the employer; if they had contracts, all benefits and insurance were included. Workers without contracts could apply to make voluntary contributions to the social security and pension funds.

39. The Government had signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and was preparing legislation for its ratification. Disability benefits were paid on a monthly basis at various rates according to the degree of disability. Prostheses and any special rehabilitation equipment considered necessary were provided free of charge and a special "accessible environment" programme was being developed. All the necessary regulations for the social protection of women with disabilities were already in place.

40. **Ms. Teterina** (Russian Federation) said that article 1 of the Law on Education referred to the principle of respect for the rights and freedoms of individuals. Education was guaranteed for all citizens regardless of gender. The Ministry of Education and Social Affairs produced an annual compendium of statistical data which was available on the Internet.

41. In relation to girls' choice of subjects, she said that in 2009 the State had introduced a single national State examination for all school graduates, which ensured equal opportunities for all with regard to entering higher education. There was a special budget allocation for technical education and the numbers of students had therefore increased in recent years. The number of women teachers in higher education had also risen and women now accounted for 180,000 of a total of 340,000 staff members at higher educational institutions.

42. The Education Act established requirements for the content of educational programmes and textbooks, which should be oriented to strengthening the rule of law, preparing the individual to be a member of an integrated contemporary society, and offering a spiritual and moral education. The content of education should promote mutual understanding and cooperation between individuals and peoples regardless of race, ethnicity, religious beliefs or social background, and students should be encouraged to recognize the

diversity of worldviews and form their own beliefs and convictions freely.

43. State programmes for general and vocational education used various textbooks with a gender dimension. In courses on mathematics and history, for example, students studied women's contribution to those fields. Since 2007, provision had been made for extracurricular activities, which included awareness-raising programmes and events with parents and families.

44. **Ms. Guseva** (Russian Federation) said that the Russian Federation had given a lot of attention to family planning and to abortion prevention. Every woman could make her own maternity decisions, and abortions were permitted within the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. To ensure women's safety, medical services for the termination of pregnancy were provided free of charge. Federal targeted programmes for family planning and maternity safety, including the "Children of Russia" programme, played a large role in the prevention efforts, which included activities to increase awareness of family planning and promote the use of contraceptives.

45. All constituent entities of the Russian Federation had regional programmes providing free contraceptives to adolescents and to women at risk of unwanted pregnancy. Special attention was given to the training of doctors in family planning and there were currently 319 family planning centres. Over 9 million women were using modern methods of contraception and the use of hormonal contraceptives had increased by 50 per cent over the past ten years.

46. A number of measures had been taken to protect maternal health and prevent abortions. A 2003 review of the social indicators for pregnancy termination had reduced the list from 13 to 4. The range of services provided as part of the termination procedures were defined in accordance with World Health Organization standards and included medical visits, information sessions, and psychological assistance and support. In 2005, centres for the protection of adolescents' reproductive health had been established.

47. The staff of women's clinics included social workers and psychologists to provide support for pregnant women who were considering abortion. A 2007 review of medical indicators for termination of pregnancy had excluded over 70 illnesses from the list. An annual report was issued with abortion statistics.

48. For the second year in a row, the Ministry of Health and Social Development, in conjunction with the Social and Cultural Initiatives Fund, had embarked on activities in all constituent entities of the Russian Federation to increase public awareness of abortions and contraceptives and bring together the abortion prevention efforts of various health entities and social and religious organizations. The activities included educational and awareness-raising events, advertising campaigns and discussions on the prevention of unwanted pregnancies. Health and social protection entities, education and youth services and community organizations worked together continuously on awareness-raising, especially among adolescents and women at risk.

49. Those efforts had resulted in a steady downward trend in the total number of abortions, with a reduction of 22.5 per cent over the last five years and a drop of 36 per cent in the number of abortions per 100 live births. Since 2006, the number of live births had exceeded the number of abortions, while there had been 26.5 per cent fewer abortions performed on women pregnant for the first time. The number of late abortions had fallen by 17 per cent, with a reduction of 30 per cent among girls under 14 years of age and almost 40 per cent for girls aged from 15 to 18 years. At the same time, maternal mortality after abortion had fallen by 34 per cent over the past five years and plans were under way to establish support centres for pregnant women in difficult situations. The centres' main tasks would be to provide medical and social-psychological support for women with unplanned pregnancies, increase awareness of the possible consequences of abortion and provide support for women with psychological and family problems.

50. HIV/AIDS consultation and screening was compulsory for all pregnant women, while treatment for HIV/AIDS was available at women's clinics and at HIV/AIDS prevention centres. The Ministry of Health and Social Development had a coordinating council on the prevention of mother-to-child transmission. Recently, the reproductive behaviour of pregnant women living with HIV/AIDS had changed, as less women were terminating their pregnancies and more of them were attending regular medical check-ups. As a result of the preventive measures, the number of infected children born to women with HIV/AIDS had fallen from 20 per cent in 2001 to 9 per cent in 2008. Over 80 per cent of pregnant women with HIV/AIDS

received transmission prevention treatment during pregnancy and over 90 per cent received such treatment during childbirth, while 97 per cent of their newborns received treatment.

51. **Ms. Belakonnaya** (Russian Federation), reviewing the information on the representation of women in the public service and administrative bodies in the Russian Federation, especially in leadership positions, as presented in tables 57, 58 and 59 of the responses to the list of issues and questions (CEDAW/C/USR/Q/7/Add.1), pointed out that the statistics in the tables were broken down by the administrative level of the bodies, i.e. federal or regional; the branch of Government, i.e. executive, legislative or judicial; and the level of post. The global figure for all posts averaged nearly 72 per cent for women. The differences by administrative level were not systematic, with some federal figures somewhat higher than the global average for women and some a bit lower. An analysis by branch of Government showed somewhat lower figures in the legislative branch and higher ones in the judicial and prosecution authorities. From a level-of-post point of view, women were strongly represented — they were even significantly in the majority — at all levels and formed over 70 per cent of the assistant, specialist and support specialist ranks.

52. **Mr. Topilin** (Russian Federation) said that all citizens were entitled to an old-age pension regardless of the length of time they had worked. With regard to the alleged banning of the wearing of head scarves by local authorities in some Muslim areas, he said that the law prohibited all forms of discrimination based on religion, which covered coercion both for and against religion-based practices such as the wearing of head scarves: some of the shadow reports submitted by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had reported efforts by some religious leaders to enforce the wearing of head scarves, which was also illegal. The President of the Russian Federation had announced a decision to form councils of elders in the Northern Caucasus districts to advise and assist the executive branch in the implementation of appropriate legislation. The Chechen Republic was currently receiving significant resources, more than any other region, for reconstruction of infrastructure and facilities. The Government had established a major national project to strengthen the infrastructure in rural areas, build schools and medical facilities and provide loans to

farmers and other economically active residents. The Duma would soon adopt a law enabling rural maternity clinics to dispense medications directly without having to go to a doctor in town for a prescription. With regard to the absence of insurance coverage for transgender-related medical services, he expressed an interest in learning how other countries treated such matters.

Articles 15 and 16

53. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** noted that the report provided no new information on article 16. With regard to article 15, she asked how the rights of women, in particular rights relating to the custody of adopted and non-adopted children, child support, property, pensions, severance pay and housing, were protected in situations where couples, including same-sex couples, ended an informal union. She requested information about the insurance coverage of fertility treatments and artificial insemination. The Committee had received reports of the persistence of underage marriages, even bridal kidnapping, especially in the Northern Caucasus regions, and she asked what action the Government was taking to deal with that problem. A matter of some concern to the Committee was the proposed amendment to article 134 of the Criminal Code, which would apparently provide virtual impunity for those who had sex with underage women — which was technically rape — if they married their victims. She requested more information on the status of that legislation.

54. **Ms. Jaising** asked about the role of customary law, in particular the sharia law in Muslim areas, in the legal system. Customary law often disfavoured women or discouraged them from resorting to the legal system to protect themselves against discriminatory practices.

55. **Mr. Topilin** (Russian Federation) said that rights of the partners in informal unions were not defined in the law, which dealt with the basic rights of individuals and legally recognized families. Before or during the relationship, partners were free to agree to conclude a legal agreement, which could define certain rights and obligations. Housing issues in situations of domestic violence posed problems, as housing was still not plentiful and there were not enough shelters. Russian family law did not recognize same-sex unions, and there were as yet no plans to review that situation. There was no prohibition against artificial insemination but also no entitlement to such procedures. Children could be adopted by a legal couple or by an individual.

In the case of relationships not legally recognized, such as same-sex unions, children could be adopted by individual partners but not by the couple, and the child would stay with its adoptive parent. He was unaware of the current status of the proposed amendment to article 134 of the Criminal Code. In response to the question on customary law, he pointed out that the law guaranteed freedom of religion and belief but also protected other rights of individuals and families.

56. **Ms. Shapieva** (Russian Federation) pointed out that human rights had originated in customary law. Traditions in the Northern Caucasus regions ensured respect for children, parents, elders and other family values. There were still occasional abuses, but the law prosecuted violators. Bridal abduction was illegal, as was polygamy. In that connection, development and education were often more effective than punitive measures. A relatively recent phenomenon was the presence of Wahhabist missionaries, who were agitating in the communities against the wishes of elders and most citizens. Women in the Northern Caucasus had full access to education and participated actively in public life and in government bodies.

57. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** said that the representation of women in the Russian legislature could still be improved.

58. **Mr. Flinterman** noted that, in the context of the universal periodic review, the Russian Federation had agreed to revise its law on NGOs, and asked what impact that might have on the work of women's NGOs and human rights organizations. He also requested more information on the status of investigations into the killings of several female journalists in recent years.

59. **Ms. Awori** noted, with regard to domestic violence in Russia, that both the Committee and other human rights bodies had determined that a separate and comprehensive law on the subject was required, not simply amendments to existing laws. Domestic violence was endemic in Russia, as in many countries, and a comprehensive law would provide stronger legal and social remedies to victims, working through public prosecutions.

60. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** asked whether the new elder councils would include women and whether candidates would be selected by nomination or by election. It was also extremely important to know exactly what the status of the dangerous proposed amendment to article 134 of the Criminal Code was.

The delegation had spoken about the positive side of tradition: she repeated her question about the specifically negative side of the impact of sharia law in Muslim areas.

61. **Mr. Topilin** (Russian Federation) said that generally, gender equality had been successfully implemented in the Russian Federation. Women's rights were on a par with those of men. With regard to the revision of the law on NGOs, he noted significant progress in cooperation on social protection and human rights between the Government and NGOs. Various regulations and other normative instruments on gender equality were being prepared with NGO input, and implementation of the regulations would receive Government financial support. Existing laws were sufficient to repress domestic violence and other harmful practices. There was a problem of under-reporting in cases of domestic violence, in that victims hesitated to come forward with complaints. It was possible that a separate law might be prepared to deal with domestic violence.

62. **Mr. Yakovlev** (Russian Federation), said that the two cases of killings of female Russian journalists that had attracted most attention were the October 2006 shooting in Moscow of Anna Politkovskaya of *Novaya Gazeta* and the July 2009 kidnapping and murder in Chechnya of Natalia Estemirova of *Memorial*. The investigation in the Estemirova case had revealed the participation of members of illegal armed groups in the Northern Caucasus region on whose activities Ms. Estemirova had been reporting. An arrest warrant had been issued for the perpetrators and all leads were being followed up. The investigation into the Politkovskaya killing in 2006 had established early on the participation of an organized criminal group opposed to Politkovskaya's reporting on the war in Chechnya. Indictments had been brought in 2008 against the brothers Ibragim and Dzhairail Makhmudov and Sergey Khadzhikurbanov, but the court had acquitted them in February 2009. That verdict had been rejected by a higher court in Moscow in July 2009 and the case had been referred back for a new trial. Further investigations were being carried out, including DNA analysis, and technical judicial cooperation and assistance had been requested from the authorities in several Western European countries. All leads were being followed and Government leaders were being kept informed of any progress.

63. **Mr. Topilin** (Russian Federation) noted that harmful traditional practices, such as bridal kidnapping, were considered criminal offences and prosecuted under the law.

64. **The Chairperson** urged the Russian Federation to expedite its ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and of the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. She welcomed the fact that the Russian Federation had incorporated some of the Committee's recommendations into its legislation and expressed the hope that the State party would strengthen its legislation against trafficking in human beings and consider the adoption of temporary special measures to promote the advancement of women.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.