
**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: Ukraine**

Third periodic report

265. The Committee considered the third periodic report of Ukraine (CEDAW/C/UKR/3 and Add.1) at its 302nd meeting, on 29 January 1996 (see CEDAW/C/SR.302).

266. In introducing the report, the representative of Ukraine highlighted the changes that the country had undergone since the report's submission in 1991, in particular, the transition from a totalitarian to a democratic regime. The Government was in the process of establishing a national machinery for the advancement of women, and several bodies had been set up to study the social situation of women and to protect women. There had also been an increase in women's non-governmental organizations. Currently, women accounted for 54 per cent of the population.

267. The representative stated that the legislation of Ukraine was consistent with the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and reported on parliamentary hearings held in July 1995 at which the implementation of the Convention had been discussed in detail. She mentioned the high level of education of women but noted that preference was given to men over women in leadership posts and that women were also not well represented in executive positions. There were no women ministers and no women in the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, and women held only 4 per cent of the seats in Parliament. Women were equal to men in professional training. They had equal access to social, political and cultural activities. They received equal wages and benefited from conditions that made it possible for them to combine work with motherhood, including part-time work and other special benefits.

268. The representative mentioned several laws and measures that had been adopted to improve the situation of families with children and that a law on children would soon be enacted.

269. The representative also spoke about the severe economic crisis, which had had a major impact on the situation of working women and had increased the threat of poverty. Seventy-four per cent of the unemployed were women.

270. The representative pointed out that Ukraine was undergoing the deepest demographic crisis of the decade. In the age group between 20 and 50 years the mortality of men was more than three times higher than that of women. The life expectancy of women is, as a result, 10 years greater than that of men. The

representative outlined the serious health problems of adolescent girls and said that the number of abortions exceeded the number of births. She said that a national programme of family planning had been launched in September 1995, including making contraceptives available.

271. The representative mentioned the setting up of a network of services and the allocation of funds for dealing with negative genetic effects of radiation associated with the Chernobyl incident.

Concluding comments of the Committee

Introduction

272. The Committee expressed appreciation for the frank presentation of the third periodic report of Ukraine and welcomed the effort to provide updated information during extensive replies, which supplemented in large measure the statistical data that should have been included in the report. It regretted that the report did not follow the Committee's general guidelines and did not take into account its general recommendations.

Factors and difficulties affecting the implementation of the Convention

273. The Committee acknowledged the dramatic economic crisis resulting from the transition of the country to a democratic market-oriented society and from structural adjustments. It also noted the serious ecological crisis deriving from various factors, in particular the Chernobyl incident. Both crises endangered the implementation of the Convention and the de facto enjoyment of the human rights of women.

274. In addition, the pervasive and systematic persistence of general cultural patterns and social gender stereotypes were found to be a major issue affecting the implementation of the Convention.

Positive aspects

275. The Committee considered that the holding of a parliamentary hearing in 1995 specifically to discuss issues related to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women showed the importance attached by the Government to the Convention and the Committee's work. It also appreciated the public impact of such a step.

276. The Committee noted with satisfaction that Ukraine had ratified all major human rights treaties and had adopted a new Act on the Effect of International Agreements on Ukrainian Territory in December 1991, by which all international treaties ratified automatically became part of domestic legislation. The Committee commended the fact that the country attached great importance to human rights in general.

277. It was also noteworthy that the Government had made commitments at the Beijing Conference on important issues relating to family life problems faced by women as a consequence of economic transition and had already established regional bodies to oversee the implementation of such special projects.

278. The Committee expressed its satisfaction at the fundamental economic and structural changes that had recently taken place in Ukraine as described in the oral presentation. It welcomed in particular the adoption of several legal measures to implement the provisions of the Convention.

279. The Committee commended the adoption of the new constitution guaranteeing the equality of men and women in all spheres of life in accordance with the Convention.

280. The Committee welcomed the fact that women with disabled or young children enjoyed early pension benefits under Ukrainian law.

Principal subjects of concern

281. The Committee was concerned that the Government had not made any effort to combat cultural and social stereotypes of women and men.

282. The Committee noted with concern that, despite the existence of several entities to oversee issues relating to women and children, the Government had no clearly formulated policy on women, and that the national machinery on gender issues had no effective authority. It was also unclear whether and to what extent parliamentary bodies were committed to eliminating discrimination against women.

283. While acknowledging the good intentions behind legal measures adopted to protect maternity, the Committee was of the view that such measures could be overprotective and detrimental to the status of women in a market-oriented economy.

284. The Committee noted the absence of measures or plans that would enable men to share parental responsibilities on an equal footing with women.

285. The Committee was concerned about the prevailing low proportion of women in decision-making positions.

286. The Committee was very concerned about sexual stereotyping and overprotective labour legislation. It noted that protective labour laws had the sole effect of restricting women's economic opportunities, and were neither legitimate nor effective as a measure for promoting women's reproductive health. Women should have a right to free choice as to their employment, and the high rates of infant mortality and fetal abnormality resulting from the ecological disaster should be addressed as a matter of public health.

287. The Committee noted the limited access of rural women to effective, affordable and acceptable methods of family planning. This situation often led large numbers of women to resort to unsafe abortions.

288. Further concern was expressed at the fact that the rate of women's economic activity had declined significantly in recent years. Women constituted 80 to

90 per cent of the unemployed. This was due to the reduction of the public sector as the main employer of women and the non-recruitment of women by the emerging private sector.

289. The Committee also noted with concern that women clustered in certain occupations in which they received substantially lower wages than those paid to men employed in other occupational sectors.

290. The Committee had serious concerns regarding the health of the Ukrainian people in general and of women in particular. The problems of sustaining normal pregnancy, of birth defects and of infertility due to nuclear radiation poisoning and stress-related difficulties weighed heavily on women.

291. The Committee had serious concerns about the deep demographic crisis in the country, in particular, and the fact that the number of abortions exceeded the number of births.

292. The Committee was concerned about the growing rate of suicide and deaths related to alcohol poisoning.

293. The Committee noted with concern that the minimum age for marriage was not the same for girls as for boys.

Suggestions and recommendations

294. The Committee requested that Ukraine provide an explanation, in subsequent reports, of "partial non-compliance" with articles 2, paragraphs (d) and (f), 3, 5, paragraphs (a) and (b), 7, paragraph (b), 8 and 14, paragraphs (a) (b) and (h), as stated in the third periodic report and changes in their implementation status in the next report.

295. The Committee recommended that in subsequent reports further information on the status of implementation of commitments made at the Beijing Conference be provided.

296. The Committee recommended that, in view of the successful incorporation into domestic legislation of all international treaties ratified by the country, equal rights as well as human rights education should be made mandatory for judges and law enforcement agencies in Ukraine.

297. The Committee recommended that the Government provide more detailed information in the next report on violence against women, including rape, wife battering, child abuse, incest and other forms of physical and psychological violence against women, as well as on governmental measures to combat such violence.

298. The Committee further recommended that Ukraine provide detailed statistical information on women of all minorities living in the country, in particular on Crimean Tartars.

299. The Committee urged the Government to review and amend the legislation that allowed the activities of numerous sex services and the practice of hiring women as dancers, waiters or other staff to work abroad, often leading to prostitution, and to take measures to prosecute criminal offenders and to rehabilitate the victims through education, training and support services.

300. The Committee recommended that, in agreement with article 5 of the Convention, measures be adopted so that women and men shared domestic work and the care of children equally.