



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
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Summary record of the 699th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 18 July 2005, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Schöpp-Schilling (Vice-Chairperson)

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In the absence of Ms. Manalo, Ms. Schöpp-Schilling, Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

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

Initial report of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (CEDAW/C/PRK/1; CEDAW/PSWG/2005/II/CRP.1/Add.3 and CRP.2/Add.3)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the representatives of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea took places at the Committee table.

2. **Mr. Ho O Bom** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), introducing the initial report of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (CEDAW/C/PRK/1), said he was convinced that the consideration of the report would provide a basis for cooperation and understanding and contribute to the protection and promotion of women's rights in that country. In 2001 the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had acceded to the Convention with a view to eliminating all discrimination against women and realizing gender equality. That same year, it had established the National Coordination Committee for the Implementation of the Convention to monitor and harmonize the national human rights system with international standards and to fulfil the reporting obligation. In preparing the report, the Democratic People's Republic had discovered that the basic requirements of the Convention had already been fulfilled in a number of sectors, and had become more familiar with international trends involving the protection and promotion of women's rights.

3. The late President Kim Il Sung had promulgated the Law on Equality of the Sexes immediately following the country's liberation from Japan, in order to emancipate women from feudal discrimination and oppression. Thanks to good legislation, gender-equality policies and preferential treatment, women now had a strong position in society and were contributing vigorously to the social and economic development of the country. Women enjoyed equal rights in the political, economic, cultural and labour spheres and benefited from education beyond the secondary level as well as free education and health care.

4. The task of the new century was to further promote the rights and welfare of women. Despite the natural disasters of the last decade, which had decreased agricultural production, damaged the economy and adversely affected the social sectors, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had maintained such social benefits as free education and universal free medical care at normal levels and had made constant efforts to increase social expenditure. Women had absolute trust in the social system and in the Government's benevolent policies and were making every effort to fulfil their role in developing and enriching the country.

5. The achievements to date in implementing the Convention were attributable to the legislative and institutional machinery that had been created with a view to eliminating discrimination against women, although more still remained to be done. He looked forward to an open and constructive dialogue with the Committee.

Articles 1 and 2

6. **Ms. Šimonović** inquired what role women had played in the preparation of the report, and requested the Government to provide in future a greater number of sex-disaggregated statistics. She would also like to know whether the Convention was considered to have higher status than domestic law and could be directly invoked before the courts, or whether its provisions were enforceable under domestic legislation. Although the Constitution contained a definition of discrimination, it was unclear whether that definition included indirect discrimination; clarification would be welcome.

7. **Ms. Khan** enquired whether the Law on Equality of the Sexes had been reviewed to determine whether it conformed to the provisions of the Convention, which called for substantive equality not only in law but also in practice. It was important to understand that in order to achieve substantive equality, women must be offered additional support. She would also like to know whether the National Coordination Committee had identified appropriate indicators and benchmarks on equal enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights, in accordance with the Law on Equality of the Sexes and with the Convention; whether measures had been taken to review the national legal framework to determine whether legislation and policies reflected each of the rights set out in the Convention; and

whether work was being done to generate sex-disaggregated statistics.

8. **Ms. Shin** said she hoped that Korea would be reunited in the future. She was disappointed that the delegation had not provided up-to-date information in its introduction to the report, which had been prepared in 2001. She wondered, in particular, about the basic livelihood of women, including how much food was produced, how much international assistance was required to meet food needs, and whether such needs were being met. She would also like to know how food was distributed to ensure that women received necessary sustenance for their families, and how the public food-distribution system functioned. Lastly, she enquired whether women were allotted as much food as men and whether food allotments varied on the basis of age or type of employment; a detailed answer would be welcome.

9. **Mr. Flinterman** said, with reference to article 2 (c) of the Convention, that he was seeking to understand what remedies were available for women in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea who alleged that their rights had been violated. Although paragraph 53 of the report suggested that such complaints were submitted to the people's committees, the response to question 6 (CEDAW/PSWG/2005/II/CRP.2/Add.3) stated that few complaints were related to encroachments on the rights of women. He would like to know the composition of the people's committees, whether they included women, and whether the people's committees were familiar with the Convention. The Government might consider asking the Division for the Advancement of Women to provide training to the people's committees as well as to the judiciary in women's rights law. He requested specific data on the number of women who had submitted complaints on the violation of their rights, and enquired whether women who were dissatisfied with the findings of the people's committees had recourse to a court of law. Descriptions of particular cases should be provided. Lastly, he asked whether a national human rights commission had been established for monitoring such rights, in particular those of women.

10. **Ms. Pimental** noted that the report made no mention of violence against women. Yet the response to question 6 said that in the period under review some cases of violence by husbands against wives had been reported, and that grave cases were submitted to the

socialist law-abiding life guidance committees. Domestic violence against women was a worldwide phenomenon, which until recent years had been virtually invisible. The Committee presumed that such violence was occurring in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea but did not reach the police or the courts. She urged the Government to conduct in-depth research into domestic violence, since studies showed that it had harmful consequences for women, children and families.

11. **Ms. Bokpé-Gnacadjá** enquired as to the composition of the National Coordination Committee, the institutions represented on it, the nature of its programmes and activities and their impact on society. Noting that the Government had conducted a debate on future progress in implementing the Convention, since some discriminatory elements persisted, she said that she would be interested to hear the outcome of that debate. In addition, she would like to know whether the difference in the minimum age of marriage for boys and girls was a remnant of an outmoded custom, and whether, in the view of the Government, it contravened the Constitutional provision guaranteeing equal rights for men and women.

12. **Mr. Ho O Bom** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the Government had instituted the National Coordination Committee soon after acceding to the Convention, because it understood the great significance of that instrument to the lives of women. There were 17 members. Initially, the Government had believed that the implementation of the Convention should be carried out by women, and at first had included only two men in the membership of the Committee. Later it had realized that the elimination of discrimination also depended on the attitude of men towards women and had decided that the work of implementation must be carried out by both women and men. In 2003, eight men had been elected to the Committee.

13. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea was working to educate its people about the Convention, including special seminars in secondary schools and intensive short courses on a yearly basis for judicial and public health personnel. The National Coordination Committee was responsible for coordinating the work of the various governmental bodies. It had scrutinized the national legislation and determined that many of the provisions of the Convention were already reflected there, and it was

constantly monitoring the implementation of the Convention by local authorities and reviewing the application of the Convention in the work of the judicial bodies. Among its most important tasks was the preparation of the report. It had collected data from both governmental bodies and non-governmental organizations concerned with the various sectors. The drafters of the report included officials from the judicial, legislative and administrative bodies of the Government, such as the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour and the Central Court. The draft report had been submitted to the governmental bodies and non-governmental organizations for their views, and then presented to the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly, at which time women deputies had offered their views. The Presidium represented the Supreme People's Assembly when the Assembly was not in session.

14. The Convention had the same status as national legislation, and could be applied directly by the courts. In the event that national legislation did not reflect the terms of the Convention, the Convention applied, while in the event of a disparity between the terms of the Convention and national legislation or a bilateral agreement, the authorities referred to article 23 of the Convention and ensured that the interests of women prevailed.

15. Taking the view that the constitution's definition of discrimination coincided with that of the Convention, he pointed out that "distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex" were all covered in national legislation. The concept of "distinction" had been much debated, leading to the conclusion that, although women and men were clearly not the same, women were acknowledged to be as capable as men in many fields and must not be disregarded or discriminated against.

16. Although the importance of eliminating discrimination against women had been enshrined in national law in 1946, the concept dated back further. In 1936, during the military struggle against Japanese domination, a 10-point political programme had proposed to do away with inequality based on gender. In 1946 Kim Il Sung had declared that the country in general, and women in particular, must be liberated from the yoke of feudalism and colonialism. For centuries, women had had no prospect of freedom to marry or to lead an independent social life, and under Japanese colonial rule the imperial army had forced

200,000 Korean women into prostitution as "comfort women" for the military, on threat of death if they refused. He added that women must become the absolute equals of men, becoming partners in building society.

17. The status of women, protected in the 1946 Law on Equality of the Sexes, was also protected in the constitution and in labour, education, public health, civil and family law. Women could not be given arduous jobs. They could not be given unequal remuneration; in fact, they worked shorter hours for the same remuneration if they had three or more children to care for. Reflecting the foundation of gender equality and the absence of discriminatory attitudes to women, the Constitution and legislation specified that the "citizen" was the subject or object of their provisions.

18. Much remained to be done to eliminate social discrimination against women. Although the State had taken legislative and policy measures after liberation, the idea of women's inferiority was deeply rooted in Korea's 2,000-year-old feudal tradition and would take time to disappear. In the future, education efforts should focus on men as well as women. Gender stereotypes were also persistent, with women seen as keepers of the household. Advances must be made in attitudes, but also in technology, to free women from household chores.

19. Article 7 of the Family Law specified that men could marry at 18, and women at 17. That had encountered no public opposition. It reflected the tendency for women to marry men older than themselves, and the fact that women reached physiological maturity sooner than men. However, recognizing that the Convention required an equal minimum marriage age for men and women, and that, in practice, women no longer married at 17, the State proposed to amend the Family Law. The country's reservations to the Convention did not mean that it wished to maintain its standpoint, but rather that it wished to avoid misunderstanding.

20. Rational distribution of food was in the hands of the Ministry of Procurement and Food Administration, a structure which had no equivalent in most other countries. The ideal situation would have been for each family to receive as much as it needed, but shortages had forced rationing of food. Food rationing was not based on sex: allocation depended on the individual's

age and job. Those performing heavy work, such as mining, received 800g of rice per day; those performing lighter work, 600 to 700g; those not employed received less. Students received 700g of rice per day; secondary school pupils, 600g; elementary school pupils, 500g; children between 1 and 2 years of age, 200g; and children younger than 1,100g. Food aid provided by bilateral donors and international organizations was distributed as they decided. Distribution monitoring systems were in place.

21. The report to the Committee had described the country's economic problems and their causes, including natural disasters and the fact that it was in a ceasefire situation; war was suspended, but not formally at an end. The country was forced to protect itself against the possible unleashing of war and therefore to devote budget resources to military preparation. As it was neither large nor rich, that expenditure was a burden.

22. Targets for the implementation of the Convention had been built into the plan of the National Coordination Committee for the Implementation of the Convention; the plan would be updated from time to time. Although the Committee had requested more sex-disaggregated data, the Central Statistics Bureau could not provide them, because its methods differed from international methods. Efforts would be made to align them.

23. The National Coordination Committee included officials from judicial and law-enforcement bodies. The Convention could be invoked directly in court proceedings. For example, if the parties to a divorce could not agree on the division of property, the courts settled the matter according to the requirements of the Convention: property owned by each party before marriage reverted to them, while property acquired after marriage was divided.

Article 3

24. **Ms. Saiga** said that the report had not provided much information; she hoped that the process of constructive dialogue would provide further details of the situation in the country. She had found the delegation's explanations about the composition of the National Coordination Committee confusing. She wondered if it was entirely an elected body, where it fitted into the structure of national authorities, whether it was separate from government ministries and what

relationship it maintained with the Supreme People's Assembly and local people's committees. She was pleased that the National Coordination Committee had an implementation plan, but wished to know if it was a short-, medium- or long-term plan.

25. **Ms. Morvai** said that she would like more detailed replies to the Committee's questions, including the request for information on the legal remedies available to women. To her knowledge there was not a single country in the world where no cases of discrimination against women had been brought before the authorities, so she would like to know the numbers of such cases in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which fields they had covered (such as discrimination in employment or access to health care) and what their outcome had been.

26. In the annex to the report, table 6 (average lifespan) indicated that the average life expectancy for women had dropped from 77.6 in 1991 to 70.94 in 2000. She wondered whether that unfortunate decline had been caused by poverty, hunger or some other factor. She had seen conflicting reports in the media about the scale of the food shortage, and wished to know whether men, women and children had died as a result and how the women of the country coped with finding food for themselves and their families. According to some media reports, some had gone abroad and returned without being punished for their actions.

27. As a criminal lawyer, she had been surprised at the assertion, in the responses to the Committee's list of issues and questions, that only seven women were in pre-trial detention, and only 40 were in reform institutions following conviction. Either the country had found the secret to preventing crime, or there had been a misunderstanding, as with a population of 2 million, she would have expected tens of thousands of detainees.

28. **Ms. Šimonović** wondered if the plan of the National Coordination Committee for the implementation of the Convention provided for a comprehensive assessment of the compatibility of national laws with the Convention. The country should also ensure that it took appropriate action to fulfil the commitments assumed under not only the Convention itself, but also the Beijing Platform for Action and the Beijing +5 process. She wished to know if implementation mechanisms existed for all of those.

29. She asked the delegation to clarify whether the Convention had been directly cited in court cases, and, if so, which tribunal would be responsible for enforcing compliance with the Convention. She also wished to know what remedies were available to women if discrimination against them was proved.

30. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** said that she echoed other experts' concerns about the national machinery for the advancement of women and, in that connection, would like additional information on the role of the provincial and district people's committees, the relationship between those committees and the National Coordination Committee and how their work was monitored. She also wondered what relationship existed between the National Coordination Committee and the Korean Democratic Women's Union, and whether there were any other organizations open to women who did not belong to the Union. She wished to stress the importance of closer cooperation between the State party's national machinery and the Committee. In particular, the National Coordination Committee could benefit from training and guidance concerning the implementation of the Convention.

31. **Ms. Popescu** said that she commended the State party for ratifying the Convention and submitting its initial report on time, despite the economic and other difficulties facing the country. She wished to stress that the Committee's aim was to help the Government and people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to understand the problems facing women and to make provision for their advancement. In that connection, she recommended that the Government should approach international organizations, and in particular the Division for the Advancement of Women at the United Nations, in order to request technical assistance and training to implement and disseminate the Convention and publicize the recommendations of the Committee.

32. Following the ratification of the Convention, a series of laws had been reviewed. However, it was unclear from the report whether the 1946 Law on Equality of the Sexes had been amended to incorporate the provisions of the Beijing Convention and the recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action. She also wondered whether Parliament had a unit on equality which could assist with the revision of legislation.

33. **Mr. Ho O Bom** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), referring to violence against women, said that husbands sometimes treated their wives roughly when they were drunk. Complaints relating to that type of domestic violence could be brought before the courts and, in order to dissuade men from mistreating their wives, the Government had introduced educational programmes. In addition, the Korean Democratic Women's Union ran workshops on women's rights in villages and communities. The number of incidents of domestic violence had decreased in recent years and the Government did not believe that the phenomenon posed a threat to the society.

34. The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea wished to raise women's awareness of the Convention and, to that end, intended to distribute informational pamphlets. However, there were very few people in the country who were well-acquainted with the provisions of the Convention and could coordinate its implementation. The National Coordination Committee was an independent organ of the Government, composed of leading officials from the various national administrative and judicial bodies. It cooperated closely with the local people's committees, all of which had departments responsible for gender equality, and also enjoyed a close relationship with the Korean Democratic Women's Union. Women who did not belong to the Women's Union could join other trades unions or women's organizations.

35. The National Coordination Committee had developed a 10-year plan for the advancement of women, the primary objective of which was to promote women's participation in the country's economic and social life. While women accounted for 80 per cent of the total number of employees in the education and public health sectors, they represented less than 20 per cent of the workforce in certain other sectors. That situation must be improved and women should be allowed to work in whichever fields they chose. Another of the plan's objectives was to improve living conditions for women, whose life expectancy had dropped on account of the economic difficulties facing the country, which meant that food and medical supplies were in short supply. Since 2000, however, life expectancy had begun to increase.

36. Women in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea were entitled to bring complaints before the courts. However, in his experience, most of the

complaints brought by women did not relate to gender-based discrimination, but rather to the quality of services offered by certain providers and to the excessive bureaucracy of State organs. Most women did not wish to discuss their private matters in a public forum but, in cases of domestic violence, perpetrators were referred to life guidance committees and subject to administrative penalties.

37. With regard to cross-border movements, it was a criminal offence to cross the border without the necessary authorization. However, since the onset of the current economic difficulties, individuals who crossed the border in search of food or other necessities were not subject to criminal charges.

38. The data on pre-trial detention had been gathered by the official statistics office. People who did not understand the way his country was run often asked questions about the number of prisoners. There were no prisons in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Criminals were sent to labour reform institutions, where they worked under strict supervision and were remunerated for their efforts. One could not assume an automatic correlation between the size of a population and the number of criminals.

Article 4

39. **Ms. Gabr** asked whether the delegation had up-to-date statistics on the number of women occupying high-level posts in the public sector. In its responses to the list of issues and questions, the State party had acknowledged that women's participation in public life was insufficient, and she therefore wished to know how the Government planned to rectify the situation. There were not enough women in economic and technical posts or the diplomatic corps. The Government should introduce a quota system for posts in those areas and also take steps to increase women's participation in the country's political life.

40. **Ms. Hong Ji Sun** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had no female ambassadors and only 4.7 per cent of its diplomatic staff abroad were women. The main obstacle to women's participation in the foreign service was the domestic burden they faced, particularly since the country was still developing economically. Nevertheless, the Government was now taking steps to increase the number of female diplomats by, inter alia, setting a 40 per cent target for

university attendance and ensuring that female students had the opportunity to learn foreign languages.

41. She acknowledged that gender-based stereotypes still existed in her country, because women had historically been taught that they were inferior to men. However, now that women were becoming more aware of their rights, they could begin to take their rightful place in society.

Article 5

42. **Ms. Morvai** stressed the need to carry out research on the kinds of violence perpetrated against women in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and, in that connection, drew attention to the Committee's general recommendation No. 19. She asked whether the Government had any statistics on sexual violence, in particular the number of rape cases, and how many men had been convicted of committing crimes against women, including spousal homicide. Lastly, she wondered whether men as well as women were encouraged to take responsibility for family planning.

43. **Ms. Dairiam** said that sexual stereotyping governed the behaviour of both men and women and assigned specific roles and responsibilities to each gender. Although the report seemed to suggest that gender-based customary discrimination was a vestige of the past which would cease to exist when hard physical labour became obsolete, the phenomenon would not disappear without a concerted effort on the part of the Government to eradicate it. In that connection, she wished to know whether men were still regarded as the head of the household in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and, if so, whether policies for the advancement of women were predicated on that notion.

44. She would appreciate more details about the uneven proportion of women in specialized and vocational education and wondered whether any research had been done to determine why women preferred certain types of jobs. She wished to know why women accounted for only 10 per cent of judges and urged the Government to consider adopting temporary special measures to rectify that imbalance. Lastly, she was interested in the content of the courses offered at the mothers' schools.

45. **Ms. Saiga** said that she, too, would like additional details on the National Coordination

Committee's 10-year plan, and on any other programmes to eliminate stereotyping. If customary discrimination persisted, she hoped that it would be taken seriously. She would appreciate an explanation of what was meant by "preferential treatment of women by law and policy" in the State party's response to question 8, and a description of the content of that law and policy.

46. **Ms. Hong Ji Sun** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the inferiority of women was a concept deeply rooted in the culture of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which had been a feudalist society for 2,000 years and had been subjected to Japanese colonial rule. Under the old regime, boys and girls could not even sit together once they turned seven years of age. Soon after gaining independence, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had promulgated its 1946 Law on Equality of the Sexes with the aim of eliminating all forms of discrimination against women. That Law, however, had yet to be fully implemented. Men had continued to be regarded as responsible for affairs outside the household and women for the chores within the household. That division of labour was changing as men became more aware of the Convention and the need to eliminate discrimination against women. Husbands now did some cooking and other household chores and took care of the children, and women were participating in social activities to an unprecedented extent: for example, the professional boxing champion of the world was a woman from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The men and women of the new generation had a very different attitude and every effort was being made to eliminate the remnants of "outmoded customs".

47. Although there was no legal restriction on women's job choices, the majority tended to work in the public health, education and commerce sectors rather than in coal mining, for example, or other jobs that required hard labour. The National Coordination Committee, in cooperation with the Korean Democratic Women's Union (which had a membership of 3 million) was exploring ways of increasing the number of women in certain fields.

48. The weekly educational programmes for mothers organized by the Korean Democratic Women's Union and the Women's Association provided an opportunity to share information and exchange experiences.

Discussions focused on children's health and education and on prenatal care.

49. **Mr. Ho O Bom** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the Government was aware of the existence of domestic violence, and research on the issue was ongoing. Domestic violence in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea generally led to divorce. The authorities had become aware of the issue of marital rape by studying the Convention; the issue had never been discussed overtly but it would now be considered.

50. **Ms. Han Chae Sun** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the women's preventive health-care system counselled women on the number and spacing of births and dispensed contraceptives free of charge. According to a recent survey, more than 60 per cent of women used contraceptives, mainly the intrauterine device. Contraceptive use among men was rare; however, that was expected to change now that the Government, in close cooperation with the World Health Organization and other international organizations, was distributing condoms to men.

51. **Mr. Ho O Bom** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) added that, as far as he knew, domestic disputes had never ended in the murder of a spouse. Since fewer than 10 per cent of judges were women, the Government was contemplating the introduction of a quota system to remedy that situation, particularly in the civil courts, which handled divorce cases.

Article 6

52. **Ms. Shin** asked whether women were on the decision-making body that determined the food distribution policy. She was concerned that unemployed women were allotted only 400 grams of rice daily, even less than the portion for elementary school children.

53. The Committee had information that women from the north-eastern region of the country fell prey to traffickers when they crossed the border into China and were sold into prostitution or forced marriages and virtual slavery and imprisonment by their Chinese husbands. She would like to know how those women were treated if they returned home; if they were arrested, detained and questioned by the authorities; and if they could move freely back and forth across the border. If such returnees were no longer criminalized, she wished to know why 40 women were in labour

reform institutions and what the charges against them were. In view of the reports of forcible abortion and rape by wardens in the detention facilities and abuse of women pregnant with half-Chinese babies, she urged the State party to establish an independent human rights institution to receive complaints and guarantee the protection of human rights. She asked whether the State party would allow Committee members to visit the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and meet with women to discuss women's rights and the situation of women in the labour reform institutions.

54. **Mr. Ho O Bom** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the Ministry of Procurement and Food Administration was a central government organ that ran local and district food distribution centres. He did not have precise statistics on the number of women employed by the Ministry but it was considerable. While 400 grams might not seem sufficient, it had to be viewed in the larger context of the total allotment for a woman's family. Other family members might be receiving 700 grams a day and some children received 600 grams a day. Also, women who worked often received an additional 700 grams of food in the workplace.

55. The Government had looked into the situation of women crossing the border into China, mostly in search of food. As many of them bypassed the proper legal formalities for leaving or re-entering the country, both the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and China had intensified monitoring by their border guards. It was absolutely untrue that women returnees from China were sent to detention centres and subjected to severe punishment. The 40 women in the labour reform institutions were not there for crossing the border. Nor were women pregnant with half-Chinese babies subject to punishment, as the law prohibited discrimination against children born out of wedlock.

Articles 7 and 8

56. **Ms. Zou Xiaoqiao**, said that she would like additional details on the "various measures" referred to in paragraph 113 of the report, to increase women's participation in political life, apart from the 11-year compulsory free education system. It would be useful to know whether training courses on gender perspective were offered to decision-makers and high-level officials; whether women had equal or preferential access to training and capacity-building

workshops; and whether women were eligible for promotions on an equal footing with men.

57. As for women's representation in international bodies, she was pleased to see a number of women in the State party's delegation, as there had never been a female representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the Commission on the Status of Women. She wondered what the main obstacle was to appointing women representatives and hoped that, in future, the situation would change.

58. **Mr. Flinterman**, drawing the State party's attention to the Committee's general recommendation No. 23 and referring to paragraph 115 of the report, which stated that "political parties had a high percentage of women members and not a few women in the responsible posts", asked for more precise information on the number and percentage of women leaders in political parties. He wondered whether the Government was taking steps to encourage political parties to overcome obstacles and ensure women's full participation and representation. He would welcome clarification about the independent status of the Korean Democratic Women's Union and its relationship to the Government, and would be interested to learn whether other women's organizations existed and, if so, what their relation was to the Women's Union.

59. He would also be grateful for additional information on human rights organizations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, particularly women's human rights organizations, and on the Government's policy on allowing civil society organizations, including women's and women's human rights organizations, to establish contacts and cooperate with similar organizations outside the country.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.