



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
315 Lexington Avenue c New York c N.Y. 10016 c (212) 689-7215 c FAX (212) 689-9073

ADRESS BY H.E. MR. ABELARDO MORENO, DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA, IN PRESENTATION OF COMBINED REPORTS V AND VI OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA. NEW YORK, 8 AUGUST 2006.

Madam Chairperson Hanna Beate Schopp-Schilling

Distinguished Committee Experts:

The UN World Conference on Women, held in Copenhagen in 1980, at its special ceremony of July 17, presented the text of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopted by the General Assembly in 1979. It had been signed by 64 countries and ratified by two; one of them was Cuba.

The Cuban State has been consistent with its action of being the first country in the world to sign, and the second to ratify the CEDAW. During the last ten years it has engaged in three constructive dialogues with its Committee (1996, 2000, and 2006) in order to review its combined reports III and IV, as well as V and VI, respectively.

It is worth noting that the period spanning since the presentation of the Fourth Periodic Report to date, has been characterized by important qualitative changes, both within the nation and in the complex international conditions that the entire humanity is facing, and which in a way have influenced and affected the Cuban people and women particularly.

In the preparation of each of our reports, we have always taken into account the observations and recommendations of the Committee on its final comments. Each report, when compared to the previous one, has presented clear progresses in the promotion, protection and guarantee of the rights enshrined in such an important international instrument which, in a universal, indivisible and interrelated manner integrate with the objectives of social justice and equality that have laid down the foundations of the Cuban Revolution's work during its more than 47 years of existence.

While the Cuban nation advances in the implementation of comprehensive, ambitious and effective socio-economic programs aimed at boosting the citizens participation,

On 15 February 2001, the Executive Secretary of the Council of Ministers sent a circular letter to all the Ministries, Central Institutes and provincial and municipal Governments indicating the steps to be taken for the assessment of the Action Plan of the Cuban Government for the Follow-up of the Beijing Conference, in response to the recommendations of the Committee on several articles of special interest of the CEDAW.

In that regard it instructed to "evaluate in their Boards of Directors the operation and effectiveness of the measures that are relevant to them, establishing a previous coordination with the Federation of Cuban Women, for its participation."

It also pointed out a group of issues and problems that required inter-sectoral coordination for statistical compilation and to carry out research and studies that would provide enough elements to enrich the presentation of the Fifth Periodic Report of CEDAW. These aspects respond to the main recommendations by the Committee in 2000 related to violence against women: manifestations and causes; tendencies and manifestations of divorce by consent; situation of rural women in comparison with those living in urban areas; tendencies of the incorporation of women to work in non-traditional areas and of high economic growth; causes and manifestation of suicide, addiction to tobacco, narcotics and alcohol in women; updating on the situation of prostitution and the effectiveness of the adopted measures; improvement of the measures for the progressive elimination of sexist stereotypes.

A comprehensive explanation on each of these aspects is provided on the report as well as an updating of the data and tendencies that have changed since its preparation in 2004.

At the moment of this dialogue we have the advantage of the data provided by the General Census of Population and housing of 2002, on which the National Office of Statistics has carried out a crossed interpretation of the information that allows evaluating the current condition of women in all areas. We likewise have included several results of the first version of a compared research that was implemented with the aim of assessing the advances and challenges in women equality, which was recently requested by the president of the Councils of State and of Ministers, Commander in Chief Fidel Castro, while referring to women's role, during the Regular Session of the Cuban Parliament in December of 2005.

We can add to the above the outcomes of the very wide process of discussion and analysis carried out by the Federation of Cuban Women at its municipal and provincial Committees during 2005. State governing bodies participated in these assemblies and discussions, and they had the opportunity to listen to the concerns, complaints, and recommendations of women about their main achievements and challenges for the enjoyment of each one of their rights.

Women make up 45.6% of the labor force in the civilian public sector, 1.2 higher than the figure reported in 2000. 63.3% of University Graduates and 66% of the intermediate and higher level education graduates in the country are women.

There is a sustained progress of female presence in the leadership at all levels and decision-making processes, for a 36.9% of those employed in that category, a figure higher than the 31.1% reported in 1999. There is also a growth in the number of women members of Parliament: from 27.6% to 35.95% currently placing Cuba at number seven in the world on that indicator.

Women represent not only the vast majority of the Law-school graduates in the country, but also hold positions of leadership in the courts and prosecution attorney's offices. 60.3% of the professional judges in the courts, and 71% of the prosecution attorneys are also women.

Cuba fulfilled all its health goals of for 2000 and adopted new strategies related to the commitment of fulfilling the Millennium Goals of the UN. It revitalized the structures and techniques and also the improvement of human resources. A strategy has been implemented in the last few years to decentralize the health services, by means of the extension and reorganization of the specialties and health assessment in the communities, which at the same time has allowed the adoption of new global strategies including the family polyclinics, with the aim of improving the quality of the comprehensive medical care and the situation of children and the specific programs for women in particular. In those services women make up 56% of the doctors in the country and 51.7% of the Cuban cooperation through in the Comprehensive Health Program that is currently providing services in 68 third-world countries to the neediest population or affected by natural disasters.

In this last case, recently the Task Brigades of the "Henry Reeve" contingent, made up by doctors and nurses, laboratory technicians and other specialties specific to these kinds of natural disasters, cooperated with Pakistan after the terrible earthquake that hit the country. There, 1240 highly specialized women (48.6% of the brigade) provided their generous contribution to assist the suffering of extremely far-off populations of the mountains that did not have access to health services.

People with any kind of disability receive a special care and we are working to achieve their increased incorporation to the social life of the country for which new programs have been added. The nation-wide research carried out from 2001 to 2003 has allowed to have ample information on psycho-social, psycho-pedagogical and clinical and genetic aspects of 366 864 persons. Of them, 52.27% are older than 60 years of age and 48% are women with some kind of disability. The new challenge was to take concrete steps that contribute to solve needs and demands detected in the research, which disabled women and their relatives have particularly benefited from. In this research, 33 626 professionals participated, most of them women.

aspirations and possibilities of social justice that have long been upheld keep their validity.

- Comprehensive training courses have been created for the youths that for any reason whatsoever were not studying or working, out of which 63.4% of the students are women younger than 30 years of age.
- A program of universalization of higher education has been implemented, with branches in every municipality of the country, rendering the conditions to access higher learning to all the population more flexible, even when living in far-off regions, also favoring young mothers with small children.
- The national currency has been revaluated, while salaries and pensions have been raised, benefiting women and men, including especially those working on jobs that require lower professional skills and hence less remunerated, as well as elder citizens, retired workers and pensioners.

Madam Chairperson:

The Cuban women, as a result of their own leading role and the Cuban Government's determination to apply the best and more fair public policies in order to guarantee their full development, currently show academic training, professional, health and political and social participation rates comparable to many developed countries in the world.

However, ours is a small country, poor in natural resources, unilaterally and unjustly blockaded, attacked, besieged. It has suffered the loss of more than 3400 lives and the mutilation of 2099 of its best men and women, as a consequence of terrorist actions. It has made huge efforts to fulfill its aspirations of justice and equality and it has achieved important results, but it has a long way to go in improving its work.

We have to continue struggling for the elimination of the persisting stereotypes, for the creation of values and a higher awareness on the gender equality, for the elimination of all vestiges of underrating, disqualification of women, and inequity in the distribution of household responsibilities.

I would like to conclude these introductory remarks by stating our confidence that the frank, objective and constructive dialogue with this Committee will allow us to share and enrich our perceptions and experiences and to improve our work and actions aimed at tackling any obstacle – be it objective or subjective – that prevent the full compliance with the Convention and the furthering of our convictions of justice for all Cuban women and men.

Thank you very much.