
**Committee on the Elimination of
Discrimination against Women
Fifteenth session
15 January – 2 February 1996
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**Concluding comments of the Committee on the Elimination of
Discrimination against Women: Hungary**

Third periodic report

229. The Committee considered the third periodic report of Hungary (CEDAW/C/HUN/3 and Add.1) at its 304th and 305th meetings, on 30 January 1996 (see CEDAW/C/SR.304 and 305).

230. In his introductory statement, the representative of Hungary stressed the importance and high priority attached by his Government to the Convention, to the achievement of equality of women and men, and to the integration of women's human rights into the mainstream of human rights activities. Human rights education at all levels was considered to be the appropriate tool to promote the elimination of discrimination.

231. The transition to a new political system resulting from democratic elections in 1990 opened up new opportunities for civil society. At the same time, the transition from State socialism to democracy had unwanted consequences regarding women's role and position in society. The concepts of parity, democracy and of equal rights of men and women, while enshrined in the Constitution and in legislation, are not yet a reality. While women participate in local politics, their representation at the national level remains low, and women's organizations are not strong or representative enough to influence government policy on equality issues.

232. A difficult economic situation, falling living standards and economic stabilization measures restrict the possibilities for implementing the Convention, in particular with regard to women's de facto equality. While there has been a dramatic increase in unemployment, so far it has affected men more than women. However, the situation of elderly women is very precarious, and young women are disadvantaged in the labour market, owing to their lower level of skills and qualifications. The labour market remains segregated. A rise in prostitution is also attributed to high unemployment and other economic hardships.

233. Recent changes introduced in the country included the modification of the family support system, according to which most financial support to families will now be need-based. Financial child-care benefits are being abolished, and the number of State-sponsored day-care facilities has decreased. The cost of private child care often exceeds the financial means of Hungarian families. Efforts are under way to educate female employees about their rights in the workplace, which is considered very important in a time of drastic economic change. A women's machinery was established within the framework of the Ministry of Labour.

234. The situation of the Roma minority, many of whom live in extreme poverty, is of particular concern to the Government. A programme of action is therefore being elaborated to address educational, employment, social welfare and anti-discrimination aspects.

Concluding comments of the Committee

Introduction

235. The Committee expressed its satisfaction with the manner in which the State party had submitted its third periodic report and engaged in a constructive dialogue with the Committee.

236. The report describes the major changes that have occurred in the country and the serious difficulties confronting women with regard to their rights and their effective recognition.

237. The Committee noted that the report and the oral presentation provided an objective analysis of the situation.

Factors and difficulties affecting the implementation of the Convention

238. The Committee is aware that Hungary is undergoing a period of social and political transition the economic consequences of which are not conducive to advancing the status of women.

239. The economic recession and the emergence of neoconservative and neoliberal ideas have had a substantial negative impact on the country's overall situation, creating a feeling of heightened insecurity. In addition, the change in attitudes towards the traditional family, with a system of values where the mother is the central element of the household, seems to limit women's opportunities.

240. Women's issues are consequently no longer a matter of primary concern for the country. The Committee is aware that this transition period is delaying implementation of the Convention and compliance with the commitments made by the State party at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Positive aspects

241. The Committee noted with satisfaction that Hungary's Constitution and legislation guarantee equal rights to women without any discrimination.

242. The Committee particularly appreciated the legislative and structural reforms recently introduced by the Government to guarantee women's social and political rights, including the Embryo Protection Act, which has considerably reduced the number of induced abortions.

243. The Committee was pleased with the inclusion of human rights teaching, including women's rights as an integral part thereof, in the curricula of primary and secondary schools and at universities.

244. The Committee applauded the cooperation being developed by Hungary with international institutions such as the European Union, the Council of Europe and the International Labour Organization (ILO) for the further training of the labour force, thereby, inter alia, providing women with opportunities to improve their situation.

245. The Committee noted with interest a resurgence of women's non-governmental organizations, which are extending links of solidarity with each other, with a view to making women aware of their rights.

246. The Committee noted with satisfaction the emergence of businesswomen in Hungary, which could help to stimulate the country's economy.

Principal subjects of concern

247. The Committee was concerned that there was no coherent policy or any powerful body with special responsibility for coordinating action in favour of women.

248. The Committee regretted that women's issues were not a priority for the Government political parties or public opinion.

249. Since their specific needs were not being taken into account, de facto enjoyment of women's rights was undeniably meeting obstacles.

250. The Committee noted with concern the undue emphasis placed on women's role as mothers without balancing it with their role as citizens.

251. The Committee expressed concern about the low level of female representation in the decision-making process and in the conduct of public affairs.

252. The Committee noted with alarm that the number of acts of violence and sex crimes against women more than doubled between 1988 and 1993, and consequently deplores the lack of special criminal legislation designed to curb these crimes.

253. The Committee noted with regret that the economic constraints resulting from the transition process were having a negative impact on women's employment and health; female unemployment was increasing and the quality of social services provided to women was deteriorating.

254. In addition, the state of health of the female population was unsatisfactory when judged by international standards. In particular, the high cost of contraceptives prevented women from freely planning when to have children. The very high increase in the rate of abortions was of concern to the Committee.

255. The Committee noted with concern the scale of the problem of prostitution, which affected girls and women in ethnic minorities in particular.

256. The Committee also noted the very precarious situation of refugee women, who are more often exposed to discriminatory treatment.

Suggestions and recommendations

257. The Committee recommended that the State party ensure that the provisions of the Convention are implemented and that the commitments it made at the Fourth World Conference on Women are honoured, by instituting a high-level national mechanism responsible for defining and coordinating a policy for the advancement of women.

258. The Committee invited the Government to take the necessary measures to improve the level of representation of women in all areas of political and public life.

259. The Committee requested the Government to take urgent legislative and concrete measures to provide female victims of violence with protection and appropriate and suitable services.

260. The Committee requested the Government to offer sex education programmes to all young people and to subsidize contraceptives in order to promote family planning and reduce the number of abortions.

261. The Committee urgently requested the Government to take all necessary measures to rehabilitate and reintegrate prostitutes into society.

262. The Committee urged the Government to guarantee social protection for minority and refugee women.

263. The Committee recommended that the Government support women's non-governmental organizations. It should also facilitate the establishment of a network of non-governmental organizations with a view to strengthening their actions.

264. The Committee urgently requested the Government to take further steps to disseminate the Convention and the general recommendations of the Committee.