

URUGUAY

In its report to the United Nations Human Rights Committee, the government of Uruguay asserts that “men and women are absolutely equal under the law, and the state of Uruguay has enacted special legislation to punish discrimination in the treatment of or opportunities granted to women. However, according to information compiled by the National Statistics Institute in preparation for the Beijing Conference, there are several specific areas in which full equality has not been achieved.” (Para. 22) *Cotidiano Mujer*, a Uruguayan non-governmental organization, prepared the attached submission on which the following summary of concerns is based. Equality Now welcomes the government’s candor with respect to statistics, but is concerned about the continuing discrimination women face in Uruguay. Equality Now is particularly concerned about child marriage, violence against women and lack of employment opportunities for women in Uruguay.

Marriage

In paragraph 144 of its report, the government notes that the minimum age of marriage is 14 for men and 12 for women. Article 23(3) of the Covenant provides that “no marriage shall be entered into without the free and full consent of the intending spouses.” Equality Now submits that the legal age of marriage should be the same for men and women, in accordance with the right to equality under the law, and that a child of twelve or even fourteen years old cannot fully consent to marriage. Article 24 of the Covenant provides for the protection of children, and in accordance with its obligations under this article, the government should raise the minimum legal age for marriage and make it the same for men and women.

Discrimination in Employment

In paragraphs 22-25, the government report cites statistics from the National Statistics Institute indicating that “four times as many men as women fall into the employer category, and two and a half times as many women as men are unpaid family workers. . . only one out of four managers is a woman. . . over half of all unemployed persons in the country are women. . . women’s average hourly wage is 75 per cent that of men.” The government does not state in its report how it will address this *de facto* discrimination.

Women and Political Participation

In paragraphs 26-30, the government of Uruguay’s report again cites figures on women’s political participation without recommending ways of increasing those numbers. Women hold only 7 out of 99 Deputy posts. Only 2 out of 30 Senators are women. There are no female ambassadors at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a low percentage of female judges at the highest levels. There is no mention of any measures the government is planning to take to address the exclusion of women from political participation.

Violence Against Women

In paragraphs 31-35, the government report addresses measures taken to prevent and punish violence against women. The Office of Technical Assistance to Victims of Domestic Violence was established in 1992 to analyze, investigate, coordinate and guide activities related

to domestic violence. The Ministry of Interior is cited by the government as being useful to the Domestic Violence Office because of its close association with crime-related matters. It appears, however, that the Office does not handle a significant number of cases, nor does it attempt to rehabilitate or educate violent men. According to *Cotidiano Mujer*, there is a paucity of educational programs on domestic violence directed to the general populace and efforts to promote greater national coordination of domestic violence cases have been unsuccessful. (See Annex 1, p.2)

Conclusion

While there is significant recognition of the problems relating to discrimination against women, Equality Now is concerned that there is no apparent plan of action to address these problems. The fact that such widespread and severe discrimination against women continues in Uruguay obligates the government to take action to ensure effectively that women achieve equality in areas such as employment and political participation. Equality Now also believes that the government should pay greater attention to the problem of domestic violence in Uruguay.

INDEX OF ANNEXES

1. Letter from Cotidiano Mujer submitted by Lilian Celiberti, Feb. 2, 1998.
2. Letter from Cotidiano Mujer submitted by Lilian Celiberti, Feb. 26, 1998.