

# **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women**

## **General discussion on Girls' and Women's Right to Education**

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**Geneva**

**Textual Interpretation of Article 10, including its main principles, objectives and links to the other articles of the CEDAW Convention.**

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Thank you Madam Chair, fellow speakers and distinguished members of the CEDAW Committee, country representatives.

It is a privilege to be here today, addressing the right of girls and women to education.

Allow me to refer first to the right to education in general, which is a basic human right.

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights outlines **four basic objectives of education**, which are

a) “Developing the human personality”;

b) “Strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms”;

c) Promoting “understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups”;

and

d)“Maintaining the peace”.

Article 10 of CEDAW calls upon State Parties to “eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education.”

Based upon my textual interpretation of article 10, I argue that the article is based on **five core principles**:

1) Elimination of all forms of discrimination to ensure that women and girls receive the same quality and type of education and have the same potential to benefit from such education as boys;

2) Education is not limited to primary and secondary education, but must include all levels of education from pre-school through to the tertiary level in academic as well as technical-vocational fields, sports and physical education and continuing education;

3) Education must be available, accessible, acceptable, and adaptable to women and girls in urban as well as in rural areas and to all disadvantaged groups;

4) Primary measures, such as the elimination of stereotypical concepts of the roles of men and women in society, must be supported with complementary measures to enhance the right of women and girls to education and to make free choices in fields of study and careers;

5) Promoting the right of women and girls to education facilitates enjoyment of rights in their personal and family life as well as in their political and public life.

I further argue that implementation of article 10 requires effective and adequate application of all other articles of the CEDAW Convention

**Article 2** calls on States parties to eliminate discrimination by any person, organization or enterprise.

It is crucial to eliminate any processes and practices within the state education system that have contributed to continue social and cultural patterns with respect to the roles of women and men in society.

**Article 4** considers the adoption of special measures to advance the status of women

and General Recommendation No. 25 (2004), explains how these special measure may be adopted in the education sector.

**Article 5** calls on States to eliminate sex and gender based stereotypes.

It would be beneficial to eliminate such stereotypes from all educational processes, practices and teaching materials.

**Article 6** calls on action against traffic in women and the exploitation of the prostitution of women.

Educated women are empowered to access the labor markets and less likely to enter illegal sectors of the market economy.

**Article 7** calls for the elimination of discrimination in the political and public life.

Educated women acquire the critical thinking and analytical skills to engage in public debates, or extra-curricular activities, which provide women and girls the opportunity to develop leadership qualities and develop a sense of civic responsibility.

**Article 8** calls on States to ensure the equal participation of women in government positions and international organizations.

Education is crucial to that end, as these positions involve representing governments, and establishing global goals and priorities.

**Article 9** focuses on the right to acquire, change, retain and transmit nationality.

If women cannot transmit their nationality to their children, such children could be denied the right to education in the mother's place of birth.

**Article 11** calls on States to eliminate discrimination in the field of employment.

Educated women have a better chance to find employment in the formal labor market without having to resort to work in the unregulated informal sector.

**Article 12** calls on States to eliminate discrimination in the field of health.

Education is central in raising awareness about healthy behaviors, sexual and reproductive health and rights.

**Article 13** calls on States to eliminate discrimination in the economic and social life.

Educated women can better understand their economic and social rights, such as financial family benefits, access to finance and participation in cultural activities.

**Article 14** focuses on the special needs of women in rural areas.

A key indicator of the elimination of discrimination and barriers faced by rural women is the number of schools built and staffed with competent personnel.

**Article 15** focuses on equality of men and women before the law.

Enhancing women and girls' right to education is crucial in facilitating women's equal access to justice. Educated women better understand and exercise their rights and know about available legal remedies.

**Article 16** calls on States to eliminate discrimination in the area of marriage and family relations.

Through education, girls and women become more aware of traditional gender roles within the home and are able to better understand the implications of early marriage, unequal right to inheritance, and other forms of exploitation of women

Let me conclude by saying that, in the meantime, guaranteeing the right to education is therefore essential to an effective implementation of the entire CEDAW Convention.

Thank you.