



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.: General
23 November 2009
English
Original: Arabic

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Pre-session working group

Forty-fifth session

18 January-5 February 2010

Responses to the list of issues and questions with regard to the consideration of the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports

Egypt*

Question 1:

The reference is to the participation of civil society and to the form of cooperation with community-based associations. This is answered in detail in the annexes attached to the report (annexes 2 and 3) which provide information on non-governmental organizations and community-based associations which participated in the preparation of the report and include the scanned signatures of the participants. After completion, the report was sent to non-governmental associations that participated in the meetings. We received written replies from some of the community-based associations and these were taken into account.

The report was sent to the ministers concerned but such reports are not presented to Parliament although reference is made to them in parliamentary deliberations that have a bearing on any of the articles of the Convention.

Question 2:

As regards cooperation between the National Council for Women, the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics and the Information and Decision-Making Support Centre, the following action was taken by the Council of Ministers:

1. Standardization of concepts and ideas and special indicators for measuring the gender factor for all users and international statistical institutions.
2. The layout of the content of the labour market survey, opinion surveys, surveys of diversity, and so forth, in the documents used in data collection and analysis was amended and the data were disaggregated to specify the scale, nature and importance of the gender gap.

* The present report is being issued without formal editing.



3. Data collectors were given support and guidance; channels of communication between them and the users of data were kept open in order to determine their new needs and problems.

4. The Council has been implementing the project “Measurement of sex equality by means of disaggregated statistics” through cooperation between the National Council for Women and UNIFEM. The project is intended to incorporate the gender perspective in national statistics and to strengthen the capacities of statisticians with a view to continuous updating of the gender database and to help the users of data and decision makers to determine the scale of the problem and the priorities for action by putting in place local and international indicators for all kinds of gender gaps and using them in the assessment of new data.

New typological indicators have been devised to measure equality in education, health, employment and political and public life with the aim of monitoring the earnings of women.

For example, the parity index in primary education is calculated as follows:

Net enrolment of females x 100 divided by net enrolment of males

Net enrolment is defined as follows:

Number of females or males at a given educational level x 100 divided by the number of females or males in the age-group for that level.

Applying that formula, we find that the parity index for 2007 is 0.99 for the primary level, 1.03 for the preparatory level, to the advantage of females, and 1.06 for the secondary level, to the advantage of females. These indexes are different from those obtained by the use of the traditional indicators or the gender gap. It has been ascertained that the parity index is more accurate in that it measures actual discrimination.

Question 3:

The reservation to article 9 has been withdrawn as explained in the report. In accordance with the constitutional requirements in Egypt, the necessary measures are being taken in order to withdraw the reservation to article 2. With a view to taking an imminent decision on that matter, the measures include seeking the views of the ministries concerned as well as of religious institutions. However, the withdrawal of the reservation to article 16 has been deferred as explained in the report (page 108 of the Arabic text).

Question 4:

The combined sixth and seventh reports (on pages 21 to 26 of the Arabic text) dealt with Egypt’s responses to the concluding observations on Egypt’s previous report. Those observations have been brought to the notice of the ministries and bodies concerned as well as of civil society institutions, and society as a whole, through numerous activities organized by the National Council for Women, whether conferences or seminars, through amendments to laws, ministerial action and decisions, or through various information media.

Question 5:

Under the Egyptian Constitution, the Convention is a law which is binding on the courts; since 1981, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of

Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has been invoked before the courts as a part of Egyptian law and not as a convention; it is referred to as a convention by lawyers and non-governmental organizations in all their related activities.

Question 6:

Egypt has adopted the United Nations definition of discrimination against women; both direct and indirect discrimination against women are prohibited by the Egyptian Constitution. The definition is an integral part of the Constitution which is the basis for all laws.

Question 7:

Up to June 2009, the total number of complaints received by the Ombudsman's Office (central office in Cairo and its branches in all the governorates) was 53,097. The complaints received are of various kinds and include individual complaints, employment-related complaints, social security, violence, the implementation of court orders, social insurance, civil allegations, criminal allegations, and so forth. The complaints are transmitted to the bodies concerned in accordance with their fields of competence. Up to the present, about 50 per cent of the cases have been resolved.

As far as the second part of the question is concerned, in addition to what was mentioned on pages 31 and 32, paragraph 3.2, of the report (Arabic text), there are many community-based associations and family affairs bureaux under the Ministry of Social Security and equal opportunities units in ministries, committees concerned with women and in professional associations and trade unions which handle any complaints relating to discrimination against women.

Question 8:

Part of the strategy was incorporated in the national socio-economic development plan for 2002/2007, and the remaining parts in the 2007/2012 plan which included gender. Implementation is monitored through mechanisms such as ministries and the National Council for Women. For the first time in Egypt the monitoring process is conducted through information collected in the field in the governorates and not merely by means of reports. The final result of the monitoring and evaluation process is forwarded to the Prime Minister.

Question 9:

The report touched on this matter on pages 14 and 15 (Arabic text). It is worth mentioning here the existence of a booklet that has been prepared and is to be distributed.

Question 10:

The report indicates that such activities are ongoing; they are mentioned under the heading "Efforts made" under every article about which a question was asked.

Question 11:

Further to what is stated on page 18 of the report (Arabic text), the details requested are to be found in reports such as the Media Watch project which is discussed in meetings that include organizations responsible for the media, the aim being to improve the image of women in all the information media. The Media Watch Unit comprises a Chair assisted by the communication officers of the project

and a group of media workers from radio, television and the press. The project also has a facilitation committee chaired by the Secretary-General and a group of experts. The Media Watch Unit is part of the administrative structure of the Council and has a limited budget which is now supplemented by the budget of the current project. When the project ends, the State will take on full responsibility for the required budget within the budget of the Council in the same way as other departments of the Council.

Question 12:

There are laws punishing rape and harassment including domestic violence. If a woman files an official complaint she obtains justice in the same way as a man by virtue of the Constitution and the law (see page 111 of the Arabic text of the report).

In one case that was tried in 2008, the court sentenced a person accused of sexual harassment to three years' detention and ordered the payment of compensation in an amount equivalent to US\$ 900.

Question 13:

Shelters are provided by the Government and by a number of community-based associations for the victims of violence and some of the community-based organizations also have a hot line and help lines. Counselling and other services are available to women victims of violence and hospitals and health centres also take in the victims of violence, in both urban and rural areas.

Seminars, meetings and training programmes are organized to raise public awareness and also to enhance the skills of people working in this field.

Statistics have been obtained from the Egyptian Ministry of the Interior showing that in the period 2002 to 2009 there were 3,584 complaints concerning murder with intent, serious assault, kidnapping, indecent assault, rape, robbery with violence, arson, abortion and coerced signing of documents. These figures do not represent the true situation as the vast majority of women do not speak out against such acts.

An ambitious project on this matter has been initiated (see pages 111 to 114 of the Arabic text of the report).

Question 14:

Please refer to pages 112 and 113 of the Arabic text of the report.

Law No. 126 of 2008 criminalizes female circumcision. Under article 4 of the law, a sentence of detention is imposed on doctors, nurses or participants if they are the subject of a denunciation.

With respect to the impact of the national campaign on female circumcision, a number of serious activities are being conducted by the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood which has set up pressure groups of natural local leaders (youth leaders, doctors, clerics) against female circumcision and a help line has been launched at the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood to protect children from all forms of violence. As a result, a number of villages have been declared free of female circumcision and a climate of opinion opposed to this practice has come into existence. It will be necessary to continue the campaign until the phenomenon of female circumcision has been eliminated.

Question 15:

Up to the present, for a variety of reasons the actual volume of trafficking in women has not been accurately estimated; there are no statistics for consideration prepared by non-governmental organizations and research conducted in research centres on selective sampling of social categories raises many questions among the various researchers.

Under Egyptian law, human trafficking in general is a crime. There are laws for dealing with this phenomenon (Law No. 103 of 1976 and Law No. 371 of 1956) but there are a number of gaps. For that reason, preparation of a draft comprehensive law to combat human trafficking has been completed, an important part of which concerns women and girl children. It will be submitted to Parliament at the next session.

The National Coordinating Committee has been established comprising 12 of the ministries concerned, the National Council for Women, the National Council on Human Rights, the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, the Public Intelligence Service and the Office of the Public Prosecutor. It has the task of drafting a national workplan to address the issue of the trafficking in persons, submitting suggestions and recommendations on the matter to the Council of Ministers through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and monitoring Egypt's compliance with its international obligations arising out of the provisions of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. As for the financial resources earmarked for the Committee, its activities are incorporated in and funded by each entity in accordance with its competence (Annex D).

Question 16:

There are no statistics on the number of women working in prostitution in that it is not a permitted activity as it is in some other countries, but there are a negligible number of reports and research studies prepared by governmental and non-governmental organizations.

The draft prepared by the Council is still being studied by the legal committees. It calls for the amendment of one of the articles of the Penal Code in respect of crimes of fornication so as to make the penalties the same for women as they are for men in accordance with Islamic sharia law which lays down equal penalties in law for the two sexes.

In the light of the establishment of the National Coordinating Committee to combat and prevent trafficking in persons, the people concerned are now being trained and made aware of the bodies dealing with combating human trafficking.

Question 17:

Law No. 149 of 2009 concerning the People's Assembly was promulgated in the light of the amendment of 2007 to article 62 of the Constitution under which women were able to participate in political life. Thirty-two electoral districts were added in which candidatures are to be restricted to women, thus guaranteeing at least 64 seats for women. In addition, women will be able to stand for election in the remaining 222 electoral districts. The new law will be applied during the forthcoming parliamentary elections in 2010.

Women have full equality under the Egyptian Constitution and there is no discrimination against them (see annex 4). See also pages 44 and 45 of the Arabic text of the report, paragraph 7.a.1.

There are no restrictions or discrimination against women with regard to their representation at all levels of Government, the judiciary and academia, and women occupy posts in all those areas (see relevant parts of the report).

Question 18:

This matter concerns children whose father is Palestinian. Resolution 1547 (1950) of the League of Arab States provides that, in order to ensure that the Palestinian nationality does not become adulterated in different States and possibly be entirely obliterated with the passage of time, and in the interest of preserving the Palestinian entity and identity, Member States shall not grant their nationality to Palestinians. However, there have been cases in which, in limited humanitarian circumstances, nationality has been granted to a child born to an Egyptian mother and a Palestinian father.

Question 19:

In 2007, net enrolment in primary education was 86.2 per cent for females and 86.7 percent for males. In preparatory education the figures were 71.6 per cent for females and 69.3 per cent for males. The net enrolment figures at the secondary and equivalent levels of education were 47.9 per cent for females and 45.1 per cent for males.

We refer to what was stated in the report under article 10 (page 55 of the Arabic text).

There is no discrimination between Egyptians and non-Egyptians or between minorities as there are no minorities in Egypt. All inhabitants are regarded as indigenous members of the population, even those that are of non-Egyptian stock and who came to Egypt in earlier times; their descendents are Egyptians and have the full rights of citizens.

Question 20:

Dropping out is mainly attributable to economic reasons and in some cases to the fact that there are no nearby schools as a result of which girls have to walk large distances between the fields in the countryside which is contrary to tradition in certain rural communities, although not all.

The answer is on page 61, paragraph 10, of the Arabic text of the report.

Question 21:

Please refer to the details given in paragraph 11.1.a.1. of the report (page 98 of the Arabic text) and to paragraph 7.b.1 under article 7 (page 45 of the Arabic text).

We would add to what is stated on page 17 of the Arabic text in connection with equal opportunity units by saying that the units are attached directly to the Offices of the Ministers and that their activity focuses on cases involving women in employment. They deal with any discrimination against women at the workplace and try to ensure that women participate in all stages of decision-making and enjoy their full constitutional rights in the field of employment.

Question 22:

The Ministry of Labour and Immigration applies Labour Law No. 12 of 2003 which provides legal protection for women and working mothers and affirms the principle of equality between employees.

The Ministry of Labour monitors implementation of the policies on the development of services which are conducive to the performance by women of their numerous roles.

Draft legislation is currently being prepared to codify the status of workers in the informal sector in which women constitute over half the workforce.

Question 23:

Egypt is one of the States with the lowest incidence of AIDS, the overall rate of infection in the population at large being 0.03 per cent. AIDS has been made part of the curriculums of preparatory and secondary schools, the faculties of relevant universities and social services institutes and faculties.

The Egyptian National Programme to Combat AIDS includes the promotion of health awareness among the population at large and especially among young people and women, the providers of health services, those involved in the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and in supervising blood transfusions and caring for and supporting the sections of society that are the most exposed to the disease.

Question 24:

The Egyptian health services have improved markedly in terms of providing access to health care and in terms of quality; the number of rural health-care units has increased from 3,205 in 2000 to 3,851 in 2009. In the field of mental health, there was an increase in the number of mental health hospital beds from 7,171 in 2000 to 8,182 in 2005 and the number of mental health units increased from 12 in 2000 to 16 in 2005. In the field of reproductive health, maternal mortality fell from 84 per 100,000 live births in 2000 to 55 per 100,000 live births in 2008.

Question 25:

Further to what was stated on pages 84 and 92 of the Arabic text under articles 12 and 14, we point out that rural women represent the village community in many village councils (people's councils and local councils).

Question 26:

The rights of elderly women are fully protected by social security pension schemes and by social insurance which offers many benefits in the case of retirement and incapacity. They have the same rights as any other citizen, and even have extra benefits.

There is housing for senior citizens that is equipped and arranged for occupancy by elderly women and provides for a dignified lifestyle, health care, including mental health care, and cultural and recreational amenities.

There are senior citizens' clubs which are, in effect, care centres through which various services for the elderly are available, both at the club itself and in their own homes (senior citizens' services bureau, old people's companionship scheme, physiotherapy units). Article 10 of Law No. 49 of 1982 on the rehabilitation

of people with disabilities (both females and males) also provides that 5 per cent of all the employees of every unit of the administrative apparatus of the State, State organizations and the public sector shall be people with disabilities (Annex E).

Female domestic foreign workers have their rights and their situation is closely monitored in that regard by the embassies of their own countries.

Questions 27 and 28:

Egypt has a reservation to article 16 of the Convention which covers most of the elements of these two questions for the reasons specified on page 108 under article 16 (see Arabic text).

As far as inheritance is concerned, the practice in Egypt is in accordance with Islamic law which is a settled matter; each heir receives a specific share of the legacy in accordance with that person's kinship to the deceased. Women have the right to inherit and their share varies on the basis of kinship. There is no discrimination against women as they inherit just like men and sometimes inherit more than men. Sometimes women inherit and men do not. In the case of siblings, females inherit half the amount inherited by males. This is the counterpart to the obligation of male siblings towards females. For example, a woman has a right in law to receive alimony from a brother if she is in need of it.

Polygamy is a matter of dispute among Islamic jurists: one group interprets the Koranic verses as permitting polygamy while another group interprets them as being conditional and not general. Some people call for a careful reading of the texts, claiming that they do not indicate support for polygamy but on the contrary forbid it. The law has not so far resolved this problem.

Question 29:

Concerning Egypt's accession to the Optional Protocol:

Please refer to what was stated on page 26 of the report (Arabic text);

Egypt's accession to the Optional Protocol is currently under consideration.
