



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

Distr.: General
2 March 2007
English
Original: Arabic

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

Pre-session working group

Thirty-eighth session

14 May-1 June 2007

**Responses to the list of issues and questions with regard to
the consideration of the initial periodic report of the Syrian
Arab Republic**

**Responses of the Syrian Government to the questions of the
Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

Question 2:

Please provide information on the process of preparation of the report, including on whether non-governmental organizations, particularly women's organizations, were consulted, whether it was presented to Parliament or any designated high-level authority and whether it was adopted by the Government.

The initial report of the Syrian Arab Republic was prepared by a national committee comprising representatives from governmental bodies and non-governmental organizations working on women's issues, in addition to a number of the country's law and information experts. The report was presented to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in accordance with the regulations current in Syria and was also circulated to all members of the People's Assembly, as well as to media figures, non-governmental organizations and all State ministries and institutions.

Question 3:

The report indicates that the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs has recommended the removal of all reservations to the Convention with the exception of reservations to article 16 (1) (c) and (f) and article 29, para. 1 (a), and that the matter has been sent to the Legal Office of the Syrian Government for an opinion (pp. 10, 24, 30). Please describe any progress in this regard.

The proposal of the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs is being considered by the competent Ministries (Awqaf, Justice and Foreign Affairs) and also by a

number of authorities on Islamic jurisprudence with a view to a decision on the matter.

Question 4:

The report does not present adequate statistical information, disaggregated on the basis of sex and ethnicity, relating to areas covered by the Convention, in particular education, employment and health. Please provide such information.

The Central Bureau of Statistics publishes the annual Statistical Compendium and all of the statistics are disaggregated on the basis of sex only (Annex 1 — Statistical tables on education and employment).

Question 5:

The report indicates the multi-ethnic population of Syria (p. 5). Please provide information on whether women of certain ethnic groups face multiple forms of discrimination and the measures that have been taken to address such discrimination.

The Permanent Constitution of 1973 does not discriminate among persons of Syrian Arab nationality in terms of rights and obligations and the same is true for all Syrian laws and legislation. Nor does the status of Syrian women differ on the basis of ethnicity or femaleness; discrimination is the outcome of social stereotyping of the roles of women and men and of discriminatory articles contained in certain laws.

Question 6 (articles 1 and 2):

Please clarify whether under the Syrian legal system, international treaties take precedence over domestic laws and provide information on court cases, if any, where the provisions of the Convention have been invoked, and the outcome of such cases.

In accordance with article 25 of the Syrian Civil Code,¹ following their ratification by the Syrian Arab Republic and with the exception of any reservations made to them, international treaties are deemed to take precedence over current Syrian laws. We have no data on the extent to which the Convention is invoked in the courts. In accordance with its plan for 2007, the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs is to implement a training project for male and female lawyers and judges on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child so that they may be invoked in legal proceedings and arbitration.

Question 7:

Please describe what remedies are available to women with complaints of gender-based discrimination, including independent mechanisms (such as an ombudsman) and statistical information on women's use of such remedies.

Syrian women have recourse to the various courts and may institute the usual legal proceedings in order to seek the reversal of administrative decisions issued by

¹ Article 25: The provisions of the preceding articles (23 and 24) shall apply only in the absence of a conflicting text or international treaty in force in Syria.

an official State body or by a private-sector body that involve some form of discrimination. They may also claim compensation. The Personal Status Act similarly guarantees to women the right to seek a separation (divorce) before the Shariah courts. In that context, women's cases come before the various courts on a daily basis. Syria has no ombudsman mechanism, but the Office of the President has a complaints bureau serving all citizens. The Syrian General Women's Federation has its own complaints bureaux for dealing with women's grievances and offering appropriate advice. The relevant governmental authorities (the Ministries of Awqaf, Justice, Social Affairs, Education, and Information) also endeavour to raise public awareness by holding seminars and workshops on the rights of Syrian women.

Question 8:

The report indicates that the General Women's Federation submitted a memorandum to the People's Assembly (Parliament) for amendment of discriminatory articles of law and that the Syrian Women's League submitted a memorandum for amendment to the Nationality Act which was also "presented to the Cabinet and is in the final stages of discussion" (p. 10). The report also indicates that a bill to amend article 3 of the Syrian Nationality Act tabled by 35 members of the People's Assembly was included in the agenda of the Assembly in its May-June 2004 session (p. 47). In addition, the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs has also reviewed discriminatory laws and proposed amendments or new laws (p. 11). Please describe the amendments and new laws recommended, describe the actions taken by the People's Assembly and the Cabinet in this regard and the timeline anticipated for any contemplated law reform.

The concern of the Syrian Government to review the laws relating to women as a matter of necessity is plainly evident in the section on women's empowerment contained in the Tenth Five-Year Plan, which states that: "Laws and legislation will be amended and integrated measures implemented to prevent and curtail abuse of and violence against women. National laws and legislation will also be updated and developed to bring them into line with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and a civil family code will be promulgated to cover the rights of family members, enshrine the equality of women and men in practice, provide protection for women against violence and promote an end to outmoded traditions and customs that impede the contribution of women to building a liberated and modern-day democratic society."

The Commission also drafted a family bill and a children's bill and will hold two workshops during 2007 with all of the concerned governmental and non-governmental bodies on Arab family laws (a comparative study) in order to produce an integrated draft for presentation by the Commission to the competent authorities with a view to its endorsement by the People's Assembly. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is working on a proposal for a new bill on associations and for a youth bill. Just recently, at the end of 2006, the People's Assembly adopted the Personal Status (Catholics) Act No. 31 of 2006, pursuant to which amendments favourable to women on such matters as custody, inheritance and adoption were passed.

Reference should be made to the growing role of non-governmental organizations in connection with amendment of the Nationality Act and the proposal

for a modern family code designed to bring about equality between men and women, as well as their role with regard to removal of the reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the drafting of a bill on associations that will promote a climate conducive to furthering the contribution of associations to the advancement of women in the Syrian Arab Republic. Approval of some of these bills is anticipated in 2008 after they have been discussed in public and after all of the bodies mentioned have set forth the reasons for the proposed amendments.

Question 9:

Please provide information regarding the status, role and human and financial resources of the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs since its establishment in 2003. Has the Government sought or considered seeking technical and financial assistance from the specialized United Nations entities, in particular from the United Nations Development Programme?

The Syrian Commission for Family Affairs was established pursuant to Act No. 42 of 2003.

Headed by: Dr. Muna Ghanim, who presides over the Commission and its board of directors.

Board of directors: Comprises eight members who are experts in strategic areas, research, information science and the family.

Number of staff: 21

Objectives: The Commission aims to:

- Protect the family, strengthen its cohesion and preserve its identity and values;
- Improve family living standards in every aspect;
- Promote the role of the family in development by fostering its interaction with the country's family-related institutions and bodies, both governmental and non-governmental;
- Cooperate with Arab and international family-related bodies in order to serve the objectives of the Commission;
- Propose the amendment of family-related legislation.

(Annex 2 — Act No. 42 of 2003 establishing the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs. Please also refer to the country report prepared for Beijing +10 and the updated version prepared for Beijing +12 on the activities of the Commission since its establishment.)

As for its financial resources, the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs is mainly reliant on government funding allocated to it in the State's general budget in the same way as to any ministry. The Syrian Government also encourages and adopts national projects and approves support from United Nations organizations, such as the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Commission has implemented a number of projects funded by these organizations.

Question 10:

The report states that one of the “tangible results” of the implementation of the Convention is that “some of the stereotyped images of women, men and children have been removed from the school curricula” (p. 22) and that the Government has taken measures to promote gender mainstreaming in school curricula by altering the portrayal of stereotyped roles for both men and women (p. 35). The report also states that the Ministry of Education is engaged in planning gender-training workshops for textbook authors (p. 51) and that the Ministry of Information has concentrated efforts on “awareness-raising through training for senior personnel in all fields of the media in matters relating to ... the rights of women (p. 23). Please indicate any other progress made in eliminating stereotypes from textbooks and the media.

The Ministry of Education is now working to complete specific action on developing the school curricula for the kindergarten to secondary stages. Inclusion of the concepts articulated in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women has been taken into account in the educational criteria and outputs, as well as in study units, with the aim of portraying a modern image of women in the school curricula and textbooks. The Arabic language timetable, for example, focuses on the rights of women in education; the alteration of social and cultural patterns of behaviour in men and women; women’s participation in society; the elimination of all stereotyping of men and women; women’s involvement in the media; the role of women in the family; the right of the girl child to care and consideration (in books used in adult education and with girl drop-outs); ideas concerning the expression of opinion and equal rights and obligations with men; the elimination of any notion of discrimination between the roles of men and women; the right to health care; and the empowerment of women to enjoy freedom of thought and expression (in Arabic language books used in general education from the basic first grade to the third secondary grade). The Commission also prepared a tree of rights for every woman and child, which has been adopted by the Ministry of Education and will be used during the 2007/08 academic year. The curricula for all branches of vocational and technical education (for both females and males) are currently being developed and national criteria for these curricula are being documented by the competent committees. Males are now at liberty to pursue a technical education in sewing and tailoring; 250 males and 2,211 females are in the business of sewing clothes, while in tailoring and dressmaking, the number of males stands at 34 and the number of females has risen to 811. In female secondary education, there are currently 30,332 females and 569 males. In other words, the female arts are a specialist area which women still wish to pursue.

The interest of the Ministry of Information of the Syrian Arab Republic in development in general, including women’s issues, has taken concrete shape with the establishment of a directorate for information on development within the Ministry. A technical information committee specializing in children’s and women’s issues has been formed, with women accounting for some 80 per cent of its composition. Its task is to follow up and highlight all issues relating to women in an accurate and scientific manner that illustrates the status of women in society and the challenges entailed in strengthening their role. A national information committee on women’s and children’s affairs has also been formed. Comprising representatives from all bodies engaged in work on women’s issues, its essential goal is to draft an

information strategy on women and children. An annual prize is awarded for the information activities that best cover women's issues. Special seminars are also held for all those same bodies so that they can coordinate in the interest of improving the treatment of information on the position of women, bearing in mind the need to highlight any negative ideas and stereotypes. Various television interludes have been prepared and produced, covering such issues as the problems of early marriage, the effect on women and society, the adverse consequences of high population growth, polygamy, women and the law, women's employment and women's health. Five television spots on women and development have also been produced.

Question 11:

A recent study on domestic violence in Syria conducted by the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs with financial support from UNIFEM showed that approximately 25 per cent of women were subjected to violence in the home. Please indicate whether a law on domestic violence is being considered and what other steps the Government is taking to combat domestic violence?

The Tenth Five-Year Plan determines the policies and plans of action to be put into operation in order to achieve the objective of reforming legislation relating to gender and women's issues. It is stated in the Plan that:

“The necessary steps will be taken to promulgate new legislation and amend existing legislation to guarantee gender equality as befits the specific nature of Syrian society, taking into account international norms and conventions ratified by and binding on Syria.

“Sectoral legislation is being promulgated with a view to making allowance for gender issues in policies, programmes and the laws on ownership, labour and taxation in order to confer special status on women in that context.

“Positive laws will go hand in hand with programmes aimed at informing women of the legal rights granted to them accordingly, with emphasis on the importance of exercising and defending those rights, on the provision of women who are subjected to violence with access to the mechanisms of justice and on the need for women to report wrongdoings in order to obtain their rights in full, without pretext of the customs and traditions that men may cite in order to practise violence against women.”

With UNIFEM support, the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs, the General Women's Federation and the Central Bureau of Statistics also carried out a study on this phenomenon. Syria is among the first countries to have conducted a field study of all types of violence in order to shed light on the forms of violence practised against women and on the extent, causes and consequences of that violence. Entitled “*Violence against women in the Syrian Arab Republic*”, the field study took a random sample of 1,891 urban and rural families in various governorates in the context of general data on family, housing and the individuals in question. The findings of the study indicated that 7.19 per cent of the women in the sample had been subjected to some type of violence. The percentage was also higher among rural women.

(Annex 3 — Abstract of the study and recommendations)

Question 12:

The report indicates that “Syria still lacks homes to provide [battered women] with shelter” (p. 35). Please indicate plans for the establishment of shelters for battered women and obstacles presented so far. Is the Government of Syria considering providing financial support for the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, which runs the only shelter for abused women in Syria?

The Tenth Five-Year Plan notes the need to establish shelters in parallel with measures to develop the national plan for the protection of women, which was prepared by the Commission in collaboration with all of the relevant governmental authorities, grass-roots bodies and non-governmental organizations. The Plan makes provision for the establishment of shelters and counselling centres for women victims of violence. The Ministry of Social Affairs is also currently working with the Society for Development of the Role of Women to establish a centre for the protection of battered women. In accordance with the Tenth Five-Year Plan, the Ministry will establish two family guidance centres with a view to preventing the spread of this phenomenon in Syria.

At the present time, the shelter of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd takes in women in need of protection from domestic violence. Alongside the work of non-governmental organizations, it offers psychological and social support to battered women and promotes their empowerment and social reintegration.

The Commission also noted that the national plan for the protection of children, which was approved by the Syrian Government, in the presence of the President of the Republic, on 2 October 2005, and which became operational in early 2006, includes the construction of two centres for the protection of the family. The first is to be completed in 2007 in Damascus and the second in 2008 in Aleppo.

It should be pointed out that the Commission involves the Sisters of the Good Shepherd in all of the committees engaged in preparing plans for the protection of women and children. The Sisters rely on support from their church in accordance with the regulations in force in Syria and receive some support from international donor organizations.

Question 13:

The report notes that a commission of legal experts studied the articles of the Penal Code relating to “honour crimes” and proposed a draft amendment (p. 105). Please describe the amendment proposed, indicate its status and the timeline anticipated for reform of such provisions.

Article 548 of the Penal Code does not punish so-called “honour crimes”. The amendment of this article therefore constitutes the basis of work undertaken by governmental authorities, grass-roots bodies and non-governmental organizations, as well as by the “Syrian women” website, which ran a national online campaign on article 548 and documented cases of young girl victims of this article of the Penal Code. It also ran a voting campaign for abolition of the article and conducted a survey that included numerous decision-makers, most notably the Minister of Awqaf and the General Mufti of the Republic. The majority of those surveyed stressed that amendment of the article and the punishment of offenders were essential. The General Women’s Federation also prepared an integrated study on honour crimes and all related measures under articles 473, 475 and 548 in terms of prosecution,

conviction and punishment. The study was presented to the Minister of Justice on 31 May 2006. The Syrian Commission for Family Affairs also prepared a draft amendment to the discriminatory articles of the Penal Code and a committee was formed under the chairmanship of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with a number of concerned governmental bodies as members (the Commission, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, the Ministry of Awqaf, the State Planning Commission and the Ministry of Justice), to study the discriminatory articles of the Penal Code and draft the necessary amendment.

Question 14:

The report indicates that while there are legal provisions that criminalize sexual harassment “no measures worthy of note, however, have been taken in this regard and women usually resort to individual solutions for this problem” (pp. 14, 55). Please explain this statement and provide details of the remedies readily available to, and pursued by, women facing sexual harassment.

As mentioned in the report, the law severely punishes sexual harassment, although the public should be made aware of the need to seek protection for victims through the courts, which women avoid for fear of how they will be regarded by society. A television series has highlighted this issue and demonstrated that the majority of the public do not endorse the approach of seeking redress through the courts.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour is responsible for the rehabilitation of women who have been subjected to sexual harassment, the aim of which is to enable their healthy social reintegration.

Question 15:

Please provide information about the numbers of women trafficked from, through and to Syria.

The Syrian Arab Republic has signed and acceded to various international conventions relating to trafficking in persons, the exploitation of the prostitution of others and the fight against all forms of slavery. These include the Protocol to amend the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children, concluded in Geneva on 30 September 1921 (New York, 12 November 1947), to which it acceded on 17 November 1947, and the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children, which it approved. It also acceded to the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (New York, 12 March 1950), to the Slavery Convention, signed in Geneva on 25 June 1926 and amended by the Protocol done at the headquarters of the United Nations on 7 September 1953, and to the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery (Geneva, 7 September 1956). All of these steps took place only a short time after the conclusion or amendment of those conventions.

Recently, pursuant to Decree No. 24 of 10 April 2005, the Syrian Arab Republic approved accession to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, adopted by United Nations General Assembly resolution 45/158 of 18 December 1990. Syria is not thus far regarded as a transit centre for trafficking in persons and no global

network involved in trafficking in persons is active in Syria. The Syrian Government is nevertheless making noticeable efforts to counter the challenges resulting from the country's geographical location insofar as it is surrounded by unstable neighbouring States (Iraq and Lebanon) and invasion and war give rise to wrongful actions, including the phenomenon of trafficking in women and prostitution.

(Annex 4 — Number of women deported from Syria during 2005 and 2006.)

Question 16:

The report indicates that “trafficking in women is punishable” under the Suppression of Prostitution Act No. 10 of 1961 (pp. 35-36). Please indicate whether the Government is considering enacting specific legislation to combat trafficking and describe the measures taken to provide specialized training on trafficking to members of the police, border guards and the judiciary?

In addition to the Suppression of Prostitution Act No. 10 of 1961, which punishes prostitution and trafficking, a national committee was established pursuant to Ministerial Decision No. 5114 of 20 September 2005 for the purpose of drafting an integrated bill that seeks to combat crimes of trafficking in persons and of formulating regulations for domestic employment agencies. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs prepared the bill on countering trafficking in persons in Syrian laws and legislation, in addition to which a legal committee comprising a number of the concerned governmental bodies was formed in order to discuss the bill. A round table organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and sponsored by the Ministry of the Interior was held on the theme of assistance to the Syrian Government in developing legislation to combat trafficking in persons. The activities of this workshop were complemented by a second workshop held on 29 and 30 January 2007. Furthermore, Ministerial Decision No. 81 was promulgated on 21 November 2006 to regulate the country's domestic employment agencies.

Question 17:

Please provide information on the rehabilitative and protective measures in place for women victims of trafficking for purposes of prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation, including a description of the effectiveness of these measures.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour is in charge of reform centres for juvenile delinquents and rehabilitation centres for delinquent girls, which are run in cooperation with various non-governmental organizations that help to rehabilitate women who have been sexually abused, trafficked or prostituted, the aim being to enable their healthy reintegration into society. The statistical monitoring carried out by various institutes shows that cases of trafficking for prostitution are negligible. The follow-up of any cases in residential areas is done in cooperation with non-governmental organizations in order to provide the necessary support. Rehabilitative and protective measures are limited owing to the fact that trafficking in women for purposes of prostitution does not constitute a phenomenon, as it is confined to individual cases. Consequently, the aforementioned centres attached to non-governmental organizations, which are overseen by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, are those which devote attention to such problems, regardless of

their origin, in addition to which the Sisters of the Good Shepherd plays its role in providing shelter and services for the women concerned.

Question 18:

According to the report, the Ninth Five-Year Plan (2001-2005) set down a 30-per-cent minimum target for participation of women in decision-making (p. 31). However, the participation of women in decision-making remains low (12 per cent in the People's Assembly and 7 per cent of the Cabinet) (pp. 39-40). What concrete measures have been taken, including temporary special measures, such as the establishment of quotas or incentives to achieving this target, taking into account article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention?

The Syrian Government has made enormous efforts to achieve this objective; the Tenth Five-year Plan (2006-2010) devotes a special component to women and emphasizes that same percentage. The strategy for the advancement of Syrian women (2006-2010) also aims to increase women's participation to 30 per cent in parallel with the process of empowering them to compete fairly for job opportunities.

As for the progress achieved in connection with women in decision-making positions:

- Dr. Najah Al-Attar was appointed as Vice-President of the Republic for Cultural Affairs pursuant to Presidential Decree No. 112 of 23 March 2006, thereby making Syria the first Arab State to open up such prospects for women in the Arab world;
- There are currently two female ministers in the Government, namely the Minister for Expatriate Affairs, Dr. Buthaynah Sha'ban, and the Minister of Social Affairs and Labour, Dr. Diyala Al-Hajj Arif. The Syrian Commission for Family Affairs is also headed by a woman, Dr. Muna Ghanim;
- In the diplomatic field, 11 per cent of Syrian ambassadors are female and the proportion of female diplomats stands at 66.14 per cent. In 2003, 370 candidates sat the competitive examination for diplomats and 23 of them were appointed, including 12 women. In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, women have occupied the positions of ministerial aide and head of department and the number of women ambassadors during the years 2000-2005 amounted to four;
- A woman was elected as secretary of the bureau of the People's Assembly for the first time and re-elected for the years 2004-2006. As for the representation of women in the 12 standing committees of the Assembly, all women members of the Assembly participate in one committee or more and three women participate in the committee bureaux (the steering bodies of the standing committees);
- The number of women in local administration increased to 7.8 per cent in governorate councils, 5.4 per cent in municipal councils, 1.2 per cent in town councils and 3.1 per cent in village councils;
- The percentage of women now stands at 1.24 per cent in the National Union of Syrian Students and at 1.20 per cent in the Engineering Union, which has a woman representative. Women make up 15 per cent of the Trade Union Council and 8 per cent of the General Congress (2006). A woman was also

elected to the executive bureau of the Federation of Labour Unions for the first time and also as chairperson of the Committee for Working Women;

- A committee of businesswomen in Chambers of Industry and Commerce has also been established in each of the country's governorates and in 2004 women accounted for 10 per cent of businesspersons. Some businesswomen are also members of the board of directors in various Chambers of Industry and Commerce;
- The Tenth Congress of the Arab Ba`th Socialist Party devoted great attention to the advancement of women and adopted a recommendation to open up the opportunity for women to widen and increase their participation in the activities of the Party and the State on an equal footing with men. The number of women members of the Central Committee of the Arab Ba`th Socialist Party in the elections of the Tenth Regional Congress in 2005 increased to 18 out of a total of 94 members, compared with 15 out of a total of 90 members in the elections of the Ninth Regional Congress in 2000. Mrs. Shahnaz Fakush was elected as a member of the Party's regional command in 2005 and is the first woman to hold this position, prior to which she performed a number of functions at various levels with the Party. Mrs. Salafah Dib was also elected chairperson of the Party's Oversight and Inspection Committee;
- It is worth noting that Mrs. Wissal Farhah Bakdash was elected as Secretary-General of the Syrian Communist Party in September 1995 and later became a member of the central command of the National Progressive Front. The situation is similar in a number of Syrian parties: the Syrian Communist Party devoted a special section to women's issues in the documents of its Tenth Congress (2006), the number of female members of the Central Committee increased from five to nine and a woman was elected as a member of the political bureau;
- The Syrian Commission also held eight seminars on women and decision-making positions in eight Syrian governorates on the occasion of International Women's Day in 2006.

(Annex 5 — Media coverage of seminars)

(Annex 6 — Percentage of women in decision-making positions)

Question 19:

The report acknowledges that the number of Syrian women working in international organizations is “modest” but states that this is due to “stereotyped roles of women in society whereby movement and travel for women is for the most part limited” (p. 43). Please indicate whether such stereotypes are also an obstacle to women's participation in other areas, such as the political and economic spheres, and what concrete measures are being taken to overcome such obstacles.

In Syria, women hold decision-making positions in a number of international organizations. These positions are quite distinct from the stereotypical forms of employment for women. A select group of educated Syrian women, for example, make up a high percentage of UN-HABITAT staff; 7 of the total number of 11 staff members are women, including two counsellors and three programme officers. The

representation of Syrian women in decision-making positions is also proportionately high in the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNDP and IOM.

Question 20:

Please provide information on the education level and access to education of girls and young women from ethnic minorities and rural areas.

The Syrian Government is working for non-discrimination among citizens in accordance with the country's Permanent Constitution. In education, for instance, equality is guaranteed by the Constitution and by law, without discrimination on grounds of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political opinion, national or social origin, wealth, parentage or for any other reason. The educational curriculum studied in Syrian schools is for all citizens, with no exceptions. Drop-out and illiteracy are problems peculiar to specific areas of Syria. The Tenth Five-Year Plan consequently devotes great attention to those areas, to which it accords priority, and a ministerial committee has been formed to allocate financial and human resources for the purpose of developing those areas and closing the gaps.

Having taken charge of the housing file and assumed the chairmanship of the Technical Housing Committee, the Syrian Commission worked in conjunction with the Central Bureau of Statistics to prepare studies on the country's most impoverished areas in order to identify their particular needs and priorities, thus enabling the Syrian Government to elaborate plans of action under the Five-Year Plan with a view to meeting those needs.

Question 21:

The report shows that while 64.5 per cent of basic education teachers are women, women comprise only 15 per cent of university teachers and that this is due to "lack of government policies encouraging closure of the gap" (p. 49). Please indicate measures that are being considered to bridge this gap.

The annexed tables show an increase in the percentage of women's input to the university teaching profession, although it still remains below the level to which the Syrian Government and Syrian women aspire. The increase in the percentage of female university students will also automatically increase the number of women in university teaching, as recognized in the section on women's empowerment contained in the Tenth Five-year Plan in connection with increasing women's input to decision-making positions in all fields.

(Annex 6 — Data on education in Syrian universities and on teaching staff).

Question 22:

Please provide information on women's participation in the work force, including women's participation in the informal sector.

The following table shows the percentage of women's participation in the job market.

<i>Sector</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>
Governmental	23.5	48.5
Private	57.8	28.4

Question 23:

The report states that “no complaints about gender-based discrimination in the field of employment have been lodged, signifying that the laws are fully applied in the regular employment market” (p. 52). However, it goes on to point out that employment offices regularly fail to offer job opportunities to women registered with them; many employers have “no qualms” about violating provisions of the Employment Act due to poor implementation of such provisions; and that, if initiated, legal proceedings drag on for years and are exploited by employers to pressurize employees (p. 56). Please indicate concrete measures contemplated to ensure compliance with the Employment Act and other relevant legislation and improve women’s access to justice.

The Employment Act No. 91 of 1954 provides for equal job opportunities for both sexes, as well as for equal rights and obligations. Regardless of gender, jobs are allocated on the basis of scientific and technical competence, which is also true in the case of employment bureaux, which provide equal opportunities for female and males based on the order in which they register with the bureau. There is also a growing interest in the situation of women employed in the private sector, in particular to ensure that employers take no liberties with the laws. In that context, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour is training employment inspectors to perform the work required of them. The working women’s committees are also making efforts to inform women workers of their rights through a number of seminars and workshops. The legal tools are furthermore available to both sexes, although procedures are usually slow owing to the administrative routine and lack of automation. However, no complaints of gender-based violence in the workplace have yet been lodged with the courts. A study on the impact of the main demographic, social, organizational and institutional factors on the attitudes of women employees is now being conducted. The aim of the study is to show the impact of the relevant main factors on the attitudes of Syrian women employed in business organizations in the private sector and to explore the factors which help to narrow the gap in administrative practices that fail to promote the use of women’s capacities.

Question 24:

According to the report, women are forbidden from working in certain kinds of jobs that are deemed “detrimental to health or morally damaging” and during certain hours at night (pp. 11, 55). Please provide a full list of the jobs that women are forbidden from working in and indicate whether the potential discriminatory impact of such provisions of the Employment Act of 1959 on women’s employment has been evaluated and provide details of any such evaluation, especially in light of article 11 (1) (b) of the Convention.

The Employment Act provides that the same conditions of employment apply to both men and women. It prohibits the employment of women, however, in jobs

that are physically demanding or harmful to the foetus in the case of pregnant women. These jobs include all those in the field of heavy industry other than clerical jobs, as well as mining, quarrying, metal and glass smelting, the manufacture of explosives and fireworks and other similar types of work. It is prohibited to employ pregnant and nursing women in jobs where they are liable to handle materials that affect the foetus, chemical substances or heavy weights (whether involving pulling or pushing).

Under the Act, it is also prohibited to assign women to night shifts between the hours of 10 p.m. and 7 a.m., with the exception of the following:

- Doctors, nurses, midwives and workers in hospitals, sanatoriums and clinics;
- Workers in postal, cable and telephone offices;
- Attendants and staff in airports and airline companies;
- Workers in the television, radio and press;
- Women engaged in work to prevent certain loss of highly perishable items;
- Restaurant and bar staff;
- Actresses on stage and in theatre troupes;
- Artists.

It is worth mentioning that the oversight committees engage in daily drives to ensure that the law is applied.

(Annex 8 — List of prohibited jobs)

Question 25:

The report states that Syria has no legislation (i) providing for flexible job patterns that give men and women the opportunity to combine work and family responsibilities, such as job-sharing or permanent part-time work (ii) on paternity leave and (iii) allowing couples to divide maternity leave (p. 54). In addition, the report mentions that the childcare facilities are scattered, disorganized and not up to par (p. 54). Please indicate measures that are being implemented to overcome such obstacles to women's equal opportunities in the labour market.

The Employment Act makes no provision for the equal responsibilities of men and women as far as domestic duties are concerned and similarly gives parental leave to mothers only. Neither does it ease the task of combining the responsibilities of home and work by legislating for half-time posts, for example. The principle of equal job opportunities for men and women is, however, guaranteed by law and the Constitution.

As for the provision of childcare facilities, in order to facilitate harmony between the responsibilities of work and home, as well as achieve the strategic aims of the State, the Women's Committee of the General Federation of Labour Unions is now compiling statistics on the number of nurseries opened and on the number of carers and beds, together with proposals for their development. The Employment Act No. 91 also provides for the establishment of nurseries, which now exist in most

ministries and State institutions. The Syrian General Women's Federation also runs a large number of nurseries and kindergartens.

Modernizing and Activating Women's Role in Economic Development (MAWRED) has published and circulated four studies, in addition to which it has organized lectures on women's issues (such as working from home, family safety and the household budget) in order to promote awareness. It has further published a socio-economic study on the status of Syrian women, institutions that are supportive of women, laws and so on. MAWRED also produced a study on the contribution of women to the family income, which forms part of their invisible work. The study pointed out the dangers of unpaid work and the situation of women working at home in towns and rural areas, concluding that it is important to raise awareness of gender roles and divide them between men and women.

Question 26:

The report notes the large female workforce in the informal job market, where there is no control or social protection. What steps are being taken or contemplated to ensure legal and social protection for the women in the informal job market, as well as those women undertaking contractual or piece work?

The Employment Act regulates the market for all types of work, both public and private, and governs all sectors. It also regulates the job opportunities available on that market. As already mentioned, the Employment Act provides for the equal rights and obligations of men and women, with the exception of jobs prohibited to women for health or safety reasons. Moreover, under no circumstances may a contract of employment include clauses that violate the provisions of the Employment Act.

Question 27 (article 12):

Please indicate whether existing programmes to combat HIV/AIDS integrate a gender perspective and whether special measures for prevention are in place that target women.

All of the strategies and programmes aimed at combating HIV/AIDS take into account gender considerations. These programmes cover primary health care, reproductive health, counselling, prevention and voluntary testing. There is also an AIDS programme run under the supervision of the Ministry of Health, in conjunction with the World Health Organization (WHO) and governmental, grass-roots and non-governmental organizations. This project seeks to provide the necessary services, hold awareness-raising workshops and publish health leaflets. There is also a helpline for queries and advice and there are central laboratories for monitoring cases. Non-governmental organizations are increasingly active in spreading health awareness as an important means of prevention. One example is the ongoing work of the Family Planning Association, which holds seminars to spread awareness of reproductive health matters, as well as training workshops for young persons of both sexes.

Question 28:

The report indicates that “a woman still needs her husband to consent to her leaving the house or to accompany her to the health service” and that the “failure to take women’s wishes into consideration may also inhibit their use of some of the available services” (pp. 64-65). Please indicate measures contemplated to address these barriers to women’s access to, and use of, health-care facilities.

The Syrian Commission for Family Affairs, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the Syrian General Women’s Federation, carried out a study on women’s health empowerment with a view to establishment of the mechanisms needed to fill the gaps which emerged in the study, including the factors mentioned in the report. The Federation also runs awareness-raising programmes for all women, particularly in rural areas, as does the Family Planning Association. The Commission has recently worked together with the Ministry of Awqaf to set up workshops with religious leaders in all governorates in order to promote the idea of reproductive health and the responsibility of both parents in that connection.

Question 29:

According to the report, rural women have high rates of illiteracy and unemployment, lack access to vocational training, do not own land and are not given the right to make decisions on family and economic matters (p. 74). The report states that there is a programme being run by the Rural Women’s Development Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform to “integrate the development of rural women into programmes of action as a main strategic concern” (p. 14). Please elaborate on the concrete measures being taken (including through the programme by the Rural Women’s Development Unit) to address issues faced by rural women, and describe the impact of such measures.

The Ministry of Agriculture devotes attention to the development of rural women through the Directorate for the Development of Rural Women, which has adopted a training programme with a manual and instructors. It has also adopted a microcredit programme, funded 27,000 women farmers and created over 30,000 job opportunities.

The National Strategy for the Advancement of Rural Women includes a special literacy programme in the section on women and education. The section on women and the economy focuses on the need for training to improve the performance of rural women and enable them to use agricultural technology. As for the section on women and the law, it points out the importance of raising rural women’s awareness of their rights, including the right to own farming land.

In terms of achievements, the Rural Women’s Development Unit has implemented a number of women’s empowerment projects, some with the support of international organizations, an investment that has effectively enhanced the socio-economic circumstances of the women benefiting from such projects.

Question 30:

The report states that the articles of the Personal Status Act are largely discriminatory and that “work is currently under way for the proposal of a modern family law that guarantees equal rights for men and women” (p. 15). Please provide information about the scope of these proposals and their anticipated compliance with the Convention as well as the anticipated time frame for action thereon.

As already mentioned, the Tenth Five-Year Plan emphasizes the need for review of the legislation relating to women, culminating in a civil family code. In that connection, the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs has prepared a bill that will be discussed with all of the concerned governmental and non-governmental organizations with a view to its finalization and submission to the competent authorities for consideration and subsequent presentation to the People’s Assembly. The proposals encompassed in the bill are directed towards the equal rights and obligations of men and women.

Question 31:

Please indicate any progress made towards ratification/accession of the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

Submitted by the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs to the Office of the Prime Minister, the proposal for removal of the reservations to the Convention contained a paragraph proposing ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted by United Nations General Assembly resolution 54/4 of 15 October 1999. It will be considered after it has been presented to a number of the concerned governmental bodies (Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

Annex 1

Main educational indicators

Table 1
Illiteracy among men and women (15 years and over)
 (Percentage)

<i>Sex</i>	<i>1970¹</i>	<i>1981¹</i>	<i>1995²</i>	<i>1999³</i>	<i>2001⁴</i>	<i>2002⁴</i>	<i>2006</i>
Women	80.0	62.9	31.6	26.3	22.2	21.3	24.2
Men	40.4	26.4	11.5	9.7	8.1	7.5	9
Gap (men-women)	-39.6	-36.5	-20.1	-16.6	-14.1	-13.8	-15.2
Ratio (men/women)	2.0	2.4	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.7

Source:

1. Population census of 1970 and 1981, Central Bureau of Statistics.
2. Workforce (job market) survey, 1995, Central Bureau of Statistics.
3. Multipurpose survey, 1999, Central Bureau of Statistics.
4. Workforce in 2001 and 2002.

Table 2
Illiteracy among men and women (15 years and over) by age in 1999
 (Percentage)

<i>Age groups</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Total (men-women)</i>
15-19	6.3	2.7	-3.6
20-24	8.8	3.2	-5.6
25-29	14.1	3.7	-10.4
30-34	21.9	6.4	-15.5
35-39	31.6	8.0	-23.6
40-44	40.7	10.0	-30.7
45-49	48.1	12.6	-35.5
50-54	56.2	16.3	-39.9
55-59	65.2	19.9	-45.3
60-64	72.2	28.3	-43.9
65 and over	78.3	41.5	-36.8

Source: Multipurpose survey, 1999, Central Bureau of Statistics.

Table 3
Illiteracy among men and women (15 years and over) by age in 2006
 (Percentage)

<i>Age groups</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Total (men-women)</i>
15-19	4.8	3.6	-1.1
20-24	8.9	4.5	-4.4
25-29	12.1	4.6	-7.4
30-34	16.2	4.4	-11.8
35-39	22.7	6.3	-16.4
40-44	30.4	7.0	-23.4
45-49	41.1	9.2	-31.9
50-54	53.0	13.7	-39.2
55-59	63.3	16.3	-47.0
60-64	69.3	22.9	-46.4
65 and above	78.0	44.0	-34.0

Source: Workforce survey, 2006, second quarter, Central Bureau of Statistics.

Table 4
Proportion of women per 100 men by stage of education

<i>Year</i>	<i>Primary</i>	<i>Preparatory</i>	<i>Secondary</i>
1970	53.9	53.5	29.3
1980	72.4	56.1	58.8
1990	85.2	69.7	75.4
1999	88.6	85.2	92.6
2002	89.8	85	96.9
2005	92	87.5	102.1

Table 5
Breakdown of students in schools and vocational training centres by sex
 (Percentage)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Gap (men-women)</i>	<i>Ratio (women/men)</i>
1980	38	62	24	0.6
1990	47	53	6	0.9
2000	49	51	2	1.0
2005	43.7	56.3	12.6	0.8

Table 6
Pre-university teaching staff by stage of education and sex
 (Percentage)

<i>Sex</i>	<i>1970</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2005*</i>
Primary stage:						
Women	38.5	52.8	63.6	65.7	67.2	64.5
Men	60.5	47.2	36.4	34.3	32.8	35.5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Women per 100 men	62	111	175	191	204.8	181.9
Preparatory and secondary stages:						
Women	21.3	32.1	43.2	48.2	49.5	45.8
Men	78.7	67.9	56.8	51.8	50.5	54.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Women per 100 men	27	47	78	93	98	85.1

* Primary means basic education.

Table 7
Government spending on female education
 (Percentage)

<i>Stage</i>	<i>Percentage of total spending on education per stage</i>
Primary from 1-6	47.4
General secondary	47.7
Vocational secondary	44.8
Total	47.2

Source: Ministry of Education.

Table 8
Students in the primary stage
 (Percentage)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
1970	65.0	35.0
1980	58.0	42.0
1990	54.0	46.0
1999	53.0	47.0
2000	53.0	47.0
2001	52.8	47.2
2002	52.8	47.2
2005	52.1	47.9

Table 9
Students in the preparatory stage
 (Percentage)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
1970	74.0	26.0
1980	64.0	36.0
1990	59.0	41.0
1999	54.0	46.0
2000	54.1	45.9
2001	54.5	45.5
2002	54.1	45.9
2005	53.2	46.8

Table 10
Students in the secondary stage
 (Percentage)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
1970	77.0	23.0
1980	63.0	37.0
1990	57.0	43.0
1999	52.0	48.0
2000	50.9	49.1
2001	51.0	49.0
2002	50.9	49.1
2005	49.5	50.5

Table 11
University students (1998-2002)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage of males</i>	<i>Percentage of females</i>
1998	78 285	57 617	135 902	57.6	42.2
1999	85 262	66 107	151 369	56.3	43.7
2000	87 659	67 478	155 137	56.5	43.5
2001	95 011	77 842	172 853	55.0	45.0
2002	102 749	88 001	190 750	53.9	46.1
2005*	243 049	210 456	453 505	53.6	46.4

* Students in higher education (institutes + universities).

Table 12
Proportion of females over males in various faculties (2002-2003)

<i>Faculty</i>	<i>Humanities</i>	<i>Science</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Arts</i>	<i>Pharmacy</i>	<i>Economics</i>
Females	69	37	28	15	11	8
Males	23	19	6	2	5	4
Total	92	56	34	17	16	12

Breakdown of workers aged 15 and over by main occupation status, sector and sex (2006 — June cycle)

	Government			Private regulated			Unregulated			Other					
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total			
	Employer	241 658	10 364	252 022	160 711	3 736	164 447	36 223	1 075	37 297	438 592	15 175	453 767		
Self-employed	431 732	22 650	454 337	525 725	16 535	542 261	193 427	19 864	213 291	1 150 885	59 004	1 290 889			
Waged	998 932	335 340	1 334 271	636 125	64 427	700 551	689 868	37 581	727 450	2 364 397	442 740	2 807 137			
Family business	65 728	17 081	82 809	104 626	25 607	130 233	130 190	102 975	233 165	300 544	145 664	446 207			
Other	3 494	336	3 830	7 116	339	7 456	708	702	1 411	11 319	1 377	12 696			
Total	998 932	335 340	1 334 271	1 378 737	114 813	1 493 550	1 488 047	83 798	1 571 846	400 021	130 008	530 029	4 265 737	663 959	4 929 696

Percentage breakdown of workers aged 15 and over by main occupation status, sector and sex (2006 — June cycle)

	Government			Private regulated			Unregulated			Other					
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total			
	Employer	17.5	9.0	16.9	10.8	4.5	10.5	9.1	0.8	7.0	10.3	2.3	9.2		
Self-employed	31.3	19.7	30.4	35.3	19.7	34.5	48.4	15.3	40.2	27.0	8.9	24.5			
Waged	100.0	100.0	100.0	46.1	56.1	46.9	46.4	44.8	46.3	9.9	4.1	8.5	55.4	66.7	56.9
Family business	4.8	14.9	5.5	7.0	30.6	8.3	32.5	79.2	44.0	7.0	21.9	9.1			
Other	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.2	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.3			
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Breakdown of workers aged 15 and over by economic activity of main occupation, sector and sex (2006 — June cycle)

	Government			Private regulated			Unregulated			Other					
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total			
	Agriculture and forestry	25 776	7 115	32 890	107 547	26 878	134 426	352 110	56 105	408 215	275 789	119 430	395 219	761 222	209 528
Industry	107 960	13 162	121 122	428 084	24 152	452 237	128 576	10 703	139 279	26 069	3 160	29 229	690 689	51 177	741 866
Building and construction	22 784		22 784	89 976	1 061	91 037	515 190	2 412	517 601	19 783		19 783	647 733	3 472	651 205
Hotels and restaurants	13 535	1 603	15 138	492 392	19 393	511 913	200 913	6 026	206 939	43 358	3 862	47 219	750 198	30 883	781 081
Transport	44 913	3 483	48 396	76 659	2 783	79 442	198 474	690	199 164	19 886		19 886	339 933	6 956	346 889
Finance, insurance and real estate	11 785	2 436	14 220	69 164	7 775	76 939	27 019		27 019	3 836	350	4 816	111 804	10 561	122 365
Services	772 178	307 541	1 079 720	114 914	32 770	147 684	65 766	7 863	73 629	11 300	3 207	14 507	964 157	351 381	1 315 539
Total	998 932	335 340	1 334 271	1 378 737	114 813	1 493 550	1 488 047	83 798	1 571 846	400 021	130 008	530 029	4 265 737	663 959	4 929 696

Percentage breakdown of workers aged 15 and over by economic activity of main occupation, sector and sex (2006 — June cycle)

	Government			Private regulated			Non-regulated			Other					
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total			
	Agriculture and forestry	2.6	2.1	2.5	7.8	23.4	9.0	23.7	67.0	26.0	68.9	91.9	74.6	17.8	31.6
Industry	10.8	3.9	9.1	31.0	21.0	30.3	8.6	12.8	8.9	6.5	2.4	5.5	16.2	7.7	15.0
Building and construction	2.3		1.7	6.5	0.9	6.1	34.6	2.9	32.9	4.9		3.7	15.2	0.5	13.2
Hotels and restaurants	1.4	0.5	1.1	35.7	16.9	34.3	13.5	7.2	13.2	10.8	3.0	8.9	17.6	4.7	15.8
Transport	4.5	1.0	3.6	5.6	2.4	5.3	13.3	0.8	12.7	5.0		3.8	8.0	1.0	7.0
Finance, insurance and real estate	1.2	0.7	1.1	5.0	6.8	5.2	1.8		1.7	1.0	0.3	0.8	2.6	1.6	2.5
Services	77.3	91.7	80.9	8.3	28.5	9.9	4.4	9.4	4.7	2.8	2.5	2.7	22.6	52.9	26.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Breakdown of workers aged 15 and over by monthly wage category in the main occupation, sector and sex (2006 — June cycle)

	Under 3 000						7 000+	Not specified	Total
	Under 3 000	3 000-3 999	4 000-4 999	5 000-5 999	6 000-6 999	7 000+	Not specified	Total	
Government									
Males	28 843	12 943	25 148	35 227	83 696	807 444	5 630	998 932	
Females	2 827	754	6 299	11 271	29 844	282 396	1 949	335 340	
Total	31 670	13 697	31 447	46 498	113 541	1 089 840	7 579	1 334 271	
Private regulated									
Males	24 504	36 640	71 749	71 977	108 979	321 200	1 077	636 125	
Females	4 580	8 288	10 715	14 651	7 309	18 883		64 427	
Total	29 084	44 928	82 464	86 628	116 288	340 082	1 077	700 551	
Unregulated									
Males	13 507	31 675	53 976	81 391	128 917	378 193	2 210	689 868	
Females	3 226	8 678	8 194	8 557	3 425	5 501		37 581	
Total	16 733	40 353	62 170	89 948	132 342	383 694	2 210	727 450	
Other									
Males	1 041	343	4 471	2 501	7 667	22 552	899	39 473	
Females	687		339	687	1 400	1 721	560	5 392	
Total	1 727	343	4 809	3 188	9 066	24 272	1 459	44 865	
Males	67 894	81 602	155 344	191 096	329 258	1 529 388	9 815	2 364 397	
Females	11 320	17 719	25 547	35 166	41 978	308 501	2 509	442 740	
Total	79 214	99 321	180 891	226 261	371 237	1 837 889	12 324	2 807 137	

Percentage breakdown of workers aged 15 and over by monthly wage category in the main occupation, sector and sex
(2006 — June cycle)

	<i>Under 3 000</i>						<i>7 000+</i>	<i>Not specified</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>3 000-3 999</i>	<i>4 000-4 999</i>	<i>5 000-5 999</i>	<i>6 000-6 999</i>					
Government									
Males	2.9	1.3	2.5	3.5	8.4	80.8	0.6	100.0	
Females	0.8	0.2	1.9	3.4	8.9	84.2	0.6	100.0	
Total	2.4	1.0	2.4	3.5	8.5	81.7	0.6	100.0	
Private regulated									
Males	3.9	5.8	11.3	11.3	17.1	50.5	0.2	100.0	
Females	7.1	12.9	16.6	22.7	11.3	29.3		100.0	
Total	4.2	6.4	11.8	12.4	16.6	48.5	0.2	100.0	
Unregulated									
Males	2.0	4.6	7.8	11.8	18.7	54.8	0.3	100.0	
Females	8.6	23.1	21.8	22.8	9.1	14.6		100.0	
Total	2.3	5.5	8.5	12.4	18.2	52.7	0.3	100.0	
Other									
Males	2.6	0.9	11.3	6.3	19.4	57.1	2.3	100.0	
Females	12.7	6.3	6.3	12.7	26.0	31.9	10.4	100.0	
Total	3.9	0.8	10.7	7.1	20.2	54.1	3.3	100.0	
Males									
Males	2.9	3.5	6.6	8.1	13.9	64.7	0.4	100.0	
Females	2.6	4.0	5.8	7.9	9.5	69.7	0.6	100.0	
Total	2.8	3.5	6.4	8.1	13.2	65.5	0.4	100.0	

Breakdown of unemployed persons aged 15 and over by age and sex (2006 — June cycle)

	Newly unemployed			Long-term unemployed			Total
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	
15-19	8 672	1 404	10 076	63 155	31 711	94 866	107 942
20-24	12 842	6 081	18 923	79 396	71 885	151 282	170 205
25-29	14 976	6 822	21 798	40 237	45 877	86 114	107 912
30-34	6 958	2 061	9 019	12 088	18 147	30 235	39 255
35-39	5 207	1 917	7 187	1 783	8 629	10 412	17 600
40-44	2 485	1 034	3 520	1 417	4 122	5 539	9 059
45-49	3 032	904	3 935	1 165	343	1 508	5 444
50-54	354		354	1 506	777	2 283	2 637
55-59	1 462		1 462		388	388	1 850
60-64	1 251		1 251				1 251
65+	691		691				691
Total	57 993	20 224	78 216	200 748	181 880	382 628	460 845

Percentage breakdown of unemployed persons aged 15 and over by age and sex (2006 — June cycle)

	Newly unemployed			Long-term unemployed			Total
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	
15-19	15.0	6.9	12.9	31.5	17.4	24.8	22.8
20-24	22.1	30.1	24.2	39.6	39.5	39.5	36.9
25-29	25.8	33.7	27.9	20.0	25.2	22.5	23.4
30-34	12.0	10.2	11.5	6.0	10.0	7.9	8.5
35-39	9.1	9.5	9.2	0.9	4.7	2.7	3.8
40-44	4.3	5.1	4.5	0.7	2.3	1.4	2.0
45-49	5.2	4.5	5.0	0.6	0.2	0.4	1.2
50-54	0.6		0.5	0.8	0.4	0.6	0.6
55-59	2.5		1.9		0.2	0.1	0.4
60-64	2.2		1.6				0.3
65+	1.2		0.9				0.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Annex 2

Full text of Act No. 42 of 2003 establishing the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs

Syria

Damascus: President Bashar Al-Asad promulgated Act No. 42 of 2003 establishing a public body to be known as the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs and having its headquarters in Damascus. It is a body corporate with financial and administrative independence and is affiliated with the Prime Minister.

The Commission aims to accelerate advancement of the status of Syrian women and better empower them to contribute to human development efforts.

The text of Act No. 42 is as follows:

The President of the Republic, on the basis of the provisions of the Constitution and the matters approved by the People's Assembly at its session on 20 Shawwal A.H. 1424 (14 December A.D. 2003), hereby promulgates the following:

Article 1:

A public body to be known as the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs shall be established, with its headquarters in Damascus. It shall be a body corporate with financial and administrative independence and shall be affiliated directly with the Prime Minister.

Article 2:

The Commission shall aim to accelerate advancement of the status of Syrian women and better empower them to contribute to human development efforts.

It shall endeavour to:

- Protect the family, strengthen its coherence and preserve its identity and values;
- Improve family living standards in every aspect;
- Promote the role of the family in development by furthering its interaction with national family-related institutions and bodies, both official and unofficial, in order to serve the objectives of the Commission;
- Cooperate with Arab and international family-related bodies;
- Propose the amendment of family-related laws.

Article 3:

The Commission shall be composed of:

- The Office of the President of the Commission;
- An eight-member board of directors;
- An administrative apparatus.

Article 4:

The President of the Commission shall be designated by decree and shall chair the board of directors. He shall be directly accountable to the Prime Minister and shall receive the same allowance for representation as ministers.

The members of the board of directors shall be designated by a decision of the Prime Minister on the basis of a proposal by the President of the Commission.

If a full-time member of the teaching staff at a Syrian university is designated as a member of the board of directors, he shall receive, in addition to his salary, an allowance equivalent to that which he received in the full-time post. Such allowance shall be payable from the budget of the Commission.

Article 5:

The board of directors shall exercise the following functions and powers:

- Propose development policies, national strategies and plans and programmes relating to family affairs;
- Elaborate plans for field communication and the annual work plan of the Commission;
- Propose the designation of representatives for conferences, seminars or scientific bodies;
- Draft an estimated annual budget for the Commission;
- Prepare reports on the implementation of plans and programmes approved by the Prime Minister;
- Prepare studies and research on family affairs and circulate them to the concerned bodies;
- Cooperate with national institutions and bodies, both official and unofficial, and with concerned associations in order to promote women's affairs;
- Establish committees and task forces on family affairs, designate their members, determine their tasks and specify their duration by a decision of the board of directors;
- Accept gifts and donations in accordance with the laws and regulations in force.

The President of the Commission shall submit to the Prime Minister for consideration with a view to their adoption the plans, programmes and reports referred to in paragraphs (a), (b), (c) and (d).

Article 6:

- The board of directors shall meet once monthly and whenever necessary;
- Meetings of the board of directors shall be deemed legal only if an absolute majority of its members, including the chairperson, is present;
- Decisions of the board shall be adopted by a majority vote of the members present. In the case of equal votes, the President shall have the casting vote.

Article 7:

The President of the Commission and chairperson of the board of directors shall assume the following functions and powers:

- Follow up the work of the board of directors and any committees established;
- Seek to develop the Commission’s resources from grants, gifts and donations;
- Convene the regular and extraordinary meetings of the board of directors;
- Oversee the scientific, administrative and financial activities of the Commission, represent it before the courts and act on its behalf with third parties;
- Appoint the staff of the Commission within the limits of its statute and supervise their work;
- Prepare and present the annual budget of the Commission to the board of directors.

Article 8:

The chairperson of the board of directors shall be the treasurer and shall enjoy the powers of a minister with regard to the staff of the Commission and all financial and administrative affairs.

Article 9:

The chairperson of the Commission shall delegate a member of the board of directors to assume his functions and powers in the event of his absence.

Article 10:

All staff of the Commission shall be subject to the provisions of the Basic Law for Civil Servants No. 1 of 1985, as amended.

No separate section for the Commission shall be established in the general State budget. The financial resources of the Commission shall be made up of:

- Assistance earmarked for the Commission by the State in its general budget;
- Income accruing from the movable and immovable assets of the Commission;
- Revenues from funds, projects and programmes run by the Commission;
- Donations, gifts and grants permitted by the laws and regulations in force.

Article 12:

The statute of the Commission shall be issued by decree and its financial regulations by a decision of the Prime Minister.

Article 13:

The Commission may engage experts or specialists through fixed-term contracts of employment, without being restricted to maximum pay limits. Such contracts shall be approved by a decision of the Prime Minister.

Article 14:

The Commission shall be subject to financial monitoring by the central apparatus.

Article 15:

Items imported by the Commission in order to achieve its objectives shall be free of all taxes and duties, including customs duty, as shall assistance, donations, gifts and grants made to the Commission.

The Commission shall enjoy the same facilities as those prescribed for any public body.

Article 16:

The President of the Commission shall receive a monthly allowance equivalent to 50 per cent of the fixed monthly wage and the members of the board of directors shall receive a similar allowance at the rate of 30 per cent of the fixed monthly wage.

Article 17:

The Prime Minister shall issue such other instruments as are necessary for implementation of the provisions of this Act.

Article 18:

This Act shall be published in the Official Gazette and shall be deemed to take effect 60 days after its date of publication.

Damascus, 26 Shawwal A.H. 1424 (20 December A.D. 2003)

President of the Republic
Bashar Al-Asad

Plan of the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs

<i>Aim of the Commission</i>	<i>Tenth Five-Year Plan</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Completed</i>
1. Legal framework identifying family components	1. Establish regulatory structures for State institutions and transform them into smart, efficient and practical organizations		Circulars and decisions of the Prime Minister (677/5080/4418/3942/3705)
2. Deal with all family components from every dimension	2. Establish legislative and legal policies and bodies, a decision-making mechanism and methods of implementation		Elaboration of separate action plans for each family component
Institutional development:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Guarantee high-level expertise – Promote the system of combining specialist fields – Broaden partnerships and alliances – Continue to improve management – Improve decision-making through information access 			
Guarantee high-level expertise			
Develop human resources	Develop human resources, capabilities and personal skills at all levels	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of training courses 2. Number of trained staff of both sexes 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Language and computer training 2. Specialist training for Commission staff and various governmental bodies
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Building of a national system for the evaluation of project performance and follow-up of implementation – Policy assessment 	

<i>Aim of the Commission</i>	<i>Tenth Five-Year Plan</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Completed</i>
Promote the system of combining specialist fields			
The challenge:			
1. To disseminate the system and preserve the specialized organizational structure (see annex)			
2. To strengthen cooperative work relations and give them an official character			
1. Strengthen capacities in order to prioritize, plan and carry out monitoring and assessment in the various specialist fields	Pursue modern administrative methodologies based on negotiation, coordination and follow-up within departments and establish the standards and indicators needed to measure productivity and performance		Elaboration of an integrated strategy for the Commission and an annual plan – Development of the organizational structure – Design of models for all of the Commission's essential activities (training, travel, leave ...)
2. Strengthen effective mechanisms among directorates in order to facilitate cooperation and partnerships within and among directorates	Give detailed job descriptions, show the outputs of each job and the interrelationship among jobs, as well as identify ways of gauging their influence in developing the functional behaviour of each employee and his training and development needs		
Elaborate strategies that combine the various specialist fields among the directorates of the Commission			
Strengthen effective mechanisms among directorates			

<i>Aim of the Commission</i>	<i>Tenth Five-Year Plan</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Completed</i>
Broaden partnerships and alliances			
1. Relating to other governmental bodies	Commitment to the participatory method		– Memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Higher Education
2. Relating to non-governmental bodies/civil-society organizations	The social market economy demands numerous responsibilities to include the private sector, local administrations, non-governmental organizations and civil-society organizations		– Memorandum of understanding with the State Planning Commission
3. Relating to the private sector	Opening up to the world and building international cooperative relationships on a participatory basis that respects mutual interests and guarantees optimum benefit from the opportunities provided by such cooperation		– Writing of the Beijing report
			– Memorandum of understanding with the General Women's Federation
			– Child festivities in Latakia (Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Ariba Communications, Jud Company)
4. Relating to regional and international organizations	Strengthening the role of international cooperation in socio-economic development		– Child festivities in Damascus (Ariba Communications, in association with UNICEF, UNIFEM, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Euro-Med Youth)
Continue to improve management			
Design all of the Commission's programmes in accordance with specific objectives and a time frame	Use of future review as a frame of reference		

<i>Aim of the Commission</i>	<i>Tenth Five-Year Plan</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Completed</i>
Application of a more comprehensive assessment system, including self-assessment measures	Develop a fair and effective system for the assessment of staff performance in public bodies and include performance standards and criteria, in addition to elaborating appropriate incentives and deterrents, together with the powers to apply them in regulations and positive laws		
Establish and implement automated support systems for accounting and financial management	Implement a new financial mechanism supported by a unified and interlinked financial system		
Create a communications system and an electronic archive	Apply the latest information technology and communications		
Improve decision-making through information access			
Establish a research and study centre for the family and its components	Provide structuring, jobs, responsibilities and new institutional capacities for central, regional and local planning agencies		
Establish a statistical unit for the Commission			
Formulation of substrategies and follow-up of their implementation			
1. The population as a core concern	Young people The aged		
2. The family as a core concern	Women's empowerment Children		

Annex 3

Study on violence against women

With UNIFEM support, the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs, the General Women's Federation and the Central Bureau of Statistics carried out a study on this phenomenon. Syria is among the first countries to have conducted a field study of all types of violence in order to shed light on the forms of violence practised against women and on the extent, causes and consequences of that violence. The study was also designed to provide a clear and methodological insight that will enable those in the institutions of the State and society who are concerned with women's rights and human rights to work for a change in the equation currently governing the relationship between women and society; for a legal foundation that is fairer and more consistent with basic human rights principles and norms, as well as more in harmony with the Syrian Constitution in terms of the equal rights and obligations which it guarantees for all citizens; and for measures guaranteed to close the gap through the development and implementation of programmes for the protection and empowerment of women that restore their confidence in themselves as fully qualified citizens who fulfil their obligations and enjoy full and unrestricted rights.

Entitled "*Violence against women in the Syrian Arab Republic*", the field study took a random sample of 1,891 urban and rural families in various governorates in the context of general data on family, housing and the individuals in question. The findings of the study indicated that 7.19 per cent of the women in the sample had been subjected to some type of violence. The percentage was also higher among rural women.

The findings of the study showed that 7.19 per cent of the individuals in the sample had already been subjected to some type of violence. This percentage was higher among rural women.

The study, which was completed in 2006, made the following recommendations:

- Intensify campaigns aimed at men and women to raise their awareness concerning the importance of respecting the dignity and status of women and ensuring they are well treated, as well as concerning the negative effects and unhealthy consequences that the abuse and ill-treatment of women bring not only for women themselves as persons and also for both family and society;
- Increase penalties as a deterrent to assailants who inflict harm on women;
- Include in the curricula for the different stages of education information and learning material conducive to strengthening the values of justice and sexual equality in different areas and promoting the importance of participation and cooperation between the sexes in the interest of the family and society, as well as an adjustment in attitudes and behaviour concerning the conventional roles of men and women;
- Set up shelters for women subjected to violence who are under hard pressure and who have no safe refuge and no provider, ensure all aspects of their rehabilitation and deliver the services and help which they need by

establishing a special fund for battered women damaged by cruel life circumstances;

- Continue undertaking field research and analytical studies designed to measure changes as far as the forms and manifestations of violence against women are concerned, diagnose the causes and determine the implications for women, the family and society;
- Pursue efforts in conjunction with all official, non-governmental and grass-roots bodies for removal of the reservations to various articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women;
- Endeavour to implement the national plan for the protection of women against violence, in conjunction with the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs and the concerned bodies;
- Establish specialist treatment centres equipped to deal with behavioural abnormalities and psychological crises and disturbances in women;
- Continue work in coordination with the bodies concerned in order to enhance the performance standard of policewomen especially and impart the skills which they need in addressing the particular circumstances of women;
- Pursue contact with women and young girls in prison and reform institutes in order to provide them with direction and guidance, as well as health and social care, and promote their social integration;
- Endeavour to work with the Ministry of Awqaf in order to highlight the status of women in Islam through an enlightened religious message;
- Focus on the information message in order to show the effect of violence against women and its negative impact on the family and society, in coordination and cooperation with the competent bodies.

Annex 4**Data on the number of women deported from the country**

<i>Moroccans</i>		<i>Iraqis</i>		<i>Foreigners</i>		<i>Lebanese</i>		<i>Jordanians</i>	
<i>Prostitution</i>	<i>Violation of administrative directives</i>	<i>Prostitution</i>	<i>Violation of administrative directives</i>	<i>Prostitution</i>	<i>Violation of administrative directives</i>	<i>Prostitution</i>	<i>Violation of administrative directives</i>	<i>Prostitution</i>	<i>Violation of administrative directives</i>
13	81	39	130	1	9	0	20	0	2

The data below shows the number of Arab and non-Arab women offenders in 2006 (at 22 November) who were deported from the country after being brought to justice.

<i>Moroccans</i>		<i>Iraqis</i>		<i>Foreigners</i>		<i>Lebanese</i>		<i>Jordanians</i>	
<i>Prostitution</i>	<i>Violation of administrative directives</i>	<i>Prostitution</i>	<i>Violation of administrative directives</i>	<i>Prostitution</i>	<i>Violation of administrative directives</i>	<i>Prostitution</i>	<i>Violation of administrative directives</i>	<i>Prostitution</i>	<i>Violation of administrative directives</i>
8	89	13	116	2	1	0	13	1	1

Annex 5

Media coverage*

* Annex 5 will be made available to members of the Committee in the language(s) in which it was received.

Annex 6

Number of women in decision-making positions in the four universities in 2006

	<i>Chancellor</i>	<i>Vice-Chancellor</i>	<i>Pro-Vice-Chancellor</i>	<i>Head of division</i>
University of Damascus	0	2	2	13
University of Aleppo	0	0	5	9
University of Tishrin	0	2	2	16
Al-Ba'th University	0	0	3	5

Source: Ministry of Higher Education

Number and percentage of females and males at the Virtual University in 2006

<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Total</i>
182	863	1 045
17.4 per cent	82.6 per cent	100 per cent

Source: Ministry of Higher Education

Number of female and male teaching staff in 2005

<i>Academic position</i>	<i>Males</i>		<i>Females</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Professor	1 091	92.0	95	8.0
Assistant professor	1 315	90.5	139	9.5
Teacher	1 691	82.2	365	17.8
Teacher in higher education	63	67.7	30	32.3
Tutor	1 788	62.2	1 085	37.8

Source: Statistics of the Ministry of Higher Education for 2005, which is under publication by the Central Bureau of Statistics

Annex 7

Women's employment

Article 39: The employment of women in the following productive jobs shall be regulated as follows:

(a) It shall be prohibited to employ women in the following industries and jobs:

1. Mining, quarrying and all activities involving the extraction of minerals and stone;
2. Metal and glass smelting;
3. Silvering of mirrors with mercury;
4. Manufacturing of explosives, fireworks and related activities;
5. Oxygen, acetylene and electric arc welding;
6. Battery manufacturing and repair;
7. Jobs involving contact with lead, lead components or lead mixtures and the cleaning of lead sites;
8. Manufacturing of asphalt;
9. Manufacturing of fertilizers from excrement, animal manure, bones or blood;
10. Carving, skinning and gutting of animals, sectioning of animal flesh and rendering of animal fat;
11. Jobs in abattoirs and tanneries.

(b) The provision of the preceding paragraph (a) shall exclude women engaged in administrative and clerical work.

Article 94: It shall be prohibited to employ pregnant and nursing women in jobs where they are liable to have contact with materials that affect the development and formation of fetuses and newborns, such as dangerous chemicals or radioactive materials, and in jobs which expose them to benzene (C₆H₆) or its by-products.

Article 95: It shall be prohibited during a woman's term of pregnancy to expose her to contact with chemicals that induce abortion or to require her to carry any load weighing in excess of 20 kilograms.

Article 96: It shall be prohibited to employ women in carrying, pushing or pulling loads in excess of the following limits:

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 15 kg. | (a) Carrying loads |
| 50 kg. | (b) Pushing or pulling loads in a wheelbarrow |
| 120 kg. | (c) Pushing or pulling loads in a two-wheeled cart |
| 500 kg. | (d) Pushing loads on rails |

Article 97: It shall be prohibited to assign women to night-shift work or to work between the hours of 10 p.m. and 7 a.m., with the exception of:

- Doctors, nurses, midwives and workers in hospitals, sanatoriums and clinics;
- Workers in postal, cable and telephone offices;
- Attendants and staff in airports and airline companies;
- Workers in the television, radio and press;
- Women engaged in work to prevent certain loss of highly perishable items;
- Restaurant and bar staff;
- Actresses on stage and in theatre troupes;
- Artists.

Article 98: Any public authority that employs women shall make available in the workplace a copy of the regulations on women's employment.

Article 99: Public authorities must conduct a periodic medical examination of women workers, in particular pregnant and nursing women, and establish nurseries in accordance with the Decision of the Prime Minister No. 2277 of 1987.

Article 100: With the exception of the jobs set forth in the preceding articles and jobs in nurseries, all of the provisions and conditions that apply to men shall apply to women, without distinction.
