Constitution of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION

Second Periodic Report of States Parties

Addendum

ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT
MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Equality

Practical implementation of the provisions relating to equality between men and women, which is generated by the Egyptian Constitution (article 11, 40) and other Egyptian laws in this respect, has taken its normal course of development, as follows:

A. In political and public life

Egyptian legislation establishes equality and equal opportunities for men and women in all areas of political and public life, particularly the following:

- Parliamentary

Experience has proven the success of the practical application of Law No. 114 of 1983, article 3, which aims to encourage Egyptian women to exercise their rights as representatives in legislative bodies and to ensure their presence in those bodies. Under that law, each list of candidates in 31 constituencies must include a female candidate.

The female members of parliament have exercised their full rights and have proven successful, which has led them to relinquish the State's protection in this respect and to stand for election in the legislative councils, competing against men. In the last elections in 1987, 10 women were elected, as compared to only seven in 1976. This is considered a positive development in society's acceptance of women as members of parliament and representatives of society.

- Diplomatic

As regards application of the principle of equal opportunities for men and women, the number of women working in diplomacy has recently increased by between 1 per cent and 1.5 per cent annually. There is a competitive examination for appointment to the diplomatic corps as diplomatic attaché, of the best candidates passing the examination, without any discrimination based on sex. In addition, the appointment of women to leading posts, such as ambassadorships abroad, is considered a positive indication of development in society's views and in its recognition of the abilities of self-aware, educated women. Two female ambassadors were recently appointed, one as a permanent representative to the United Nations Office at Vienna and the other as Egypt's ambassador in Rome.

- Trade unions

This is one of the most important fields where women have realized great achievements, taking advantage of the changes in membership rights introduced by the State in the trade union laws. The number of women members in the trade union movement has recently reached 100,000. Women have also attained senior levels through election as representatives of sectors, throughout the country.

- Employment

Egyptian women enjoy equal rights with men in employment. In its various organs, the State ensures that women receive equal pay to that of men for the same work. They receive all work benefits, such as allowances and promotions, on equal terms with their male colleagues.
With the increase in the numbers of women working in all fields, a number of laws have been introduced to help working women reconcile their duties to their families and their work. These laws are considered, in general, as favouring women. For example, a working woman is granted a three-month maternity leave after delivery, three times during her working life. This leave is with full pay and is not considered as part of the normal leave established by law.

A number of privileges for working women have also been established by law. The most important privileges are the right of a woman to work half time for half pay, if she wishes, her right to combine her pension with her husband's and the right of children to combine the pensions of both parents. In addition to the laws and legislations which are considered to favour women, the State wants to ensure working women's peace of mind by increasing the number of nurseries in institutions, organizations, schools and associations so that working women need have no anxiety concerning their children, who will be in places that provide health care and education while they are at their places of work.

- The statistics available are data based on a sampling survey of employment in 1974-1984. They show that the proportion of the total active population accounted for by working women was 6.2 per cent in 1974 and had increased to 18.5 per cent in 1984.

- Despite the unavailability of statistics, it can be taken as a fact that Egyptian women have set out to work and have entered all fields of employment. The last five years have witnessed a gradual but definite development in social and economic thinking.

Socially, the status and presence of women outside the home environment have become a matter a fact which does not give rise to any question. Society has also progressed towards abolishing rigid stereotypes and attitudes towards women's work.

Economically, women now constitute a considerable economic force at the levels of the State and the family. Egyptian families are increasingly dependent on the woman's salary, which defrays part of the burden of living expenses. It is therefore expected that this natural development will lead to consolidation of the image of working women who have rights and duties equal to those of men.

The education authorities seek to ensure that young people are brought up in an atmosphere of equality, without regard to traditional stereotyped concepts of the roles of men and women and they are endeavouring gradually to rid society of discriminatory attitudes towards women.

Development

Egyptian women, like men, are accorded full legal capacity and enjoy financial independence. Women can administer, supervise and dispose of their property as they see fit. They also have the right to conclude contracts and to take part in commercial, financial and economic transactions without any discrimination.

Egyptian women play a fundamental role in the economic development of their country as they participate effectively in all economic and commercial activities, because they enjoy full legal capacity, on the one hand, and also constitute a considerable part of the work-force.

Egyptian women also account for an increasing proportion of makers of decisions and policies relating to development, at the level of directors, professionals or technicians in the productive fields and sectors.
The 1984 statistics show a rise in the number of women in the commercial and economic sectors during the past 10 years from 11.3 per cent to 20.1 per cent.

The State, in co-operation with international, regional and non-governmental organizations, endeavours to increase women's awareness and to integrate them in the development process. The efforts of the State are directed at specific categories, such as rural women who are being organized in productive projects relating to rural areas.

**Services provided to rural women**

**Women's clubs**

There are 259 clubs. They are concerned with developing and increasing awareness and eradicating illiteracy among women, with everything that leads to improving their health standards and those of their families and with the methods and means of protecting against and preventing disease, and especially with family planning.

The women's clubs aim at raising the standard of living of the local community and at bringing about the advancement of rural and urban societies by providing guidance and interviewing and training women in various skills which help raise their social, economic and cultural standards, such as home economics, childcare, personal hygiene, women's crafts and general education.

**Female social leaders**

This project aims at creating natural leaders among the village population who can influence local society and constitute a link between the inhabitants and service institutions, in order to assist people to take full advantage of available services. They undertake awareness raising and help solve problems, after being trained and prepared for this role. They can also participate in many efforts made in the areas of awareness raising, eradication of illiteracy and child and family care. They take part in the implementation of plans and projects concerning women and pave the way for some national projects adopted by the State.

The female leaders' work is voluntary, and they do not receive any fixed pay. There are 1,572 leaders throughout the country.

**Projects for the development of rural women**

The projects for the development of rural women aim at integrating women in development and raising their economic, social, cultural and health standards. Centres are established in villages to develop their skills, eradicate illiteracy among them and stimulate their awareness in every respect. The United Nations organizations help in implementing these projects. Such projects are now being implemented in 13 governorates in the country.

**Producing families project**

The producing families project, being implemented by the Ministry of Social Affairs, is one of the most important social projects with economic input. This project aims at the development of human resources by providing the beneficiaries with training opportunities and developing their technical skills according to their capabilities and means, in a manner that enables them to play a productive role in society. It also aims at absorbing excess labour by creating new work
opportunities without making the State bear huge financial or foreign burdens, as it must when large factories are established. This project also helps to counter and solve some social problems resulting from the existence of unexploited spare time for some individuals.

This project benefits 200,000 families throughout the country.

**Mother- and child-care services**

The most important programmes of mother- and child-care services are those relating to care for pregnant women and new mothers, in which health care is provided in line with the highest modern medical standards, with emphasis on prevention. They also include clinical examination and the necessary laboratory tests for persons planning to marry, in order that the children will be free from hereditary diseases. These services are provided through the mother- and child-care services in the following basic care units.

(a) Mother- and child-care centres: 160, located in governorate centres. Each centre serves 75,000 people.

(b) Urban health centres: 97 complexes for basic care services, located in governorate centres. Each centre serves 25,000 to 50,000 people.

(c) Rural units and health teams in the villages: there are 2,640 rural units, each serving 8,000 people.

To ensure better health for pregnant women, they are made aware of the benefits of family planning when they visit the centre after delivery. They are acquainted with the various means of family planning and their interest is awakened in birth control in an appropriate way, to protect their health and that of their children. Children remain under medical supervision until they are six years old. They are vaccinated against contagious diseases and medically cared for and treated when they fall sick. Under the national project for combating diarrhoeal diseases, cases of diarrhoea among children are attended to, in order to decrease the mortality rate among children.

**Science and technology**

The proportion of women in the fields of science and technology in general is constantly increasing. It has been noticed that women prefer to work in the scientific research sectors rather than in production. This is due to the fact that work in research is more suitable to women's position in society than work in production, which may require longer and unusual working hours (night work), since in Egyptian society virtually the whole responsibility for the family is borne by women.

Women also participate effectively in efforts, whether government or local, made to protect the environment from pollution. The women in the Egyptian parliament exercised great influence in the enactment of many laws for the protection of the environment in Egypt in the early 1980s. Women participate, as well, in efforts at the regional and international levels for the protection of the environment.

**Special care services for elderly women**

The Ministry of Social Affairs extends full care to elderly women by providing comfortable and fitting homes where they stay and receive health, psychological and social care services as well as vocational therapy to fill their spare time and make them feel that they are still needed members of society.
- There are 34 homes for elderly persons of both sexes;
- There are 10 homes for elderly women only.

Services for the disabled

The Ministry of Social Affairs provides services to the disabled of both sexes leading to social rehabilitation and integration in normal life. Suitable facilities are provided in each case in the 17 rehabilitation centres in the various governorates. There are also 131 factories which provide work to the handicapped and 12 factories which produce specialized prosthetic devices. The number of beneficiaries of both sexes in 1988 was 21,409.

However, Law No. 36 of 1975 requires factory owners to draw 5 per cent of their workers from among disabled persons of both sexes.

Social security services

The Ministry of Social Affairs provides social security services in the form of financial assistance to various categories of persons. The following table shows these categories and the number of women who received pensions or assistance in 1988:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pensions</th>
<th>Assistance</th>
<th>One-time assistance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Widows - 15,551</td>
<td>Nursing mothers - 115</td>
<td>Delivery cases - 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorcees - 55,646</td>
<td>Families of prisoners - 1,701</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls without support - 4,730</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families of prisoners - 641</td>
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ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT

Ministry of Human Resources
and Training

International Labour Relations

Answers to questions concerning the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 1979, which are within the competence of this Ministry

1. Legislation applicable to this Convention:

(a) The Permanent Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt;

(b) Labour Law No. 137 of 1981;

(c) International Labour Convention No. 111 of 1958 concerning Discrimination in respect of Employment and Occupation.

The status of women under Egyptian legislation:

Our national laws prohibit differentiation between men and women. They guarantee women equal rights in the political area and in public life, equality in access to education and non-discrimination in employment and remuneration. They provide for the necessary guarantees for working women in cases of marriage and childbirth. They also stress social services, particularly child care, which are necessary so that family obligations can be combined with work responsibilities and participation in public life.

In reply to the question concerning rates of unemployment, the difference in the rates of unemployment for men and for women and whether this is due to the practices of private companies, to customs and traditions, to the lack of technical and professional training or to the inability of women to compete with men in the labour market, we wish to refer to the preliminary data of the 1986 census, which have been published by the Central Organ for General Mobilization and Statistics. The following table shows the numbers of unemployed persons of both sexes:

| Unemployed, both sexes, aged from 6 to 64 years, according to the 1986 census |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| **Male**        | **Female**      | **Total unemployed** |
| 1 158 801       | 852,556         | 2 011 357         |
| **Total work-force** |                | 13 677 618       |
The above table shows the following:

1. The percentage of unemployed males in the total work-force of both sexes is 8.472 per cent.

2. The percentage of unemployed females in the total work-force of both sexes is 6.223 per cent.

3. The percentage of unemployed of both sexes in the total work-force is 14.705 per cent.

From this we can deduce that the percentage of unemployed females is less than the percentage of unemployed males.

As regards the extent to which the principle of equal pay for the same work is respected and whether there is any discrimination in remuneration, the Egyptian lawmakers did not differentiate between men and women in terms of rights and duties. The Labour Law, No. 137 of 1981, defined the worker under article 1 as follows: any natural person who works for an employer and under his management or supervision. Thus, it does not differentiate between workers, whether they be men or women.