

**Committee on the Elimination of
Discrimination against Women
Fourteenth session
16 January – 3 February 1995
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**Concluding comments of the Committee on the Elimination of
Discrimination against Women: Colombia**

**Combined second and third periodic report
(Reports considered at the thirteenth session)**

602. The Committee considered the revised combined second and third report of Colombia (CEDAW/C/COL/2-3/Rev.1) of 21 September 1993 at the meeting held on 31 January 1994.

603. The representative of the Government of Colombia introduced the document in question and replied to the questions which the Committee had submitted to him in advance and which had been prepared by the Pre-session Working Group.

604. The Committee considered that the reports of Colombia, which had been drawn up with the participation of not only governmental agencies but also non-governmental organizations, were in keeping with the Committee's guidelines for the submission of reports and provided detailed information on the implementation of most of the articles of the Convention. Furthermore, they analysed in a self-critical manner the obstacles that still existed. The Committee drew attention to the extensive information provided on violence against women, which was felt to be of great interest; it regretted that no reference had been made to General Recommendation 18 of the Committee on handicapped women; and it asked how the increase in guerrilla activities and drug trafficking had affected the lives of urban and rural women and families.

605. In spite of the contents of the document, it should be pointed out that there were some shortcomings in it, such as the lack of analysis concerning articles 1 and 2 of the Convention, despite their particular importance. The Committee recommends therefore that in its future reports, Colombia should provide an adequate analysis of each of the articles of the Convention, in accordance with article 18.

Progress achieved

606. The following points should be underscored as the most significant ones in efforts to ensure the complete equality for Colombia women:

- Since 1992, divorce has been permitted for all marriages, including Catholic marriages, and the grounds of mutual consent have been added;
- In 1992, the Constitutional Court recognized that domestic work had monetary value, which constitutes a precedent and establishes jurisprudence;
- The patrimonial regime for de facto unions was regulated in 1990;

- The preposition de was removed from the names of married women through a legal order;

- The Law on Support for Female Heads of Families (1993) provides such women with access to social security both for themselves and their dependants;

- Law 50 of 1990 extended paid maternity leave from 8 to 12 weeks.

607. Furthermore, the Committee drew attention to the increased participation by females at all levels of the educational system, which has been put on an equal footing with the system for males, including university education, the reduction of illiteracy and fertility - although there are still differences in the number of children per woman according to her level of education - as well as the increase in the number of women who wish to work outside the home and who obtain a job.

608. The Committee attached particular importance to the 1991 Constitution, which contains several articles concerning the Convention on the Elimination of All Form of Discrimination against Women and the General Recommendations of the Committee, as well as a number of decisions by the Constitutional Court with regard to: (1) the ruling against an educational institution for expelling a girl because she was pregnant; the institution was required to readmit her; (2) the requirement to include sex education in primary education.

Obstacles and suggestions

609. The Committee regretted that the General Education Law of December 1993 had not included affirmative-action measures concerning non-sexist education or any provisions specifically relating to women. This required the Presidential Council for Youth, Women and the Family to continue to provide strong support for programmes aimed at overcoming stereotypes concerning men and women in textbooks and other school materials, the training of teachers and school curricula.

610. The Committee also pointed out that the Presidential Council and Ministry of Labour should publicize to a greater extent than up to now the rights of women in the workplace and seek ways of supporting them and protecting them more effectively against abuses in enterprises in sectors such as flower-growing, the clothes and food industries and particularly the informal sector. It would be advisable to train, in particular, officials responsible for monitoring the correct application of labour legislation, for example labour inspectors, with regard to the rights of working women.

611. On the basis of the information provided on violence against women and on women prostitutes, the Committee requested that the next report should supplement that information with new data and analyses and, above all, information on new measures to eliminate violence against women in all its forms. It was suggested that all necessary steps should be taken to ensure that in cases of domestic violence, the aggressor was the one who left the residence instead of the woman attacked, as occurred in many places in the world.

612. The Committee criticized the high number of miscarriages and the maternal mortality rate resulting from them, which made it consider the possible need to amend the legislation in force and the necessity to continue to promote the spread of family planning, particularly in rural areas.

613. The Committee pointed out that policies to promote equality should be stepped up with regard to the most impoverished women and the low level of training and should eliminate the differences which still existed between urban women and rural women.

614. While the Committee viewed positively the fact that some Colombian women had reached very high-level posts (three ministers, including the Minister for Foreign Affairs), it considered that speedier progress should be made in the participation by women in decision-making, for example, through government support for specific programmes for women candidates in elections.

615. In order to promote and coordinate these measures and continue making progress in implementing the Convention, the Committee recommended strengthening the government mechanism responsible for policies on equality - currently the Presidential Council for Youth, Women and the Family - by providing it, under the law, with sufficient authority to propose, promote, coordinate and carry out measures on behalf of women at a higher hierarchical level within the Administration, greater autonomy and more human and economic resources. If all that was established by law, the changes of government would not have a negative impact on its functioning.