
Committee on the Elimination of
Discrimination against Women
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Concluding comments of the Committee on the Elimination of
Discrimination against Women: China

Second periodic report

145. The Committee considered the second periodic report of China (CEDAW/C/13/Add.26) at its 195th meeting, on 23 January 1992.

146. The representative of China stated that since the report before the Committee had been submitted by his Government in 1989, covering developments from 1983 to 1989, and since further changes had occurred since then, he would like, first, to introduce supplementary information. He stated that the eighth five-year plan for national economy and social development had started in 1991. The overall situation in China had created favourable conditions for the smooth implementation of the Convention and he pointed to the following new laws and regulations: a law on the protection of the rights and interests of women had been drafted and it would be before the fifth plenary of the Seventh National People's Congress later in 1992 for approval. A regulation by the Ministry of Labour and Personnel on the postponement of the retirement age of senior women experts enabled them to retire at the age of 60. Firm measures were being taken against various criminal acts infringing upon the rights and interests of women. The Government had also formulated a decision on the strict prohibition of prostitution and whoring and a decision on the severe punishment of criminals who abduct and traffic in or kidnap women or children, both having legal effect. Articles on the protection of women were contained in two new laws that had taken effect in May 1991 and January 1992 respectively, namely, the law for the protection of disabled persons and the law for the protection of the under-aged.

147. He said that the stipulations covered women's rights of participation in politics, in employment, education, marriage and the family, and of the person, thus making the protection of the rights and interests of women more systematic and comprehensive. The action of the central Government had received positive support at the local level, and some 31 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions had formulated local regulations. The Chinese Government had also launched new activities for legal education.

148. Concerning women's participation in politics, vigorous efforts undertaken by the Government together with the All China Women's Federation (ACWF) had proved to be very effective. In elections of deputies to the people's

congresses at county and township levels in 1990, the average percentage of elected women had reached 21 per cent, with a peak of 25 per cent.

149. With regard to women in rural areas, the representative pointed out that 80 per cent of Chinese women lived in rural areas, and women accounted for 50 per cent of the total rural labour force. A campaign, with the participation of some 10 ministries and other bodies, had been launched in 1989 for rural women to help them improve their qualifications and skills to fight poverty. Activities included emulation drives of various professional skills, teaching women one or two professional skills and eradicating illiteracy. Some 120 million women had participated, and the overwhelming majority had mastered one or two practical skills; 2.8 million women had overcome illiteracy; and 240,000 rural women had become agricultural technicians through educational courses.

150. In connection with the campaign "Health for all by the year 2000" of the World Health Organization (WHO), he said that China had put women's health care into the plan for primary health care with an emphasis on rural areas. One of the targets was to reduce the mortality rate of pregnant women and post-partem mothers by 50 per cent. The network of maternal and child health would be strengthened, and health care for rural women would be improved. Special attention would be paid to the training of rural medical workers in basic preventive skills.

151. The representative then replied to the comments and questions prepared by the pre-session working group.

152. The question was raised by the Committee as to what percentage of its GNP China had allocated to social development and human resources. It was noted that the structural reform of the Chinese economy had generated a spectacular increase in national productivity, enabling the GNP to attain an average annual growth rate of 11 per cent. That economic development would engender considerable social development. The Human Development Report 1991, issued by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), emphasized the reconsideration of priorities and maintained that funds allocated to key sectors, such as basic education, primary health care, supply of potable water to rural areas, family planning, food subsidies and social security, genuinely promote sustained and equitable human development.

153. The representative replied that China's GNP in 1990 amounted to 1,768.61 billion yuan renminbi. The national financial revenue was Y 331.26 billion. Social development and human resources expenditures were as follows: Y 22.18 billion on agricultural production assistance; Y 61.73 billion on education, culture, science and public health; and Y 5.5 billion on pensions and social relief.

154. The question was asked as to what extent women were informed of new provisions and to what extent they had access to courts or to other remedies to enforce them. The Committee had noted some progress in the adoption of laws and regulations intended to strengthen democracy, improve the existing legal system by promoting greater equity and establish new relationships between family members based on equality, the sharing of responsibilities and human dignity, especially that of women.

155. Also, it was noted that the laws on succession and marriage conferred the same rights and duties on men and women, without discrimination. For a woman to be able to conduct her family life in a responsible way and in an equal partnership, however, she must first have been entitled to an education, which was a prerequisite for all equality and all development, and to work that would reflect its specificity.

156. The Committee further noted that the Chinese Government had provided its regions with laws to reform the educational system. Education was compulsory and free of charge for all children. Laws also guaranteed women employment.

157. The representative said that China was engaged in its second five-year programme to disseminate legal knowledge and legal education. The focus was on 10 laws, including the Constitution, the marriage law, criminal law and civil law. Some 300 million women had participated in relevant activities in the first five-year period.

158. Despite the efforts and positive measures to promote equality, some difficulties subsisted; those were due primarily to the cultural bias shown by Chinese society towards women.

159. The Committee noted that the Act concerning public enterprises, 1988, stated that male workers (it did not refer to female workers) had the right to participate in the democratic management of their enterprise. It was asked whether women workers participated to the same extent as men.

160. The representative stated that the Act concerning public enterprises referred to workers, meaning both men and women, and that the potential of young workers should be given full play.

161. Paragraph 11 of the same Act stated that enterprises must fully exploit the potential of young male and female workers. What was meant by the word "exploit"? Did it perhaps mean "use".

162. With regard to local laws and regulations, specific information was requested on the equality of women with men in promotion, remuneration and the allocation and construction of housing in rural areas.

163. Examples provided on the local laws of Beijing, Tianjin and other towns illustrated equality in, inter alia, promotion and remuneration. Also, an Act of Liaoning Province stated that women and men workers enjoyed the same rights in the allocation of houses, thus changing the past practice whereby only men were entitled to houses.

164. The representative was asked what measures were taken to protect widows and to ensure their economic independence.

165. He replied that women, including widows, enjoyed rights in terms of economic independence, and violators would be punished in accordance with the law.

166. The Committee asked what the composition was of the special group established to study and elaborate laws protecting the rights and interests of

women, and how its members were elected. Of the 13 members, only 2 were women selected from the All China Women's Federation (ACWF).

167. The representative answered that the Working Group on Women and Children was mostly composed of women from judicial circles and those in charge of women's and children's work.

Article 5

168. The Committee asked whether there were education and media programmes to project positive images of women rather than reinforce stereotypes.

169. The representative answered that in recent years, China had witnessed an increase in the use of women's images in advertising. A recent seminar had focused on the role of the mass media in enhancing a positive and new image of women who enjoyed self-respect, self-confidence, independence and self-improvement.

Violence (articles 2, 5, 11, 12 and 16)

170. The Committee requested information on the level of violence against women in China and asked what measures had been introduced to protect women from violence, abuse and exploitation.

171. The representative answered that violence against women had not been a serious social problem in China. Respect for women's dignity was stressed by the Government. Forms of violence were rape, beating and maltreatment of wives by their husbands, forced prostitution, kidnapping and abduction of women. Criminal and other relevant laws dealt with the matter. Rape was punished by imprisonment or death, depending on the circumstances; maltreatment either by imprisonment or public surveillance; and abduction by imprisonment, confiscation of property or death, depending on the severity of the offence.

Article 6

172. It was noted that prostitution existed even though it was prohibited, and the question was raised whether women who prostituted themselves were punished and what the radical measures, referred to in the report as designed to terminate prostitution, were.

173. It was answered that Chinese law explicitly prohibited prostitution, and forms of punishment included detention, warning, written confession, education through physical labour or fines. If misdeeds were crimes, criminal law applied. The punishments for those who lured women into prostitution or profited from operating brothels were prison terms, detention for labour or surveillance. Pimps might be sentenced to 10 years or life imprisonment. Prostitutes and their customers might be rounded up and provided with legal and moral education. They might be required to engage in productive labour. Treatment for venereal disease was compulsory. Steps taken to eradicate prostitution included economic development, ideological education and strengthening of legislation and law enforcement.

Article 7

174. Many questions were asked on the participation of women in parliament, which was 15 per cent higher than average. It was asked whether women parliamentarians were able to act effectively with respect to parliamentary bills, whether they could modify them, whether they form a group in Parliament, whether they had proposed a parliamentary bill concerning women, and if so, which bill it was.

175. Questions were asked on how many women had seats in the people's assemblies, whether some regions were more willing than others to vote for women, in view of the fact that the number of candidates exceeded the number of seats at the time of the election, and how many women members there were in the Communist Party Central Committee, in the Central Advisory Commission and in the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. In addition, it was asked what steps had been taken to ensure equal representation.

176. The Committee noted that key economic, legal and political posts were being filled by men; only three such posts, or 1.4 per cent, were filled by women. Obviously, women could only influence and change matters if they reached the decision-making level. Questions were asked on what ACWF was doing about that and whether ACWF was consulted about women's appointments or promotions to important posts; whether ACWF played a role in the deliberations and decisions concerning problems that affected the future of the country in economic, political, cultural and social matters; to what extent other groups or individuals were consulted on those matters; and how a person became a member of ACWF.

177. The representative provided information on the percentage of women in governing bodies: 634 deputies (21.3 per cent) in the National People's Congress; 16 members (11.6 per cent) in the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress; 2 vice-chairpersons (10 per cent) in the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress; 10 members (6 per cent) and 12 alternate members (11 per cent) in the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China; and 1 woman member (0.5 per cent) in the Advisory Commission of the CPC Central Committee. Efforts to increase women's participation included training and education for women to enhance their capabilities, and of society at large to eradicate traditional thinking and behaviour. One of the main tasks of ACWF was to promote the participation of women at all levels and in all spheres of public life. There were currently three women ministers in China (7.3 per cent of the total) and 11 vice-ministers. The representative stated that the percentage was still far from satisfying. The Chinese Supreme Court had one woman vice-president. In recent years ACWF had been recommending women for high-level posts. He explained that ACWF was a membership organization composed not of individual members but of organizations. All adult women were potential associates of the Federation. Membership could be obtained through the filing of an application and by accepting the Federation's constitution.

Article 8

178. In answering a question, the representative said that China currently had 1,314 women diplomats or 26.9 per cent.

Article 10

179. Questions were raised on illiteracy rates and the enrolment of girls in primary, secondary and tertiary education, which continued to be low. The Committee asked whether there existed such measures as reprimanding or fining parents who did not comply with the law on compulsory education to ensure that girls complete their education; whether there were differing entrance requirements for women into tertiary institutions; whether girls and women had equal access to sports and physical education in both urban and rural schools; and whether educational reform had affected school textbooks and, if so, had women's image been enhanced.

180. At the request of the Committee, the representative first clarified some numbers. China currently had a total of 180 million illiterate persons, of whom 70 per cent were women. In 1989, attendance by females in primary, secondary and tertiary schools was 46, 41.4 and 33.7 per cent of the respective total numbers; 97 per cent of school-age children attended school, and the attendance rate for girls was 95 per cent. Measures to eradicate illiteracy included long-term anti-illiteracy campaigns, increased funding and the creation of better conditions for schooling girls. The same recruitment standards for universities applied to males and females. Physical education was compulsory in China. Textbooks had always been based on principles of sexual equality and women's positive images.

Article 11

181. The questions were asked whether the principle of equal pay for work of equal value applied in all areas of economic activity and whether China had encountered any difficulties in applying it. It was noted that the employment of women rose from 67 per cent in 1970 to 70 per cent in 1990, while, during the same period, the employment of men fell from 90 per cent to 87 per cent. The 3 percentage points lost by men were gained by women. The Committee asked the reason for that. It also asked whether self-employed female workers had difficulty in becoming integrated into the system, and what ACWF was doing to help them. The Committee noted that women headed enterprises in the rural areas as well as more than one third of the specialized enterprises. It asked in which segment of economic production those activities were undertaken.

182. Questions were asked on the action taken by women in the case of wrongful dismissal and whether they were protected by the trade unions. Similarly, the complaint and enforcement procedures instituted by the State in order to combat discrimination were enquired into. Could women have recourse to courts or other institutions if they were discriminated against?

183. The Committee stated that piecework, which was generally done at home, and flexible working hours were sought by women. It asked what prompted women to choose that kind of work and in what numbers.

184. In order to guarantee women employment, the public authorities had endeavoured to give women proper vocational training before and during their employment, so that they might be more competitive in the labour market. The question was raised as to what incentives were offered by the Government to encourage heads of businesses and factories to enrol more women in training courses. Compared with men, what percentage of women benefited from such incentives?

185. Article 11 of the regulations on security of employment stated that services employing a large number of women should gradually establish an infirmary, a room for rest, a room for nursing infants, a crèche and even a kindergarten. That was a step forward, but the representative was asked how it was perceived by the employers; how many were required to implement that reform; and whether it would not discourage the employment of adequate numbers of women in the enterprises?

186. The representative stated that the principle of equal pay for equal work was applied in China. He said that the increase of the percentage of female employment did not mean that women had taken the jobs of men. Women's federations assisted self-employed female workers mainly by legal advice. Some rural households owned by women in traditional farming were specialized in the breeding of animals, poultry and fish, processing, handicrafts, trading and services. Trade unions and the labour department could hear complaints concerning wrongful dismissal. Discrimination cases might be brought before the courts or to administrative departments. In China, all employed workers were requested to receive occupational training. Under a plan that ended in 1990, 37.4 per cent of the trainees were women. Various measures were in force to ensure basic living needs of the staff of bankrupt enterprises, including unemployment subsidies of up to a total of 24 months, and retraining of workers. Women from trade unions and women's organizations participated in the formulation of the new labour code. Sexual harassment was not a major problem in China, and judicial and administrative organs were called upon to solve cases on a case-by-case basis.

Article 12

187. The Committee noted that the integration of family-planning services into basic maternal and child health services would mean that the problem could be tackled as a whole. The receipt of material and technical assistance from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) had enabled China to identify the risks of reducing the mortality and morbidity rates for infants and mothers and to introduce in China the production of more effective modern contraceptives that met more reliable control and quality standards. It had also enabled Chinese researchers to carry out studies to diminish the adverse effects of certain products on women's health.

188. The Tianjun Listang pharmaceuticals factory manufactured approximately 3.5 million Norplant subdermal contraceptive implants. The representative was asked if there were any studies to monitor the effect of Norplant, which some studies had indicated endangered the health of women.

189. The representative informed the Committee that the project referred to in the question had not been executed. Some (Norplant subdermal contraceptive) implants had been bought for trial use and monitoring. China was developing its own similar product.

190. He was asked what the status was of the UNFPA-assisted project that advocated the information, education and communication (IEC) method and who was responsible for implementing the programme: women's organizations, family planning services or public health services.

191. A public information and education campaign on population issues had been implemented since 1979 with UNFPA, the State Commission on Birth Control, the State Education Commission and the Ministry of Health.

192. It was known that in a number of developing countries the decision to use any particular contraceptive method was taken by the man. He decided for the woman but did not feel concerned.

193. Birth control was the duty and obligation of both husband and wife.

194. It was asked if there were programmes for men, and what methods were being used to sensitize men to the usefulness of becoming more involved in family planning and using reliable methods such as vasectomy or condoms when the health of the wife did not permit her to use contraception. Article 2 of the Marriage Act made no distinction, since it stated that the spouses were obliged to practise family planning.

195. The population policy of China would cause considerable changes in Chinese society; 10 per cent of the population would be over 60 from the present until the year 2000 (ratio of 109 women/100 men), which would give rise to problems of subsidies and care. It was asked (a) whether there were roles for Chinese women; and (b) whether the policy of the single child, and the preference for boys, would cause the number of women to diminish gradually and therefore create an imbalance.

196. Given the attention allocated by the Chinese Government to the health care of women and children, great progress had been made over the last four decades, and infant mortality rates had been greatly reduced.

197. The elderly were revered in China. The Government had adopted various measures, including social insurance and welfare, free medicare and health care, for the elderly. There were schools and recreational centres oriented to the elderly. The policy of encouraging couples to have only one child, in effect since 1979, had led to an increase in one-child families. In 1988, 52.22 per cent of families had one child, 32.41 per cent had two and 15.37 per cent had three or more (in 1970, the numbers were 22.73, 17.06 and 62.21 per cent, respectively). The gender ratio in 1988 was 106.8 males to 100 females (in 1970 the ratio was 105.5 to 100). The representative stated that that showed that the one-child family policy had not resulted in a sex imbalance of the population.

198. The Committee also wanted to know what programmes there were to encourage preventive measures to be taken in regard to AIDS.

199. Cases of AIDS had been detected in recent years in parts of China. Since 1985, over 600 patients had tested HIV positive. Although the infection rate was still low, China had adopted specific measures to prevent and control AIDS, including public education on the prevention of AIDS.

Article 13

200. The Committee asked which welfare organizations were concerned with the aged, the solitary and the handicapped.

201. The representative said that the elderly, the widowed and the handicapped were the concern of the whole society. The civil affairs agencies, and those in charge of labour, education and health, as well as mass organizations such as the federations of the handicapped, women and youth offered a variety of assistance and services.

Article 14

202. The Committee asked if the contractual management system enabled rural women to embark on activities other than agriculture to develop the communal economy; what products were produced for export by Chinese women and how they were advised in that work; why the level of pension of retired women in rural areas varied according to the level of development of the region in which they lived; and whether women had equal access to land use and what the requirements were.

203. The representative stated that the reform of the economic system in China's rural areas had changed the pattern of production of primarily grain into a comprehensive development of agriculture, forestry, industry, trade etc., thereby also creating favourable conditions for women to engage in a variety of new tasks. Women had become workers in local enterprises that had partially introduced the contract labour system, which closely linked the quality of work with remuneration, thereby also improving efficiency and providing incentives for workers. Rural women had made tremendous contributions to the revitalization of China's rural economy. Women's export products included foodstuffs, farm produce, fruits, garments, toys and electronic appliances, which were generally ordered and therefore had a solid market. Pensions for China's peasantry were not provided by the State. Whether there was a pension fund to provide pensions and other social benefits for its peasants depended on the development level of the collective economy in each place and adequate collective savings of the rural collective. Rural collectives allocated land to peasants on the basis of the size of the family with no prejudice to their sex.

204. The Committee noted that commendable efforts were being made to provide potable water, together with sanitation and electricity, to all the inhabitants of rural areas. But some areas remained without those basic necessities, and women suffered more than anyone else because of that situation. It asked what percentage of the population lacked those necessities and if additional resources were being allocated to improve the situation.

205. Various ministries were involved in the effort to provide tap water. No numbers were currently available to the representative on the matter.

Article 15

206. It was asked how laws had been promoting the family and women and examples of the interpretation of those laws were requested. It was also asked whether women judges contributed to a favourable interpretation of legislative texts.

207. The representative replied that the Constitution stipulated that marriage and the family were protected by the State. The marriage law, containing freedom of marriage, monogamy and equality between men and women, had been promulgated twice. The law also enabled women's equal participation in social development. On the second question, he stated that it happened, but not necessarily.

Article 16

208. The Committee noted that the divorce rate had gone up, and 80 per cent of the applications for divorce were submitted by women on the legal ground of lack of affection. The report attributed that situation to the social progress that had followed the opening up of China's economy. It was asked what measures ensured that men and women were aware of their joint responsibility vis-à-vis the family and society; what dangers threatened children owing to the very high divorce rate; and what provisions were available for counselling and conciliation.

209. The representative replied that family ties in China had always been stable. Although on the increase, the rate of divorce was a mere 5 to 7 per cent. The fact that women did initiate divorces was a demonstration of the breaking of the bondage of feudalistic ideas, he said. The focus, however, was on harmonious relationships, and efforts were made to assist couples in difficulties by advice and mediation. In handling divorces, the Government and society as a whole attached importance to the protection of the legitimate rights of women and children.

210. Members of the Committee thanked the representative for the detailed answers provided to the numerous questions. The Chinese Government and ACWF were congratulated for the effort and the progress achieved in implementing the Convention.

211. Additional clarification was sought on a number of points, including the following: on the political participation of women, it had been stated that training was used to enable more women to participate in the political process. The experts wondered whether that was not an old-fashioned, macho approach of the "undertraining" of women, since men did not have to go through such special training. One expert also wondered why it was necessary to have new local rules protecting women who gave birth to girls. Concerning the efforts to combat illiteracy, one expert pointed to the existence of mobile schools in autonomous regions. She asked which language was being taught in Tibet. It was also asked if the measures described under article 12 had been freely accepted by the population, or if the Government had taken stronger measures. On the subject of social security, it was pointed out that the differences that existed between various regions' development levels were not in line with

the aspired-to egalitarianism. One expert noted that things were moving very slowly and that political will alone was not enough to reach equality. The social infrastructure and the economic situation of the country should develop also, otherwise there was not the right framework for a solution to the equality issues. It was also noted that stereotyped social patterns prevailed in China, and clarification was sought on the issue of equal pay for work of equal value. Another expert asked whether the representative agreed that women's tertiary education was essential for the larger participation of women. It was asked whether women's participation was a priority of the movement for democracy. Referring to the representative's statement that sexual harassment was not a problem in China, one expert asked if that statement had less to do with the absence of harassment than with the lack of adequate structures to point it out. Another expert asked to what extent the Government was satisfied with the changes in women's lives, and what approach was used to assess the status of women. Another question related to ACWF funding.

212. In further discussion, some experts asked whether it was possible that the third periodic report could be broken down by regions, because of the vastness of the country, to give a better picture and to make it easier for members to understand the issues involved. It was also asked whether women were prominent in the dissident movement, whether gender was an issue and whether women were still detained or restricted in their freedom to travel. Concerning the low numbers of women in high political bodies (the Council), one expert pointed to structural problems rather than to the lack of education of women, and she asked whether the Government had set quotas for women.

213. In response to a number of follow-up and additional questions, the representative of China said that in accordance with the saying that women held up half the sky, women played very important roles in family and society. Due to cultural constraints, the current situation was not fully satisfactory, and tremendous efforts on a long-term basis were required to eradicate the remnants of inequality. To that end, the Government had embarked on clear-cut policies and directions. He reiterated that the one-child family policy had been quite successful, and it was in line with the common interest of the population. Implementation was more successful in urban areas and among the better educated groups of society. There were distinctions in the enforcement of the policy, in particular with regard to minorities and areas with lower population density. Regulations stipulating the protection of women with girls existed, but only in some areas where feudal influences i.e., the preference for boys, persisted. He stated that the Government had mainly carried out education and training for prostitutes. Concerning the use of language in Tibet, he stated that as stipulated by the Government of the Tibetan Autonomous Region, the people of the region had the freedom to develop and use their own language. A 1978 regulation adopted by the TNC stipulated the equal importance of both languages, with Tibetan being the principal one. Tibetan was the main language being taught in schools and universities in the region.

214. The representative went on to elaborate that objective reality had forced both spouses to participate in household chores, but that the traditional division of labour persisted in rural areas, although the situation was changing. On the issue of whether equal pay for work of equal value should be applied, he replied in the affirmative. He further said that the Chinese

Government respected dissidents having different political and religious opinions. It did not discriminate against such persons. He pointed to the example of a woman journalist who had written many articles critical of the Chinese Government in the People's Daily, and who had recently been granted an opportunity of going to the United States of America to study. Concerning the so-called "model daughter-in-law award", he said that his Government promoted good family relations for social progress. The emphasis was on respect for the old, love for the young and respect between spouses, and on equality. He agreed with the importance of international cultural exchanges between women, and education for girls. ACWF received its funding mainly from the Government and partly through donations.

215. He also stated that his Government would carefully study the point raised by some members, namely, to have the third periodic report provide information broken down by region. As the members had stated, China was a vast country, and it would be interesting and useful for the members to receive information by region. It had been indicated by the members that that might also be of assistance to the Government in assessing the situation and in obtaining a more detailed picture of the situation of women in China.

216. In her concluding remarks on behalf of the Committee, the Chairperson thanked the representative and his delegation for their presence and the answers to the many questions, which proved the importance the Government of China placed on women's issues, and showed that they heeded the Convention and the Committee. She also expressed her appreciation for the fact that China had not entered any reservations to the Convention, except on article 29, which, however, did not deal with discrimination. China was a large country, she went on, and the responsibility for facing up to issues such as traditions was huge.

217. She pointed to two new positive steps taken by the Government, namely, the adoption of new laws for women and structural adjustment in the economy, which had led to an increased GNP. A percentage of that increase would go towards programmes that were social or economic in nature, and women would benefit from it. Since structural adjustment programmes often caused women to become victims, owing to the removal of social programmes from the budget, she expressed her hope that the next report would provide the Committee with an evaluation and assessment of those programmes, which could become an example to be followed by others. She stated that illiteracy was a problem, with 70 per cent of the 180 million illiterates being women. Extensive treatment was required, she continued, since illiteracy was a huge problem in the advancement of women. She found the 26 per cent women in the diplomatic corps to be a sizeable number, but eight women ambassadors was perhaps not such a large number, and she hoped that that would increase. Concerning population matters, and the question whether by tradition preference was given to men, she said that the numbers provided by the representative had removed fears on the male:female ratio. She hoped that the Government would continue to pay attention to the balance between males and females.

218. Concerning the next report, she expressed her hope that the Committee would receive more details on the percentages of women and on procedures to overcome old habits. She pointed to the linkage between the political history of a country and its socio-economic situation, which in China found its

expression in the feudal system and the fact that men were considered to be superior to women. If the next report could stress those points, it would help the Government to overcome those problems.