



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

Distr.: General
31 August 2010

Original: English

**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
Forty-sixth session

Summary record of the 935th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 20 July 2010, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Gabr

Contents

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

Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Australia

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of this document* to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza.

Any corrections to the record of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

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 sixth and seventh periodic reports of Australia (CEDAW/C/AUL/7; CEDAW/C/AUL/Q/7 and CEDAW/C/AUL/Q/7/Add.1)

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

2. **Ms. Hambling** (Australia) said that since its previous periodic report, Australia had made considerable progress on women's empowerment, although full equality had still not been achieved. It had further strengthened its commitment to the Convention by acceding to its Optional Protocol in December 2008. Australia's constitutional system, in which legislative, executive and judicial powers were shared among three levels of government — federal, state and territorial — affected the manner in which the federal Government interacted with Australian women.

3. The Office for Women was the focal point for women's issues, working with all ministries to ensure that women's issues were integrated into all government policies and programmes. Its work was complemented by that of the Office of the Sex Discrimination Commissioner within the Australian Human Rights Commission and the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency, both of which had legislative mandates. The Government also consulted with civil society on issues affecting women through six publicly funded women's alliances that coordinated the advocacy efforts of 100 Australian women's organizations. It also funded non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to conduct their own consultations and prepare an independent shadow report for consideration by the Committee.

4. Women's participation in political and public life had increased significantly since the last reporting period. In politics, 30 per cent of parliamentarians, seven federal ministers including the Prime Minister, two parliamentary secretaries, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the Governor-General, Australia's highest public official, were all women. In the public service, women made up almost 58 per cent of the total workforce, holding three times as many senior executive positions in 2009 as in 1995. In the judiciary,

three out of the seven justices of the High Court were women.

5. Australia had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 17 July 2008 and had acceded to the Optional Protocol to that Convention on 20 September 2009. The mandate-holders of the United Nations Human Rights Council had been issued a standing invitation to visit Australia to examine the protection of human rights. Australia had also participated fully in the 15-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2010.

6. Although much progress had been made, violence against women continued to be a problem. The Government would continue to tackle issues such as sexual assault, rape, sexual harassment and trafficking for sexual exploitation. It was in the final stages of developing a national plan to reduce violence against women and their children. The Government had provided an initial \$A 42 million for the establishment of a new telephone and online crisis service; for an educational campaign to give young men and women the communication skills they needed to establish good relationships based on equality and respect; for a social marketing campaign to change attitudes and behaviours that contributed to violence; for support for research into the rehabilitation of perpetrators; and for greater harmonization of federal, state and territorial laws on violence against women.

7. Australia had established a national action plan to eradicate trafficking in persons which broadly mirrored the objectives of the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. It had made improvements to its Support for Victims of People Trafficking Programme and the People Trafficking Visa Framework, to provide a more flexible support structure for victims and their families. Australia was also working with other countries in the Pacific region to address human trafficking beyond its borders.

8. The Government had launched a National Congress of Australia's First Peoples to serve as the marshalling force for indigenous organizations and individuals across the country. The new body would provide a central mechanism through which governments, corporations and communities could engage in reform initiatives affecting indigenous peoples. On 30 April 2010 the first Australian indigenous woman, Ms. Megan Davis, had been

elected to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

9. Australian women still earned less than men and retired with about half the savings of men. In response, the Government had passed the Fair Work Act 2009, which introduced substantive reforms to the federal workplace relations system, provided for equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value, and stipulated that all employment contracts must include provisions that allowed employers and employees to make individual flexible arrangements that suited their particular needs, such as family responsibilities. The amount of unpaid parental leave available to parents had been doubled, and parents even had the right to seek an extension beyond 12 months, which employers could only refuse on reasonable business grounds.

10. The Government had also introduced amendments to its Sex Discrimination Act 1984 on 24 June 2010, to provide clearer protection for breastfeeding women and more comprehensive protection against discrimination in the workplace on the grounds of family responsibilities and sexual harassment.

11. The federal Government aspired to equal representation of men and women in the legislature, government and senior levels in the public and private sectors. The 2008 Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency's census showed, however, that the number of corporations with no female executive managers had increased from 40 per cent in 2006 to 46 per cent in 2008. In response, the Government was using various regulatory and educational measures to support women's leadership in the private sector and was funding women's alliances to ensure that women's issues were represented in decision-making and policy outcomes at all levels.

12. The Government had launched its national human rights consultations in December 2008 and had released its Human Rights Framework in April 2010, based on the reaffirmation of Australia's commitment to the core United Nations treaties to which it was a party. It was providing \$A 18.2 million over four years to implement the Framework, which included a focus on community and public sector education; a national human rights action plan; consolidation of Australia's anti-discrimination laws; and strengthened parliamentary scrutiny of human rights legislation.

13. The Government had made provision for a new paid parental leave scheme which would promote women's continued engagement in the workforce. Although men were increasingly involved in caring for young children, it was generally mothers who claimed parental leave, as they usually provided primary care during the initial months of a child's life. The Government was also investing \$A 17.1 billion over four years in early childhood education and child care.

14. Australia was working to ensure that gender equality existed across all areas of its aid programmes; that there were equal opportunities for women and girls to participate in all levels of education; that they had equal access to health care; and that they had equal opportunities to participate in the economy and hold leadership positions in both the private and the public sectors. It was also seeking strategic leadership opportunities to highlight the particular disadvantages faced by women and girls with disabilities in developing countries.

Articles 1 to 6

15. **Ms. Šimonović** said that she would appreciate information on possible amendments to the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 or any other plans to implement the Committee's recommendations relating to equality and the definition of discrimination.

16. She would also like to hear the delegation's views on the recommendation that Australia should develop human rights legislation that made explicit reference to the Convention, provided for substantive equality between men and women, and incorporated guarantees of equality and non-discrimination in the Constitution.

17. **Ms. Ameline** said that she would like to know how the Government intended to achieve legislative harmonization and establish coordination mechanisms across the country. It was unclear why, instead of adopting a fundamental text on human rights, the Government preferred to adopt only a general framework. With the upcoming elections, more details on possible quotas and increased visibility of women would be welcome. She also wished to know whether specific actions were being taken to increase the awareness of judges and women of the contribution that the Protocol could make to the judicial system.

18. **Mr. Flinterman** asked whether the delegation agreed with the assessment by the Australian Human Rights Commission that the Sex Discrimination Act

1984 did not comply fully with Australia's international obligations. He sought further information about the reasons for introducing a bill to amend the Act and about the contents of that bill. It was difficult to understand why the State party had indicated in paragraph 35 of its responses to the list of issues and questions that it had reservations to the Convention with respect to paid maternity leave and to employment of women in direct combat roles in the armed forces, when it had sent a note to the Secretary-General dated 30 August 2000 announcing that it had withdrawn its reservation concerning the armed forces. It would be useful to know if that reservation still applied.

19. The Human Rights Committee had expressed concern that the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights was not uniformly applied across the country; that there was no mechanism to ensure compatibility with international human rights treaties; and that there were no judicial decisions which referred to the provisions of the Covenant. He sought to know whether the situation was any different with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The State party should cite any leading cases where the Convention had been invoked, and should confirm that the ratification of the Optional Protocol would have some impact, because the ratification made it all the more necessary for the Convention to be invoked before national courts.

20. It was unclear whether the Government was living up to its obligations to give wide publicity to the Convention. He wished to know why the State party had rejected one of the main recommendations coming out of the human rights consultations, namely that Australia should adopt comprehensive legislation covering all human rights.

21. **Ms. Jaising** wondered why the Office for Women had been moved from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, where it had a higher profile and possibly greater impact, to the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. Considering independent reports that there was a huge gap in socio-economic indicators between men and women, particularly indigenous women, she wished to know whether there was any constitutional dispensation in relation to indigenous communities.

22. While the emergency provisions applicable to indigenous communities on child sexual abuse

appeared benevolent, their implementation on the ground was not entirely acceptable to the indigenous communities themselves. She sought more information about the socio-economic conditions of indigenous women vis-à-vis those of Australian women in general. Any information about the impact of the suspension of the Race Relations Act on indigenous women would also be appreciated.

23. **Ms. Hayashi** asked whether, under the Human Rights Framework, there were plans to enact a specific law that covered all aspects of discrimination. Considering that the budget for the Sex Discrimination Commissioner was almost 20 per cent less in 2008-2009 than previously, she would welcome information about any mechanisms to strengthen the role of the Sex Discrimination Commissioner and to secure adequate funding for the human rights mechanisms on gender equality. She also wished to know the legal status of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples and whether its resolutions would be binding on the State party.

24. **Ms. Neubauer** asked whether the human and financial resources of the Office for Women had changed, and whether its budgetary allocation would be sufficient for it to fulfil its mandate. She sought clarification about the mechanisms which would allow the Office to coordinate its work with that of other departments at both the federal and the state levels.

25. **Ms. Moyle** (Australia) said that one of the strengths of the federal system of government in Australia was that it allowed states to take the lead in such areas as gender equality, all states and territories being of course bound by the Convention. The main mechanism for the implementation of the Convention in domestic legislation was the Sex Discrimination Act 1984, which, in conjunction with a range of legislation in such areas as employment, health and housing, ensured its implementation throughout the country. The Act had been reviewed with a view to strengthening it, although the bill introduced in 2010 had lapsed with the dissolution of Parliament in anticipation of the August elections.

26. There was a quota of 30 per cent of seats in Parliament for women, and both the Prime Minister and her deputy were women. National women's alliances and related NGOs were being urged to take a role in the upcoming election. One organization had conducted an online survey called "What Women

Want” to ensure that their concerns were taken into account by candidates.

27. Australia’s two reservations to the Convention, concerning women in direct combat roles in the armed forces and paid parental leave, still stood, but a bill had been introduced to lift some of the restrictions. As for publicity regarding the Convention, a package of human rights materials for schools, legal centres and the general public had been developed that included information on it.

28. The relocation of the Office for Women to the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs enabled the Office to pursue its policy coordination role and introduce programmes and research. It had access to the highest levels of government and had input to policy reform, on paid parental leave, for example. The Office was the lead agency for a Committee on the Status of Women made up of high-level representatives from 17 departments. As the main mechanism for mainstreaming of a gender perspective, it met quarterly to develop capacity and coordinate action across its membership. Its annual budget of \$A 3.91 million had not changed since the move.

29. The National Indigenous Women’s Gathering was not being replaced by the new Indigenous Women’s Council, although its role was being reviewed. In addition, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women’s Alliance had been introduced.

30. **Ms. Farrant** (Australia) said, with regard to constitutional guarantees of equality and non-discrimination, that the process of changing the Constitution was difficult. The Government had no current plans to amend it to include a definition of discrimination, preferring to rely on a strong legislative regime against discrimination. Moreover, the Sex Discrimination Act included the content of the Convention in its provisions. The bill amending the Act, currently in abeyance, addressed issues mainly relating to sexual harassment in the workplace, employment discrimination against women because of family responsibilities, breastfeeding protections and expanded protections against sexual harassment for students under age 16.

31. The Government had accepted for immediate implementation eight of the Committee’s recommendations pursuant to its previous report, the others would be covered under the process of

harmonization and review of human rights legislation. In preparing the human rights act, it had been found that human rights were very important to the citizens of Australia, but there were differences of opinion on how to protect those rights. Concerns had been expressed regarding the need for and potential effects of such an act, and it had been decided to develop a Human Rights Framework instead. Funding for the Australian Human Rights Commission had indeed been reduced, but Government funding had been constrained across the board by the recent global economic crisis. Nevertheless, an additional \$A 6.6 million had been allocated over four years for human rights education. The Commission, an independent statutory agency, had revised its staffing structure and adjusted its programme funding upwards to reflect efficiencies and savings.

32. The Standing Committee of Attorneys-General had developed a project to harmonize anti-discrimination laws among the states which functioned as a gateway for information on national anti-discrimination legislation. The Optional Protocol had not yet been invoked in any court cases, but there were a large number of cases referring to the Convention itself.

33. The Government provided funding for judicial education on gender awareness. The National Judicial College had been formed in 2002 to provide professional development for members of the judiciary. Its Gender Justice Committee provided advice in such areas as rape and sex crimes cases.

34. **Ms. Popescu** said that she would like to hear more about any temporary special measures available to members of vulnerable groups, especially those facing multiple forms of discrimination. She noted with appreciation that the private sector had taken such measures, but asked what steps the Government sector had taken to introduce quotas or minimum targets for women’s representation, and if there was any targeted recruitment of underrepresented groups like aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander women in such areas as medicine or teaching. It would be helpful if the delegation could elaborate on the initiative to establish a national body for indigenous people.

35. **Ms. Patten** said she wondered if the Government had reconsidered its position that it did not favour temporary special measures. She would also like to know what was being done to encourage the political

participation of aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

36. **Ms. Awori** requested more information about the national plan to combat violence against women, including the budget allocation and mechanisms to monitor implementation. She would also like to hear about strategies to address violence against women in the aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and whether appropriate legal services were available to those women. More information was also needed about violence against women with disabilities, particularly those living in institutions, and against lesbians. Lastly, she asked the delegation to elaborate on the non-therapeutic sterilization of children and adults with disabilities.

37. **Ms. Ameline**, referring to the media code of conduct on body image, asked what form it took, whether it was binding and if it had been established as a preliminary to the enactment of legislation. The results of a recent survey showed that 22 per cent of the population thought violence against women was part of the culture in Australia, and she would like to know what campaigns or other activities were planned to reverse that trend. Lastly, she asked for specific information on sharing of household responsibilities between men and women.

38. **Ms. Šimonović** asked if the national plan on violence against women was fully operational, whether domestic violence shelters were free of charge for victims and whether protection orders were available. It would be helpful to hear more about any federal legislation on violence against women or domestic violence. Statistical data on violence against women and femicide in the aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, as well as on prevention efforts, would also be welcome.

39. **Ms. Neubauer** said that reports from NGOs had found links between family violence and homelessness and entry into the sex industry. Sex workers were particularly vulnerable to discrimination, yet it appeared that the Government had no programmes to discourage the demand side of prostitution and to provide an exit strategy for women wishing to leave that industry. She would like to know if prostitutes were considered self-employed or an employee of the brothel, how their health and safety were protected, and how the autonomy, dignity and human rights of prostitutes were ensured.

40. **Ms. Chutikul** welcomed the changes in the anti-trafficking strategy, and asked for information on the results of the national action plan to combat trafficking in persons and the new plan to combat the sexual exploitation of children. Australia's participation in the anti-trafficking programme for the Asia region was commendable, but more efforts were needed to ensure its sustainability. An evaluation of the Bali process was needed, as many believed it was not cost-effective. More information on accommodation for trafficked women and civil proceedings available to provide them with compensation would be helpful, as well as efforts to prevent underage prostitution and address the demand side. Lastly, she asked how Australian citizens who travelled abroad to have sex with children were handled.

41. **Ms. Moyle** (Australia) said that temporary special measures were allowed under the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 in public, private and community organizations, and in fact the National Women's Alliances could be seen as one such measure. The Australian Public Service Commission reported on women's participation in the public sector. The Government did not, however, intend to establish quotas for women in leadership positions. There were no targets for women's representation in political parties, but the Australian Labour Party had reached the level of 35 per cent women.

42. The national plan on violence against women was well advanced, but had not yet been finalized. The Government had taken steps to implement the Committee's recommendations pursuant to the previous report, for example by establishing a toll-free national domestic violence hotline. A more recent community attitudes survey had shown some improvement in attitudes towards domestic violence, but many challenges remained. A new programme had been launched to raise awareness and prevent domestic violence, and 17 "respectful relationships" programmes had been launched in schools.

43. The status of sex workers was governed by state and territory legislation; while the Government did not take steps to prevent prostitution, it was subject to regulation. The employment relationship between brothel owners and sex workers encompassed a wide variety of arrangements. As for protection of the health, safety and human rights of sex workers, the Scarlet Alliance, an NGO for sex industry workers, had initiated a number of outreach projects.

44. An evaluation of the anti-trafficking strategy had recommended strengthened coordination. An enhanced form of the anti-trafficking programme had been launched in July 2009, and preliminary results should soon be available. Victims of trafficking could use civil proceedings to seek compensation through a range of mechanisms.

45. **Ms. Halbert** (Australia) said that the Government had been actively involved in shaping the framework of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples. The Congress had been structured to be gender-balanced, represent minority groups, exist separately from the Government and eventually become financially independent. The Congress had been recently incorporated and was working to consolidate its operational architecture.

46. The Indigenous Women's Programme provided grants to enhance indigenous women's public leadership, well-being and economic status, including by increasing their participation in setting local government priorities. The Government was addressing violence against indigenous women in the Northern Territory through a plan to increase the number of shelters, improve policing and implement alcohol management programmes. The Indigenous Family Safety Agenda also addressed the role alcoholism played in perpetuating violence against indigenous women.

47. **Ms. Farrant** (Australia) said that the Government's Community Legal Services Programme had established culturally appropriate legal centres for aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. There were several other well-funded programmes to facilitate indigenous people's access to the justice system, including contracts with aboriginal legal services to provide counsel and casework services.

48. The national plan to reduce violence against women was comprehensive and would include women with disabilities. Many states and territories had been active in addressing violence against women with disabilities in institutions. For example, in Queensland, systematic protocols had been established to respond to reports of abuse in public services. In Victoria, guidelines had been revised and distributed in all state mental health institutions to respond to incidents of sexual violence.

49. The Government had removed discriminatory measures against same-sex couples in federal laws as

part of a reform package passed in 2008. The Attorney-General had also urged states and territories to revise relationship registration schemes to ensure recognition of de facto same-sex relationships. In addition, the Australian Human Rights Commission had issued a report in March 2009 that offered recommendations on amending references to sex and gender matters in government documents. Current national anti-discrimination law did not prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sexuality, although the Fair Work Act of 2009 did prohibit discrimination in employment based on sexual preference. All states and territories recognized sexuality and gender identity within their anti-discrimination framework.

50. The Government was not proposing to enact legislation to prohibit the sterilization of children. Family courts decided such questions based on the child's best interests. Guardianship tribunals in some states could authorize the sterilization of children in limited circumstances. A national protocol issued by the Australian Guardianship and Administration Council provided tribunals with a set of considerations to promote consistency in decision-making across states.

51. The states and territories had a variety of legislative and non-legislative measures in place to respond to violence against women. For example, in Victoria, the definition of family violence had been broadened to include violence in all its forms, including sexual and psychological. There was legislation in place in all states and territories to enforce apprehended violence orders in order to protect victims.

52. The Government was committed to combating people trafficking and supporting victims. The national anti-trafficking strategy criminalized sexual servitude, but it did not include provisions to prevent or discourage demand for prostitution. As had been noted, sex work was not unlawful in Australia, but was strictly regulated, with sex workers receiving support on health, legal and financial issues. The Government placed strong emphasis on educating Australians of all ages on their sexual rights and had invested \$A 9 million in a programme to teach young people skills to maintain respectful relationships. The national human rights framework included initiatives to fund community education by NGOs to discourage demand for prostitution and prevent women from entering prostitution.

53. Victims of trafficking could access financial assistance through national Government mechanisms. In addition, under the federal Crimes Act, courts could order offenders to pay reparations to victims. Each state and territory had a different compensation scheme for victims of trafficking, although all of the schemes were administered through the justice system.

54. The Government had criminalized child sex abuse overseas as an offence termed “child sex tourism”, which carried a penalty of a maximum of 25 years in prison. There had been 29 prosecutions since the offence had been enacted in 1994, of which 19 had been proven. A package of reforms had been passed in April 2010 to improve implementation of child sex tourism laws. For example, it was now a crime to plan an act of child sex tourism, thus creating greater scope for prevention efforts. Public awareness campaigns on the problem had also been conducted.

55. **Ms. Morehead** (Australia) said that the code of conduct on body image had been issued in June 2010 and was non-binding. The code provided guidance to the media, fashion and advertising industries on actions they could take to support positive body image, including identifying the use of enhanced images, representing diverse body shapes and cultures, and setting age-appropriate limits. The voluntary code had been developed by a national advisory group which included representatives of the targeted industries. An awards programme and a symbol of approval were to be introduced to recognize and encourage participation. The code was part of the National Strategy for Young Australians, which placed a strong emphasis on positive body image generally, as the issue had been identified as a major concern of young Australian women.

56. **Ms. Ara Begum** asked whether gender balance would be maintained under the composition of the caretaker Government and whether gender equality policies would be applied during the election. She also wished to know whether indigenous women’s participation would be ensured. Noting the Government’s work on the 15-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action, she wondered if similar consultations were planned to commemorate the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Convention.

57. **Ms. Awori** asked why the conviction rates in sexual assault cases had not been provided in the

response to the Committee’s list of issues and if any steps were being taken to obtain that information.

58. **Ms. Patten** requested clarification on the Government’s policy on temporary special measures. The delegation had mentioned several such measures that had been adopted under the Sex Discrimination Act, but Australia’s report stated that the Government did not support temporary special measures. There appeared to be a double standard as to what types of women such measures applied to. Measures had been taken to support women’s integration into the boards and senior management of major industries, which would fit the Convention’s definition of quotas under article 4, yet similar support was not extended to vulnerable groups, such as aboriginal women and women with disabilities.

59. **Mr. Flinterman** said that he would appreciate guidance as to specific court cases that explicitly invoked the Convention, thus demonstrating that the judiciary made a clear distinction between the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

60. **Ms. Šimonović** wished to know how the Government ensured that minimum standards were met in states’ response to violence against women if there was no national legislation on the issue. She also asked if the national plan on preventing violence against women was operational, what entity would be monitoring its implementation and if it contained standards that would apply to the entire country.

61. **Ms. Hambling** (Australia) clarified that the caretaker arrangements did not signify any change to the current structure of the Government, including in terms of women’s representation; they included a code of behaviour that limited decisions that could affect any incoming Government and obligated public services to remain non-partisan.

62. **Ms. Moyle** (Australia) said that gender equality in the upcoming elections would depend on the positions of the various political parties.

63. The Government was funding activities to recognize the centenary of International Women’s Day, and it was expected that the work with the National Women’s Alliances in that respect would include activities on the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Convention.

64. In 2008-2009, the number of cases of sexual assault and related offences finalized in the higher courts totalled 17,209; 63 per cent of the defendants had been found guilty, 15 per cent had been acquitted and 22 per cent of the cases had been withdrawn by the prosecution. The number of magistrates court cases totalled 492,197; 49 per cent had been transferred to another court, 20 per cent had been withdrawn by the prosecution, 26 per cent had resulted in convictions and 5 per cent ended in acquittals. Men comprised 98 per cent of the defendants in both court systems.

65. While the Government did support temporary special measures, which could take many forms, it specifically did not support compulsory quotas. In response to the concern about double standards, she said that the private sector was free to introduce its own special measures to improve women's leadership, as had been the case with the Australian Securities Exchange. The Cabinet had made a strong statement calling for an increase in women's representation in Government boards and bodies, which currently stood at 33 per cent at the federal level. An investigation by the Office for Women had found a significant increase in women's leadership in public agencies as a result of more transparent recruitment procedures. Four out of the nine states and territories had targets and quotas in place for women's representation in government boards and bodies.

66. As the national plan to reduce violence against women had not been finalized, plans for enforcing minimum standards and monitoring the strategy could not yet be reported.

67. **Ms. Farrant** (Australia) said that the delegation would provide leading cases in which the Convention had been applied.

Articles 7 to 9

68. **Ms. Popescu** asked how many Australian diplomats were women and how many ambassadors were indigenous women. She also requested information on measures in place to support women's careers in the foreign service and whether the Government envisioned gender parity in that area.

69. While it was impressive that women made up 20 per cent of Australia's peacekeeping presence, she wished to know how many of those women held senior posts, which countries they were deployed in and how their training was ensured. She asked if any women had numbered among peacekeeping casualties and what the public opinion of women peacekeepers was,

as their presence seemed to contradict Australia's reservation to the Convention excluding women from combat duties.

70. Additional information on the gender architecture of Australian international development cooperation mentioned in the report would be welcome.

71. Finally, she asked what steps the Government had taken to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, and if there was a national plan on the issue.

72. **Ms. Zou Xiaoqiao** requested details on the Office for Women's work with state governments to improve women's participation in public decision-making, including steps taken and the current state of the initiative.

73. Noting that vulnerable groups, including immigrants and women with disabilities, represented a significant part of the population, she asked how the Government could ensure their participation in public decision-making if it did not support compulsory quotas.

74. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** asked whether the Government provided subsidies to political parties, and if so, whether such funding could be made contingent on women's participation in the parties. She requested information on indigenous women's political participation at the local level and whether the percentage of their representation was proportional. She would also appreciate information on the percentage of universities that were led by women and whether any indigenous women headed universities. In addition, she requested figures on the number of women in the justice system at the state and federal level.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.