



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women
Sixty-second session**

Summary record (partial)* of the 1348th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 4 November 2015, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Hayashi

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* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention (continued)

Fifth periodic report of Uzbekistan (continued) (CEDAW/C/UZB/5; CEDAW/C/UZB/Q/5 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Uzbekistan took places at the Committee table.*

Articles 1 to 6 (continued)

2. **Mr. Shodiyev** (Uzbekistan), replying to questions asked at the previous meeting, said that shelters had been established to care for orphans and adolescents whose parents were missing or untraceable. In regard to the prison system, an inter-agency working group had been set up to monitor prison conditions and ensure that international prison standards were upheld, particularly for women detainees. The Government regularly conducted prison inspections with the participation of the National Centre for Human Rights and NGOs. As for Mutabar Tojibaeva, she had been imprisoned for committing a specific offence rather than for her work. She had been visited by officials in order to monitor her health condition and ensure that she received appropriate medical treatment.

3. **Ms. Rakhimova** (Uzbekistan) said that measures had been taken to combat sex tourism and prevent the recruitment of children for sexual purposes by criminal gangs, including the introduction of strict visa checks. As a result, there had been no specific cases of sex tourism in 2014. Particular attention had also been paid to curbing prostitution and pimping and the penalties for persons found guilty of such acts had been increased.

Articles 7 to 9

4. **Ms. Acar**, noting the decrease in the number of women elected to the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis (parliament) at recent elections, asked whether the State party intended to introduce specific measures or sanctions for political parties that failed to respect the 30 per cent quota for women. She said she would welcome information on the policies adopted, including temporary special measures, to promote women to executive positions in the Cabinet of Ministers, the judiciary and senior positions in the foreign service, such as ambassadors and heads of missions abroad. What steps had been taken to strengthen women's participation in elections as voters and facilitate their access to the voter registration process?

5. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said that considerable efforts had been made to increase women's representation at all levels of government. While the number of women in the parliament remained low, there had been a significant increase in women's overall political representation since 2007. Additional measures would be adopted in order to reach the 30 per cent quota and the introduction of special temporary measures had not been ruled out. Steps would also be taken to address the regional disparity in women's political representation, particularly at the local level. As to women's representation in the foreign service, strategies would be devised in order to address the low numbers of women ambassadors and senior foreign service officials, including the introduction of targeted recruitment and training programmes to attract women candidates. At present, there was one woman ambassador posted abroad.

6. **Ms. Marufova** (Uzbekistan) said that women actively participated in the work of the electoral commissions, including the Central Electoral Commission. During the

2009 elections, they had accounted for 42.5 per cent of the members of district electoral commissions.

7. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said that women made up 13 per cent of judges and 15 per cent of law students. The Government recognized that women were underrepresented in the judicial sector and intended to launch a variety of measures to attract more women to the legal profession.

8. **Ms. Nadaraia** said that she would welcome additional gender-disaggregated data on the choice of course of study and enrolment in higher education. What measures had been taken to combat negative gender stereotypes at all levels of the education system and award scholarships to girls so that they could study abroad?

9. **Mr. Bruun** asked what steps had been taken to ensure that women's participation in the cotton harvest was voluntary. He said that he also wished to know what measures had been adopted to increase women's representation in all sectors of the labour market and promote the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. Information on the availability and affordability of childcare facilities would also be welcome in that regard. Lastly, he asked whether specific legislation had been introduced to prohibit sexual harassment in the workplace.

10. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** said that she would like additional disaggregated data on the different causes of mortality affecting men and women. Further information on the screening and awareness-raising programmes available to women for the detection of uterine, cervical and breast cancers would also be useful, including whether they were available to women who were no longer of child-bearing age. As to sexual and reproductive health, she wished to know whether young persons received information about sexuality and sexual health and whether the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community had access to sexual and reproductive health services on an equal basis with others. Additional information on the impact of the high birth rate on women's rights and their ability to actively participate in public life would also be welcome. Lastly, she asked why the abortion rate had dropped significantly over recent years and whether access to abortion services had been reduced. What measures had been taken to prevent the misuse of pregnancy screening procedures, particularly in cases of foetal impairment, and ensure that sex-selective abortions did not take place?

Articles 10 to 14

11. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said that both the general and specialized secondary education system covered almost the entire school-age population. Children benefited from music and art schools not only in urban but also rural areas. Gender equality had been achieved in general secondary schools and vocational schools; however, gender disparities remained in higher education and were being closely monitored.

12. Analytical studies were regularly conducted to provide an overview of the situation in Uzbekistan, highlight progress made and identify areas for improvement. For example, the recently published 2015 Millennium Development Goals Report on Uzbekistan had identified the adoption of laws guaranteeing universal primary and secondary school education as one of the key factors behind the attainment of gender parity. The introduction of compulsory general specialized secondary education had increased opportunities for girls to take up vocational studies and an annual State prize had been launched to encourage girls with an aptitude for certain subjects, such as science and literature, to pursue further studies by awarding them with university grants and scholarships. In that connection, the size of the bursaries was the same for men and women students.

13. It was difficult to pinpoint a single, overriding factor behind the gender imbalance in higher education; in reality, it was likely due to a range of factors, including economic factors and the fact that women tended to marry earlier than men. There was, however, an inconsistency that needed to be resolved between the Family Code, which provided that girls could marry at 17, and the law on education, which made primary and secondary education compulsory for all children up to age 19.

14. **Ms. Marufova** (Uzbekistan) said that the Employment Act provided for equal employment opportunities, without any discrimination. There were plans to enact further legislation to prevent employers from introducing selection criteria not related to the competencies and skills required to perform the job at hand. Labour legislation under which women were prohibited from certain forms of night work was currently under review. In that connection, pregnant women and mothers with small children were granted social allowances and shorter working days. They were also exempted from working overtime and without a pay cut.

15. The Government had recently entered into an agreement with the International Labour Organization on a Decent Work Country Programme for the period 2014-2016 and had ratified a number of ILO conventions, including the ILO Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100). All international conventions to which Uzbekistan was a party had been incorporated into national law.

16. Training courses and loans were available to women graduates to promote employment and entrepreneurship. Legal support was also available to women entrepreneurs and could be accessed via a telephone hotline. Women's participation in the cotton harvests was on a voluntary basis and in full compliance with labour laws.

17. **Ms. Rakhimova** (Uzbekistan) said that, under article 121 of the Criminal Code, forcing a woman in a subordinate official position or relationship of financial or other dependence to engage in sexual relations was a criminal offence. In 2014, 12 persons had been convicted for that offence and seven persons in the first nine months of the current year.

18. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said that cotton was harvested entirely by individual farmers and thus the cotton industry belonged to the private sector. The Government placed a priority on providing employment for young persons, particularly recent graduates, and took into consideration the need for gender parity.

19. In Uzbekistan, the list of hazardous jobs was considered an achievement since it protected women from harmful working conditions, such as mining or night work. However, structural reforms of the economy were needed to provide women with the opportunity to work in areas in which they were underrepresented, such as in extractive industries. The gender representation and productivity of the country's workforce was important, and priority was placed on enabling women to achieve a work-life balance and have the right to work from home, retrain or return to work after a period of absence.

20. **Mr. Khudayarov** (Uzbekistan) said that maternal and child welfare was a national priority, and measures had been taken to raise awareness in families of health issues and healthy lifestyles. Circulatory disorders were the leading cause of female mortality, followed by cancer and respiratory disease. Efforts to prevent deaths from breast and cervical cancer included the provision of the latest technologies in health-care centres and training for oncologists.

21. Women in remote areas had access to health-care and family planning services. In that connection, increasing numbers of pregnancies were being diagnosed before the end of the first trimester. A recently launched programme was focused on improving reproductive and maternal health, with emphasis on birth spacing. Abortion

was no longer the leading method of contraception thanks to efforts to improve access to, and raise awareness of, modern forms of contraception. Moreover, seminars on reproductive health were held for adolescent girls.

22. **Ms. Haidar** said that she would appreciate information on the amount of social benefits that the poorest sectors of the population could claim. Noting that the *mahalla*, or self-governing bodies, predominantly distributed financial support based on the place of residence, and in light of the deficiencies identified in the registration system, she wished to know what was being done to ensure that vulnerable women who had left the marital home could gain access to such funds. She would also be interested to know the results of any impact assessments of the efforts made pursuant to a recent presidential decree to promote the development of work at home by women with young children and whether there were plans to help women return to work after raising their children.

23. **Ms. Gabr** said that, given the fact that women represented more than half of the agricultural population, she wondered why there were so few farms headed by women. In the light of the rural exodus currently occurring in the State party, she wished to know what concrete measures had been taken or were envisaged to encourage rural women to become heads of farms, including any temporary special measures and financial incentives, and to increase their participation in political and public life. She would also be interested to hear what budgetary provision had been made for social services and activities for rural women. Lastly, she noted that the State party had signed but not yet ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and asked whether the Government had plans to do so.

24. **Ms. Marufova** (Uzbekistan), referring to the question raised concerning the measures to develop work at home, said that, under the relevant decree, businesses that placed orders for the goods and services of homeworkers were given exemptions on the employer social contribution scheme. The new presidential decree had extended the exemptions from 1 January 2014 to 1 January 2019. Various incentives were in place to encourage women to work from home, and the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan conducted regular activities, such as financial support seminars, to improve the situation of women homeworkers and to encourage women to set up their own businesses.

25. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said that the Government had launched a major campaign, with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), to raise awareness about the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which had been translated into Uzbek and widely disseminated. An expert group was currently considering various options with a view to ratifying the Convention, possibly with certain reservations. Meanwhile, the Government had taken a number of steps to safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities, in particular in terms of transport.

26. **Mr. Usmanov** (Uzbekistan) said that the authorities were working to develop entrepreneurship among women and to give them access to loans and, in particular, microcredits. The amount of money lent to women had increased steadily over the past few years. More than one third of entrepreneurs were women.

27. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said that non-working mothers received financial support during pregnancy and childbirth and up to three years of maternity leave. Women with children aged under 3 years benefited from a slight reduction in working hours. Poor families were provided with winter clothing, free school supplies and gym clothes for girls. All first-grade pupils received a school kit. Social and financial benefits for women, families and children were allocated by the local citizen's associations — *mahalla* — ensuring that assistance was effectively targeted.

28. **Mr. Khudayarov** (Uzbekistan) said that persons with disabilities, 40 per cent of whom were women, benefited from a wide range of social services. A State programme focusing on the needs of senior citizens had been adopted.

29. **Ms. Haidar** asked how, in the long term, the authorities intended to address the imbalance between a scheme encouraging mothers to work from home, the need to get such women back into the mainstream labour market and the lack of child day-care centres.

30. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said that the Government provided non-working mothers with benefits in order to help them; in no way were they intended to discourage them from returning to work. Women members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community enjoyed the same rights to medical services as other Uzbek citizens.

31. **Mr. Khudayarov** (Uzbekistan) said that the number of abortions was falling because of increased public awareness about modern contraceptives. Abortion was legal if carried out in the early stages of pregnancy by a medical professional. Regardless of their sexual orientation, women were provided with reproductive health services at specialized centres. The number of births of infants with congenital anomalies had been halved owing to the establishment of screening centres. No abortion was performed unless the written consent of the parents and relatives was given when the risk of foetal impairment was detected.

Articles 15 and 16

32. **Mr. Shodiyev** (Uzbekistan) said that individuals not possessing a residence permit were offered services, including health-care services. Following divorce, joint assets were distributed in accordance with the relevant legislation and women could not legally be expelled from the former marital home.

33. **Ms. Haidar** asked whether the State party intended to drop the requirement for women wishing to travel abroad to seek the permission of their husbands.

34. **Ms. Patten** said she wished to know which body had been responsible for the collection of the data on the number of early marriages and marriages between blood relatives referred to in paragraph 280 of the State party's report and who had reported such cases to the authorities. She asked how many fines relating to early marriage had been imposed and how many prosecutions had been brought under the Code of Administrative Liability since 2013. The Government should consider raising the minimum age for marriage to 18 years for both men and women, as recommended by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2013. She asked how the authorities protected the rights of women and girls who had entered into unregistered religious marriages.

35. **Mr. Usmanov** (Uzbekistan) said that the information on the number of early marriages and marriages between relatives contained in the report was accurate and had been provided by the Ministry of Justice. Under article 15 of the Family Code, the minimum age for marriage for girls could be reduced by no more than one year, to 16 years of age, in cases of pregnancy or the birth of a child, provided that the minor had full dispositive capacity, i.e. had been emancipated by her parents or guardians. The number of marriages involving 16-year-old girls had fallen. While 53 such marriages had been recorded in 2011, only 12 had been recorded in 2014. A bill on amendments to the Family Code which took up the issue of whether to set the minimum legal age for marriage at 18 years for both men and women was currently before the parliament. In 2014, the authorities had carried out a large number of activities designed to raise public awareness about the negative consequences of early marriage and marriages between relatives.

36. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said that, at its previous session, the parliament had sent a bill on the minimum age for marriage back for revision. Furthermore, opinion polls had shown that the people were in favour of a lower minimum age for marriage for girls than for boys. However, he agreed that the Government should ensure equality between men and women. While the Government had assumed responsibility for maternal and child welfare, it had neglected fatherhood. Today, there was much discussion about the feminist movement. However, it was sometimes also necessary to speak about the protection of the rights of men. Marriage between relatives was illegal, but such marriages were considered to be socially acceptable in some regions of Uzbekistan. However, civil partnerships were not accepted by Uzbek society or officially recognized.

37. He agreed that a woman should have the freedom to travel without seeking the permission of her husband and suggested that a clause to that effect should be stipulated in the marriage contract. Such contracts had been introduced in 1997 when the Family Code had been adopted. Many efforts had had to be made to raise awareness of how useful marriage contracts could be. The tradition whereby the bride moved in with the groom's family was in decline as the economic situation had improved. Women wishing to travel abroad must seek the permission of both the husband and the wider family.

38. **Ms. Patten** asked what measures had been taken to protect the right of women to an equal share of marital property in cases where their property had been transferred to their husbands' families or to other third parties and how claims made by women for their share of assets were dealt with by judges, in particular in cases of divorce. She asked what was being done to ensure that women did not suffer negative economic consequences following divorce.

39. **Ms. Haidar** asked whether unmarried women wishing to travel abroad were required to obtain permission from their fathers or brothers.

40. **Mr. Usmanov** (Uzbekistan) said that underage women students wishing to study abroad must first obtain permission from their parents. The Government was working hard to protect the economic and parental rights of divorced women. The *mahalla* committees provided mediation services for couples experiencing marital problems or breakdown. Women had the right to divorce; custody of children was usually awarded to the mother; and the rights of women and children to housing and financial support were treated as priorities by the Government. However, Uzbek women mostly preferred to try to keep their families together rather than to divorce; consequently, most divorces were initiated by the husband. Awareness-raising activities relating to the negative economic consequences of divorce had been carried out among young persons.

41. He thanked the Committee for a constructive and open dialogue and said that Uzbekistan was committed to the implementation of the Convention and the development of a more wide-reaching gender policy.

42. **The Chairperson** said she was grateful to the delegation for providing the Committee with further insights into the situation of women in the State party and encouraged the Government of Uzbekistan to take measures to implement the Committee's recommendations.

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 5.10 p.m.