



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
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Summary record of the 872nd meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 23 January 2009, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Gabr

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention (*continued*)

Combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia (CEDAW/C/ARM/4, CEDAW/C/ARM/Q/4 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Armenia took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Kirakossian** (Armenia) said that, since the presentation of its previous report in 2002, Armenia had been actively involved in a process of enhancing the protection of human rights for all its citizens, and had become party to a number of international and bilateral human rights treaties. The basis for legal protection from all forms of discrimination in Armenia was the Constitution of 1995, which had been amended in 2005 to strengthen the legal framework for human rights, including protection from gender discrimination. In 2004, the Government had approved the national programme to improve the status of women and to enhance their role in society 2004-2010, aimed at achieving equal rights and opportunities for women and men in decision-making and improving women's socio-economic status, health and protection from violence, including trafficking in women and girls.

3. An analysis of statistical data showed that there was no gender discrimination at any level of education in Armenia. School enrolment at all levels — primary, middle school and secondary school — was over 90 per cent for both boys and girls. Secondary education was obligatory, and the literacy rate was 99.8 per cent. Armenia would meet Goal 2 of the Millennium Development Goals (universal primary education) before 2015.

4. The first programme established under the 1995-2005 national strategy to improve women's reproductive and sexual health was a family planning programme. Under that programme, 77 family planning services had been established in all regions of the country and information and training had been provided to medical personnel. The media were used to disseminate information to the public about modern contraceptive methods and the prevention of unwanted pregnancies and abortions. The national programme for 2007-2015 would be aimed at expanding contraceptive use and preventing abortions. Contraceptives had been

made available to all who wished to use them, regardless of age, marital status or income. Schools had begun to provide education on safe sexual behaviour and modern contraceptive methods, including peer counselling programmes for young people and adolescents.

5. Reducing maternal and child mortality rates was a Government priority. Improvements in the quality of care in maternity hospitals and the introduction in July 2008 of a programme for State certification of births in order to provide better access to childbirth services were some of the actions undertaken in that area. The maternal mortality rate had dropped slowly and steadily over the past 17 years and was 25.6 per 100,000 live births in 2007. It was currently lower than the average for the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, but remained four times the European Union average.

6. Indicators for HIV/AIDS infection had been kept low through the introduction of voluntary counseling and testing, screening for pregnant women, awareness-raising and education programmes among at-risk groups and free distribution of condoms and access to medical care for persons living with the virus.

7. In Armenia the issue of violence against women and domestic violence had become a subject of open discussion. Each year the country participated in the "16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence" campaign, and in 2007 had also joined a Council of Europe campaign. The national programme to improve the status of women 2004-2010 included a component to address violence against women, and the results of its yearly review by the Government were publicized through a press conference. The Armenian police paid particular attention to prevention of violence against women, including by improving security in public places. A working group headed by the Deputy Director of the police force had been established in 2006 to implement the national programme in the area of violence against women and domestic violence. The police information centre kept a record of crimes committed against women, and training seminars were held for all staff handling such cases. An interdepartmental working group formed in 2007 was also working on a draft law on domestic violence.

8. The Government of Armenia placed high priority on the fight against human trafficking, and was a party to all the major international agreements in that area.

In October 2002, the Prime Minister had created an interdepartmental commission to eliminate human trafficking, which in 2007 had become the Armenian Council on Trafficking Issues, headed by the Deputy Prime Minister. The Council worked in close cooperation with non-governmental and international organizations involved in the fight against trafficking. A referral mechanism to provide services to victims of trafficking had been created in November 2008.

9. Although women had equal rights under the Constitution and laws of Armenia, their participation in political and public life remained low. The new Labour Code adopted in 2004 granted them equal employment opportunities, and articles 2 and 3 of the Electoral Code guaranteed the right to vote and to run for office without regard to gender. The Electoral Code further established a quota of 15 per cent women in proportional party lists, and at least one of every 10 candidates must be a woman. Nevertheless, for various reasons ranging from inequalities in basic opportunities for men and women to gaps in legislation, women's participation in political life remained passive. Despite some progress made, not enough women were involved in the highest levels of the decision-making process. Only 12 out of 131 deputies in the National Assembly were women, and there were only two women cabinet ministers. Women's representation at the local level was equally low. In conjunction with a UNDP project on gender and politics, a gender analysis had been conducted of a number of laws, including the labour, family, electoral, criminal and nationality codes. Based on the results of the analysis, a package of proposed measures to correct imbalances would be circulated for review by the relevant ministries before submission to the Government.

10. Although there was no de jure discrimination against women in the Constitution and laws of Armenia, some stereotypes and mentalities persisted that resulted in discrimination at a practical level. They should be carefully analyzed in order to define programmes to overcome them. In closing, he highlighted the involvement of NGOs in the area of human rights in general and women's rights in particular, and expressed the Government's readiness to work with national and international organizations to increase women's full enjoyment of their rights.

Articles 1 to 6

11. **Mr. Flinterman** said that he had noted with pleasure the adoption by Armenia of the Optional Protocol to the Convention. Its article 13 contained the obligation to publicize the existence of the complaints mechanism, and he asked what measures had been taken to raise awareness of the Optional Protocol among civil society organizations. The Constitution, in its article 6, stated that international treaties prevailed over domestic law except in the event of a conflict, and he would like to know whether the judiciary, the legislature or some other body determined when a conflict existed. It would follow, as well, that the definition of discrimination as contained in article 1 of the Convention was part of the law of Armenia, but he wondered if its citizens were aware of that definition. Lastly, he noted that there were no court cases invoking the Convention, and asked what the Government had done to raise awareness of the Convention among the judiciary.

12. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** asked if there was a special unit within the office of the human rights ombudsman dealing with gender discrimination and equality. The lack of case law invoking the Convention might be an indication that automatic integration of international treaties into domestic law was not sufficient; perhaps they should be included in statute books as well. More information on the powers of the Constitutional Court with regard to the question of gender review of laws would also be helpful.

13. **Ms. Neubauer** said that she had been unable to develop an accurate picture of the national mechanism for gender equality from the report and the written responses to the Committee's questions. The Department of Women's Family and Children's Affairs appeared to be the main mechanism, and she would appreciate knowing whether there was any legal provision designating that Department as the national machinery for women, whether it had a dedicated gender equality unit and how many of its staff were involved in making and monitoring policy, whether there was a coordination unit for horizontal coordination among all ministries, and whether its funding came from the regular State budget or donor funding. Lastly, she wanted to know whether the national programme for women reported to Parliament on its activities.

14. **Ms. Popescu** said that the national programme to improve the status of women was rather general in nature, while special temporary measures for the advancement of women were targeted to specific areas and for a limited time, for example quotas for women in party lists. She drew attention to the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 on special temporary measures, noting that the general recommendations could be very useful in efforts to eliminate de facto discrimination. She asked to hear more about how the implementation of quotas in party lists was assessed, and whether any other measures targeted to women in vulnerable groups were planned.

15. **Ms. Harutyunyan** (Armenia) said that when an international treaty was ratified, it was first of all incorporated into the legal system and then published in the Official Gazette by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was posted on various websites, including those of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Armenian Legal Information System. The courts were also informed, but there were no references to international treaties in their legal decisions as all treaty provisions were incorporated into domestic law.

16. The Constitutional Court decided whether an international treaty was compatible with the Constitution and its human rights provisions. If a treaty provision was considered discriminatory then it would be contrary to the Constitution and could not be integrated into domestic legislation. It would not be considered specifically in terms of references to women or girls, but in terms of discrimination on the grounds of religion, sex and so on. As the entire process took place prior to ratification of the treaty, no conflict would arise subsequently. The provisions of a ratified treaty had precedence over national legislation, as provided for in the Constitution and in international treaty law. The Ministry of Justice would inform the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of any discrepancy with national legislation, which would then be changed accordingly.

17. **Ms. Aghajanian** (Armenia) said that the Constitution and domestic legislation had been designed to be gender neutral. Legislation and policies therefore prohibited discrimination based on religion, sex and other factors, rather than referring specifically to women or girls.

18. The office of the human rights ombudsman had been established only three or four years previously

and did not have a dedicated gender unit, although it did deal with gender issues. So far it had received no claims from women or men regarding gender discrimination. The courts must be dealing adequately with most divorce or children's rights issues, as women were not applying to the ombudsman for additional assistance.

19. **Ms. Harutyunyan** (Armenia) said that an amendment to the family code had already been drafted to address the discrepancy in the age of marriage, which was currently 17 years for women and 18 years for men.

20. **Ms. Tanashyan** (Armenia) said that the coordination of gender issues was currently the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and in particular the Department of Women's, Family and Children's Affairs, which had been set up in 1997. The Department had a staff of 10 persons working in the women's affairs unit and the children's unit, and three staff members dealt with gender equality. The staffing level was sufficient as the National Institute of Labour and Social Research was responsible for preparing draft legislation and conducting research on various issues for the Ministry. In 2008, the Institute's work had included the preparation of draft legislation for gender equality and work on a gender equality framework. The Government's 2009 programme of work included the adoption of that framework, which should be ready for consideration by June.

21. A 2004 Government decision regarding the national programme to improve the status of women had entrusted the coordination work to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Every year the Ministry produced a report on the work carried out and a plan for the following year, with input from all interested ministries and the regional Governors. In 2005, regional divisions had been established for the defence of women's and children's rights and they also produced annual reports on family, women's and gender issues and gender equality. In 2008, another Government decision had assigned the Ministry responsibility for the area of gender equality. The work on gender issues was not funded through a single budget line but received separate funding for individual measures in the areas of health, education, social issues and institutional mechanisms.

22. **Ms. Aghajanian** (Armenia) said that there was close cooperation from civil society, media and academic circles in the preparation of many Government programmes and legislative acts. NGOs were very knowledgeable and their representatives sometimes even chaired the working groups.

23. Civil servants were often responsible for coordination while expertise was created within institutions, as in the case of the National Institute of Labour and Social Research. The standing parliamentary committees, such as the committee created in 2007 to deal with human rights, including women's affairs and gender equality affairs, had their own expert bodies. The Government reported annually to Parliament on all of its programmes, both substantively and in terms of allocation of resources. Gender equality had been discussed by parliamentary committees at the committee level and at the expert level.

24. She thanked the Committee for the clarification regarding temporary special measures and recognized that the example given in the report had not been appropriate. Armenia did not have temporary special measures for women, although there were special programmes for women in vulnerable groups. Refugee women were provided with opportunities and special training for setting up small businesses. There were also programmes for women who had been victims of domestic violence or trafficking. The programmes for trafficking victims included measures for their recovery and reintegration, including into the workforce, in order to resolve the social issues that had contributed to the trafficking.

25. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** noted that although the Convention was part of the legal system, the Constitution contained only general provisions on equality. The lack of case law could be an indication that clarification was needed in the form of a definition of the concepts of discrimination and gender equality in line with the Convention. Gender neutrality was not sufficient, as the Convention referred to both formal and substantive equality and special temporary measures were therefore needed.

26. **Ms. Awori** commended the Armenian Government for its ratification of the Convention, but noted that, in line with article 2 of the Convention, Armenia should adopt appropriate legislative and other measures, including sanctions where appropriate,

prohibiting all discrimination against women. Gender neutrality was appropriate in terms of human rights, but the Convention required an explicit prohibition of gender-based discrimination. She asked whether such legislation existed or was planned.

27. **Ms. Murillo de la Vega** emphasized the importance of positive measures to address the inequalities that persisted in Armenia. Apparently, it was difficult for women to participate in politics and stereotypes played a role. Despite the high level of education of the female population, women did not have equal representation in political life. Specific problems should be identified and solutions should be found in the form of temporary special measures to ensure that men and women had the same opportunities. The new legislation that was being prepared should take account of the Committee's recommendations.

28. **Ms. Šimonović** congratulated Armenia on its ratification of the Optional Protocol. The new legislation on gender equality should include a specific provision on substantive equality so that a gender perspective was clearly established at the national level.

29. The Committee on the Rights of the Child had pointed out in 2004 that Armenia's legislation contravened the principle of non-discrimination with regard to the age of marriage, yet no change had yet been made. She asked whether the Government or some specific body was responsible for the process of following up on the concluding recommendations of human rights bodies.

30. **Ms. Hayashi** appreciated the Government's efforts to rehabilitate women refugees and women victims of trafficking. She had learned that, in addition to the Russian, Yazidi, Kurd, Assyrian and other minorities that made up 4 per cent of the population in Armenia, there were also religious minorities, including substantial non-Christian populations. The Committee was currently paying more attention to those vulnerable groups and she was interested in hearing about the impact of intersectional discrimination, based on causes that included ethnicity and religion, and of any plans for measures to address the special needs of such minorities.

31. **Ms. Zou Xiaojiao** asked whether there was a system in place to monitor and evaluate implementation of the national programme to improve the status of

women and whether an evaluation had already been carried out. If so, she wondered what had been achieved and in which areas of the programme was further action required.

32. **Ms. Popescu** asked about the status and time frame of the draft law on equal rights and equal opportunities. She wondered whether it covered the entire social sphere, including employment, violence against women and political representation, or whether it had a more specific focus. She asked whether the draft law provided a monitoring mechanism and penalties for non-compliance with its provisions and whether it included a reference to the Convention.

33. **Ms. Ameline** said that, although the provisions of the Convention were part of domestic law, the Convention should be an important element of women's policy. Women's issues still seemed to lack visibility in general, even in institutional terms, as there was no separate ministry for women. She asked whether it had been verified that the ombudsman had not needed to address certain discrimination issues because they had been dealt with satisfactorily in the courts. It would be interesting to know whether access to justice was really so direct or whether, as in some countries, women did not have access to justice for financial or other reasons.

34. **Mr. Flinterman** said that he now understood that the Convention was invisible in the legal system because existing legislation had been harmonized with its provisions. Nevertheless, it was important to bear in mind that domestic legislation should be interpreted in line with international obligations. The provisions of the Convention were dynamic and their meaning had developed over the past 30 years. Harmonization with domestic laws should therefore be a continuing process in which the Government, the judiciary and the legislature all had their role. It was important to give extensive publicity to the Convention and to provide continuous training for the judiciary and the legislature in the international obligations of States parties.

35. **Ms. Harutyunyan** (Armenia), responding to a question about substantive equality, said that the Constitution included provision for general human rights for all persons. All other legislation to some extent corresponded to the definitions of the Convention and clearly established the equality of rights of women and men. The Labour Code included an article on the rights of men and women and the

Civil Code and the Criminal Code included articles on women's rights.

36. **Ms. Tanashyan** (Armenia) said that the draft legislation on guarantees of equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women had been drafted by a group of experts from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the National Institute and Parliament. The chairperson had been a representative of an NGO. In 2009, a number of activities would be carried out, including public hearings and round tables, to encourage stakeholders and the public to discuss the draft. The Government had recently approved the framework for gender equality, which included a number of legislative amendments. If the process had not been completed by the end of the year, it would be submitted to the Government in the following year.

37. She had participated in preparing the draft, which covered all gender equality issues, mechanisms and monitoring. Parliament, the Government and local government bodies all had their rights and obligations in relation to its implementation and there were penalties for non-compliance. The legislation also included a reference to the Convention, the only reference of that kind to an international treaty.

38. **Ms. Aghajanian** (Armenia) described the procedure for the adoption of national laws. The drafting process was followed by a phase of public discussion with civil society and NGOs, which provided recommendations and input to finalize the draft. After being approved by Government ministries the draft was submitted to Parliament. The legislation in question was already at the stage of public discussion, which usually lasted a few months, and the adoption process should proceed according to schedule.

39. The new legislation included provisions that already existed in different codes. Every code referring to women had specific provisions providing protection against discrimination. There was no discrimination against women in Armenia in the areas of education, health, labour or wages. Nor was there any discrimination against national minorities or religious groups, which was well documented in the reports of the relevant Council of Europe monitoring bodies. The poverty reduction strategy included specific programmes targeting socially vulnerable groups. As there was no discrimination in legislation, all Armenian

citizens had equal rights and minority groups did not require specific programmes.

40. Follow-up action was taken to review national legislation in the light of international treaties and to make recommendations for improving it. An amendment had already been drafted concerning the age of marriage but had not yet been adopted owing to a two-year delay while the parliamentary and presidential elections were held.

41. All national programmes and action plans approved by the Government were monitored. The Cabinet was responsible for oversight of the monitoring and studies were carried out periodically to review existing national action plans. Recently, the poverty reduction strategy had been revised in order to include specific measures to improve women's participation in public life.

42. The human rights ombudsman did deal with women's issues, but as no complaints had been received, the suggested explanation was that women were satisfied with the results obtained through the courts.

43. She recognized that the level of women's political participation was still low, despite equal opportunities for education and work, their equal participation at many levels and even their high level of representation in some areas. In the first years of Armenia's independence, women had tended to withdraw from the workforce to concentrate on their families, but now that the economic situation had improved, they were returning to work in the civil service. Over the past seven or eight years there had been a huge increase in women in mid-level decision-making posts and it was only a question of time for them to reach more senior positions. It was important to continue with awareness-raising and efforts to enhance women's self-esteem in order to encourage them to go into politics.

44. **Ms. Neubauer** said it was not only gender stereotypes that hampered progress towards substantive equality in Armenia, but also a lack of understanding of the concepts of gender equality and discrimination against women. Legislation had to take account of past discrimination and its consequences in order to take all forms of direct, indirect and hidden discrimination into account. It was clear that inequality between women and men existed in all substantive areas of life in Armenia and throughout the life cycle. In its previous concluding observations, the Committee had already

requested the Government to take action to combat gender stereotypes. She asked whether any studies of gender stereotypes had been conducted and whether there were any legal provisions to prohibit their use by the media and advertising agencies. The media were autonomous but had to respect national legislation and should be encouraged to play an active role in supporting gender equality and increasing awareness of the Convention. She asked whether a self-regulating mechanism existed to address cases of sexist portrayal of women in the media and advertising and if not, whether there were plans to introduce one.

45. **Ms. Jaising** said that reports from other organizations indicated that almost 30 per cent of women in Armenia had reported being victims of domestic violence. Yet the report made no mention of the existence of domestic violence or the extent of violence against women in general. As the ombudsman had not dealt with those issues, it was all the more important to know how many such cases appeared in the regular courts and what the outcomes were. Domestic violence was covered by general criminal law as bodily harm, for which penalties were often low, and the measures included in the national programme, such as shelters, were not preventive as they were only applied after the violence had occurred. As violence against women was not recognized as an act of discrimination, it was important to define discrimination in domestic law in order to link it to international law and treaty obligations. The persons who prepared the report did not seem to have a clear understanding of what discrimination was. Finally, she asked whether the criminal definition of rape included rape within marriage.

46. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** said that some additional information on violence against women had been provided in the responses to the list of issues and questions (CEDAW/C/ARM/Q/4/Add.1), but no information had been provided on penalties. According to United Nations sources, perpetrators could be imprisoned for up to two years, but frequently received lesser punishment or fines. She requested more information on all kinds of violence against women, including the number of women murdered by intimate partners.

47. The low numbers of rape cases reported seemed to indicate an extreme case of underreporting. Perhaps women feared stigmatization or did not trust the system to provide a remedy. According to credible

United Nations sources, corruption in the criminal justice system meant that batterers could bribe judges, prosecutors or the police to prevent an investigation.

48. It had been mentioned that an NGO representative had chaired the working group which prepared the draft legislation on gender equality. Although she certainly appreciated the Government's strong connection with civil society and NGOs, any reliance on their participation could lead to a diminished feeling of responsibility. The Government should be taking the initiative on legislation with the assistance of NGOs, and those organizations should not be left with sole responsibility for shelters, a hotline and other support services. She also asked whether the Government was aware of the practice of bride-kidnapping in rural areas, in which women were kidnapped and then forced into marriage.

49. **Ms. Popescu** commended Armenia for its efforts to combat trafficking in persons. As the second national programme was already under way, she asked for details of any assessment of the first programme, as some sources had claimed that trafficking was increasing. According to alternative sources, victims were sometimes criminalized if they were considered to be prostitutes and the main concern was State security rather than protection of victims and witnesses. Lack of victim protection could be one of the reasons for the relatively low number of cases, prosecutions and convictions reported. She asked for additional data, including information on the new referral mechanism.

50. It would be interesting to know whether Armenia had introduced a comprehensive programme, including legislation, to address the exploitation of prostitution, as recommended by the Committee, or whether it planned to do so. She also asked for clarification of whether clients of prostitutes and pimps were considered to have committed a criminal offence.

51. **Mr. Flinterman** asked for more information on the implementation of articles 261 and 262 of the Criminal Code, which criminalized inducement to and facilitation of prostitution. It would be interesting to know how many investigations, prosecutions and convictions had taken place and what the judiciary's sentencing policies were. He asked for clarification of what was meant by administrative liability and requested more information concerning the 10,000 fines imposed on prostitutes in 2005. He wondered

whether registering juveniles and women who were involved in prostitution with the police meant that they received some form of protection.

52. **Ms. Tanashyan** (Armenia) said that the issue of violence was covered by a number of domestic regulatory acts, including the Criminal Code, the Civil Code and the Family Code, without any reference to gender. All acts of violence were punished, regardless of whether they took place inside or outside the family. Crimes of violence included inducement to commit suicide, intentional bodily harm and rape, including marital rape. In 2005, a social assistance act had defined the forms, timelines and mechanisms for providing assistance to victims of violence. In 2010, funding would be made available for the State programme of crisis centres for victims of violence.

53. A draft law on domestic violence was currently being prepared on the initiative of the Women's Rights Centre with assistance from international organizations and would be submitted to the Government. The National Institute of Labour and Social Research had begun work on the bill on gender equality, which was entirely an initiative of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

54. **Ms. Duryan** (Armenia) said that Armenia was very concerned about violence against women and children and had been working in that area for several years. She was a member of the working group set up by the Chief of Police in 2005 and chaired by the Deputy Chief of Police, which was working on measures to eliminate violence against women and children. The working group had been compiling statistics on violence against women since 2005 and produced monthly reports. In 2003, with UNICEF, a working group had been set up to collaborate with the police on clear mechanisms for detection and prevention of violence against children. She noted that although the number of rape cases was low, the total number of sexual offences was higher: 29 in 2007 and 54 in 2008.

55. Bride kidnapping did not exist in Armenia, although that term was sometimes used to refer to an elopement or a relationship with a minor. Such cases usually went to court and were resolved by the couple getting married. Kidnapping as such did not exist.

56. Prostitution was not a criminal offence but it was an administrative offence. It was punishable under the Administrative Code by a fine of from 50 per cent to

200 per cent of the statutory minimum wage. The fine was only imposed on persons over 16 years of age. In the case of younger girls, the adults involved were punished as traffickers under the Criminal Code.

57. The police had been working actively with various community organizations since 2000 and with the Women's Rights Centre since 2002. Victims of violence or trafficking were always treated as victims and the police had referred 60 women victims of trafficking to the Centre. About thirty police officials worked on trafficking investigations and additional staff worked in the field, collecting operational data and carrying out raids.

58. District inspectors were responsible for investigating the perpetrators of domestic violence and were currently dealing with about 400 cases. They worked with inspectors from the Department of Minors in individual preventive efforts and reported annually on their work.

59. **Ms. Aghajanian** (Armenia) said that gender stereotypes did exist, but not in the areas of education and health, as demonstrated by the most recent statistics. Female students were now entering areas that were previously male dominated, and vice versa, and more girls than boys were moving on to higher education. There was no discrimination, as all students had to pass the same examinations.

60. The latest study on the causes of women's underrepresentation at decision-making levels had explored all areas of civil life: political participation, representation in parties, and participation as candidates in electoral campaigns. That study would serve as a basis for addressing stereotypes and improving women's representation in political life.

61. She did not agree that Armenia's trafficking data were inaccurate. The information flow had been consistent for the past six years, and not because of a lack of awareness of the issues, but because the causes of trafficking were being dealt with through strict preventive mechanisms, including providing information to the public on a regular basis regarding migration regulations and the possibilities and dangers of trafficking. The numbers of victims reported was accurate. Armenia was a country of origin, so victims were found abroad and then repatriated. Reintegration and assistance services were provided. The national referral mechanism made it very clear when an individual was considered a victim and specified the

kind of assistance to be provided, including shelter and legal assistance. Information on the work of the national referral mechanism would soon be available in English.

62. Traffickers occasionally posed as victims but were usually detected and prosecuted. Victims were not criminalized as traffickers. A working group was currently developing a witness protection mechanism with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which would be in place by the end of the year and would enable more cases to go to court.

63. **The Chairperson** agreed that victim protection was important, but said that it was also important to highlight the need for prevention and punishment in relation to trafficking.

Articles 7 to 9

64. **Ms. Jaising** said that the statistics showed that more women had been elected when the quota had been increased, but they were still below the quota level of 15 per cent. The quotas did not seem to be mandatory as there was no mechanism to ensure that a minimum number of women were elected to Parliament. She wondered whether quotas existed for local government bodies.

65. Data from alternative reports pointed to an alarming incidence of violence against women, especially women journalists, during the electoral process. Women journalists had been abducted and even threatened with rape. She wondered to what extent those incidents had been investigated and to what extent remedial action had been taken.

66. **Ms. Popescu** said that it was important to increase women's involvement in the decision-making process. Information had been provided only on the number of women parliamentarians, which had risen since the previous election but was still low. Gender-disaggregated data on representation at the local and regional levels should be provided.

67. Although there was no de jure discrimination against women's representation in foreign and international affairs, there were still substantive discrepancies, especially at senior levels, including in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There was just one woman ambassador, but surely there were other women in the Ministry who were capable of taking on that responsibility. She wondered whether the 86 women

employed by the Ministry were all diplomats or whether some were members of the administrative staff. She also asked how many women occupied senior posts in the Ministry. Information was needed on women in the judiciary and the police force and it was also important to know how many women were in leading positions in private-sector companies.

68. **Ms. Aghajanian** (Armenia) said that the quotas applied to the number of women on party lists, so they did not affect the numbers of women elected. However, a planned amendment would increase the requirement to one woman in every three and make it compulsory for a woman to take up a vacant position if she was next in line. By the time of the next election, all of those issues should have been settled.

69. There had just been one case of an attack on a woman journalist, but there had been no rape threat. The Prosecutor's office had investigated, and a criminal case had been initiated.

70. There were 71 women diplomats, and the other women in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs worked in administration. At present, four of the eleven departmental directors were women and the number was increasing. The statistical services database contained statistics on the private sector and was very detailed. Its electronic address had been provided in the responses to the list of issues and questions.

71. **Ms. Harutyunyan** (Armenia) said that there were 172 judges in Armenia and that 34 of them were women. Four of them worked in the criminal courts, one in the criminal court of cassation, one in the civil court of cassation and four in the civil appellate court.

72. Article 164 of the criminal code established the penalty for anyone convicted of impeding the professional activity of journalists as a fine of from 50 to 150 times the minimum wage. Government officials were subject to higher fines or imprisonment or could lose the right to serve in certain posts.

73. **Ms. Duryan** (Armenia) added that any report of a person being assaulted was registered. No cases of abduction or rape of journalists had been reported. The number of women in the police force had increased over the past 10 years, and it currently employed 2,404 women and 11,000 men.

74. **Ms. Popescu** asked for statistics on the number of women victims of trafficking.

75. **Ms. Šimonović** asked for clarification of the law on domestic violence. NGOs had proposed the draft law but she wondered whether the Government was working on the new law and whether it took into account the recommendations of the Council of Europe Task Force to Combat Violence against Women. She asked for more details of the Armenian campaign to counter violence against women.

76. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** asked about the existing legal situation with respect to domestic violence, including any emergency measures for women who were being threatened or battered. She asked whether women could ask a court for a restraining order, whether such orders could be given in the presence of one party alone and for what period they were valid. It would also be interesting to know whether police officers and judges had been sensitized with respect to domestic violence and whether sexual harassment was currently considered a criminal offence, in addition to being a disciplinary offence under the Labour Code. She wondered whether criminal procedures existed for such cases or whether they were envisaged in the proposed bill.

77. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** said that the delegation should act to increase the quotas for women's political representation, as Armenian women were surely capable of achieving 50 per cent. Solutions could be found to any difficulties that arose. Political parties could be offered subsidies on the condition that they presented women candidates for Parliament, with substantial subsidies for parties that placed women high on their lists and guaranteed a minimum of 30 per cent of women among those elected.

78. **Ms. Neubauer** said it was clear that gender stereotypes had an impact in all areas and not just in women's participation in political decision-making. Even in education, gender stereotypes contributed to the high numbers of women students in the areas of health and education. She asked whether there had been any study of the division of responsibilities between women and men in private life. She asked how the media and advertising agencies had responded to the Government's action to encourage them to refrain from a sexist portrayal of women and men. She also wished to know whether any existing legislation prohibited the discriminatory portrayal of women and men.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.