



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

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

**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under
article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms
of Discrimination against Women**

Seventh periodic report of States parties

Belarus*

* The present report is being issued without formal editing.

**Seventh periodic report of the Republic of Belarus
on the implementation of the provisions of the
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of
Discrimination against Women**

Minsk – 2009

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Introduction

1. In accordance with article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Republic of Belarus submits its seventh periodic report on the implementation of the Convention during the period from 2002 to 2007.
2. The report has been prepared in accordance with the reporting guidelines adopted by the Committee on the form and content of reports. The report is based on information provided by ministries and other Government bodies of the Republic of Belarus and by Belarusian civil society organizations working in the fields of gender equality and the elimination of gender-based discrimination.
3. The report presents an overview of the socio-economic situation in the Republic of Belarus as it affects demographic processes and the institutional machinery established in implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
4. The sections of the report contain information on the legislative, administrative and other measures adopted in the Republic in order to fulfil the commitments set by the provisions of the Convention.
5. The report reflects the progress achieved in improving the status of women in the Republic during the reporting period, as well as persistent obstacles in that area.
6. The report now being submitted has been approved by the National Council on Gender Policy of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus.

Part I Background information

A. Demographic situation

7. The contemporary demographic situation in the Republic of Belarus is marked by a process of natural decline in the size of the population. In 2007, the number of deaths exceeded the number of births by 29,400.
8. As at 1 January 2008 the population of the Republic stood at 9,689,800 people, having declined by 24,700 since 2007, i.e. by 0.3 per cent, which represents, in comparison with the population size as at 1 January 2002, a decline of 261,100, or 2.6 per cent.
9. The age structure of the population has also changed, owing mainly to a declining number of people under the working age, i.e. 0 to 15 years of age. On 1 January 2008 the number of such young people amounted to 1,547,000 people, or 16 per cent of the population, a decline since 1 January 2002 of 371,200 people.
10. At the beginning of 2008, the size of the working-age population (men from 16 to 59 years of age and women from 16 to 54 years of age) stood at 6,053,300 people or 62.5 per cent of the overall population, a rise of 135,300 since 2002. That increase was due to a growth in the number of people in the 50-54 year-old age group, who were born after World War Two.

11. At the beginning of 2008, the number of people of retirement age amounted to 2,089,500 people, or 21.5 of the overall population, which represented an increase of 25,200 since 2002. The proportion of such people amounted to 18.4 per cent in urban areas and 30.2 per cent in rural areas.
12. The year 2007 saw a continuation of the trend towards a decline in the size of the population in all parts of the country except for the city of Minsk.
13. The following factors influence the size and structure of the population: fertility, mortality and migration. Belarus saw 103,600 births in 2007 and 133,000 deaths, with 14,200 people entering the country and 9,500 leaving.
14. Compared to 2002, the number of births rose by 14,900, or 3 per cent. Population growth resulting from migration amounted to 4,700 people in 2007.
15. From 2002 to 2007 there was some stabilization in the number of births, which was due to a more favourable age structure among the female population. In 2007, the birth rate reached 10.7 births per 1000, compared to 8.9 in 2002. Similar trends can be seen across urban and rural environments. In towns the crude birth rate rose to 10.9 per cent and in rural areas to 10.1 per cent. This was accompanied by a rise in the proportion of second- and third-child births in families.
16. The total fertility rate stood at 1.373 in 2007, compared to 1.222 in 2002.
17. In Belarus, as in many European countries, there is a trend among women to postpone marriage and the birth of children somewhat. In 2007, the average age of women marrying for the first time was 23.8 years and for men 25.9, compared to 23.0 and 25.3 in 2002. In 2007, the average age of women bearing their first child was 24.2, compared to 23.5 in 2002.
18. In 2007, the percentage of newborns born in registered marriages rose to 78.8 per cent, and that of children born to unmarried parents declined to 21.2 per cent.
19. In recent years there have been positive developments in marital and family relations. Over the 2002-2007 period the number of new marriages rose by 35.7 per cent and the marriage rate was 9.3 per 1000 in 2007. The number of divorces fell by 3.3 per cent, with the divorce rate standing at 3.7 per 1000 in 2007. The percentage of men married before the age of 25 was 52.8 per cent, and for women 72.8 per cent.
20. In 2007, the number of deaths fell by 5,400 compared to 2006, or 3.9 per cent, which was due to a decline in the number of deaths resulting from such basic causes as infectious and parasitic diseases, respiratory diseases, circulatory system problems and tumours. The crude mortality rate fell from 14.8 per cent in 2002 to 13.7 per cent in 2007. Similar trends were seen in both urban and rural areas. In towns there was a decrease from 10.9 per cent to 10.4 per cent and in rural areas the rate fell from 24.1 per cent to 22.6 per cent.
21. Belarus is among the countries that have an average infant and child mortality rate. Among the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Belarus has the lowest infant death rate. The death rate for infants under the age of one was 5.2 per 1000 in 2007, compared with 7.8 in 2002.
22. Average life expectancy at birth rose overall by 2.3 years in 2007 compared with 2002 (2.2 years for males and 2.1 years for females), reaching 70.3 years

overall (64.5 years for men and 76.2 for women). Women in rural areas have a life expectancy that is 3.2 years lower than the urban figure.

23. Thus, the major demographic problems facing Belarus include: a reduction in the fertility rate to a level below the replacement level, a lower social norm for the number of children in the family (predominance of single-child families), and a high mortality rate, mainly in the working-age population, especially among men.

24. The projected trends in the age structure of the population in coming years suggest that there will be an increase in the labour force followed by a decrease in the number of people reaching working age. The relative growth in the senior age group has resulted from the improvements in the mortality and morbidity rates, the reduced economic activity of the population coupled with the lower social productivity of labour, the rising demographic burden borne by the working population compared to the elderly, and increased State expenditures for social security and welfare.

25. Presidential Decree No. 135 of 26 March 2007 brought about the adoption of the National Programme for the Demographic Security of the Republic of Belarus for 2007-2010. The goal of the Programme is to prevent further worsening in the demographic situation and to stimulate population growth in the Republic.

26. The Programme seeks to achieve its goals by adopting a set of targeted socio-economic, legal and organizational measures aimed at improving the quality of life for families with children; adopting a set of measures aimed at strengthening reproductive health and protecting the health of mothers and children; reducing morbidity and mortality rates through training in healthy life styles and by eliminating the influence of negative environmental factors; and improving the quality of life of citizens through the introduction of organizational, technological and other innovative measures in health care, the strengthening of informational and educational tools in health care systems, and the improvement of social services for the elderly; and optimizing domestic and foreign migration flows in line with national demographic interests.

B. Socio-economic and political situation of women

27. Achieving equal participation of men and women in all spheres of social life is one of the main principles guiding the development of contemporary society. The Republic of Belarus not only supports that principle but has fully assumed specific obligations towards that end.

28. Belarus has announced various measures to ensure the equal realization by men and women of their rights and freedoms as one of the main constitutional principles and priorities of Government policy and has assumed specific obligations towards its citizens and the international community to implement those rights.

29. The realization of constitutional norms in this area has been reflected in the Code on Marriage and the Family of the Republic of Belarus, as well as the Labour Code, the Criminal Code, the Civil Code and other legislative acts adopted by the Republic.

30. Implementation of the principle of equal rights is ensured by guaranteeing women equal opportunities with men to obtain education and professional training

and equal rights with regard to employment, compensation for their work and advancement in their careers, and in social, political and cultural activities, as well as by adopting special measures to protect the labour and health of women.

31. Laws have been adopted by the Republic of Belarus to amend and supplement the Labour Code and the Code on Marriage and the Family. These normative legal acts to a great extent ensure the enjoyment of equal rights and opportunities by women and men.

32. Implementation of Act No. 125-Z of 15 June 2006 entitled "On the employment of the population of the Republic of Belarus" focuses on ensuring the legal, economic and institutional underpinnings for the State's policy on promoting employment and State guarantees with regard to protecting the constitutional rights of citizens to work and to benefit from social protection against unemployment.

33. The process of improving the Labour Code of the Republic of Belarus, in particular balancing the work requirements of citizens with their family obligations, takes into account the need to protect the important reproductive function of women, and also the need to equalize the opportunities of workers, bearing in mind their sex and family situation.

34. In particular, the Labour Code was supplemented through the adoption of the Act of 20 July 2007 entitled "On amending and supplementing of the Labour Code of the Republic of Belarus", which added provisions aimed at providing opportunities for the father to participate equally with the mother in the raising of children (articles 185 and 265). Furthermore, women with children under three years of age may be engaged for night work only with their written agreement (article 263).

35. Act No. 80-Z entitled "On the demographic security of the Republic of Belarus" was adopted on 4 January 2002. That was a practical step taken by the Government to protect the future of the country.

36. The Act established the legal and institutional bases for demographic security through improvements in the socio-economic conditions of the population of the country by gradually strengthening national minimal social standards for wages, pensions, education, health care, culture, housing, community services, social support and social services; providing incentives and better support for specialists serving in rural areas; shaping appropriate spiritual and moral values among citizens with regard to family relations and strengthening the status of families in society.

37. Implementation of the Act on demographic security provided the basis for the development of the National Programme for the Demographic Security of the Republic of Belarus for 2007-2010 (adopted by Presidential Decree No. 135 of 26 May 2006), which seeks, primarily, to establish the prerequisites for improving the contemporary demographic situation in the country, which is marked by a process of natural decline in the size of the population and potentially threatens the stable development of the State and national security.

38. Belarus implemented the National Plan of Action for Gender Equality of the Republic of Belarus for 2001-2005 (adopted by Decision No. 670 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus on 8 May 2001). In the context of implementing the Plan various targeted legal, institutional and administrative

measures were taken to improve the status of women and defend their rights and interests.

39. Activities undertaken under the National Plan of Action were aimed at promoting the development of small- and medium-sized enterprises and individual entrepreneurship among women and monitoring the working conditions of workers, especially women, in organizations under various kinds of ownership. Work continued on training a gender-balanced reserve of administrative workers for nomination to State administrative bodies. Informational and educational campaigns have been conducted in the mass media to overcome stereotypical views on the participation of women in decision-making.

40. In order to eliminate gender discrimination in education, curriculums, textbooks and other teaching materials have been reviewed to rid them of gender stereotypes. During their upbringing and education girls of all ages have been encouraged to develop their leadership skills.

41. In Belarus a network of social service institutions has been developed to provide various kinds of assistance to women victims of violence. In that connection a system to provide comprehensive training and education for social workers has been organized, as well as training for the staff needed in the health care and education systems and law enforcement bodies to work with women who have experienced violence. There has also been active informational, educational and research work on preventing violence in the family and trafficking in women.

42. The National Plan of Action of the Republic of Belarus to Ensure Gender Equality for 2008-2010 was developed and adopted (approved by Decision No. 1286 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus on 3 September 2008). Activities under the new Plan are aimed at strengthening the results of the previous plan and at sustaining the State policy against gender-based discrimination, which seeks to establish conditions allowing both women and men to achieve their full potential in all spheres of activity.

43. During the years 2001 to 2005 the Presidential Programme entitled "Children of Belarus" (approved by Presidential Decree No. 281 of 24 May 2001) was implemented with the goal of strengthening the effectiveness of the State system supporting children, primarily those in especially difficult circumstances, and of achieving the common priorities and guidelines of the State social policy for children and women, which are to be applied in all Government activities at all levels.

44. The "Children of Belarus" Programme achieved the following results: the level of medical care for children and women was improved; measures were taken to mitigate the negative impact of the Chernobyl disaster on children's health and pregnant women; various problems relating to the defence of children's rights and interests and the specific problems of their psychological and physical development were successfully dealt with; and the system of institutions providing social services to families and children was improved.

45. At present, activities under the Presidential Programme "Children of Belarus" for 2006-2010 (approved by Presidential Decree No. 318 of 15 May 2006) are under way. Priority activities under the Programme include: improving the quality of family life in families with children; strengthening health and promoting the development of healthy life styles in families and among children; mitigating the

negative impact of the Chernobyl nuclear power station disaster on the development of children; establishing conditions likely to promote an increase in the birth rate; preventing social dysfunction in families; and promoting the physical, mental and spiritual development of the coming generation.

46. Implementation of the State programmes and plans described above is aimed at promoting the achievement of equality in the rights of women and men in all spheres of activity.

47. The policy of equal rights and opportunities for women and men requires parity in the participation in decision making at all levels.

48. Women in Belarus hold such posts as the Deputy Chief of Administration for the President of the Republic of Belarus and the Chairperson of the Central Commission of the Republic of Belarus on elections and Republican referendums.

49. In 2007, 18 per cent of the leadership posts in the Republican administrative structure were held by women. In the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus a women held the post of Minister for Taxes and Duties. There were 13 women serving as Deputy Ministers. Four women represented the Republic in the international arena at the ambassadorial level. Two women were on the Board of the National Bank of the Republic of Belarus.

50. Women are fairly broadly represented in the judiciary - 32 per cent of all judges. The general staff of the Supreme Court consists of 144 people, of whom 63.1 per cent are women. There are 13 female judges on the Supreme Court, including the Deputy President of the Court. Of the 12 members of the Constitutional Court, four are women.

51. In the 2004 legislative elections, 32 women were elected to the House of Representatives of the National Assembly and 18 women to the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly. Overall, women made up 29.8 per cent of the members of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus.

52. There has been a gradual increase in the representation of women in local Councils of Representatives at all levels, as well as in the executive branch. In 2007, 10,348 women were elected to the local Councils of Representatives, or 45.7 per cent of the total number of representatives.

53. Evidence for the existence of gender problems in Belarus can be found in the fact that women have a much higher average level of education than men (55 per cent of working women have a high- or mid-level education, compared to 38 per cent of men), and yet they tend to work in the lowest paid professions and sectors of industry, and in fact increasingly so. This is usually the result of motherhood and their need to provide childcare and care for the family.

54. Women clearly predominate in sectors not involving production and tend not to work in sectors involving material production. For example, in the sectors of health care, physical culture and social services there are 280,199 women working, or 82.3 per cent of all workers in those sectors; in education 392,006 women, or 80.6 per cent of workers; in the cultural sector 50,775 women, 73.8 per cent; in the art sector 6,409 women, or 56.8 per cent; in commerce and the food service sector 289,458 women, or 69.9 per cent; and in the communications sector 41,928 women, or 63 per cent.

55. In higher education institutions, about 13,000 women work as teachers (55 per cent), of them 233 have PhDs and about 4,000 have bachelor degrees, with 220 working as professors and 2,600 as assistant professors.

56. Out of all civil servants at all levels in the administration, 66 per cent are women, usually holding such posts as chief specialist, senior specialist and so forth.

57. The participation of women in business and entrepreneurship remains relatively low. In 2007 7,336 women (53.4 per cent of those working in the field) worked in general commercial sectors and in real estate 11,594 (52.6 per cent of workers).

58. The proportion of women with higher education among employed women rose from 22.6 per cent in 2002 to 27 per cent in 2007, while the corresponding ratio for men in 2007 was 21.1 per cent. The proportion of women with secondary technical education was 27.9 per cent. Among employed women only 2.4 per cent had not completed their secondary schooling, while for employed men the figure was 4.8 per cent.

59. On average, wages for women in Belarus in 2007 were 78.4 per cent of men's wages (in 2002, 80.9 per cent).

60. There continues to be a problem of female unemployment in Belarus. However, thanks to the measures that have been adopted, the number of women registered as unemployed is slowly falling. In early 2002, the State Employment Service had 62,000 unemployed women on its rolls, but as at 1 January 2008 there were only 28,900, or 65.6 per cent of all unemployed.

61. The labour market presents the greatest difficulties to women raising young children, school graduates with no work experience, women close to retirement age, disabled women and women in fields where the current market favours men (engineering, technical, construction and other specializations).

62. The high level of female unemployment is due, to a great extent, to the misfit between the supply of and demand for the jobs available, in terms of skills, qualifications and gender. Demand on the employers' side leans heavily towards male workers.

63. The main mechanism for implementing the State policy for promoting employment is the annually developed State Programme to Promote Employment of the Population of the Republic of Belarus, which is adopted by the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus. On the basis of the State Programme, regional programmes are developed taking into account the local situation.

64. Under the State Programme to Promote Employment the following measures have been adopted as basic guidelines for increasing employment in the population, including women: assisting the unemployed to find work, developing the geographic mobility of the workforce, orientation and training in various occupations, promoting entrepreneurship initiatives and support for self-employment among the unemployed, the creation of new jobs, and developing a system of public works projects.

65. The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of the Republic of Belarus organizes and manages the implementation of the State employment policy and the State commitments in that regard through the appropriate labour, employment and

social welfare bodies. Within the structure of the appropriate local executing and administrative bodies regional labour, employment and social welfare bodies carry out their functions, e.g. in Minsk there is the Committee on Labour, Employment and Social Welfare within the Minsk City Executive Committee.

66. In order to find jobs for the unemployed who are in special need of social welfare assistance and are unable to compete on an equal basis in the labour market, which mostly means single women and women with many children, those raising young children and those with disabled children, a quota system for jobs has been widely used in Belarus.

67. In order to guide women in an active search for work and to familiarize them with the job market and how it is changing, bodies active in labour, employment and social welfare in Minsk and other district centres conduct job fairs covering available jobs and jobs for specialists, as well as "Open Door Days" organized with employers.

68. The most effective measure for mitigating the social consequences of unemployment has been to train unemployed women in new professions, guided by the demand in the jobs market, including assisting them to organize their own businesses. There are 320 institutions in the country that work to strengthen skills and retrain personnel.

69. After vocational training, the rate at which women find work improves significantly. Efforts to organize vocational training for women has been stepped up, with a guarantee of a job upon completion.

70. Every year, budget allocations for job creation, especially for women, have been increased.

71. The main social institution through which people learn and carry out gender roles is the family.

72. It is in the State's interest to support the family, thus enabling maximum and full realization of the family's functions and strengthening its potential. Achievement of that goal depends to a great extent on the place that women occupy in society, on the extent to which they participate in decision-making, on their integration into the processes of social development, and on a reasonable distribution of roles in the family. The latter requires that one take into account the professional and family obligations of all family members.

73. Ensuring greater social protection of the family and strengthening material support has been and remains one of the priority goals of State policy in Belarus.

74. In implementing its social policy with regard to working parents the State has devoted serious attention to the establishment of conditions that make it possible to take into account professional and family obligations. A system of social services has been established that provides families with a wide range of socio-economic, psychological, educational, legal, community and other social services.

75. In accordance with Decision No. 724 of the Council of Ministers of 30 May 2003 entitled "On measures to introduce a system of State social standards with regard to services for the population of the Republic of Belarus", a network of social services centres has been established and developed in Belarus, working in each administrative region (in all, 156 district social services centres and 144 socio-

educational centres). Specialists at these centres provide social support for families "at risk", determine the assistance needs of particular families and children, provide psychological and legal support to those in a difficult living situation, and offer consulting services with regard to employment, benefits, compensation and other payments.

76. State support to families with children takes the form of various sorts of grants (including supplements to their unemployment benefits), tax rebates, food allowances for the children, payments for placing young children in preschool, textbooks, and so forth.

77. From 2002 on, the size of the allowances have been set as a percentage of the average per capita minimum subsistence living budget and the allowances are reviewed every three months to see whether they need to be increased. From 2002 to 2006 such reviews have led to a more than nine-fold increase in the allowances. Monthly allowances for child care for children under three years of age and allowances to families raising disabled children or a child up to 18 years of age who has HIV or AIDS are granted, irrespective of the total income per family member.

78. A significant element of financial support provided to families by the State has been a lump-sum grant on the occasion of the birth of the first child, which has been increased from two to five minimum subsistence budget units, and for the second and later children, up to 7 minimum subsistence budget units (Presidential Decree No. 268 of 8 June 2007 entitled "On strengthening State support to families on the occasion of the birth of children").

79. In February 2006, Presidential Decree No. 95 of 14 February 2006 eliminated the differences in the size of the allowances granted to various categories of recipients for raising a child under three years of age. As a result, non-working women, like working women, became entitled to receive an allowance that was 65 per cent of the subsistence minimum.

80. In accordance with Decision No. 271 of the Council of Ministers of 1 March 2007, as amended and supplemented, families whose average per capita monthly income did not exceed 100 per cent of the average per capita subsistence minimum over the preceding two quarters were entitled to receive food free of charge for children under two years of age. By expanding the needs requirement and eliminating the differentiation between categories of recipients in supplying free food for children less than two years of age, the State significantly increased the number of recipients of such State social assistance.

81. Serious attention has been devoted in Belarus to developing a system for protecting reproductive health.

82. According to the data of the United Nations Population Fund report entitled "State of World Population 2007", Belarus is the only CIS country where 100 per cent of births took place with trained assistance. For developed countries that index stands at 99 per cent.

83. Priority matters for the State health care system include preventing diseases that affect pregnancy and birth and ensuring healthy offspring. Through the development of a three-level system of medical assistance to pregnant mothers and newborns Belarus has been able to lower the infant mortality rate from 7.8 deaths per year per thousand live births in 2002 to 5.2 in 2007.

84. Targeted efforts on the part of health care services to provide essential information on family planning and to disseminate up-to-date information on reproductive health matters have led to positive results. Thus, the decline in the number of abortions testifies to the effectiveness of programmes to preserve the reproductive health of women. During the reporting period the number of abortions in Belarus declined by a factor of 1.9 (89,900 in 2002, 80,000 in 2003, 71,700 in 2004, 64,700 in 2005, 58,500 in 2006, and 46,300 in 2007).

85. During the period under consideration, new highly specialized forms of assistance became more available through the organization of various specialist services at women's clinics such as paediatric gynaecology, endocrinology, breast examinations and cancer prevention offices. In 2004 the "Mother and Child" Republican Scientific Practical Centre was established. It is the main institution in Belarus working in the fields of obstetrics, gynaecology and medical genetics.

86. Doctors have been devoting special attention to the problems of menopause and male and female infertility. To treat married couples afflicted with infertility, a "Marriage and Families" service has been established in all district centres and in Minsk.

87. In order to prevent perinatal HIV transmission, voluntary HIV testing of all pregnant women has been introduced in Belarus. Centralized purchase of HIV transmission prevention medications has been set up for pregnant women, for women about to give birth and for newborns. The Government pays for all stages of perinatal HIV transmission prevention.

88. Gender considerations are taken into account in efforts to protect reproductive health. In particular, the "Partnership" programme, which involves both future spouses in training, has set up family birth workshops to train fathers in responsible parenthood. The number of partnered births where the father is present is growing each year.

89. Looking at the measures described, one can say that the Republic of Belarus has generally made progress in improving the status of women, in part through its targeted social policy. Nevertheless, the situation with regard to ensuring gender equality will need further efforts to eliminate gender discrimination and to promote full realization of the personal potential of both men and women in all areas of activity.

C. Institutional machinery to improve the status of women

90. Implementation of the State policy on gender equality depends to a great extent on the national machinery established to coordinate the activities of all bodies working in that sphere.

91. The bodies that work on the status of women and gender equality include:

The National Council on Gender Policy of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus;

The Standing Commission on Demographic Security and Social Development of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus;

The Standing Commission on Health Protection, Physical Culture and Family and Youth of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus;

The Socio-Cultural Sector Board of the Administration of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus;

The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (Department of Population and Gender and Family Policy).

At the regional level, local labour, employment and social welfare bodies execute State social policy.

92. Each of these entities in the national machinery carries out its functions within the limits of its competence.

93. The House of Representatives and the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus prepare the legal basis for action in the social sphere, including matters relating to the status of women.

94. The Socio-Cultural Sector Board of the Administration of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus and the experts of the Department of Population and Gender and Family Policy of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of the Republic of Belarus are responsible for developing and implementing the State's policy, which seeks to improve the status of women and ensure the enjoyment of equal rights and equal opportunities between men and women, to introduce proposals to improve legislation bearing in mind gender issues.

95. The work of the national machinery has led to improvements in national legislation, the adoption and implementation of national action plans to ensure gender equality, and the adoption of targeted legal, institutional and administrative measures aimed at improving the status of women and at defending their rights and interests.

Part II

Implementation of the Convention

Article 2. Elimination of discrimination against women

96. Under article 22 of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus (hereinafter the Constitution), all are equal before the law and have the right, without discrimination, to equal protection of their rights and legal interests. Women and men of marriageable age have the right, on a voluntary basis, to marry and establish a family. The spouses have equal rights in family relations (article 32 of the Constitution). Women are provided with opportunities equal to those provided to men in terms of access to education and vocational training, obtaining work and advancement at work, and participation in socio-political, cultural and other spheres of activity, and the same measures to protect the work place and health (article 32 of the Constitution). Women and men, adults and minors, have the right to equal compensation for work of equal value (article 42 of the Constitution). Elections of representatives and other persons elected to Government service by the people are open to all: the right to elect representatives belongs to all citizens of the Republic of Belarus who are at least 18 years of age (article 64 of the Constitution).

97. Given that the constitutional norms stipulate that the rights of men and women are equal in all fundamental spheres, the inclusion in the Constitution of a general provision on equality between men and women does not seem expedient.

98. The Republic of Belarus consistently implements programmes aimed at ensuring equality in the rights of men and women. The principle of equal rights is enshrined in the Republic's Code on Marriage and the Family, the Labour Code of the Republic of Belarus, the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus, the Civil Code of the Republic of Belarus, in Act No. 125-Z of 15 June 2006 of the Republic of Belarus entitled "On the employment of the population of the Republic of Belarus", and in other normative acts of the Republic.

99. From 2001 to 2005, the National Plan of Action on Gender Equality was implemented in Belarus (approved by Decision No. 670 of 8 May 2001 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus). In the framework of implementing the National Plan of Action in the country, various targeted legal, institutional and administrative measures were taken to promote the advancement of women and protect their rights and interests.

100. Work to improve national legislation was actively pursued, with a view to bringing it in line with international norms. That included the adoption of the Act of the Republic of Belarus of 30 October 2003 entitled "On ratification of the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women" and the Act of the Republic of Belarus of 4 November 2003 entitled "On the ratification of 1952 Maternity Protection Convention (revised) (ILO Convention 183)".

101. The goal of the next National Plan of Action on Gender Equality for 2008-2010 (adopted by Decision No. 1286 of 3 September 2008 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus) is to eliminate incidents of gender discrimination and to ensure the fullest realization of the personal potential of women and men in all spheres of activity.

102. Significant activities to that end include: improving legal norms, reviewing laws and draft laws from a gender perspective; providing equal opportunities for strengthening skills and vocational training; protection of motherhood, fatherhood and childhood; eliminating discrimination in employment, dismissal and promotion; promoting a balanced distribution of professional and family obligations between women and men; ensuring real participation by women in management; preventing violence against women and in the family; facilitating effective cooperation and sharing of responsibilities by women and men in all aspects of family life; and overcoming traditional stereotypes in public opinion regarding the role and place of women in society.

103. The combined fourth, fifth and sixth periodic reports of the Republic of Belarus on implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women presented a detailed view of the legal efforts to strengthen the principle of equal rights between women and men in the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus and other legislation.

104. This, the Republic of Belarus continues to improve its legislation and to adopt appropriate programmes to deal with gender issues in line with current international legal norms and standards.

Article 3. Ensuring equality between men and women

105. The State is taking all necessary measures to ensure the comprehensive development and advancement of women and respect for their rights equally with men.

106. Article 32 of the Constitution guarantees women equal opportunities in education, vocational training, employment and promotion at work and in the socio-political, cultural and other spheres, as well as the promotion of conditions for the protection of their labour and health.

107. Specific information confirming the implementation of these commitments is provided below.

Article 4. Temporary special measures to ensure de facto equality between men and women

(1) The adoption of temporary special measures

108. In evaluating the performance of the State and civil society actors in implementing policies aimed at improving the social status of women and ensuring equal rights and opportunities for men and women during the reporting period, we consider that Belarus has made progress in the right direction.

109. Active efforts have been made to improve national legislation and bring it into conformity with international legal standards.

110. In addition to previously signed international instruments aimed at ensuring equal opportunities for men and women, the Act of the Republic of Belarus entitled "On ratification of the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women" was adopted on 30 October 2003. In further support of the principles of the equality of women in employment, the protection of motherhood and ensuring the health and security of mothers and children, the Act of the Republic of Belarus entitled "On ratification of the Convention on the revision of the 1952 Maternity Protection Convention (Revised) (ILO Convention 183)" was adopted on 4 November 2003.

111. Amendments and addenda have been introduced into the Labour Code of the Republic of Belarus and the Code on Marriage and the Family of the Republic of Belarus, which are aimed at ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men.

112. In order to reduce the gap between the de jure and de facto situations of women in all spheres of life, the National Plan of Action on Gender Equality for 2001-2005 (approved by Decision No. 670 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus on 8 May 2001) was implemented, which helped to ensure equal opportunities for both sexes in Belarus.

113. The National Plan of Action set the following priority areas: women and human rights, women and the economy, social protection of women, women and education, women and health, women's participation in decision-making at the political, legislative and executive levels, women and violence, women and the media, and the development of institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women.

114. Under the National Plan of Action on Gender Equality for 2001-2005, various actions were undertaken, including gender analysis of legislation and drafts bills, monitoring respect for labour and employment laws, and improvement of women's legal literacy.

115. The curriculums of educational institutions were reviewed in order to eliminate gender stereotypes and the expression of any form of gender discrimination in educational literature. At the National Education Institute, which is a research and methodology oriented establishment, work is proceeding on the preparation of textbooks and teaching materials for the new generation in educational establishments of Belarus in the light of a gender analysis of textbooks, and on developing programmes of after-school activities called "Fundamentals of a gender culture".

116. There has been a noticeable increase in the social activism of women and their participation in civic life of society. Gradually women's participation in political, economic and social decision-making is expanding.

117. The problems of domestic violence and trafficking in human beings are being discussed in public forums and are considered socially significant. Efforts to reduce and eliminate such phenomena have been increased.

118. The Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, along with other State bodies, has developed a set of measures aimed at preventing and combating violence against and trafficking in women, which includes improving the collection of statistical information and expanding the range of social services available to women victims of various forms of violence and trafficking in people.

119. Implementation of the National Plan of Action on Gender Equality for 2008-2010 (approved by Decision No. 1286 of the Council of Ministers on 3 September 2008) will make it possible to continue measures aimed at preventing gender discrimination and to promote the fullest realization of the personal potential of women and men in all spheres of life.

120. The National Programme for the Demographic Security of the Republic of Belarus for 2007-2010 (approved by Presidential Decree No. 135 of 26 March 2007) seeks to implement an integrated system of socio-economic, legal and organizational measures aimed at improving the quality of life of families with children, along with measures to improve reproductive health and maternal and child health and reduce morbidity and mortality through efforts to promote a healthy lifestyle and improved quality of life.

121. The gender equality situation in Belarus requires further action to establish de facto equality between men and women in enjoying equal opportunities.

(2) Protection of motherhood

122. Under article 32 of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, marriage, family, motherhood, fatherhood and childhood enjoy the protection of the State.

123. Under article 3 of the Code on Marriage and the Family of the Republic of Belarus, protection of the family, motherhood, fatherhood and childhood is recognized as a State priority.

124. Labour legislation also provides for the simultaneous performance of two social functions by women - professional and reproduction. In this regard, the legislation governs the special rights of women related to motherhood.

125. With the entry into force of Presidential Decree No. 369 of 2 June 2006 entitled "On adding to Presidential Order No. 180 of the Republic of Belarus of 12 April 2000", it is incumbent on the employer, with the consent of a mother (or the father of the child instead of the mother, or the child's guardian) who is returning to work before or after completing her maternity leave, which lasts until the child reaches the age of three, to extend the employment contract (or start a new one) to last not less than until the child reaches the age of five.

126. Act No. 272-Z of the Republic of Belarus of 20 July 2007 entitled "On amending and adding to the Labour Code of the Republic of Belarus" (in force since 26 January 2008) introduced several amendments and addenda to the Labour Code of the Republic of Belarus. In particular, women with children under the age of three may be required to work at night only with their written consent (article 263).

127. Article 265 of the Labour Code provides that the right of a mother who is raising three or more children under the age of sixteen years or a disabled child under the age of eighteen years to an additional day off work per week with pay in the amount of her average daily wage, can be extended to the father, guardian or trustee, and also allows for the allocation of such free days among those persons.

128. Working fathers and other relatives who actually provide care for a sick child under the age of fourteen, a child under the age of three years, a disabled child under the age of eighteen years or a disabled child under the age of eighteen years are entitled, in the event of the mother's illness, as are the child's caregivers (trustees), to benefits for their temporary inability to work, in the amount and subject to the conditions specified in the law.

129. Under article 5 of the Act of 18 June 1993 (as amended on 14 June 2007) entitled "On health care", citizens of the Republic of Belarus are guaranteed the right to health protection, regardless of their gender, race, language, nationality, job or social status, place of residence, attitude towards religion, belief or other circumstances.

130. That right is ensured through the protection of the environment, the creation of salubrious working conditions, improvements in the daily living environment, rest, the production of food of good quality, access to facilities for physical culture and sports, provision of affordable health care, including free treatment at State health care institutions.

131. The Framework Plan for Strengthening Health Care in the Republic of Belarus for 2003-2007 (approved by Decree of the Council of Ministers No. 1276 on October 8, 2003) assigned priority to the development of primary health care, maternity and child welfare services, and medical genetic services, and to the protection of the social interests of citizens by giving them free medical care.

132. In implementing the State policy on reproductive health, the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Belarus works jointly with health care institutions to focus work on increasing the number of family-planning offices in women's clinics, and on strengthening reproductive health services for adolescents and youth, as well as expanding the range of services for the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases.

133. In order to improve the reproductive health of women in Belarus six regional endoscopic centres have been established and are now working, as well as the city centre for endoscopic surgery in Minsk, and all operations are paid for by the State.

134. Consultations, medical assistance and obstetric services for women are provided in 122 antenatal clinics, 218 gynaecological clinics and 19 maternity clinics. Maternity clinics in the country are working on introducing a system whereby the mother and child can remain together; they also broadly support the principles of breastfeeding.

135. In 2004, the "Mother and Child" Republican Scientific and Practical Centre was established. This is the country's main institution in the field of obstetrics and gynaecology, paediatrics and medical genetics.

136. In order to treat couples suffering from infertility, "Marriage and Family" clinics have been established in Minsk and in each regional centre.

Article 5. Elimination of gender biases and stereotypes

(a) Changing social and cultural models of behaviour

137. The changes under way in Belarusian society have expanded opportunities for women's self-realization and have provided a variety of ways for women to participate in the social, professional, political and public life of the country. Women have become more actively engaged in entrepreneurship and in independent job creation. However, initiatives aimed at achieving gender equality and equal rights are sometimes hampered by stereotyped views according to which the social significance of women is reduced to their traditional role in the family.

138. The National Plan of Action of the Republic of Belarus on Gender Equality for 2001-2005 (approved by Decision No. 670 of 8 May 2001 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus) has been implemented. The Plan included continued efforts to develop a gender-balanced reserve of personnel for placement in administrative bodies. Awareness-raising campaigns were conducted in the media to overcome stereotypes about women's participation in decision-making.

139. The National Programme for the Demographic Security of the Republic of Belarus for 2007-2010 (approved by Presidential Decree No. 135 of 26 March 2007) includes systematic activities to raise awareness and change the social and cultural behaviour patterns of men and women in order to eliminate stereotyped models, improve the prestige of the family and instil a conscious approach to parental obligations.

140. A significant role in this process belongs to the media. Articles dealing with the status of women can be found in nearly all publications in the socio-political, cultural and educational spheres. A number of newspapers and magazines have regular columns on such topics.

141. Issues related to changing the social and cultural behaviour patterns of both men and women and the elimination of prejudices have been the subject of press conferences, roundtables and other activities on the part of concerned departments and the International Integrated Information Centre and State Press Centre, which is a joint Republican enterprise.

142. National television and radio programmes, including Channel One's "In Tune" and "Good Morning, Belarus", Channel ONT's "Family Matters", and Belarusian National Radio Programme One's "Radio Fact", "Post Factum", "Theme of the Day", "Current Topics", highlight problems associated with changing the social and cultural behaviour patterns of men and women.

143. The Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus, along with the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Belarus, the Ministry of Sports and Tourism of the Republic of Belarus and the Belarusian Women's Union, has organized national competitions open to journalists of the print media for the best coverage of the topic of childhood, motherhood and family values and the promotion of healthy lifestyles.

144. Efforts to promote education on gender issues continue. Information for students on human rights, women's rights and the rights of children is couched in age-appropriate terms.

145. The Framework Plan for the Continuing Education of Children and Young People in the Republic of Belarus (approved by Decision No. 125 of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus on 14 December 2006) and the Programme for the Continuing Education of Children and Young People in the Republic of Belarus for 2006-2010 (approved by Decision No. 32 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus on 28 December 2006) devote special attention to the need for gender training of the individual personality and emphasize the urgency and need to intensify work to promote a culture of family relationships, a gender culture and habits based on nonviolent behaviour. Particular attention is given to the need for a new approach to gender relations and to strengthening positive stereotypes in the mind of the public.

146. Educational establishments that provide general secondary and vocational education offer an inter-disciplinary course called "Social Science". That course focuses on the study of the historical stages of the development of human rights and democracy as ways of protecting human rights and freedoms; it also covers the international human rights instruments, women's rights and the rights of children. In institutions of specialized secondary education, human rights, including women's rights, are studied in a course called "Fundamentals of the Law".

147. In higher education establishments, issues related to human rights and women's rights are addressed in programmes on philosophy, political science, law and human rights and in a course called "Fundamentals of the ideology of the Belarusian State". Human rights courses provide systematic and comprehensive information about human rights, including women's rights.

148. Educational institutions of Belarus also provide other educational activities, such as elective courses on the family and gender relations, oral magazines, legal debates and other activities aimed at creating behavioural change in relations between men and women.

149. During the reporting period, as methodological support for teaching in educational institutions, various textual materials have been issued on the prevention and elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence, on the prevention of trafficking in human beings, on social rehabilitation programmes and support for the victims of trafficking, on legal, family and gender education, on the promotion of healthy lifestyles and on the ideas of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

(b) Raising and upbringing of children in the family

150. The main social institution through which one learns about and acts out gender roles is the family.

151. The provisions of the Code on Marriage and the Family of the Republic of Belarus are based on a strict interpretation of the principle of equality between spouses and seek to give their rights and obligations concrete form.

152. In order to strengthen marriages and families, improve the culture of family relationships and awareness of the rights and responsibilities of the spouses and their responsibilities for the children and for each other, the spouses may enter into a marriage contract, which also serves, in the event of divorce, to determine property issues and other aspects of the union, as well as where the children will live, the amount of child support, the schedule for visitation by the non-custodial parent, as well as other matters related to the maintenance and education of the children (article 13).

153. Spouses are required to base their family relations on mutual respect and mutual assistance, the fair sharing of family responsibilities, and assistance by each of them in the implementation of the rights of the other to maternity (or paternity), to physical and spiritual development, to education and the expression of their abilities, and to work and leisure (article 20).

154. The family is assigned the primary right and duty to determine the forms, means and methods of raising the children. The duties of the family in relation to the children are determined by the children's rights established by the Code on Marriage and the Family of the Republic of Belarus and other legislative acts of the Republic of Belarus (article 65). The family is the natural environment of the child. The raising of children in the family is protected and encouraged by the State (article 66).

155. The inculcation in children and young people of a proper understanding of motherhood and fatherhood as a social function and a responsible approach to parenting and child-rearing is covered in a special course on the family developed by the National Institute of Education as part of the "Children of Belarus" Presidential Programme for 2006-2010 year (approved by Presidential Decree No. 318 of 15 May 2006).

156. The National Institute of Education, which combines both theoretical and methodological research, is working on the preparation of gender-sensitive textbooks and teaching materials for the new generation in educational establishments of Belarus, and has developed the "Fundamentals of the gender culture" programme of after-school activities, whose goals are to eliminate gender bias based on the idea of superiority of one sex, educate the younger generation in tolerance towards both sexes, prevent of all forms of gender discrimination, increase students' interest in the study of gender problems in society, and inculcate positive attitudes towards establishing a family and raising children.

157. The curriculums and programmes of refresher and retraining courses for specialists in the education system include subjects related to the particular features of the social behaviour and status of women in the modern world, and training materials have been issued on socio-pedagogical and psychological studies of the family, on teaching young people the valuable purposes of the family, and on

preventive techniques against cruel treatment, violence and trafficking in human beings.

158. Given the need to change the traditional role of men and women in society and the family in order to achieve equality between the sexes, the Academy of Postgraduate Education of the Republic of Belarus has devoted considerable attention to developing the professional skills of specialists in the field of gender and family education, the provision of socio-pedagogical and psychological support to families, social protection and the protection of motherhood and childhood. In particular, the provision of socio-pedagogical support to families is covered in teacher-training courses entitled "The socio-pedagogical problems of the family" and "What teachers can do in terms of socio-pedagogical support for disadvantaged families".

159. This issue gets much attention in *Socio-Pedagogical Work*, a monthly scientific-methodical and information magazine, and in *Psychology*, a scientific-methodical journal.

160. The proclamation of the Year of the Mother (2006) and the Year of the Child (2007) played an important role in Belarus in launching a public awareness and information campaign promoting families, mothers and children, which involved various measures aimed at increasing public awareness of the role of women in society, strengthening the status of the family and strengthening public support for families with children.

161. At the initiative of the Belarusian Women's Union, a non-governmental organization (NGO), and as part of the activities under the Year of the Mother, the cities of Soligorsk in the Minsk district and Grodno opened Museums on Motherhood in order to strengthen the status and prestige of the family and motherhood. The museums offer guided tours for children and young couples and hold leadership meetings in the city women's councils. In the near future, it is expected that the city of Pinsk in the Brest district and other cities will open such museums.

162. In Belarus, there are activities each year on Mother's Day, Women's Day and Family Day, which seek to promote universal human values and serve as an expression of deep respect for mothers. The district executive committees and the Minsk City Executive Committee hold solemn ceremonies to award the Order of the Mother to mothers of large families who have borne and raised more than five children. As of 2007, this prestigious award had been awarded to 4,599 women.

163. Traditionally, while the city and district administrations carry out the activities mentioned above, women's NGOs organize family events, contests, artistic exhibitions of work done by families, meetings of family clubs and concerts by amateur groups. The local authorities conduct special campaigns in remote rural areas to organize visiting clinics with medical and social workers and psychologists.

Article 6. Prevention of all forms of trafficking in women

164. The problem of trafficking in human beings in the Republic of Belarus is being dealt with in a comprehensive and thorough manner. Thanks to the measures that have been adopted, the problem of trafficking in human beings is not widespread in Belarus.

165. The country has a well-developed normative and legal framework aimed at combating trafficking in human beings, including women and children.

166. In order to bring national legislation into line with international standards, Presidential Decree No. 3 entitled "On some measures to combat trafficking in human beings" (hereinafter referred to as Decree No. 3) was adopted on 9 March 2005, which harmonized norms and established the key provisions governing the most important elements in the areas of employment and training abroad, the activities of marriage and modelling agencies, and the adoption process.

167. Pursuant to Decree No. 3 a number of laws and regulations were adopted consistent with the ideas embodied in the Decree and making it possible to deal with the problem of trafficking in human beings in a thorough and comprehensive manner.

168. In order to establish a legal and institutional framework ensuring adequate protection of victims of trafficking in human beings, Presidential Decree No. 352 of 8 August 2005 entitled "On prevention of the consequences of trafficking in human beings" was adopted, which defines the concept of "victim of trafficking in human beings" and specifies the measures to be taken to ensure the safety of victims, their social protection and rehabilitation, and the parameters of a temporary stay in the territory of Belarus for foreign citizens and stateless persons who are victims of trafficking, as well as their discharge from criminal responsibility.

169. The Act of the Republic of Belarus of 4 May 2005 entitled "On amending and adding to certain codes of the Republic of Belarus so as to increase penalties for trafficking in human beings and other related offences" incorporated a number of the provisions of Decree No. 3 in the Criminal Code and the Code on Administrative Offences of the Republic of Belarus.

170. The Criminal Code establishes criminal responsibility not only for human trafficking, but also for a number of crimes that are closely related to the problem. In particular, it criminalizes making use of prostitution or promoting prostitution (article 171 of the Code), enticement into prostitution or forcing others to continue to engage in prostitution (article 1711 of the Code), human trafficking, including for sexual exploitation (article 181 of the Code), as well as kidnapping, including the kidnapping of children, for sexual exploitation (article 182 of the Code).

171. Besides the articles of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus aimed directly at protecting children from sexual exploitation, other related acts have been criminalized, including drawing minors into antisocial behaviour (article 173 of the Criminal Code), as well as the dissemination of pornographic materials or objects (article 343 of the Code).

172. Trafficking in women does not constitute a specific crime, as it is included in the concept of "trafficking in human beings".

Table 1
Statistical data on the number of convictions for crimes linked to trafficking in human beings

<i>Article of the Criminal Code</i>	<i>Number of convictions</i>					
	<i>2002</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>
171 (Making use of prostitution or promoting prostitution)	54	87	112	78	73	115
171 ¹ (Enticement into prostitution or forcing others to continue in prostitution)	article did not exist then			4	11	53
181 (Trafficking in human beings)	4	13	24	38	32	84
182 (Kidnapping for purposes of sexual exploitation)	-	3	13	14	4	8
187 (Illegal activities involving arranging jobs abroad)	article did not exist then			2	4	4

173. It should be noted that there are in Belarus two main forms of trafficking, one of which involves sexual exploitation, the other - the exploitation of labour. Trafficking is also categorized according to whether it is international (with the export of Belarusian citizens abroad) or domestic (inside Belarus).

174. Belarus is mainly a country of origin and a transit country for "live goods". There have also been cases involving the export of Belarusian citizens to more than 30 countries. Following the adoption of effective measures, the number of destination countries has decreased by half.

175. During the 2002-2007 period, law enforcement bodies detected 3000 victims of sexual exploitation (all of whom were women).

Table 2
The number of women victims of sexual and labour exploitation

<i>Year</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>
<i>Number</i>	100	350	400	625	1 107	418

176. Recently, the problem of labour exploitation of Belarusian citizens abroad (mainly in the Russian Federation) has acquired particular urgency.

177. From 2005 to 2007, law enforcement bodies in Belarus detected 397 victims of forced labour.

178. Belarus has adopted and implemented programmes to combat trafficking in human beings, which seek essentially to implement a coordinated set of measures of an institutional, legal, preventive, social and medical nature so as to minimize the scope of human trafficking and provide reintegration assistance to victims.

179. Implementation of the State Programme of Comprehensive Measures to Combat Human Trafficking and Prostitution for 2002-2007 (approved by Decision No. 1636 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus on 8 November 2001) helped to focus the attention of Belarusian society on the importance of the trafficking problem and dealt with a number of priority problems,

including strengthening machinery and developing new effective measures against this social evil.

180. Presidential Decree No. 624 of 6 December 2007 led to the adoption of the State Programme on Combating Human Trafficking, Illegal Migration and Related Illegal Acts for 2008-2010, which provides for further implementation of comprehensive activities that are relevant in light of current trends.

181. Meeting the challenges of the State Programme has involved more than fifteen national ministries and Government bodies.

182. As the coordinator for the activities of Government bodies of the Republic of Belarus in the campaign to combat trafficking in human beings, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus has the authority to detect, prevent and investigate crimes involving trafficking in human beings and to detain persons committing such crimes.

183. Twice a year, the Ministry reports to the Interdepartmental Commission on Combating Crime, Corruption and Drug Addiction of the Security Council of the Republic of Belarus, with a view to then informing the President of the Republic of Belarus.

184. The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of the Republic of Belarus handles the rehabilitation and social reintegration of victims of human trafficking in persons over 15 years of age.

185. The rehabilitation and social reintegration of children aged 3 to 15 who are the victims of human trafficking have been assigned to the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus. This Government body is also responsible for carrying out an information campaign on preventing the "modern slave trade".

186. In order to prevent possible sexual exploitation of minors, the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus also maintains control over the process of sending students to study abroad, the adoption of children and the activities of modelling agencies.

187. The rehabilitation of the victims of trafficking who are children under 3 years old has been assigned to the Ministry of Health (trafficking in children of that age has not been detected in Belarus).

188. Particular attention has been paid to public awareness and prevention campaigns aimed at preventing trafficking in human beings, including women and girls. The Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus and the media play an important role in that process.

189. A system has been developed to carry out programmes aimed at supporting and protecting victims of human trafficking and persons who are witnesses in the investigation of these crimes.

190. The rehabilitation and social reintegration of victims of human trafficking, including women and children who are the victims of sexual exploitation, is paid for by the State and includes the following types of assistance:

- The provision of temporary residences, including beds and food;
- Legal assistance, including legal advice;

- Medical care provided by State health care agencies (also in in-patient hospitals);
- Psychological assistance in the form of psychoprophylactic, psychodiagnostic and other corrective treatment, psychological counselling, as well as socio-educational assistance.

191. In order to minimize negative social consequences and to facilitate the rehabilitation of victims of human trafficking, 156 regional social service centres have been set up as part of the social protection system in the country.

192. Minors can also receive rehabilitation in 145 socio-educational establishments set up by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus (9 of them are socio-educational centres, 37 are children's social shelters and 99 are centres set up in shelters).

193. For children under the age of three, rehabilitation is provided in 10 children's homes run by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Belarus.

194. Belarusian NGOs are actively involved in addressing the issues of the rehabilitation of victims of human trafficking, including women and children. The Belarusian Young Women's Christian Association launched a programme in 2001 called "La Strada": for the prevention of human trafficking in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. "Children Are Not For Violence", an urban NGO for the prevention of child abuse, has been running a programme called "Stop the Rod of Evil" since 2002, which is aimed at combating child prostitution, child pornography and child trafficking for sexual exploitation. "Radislav", another NGO, has been operating a crisis centre since 2002 offering a variety of services to women and children who are the victims of violence. In 2007 that NGO helped the regional social services centre in the Pervomaisky district of Minsk to start up a service providing assistance to victims of violence.

195. Belarus is actively cooperating in the fight against human trafficking with various international organizations, such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, UNICEF, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Central European Initiative, and with various international NGOs in the field. Those organizations have assisted Belarus through international technical assistance projects and programmes aimed at combating human trafficking.

196. The projects implemented include an IOM programme called "Combating human trafficking: Republic of Belarus", which has included a number of projects that ran from September 2002 to December 2005, and a joint European Union, UNDP and Government of the Republic of Belarus project called "Combating trafficking in women in the Republic of Belarus", which ran from June 2003 to December 2005. The latter project made it possible to open a rehabilitation shelter for victims of trafficking in women in July 2004.

197. In 2007, Belarus, with the assistance of IOM, was able to launch a project called "Combating human trafficking: Republic of Belarus".

198. Measures adopted at the national and international levels have made it possible, from 2002 to 2007, to eliminate 11 criminal organizations (of which 10 were transnational) engaged in supplying Belarusian citizens to clients abroad.

199. Belarus is actively working at the international level on the problem of combating trafficking in human beings.

200. At the Summit of Heads of State and Government in September 2005 in New York, President Aleksander Lukashenko of Belarus launched an initiative to intensify efforts to combat trafficking in human beings, attacking especially the demand for human goods.

201. At its sixty-first session the United Nations General Assembly in New York unanimously adopted a resolution prepared by the Republic of Belarus entitled "Improving the coordination of efforts against trafficking in persons" (resolution 61/180 of 20 December 2006), which was co-sponsored by 20 countries .

202. A significant example of constructive international cooperation was provided by the joint IOM, OSCE and UNICEF international conference entitled "Combating the demand for trafficking in persons: expansion of cooperation between countries of origin and destination countries", held in Minsk on 26-27 October 2006 with the participation of representatives of 40 States from the European Union, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Middle East, along with 12 international organizations and 8 NGOs.

203. The Republic of Belarus is taking active steps to attract international attention to the problem of violence and human trafficking. Thus, on 5 March 2007, at the initiative of Belarus and the Philippines and with the assistance of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Vital Voices Global Partnership, an international NGO, there was an international conference at United Nations Headquarters in New York entitled "Trafficking in Women and Girls: Meeting the Challenge Together." The conference was attended by over 400 people from more than 90 countries, including representatives of international and national NGOs and civil society groups.

204. In July 2007, bearing in mind the practical experience it had accumulated and the progressive legislation it had drafted, Belarus established the International Study Centre for training, upgrading skills and retraining staff working in the fields of migration and human trafficking, which is recognized as a basic training institution for combating human trafficking for CIS member States.

205. In our country human trafficking has not become a large scale phenomenon. The measures adopted have made it possible to combat the threat posed by the "modern slave trade" and to ensure the security of the Belarusian population. One result has been that reporting of this sort of crimes has tripled over the last seven years.

Article 7. Women in political and social life

(a) Right to vote

206. Under article 38 of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus Republic citizens of the Republic have the right to freely elect and be elected to public office on the basis of universal, equal, direct or indirect suffrage by secret ballot.

207. Citizens of the Republic of Belarus have the right to participate in decisions regarding public affairs, both directly and through freely elected representatives. The direct participation of citizens in managing the affairs of society and the State is ensured through referendums, the discussion of draft laws and issues of national and

local significance and other means specified in the law. Through means specified in legislation, citizens of the Republic of Belarus take part in the discussion of issues of public life in Republican and local assemblies (article 37 of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus).

208. Elections for the President of the Republic of Belarus, representatives to the House of Representatives and representatives to local Councils of Deputies are open and are decided through universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot. Referendums are decided through universal, free, equal and secret ballot. These provisions are guaranteed by the Electoral Code of the Republic of Belarus (articles 3-7).

(b) Participation in Government bodies

209. Under article 24 of the Act of the Republic of Belarus of 14 June 2003 entitled "On public service in the Republic of Belarus", when persons enter public service, as well as during service, no restrictions or benefits based on gender, race, nationality, social origin, property, religion, belief or membership in political parties and other public associations are allowed, except in cases stipulated by the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus.

210. The policy of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men, which is in force in the Republic of Belarus, involves, inter alia, the equal participation of women and men in decision-making. Analysis of women's participation in decision-making at the State level in Belarus shows that there have been improvements.

211. A woman is serving as Deputy Chief of the Presidential Administration for the President of the Republic of Belarus and another as Chairman of the Central Commission of Belarus for Elections and Republican Referendums.

212. In 2007, 18 per cent of the leadership positions in Republican administrative bodies were held by women. In the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus, a woman held the post of Minister for Taxes and Duties. Thirteen of the Deputy Ministers were women. Four women represent Belarus in the international arena with the rank of ambassador. Two women are members of the Board of the National Bank of the Republic of Belarus.

213. Women are fairly widely represented in the judiciary - 32 per cent of the total number of all judges. Of the 144 employees of the Supreme Court is 144, 63.1 per cent are women. Thirteen women are judges on the Supreme Court, including the Vice-President. Among the 12 members of the Constitutional Court, four are women.

214. In the 2004 legislative elections to the National Assembly, 32 women were elected to the House of Representatives and 18 to the Council of the Republic. The percentage of women representatives in the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus is 29.8 per cent.

215. The number of women holding elective office in local Councils of Deputies at all levels, as well as in bodies of the executive branch, is steadily increasing. Thus, in 2007, 10,348 women were elected to local Councils of Representatives at all levels (45.7 per cent of the total number of representatives). According to Inter-Parliamentary Union data published in *Women in Parliament in 2007: a review of the year*, Belarus is in 22nd place in terms of the percentage of women in

parliament, ahead of the CIS countries and several developed countries, including Australia, Britain, Italy, the United States, France and Japan.

(c) Participation in the work of non-governmental organizations

216. In Belarus the right of the freedom of association is guaranteed under article 36 of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus - everyone has that right.

217. Citizens of the Republic of Belarus have the right, at their own initiative, to form associations and join existing associations under article 2 of Act No. 3254-XII of the Republic of Belarus of 4 October 1994 entitled "On public associations". Under article 6 of the Act, the State guarantees the protection of the rights and lawful interests of public associations and unions.

218. During the reporting period the procedure for registering public associations was considerably simplified. Presidential Decree No. 605 of 6 October 2006 entitled "On some issues regarding the State registration of public associations and their unions (associations)" abolished the Republican Commission on the Registration (or Reregistration) of Public Organizations, whose functions were transferred to the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Belarus. Registration of local associations is handled at the regional level by the district justice offices of regional executive committees and the Minsk City Executive Committee.

219. In Belarus 36 women's NGOs have been established and are functioning. Among the most active are the Belarusian Union of Women, the Belarusian Young Women's Christian Association, the Women's Independent Democratic Association, the Belarusian Organization of Working Women, the Belarusian Association of Social Workers and others.

220. Women's associations in Belarus run a number of projects aimed at addressing the problems faced by women in modern society: improving the social status of women in society, increasing women's participation in decision-making at all levels; developing women entrepreneurs; finding ways to eliminate violence against women, including domestic violence; and trafficking in persons, especially women and children.

221. The Belarusian Women's Union executes projects aimed at promoting the protection of women's rights and interests and the empowerment of women in social, economic, social and cultural life. Traditionally, from 7 April 7 to 15 May, the Belarusian Women's Union, working with the international organization "Hope Express" and the "Mother and Child" Republican Scientific and Practical Centre, organize a event called "Women's health - the health of the nation". The event includes meetings with medical professionals, business leaders, and the unions at many industrial enterprises and workers' dormitories (at the Kalibr plant, the Mastra, Elema and Belplast joint stock companies, the Minsk Automobile Plant, the Minsk Tractor Plant, the Minsk Watch Plant, the S. I. Vavilov plant, and a number of other companies).

222. The Business Women's Club of Belarus, established with the assistance of the Belarusian Union of Women has been functioning since 2002. At meetings of the Club women discuss business problems and issues such as women's participation in the social and political life of society. The Club provides support for advertising and selling products produced in factories and assists in the opening of company shops and branches for the sale of those products. The Business Women's Club of Belarus

assists in providing classes at regional and district centres for the presidents of primary organizations within the Women's Leadership School.

223. The Belarusian Women's Union cooperates actively with international women's organizations. It has signed memoranda of cooperation with women's organizations in Russia, Lithuania, China, Vietnam, Syria and Ukraine.

224. Since 2002, the Belarusian Young Women's Christian Association has been running the La Strada programme to prevent trafficking in persons in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Those activities include seminars, conferences and round tables discussions for representatives of Government agencies and non-governmental organizations; the programme works actively with the media and runs informational and educational campaigns for groups at risk. The La Strada hot line provides advice on opportunities, conditions, and rules of safe travel abroad relating to employment, marriage or education. It also assists families that are looking for family members abroad. The programme provides rehabilitation and reintegration services for victims, including free medical, legal, psychological and other assistance.

225. Various NGOs, including the "Women's Independent Democratic Movement", the "Business Women's Club of Brest" and "Cooperation among Business and Creative Women", are active in running projects to protect women's rights and interests, promote the status of women in society and develop social structures aimed at assisting women.

226. The NGO Cooperation among Business and Creative Women established the Belarusian Women's Network, which is an Internet-based information resource about and belonging to Belarusian women's groups, providing timely information on current social issues affecting Belarusian women, on legislation regarding the protection of women's rights, on contact information for centres that help people who are in a difficult situation, and on gender studies, as well as a women's resource directory, news of the Belarusian women's community and the international women's movement.

227. There is growing interaction between NGOs and Government authorities and other agencies aimed at involving representatives of several NGOs in the development of normative legal acts.

228. Representatives of the Belarusian Union of Women, the Women's Independent Democratic Movement and the Belarusian Young Women's Christian Association are members of the National Council on Gender Policy under the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus.

Article 8. Women in international organizations and in the diplomatic service

229. Belarusian legislation establishes the rights and conditions under which women and men alike represent the Government of the Republic of Belarus and the State at the international level.

230. Admission to diplomatic and other posts in the central structure of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus and offices abroad, as well as the promotion and rotation of staff, is based on the principle that equal requirements must be imposed on all personnel, regardless of sex.

231. About 20 percent of the women who are employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs work in Belarusian offices abroad, including four women who represent the country in the international arena with the rank of ambassador.

232. It should be noted, however, that the representation of Belarusian women in international inter-governmental organizations remains low.

Article 9. Nationality

(1) Right to obtain, change and retain nationality

233. Act No. 136-Z of the Republic of Belarus entitled "On nationality in the Republic of Belarus" was adopted on 1 August 2002.

234. The Act reflects a national approach that does not distinguish between citizens on the basis of sex in the regulation of matters relating to nationality.

235. In particular, nationality in the Republic of Belarus is equal for all citizens of the Republic of Belarus, regardless of the grounds leading to its acquisition, and no one can be deprived of his or her nationality in the Republic of Belarus or the right to change nationality (article 3 of the Act).

236. The conclusion or dissolution of a marriage between a citizen of the Republic of Belarus and a citizen of another State or a Stateless person does not in itself affect the nationality of the spouses. A person who has entered into a marriage with a citizen of the Republic of Belarus acquires nationality in the Republic of Belarus, where he or she has expressed that desire and subject to the conditions laid down by the Act (article 7). Residence of a citizen of the Republic of Belarus in the territory of a foreign State does not in itself lead to loss of nationality in the Republic of Belarus (article 6 of the Act).

(2) Nationality of children

237. The Act of the Republic of Belarus entitled "On nationality in the Republic of Belarus" provides for the equal rights of women and men in obtaining nationality. The Act also provides for the expression by both parents (even adoptive parents) of their wishes with regard to the nationality of their children in the event of the loss, change, acquisition or retention of nationality or the child's adoption (articles 19, 23, 25, 26 and 27).

Article 10. Education

238. During the reporting period the Republic of Belarus took important steps to further develop the national education system. According to the UNDP *Human Development Report 2007* Belarus is ahead of all CIS countries with respect to adult literacy (99.6 per cent) and also has one of the world's highest literacy levels among young people (99.8 per cent).

239. In 2002-2007, changes were introduced to improve the legislation in the field of education, so as to create the legal, institutional, economic and social foundations needed for the functioning and development of the education system in the Republic of Belarus, establish the conditions needed for the formation and development of the individual and give effect to the right of everyone to education.

240. The basic principles of the State education policy of the Republic of Belarus were established in Act No. 1202-XII of the Republic of Belarus of 28 October 1991

entitled "On education", Act No. 216-Z of 29 June 2003 entitled "On vocational and technical education, Act No. 285-Z of the Republic of Belarus of 18 May 2004 entitled "On the education of persons with mental or physical handicaps (special education)", Act No. 141-Z of the Republic of Belarus of 5 July 2006 entitled "On general secondary education" and Act No. 252-Z of the Republic of Belarus of 11 July 2007 entitled "On higher education".

241. Decision No. 53 of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus of 25 May 2006 approved the Programme on Developing the National Education System for 2006-2010. The total amount of financing allocated to the Programme, including the content of the "Education" section, is 40,347.4 billion roubles.

242. The programme seeks to address the following major tasks:

- Improving the legal framework for the functioning of the educational system;
- Updating the content of education, educational and methodical support, and facilities and equipment;
- Establishing a system of education quality assessment;
- Establishing mechanisms to get sectors of the real economy involved in improving the quality of vocational training;
- Integrating education, science and production;
- Improving the training and welfare protection of workers in the education system;
- Improving management efficiency in education.

243. A number of Government programmes and plans have been adopted and implemented (or are still being implemented) in order to improve the education system in Belarus, including the National Plan of Action to Improve the Situation of Children and Protect their Rights for 2004-2010 (approved by Decision No. 1661 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus on 18 December 2003), the "Children of Belarus" Presidential Programme for 2001-2005 (approved by Presidential Decree No. 281 of 24 May 2001) and the "Children of Belarus" Presidential Programme for 2006-2010 (approved by Presidential Decree No. 318 of 15 May 2006), the Framework Plan for the Continuing Education of Children and Youth in the Republic of Belarus (approved by Decision No. 125 of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus on 14 December 2006) and the Programme for the Continuing Education of Children and Youth in the Republic of Belarus for 2006-2010 (approved by Decision No. 32 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus on 28 December 2006).

244. The activities undertaken under these Plans have helped to maintain the quality of education that has traditionally been inherent in the educational system of Belarus, and have made it possible for boys and girls, and men and women, to obtain the education that suits the needs of the individual, society and State.

245. During the reporting period the number of women studying in specialized middle schools and higher educational establishments in Belarus has exceeded that of men.

246. At the beginning of the 2007/2008 school year, the number of women enrolled in educational establishments in the country amounted to 922,000 (51 per cent of the

total enrolment). There were 1,135,000 boys and girls enrolled in secondary schools at the beginning of the 2007/2008 school year, of whom 49 per cent were girls. In vocational schools, girls accounted for more than 33 per cent of students. The proportion of female students in secondary specialized educational institutions amounted to 54 per cent.

247. The high proportion of girls among students in higher education, namely, 60 per cent, remains stable. Girls tend to be found in the humanities and the social sciences; 80 per cent of teacher-training students are girls, 71 per cent in economics, communications, law and government, and health care.

Table 3

Distribution of students in State-owned higher educational establishments during the 2007/2008 academic year, disaggregated by course of study and sex

<i>Course of study</i>	<i>Total number of students</i>	<i>Number of women</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Teacher training	57 101	43 983	77.0
Humanities	15 538	12 795	82.3
Communications, law, economics, management	117 886	85 921	72.9
Natural sciences	12 263	6 580	53.7
Environmental sciences	2 829	2 206	78.0
Engineering and technology	73 028	20 716	28.4
Architecture and construction	15 267	4 715	30.9
Farming and forestry. Garden and park design	23 817	7 833	32.9
Health care	15 001	10 668	71.1
Social protection	3 387	3 086	91.1
Physical culture, tourism and hotel services	6 126	2 742	44.8
Public food service, consumer services	823	639	77.6
Security services	5 865	668	11.4
Art and design	6 057	4 256	70.3

Table 4

Distribution of students in private higher education establishments during academic year 2007/2008, disaggregated by course of study and sex

<i>Course of study</i>	<i>Total number of students</i>	<i>Number of women</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Teacher training	188	161	85.6
Art and design	677	478	70.6
Humanities	951	745	78.3
Communications, law, economics, management	56 067	37 643	67.1
Natural sciences	432	32	7.4
Engineering and technology	326	120	36.8
Social welfare	29	25	86.2

248. Among the teachers at institutions providing secondary specialized education, women predominate, numbering about 8,000 or 73 per cent of the total number of teachers. Among them, 33 have a PhD degree. Higher teacher-training institutions employ about 13,000 women (55 per cent of the staff); among them, about 4,000 have bachelor degrees, 2,600 are assistant professors, 233 have PhDs and 220 are professors.

249. In Belarus, the educational level among women is generally higher than among men, and this has been so for some time. Among employed women, 55 per cent have higher and secondary special education degrees, among men - 38 percent.

(a) Choice of profession

250. In Belarus, girls and boys, as well as women and men, have equal opportunities when it comes to choosing a profession or occupation, access to education and the earning of degrees in educational establishments of all categories. This equality applies to preschool, general, specialized and higher education, as well as all types of vocational training.

251. Secondary specialized, vocational, technical and higher educational establishments of the Republic of Belarus hold "open days" for graduates of primary schools in order to guide them in choosing their future profession.

252. Higher educational institutions annually hold Olympiads and conferences on academic subjects for senior secondary students, which also helps them to gain awareness of their future occupations.

253. Each year, the Ministry of Education published guides for those seeking admission to institutions providing vocational, specialized secondary and higher education, with full information about admission requirements, occupations and specializations in the various educational institutions.

254. For example, in 2007 the book *Belarus - the country of your future. A book for graduates* was issued for graduates of general educational institutions, vocational and technical secondary educational institutions and specialized secondary educational institutions; the book contains extensive background material on the level of development of the various economic sectors and educational institutions of the Republic of Belarus, preparing specialists for each sector.

(b) Access to and quality of education

255. Girls and boys in urban and rural areas, at all levels, are trained on the same programmes and receive the same educational qualifications. This equality is ensured through a system of State standards in education, which have been set in the Republic of Belarus for all levels of education.

256. All students, both male and female, use the same textbooks and teaching materials and equipment and are taught the same subjects by teachers of equal qualifications, using identical forms of study and teaching methods, teaching aids; exams cover the same programmes.

(c) Coeducation

257. In the educational institutions of the Republic of Belarus the sexes study together

258. The Framework Plan for the Continuing Education of Children and Youth in the Republic of Belarus (approved by Decision No. 125 of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus on 14 December 2006) and the Programme for the Continuing Education of Children and Youth in the Republic of Belarus for 2006-2010 (approved by Decision No. 32 of the Council of Ministers on 28 December 2006) devote special attention to the need for gender education of the individual and emphasize the urgency and the need to intensify efforts to promote a culture of healthy family relationships and gender culture and develop skills in nonviolent behaviour; special attention is also paid to the need for a new approach to the system of gender relations and the strengthening of positive stereotypes in the mind of society and the role of women in governance and the socio-economic sphere.

259. The National Institute of Education, which is the main agency for developing textbooks and training manuals for public educational institutions in Belarus, is working on the preparation of a new generation of textbooks and manuals that takes into account the gender analysis performed on already published materials, and on the elimination of instances of gender stereotypes and gender discrimination of all forms in educational literature.

(d) Scholarships and education grants

260. Belarusian legislation provides for equal opportunities for women and men to obtain scholarships, financial assistance and other education grants. Act No. 252-Z of the Republic of Belarus of 11 July 2007 entitled "On higher education" guarantees that students can receive scholarships in accordance with the rules specified by the legislation of the Republic of Belarus; reimbursement for the rental of housing, if they can't get places in dormitories (for students studying at State expense) in the amount and manner specified by the law of the Republic of Belarus; material and moral encouragement of their success in academic, public and research activities; and soft loans to pay for their first programme of higher education in accordance with the laws of the Republic of Belarus (article 30).

(e) Continuing training and retraining

261. Women have equal rights with men to continuing training within an occupation and to retraining for a different occupation. The implementation of the country's Framework Plan for Continuing Education enables women (with no age limit) to improve their skills or retrain. Act No. 1202-XII of the Republic of Belarus of 28 October 1991 entitled «On education" guarantees the right to get additional education aimed at promoting the intellectual, aesthetic, moral and physical development of the person during his or her basic education and at deepening vocational skills; the Act also seeks to deal with the problem of obtaining trained personnel in all spheres of socio-economic activity. Additional education may be obtained at all levels of basic education and includes the training and retraining of personnel (article 8).

262. In Belarus, more than 300 educational institutions (with their subunits) provide continuing training and retraining. These educational institutions train more than 600,000 people annually, over 40 per cent of whom are women.

263. Under the Framework Plan on the State Personnel Policy of the Republic of Belarus (approved by Presidential Decree No. 399 of 18 July 2001) various measures have been developed and adopted to improve the skills of State workers with a view to upgrading the economic and legal machinery supporting the activities

of the supplemental education system. To this end, the effective interaction of a wide range of social partners has been encouraged for the development of the system (ministries, local authorities, educational institutions and enterprises).

264. To ensure the successful development of a system of advanced skills training and retraining for personnel, work is proceeding on determining which are the main training institutions in each branch that provide the scientific, educational, methodical and organizational leadership and serve to develop the sectoral sub-systems.

265. Belarus attaches importance to the organization of training for the jobless and the unemployed. Bearing in mind the experience of other countries, Belarus has established labour, employment and social welfare bodies in the various regions of the country to organize training for the unemployed using existing educational institutions and public training centres. Every year, those bodies have provided training for over 26,000 unemployed persons.

(f) Compulsory education

266. In the Republic of Belarus general basic education is compulsory. School attendance on the part of the relevant age group of children is 100 per cent.

(g) Participation in sports and physical training

267. Physical culture, sport and tourism are important factors in the Republic of Belarus for improving the health of the population. The physical culture and sports movement has been given the status of a main priority of the State's social policy.

268. The law guarantees and ensures equal rights and opportunities for girls and boys, as well as women and men, to pursue physical culture and sport. In order to give effect to those rights, the State system of preschools, schools, sports schools for children and young people and voluntary physical fitness and sports associations where people live, at school, at work, at parks and vacation sites, and at establishments and businesses that provide paid physical fitness services.

269. Various pieces of legislation, including the Act of 18 June 1993 of the Republic of Belarus entitled "On physical culture and sports", as amended by the Act of the Republic of Belarus of 29 November 2003, Act No 205-Z of the Republic of Belarus of 9 January 2007 entitled "On amending and adding to the Law of the Republic of Belarus entitled 'On tourism'", the State Programme for the Development of Physical Culture and Sports in the Republic of Belarus for 2003-2006 (approved by Decision No. 254 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus on 26 January 2003), and the National Tourism Development Programme of the Republic of Belarus for 2006-2010 (approved by Decision No. 1796 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus on 21 December 2007), have focused on the use of physical culture, sport and tourism in the interests of the individual and society, especially children and youth, and the organization of physical culture and mass sports in the State system of education and personal development.

270. Under these programmes, a number of activities have been undertaken to ensure high-quality access for all groups of the Republic of Belarus, including people in rural areas, to enable them to participate in sporting events and clubs and use sports facilities, regardless of their abilities or level of training.

271. In Belarus there are more than 230 stadiums, 40 sports riding halls, 235 swimming pools, 6,500 gymnasiums, more than 650 mini-pools in preschool institutions, as well as various Olympic training bases, such as Staiky, Raubichy, Ratomka, sports and tennis halls, multi-purpose ice rinks and more than 10,000 outdoor athletic fields.

272. Sports and physical culture clubs have been established in the regions and for various economic sectors. During the reporting period sectorally organized clubs included 11 at the Republican level, 31 in the regions and 38 in the districts. Physical education and training centres have been established in the districts, and in the cities and regions more than 100 physical culture and sports clubs and physical fitness and therapy centres are operating.

273. There are more than 25,000 physical culture and sports specialists working in the country, among them 7,800 physical education teachers.

274. Almost all secondary schools and specialized secondary schools have introduced three hours per week of physical culture, and in higher education four hours per week.

275. Besides the State programmes at the place of study, work and residence, more than 1 million people (11 per cent of the total population) are active in sports clubs, fitness groups and physical culture and therapy centres. Counting those engaged in State physical culture programmes, about 30 per cent of the physically active and able-bodied population is involved.

(h) Developing a healthy lifestyle

276. The State and society devote considerable attention to issues regarding healthy lifestyles. The country successfully implemented the "Health of the Nation" programme for 1999-2005 (approved by Decision No. 393 of the Council of Ministers on 23 March 1999) and the State Programme for the Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles in the Republic of Belarus for 2002-2006 (approved by Decision No. 1553 of the Council Ministers of the Republic of Belarus on 26 October 2001).

277. The National Programme for the Demographic Security of Belarus for 2007-2010 (approved by Presidential Decree No. 135 of 26 March 2007) seeks to implement an integrated system of measures of a socio-economic, legal and institutional nature that are aimed at improving the quality of life for families with children and at implementing measures to improve reproductive health and maternal and child health.

278. In the framework of these programmes regular newspaper columns for young people on issues relating to maintaining good health have been established and are maintained in the national and regional media. Popularized scientific and practical literature on the promotion of healthy lifestyles, reproductive health and family planning are also being distributed.

279. In the educational institutions of the Republic of Belarus systematic work is under way on protecting the health of children and youth of both sexes and on training them in developing healthy lifestyles and safe behaviour.

280. The Ministry of Health of the Republic of Belarus, working with the United Nations Population Fund, implemented various complex projects such as

"Improving youth's access to information on reproductive health" and "Protecting adolescents" from 1999 to 2003 and from 2003 to 2007.

281. In child health clinics in Minsk five youth-friendly centres were opened, offering psychological and medical counselling by reproductive health specialists that included modern contraceptive techniques. The assistance provided to adolescents and young adults is confidential.

282. The 122 out-patient clinics for women offer family planning advice. Health care organizations have established antenatal clinics for pregnant women and clubs for young families and newlyweds, which show instructional videos for students of secondary and higher education establishments.

283. The media play an important role in promoting healthy lifestyles, reproductive health and family planning.

284. The 13 national newspapers draw attention on a regular basis to issues regarding reproductive health and safe behaviour in columns such as "You and I" (in the newspaper *Banner of Youth*), "School Meeting" (*Komsomolskaya Pravda*), "Time of Love" (*Transitional Age*), "Sex Basics" (*Belarusian Youth*) and "Situation" (*Belarusian Business Paper*). These articles stress safe sexual behaviour, responsibility in one's sex life and the problems of sexually transmitted diseases. Targeted campaigns promoting healthy lifestyles have also been mounted in the regions of Belarus. All the regional newspapers and media run regular columns such as "For a Healthy Lifestyle", "Medical Advice", "Latest Word", "Listen!", "Your Health", "Women's Health" and others.

285. The Capital TV channel runs stories and news reports on health issues on a news programme called "24 Hours" and a programme of news analysis called "Week". The programme "Hello, Doctor" is being shown again. A programme called "Theme" on the LAD TV channel presents Government representatives, doctors, teachers and psychologists discussing the nation's health. Visitors to the channel's website can put questions to the speakers and those in charge of the programmes.

286. Radio journalists from FM stations actively participate in the coverage of reproductive health problems. Programmes broadcast on the radio stations "Mir", "Capital", "Radio 2", "Youth Radio", "Alpha Radio" and "Belarusian Radio" carry interviews with health professionals (doctors, teachers and social workers). It should be noted, however, that there are no programmes that are fully devoted to this issue and constantly on the air.

287. Since 1999, the International Centre for Integrated Information/Press House Centre, a Republican joint enterprise, working with UNICEF and in the framework of a programme called "Youth Health and Development - HIV/AIDS Prevention", has been running a youth project called "Voices of Youth in the Mass Media for Health and Development", which seeks to promote healthy lifestyles. Project activities include issuing a newspaper called *Voices of Youth* on a regular basis and holding press conferences and round-table discussions for journalists covering the topic of healthy lifestyles. Thanks to the scale of these activities the ideas of the "Voices of Youth in the Mass Media for Health and Development" project were disseminated broadly to all regions of Belarus.

Article 11. Employment

288. It was noted, in the combined fourth, fifth and sixth periodic report, that the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus guarantees equal access for women and men to any post in State bodies, in accordance with their abilities and training (article 39); the right to choose a profession, occupation or work in accordance with their inclinations, abilities, education and training, bearing in mind their social needs; the right to enjoy healthy and safe working conditions (article 41); the right to equal pay for equal work (article 42); and the right to health care and education (article 49) and to social security in old age (article 47).

289. The way that the Labour Code of the Republic of Belarus regulates specific aspects of labour relations with women has been discussed. The basic rights of workers, both women and men (article 11), have been listed, particularly the rules for the work of women and workers with family responsibilities (chapter 19). We shall now add information on the following.

(1) (a), (b) Right to work

290. On 1 January 2008 the labour, employment and social protection bodies of the Republic of Belarus reported that 44,100 people were registered as unemployed, of whom 28,900 were women (65.6 per cent). Women predominate in all age groups of those registered as unemployed. Most of these women are between 20 and 34 years old, amounting to 18,200 women or 42.2 per cent of the unemployed, or in the pre-retirement age group, namely 50 to 54 years old (12.5 per cent). The average age of the Belarusian unemployed women is 37.1 years.

291. In 2007, women accounted for 45.3 per cent of the registered unemployed, including those discharged owing to job eliminations (4.4 per cent) and those who quit work on their own (15.2 per cent).

292. Women have a harder time finding work. This is reflected both in the average length of time a job search lasts and in the number women who have been looking for work for more than a year. The statistics show that in 2007 unemployed men found a new job within 1.5 months, whereas for women the search required 3.1 months. As a result, women spend longer periods in unemployment, 5.4 months compared to 4.0 months for men. Among those registered as unemployed for more than a year, 78.2 per cent are women. The long search for work is one aspect of the vulnerability of women in the labour market.

293. The main tool for implementing the State policy on promoting employment is the annual State Programme to Promote Employment in the Republic of Belarus, which is adopted by the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus. Regional programmes that take into account the local situation are adopted on the basis of the State programme for promoting employment.

294. Under the State Programme to Promote Employment, various measures in key areas of employment, including women's employment, have been adopted, including: assisting the unemployed to find jobs; developing the geographic mobility of the workforce; career guidance and vocational training; promoting entrepreneurial initiatives and supporting the self-employment of the unemployed; creating new jobs; expanding the public works system and preventing unemployment.

295. Various labour, employment and social welfare bodies have been established to implement State policies aimed at promoting employment and ensuring the necessary safeguards for citizens; the work of those bodies is organized and led by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of the Republic of Belarus. Regional labour, employment and social welfare authorities, including in the city of Minsk the Committee on Labour, Employment and Social Welfare of the Minsk City Executive Committee, function within the structure of the appropriate local executive and administrative authorities.

296. From 2002 to 2007, various measures were taken under the State Programme to Promote Employment with the goal of enhancing the role of women in public life, encouraging their professional activities and making it possible for them to balance their work activities and their family responsibilities. These measures relied significantly on vocational training and retraining, job creation and the development of the public works system, which had to take into account the gender dimension. Women have, to a large extent, found work in the growing light industry and food processing sectors, in new social service-oriented non-profit organizations and in the expanding social services sector.

297. Job quotas have been widely used in Belarus to secure employment of vulnerable categories of citizens, primarily single women with many children and those raising minor and disabled children.

298. One of the most effective measures for mitigating the social consequences of unemployment has been the training of unemployed women in new occupations that are in demand in the labour market, which includes assisting them in building their own businesses. To that end, 320 training and retraining institutions have been established and are in operation. Women who have completed vocational training show much higher employment rates. Greater efforts have been mounted to try to offer women vocational training with a guaranteed job afterwards.

299. Each year Belarus has increased the State funds allocated to job creation, particularly jobs for women.

300. In order to guide women in an active search for work and familiarize them with the job market situation and employment trends, various groups involved in jobs, employment, and social welfare hold job fairs all over the country, including jobs for specialists; companies also have "Open Door" days.

301. In order to inform the public about the availability of jobs all over the country, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of the Republic of Belarus has established and continuously updates on its website a computerized information system called the "All-Republican Job Vacancies Data Bank".

302. The State policy to develop and support entrepreneurship forms an integral part of the economic policy of Belarus; it seeks to strengthen the productive, innovative and investment activities of small businesses, expand exports of goods and services and the production of import-substituting products and accelerate the development of small businesses in small and medium-sized cities and in rural areas. These measures are also aimed at easing female unemployment and at strengthening the economic empowerment of women.

303. For this purpose the Council of Ministers approves each year the Programme of State Support for Small Businesses in the Republic of Belarus. The State, local

governments and the banks provide funding for the activities of the Programme, which includes financial support for entrepreneurs in their investment projects and the provision of financial resources and other assets through financial leases and other kinds of financial support.

304. Citizens, including women, who have applied to the State Employment Service for assistance in organizing self-employment and entrepreneurship can receive advisory, methodological, legal and financial assistance.

305. Those who are unemployed can receive (by signing an agreement) a grant amounting to 7 minimum subsistence budget units, as well as a bank loan (interest-free but has to be repaid). A loan amounting to 45 minimum subsistence budget units can be granted for up to 18 months, and those involved in the organization of production or the processing of agricultural products can get a loan amounting to 90 minimum subsistence budget units for up to 30 months.

306. Women in business in Belarus tend to be concentrated in the fields of industrial production, the provision of public services and the retail trade; they prefer stable, long-term businesses and seem to want to create a civilized and transparent business environment that complies with the law. By 2007, women engaged in business included highly trained accountants, architects, individual auditors, designers, make-up artists, beauticians and retail sellers of goods and foods at markets. Women in business include both women as co-owners or managers of large joint-stock companies and women as owners or founders of newly created businesses. This includes small leather goods workshops, sewing shops and workshops, restaurants, hair salons, dental offices, tourist and advertising services and financial securities operations.

307. Belarus established a network for small business support (by Decision No. 1111 of the Council of Ministers of 25 August 1997 entitled "On business support centres in the Republic of Belarus"), which consists of business support centres and small business incubators. Currently there are 10 incubators and 38 centres, 13 of which are run by women.

308. Six women business leaders were the 2007 winners in the annual national "Best Entrepreneur" contest.

309. Within the framework of State support of small businesses, the Ministry of the Economy of the Republic of Belarus ran a pilot project in 2007 to develop useful websites, including "Your Own Business " and "Subcontracting Centre". The sites are designed for a wide range of entrepreneurs at various stages of business development, from small start-ups to large-scale operations.

310. Implementation of the provisions of the Act of 15 June 2006 entitled "On the employment of citizens of the Republic of Belarus" led to further development of the organization of temporary employment in the form of paid work in public works projects, which has allowed the jobless and the unemployed population to supplement their incomes and maintain or update useful labour skills. In 2007, labour, employment and social welfare bodies signed 4341 contracts with companies for paid public works projects, thereby providing temporary employment for 101,100 people, including 46,300 unemployed women.

(c) Vocational training

311. In a competitive labour market, employers demand higher levels of skill and training of new employees

312. However, registered unemployed women tend to have higher levels of education than men: 9.7 per cent have completed their higher education, 20.4 per cent - specialized secondary education, 38.2 per cent - regular secondary education, 21.9 per cent - vocational and technical schooling, 9.8 per cent - general basic schooling. Among men, 10.3 per cent have completed their higher education, 10.9 per cent - specialized secondary education, 41.8 per cent - regular secondary education, and 15 per cent - general basic schooling.

313. The State guarantees unemployed citizens of Belarus: vocational training, retraining and continuing training, subject to the needs of society and in accordance with their inclinations, abilities, skills and the specific characteristics of their mental and physical development; the payment of unemployment benefits and scholarships during their training under the guidance of job agencies and employment and social welfare agencies; the provision of material assistance to the unemployed and their dependents; compensation for expenses arising from being sent by public employment services to work or study in another place; and the promotion of new or expanded business activity.

314. Belarus has established and runs 320 training and retraining institutions. It is common for training for women to be organized in such a way as to include a guaranteed job prospect.

(d), (e) Payment for work and social security

315. Wage parity plays an important role in ensuring equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women, and it significantly affects the level of benefits received after retirement. The average difference in wages between men and women in Belarus has declined. In 2007, the ratio of women's wages to men's was 78.4 per cent (in 2002 - 80.9 per cent).

316. One form that the social protection of citizens in the Republic of Belarus takes is the provision of pensions. About 1,700,000 women in Belarus receive a pension (67.5 per cent of the total number of pensioners).

317. Act No. 1595-VII of the Republic of Belarus of 17 April 1992 entitled "On pension security" stipulates that women can retire at a lower age and after a shorter working life than men: women are entitled to receive a pension on reaching 55 years of age and after having worked for at least 20 years (with no less than five years of contributory service).

318. Retirement at an earlier age is justified by the heavy or harmful nature or other specific aspects of the work performed. This legislation sets out a number of pension benefits that are available only to women.

319. Thus, retirement pensions are granted to:

- Women working in the textile industry on looms and machines (see the list of industries and occupations adopted by the Council of Ministers), when they reach 50 years of age and have performed that sort of work for at least 20 years;

- Women working as tractor drivers and mechanics, mechanics on construction, road-building and load-handling machines mounted on tractors and earthmoving machines, when they reach 50 years of age and have worked in that field for at least 20 years, of which at least 15 years involved doing that sort of work;
- Women who milk cows (milking machine operators) or raise calves or pigs on collective or State farms or other agricultural enterprises, who have reached the age of 50 and have at least 20 years of service where they were required to meet established work norms;
- Women with five or more children, all over 8 years of age, who have reached the age of 50 (even if the last child is still under 8 years old) and have worked for at least 15 years;
- Women with five or more children over the age of 16, who have worked on collective farms, State farms and other agricultural enterprises directly involved in agricultural production for at least 10 years (not including time off to take care of the children), whatever their current age.

320. The lower retirement age and the lower requirements in terms of length of work for women are made up for by the increased value of their service in calculating their pensions (each year of work experience, within the period required for qualifying for a full pension, i.e. 20 years for women and 25 years for men, adds 2.75 per cent of the wage to a woman's pension amount and 2.2 per cent for men).

321. The period of work that counts towards a pension includes the period of work during which contributions were paid in and, in the case of women, other periods as well. Such a period would be the time during which mothers took care of children under the age of three (up to 9 years maximum), or for a disabled child under the age of 18 years, and others.

322. The average amount of the old-age pension for women is slightly lower, by 10 per cent, than for men (pensions in May 2008 amounted to 356,400 roubles and 393,600 roubles respectively), which is due, mainly, to their lower salaries.

323. About 127,000 women get pensions owing to the particular conditions associated with the work they performed; the average size of those pensions is 4.3 per cent higher than the average retirement pension. This does not mean that there is discrimination against women in pay, rather that women traditionally work in sectors where the pay is lower.

(f) Protection of labour

324. Occupational safety and health remains a priority for the Government's social policy. During the reporting period Belarus established the current State occupational safety management system and developed national legislation in this area.

325. Various special purpose programmes have been implemented to this end, namely, the Republican Programme to Improve Labour Conditions and Protection for 2002 - 2005 (approved by Decree No. 881 of the Council of Ministers on 13 June 2001), followed by the adoption of the Framework Plan for State Administration of Labour Protection in the Republic of Belarus (approved by Decision No. 904 of the Council of Ministers on 16 August 2005) and the

Republican Special Purpose Programme to Improve Labour Conditions and Protection for 2006 - 2010 (approved by Decision No. 905 of the Council of Ministers on 16 August 2005) and other relevant sectoral and regional programmes.

326. Compulsory insurance against industrial accidents and occupational diseases has been introduced, with a view to ensuring the social protection of victims of industrial accidents and occupational diseases.

327. In order to protect the health of working women, the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus, by its Decision No. 765 of 26 May 2000, adopted the list of occupations that are so taxing or involve such dangerous conditions that women are not allowed to be hired to perform them

328. The development of draft laws and regulations, programmes and action plans to improve labour conditions and safety, and the supervision and monitoring of compliance with labour and labour protection laws are carried out within the framework of the social partnership. Safety issues are included in the general, sectoral and local agreements and collective bargaining agreements.

329. The system for education in the field of occupational safety is being strengthened. About 200 people have been retrained and have been awarded certification as occupational safety specialists. However, despite the downward trend in the number of industrial accidents and cases of occupational diseases, the social and economic losses caused by such problems remain significant.

330. We also have a problem in Belarus with women working in unhealthy conditions.

331. There are about 133,400 women working in conditions that don't meet sanitary or hygienic standards (about 30 per cent of all of the workers working in such sites). This includes women working in the chemical and petrochemical industries (46.7 per cent), the forestry, wood processing and pulp and paper industries (38.4 per cent), the glass and porcelain industries (38.2 per cent), and the grain-milling, cereal and animal feed industries (34.2 per cent). The most harmful factors in such industries are the high noise levels, the dust and the pollution of the air by gases in the work area.

332. In order to prevent disease and protect the lives and health of workers working in hazardous working conditions, including women, the law provides for a system of benefits and compensation: early retirement, additional holidays, shorter working hours, special diet therapy and other compensatory measures.

333. The number of women victims of industrial accidents continues to fall in Belarus. The data of the Ministry of Statistics and Analysis show that from 2002 to 2006 that the number of women hurt in industrial accidents fell by 29 per cent (in 2002 – 1,473 women, in 2003 – 1,465, in 2004 – 1,378, in 2005 – 1,186, in 2006 – 1,044 and in 2007 – 905).

Table 5
Statistics on the number of women killed in industrial accidents

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of women killed in industrial accidents</i>	<i>Percentage of all fatal victims of industrial accidents</i>
2002	18	7.9
2003	20	9.3
2004	15	6.0
2005	16	6.8
2006	11	4.8
2007	12	5.6

334. The State Labour Inspection Department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of the Republic of Belarus, working with specially authorized State control and monitoring bodies, prosecutors' offices and trade unions, systematically carries out State supervision and control over compliance with labour legislation in order to protect the employment rights of citizens.

335. Those supervisory and monitoring activities focus on compliance in respect of women and other categories of workers who enjoy special protection in labour relations. In 2007, the courts of the Republic of Belarus considered 4 civil cases involving claims for reinstatement submitted by pregnant women who had been dismissed by their employers and a suit submitted by a single mother raising a young child. In three cases the claims were granted, and one case was settled in an amicable settlement under which the plaintiff was reinstated by the defendant.

336. Since the entry into force of Presidential Decrees No. 392 of 23 August 2005 and No. 369 of 2 June 2006 entitled "On amending Presidential Decree No. 180 of 12 April 2000", which established safeguards for specified categories of women workers in the conclusion and extension of their contracts, only one case of a violation by an employer has been recorded regarding the extension of a contract with a woman who was on parental leave pending her child's reaching the age of three.

(2) Professional and family responsibilities of women

337. In the previous combined periodic reports for the period 1994-2001, we provided information on measures aimed at protecting pregnant women and women with children who need to combine parenting with work.

338. We can now add the following information. In implementing social policies with regard to working parents, Belarus has devoted serious attention to establishing ways for women to combine professional and family responsibilities. The labour legislation of the Republic of Belarus takes into consideration the fact that women must usually perform two functions simultaneously - the professional and the reproductive, and it regulates the special rights of women associated with motherhood.

339. In order to protect mothers and children, the country's labour laws establish guarantees with regard to hiring and dismissal and the working conditions of pregnant women and women with children.

340. Article 184 of the Labour Code stipulates that working women are entitled to maternity leave of 70 calendar days before delivery (if they work in an area with radioactive pollution - 90 days) and 56 days after delivery (in cases of difficult birth or the birth of two or more children - 70), with pay during this period and benefits under the State social insurance.

341. With the entry into force of Presidential Decree No. 369 of 2 June 2006 entitled "On amending Presidential Decree No. 180 of the Republic of Belarus of 12 April 2000", an employer must, with the consent of a mother (or father of the child instead of the mother or a guardian) who returns to work before or after the expiry of her maternity leave, which runs until the child reaches the age of three, extend or conclude a new contract for a period that runs until the child reaches the age of five.

342. Act No. 272-Z of 20 July 2007 entitled "On amending the Labour Code of the Republic of Belarus" (entered into force on 26 January 2008) introduced a number of amendments and addenda into the Labour Code. In particular, women with children under the age of three may be required to work at night only with their written consent (article 263).

343. Article 265 of the Labour Code provides that an employer must grant to a mother who is raising three or more children under the age of sixteen years or a disabled child under the age of eighteen years, the right to have the father, caregiver or guardian of the child receive an extra day off work per week with pay in the amount of that person's average daily wage, and also provides for the mother to allocate those days off among those persons.

344. A working father or other relatives actually caring for a sick child under the age of fourteen, a child less than three years old, a disabled child under the age of eighteen, or a disabled child under the age of eighteen, shall be entitled, in the event of the mother's illness, or that of the caregiver or guardian of the child, to temporary disability benefits, subject to the terms and conditions stipulated in the law.

345. The well-developed network of preschool institutions helps to educate and bring up young children and also allows parents to balance their work activities and training with their domestic and family responsibilities.

346. Care for young children in preschools is free, as in previous years, and parents pay 60 per cent of the cost of the food, based on a schedule that varies according to the child's age and the type and mode of operation of the preschool.

347. In 2007, the country had 4,109 preschools, which cared for more than 365,298 children, a coverage of 81.3 per cent of that age group. The number of preschool institutions is growing and they have various profiles: kindergarten-type schools are up by 7.01 per cent, preschool development centres have increased by 21.4 per cent, and the number of sanatorium preschools has grown by 3.75 per cent.

348. Short-term preschool care, from two to seven hours, is offered by 347 preschool groups. There is also a growth in new self-supporting preschools in both urban and rural areas.

349. Preschools provide a variety of educational and health services, and demand on the part of parents for paid educational services is growing. In 2007, there were 7,518 groups providing such services on a fee basis for 122,000 children. Such groups, focusing on fine art, dance, music and singing, sports, swimming, soft toys

and others, seek to develop the creative abilities of children. Such groups also put a priority on providing educational services in or near the child's home.

350. Preschool specialists assist the family in the upbringing and education of their children and in ensuring that the children can realize their right to a decent education. All preschools are staffed by qualified teachers, who were 50,568 in number at the end of 2007. The staff of preschools are constantly improving their professional skills.

351. Since 2006, in the framework of the "Child development in early childhood (from 0 to 6-7 years)" project, the National Education Institute of the Republic of Belarus, working with UNICEF, has been developing and testing new approaches to training in conscious parenting in various groups (family kindergartens, nursery schools, parent clubs and universities). Groups have been established to assist parents in adapting, and educational home visits by specialists have been introduced to provide professional assistance to parents in the upbringing and development of children and to acquaint them with new technologies in the raising and education of children from birth to 6 years, as well as to provide professional assistance to prospective parents and families whose children do not attend preschool.

Article 12. Health care

(1) Medical care

352. The health of women and children and the trends in health and demographic indicators, especially the decline in the maternal and infant mortality rates, reflect the state of socio-economic development of Belarusian society.

353. Belarus has seen a steady rise in public spending on health: from 2001 to 2006 expenditures in this area nearly tripled (from \$537,500 to \$1,579,500); per capita spending increased from \$52.80 to \$145.50 (2.76 times higher). Belarus's success in improving maternal and child health has been recognized at the international level. According to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (see *Transition Report 2005*) Belarus had the highest proportion of expenditure on health, 4.9 per cent of GDP, compared with other CIS countries.

354. Belarus is ahead of the CIS countries and several Eastern European countries in reducing maternal mortality (in 2007, 5.8 deaths per 100,000 live births) and child mortality for children under 5 years old (in 2007, 7 deaths per 1000 births).

355. Under the Act of the Republic of Belarus of 18 June 1993 (revision of 14 June 2007) entitled "On health care", medical care is provided to women in State medical institutions without charge.

356. Women's health status significantly affects the welfare of families and children, and priority is therefore given to the reproductive health of women and girls. The State Programme on the work of health care organizations has targets that were set by the Framework Plan for Health Care in the Republic of Belarus for 2003-2007 (approved by Decision No. 1525 of the Council of Ministers on 23 December 2005), the National Programme for the Demographic Security of the Republic of Belarus for 2007-2010 (approved by Presidential Decree No. 135 of 26 March 2007), the "Children of Belarus" Presidential Programme for 2006 - 2010 (approved by Presidential Decree No. 318 of 15 May 2006), focused on improving

women's reproductive health, strengthening the protection of mothers and children, and combating HIV/AIDS.

357. In Belarus, the reproductive health protection system includes the following preventive measures: preventing unwanted pregnancies; reducing the number of abortions and the morbidity caused by abortion; organizing events for various age groups to develop behaviour patterns that are safe for health and life; providing counselling on reproductive health issues; family planning training for women and their families on pregnancy and childbirth; perinatal protection of the foetus, including the prevention and treatment of intrauterine infections and the prevention of the vertical transmission of HIV infections; and the introduction of screening programmes for the prevention and early detection of diseases of the reproductive system.

358. There is a well-tuned health monitoring system in operation for girls and adolescent girls, including 47 child gynaecologist offices that have paediatricians, obstetricians and gynaecologists working together. Other specialists can also be brought in if necessary. Paediatric clinics perform dynamic examinations on girls and adolescent girls up to the age of 18. Screening examinations by paediatric gynaecologists (obstetric gynaecologists) are performed as girls begin their early childhood education (3 years old), grammar schooling (6-7 years old) and then annually from 12 to 18 years of age. When pathologies of the reproductive system are identified in girls, they are referred to a clinic for examination and treatment by paediatric gynaecologists (obstetric gynaecologists).

359. Family planning offices are in operation at 122 antenatal clinics. Health care organizations have established health schools for pregnant women, as well as clubs for young families and newly-weds.

360. Infertility affects 14.5 per cent of couples in Belarus. According to the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Belarus, there are now 9,856 registered cases of infertility in women and 1,794 in men. There were 2,912 new cases in women and 473 in men. Each district centre, including the city of Minsk, has set up "Marriage and Family" clinics for treating couples suffering from infertility, which include the services of the State Department of Assisted Reproduction Technology on secondment from the "Mother and Child" Republican Scientific-Practical Centre.

361. Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and abortion are important factors that have an impact on reproductive health, because they can lead to chronic inflammatory disease, infertility and endangerment of the health of offspring.

362. There has been a reduction in the incidence of sexually transmitted infections in the country. In 2004, the rate for new infections was 636 cases per 100,000 people, and in 2007 it was 541 cases per 100,000 people.

363. There has, however, been an increase in the number of pregnant women diagnosed with HIV infection (44 women in 2002, 113 in 2007). The number of pregnant women diagnosed with AIDS in 2007 has not been determined.

364. The State is fully active in preventing HIV/AIDS, in particular by taking measures to prevent transmission from mother to child. Pregnant women undergo voluntary testing for HIV/AIDS when they begin their course of medical observation in antenatal clinics. When a future mother is detected to have HIV/AIDS, she is put on antiretroviral therapy during pregnancy and after delivery,

in accordance with the regime recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO). Caesarean section is also used for safe delivery. The baby is given breast milk substitute when feeding.

365. In the first half of 2007, 88.2 per cent of pregnant women and 93.8 per cent of newborns received preventive treatment against perinatal HIV transmission. All children born of HIV-infected mothers are provided with replacement milk formula free of charge for up to one year through the "Prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS in the Republic of Belarus" project, an international technical assistance project implemented by UNDP jointly with the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Belarus.

366. During the reporting period, HIV/AIDS has been widely publicized in the media. Public service advertisements have been broadcast on television and are widely posted in public transport, health care institutions, schools and other places. Popular scientific and practical literature has been issued on healthy lifestyles, reproductive health and HIV/AIDS.

367. In 2005, the Republican Centre for Hygiene, Epidemiology and Public Health opened an office offering information and educational activities on HIV/AIDS, where citizens can get professional and confidential advice on the HIV/AIDS problem.

368. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have become actively involved in preventive work on HIV/AIDS. In 2007, the Christian Children's Fund assisted in carrying out a number of projects aimed at supporting HIV-infected children and their families. A project aimed at training pregnant women and women in maternity wards in appropriate and safe behaviour was run by an NGO called "Spirituality" or the "Gomel Regional Centre for Social and Psychological Support", working together with the maternity ward of the Gomel District Clinical Hospital, the Gomel City Maternity Hospital and the Klumov Third Municipal Clinical Hospital in Minsk. The project also included organizing a series of classes for couples, a counselling hotline, a young families club and the preparation of training materials. The "Spirituality" NGO also offers psycho-social support to HIV-positive parents.

369. The Health Care Committee of the Minsk City Executive Committee and the City Clinical Hospital for Children's Infectious Diseases of Minsk have assisted in setting up the "Belarusian Children's Hospice" project. The project aims at improving the quality of life of HIV-positive children and their parents and at increasing the knowledge of specialists. Under the project such families receive comprehensive palliative care at home.

370. One of the most pressing reproductive health problems is abortion. In Belarus, abortion is allowed by law. A pregnancy may be terminated at the request of the woman in the first 12 weeks. From 13 to 22 weeks, a pregnancy may be terminated with the consent of the woman under certain special conditions, which may be medical, i.e. serious illness, or social, e.g. being under age or the victim of rape or other reasons.

371. Termination of pregnancy for medical genetic reasons, such as the detection of a congenital foetal malformation that is incompatible with life, can be performed at any time when the malformation is detected, provided that the woman has consented and bearing in mind her health condition.

372. During the reporting period the number of abortions in the Republic of Belarus has declined by almost a half (89,000 in 2002 and 46,300 in 2007).

Table 6

The trend in abortions in the Republic of Belarus

<i>Year</i>	<i>All abortions (medical and suction)</i>	<i>Number of abortions per 1000 women of child-bearing age</i>	<i>Number of abortions per 100 births</i>
2004	71 700	26.8	80.7
2005	64 655	24.3	72
2006	58 516	22.1	61.0
2007	46 285	17.7	45.2

373. Despite the decline in the absolute number of abortions, abortion remains the main method of birth control. In recent years, the number of women of reproductive age using other types of contraception has increased (20.9 per cent of women used an intra-uterine device and 17.4 per cent used hormonal contraception), but usage of such methods is still less frequent than in Western Europe.

(2) Protection of the health of women and children

374. Under the legislation of the Republic of Belarus pregnant women receive medical check-ups in public health care organizations and inpatient medical care during and after childbirth, and newborns receive preventive medical care and medical check-ups.

375. According to the United Nations Population Fund *Report on the State of World Population 2007*, Belarus is the only CIS country where 100 per cent of births take place with the assistance of qualified medical assistance. In developed countries the figure is 99 per cent.

376. There are 2,526 obstetric gynaecologists working in Belarusian medical institutions (5.4 per cent of all physicians).

377. In 2006-2007, the Republic of Belarus reorganized its obstetric gynaecological services. The existing large regional maternity hospitals and district hospitals now include perinatal centres to provide specialized care for women with severe obstetric and somatic problems, as well as assistance in caring for premature babies.

378. The "Mother and Child" Republican Scientific-Practical Centre, which is currently the chief medical institution in the field of obstetric gynaecology, neonatology, paediatrics and medical genetics, provides medical assistance to women with the most severe obstetric and extragenital problems, intensive therapy and care for newborns, including premature and profoundly premature infants from all regions of Belarus, and diagnostic services for hereditary and congenital diseases; minimally invasive, laser and cryosurgical methods are being introduced, along with in vitro fertilization and other modern medical technology.

379. Maternity hospitals are working on a system to keep the mother and child together. Particular attention is devoted to promoting natural breast-feeding, which is a key factor in ensuring the adequate growth and development of the child. Efforts to support breast-feeding have led to a doubling in the number of children breastfed over the past ten years.

380. An important factor in protecting the health of women and children is making it possible for pregnant women to consult obstetric gynaecologists in a timely manner.

381. Belarus has introduced an incentive allowance for pregnant women to register at an antenatal clinic before the twelfth week of their pregnancy and to fully comply with doctors' recommendations. This has led to a significant increase in the proportion of women who have registered in early pregnancy. In 2007, 95 per cent of women registered their pregnancy before the twelfth week. Prenatal ultrasound examinations are very common and are performed at various times during the pregnancy: up to 12 weeks - 91.6 per cent, 12 to 22 weeks - 94.3 per cent, after 22 weeks - 92.1 per cent.

382. All antenatal clinics conduct prenatal ultrasound diagnosis of congenital malformations of the foetus. This makes it possible to identify the abnormality and take preventive measures to avoid worsening of the condition of the foetus. Such measures have reduced the frequency of hereditary and congenital disorders among newborns and have reduced child disability by 10 to 15 per cent.

383. In Belarus, the trend as far as medical and demographic processes are concerned is positive. In 2007, the number of births increased by 14.3 per cent with 102,714 births (89,844 in 2005).

Article 13. Other areas of socio-economic life

(a) Social protection of the family

384. Creating an enabling environment for family life and social support for families with children is of special concern of the State.

385. The system of social protection for families with children includes a set of legally recognized economic, social and employment guarantees and rights, and social institutions for their implementation and for enabling families to perform their social functions.

386. In order to ensure fully developed care and upbringing of children in families, the State provides the necessary level of material support in the form of Government benefits, guarantees the right to take advantage of childcare facilities and provides benefits to pay for meals in preschools, in accordance with the laws of the Republic of Belarus (article 21 of Act No. 2570-XII of the Republic of Belarus entitled "On the rights of the child" of 19 November 1993).

387. The period during which the family receives State support for bringing up and maintaining children has been extended to the child's reaching 18 years of age (article 1 of Act No. 2570-XII of the Republic of Belarus entitled "On the rights of the child" of 19 November 1993).

388. The National Programme for the Demographic Security of the Republic of Belarus for 2007-2010 (approved by Presidential Decree No. 135 of 26 March 2007), the "Children of Belarus" Presidential Programme for 2001-2005 (approved by Presidential Decree No. 281 of 24 May 2001) and "Children of Belarus" for 2006-2010 (approved by Presidential Decree No. 318 of 15 May 2006) all devote special attention to social support for families and children.

389. The main forms of public assistance to families with children include: cash payments to families upon the birth of children, maintenance and upbringing (benefits, pensions), as well as material assistance in cash and in kind; labour, tax, housing, medical and other benefits for parents and children; social services for families (the provision of medico-social, psychological, pedagogical, socio-legal and other services).

390. Since 2002, allowances are set as a percentage of the average per capita minimum subsistence budget and are reviewed on a quarterly basis as that minimum budget increases. The reviews for the period 2002-2006 led to increases in benefits by a factor of more than 9. Monthly allowances for child care up to age 3, as well as benefits to families raising a disabled child or a child infected with HIV or AIDS up to the age of 18, are granted regardless of the total income per family member.

391. From 1 January 2008 the allowance for child care up to age 3 increased from 65 to 80 percent of the average per capita minimum survival budget. This type of benefit is given to all families without regard to income.

392. The allowance for children aged 3 to 16 (18) amounts to 30 per cent of the minimum subsistence budget, calculated on an average per capita basis, and is granted, provided that the average total monthly income per family member for the preceding year does not exceed 60 per cent of the minimum subsistence budget in the prices of September of the previous year. The allowance is allocated and paid, in the amount of 50 per cent of the established sum, provided that the average total monthly income per family member for the preceding year does not exceed 80 per cent of the minimum subsistence budget in the prices of September of the previous year.

393. Since 2002, Belarus has been working to improve the national legislation governing the allocation and payment of benefits.

394. Various normative legal acts (Presidential Decree No. 726 of 18 December 2006 entitled "On the calculation of social benefits" and the Act of the Republic of Belarus of 28 December 2007 entitled "On amending and adding to the Act of the Republic of Belarus entitled 'On state assistance to families raising children'") have been adopted to increase the size of payments to certain categories of recipients, allocate some benefits to families that did not previously have such rights, and improve the procedure for the allocation of benefits to families raising children with disabilities, as well as to large and single-parent families.

395. An important measure in the material support provided to families by the State has been the increase in the size of a lump-sum benefit in connection with the birth of the first child from two to five minimum subsistence budget units, and with the birth of the second and subsequent children to seven minimum subsistence budget units (Presidential Decree No. 268 of 8 June 2007 entitled "On increasing public support for families on the birth of children").

396. The law provides for supplements to the benefits: for children born out of wedlock, if information about the father of the child has been recorded in the book of registry of births at the mother's request; for children adopted by single persons; for children raised by one parent or for children under guardianship or care, if the other parent(s) refuses to pay child support, or in other cases specified in the legislation of the Republic of Belarus, where the recovery of the child support is impossible; for disabled children under 18 years old, raised in a family; for the

children of a parent serving in the armed forces for a fixed period or a military cadet; for the children of persons of draftable age who are called up for service in a mobilization resulting from war or some special reason; and for the children of reservists while they are on active duty or are being trained.

397. Since February of 2006, Presidential Decree No. 95 of 14 February 2006 entitled "On strengthening support for families with children less than three years of age" eliminated the differences in the size of benefits for the care of a child less than three years of age for different categories of recipients. As a result, non-working women are now on a par with working women and are entitled to an allowance of 65 per cent of the minimum subsistence budget.

398. Decision No. 1174 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus of 21 September 2004 entitled "On the payment of financial compensation to families on the birth of twins" seeks to strengthen the State's social protection of families on the birth of twins. Under the Decision financial compensation in the amount of two minimum subsistence budget units is paid for each twin child, instead the earlier entitlement to a set of children's basic necessities.

399. Under Decision No. 271 of the Council of Ministers of 1 March 2007 entitled "On the free provision of food to children during the first two years of life" (as amended and supplemented), families whose average monthly per capita household income does not exceed 100 per cent of the average per capita minimum subsistence budget over the past two quarters are entitled to the free provision of food for children during the first two years of their lives. By expanding the eligibility criteria and abolishing the principle of categories of recipients for the provision of free meals to the children less than three years of age, Belarus significantly increased the number of recipients of this type of State social assistance.

400. In order to protect motherhood and childhood in the labour legislation of Belarus, various guarantees related to employment, dismissal and improving the working conditions of pregnant women and women with children have been strengthened. Working women are granted maternity leave of 70 calendar days before delivery (those working in areas with radioactive contamination get 90 days) and 56 days after delivery (in the event of a difficult birth or the birth of two or more children - 70 days) with payment during this period of benefits under State social insurance.

401. Working women, regardless of seniority, may, if they so wish, after the expiration of their maternity leave, be granted leave to care for their child until he or she reaches the age of three, with the payment during this period of the monthly State benefit. Such leave may be used by women in full or in portions of any length. Child care leave until the child reaches the age of three may be granted to a working father or other relatives actually caring for the child, instead of to the mother, or where a guardianship has been established, to the guardian.

402. Other means of materially assisting families with children include tax advantages; discounts on preschool fees, the cost of textbooks and school supplies, the cost of food for children in preschools, the cost of drugs and public transport; and supplements to unemployment benefits. Thus, all children under the age of three are provided with free prescription drugs and medications for free, and those under seven are entitled to free travel on urban and suburban transport, except taxis.

403. Presidential Decree No. 638 of 14 December 2007 entitled "On some measures of State support of the population" seeks to optimize the benefit system. The Decree significantly expanded the eligibility criteria for assistance: up to 100 per cent of the highest average per capita minimum subsistence budget over the past two quarters for monthly social benefits and 120 per cent of the minimum subsistence budget for lump-sum social benefits. The use of categories of beneficiaries for determining the benefit was also eliminated.

404. Low-income families also get non-cash housing subsidies.

405. In 2007, the main recipients of State social assistance were large families and single parent families, amounting to 48,500 people, or 81.9 per cent of all recipients.

406. Families with disabled children up to the age of 18 amounted to 0.5 per cent of recipients of targeted assistance in 2007 (286 people in all).

407. The improvement of the social services system is one of the leading and rapidly growing components of the country's social policy

408. Decision No. 724 of the Council of Ministers of 30 May 2003 entitled "On measures to introduce a system of State standards for social services to the population of the Republic of Belarus" led to the establishment and development of a network of social services clinics represented in each administrative district by the local centres for social services (156 such clinics in all). As at 1 January 2008, 1,608,000 citizens in difficult situations had been registered in these centres.

409. In order to improve social services, the structure of regional social services centres is being systematically developed. Overall, in 2007 the number of structural sub-units units of these centres has increased from 656 to 710.

410. This process is designed to facilitate the activities of the Programme on the Development and Optimization of the Network of Social Services by 2010 (approved by Decision No. 1229 of the Council of Ministers on 28 September 2007).

411. It should be noted that in recent years, as an indicator of the effectiveness of the State's social policies, there has been a steady decline in the number of citizens with incomes below the minimum subsistence budget. In 2002, 30.5 per cent of the population had incomes below the minimum subsistence budget, and in 2007, only 7.7 per cent. The proportion of poor households with children and with per capita disposable incomes below the subsistence budget declined from 36 per cent in 2002 to 9.7 per cent in 2007.

412. One of the priorities of social policy of the Republic of Belarus is the social welfare of older persons, including elderly women.

413. In order to improve the situation of this category of citizens, various programmes have been adopted, including the Republican Comprehensive Programme of Social Support for the Elderly, Veterans and Persons Affected by the Wars for 2006-2010 (approved by Decision No. 1488 of the Council of Ministers on 19 December 2005) and the Comprehensive Programme to Improve Social Assistance for Single Senior Citizens in the Republic of Belarus by 2010 (approved by Decision No. 855 of the Council of Ministers on 13 July 2004).

414. The activities of those programmes are aimed at addressing issues of socio-legal protection, health promotion, participation in appropriate work, targeted social support, and development of the infrastructure that provides social services for

veterans, the disabled and the elderly. Modelled on the Republican Programme, similar regional programmes were developed and adopted.

415. For the needy elderly, various activities have carried out to provide effective social assistance and social services, provide various benefits and social security, improve housing conditions, put telephones in their homes and apartments, enhance the quality of medical care and sanatorium and spa treatments, provide special transport and other means of social rehabilitation, and provide additional types of services.

416. The services most in demand are those provided by social assistance agencies in the home. Currently, such assistance is being provided to over 79,000 elderly and disabled citizens, of whom 70 per cent live in villages. For citizens who cannot live independently, the centres have set up 42 branches providing 24-hour home-stay for 1,400 senior citizens and disabled persons.

417. The centres are constantly trying to introduce new types of social services, such as nursing services, transportation and other one-off social welfare services, including some services provided for payment. This promotes the principle of social justice and the targeting of assistance and helps in obtaining additional budgetary resources to strengthen the logistical capacities of the centres.

418. Resources provided by local executive authorities and enterprises have made it possible to open 7 small boarding facilities designed to house up to 50 senior citizens and disabled persons.

(b) Right to obtain loans and credit

419. There is nothing in Belarus that prevents women from obtaining bank credits or loans on the same basis as men. With the emergence of new forms of economic relations, which has allowed individuals greater opportunities to realize their potential through business activities, it is quite natural and logical that women in Belarus have become active in the establishment and functioning of economic entities with a fundamentally different organizational and legal status and form of ownership.

420. Belarus attaches great importance to the development of small businesses, which play an important role in socio-economic development and promote the development of a competitive environment, greater production of consumer goods, a broader range of services, and the creation of new jobs and greater stability in the economy.

421. The scope of small businesses covers almost all sectors and spheres of activity. In 2007, the largest number of small businesses operated in trade and catering - 39.6 per cent, industry - 23.6 per cent, construction - 12.1 per cent, and transport - 5.9 per cent.

422. The system of State support for small businesses emerged after the adoption of Act No. 685-XIII of the Republic of Belarus of 16 October 1996 entitled "On State support of small business in Belarus". Since 1997, an annual programme of State support of small business has been developed and implemented.

423. In order to protect the rights and legitimate interests of people engaged in entrepreneurial activities, expand the market for goods and services and establish a favourable economic climate, the President of the Republic of Belarus signed

Decree No. 48 of 24 March 2005 entitled "On urgent measures to support entrepreneurship" and Decree No. 285 of 18 June 2005 entitled "On some measures to regulate entrepreneurial activity".

424. A unified support system for entrepreneurs has been developed and is in operation with the following structure: the Department of Entrepreneurship of the Ministry of the Economy serves as the Government body responsible for giving effect to the State policy to support entrepreneurship, the Belarusian Fund for Financial Support of Entrepreneurs, the regional institutions providing financial support for entrepreneurs, and local institutions providing support in the regions (business support centres and small business incubators), as well as non-profit organizations of entrepreneurs.

425. The Programme for State Support of Small Business in the Republic of Belarus for 2007 (approved by Decision No. 264 of the Council of Ministers on 28 February 2007) seeks to further develop small businesses, increase the number of small businesses and create new jobs. Resources from the national budget and local budgets, as well as funds from banks, have been designated to finance the activities of the Programme, which includes financial support to entrepreneurs through support to investment projects and the provision of financial resources and assets through financial leases and other kinds of financial support.

426. The microcredit system in Belarus made a significant qualitative step forward in 2004-2005, when the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development began providing Belarusian banks with funds to finance small businesses.

427. According to Belarusian banks, which act as the agents for developing the investment credit line from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, about 30 per cent of the clients seeking long-term loans recently were women working as individual entrepreneurs.

428. Some of the types of financial support provided to female entrepreneurs include funds for the development of equipment leasing, loan guarantees, the establishment of a system to insure investment risks in small business, in particular the establishment of credit guarantee funds for small businesses, which are not available in Belarus.

429. Under the State Employment Programme for 2007 financial assistance has been offered to the business initiatives of 1,300 women (45.7 per cent of the total amount of the loans and grants received).

(c) Participation in cultural life and sports

430. In the Act of 4 June 1991 (as amended on 18 July 2007) entitled "Culture in the Republic of Belarus", articles 15 to 20 spell out the rights and duties of citizens in the area of culture.

431. The State guarantees the right of citizens of Belarus - men and women - to participate in cultural life and come to know the values of national and world culture, and promotes the development of the network of cultural and educational institutions.

432. In Belarus there are 3,986 public libraries, 145 museums, 140 cinemas and 30 theatres, which provide the institutional context for cultural recreation and are accessible to all segments of the population.

433. Belarus is systematically developing artistic and aesthetic activities in the education of children and young people and, to that end, is setting up schools of music, art, dance, drama school and school crafts. In addition to providing a context for education, these institutions have been active in cultural events and educational activities, and their students participate in concerts, national and international festivals and shows.

434. Clubs are being established to organize the leisure time of young people, including amateur art groups, drama studios and lecture courses on various academic subjects.

435. Theatrical performances, concerts, talk shows, open-air spectacles, entertainment programmes, art exhibitions, singing competitions and beauty contests are continuously being organized.

436. Various laws, including the Act of 18 June 1993 entitled "On physical culture and sports", as amended by the Act of 29 November 2003, Act No. 206-Z of 9 January 2007 entitled "On amending and adding to the Act of the Republic of Belarus entitled 'On Tourism'", the State Programme for the Development of Physical Culture and Sports in the Republic of Belarus for 2003-2006" (approved by Decision No. 254 of the Council of Ministers on 16 January 2003), and the National Tourism Development Programme of the Republic of Belarus for 2006-2010 (approved by Decision No. 1796 of the Council of Ministers on 21 December 2007), have focused on the use of physical culture, sport and tourism in the interests of the individual and society, especially children and students, and on the organization of physical culture and mass sports in the State education system.

437. The laws guarantee and ensure equal rights and opportunities for physical culture and sport for girls and boys, and for women and men. These rights are given effect through the State system of kindergartens, schools, sports schools for children and youths, voluntary physical fitness and sports associations of citizens at home, school, work, and places of rest and recreation, as well as through institutions and businesses that provide paid services in the area of physical fitness.

438. In Belarus, there are more than 230 stadiums, 40 sports riding halls, 235 swimming pools, 6,500 gymnasiums and more than 650 mini-pools in preschools, as well as Olympic training bases, sports and tennis halls, multi-purpose ice rinks and more than 10,000 public playgrounds. Access to sports and sports facilities by all categories of the population is guaranteed without any discrimination.

Article 14. Rural women

(1) Situation of rural women

439. Women have accounted for and still represent a significant portion of the rural labour force, employed not only in the typical "female" sectors (services, lifestyle and education), but also in the main sectors of agriculture, namely, animal husbandry and cultivation.

440. Social, living and working conditions in rural areas affect the life expectancy of rural residents. Thus, life expectancy at birth in 2007 for women was 76.2 years. Women's life expectancy in rural areas was 3.2 years less than that for women living in urban areas.

441. The crude mortality rate of the rural population declined from 24.1 per cent in 2002 to 22.6 per cent in 2007.

442. In Belarus, internal migration flows are directed mainly from rural to urban areas. However, 60 per cent of the population leaving rural areas are young people, predominantly women. The countryside is home to 1,400,00 women.

443. In 2007, agriculture employed 179,400 women, or 40 per cent of the total number of such workers. However, the number of women in that sector continues to decline.

Table 7

Number of women working in agriculture

	<i>Thousands of people</i>			<i>Percentage of all workers in the sector</i>		
	2005	2006	2007	2005	2006	2007
Total	2 112.6	2 142.0	2 179.6	52.9	52.7	52.8
Those working in agriculture	184.1	182.3	179.4	39.1	39.3	40.0

444. The wages of women employed in agriculture is about on a par with the level of the average wage of all workers in agriculture. Women working as operators of cow milking machines have wages that are 40 per cent higher.

Table 8

Calculated average nominal wage for workers, disaggregated by sex and sector of the economy (in thousands of roubles)

	<i>2000</i>		<i>2006</i>		<i>2007</i>		<i>Women's wages as a percentage of men's</i>		
	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	2000	2006	2007
Total	78.7	97.2	589.5	738.0	694.8	886.5	81.0	79.9	78.4
Working in agriculture	49.1	52.2	383.0	375.2	450.7	458.0	94.0	102.1	98.4

445. Since 2002, Belarus has experienced a reduction in poverty in rural areas. The proportion of the population in rural areas with a per capita disposable income below the minimum subsistence budget in 2007 was 12.4 per cent (compared to 35.1 per cent in 2002), whereas in cities and towns in 2007 it was 5.6 per cent (in 2002 - 28.4 per cent). Agricultural production on the private farms of rural residents and the suburban and urban garden plots of city residents continues to have a significant impact on the standard of living.

Table 9

Proportion of households with garden plots (at the beginning of the year, in percentage) (based on a selective study of households)

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
All households	63.4	60.3	62.1	60.6	60.3	58.5	59.3
Urban and suburban areas	47.9	43.8	45.1	42.5	43.1	41.3	41.8
Rural settlements	94.9	95.1	95.2	96.1	93.9	93.3	93.8

446. Production from these garden plots is mainly for personal consumption (94 per cent), but also serves to assist relatives and friends or is brought to market (6 per cent).

Table 10.

Proportion of income derived from private market gardens compared to total income (in per cent) (based on a selective study of households)

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
All households	10.8	10.1	8.4	7.1	6.2	5.8
Urban and suburban areas	6.9	6.5	5.6	4.4	3.9	3.6
Rural areas	20.4	19.2	15.4	14.1	12.1	11.8

447. There is some unevenness in the provision of social benefits depending on one's place of residence. For example, in 2007 the average total amount of social benefits received per family in urban areas was 1.6 times higher than in rural areas, specifically: for food - 0.79 times; for child nutrition and tuition in preschools - 0.64 times; and for drugs - 2 times as high. This is partially offset by targeted social assistance. For example, in rural areas the proportion of families receiving such assistance out of the total number who applied for it was 2 times higher than in urban areas.

(2) (a) Employment programmes in villages

448. The main instrument for implementing the State policy to promote employment is the annual State Programme to Promote Employment in the Republic of Belarus, which is adopted by the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus. On the basis of the State Programme regional programmes are developed that take into account the local situation.

449. In order to implement the State policy to promote employment and ensure that citizens enjoy appropriate protection, various labour, employment and social welfare bodies have been established, whose work is organized and led by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of the Republic of Belarus. The structure of the corresponding local executive and administrative authorities includes the regional labour, employment and social welfare authorities, and in the city of Minsk - the Committee on Labour, Employment and Social Welfare of the Minsk City Executive Committee.

450. Under the State Programme to Promote Employment, the following measures aimed at helping women, including rural women, find employment are being implemented:

- Specialized job vacancies fairs, with a predominant emphasis on the use of female labour;
- A primary focus on the vocational training of unemployed mothers who have not worked for a long time owing to their involvement in child care, with an emphasis on fields in which they can engage in self-employment and work at home;

- Priority allocation of budgetary loans from the Social Security Fund of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of the Republic of Belarus to employers who create jobs for the employment of women;
- Monitoring the observance by employers of labour laws in hiring and dismissing women with children under the age of 3.

451. A job quota system is widely used to promote the employment of vulnerable categories of citizens, primarily single women, those with many children and those who are raising minor children and/or disabled children.

452. The State Programme for Rural Revival and Development for 2005-2010 (approved by Presidential Decree No. 150 of 25 March 2005) includes a set of measures to promote employment of the rural population, including women.

453. Among the results of the State Programme in 2007 were:

- Permanent jobs for 26,700 unemployed people in rural areas, using newly created and existing jobs, which amounted to 127 per cent of the annual target for the Programme;
- Vocational training and retraining of 5,400 unemployed people in rural areas (150 per cent of the target), of which 705 live in agrotowns;
- Jobs were found for 2,400 unemployed living in settlements that had been converted into agrotowns in 2006;
- With the help of financial assistance from the State Employment Fund 800 jobs were created for rural residents.

454. In 2007, the labour, employment and social welfare bodies of the Republic of Belarus received requests for assistance from 432 unemployed people to organize their own businesses in rural areas. All of them were supported through loans and grants. At the same time citizens living in small towns and settlements with persistently high levels of unemployment receive a one-time non-reimbursable State cash benefit (subsidy) amounting to 10 times the minimum subsistence budget.

455. The number of unemployed people living in rural areas at the end of 2007 was 9,100, a decline of 700 people.

456. To keep the public informed about the availability of jobs in the agricultural sector of the country, including those providing housing, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of the Republic of Belarus has established and continuously updates on its website a computerized information system called the "All-Republican Job Vacancies Data Bank" (jobs available).

(b) Protection of health

457. The State Programme for Rural Revival and Development for 2005-2010 (approved by Presidential Decree No. 10 of 25 March 2005) calls for health interventions to benefit rural populations in order to ensure them access to skilled medical care.

458. In particular, general medical outpatient clinics serving patients within a radius of 10-15 kilometres are being set up with a paramedic on duty 24 hours a day in each clinic. Work is under way to organize outpatient clinics offering general medical care on the model of a family physician, providing outpatient polyclinic

services, replacing inpatient medical care. Mandatory clinical examination of all children and adults of working age has been introduced in order to prevent disease and monitor patients with chronic diseases.

459. There has been a growing effort to develop general practitioners, district doctors (internists, paediatricians) and dentists in order to reach an average of 1 doctor for 1,300 people in rural areas.

460. The State Programme includes efforts to improve the material and logistical resources of sanatoriums operated by the "Belagrozdravnitsa" unitary enterprise to improve the treatment and rehabilitation of workers of agriculture.

461. The Framework Plan for Health in the Republic of Belarus for 2003-2007 (approved by Decision No. 1276 of the Council of Ministers on 8 October 2003) gave priority to the development of services to protect motherhood and childhood, provide medical genetic care, and protect the social interests of citizens by providing free medical care.

462. In order to implement State policy on reproductive health, the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Belarus, together with health agencies, is devoting targeted efforts to increase the number of family-planning offices at antenatal clinics, obstetric stations and medical outpatient clinics (for rural residents), and to increase the availability of reproductive health services and advice on family planning.

463. In Belarus, 2431 obstetric stations and outpatient clinics have been set up to provide medical care in rural areas. Referrals can be organized, allowing for consultations with specialists in the regional and district hospitals.

464. Each year, as part of the events for Mother's Day, Women's Day and Family Day, local authorities carry out special actions to benefit remote rural settlements by organizing visiting consultations with medical and social workers and psychologists.

(c) Protection of labour

465. Appropriate measures are being taken to improve the working conditions of rural women.

466. In agriculture, women are not to work in jobs where, according to the list of jobs involving heavy work and work in hazardous conditions (approved by Decision No. 765 of the Council of Ministers on 26 May 2002), the use of female labour is prohibited.

467. Under the Sectoral Programme to Improve Labour Conditions and the Protection of Labour for 2006-2010 (approved by Decision No. 5 of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food of Belarus on 21 January 2007) the number of jobs involving harmful and/or dangerous conditions in 2011 will be reduced by 20 per cent compared with 2005, including for women, in order to improve agricultural production. In accordance with the Programme work is under way to equip livestock farms with computers, install running water in the facilities and centralized water heating, set up rooms for the psychological relief and health of women, transport female workers to and from work in employer-owned transport, and organize sanatorium and health resort visits for women. The use of female workers on night shifts is prohibited.

468. In order to create better conditions for women-machine operators working on tractors, combines and other complex agricultural machinery, production quotas were cut by 10 percent from the usual norms in such enterprises.

469. For women employed in several agricultural occupations, the Programme provides for preferential conditions for retirement (before reaching the general retirement age of 55).

- Women working as milkers (milking machine operators) or raising calves or pigs on collective or State farms and other agricultural enterprises can retire at 50 if they have worked for at least 20 years in that occupation in accordance with the established norms of service;
- Women with five or more children, having raised them to the age of 8, may retire at 50 (even if the fifth child is still under 8 years of age) after having worked for at least 15 years;
- Women with five or more children, having raised them to the age of 16, may retire, regardless of their age, after having worked on collective farms, State farms or other agricultural enterprises directly in agricultural production for at least 10 years (without counting the length of time caring for children).

470. The Sectoral Programme provides for measures to improve the status of young people in rural areas, to promote agricultural production by young qualified young workers and create enabling socio-economic conditions in rural areas, and to develop jobs focused on the employment of women. These measures will help reduce the exodus of women from rural areas and improve the demographic situation.

(d) Vocational training

471. In order to get women more actively involved in the reforms affecting the agricultural sector in Belarus, various measures have been adopted to improve their competitiveness in the labour market. Agricultural universities are preparing students for new specializations that are in demand. A list of occupations has been drawn up for which training courses have been devised in rural vocational and technical schools.

472. In education, Presidential Decree No. 80 of 7 February 2006 approved the Rules for Admission to Higher and Secondary Specialized Educational Institutions, which should promote the targeted training of specialists for agricultural organizations, including women living in rural areas. Under the Rules, admission to distance learning at agricultural education institutions will be announced each December, which makes it easier for women employed in agricultural production to study.

473. Thanks to those improvements, which facilitated study at higher and secondary special education in agricultural universities and secondary specialized educational institutions, 28,300 women enrolled (44.2 per cent of the total number of students and pupils).

(e) and (g) Improving working conditions

474. Additional guarantees of employment assistance to citizens, including those in rural areas, are provided through the development and implementation of targeted State programmes to promote employment, generate more jobs and establish

specialized labour organizations (including those involving work for the disabled), provide vocational guidance services and training through special programmes, and other measures.

475. The State Programme for Rural Development for 2005-2010 (approved by Presidential Decree No. 150 of 25 March 2005) has been under implementation in Belarus for the past two years. The national budget has allocated about 70 trillion roubles for its implementation. The main objective of the Programme is the revival and development of the social and productive sectors of the village, so as to ensuring sustainable agricultural production, raise rural incomes, create jobs, and promote the improvement of the demographic situation in the countryside.

476. The State Programme for Revival and Development in Rural Areas includes the establishment of agrotowns, which are based on the rural councils and the central farms of the agricultural organizations. In 2007 425 agrotowns were established (by 2010, the plan calls for 1481).

477. The mechanism for providing financial support to the unemployed, including those in rural areas, to help them start new businesses has been operating in Belarus for several years. In particular, in 2007 the State Employment Service has assisted more than 2,800 unemployed to start their own businesses. Financial support is allocated to unemployed to help organize entrepreneurial activities and develop self-employment (especially in services) through funds from the State extra-budgetary Social Security Fund of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of the Republic of Belarus, which are then transferred to local budgets for activities to provide employment.

478. Labour, employment and social welfare bodies have been instrumental in organizing entrepreneurial activities. This support is expressed not only in funds, but also in organizational and methodical support, namely, by informing the unemployed about the procedure and conditions for assistance in starting a business, through referrals to vocational training, and through assistance to the unemployed in preparing the necessary documents for obtaining the grant.

479. Since 2002, a club called "Business Women of Belarus", created with the assistance of the Belarusian Union of Women, has been operating. At meetings of the Club women discuss problems relating to industry and issues relating to women's participation in the social and political life of society. The "Business Women of Belarus" club has assisted in organizing courses at district and regional centres for heads of grass-roots organizations, the "School of Women's Leadership". Seminars, training sessions and consultations on small business have been organized for women who want to start their own businesses. Events of this kind have also been organized by the "Business Women's Club of Brest".

480. Experience has shown that rural women tend to prefer to engage in commerce, shipping and the provision of consumer services, including hairdressing, sewing and repairing clothing and footwear, and the repair of household appliances.

(h) Improving living conditions in rural areas

481. Priority activities in the efforts to develop the social sphere in rural areas include increasing the attractiveness of the work and living conditions of the rural population, improving infrastructure in rural settlements; developing the construction of housing and communal facilities in rural areas; upgrading roads and

developing transport in rural areas; improving the quality of education in rural areas; improving rural health services; developing cultural and recreational activities; maintaining and developing the traditional culture of the regions; developing physical culture, sport and tourism in rural areas; and improving domestic and commercial services to the rural population.

482. An important form of State support for families living in rural areas is providing them with soft loans for housing construction. Each year, the Council of Ministers and the National Bank of Belarus jointly decide on a target for the construction of the required number of houses, which are then financed through concessional lending. This construction includes, for example, farmsteads with improved planning, including outbuildings and yard improvements for people listed as needing better housing (equally for both women and men).

483. Concessional loans can cover a maximum of 95 per cent of the cost of building a dwelling with the standard concessional surface area and the typical consumer features required for citizens residing permanently and working in rural areas and for large families. A loan is provided to such citizens for up to 40 years at 3 per cent interest per annum.

Article 15. Equality before the law

(1) Equality before the law

484. The periodic report for 1994 to 2001 noted that the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus guaranteed the equality of men and women before the law.

(2) and (3) Equal rights in concluding contracts

485. The State ensures that citizens have equal rights to conclude contracts and dispose of property, as well as that all citizens will be treated equally at all stages of court proceedings.

(4) Choice of place of residence

486. In Belarus, men and women are guaranteed the same rights regarding freedom of movement and the choice of residence.

487. In order to make it possible for citizens to exercise their rights to freedom of movement and the choice of residence under article 30 of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, Presidential Decree No. 413 of 7 September 2007 entitled "On improving the system for registration of citizens at their domiciles and at their places of residence" abolished the residence permit system on 1 January 2008 and introduced a single system for registering citizens of the Republic of Belarus, as well as foreign citizens and stateless persons residing permanently in the Republic of Belarus, at their place of domicile and their place of residence.

488. The rights and obligations incurred by a citizen in connection with a permanent or temporary residence permit are preserved.

489. Registration at one's domicile (permanent) is a civic duty and registration at one's place of residence (temporary) is a right (except, in particular, for people coming from another locality to study in educational institutions or research organizations, who must register for their period of training).

Article 16. Marriage and family relations*(1) (a) Equality upon entering marriage*

490. In addition to the information in the previous report we offer the following information. The Act of the Republic of Belarus of 20 June 2006 amended and added to the Code on Marriage and the Family of the Republic of Belarus.

491. A new article 20-1 was added to the Code on Marriage and the Family of the Republic of Belarus, relating to the equality of the spouses in family relations. Under this article, all issues regarding the marriage and family relations must be decided by the spouses jointly, by mutual consent and on the basis of equality. The spouses are obliged to base their family relationships on mutual respect and mutual sharing of family responsibilities, assisting the other spouse in the implementation by each of them of their rights to maternity (paternity), physical and spiritual development, and education, and to display their talents, work and leisure.

492. Since the Act came into force, the right to conclude marriage contracts resides with the persons who are marrying, as well as their spouses. The marriage contract between the marrying parties enters into force on the date of registration of the marriage by the public authorities who register acts relating to civil status. In the part that defines the subject of the marriage contract, the provisions of the Code on Marriage and the Family of the Republic of Belarus have not changed. Accordingly, the parties to the marriage contract may now, either before (before concluding the marriage) or at any time before a divorce, regulate, through such an agreement, any property or non-property relationships between the spouses, provided that the agreement does not contravene the Act on Marriage and the Family and does not violate the rights and legitimate interests of others.

(d) Responsibilities of the parents

493. On 24 November 2006, Presidential Decree No. 18 of the Republic of Belarus entitled "On some measures to protect children from dysfunctional families" was adopted. The Decree puts parents under the obligation to reimburse the State for its expenditures relating to maintaining their children in State care, if the children have been taken from the parents because the parents are chronic alcoholics or drug addicts or otherwise unable properly to fulfil their responsibilities to raise and support the children, which has put the children at risk socially.

(2) Minimum marriage age

494. The Act of the Republic of Belarus of 20 June 2006 brought some amendments to the Code on Marriage and the Family of the Republic of Belarus, modifying the rules for lowering the minimum marriageable age limit (18 years). In particular, in exceptional cases resulting from pregnancy or childbirth, or in cases where a minor has gained full legal capacity before reaching the age of majority, a State body that registers acts relating to civil status may lower the marriageable age of individuals who intend to marry, but not by more than three years. Reducing the age of consent is made at the request of the parties entering into marriage. In this case, the consent of the parents or guardians of the minor(s) to the marriage is not required.

Part III

Information regarding the Committee's recommendations

Paragraph 333

495. Information on this point can be found in the article-by-article part of the report under the discussion of article 2 of the Convention.

Paragraphs 334, 335 and 336

496. In 2004, in an effort to improve legislation and bring it into line with international standards and to comply with the obligations assumed by the Republic of Belarus upon ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and upon signing the final documents of the 4th World Conference on Women and the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", Belarus developed a Framework Act on Gender Equality. However, the plan for preparing draft laws did not include a section on developing the draft of the Act referred to above, owing to the fact that protection of the equal opportunities of men and women to realize their equal rights and freedoms is a constitutional principle and therefore a priority of State policy.

497. The implementation of the constitutional norms is reflected in various laws governing respect for the rights and opportunities of men and women - the Code on Marriage and the Family of the Republic of Belarus, the Labour Code of the Republic of Belarus, the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus, the Civil Code of the Republic of Belarus, and other legal acts.

Paragraphs 337 and 338

498. We can add the following to the information set forth in the article-by-article part of the report under the discussion of article 4 of the Convention.

499. The Republic of Belarus maintains a consistent approach to policy and programmes aimed at ensuring the equality of men and women.

500. Various laws have been adopted, including the Act of the Republic of Belarus amending and adding to the Labour Code and the Code on Marriage and the Family of the Republic of Belarus. These are generally applicable legal acts that strengthen respect for the equal rights and opportunities of women and men.

501. The intention behind improvements to the Labour Code of the Republic of Belarus is to improve the balance between the work relations of citizens and their family responsibilities, taking into account the continued relevance of the reproductive function of women and the need to equalize the opportunities for working people regardless of sex or marital status.

502. Act No. 80-Z entitled "On the Demographic Security of the Republic of Belarus" was adopted on 4 January 2002. It represented a practical step taken by the State aimed at securing the future of the country.

503. Implementation of the Act on demographic security led to the development of the National Programme on the Demographic Security of the Republic of Belarus for 2007-2010 (approved by Presidential Decree No. 135 of 26 May 2006), which seeks primarily to facilitate improvements in the country's current demographic

situation, one that is characterized by the normal attrition of the population, which represents a potential threat to the sustainable development of the State and national security.

504. Belarus has implemented the National Plan of Action on Gender Equality of the Republic of Belarus for 2001-2005 (approved by Decree No. 670 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus on 8 May 2001). Under the Plan, various legal, organizational and administrative measures were adopted with the purpose of advancing the status of women and protecting their rights and interests.

505. The activities of the National Plan of Action were aimed at promoting small- and medium-sized businesses and individual entrepreneurship among women, and at continuously monitoring the state of working conditions, especially those of women, in organizations with various forms of ownership. Work continued on developing a gender-balanced group of civil servants for placement in administrative and management bodies. Awareness-raising campaigns have been conducted in the media to overcome stereotypes about women's participation in decision-making.

506. A National Plan of Action on Gender Equality of the Republic of Belarus for 2008-2010 (approved by Decision No. 1286 of the Council of Ministers on 3 September 2008) has now been developed and adopted, whose activities are designed to build on the results of the previous National Plan of Action and to continue the State policy to prevent discrimination on the grounds of sex, thus creating conditions that provide for the fullest realization of the personal potential of women and men in all spheres of life.

507. The Framework Plan for the Continuing Education of Children and Youth in the Republic of Belarus (approved by Decision No. 125 of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus on 14 December 2006) and the Programme on the Continuing Education of Children and Youth in the Republic of Belarus for 2006-2010 (approved by Decision No. 32 of the Council of Ministers on 28 December 2006) devote special attention to the need for gender education of the individual and emphasize the urgent need for intensified work to promote a culture of family relationships, gender, culture and nonviolent behaviour skills. They devote particular attention to the need for a new approach to gender relations and the need to strengthen positive attitudes in the minds of society.

Paragraphs 339 and 340

508. Information on this point can be found in the article-by-article part of the report under the discussion of article 5 of the Convention.

Paragraphs 341 and 342

509. Information on this point can be found in the article-by-article part of the report under the discussion of article 5 of the Convention.

510. In addition, we submit the following information. The Institute for the Retraining and Continuing Education of Judges and the Staff of Prosecutors' Offices, Courts and the Justice System (established under Presidential Decree No. 348 of 30 June 1998) runs training programmes to ensure continuous strengthening of skills in the field of law and works so as to familiarize people working in prosecutors' offices, courts and the justice system with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

511. The provisions of international legal instruments ratified by the Republic of Belarus, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol, are constantly being explained in workshops and roundtables (some of which are given by NGOs), lectures by specialists and the national media, for example, Channel One, ONT and STV, national newspapers such as *Sovetskaya Belarus*, the *Belarusian Business Newspaper*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, and regional newspapers such as the *Vitebsk Courier*, the *Evening Grodno* and the *Courier from Borisov*.

512. In 2003, round tables entitled "The Women's Convention in Belarus: Commitments and Implementation" were held in Minsk, Vitebsk and Brest, dealing with the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and explaining the provisions of the Optional Protocol. In 2004, a round table discussion was held in Minsk to discuss the results of the report of Belarus submitted to the thirtieth session of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The round tables were attended by representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of the Republic of Belarus, interested Government bodies, various NGOs such as the "Women's Independent Democratic Movement" and the "Young Women's Christian Association", and representatives of national mass media.

513. In 2004, the NGO "Cooperation between business women and creative women" and the Women's Educational and Counselling Centre organized an Internet conference in Minsk entitled "The women's movement in Belarus", during which participants discussed the results achieved in Belarus through the implementation of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

514. Under a project called "Encouraging a wider role for the social influence of women in the Republic of Belarus during the period 2002-2005", the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of the Republic of Belarus and the UNDP Office in Belarus jointly organized and held a roundtable entitled "Legal support for gender equality" for law professors from higher educational institutions and legal researchers. The training for journalism students at the Belarusian State University includes a seminar entitled "Constructing Gender in the Mass Media", where students analyse Belarusian mass media texts in terms of coverage of women's participation in political, economic and social life. An electronic textbook on gender issues for journalists has been developed under the title "Interpretation of the role of women in decision-making".

Paragraphs 343 and 344

515. We can add the following to the information set forth in the article-by-article part of the report under the discussion of article 7 of the Convention.

516. Citizens of the Republic of Belarus have the right on their own initiative to form associations and engage in active associations. This is guaranteed under Act No. 3254-XII of the Republic of Belarus of 4 October 1994 entitled "On public associations" (articles 2 and 6).

517. Such non-governmental organizations enjoy the following rights: the right to receive and distribute information relevant to their activities; establish their own media and use State media in the prescribed manner; engage in publishing activities; represent and defend the legitimate rights and interests of their members

(participants) in State, economic and social bodies and organizations; establish branches and sub-units as appropriate and at their own expense; and engage in productive and economic activities aimed at accomplishing the goals and objectives specified in their statutes (article 22 of the Act).

518. Women's associations in Belarus are actively involved in addressing the problems faced by women in contemporary society:

- Improving the social status of women in society and increasing women's participation in decision-making at all levels ("Belarusian Union of Women", "Women's Independent Democratic Movement", "Business Women's Club of Brest" and "Women's Alliance");
- Developing women entrepreneurs ("Cooperation Between Business Women and Creative Women", "Business Women's Club of Brest", "Women's Independent Democratic Movement");
- Elimination of violence against women, including domestic violence ("Belarusian Young Women's Christian Association", "Radislav", and "Belarusian Association of Social Workers");
- Rehabilitation of victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and associated preventive measures ("Belarusian Young Women's Christian Association" and "Radislav").

519. The preparation of this periodic report involved representatives of the "Belarusian Union of Women", the "Belarusian Young Women's Christian Association", "Cooperation between Business and Creative Women" and the "Business Women Club of Brest.

Paragraphs 345 and 346

520. The composition of the National Council on Gender Policy under the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus was renovated in 2003 in accordance with Decision No. 807 of the Council of Ministers of 16 June 2003.

521. In 2007, a draft National Plan of Action on Gender Equality for 2008-2010 (approved by Decision No. 1286 of the Council of Ministers on 3 September 2008) was prepared with the goal of providing confirmation of the new composition of the National Council on Gender Policy under the Council of Ministers of the Republic Belarus and of strengthening the Council's work.

522. The new Board (Decision No. 95 of the Council of Ministers of 26 January 2009) included managers and representatives of the State administrative apparatus, local executive and administrative bodies, the Supreme Court, members of the National Assembly of Belarus, representatives of NGOs and international organizations and members of the scientific community.

Paragraphs 347 and 348

523. One of the manifestations of discrimination against women is domestic violence. In 2007, law enforcement authorities recorded 2,115 incidents involving domestic violence against women.

524. The Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus does not treat domestic violence as a specific offence.

525. However, violence as harm inflicted threatening the life or health of the victim is punishable under the criminal and administrative legislation of the Republic of Belarus, regardless of the relationship between the person who committed the specific crime (or offense) and the victim of the crime (or offense).

526. For example, section VII of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus, entitled "Offenses against the person", criminalizes acts such as murder (article 139), intentional infliction of serious bodily injury (article 147), less serious injury (article 149) and light injury (article 153), torture (article 154), rape (article 166), coercion to perform sexual acts (article 170), unlawful deprivation of liberty (article 183), insult (article 189) and others.

527. The Administrative Offences Code of the Republic of Belarus also deals with offenses such as the deliberate infliction of bodily injury (article 9.1.) and insult (article 9.3.), which are common in incidents of family violence

528. Thus, an effective legal regulatory framework for combating domestic violence has been established in the Republic of Belarus.

529. It should be noted that domestic violence is generally characterized by high latency. This is because, first of all, under the second part of article 26 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Belarus, criminal cases involving some of the crimes that are commonly associated with domestic violence, which are covered by, for example, articles 153 and 189 of the Criminal Code, are cases brought by one private individual against another. Such cases are initiated solely on the basis of a complaint by the victim of the crime through his legal representative.

530. Victims of domestic violence do not always want to testify against members of their family. In such cases, under the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus, family members and close relatives of the perpetrator are not criminally liable for refusing to testify (article 402) or for their failure to report an evident crime that is particularly serious or the evident perpetrator of such a crime (article 406).

531. In this regard, considerable attention is devoted in the Republic of Belarus to the prevention of this type of crime. Thus, under article 14 of the Act of 10 November 2008 entitled "On the principles of actions to prevent offences", a number of Government agencies have been charged with the duty on a permanent basis to work to prevent domestic violence, which is defined as intentional acts of a physical, psychological and sexual nature that are committed by one family member against another family member, violating his rights, freedoms and legitimate interests and inflicting physical and (or) mental suffering. This work falls within the competence of internal affairs agencies, prosecutors' offices, educational institutions, health organizations, labour, employment and social welfare bodies, housing management services, youth affairs commissions and guardianship agencies.

532. In accordance with the National Plan of Action on Gender Equality for 2008-2010 (approved by Decision No. 1286 of the Council of Ministers on 3 September 2008), the competent public authorities of the Republic of Belarus are working to strengthen legislation to prevent domestic violence and protect victims of domestic violence. This work is being carried out by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of the Republic of Belarus, the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Belarus, the Ministry of

Education of the Republic of Belarus and the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Belarus, as well as by nongovernmental organizations.

533. Order No. 206 of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus of 26 August 2002 approved the Regulations on the principles for actions taken by internal affairs agencies to organize crime prevention, which regulates a set of preventive measures aimed at preventing crimes in daily life.

534. The "Children of Belarus" Presidential Programme for 2006-2010 (approved by Presidential Decree No. 318 of 15 May 2006) includes educational and instructional programmes (as elective courses) and skills training in the prevention of violence in the home, in communities such as the school or the workplace, and in society, and training in the techniques of nonviolent conflict resolution.

535. In Belarus, the national legislation effectively supports the fight against and prevention of domestic violence.

536. In order to prevent offences in the sphere of family and community relations, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus has developed and implemented a special system called "Everyday Life" for monitoring domestic violence and crimes in private life. The Ministry of Internal Affairs has registered 20,400 people who have committed violent acts in everyday life, with whom law enforcement agencies and public agencies are working to prevent recurrences. The persons concerned have been subjected to measures such as official warnings, charges of administrative responsibility, referral to preventive clinics that involve treatment and work, and the deprivation of parental rights.

537. Decree No. 114 of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of the Republic of Belarus of 17 September 2007 approved the Suggested Regulations for Local Social Services Centres, which provide for the establishment of social adaptation and rehabilitation units with "crisis rooms" within the structure of the centres.

538. The social protection and rehabilitation of victims of violence and human trafficking is provided free of charge and includes temporary places of residence in "crisis rooms" (14 such rooms have been opened), which, if necessary, can be created in the social adaptation and rehabilitation units within the local social services centres. Such units are operating in 138 centres.

539. Since 2002, the NGO "Radislav" has been running the Crisis Centre for Women and Children Victims of Violence, which offers a wide range of services. In 2007, with the help of that NGO, the local social services centre in the Pervomaisky district of Minsk opened a service called "Assistance to Victims of Violence".

540. In 2007, 325 people called on the service for help. Clients receive, over the telephone, useful information and assistance provided by a professional psychologist and a lawyer. There is also a plan to organize room and board facilities to house victims around the clock.

541. In many centres, special programmes for young parents have been developed to strengthen marital and family relations skills. Clubs and groups have been organized to assist members in developing harmonious family relations, strengthen social adaptation and support of families and promote the resolution of conflict situations.

542. In order to raise awareness about violence against women and children and trafficking in persons, specialists at the centres serve in information stands distributing advice to women and children on personal safety and indicating useful telephone numbers of Government agencies and nongovernmental organizations to which they can turn in difficult situations. Telephone lines called "Trust" and "Hot Line" have been established.

543. Women's motivation to turn to law enforcement agencies for help in cases of violence is strengthened through informational campaigns in the form of lectures, discussions and consultations in the centres, through counselling units in residences, businesses and educational institutions, and through the media.

544. National television and radio programmes (on Channel One - "In Tune" and "Good Morning, Belarus"; on the ONT channel - "Family Matters"; on Belarusian Radio's First National Channel - "Radio Fact", "Post Factum", "Theme of the Day" and "Current Topics") draw attention to the problem of domestic violence and seek to identify the causes associated with this phenomenon.

545. From 2001 to 2003, UNIFEM ran a regional public-awareness campaign called "Life without violence" in Belarus. The project involved informational and educational outreach to raise awareness about the problem of domestic violence and to consolidate the efforts of all concerned to prevent it. Various events, round tables, seminars and press conferences were organized in the country. The publication of calendars, leaflets, booklets and posters was timed to coincide with the campaign. Public service announcements were also broadcast on television.

546. In 2006, a media campaign entitled "Domestic Violence Should not be Part of Your Life" was organized with the help of a number of United Nations agencies in Belarus (UNFPA, UNICEF, UNDP, UNHCR, OSCE and the Department of Public Information of the United Nations).

547. In 2006-2007, every region of Belarus ran campaigns entitled "Family without Violence". This involved groups consisting of members of the police, workers from labour, employment and social welfare bodies, health workers, teachers and media representatives, who worked in the evening and night duty stations of internal affairs agencies and went out to check out every complaint about a family incident in order to analyse and decide on the measures needed to address the causes of the family incident.

548. In the period 2006-2008, the United Nations Office in Belarus assisted Belarusian authorities in running an information campaign as part of the Global Campaign entitled "Sixteen Days of Action to Eliminate Violence against Women". That large-scale information campaign raised awareness in the public and helped to develop attitudes of zero tolerance for manifestations of violence.

549. In order to raise awareness about violence against women and children, specialists at the local social services centres have published articles in the media, appeared on radio and television, conducted seminars and lectures, organized community meetings, held interviews focusing on prevention with parents and adolescents in clubs, conducted role-playing games on legal subjects; and developed information stands with advice on personal safety, including useful telephone numbers of government agencies and nongovernmental organizations to which they can turn in difficult situations.

550. Further efforts on the part of the State and society to combat violence against women will focus on legislative reform, improving the legal culture of the population, and improving the crisis centres by providing skilled professional assistance.

On paragraphs 349 and 350

551. Detailed information on measures taken by the State and society to deal with the problem of trafficking in women and girls can be found in the article-by-article part of the report under the discussion of article 6 of the Convention.

Paragraphs 351 and 352

552. Information on this point can be found in the article-by-article part of the report under the discussion of articles 11 and 13 of the Convention.

Paragraphs 353 and 354

553. Detailed information on measures taken by the State to protect elderly and rural women can be found in the article-by-article part of the report under the discussion of articles 13 and 14 of the Convention.

Paragraphs 355 and 356

554. Information on this point can be found in the article-by-article part of the report under the discussion of article 12 of the Convention.

555. In addition, we are providing information about measures taken to improve the situation of citizens, including women, affected by the Chernobyl nuclear power station disaster.

556. In 1991, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Belarus adopted the Act entitled "On the social protection of citizens affected by the Chernobyl disaster", which has been amended and supplemented each year in order to strengthen measures to provide relief to the victims of the consequences of the disaster, in particular by Act No. 31-Z of 4 June 2001 and Act No. 45-Z of the Republic of Belarus of 12 July 2001 entitled "On amending and adding to the Act of the Republic of Belarus entitled 'On the social protection of citizens affected by the Chernobyl disaster'".

557. Other measures taken to overcome the effects of the Chernobyl accident include:

- Presidential Decree No. 10 of the Republic of Belarus of 25 April 2001 entitled "On measures for the socio-economic rehabilitation of areas affected by the Chernobyl disaster";
- Decision No. 1175 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus of 8 August 2001 entitled "On the size of benefits and additional payments to people affected as a result of the disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear power station";
- Decision No. 57 of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Belarus of 31 August 2001 entitled "On improving the clinical examination of victims of the Chernobyl disaster and similar groups in the population";

- Presidential Decree No. 565 of 29 November 2005 entitled "On some measures to regulate housing relations";
- Presidential Decree No. 128 of 19 March 2007 entitled "On some issues regarding the provision and use of residential premises in the public housing stock";
- Presidential Decree No. 80 of 7 February 2006 entitled "On the rules for admission to higher and secondary special educational institutions";
- Presidential Decree No. 542 of 28 August 2006 entitled "On the treatment and rehabilitation of the population at sanatoriums".

558. The Act of the Republic of Belarus entitled "On the social protection of citizens victims of the disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear power station" provides for a number of benefits to parents to care for sick children:

- The payment of sick leave for one parent of a sick child, or for another person who actually provides care for the child, in the amount of 100 per cent of wages for the entire period of the illness, including sanatorium treatment, if that person is at the sanatorium with the child ;
- Travel free of charge with a sick child using any means of transport (except taxi) to the hospital and back, with the right to buy tickets without standing in line;
- A monthly payment of a basic allowance to non-working women with children who have disabilities and need, in the view of the medical advisory board, home care provided by an outsider.

559. Women living in radioactively contaminated areas are eligible to receive a prenatal leave of 90 calendar days and 56 days after birth (in the event of a difficult childbirth or the birth of two or more children - 70). Women who live in settlements in areas of subsequent resettlement and who have been granted the right of resettlement, will receive an allowance for child care until the child reaches the age of three years in an amount double that received in the rest of the country, as established for the country as a whole under the legislation of Belarus.

560. Children who live in settlements in subsequent resettlement areas and have the right of resettlement can receive free medicines (by prescription), free sanatorium treatment, free access to preschool facilities (some places will reimburse underprivileged children for the cost of food) and free stays in children's health camps. In zones that are periodically rechecked for radiation, children who have been resettled in rural areas may attend preschools free of charge. Children living in the area can be treated free of charge at sanatoriums.

561. Belarus has implemented a number of State programmes aimed at reducing the impact of the Chernobyl disaster.

562. From 2001 to 2005 the "Children of Belarus" Presidential Programme (approved by Presidential Decree No. 281 of 24 May 2001) was implemented with a view to improving the efficiency of the State support system for children, especially those in especially difficult circumstances, and at applying uniform priorities and targets in the implementation of the State social policy for children and women at all levels of Government.

563. The activities of the Presidential Programme led to improvements in the quality of health services for children and women, as measures were taken to reduce the impact of the negative factors of the Chernobyl disaster on the health of children and pregnant women, which strengthened the system of social services for families and children.

564. At the present time the "Children of Belarus" Presidential Programme for 2006-2010 (approved by Presidential Decree No. 318 on 15 May 2006) is being implemented. Among the priorities of the Programme are to improve the quality of life for families with children, improve health and promote healthy lifestyles for families and children, continue efforts to reduce the impact of the adverse effects of the Chernobyl disaster on children's development, establish an environment favouring increased fertility, and promote the physical, mental and spiritual development of the younger generation.

565. One of the most important components of protecting and strengthening the health of children living in contaminated areas is to maintain a balanced diet. In the period 2002-2007, the system for organizing free meals for such children was improved. Decision No. 434 of the Council of Ministers of 16 April 2004 entitled "On the organization of free meals for students enrolled in educational institutions located in the area of radioactive contamination" set the rules for administering that benefit. The frequency of free meals in school depends on the intensity of the radioactive contamination of the area of residence concerned. Joint Resolution No. 81/1 of the Ministry of Education and the Committee on Problems Resulting from the Consequences of the Chernobyl Disaster of 27 December 2004 approved nutritional standards (sets of products) for the provision of one, two or three meals a day, bearing in mind the age of the children. In the 2006 school year, 195,000 students of educational institutions located in the contaminated areas received free meals.

566. Free stays and treatments in sanatoriums also played a role in maintaining the health of citizens affected by the Chernobyl disaster. As of 1 January 2007, 311,200 people, including 258,500 children and adolescents, had benefited from such stays. More than 90 organizations were involved in the rehabilitation of this group.

567. Children who leave the contaminated regions need special attention and psychosocial support, and they are therefore directed primarily to children's rehabilitation and treatment centres, which are able to provide them with skilled care. In 2006, 14 such centres handled about 60,000 children (more than 40 per cent of the total number of persons treated).

568. A number of benefits have been set up for graduates of schools located in areas of radioactive contamination, in particular, the right to priority admission (all other things being equal) to higher and secondary special schools, vocational and technical schools and vocational training courses, with the provision of dormitory space for the period of study. Admission to preparatory sections at institutions of higher education is granted, regardless of the availability of places available, with a definite offer of dormitory space. The size of scholarships given to such persons has been increased by 50 per cent.

569. The fact that some families have disabled children has led to increased costs in funding the programme of enhanced nutrition, treatment and ongoing care, and has led to a greater likelihood that one of the parents will be dismissed from work. In

this regard, for a disabled child under 18 years, the State pays benefits, regardless of the total family income, with a supplement amounting to 40 per cent of the amount of the benefit. If the disabled child is being raised in a family where there are other children, the benefits for all children are paid without regard to total income. Unemployed persons and non-pensioned persons who provide care for a disabled child receive an allowance for that care amounting to 65 per cent of the minimum subsistence budget. This allowance for the care of disabled children under the age of 10 is granted regardless of degree of invalidity, and in the case of disabled children aged from 10 to 18, for those with second, third and fourth degree invalidity.

570. For disabled children under the age of 18 whose invalidity is associated with the disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, a supplement to their social pension has been set at 100 per cent of the minimum old age pension.

571. The medical care system, financed by the national budget, has made it possible to compensate, to some extent, for the health injuries caused by the Chernobyl disaster.

572. The basic tool in the system for preventing radiation-linked diseases is the system of special clinical examinations, which provides for early detection and timely treatment.

573. Belarus annually examines 97-99 per cent of its citizens. All those in need receive both outpatient and inpatient treatment. The clinical examinations have helped stabilize disease in the affected population. Compared with 1999, the primary morbidity rate among women affected by the Chernobyl disaster had declined in 2005 by 23.9 per cent, and among men - by 27.5 per cent.

574. In order to optimize therapeutic and diagnostic services and streamline the current system of research institutions working to minimize the health effects of the accident, a Republican Scientific-Practical Centre for Radiation Medicine and Human Ecology was established in 2002. One of the main activities of the Centre is to coordinate organizational and methodical support for the clinical examinations of the affected population.

575. Simultaneously, the State is working to reduce the radiation risk to human health, establish normal living conditions for those who have resettled and those who chose to remain in areas where radioactive contamination is present.

576. To this end, the State Programme to Combat the Effects of the Chernobyl Disaster for 2001-2005 (approved by a Protocol of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers on January 9, 2001) and the State Programme to Combat the Effects of the Chernobyl Disaster for 2006-2010 (approved by Decision of the Council of Ministers Belarus on 11 January 2006) set out the tasks ahead with the regard to real economic recovery and sustainable development in the affected regions. The Programmes provide a range of measures aimed at improving the legislative and regulatory framework for reducing the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, for establishing favourable economic conditions in the affected areas and for retaining vital industries.

577. A vital step in the effort to overcome the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster is the implementation of a set of measures aimed at ensuring radiation protection of the population. These measures include establishing a system of radiation control and monitoring, decontaminating socially significant objects,

burying evacuated settlements, maintaining the radioactive waste management system and maintaining the exclusion and evacuation zones. The priority is to ensure the production of healthy food products, food staples and other agricultural products and to implement protective measures in forestry.

578. During the reporting period the most seriously affected households in the Gomel and Mogilev districts benefited from a vocational retraining programme. Residents of those areas were also provided with a large number of dosimetric devices suitable for cattle. Contaminated farms received phosphate and potash fertilizers and herbicides for the cultivation of agricultural crops in full conformity with the plan. Lime treatments were applied to acid soils. New fields for raising fodder for livestock production were created, with a total area of 37,800 hectares.

579. Under the Programme, more than 8,500 houses and apartments in all localities affected by the Chernobyl accident will be connected to the gas mains. In addition, the affected population will also be provided with quality drinking water through the construction of an additional 150 km. of water mains. The construction of kindergartens, schools, hospitals and other socio-cultural facilities will also continue.

580. In its efforts to overcome the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, Belarus actively cooperates with several international organizations: UNDP, World Bank, UNICEF, IAEA, as well as individual countries and numerous charitable organizations.

581. Thus, since 2001, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, working with the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Belarus, has been implementing a project called "Maternal and Child Health". The project aims at improving the quality of preventive and medical care for women and children living in areas contaminated with radionuclides as a result of the Chernobyl accident. Activities are being carried out in 9 regions in the Gomel and Mogilev districts in close cooperation with the district and regional administrations.

582. During the time that the project has been running, 24 health offices have been equipped with modern medical equipment, 120 obstetricians, neonatologists, paediatricians and general practitioners have been trained, and various measures to improve health education in the affected areas have been developed and implemented.

583. In addition, in a related project carried out in collaboration with the Gomel Institute of Radiology in the Bragin and Khoyniki areas of Gomel district, a network of school centres has been established to teach practical radiological skills. Thanks to the work of the centres the number of children with high body levels of cesium-137 has dropped by a factor of nearly 10.

584. Among the priority areas of cooperation between Belarus and UNICEF under the country programme is the protection of the health and interests of children and young people living in areas affected by the Chernobyl disaster.

585. In 2006, various joint projects were carried out entitled "Teaching healthy lifestyles and life skills in areas of Belarus affected by the Chernobyl accident" (led by the "Brest Regional Centre of Hygiene, Epidemiology and Public Health" and the "Hope and Healing" Centre of Confidence, an NGO).

586. The projects consisted of educational and outreach activities in areas contaminated with radionuclides in order to persuade children and adults of the need to preserve and strengthen their health, to strengthen a sense of responsibility among children and adolescents and their parents for their health, and to promote changes from risky behaviour to a healthier life style.

587. During the project, workshops and training sessions on healthy lifestyles and the prevention of psychoactive substance abuse were organized in 10 pilot schools in the city of Lunintse and Lunintse region (Brest district), and a youth club consisting of teenage leaders was organized to support children and youth initiatives aimed at building and developing a healthy lifestyle. In Lunintse an information and resource centre was set up to run informational and educational activities for children and specialists in Lunintse and the surrounding region.

588. The project also led to the creation of a CD-ROM with informational and methodological materials, both print and video, for training in and promotion of healthy lifestyles and life skills in the areas affected by the consequences of the Chernobyl accident (includes practical manuals for teachers and students of classes 1-4 entitled "Basics of a healthy lifestyle and radiation safety" and a manual for teachers of physical education entitled "Protecting the physical health of children and young people living in areas of radionuclide pollution", etc.).

589. Under the CORE programme in 2007, various projects were carried out, including "Living with a smile" (based on the Chechersk village council) and "Merry Musician" (based on the Centre for Corrective and Developmental Teaching and Rehabilitation in the city of Chechersk). New forms of work with disabled children and their parents were introduced, in particular, rehabilitation programmes through the arts, music therapy and theatre.

590. In 2007, a special issue of "Facts for Life" (published in March 2008) was prepared with the help of interested people. A special edition was issued for the areas affected by the Chernobyl accident, which contained information for people living in the contaminated areas, as well as information that could help parents to create better conditions for the health, development and lives of their children.

Paragraphs 357 and 358

591. Information on this point can be found in the article-by-article part of the report under the discussion of articles 4 and 7 of the Convention.

Paragraphs 359 and 360

592. In accordance with the Committee's concluding observations we are providing information about the measures taken by the State with regard to migrants and refugees, including women and children, in the Republic of Belarus.

593. The geographical position of Belarus encourages the use of its territory by migrants, including illegal migrants, from regions with unstable socio-political situation in order to enter the States of the European Union.

594. The instability of the socio-political situations in countries exporting illegal migrants, the effects of wars, armed conflicts, internal political struggle in Asia and the Middle East, and the well-established activities of traffickers and transporters of

illegal migrants fleeing difficult economic situations in various countries are also factors driving migration into Belarus and through its territory.

595. Currently, more than 130,000 foreign citizens and stateless persons have a permit for permanent residence in Belarus. Each year, 10,000 – 13,000 foreigners obtain a permit.

596. In 2007, 14,155 people entered Belarus to become permanent residents.

Table 11

The number of migrants entering the Republic of Belarus from 2002 to 2007

<i>Year</i>	<i>Migrants arriving</i>		
	<i>Both sexes</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
2002	18 939	9 369	9 570
2003	18 146	8 832	9 314
2004	14 642	7 154	7 488
2005	13 031	6 506	6 525
2006	14 124	7 075	7 049
2007	14 155	7 084	7 071

597. The main influx of immigrants comes from Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, which accounted for 74.8 per cent of the total number of people arriving in Belarus.

598. Significant factors contributing to the migration processes into Belarus are labour migration and forced migration

599. The State migration policy of the Republic of Belarus with regard to foreign labour migration is directed at improving the regulatory mechanisms governing the export and import of labour, the protection of the national labour market from uncontrolled influxes of foreign workers, and mitigation of the impact on the domestic labour market by promoting the employment of Belarusian citizens abroad.

600. In the Republic of Belarus, the export and import of labour is carried out by companies and individual entrepreneurs who have obtained special permission (licence) from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus. Currently, 793 licensees are engaged in attracting foreign labour to Belarus.

601. Belarus has established an integrated system for the legal and social protection of asylum-seekers.

602. The Republic of Belarus, being a party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, acts to protect asylum-seekers in accordance with international norms and standards.

603. Act No. 3605-XII of 22 February 1995 entitled “On refugees” is currently in force and meets the universally accepted requirements laid down in the basic instruments of international law on refugees.

604. Since 1997, more than 3,100 foreigners from 46 countries in the world have applied to the Belarusian authorities for refugee status.

605. Seventy-six foreigners have been granted refugee status and have received Belarusian nationality.

606. Legal, economic and social guarantees for the protection of the rights and legitimate interests of forced migrants are regulated by the legislation in force.

607. The national asylum system provides access to security, guarantees the non-refoulement of refugees, and creates the basic conditions enabling the social integration of this category of aliens into Belarusian society.

608. Guarantees of the non-refoulement of foreigners applying for refugee status or of those already recognized as refugees are enshrined in article 37 of the Act entitled "On refugees", according to which foreigners in this category cannot be returned or deported against their will to a State where their life or freedom would be threatened on account of their race, religion, nationality, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion.

609. Under the Act entitled "On refugees", foreigners who are recognized as refugees have the right to the education of their children in preschools and general secondary schools, and to medical care for their minor children along with the children of citizens of the Republic of Belarus (articles 10, 11).

610. Foreigners who are recognized as refugees have equal rights with citizens of the Republic of Belarus, including the right to social security, medical care, employment, involvement in business, education, acquisition of goods and real estate, judicial protection, and participation in social activities.

611. The State Employment Service will organize vocational training for and employment of foreigners and recognized refugees at their place of domicile (article 13). They are guaranteed financial and other assistance in the amount and according to the procedure established by the Council of Ministers, as well as the enjoyment of other rights that derive from legislative acts and international treaties adhered to by the Republic of Belarus with regard to foreign citizens and stateless persons temporarily residing in the Republic of Belarus (article 17).

612. Promoting the social integration of migrants is a priority of the State Migration Programme for 2006-2010 (approved by Presidential Decree No. 135 of 26 March 2006). For these purposes, measures to promote the integration of recognized refugees in Belarusian society are being developed in collaboration with and with the support of various international organizations (IOM, UNHCR, the European Commission and UNDP).

613. In 2005-2006, within the framework of a joint project of the State Border Committee of Belarus, the UNDP Office in Belarus and the European Commission, Belarus established the Centre for the Temporary Accommodation of Migrants (to deal with people crossing the State border of Belarus illegally), with 30 beds in Brest, based on the standards set by the European Union for institutions of this type, which will serve as the focus for a centre for training and retraining that will use specialists from existing centres in the cities of Grodno, Lida and Smorgon.

614. Since 2007, the International Organization for Migration, working with the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, has been carrying out various technical assistance projects such as "Combating trafficking in human beings: Belarus" and "Improving Belarus' capacity to manage migration processes (Migrabel)".

615. UNHCR annually runs international technical assistance projects in Belarus aimed at increasing the country's capacity to receive and integrate refugees and provide them with access to the national social protection system. At present there are several long-term international technical assistance projects under way, namely, "Strengthening the national asylum system" (two parts) and "Increasing capacity for local integration."

616. These projects seek to ensure that persons in need of international protection under international standards have access to efficient and effective procedures for obtaining refugee status in the Republic of Belarus; develop the administrative capacity of the State, in particular by improving the conditions for receiving refugees; and raise awareness and disseminate information to make people aware of the needs of refugee for protection and subsequent integration into society.

617. In April 2007, on the initiative of the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus and with the cooperation of UNHCR, the first international contest on refugee law called "New Horizon" was held, which was attended by teams from six universities of the Ministries of Internal Affairs of Russia, Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus.

618. "Social Aid", an independent international agency, and the "Eureka" Centre for Creative Child and Youth, working with support from UNHCR, have worked to promote the personal development of women refugees; children from refugee families have benefited from organized musical activities, sports and other developmental and cultural activities.

619. The prospects for effective regulation of forced migration on the territory of Belarus are linked to the further development of migration legislation. A new Act of the Republic of Belarus entitled "On granting foreign citizens and stateless persons refugee status and additional and temporary protection in the Republic of Belarus" is being prepared.

620. The Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus is preparing the Regulations on identity documents and the Regulations on documents required for leaving and (or) entering the Republic of Belarus. In accordance with those Regulations new models for the document for residence by foreign citizens and stateless persons in Belarus will be introduced, along with the travel document of the Republic of Belarus, a refugee ID card and a certificate for return to the Republic of Belarus.

Paragraph 363

621. Pursuant to the Committee's recommendations, this report includes gender perspectives on the implementation by the Republic of Belarus of the recommendations of the special session of the General Assembly to review and appraise implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the special twenty-seventh session on children ("A World Fit for Children"), and the Second World Assembly on Ageing.

622. The report provides detailed information on legislative, administrative and other measures for the advancement of women taken by the Republic of Belarus during the reporting period.

623. In addition, we can inform you that in June 2007 a report was submitted on measures taken by the Republic of Belarus to implement the Action Plan and final document of the twenty-seventh special session of the United Nations General Assembly on children "A World Fit for Children".

624. In September 2005 the Republic of Belarus issued a national report entitled "Achieving the Millennium Development Goals". The report was prepared by a team of national experts with the support of the United Nations Office in Belarus.

Paragraph 364

625. The text of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol have been issued in the Russian language and disseminated in the Republic of Belarus to those interested. Those texts are available in Republican, district and regional libraries, in the libraries of educational establishments and on Internet sites.

626. The concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the combined fourth, fifth and sixth periodic reports of the Republic of Belarus on its implementation of the Convention have been distributed to Government administrative bodies, higher educational establishments and bodies in the justice system.
