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

Initial report

69. The Committee considered the initial report of Mongolia (CEDAW/C/5/Add.20) at its 66th, 67th and 70th meetings, on 11 and 13 March 1986 (CEDAW/C/SR.66, 67 and 70).

70. The representative of Mongolia introduced his country's report by giving a brief summary of the historical, political, socio-economic, cultural and geographical aspects. Since the revolution of 1921, he pointed out, much had been accomplished in the development of Mongolia and one of the most significant achievements was the realization of full equality between men and women in all aspects of life; any attempt to deny women's rights was punishable by law.

71. The representative of Mongolia pointed out that the women of Mongolia were among the first in the Orient to acquire political, economic and civil equality. Mongolian women formed 49 per cent of those working in economic and cultural activities.

72. Attention was drawn to the demographic situation and it was pointed out that children under 16 accounted for 47.1 per cent of the population and that 65 per cent of the population was under the age of 35. The representative of Mongolia pointed out that the Government had given much attention to the question

of illiteracy which, before 1921, stood at 98 per cent and which was now totally eliminated. Currently, of every 10,000 persons, 2,373 attended general educational schools, 246 attended specialized secondary educational institutions and vocational schools and 130 attended higher educational establishments. In fact, every fourth person was studying.

73. In Mongolia, the representative continued, the basic provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had become a reality. Women enjoyed all political rights on an equal footing with men; the same rights at all levels of education, which was free; and the same rights in terms of employment and remuneration. Paid maternity leave was granted and special consideration was given to nursing mothers. As a result of systematic all-round socio-economic and health-related measures taken by the Government in the past 65 years, the country's population had increased threefold, and life expectancy had more than doubled and now reached 67.

74. The representative of Mongolia pointed out that Mongolian family legislation was designed to strengthen the family and to improve family relations on the basis of equality between men and women.

75. In Mongolia, the Committee of Mongolian Women played an important role in protecting the rights and interests of Mongolian women and it monitored the execution of decisions and legislation in the field of maternal and child welfare.

76. Mongolia, he continued, had considered that the United Nations Decade for Women was an important factor in the struggle for equal rights for women in society and for their active involvement in the movement to strengthen peace and international security.

77. The representative of Mongolia concluded his introduction by drawing attention to a number of corrections to be made in the English translation of the country report.

78. Many experts commented that considerable progress had been attained in the years following the popular revolution of 1921, especially in the social services provided to women, as well as in legislation. Whereas the representative of the State Party, in his introductory speech, had mentioned a proverb that, prior to the popular revolution, women had been treated like slaves in the household and servants to their husbands, it could be noted that the State now provided the necessary framework for the full integration of women into the socio-economic and political life of the country and for the enjoyment of equal rights of women with men in all fields of life of the society. It was asked whether women were still servants to their husbands.

79. Several experts requested statistical information on the percentage of women and men participating in political life, how many were placed in policy-making positions and how many were members of the Communist Party. In that regard, they also asked about the role of the Committee of Mongolian Women in public life, the types of activities it engaged in and whether it could make recommendations to the local or State assemblies in order to improve the status of women in the country.

80. Other experts asked what positive measures were being taken in order to see that the rights accorded to women were really implemented. As there were always discrepancies in the law and in practice, more information was requested on the system of redress, either through courts or through labour institutions. They also

asked what kind of sanctions were given to those found guilty of discrimination. Since there was no mention in the report as to obstacles encountered, it was asked whether the Government felt that the present situation was satisfactory in regard to the status of women.

81. In regard to article 5, one expert requested information on the progress achieved in overcoming prejudices and attitudes detrimental to women and asked specifically if the superiority of the male sex still prevailed. It was also asked what role religion played in influencing certain attitudes and behaviour of both men and women and whether the traditional and customary practices, if any, had been overcome. Another expert noted that in the legal annexes, such as the Labour Code, provided in the report, there seemed to be an overprotection of women in their maternal role while the terminology used in the initial report itself made women either invisible or simple numerical averages. It was asked whether a commission entrusted with the analysis of problems such as those mentioned above had been created.

82. One expert remarked that no information had been provided on articles 6, 7 and 12 relating to the suppression of prostitution, participation in public life and health.

83. With regard to article 9, one expert requested clarification as to the right of women to keep their own nationality.

84. Many experts commended Mongolia for having almost eradicated illiteracy. More information was requested on the percentages of women attending all institutions of learning, as well as statistical information on women and men attending institutions of higher learning in all educational disciplines. Special concern was expressed with regard to women being able to attend professional and technical institutions conventionally attended only by men. It was also asked whether the Government had taken measures both through education and the media to address the problem of sex stereotyping.

85. Also of general concern was the status of rural women, since the population in the rural areas was greater than that in the urban areas. Questions were asked regarding educational measures being taken to upgrade the skills of rural women, their cultural involvement and access to facilities which seemed to be more readily accessible to women living in the cities.

86. Several experts noted that in regard to article 11 of the Convention, statistical information was necessary on women's employment by sector and occupational group and by levels within these groups, as well as by comparison to male employment, in order to allow the Committee to have an overview of the situation. It was recognized that the principle of equal pay for equal work had already been conquered but it was questioned whether that was the actual practice in the country. One expert asked how an individual was qualified to become a workers' hero. Clarifications were also sought on the terms "manual work", "fixed work", "socially useful" and "heavy loads" and how they were determined and by whom. The representative of Mongolia was also asked if he could present the list of work which prohibited the employment of women.

87. Several experts remarked that combined measures to protect mothers, such as maternity leave prior to and after the birth of a child, and their gainful employment showed that significant advance in the improvement of the status of women in Mongolia had taken place. It was asked whether women were able to keep

their employment if they decided to raise their children and take extended leave after maternity leave. One expert referred to page 8 of the report of Mongolia and asked what kind of subsidies did a family with numerous children receive. On the other hand, it was asked how women who were childless were treated. One expert asked for more information on the provisions for paternal leave, what was meant by bread-winner when referring to pensions and whether the latter referred only to men as head of the household.

88. It was remarked that the nature of the Mongolian family, whether nuclear or extended, had not been explained in that report and that it was difficult to understand the changes that had taken place within the family structure and society. More background information was requested on the availability of family planning programmes, sex education and the participation of the father in the raising of children and in housework.

89. One expert, remarking that divorce laws constricted rather than freed women since marriage could only be dissolved by mutual consent provided there were no minor children, asked what would happen if no agreement was reached by the couple, if the couple could appeal to a court and under which provisions would a court examine the case. Another expert asked whether information could be provided on the property rights of spouses, the nationality rights of children and the consequences of divorce on the same.

90. An expert referred to article 12 of the Convention and to the fact that more details were needed on health care facilities for both rural and urban women. It was mentioned that in order to assess progress in this regard vital statistics should be provided, such as maternal and child mortality, life expectancy of both men and women, and the availability of medical facilities, such as those required for abortion.

91. Other experts inquired about adoption laws and the benefits women received when they adopted a child. One expert asked if the subsidies received by a natural mother were different from those received by a mother who had adopted a child. Another expert requested additional information on subsidies received by a mother on maternity leave and whether a full salary was paid during that leave.

92. In responding to the questions raised, the representative of Mongolia stressed that equal rights were guaranteed in his country and that the solution of women's problems was inseparable from the general advancement of his Government.

93. With regard to questions raised on employment, the representative pointed out that, under socialism, every citizen has a guaranteed right to work and to receive payment for work in accordance with its quantity and quality. There was no unemployment and there was equal pay for equal work.

94. The representative of Mongolia stressed that all able-bodied women who wish to are permitted to study or are employed in the national economy and culture, and today there is no branch in the economy and culture where women are not employed. Women made up 49.2 per cent of the labour force in 1983, 46.6 per cent in material production and 57.2 per cent in the non-material sphere; he cited some figures for the participation of women in the labour force. In order to protect women from undertaking certain kinds of hazardous work, the Labour Code forbade the employment of women underground at work that was heavy and hazardous to women's health. A woman cannot be dismissed because of pregnancy or because she is nursing a child, nor can her wages be lowered because of those conditions.

95. With regard to questions on pension, the representative stated that the Pensions Act and the Labour Code gave all citizens the entitlement to an old-age pension: women at the age of 55 and men at the age of 60. Many people, he pointed out, did decide to continue working beyond retirement age.
96. The representative of Mongolia pointed out that illiteracy had been eliminated long before, and that compulsory eight-year education had been introduced. He also cited some statistics on education and pointed out that female students comprised 55.7 per cent of the student population.
97. With regard to the family, he replied that men and women had equal rights in family relations; all members shared in household duties; women had equal property rights; and children born out of wedlock enjoyed the same rights as other children. It was also possible for men to take special paid leave to look after a sick child, spouse or parent.
98. The representative of Mongolia pointed out that motherhood was considered a privilege and an honour. He also informed the Committee that the decision for the number of children rested with the spouses; medical care and education were free; and crèches, education and cultural facilities were also free. Women had benefits of maternity leave and there were additional benefits for nursing mothers. It was pointed out that rural women enjoyed the same social and political rights as urban women.
99. The representative informed the Committee that a single person had the right to adopt a child providing that the person had reached the marriage age, was mentally stable, and had no legal convictions nor was subject to lawsuits.
100. With regard to questions on divorce, the representative stated that dissolution of marriage was denied when the wife was pregnant or when there was a child under one year of age (this was a measure designed to safeguard the rights of the child) or when the spouse was gravely ill or injured. Children traditionally assumed the father's name.
101. In Mongolia, the representative replied, abortion was prohibited unless there were exceptional circumstances; illegal abortion was an offence.
102. There was no prostitution in Mongolia, the representative stated, and it was a punishable offence. He also stated that rape or violence against a female were also punishable offences.
103. The representative stated that any form of discrimination was prohibited by law and complaints could be filed at the place of work or in the courts. All work places had legal advisers, unions and public organizations to monitor the implementation of legislation.
104. With regard to the question on citizenship rights, the representative explained that if a Mongolian citizen married a foreigner he/she retained his/her citizenship but could change nationality if desired. Children of such marriages were considered Mongolian citizens.
105. In response to questions about the Committee of Mongolian Women, the representative pointed out that it organized a congress every five years and was responsible for involving women in active participation in national development and for monitoring and improving educational levels of women, living and working

conditions and facilities for mothers and children. The Committee had full authority to monitor the implementation of legislation in the field of maternal and child welfare.

106. In response to some additional questions, the representative of Mongolia informed the Committee that sexist publicity was prohibited in Mongolia. On the question of divorce, the interests of both spouses and children were fully taken into account in divorce proceedings. He also pointed out that while it was traditional for children to assume the father's name, the use of the mother's name was also acceptable.

107. With regard to the list of work which prohibited the employment of women, the representative stressed that such prohibition was enacted purely in the interest of the women since those jobs were considered hazardous but, with improved automation and mechanization, it was envisaged that more jobs would become open to women.

108. On the question of abortion, the representative stated that he was not in the position to comment on whether abortion laws could be liberalized.

109. With regard to clarifying the meaning of "communist morality", the representative of Mongolia pointed out that this was the basis that governed Mongolian society, ensuring mutual respect among family members. Since Mongolia had a socialist system of economy, the means of production were in common ownership and not only of a few, therefore exploitation did not occur and equality for all was ensured.

110. On the question about household activities being considered an economic activity, the representative of Mongolia informed the Committee that information on this would be reflected in the second report.