



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

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

Summary record of the 970th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 25 January 2011, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Pimentel

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

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

Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Bangladesh (continued)
(CEDAW/C/BGD/6-7; CEDAW/C/BGD/Q/7 and Add.1)

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

2. **Ms. Chaudhury** (Bangladesh), providing further information on the empowerment of women, said that there had been significant progress with respect to women's participation in the political arena and that the necessary enabling environment had been established to maintain that progress. Women occupied a number of high-level posts in the Government; at cabinet level, there were currently six women ministers, including the Prime Minister. In the national parliament, there were currently 19 women parliamentarians who had been directly elected and a further 45 who occupied reserved seats. There was no bar for women to contest direct elections and the system of reserved seats encouraged women to come forward to stand as candidates in those elections, as demonstrated by the fact that a number of the current cohort of directly elected Members had previously held reserved seats. The Local Government Act of 1997, which provided for the direct election to reserved seats for women, represented a milestone in ensuring equal access for women to the grass-roots political power structure and in providing the framework for women's participation in the political decision-making process. In that connection, she said that the Representation of the People's Ordinance of 2008 required political parties to set a 33 per cent quota for women candidates in parliamentary elections.

3. In the civil service, an encouraging trend was that an increasing number of women were occupying high-level posts such as those of secretary, deputy commissioner and ambassador. In the Ministry of Health, women accounted for 46 per cent of the workforce. In the higher courts there were 6 women judges and in the lower courts there were more than 250 women judges. There were 2,000 women police officers and a further 3,000 were currently being recruited. The Government had set recruitment quotas for women of 10 per cent for gazetted posts, 15 per cent for non-gazetted posts and 60 per cent for primary school teaching posts. She highlighted the important role played by women in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in her country, and expressed her appreciation for their efforts in advancing women's rights.

4. She welcomed Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani's comments made at the previous meeting, and reaffirmed her Government's commitment to continue its efforts to promote gender equality and non-discrimination.

5. **Ms. Bailey**, while commending the State party on its efforts to improve women's and girls' access to education, said that she remained concerned about a number of specific issues. For example, gender parity in enrolment had been achieved at the primary school level, but the corresponding completion and secondary school enrolment rates remained low. She asked what the Government was doing to reverse that trend, and requested more detailed information, in particular with regard to net enrolment rates for the primary and secondary levels. She also noted that there was a disparity between the quality of education in urban and rural areas and enquired what measures were being taken to equalize quality across the system. She commended the Government on the establishment of three women's polytechnic institutes and an Asian university for women as part of its efforts to close the gender gap in technical and tertiary education. However, she expressed concern that the range of options available to students in single-sex educational establishments was often limited to those areas that were considered appropriate for the particular group concerned.

She therefore asked the delegation to indicate whether students at those institutions had access to a full range of subjects. With regard to efforts to reduce the high school drop-out rate, she asked whether the measures to exempt some students from tuition fees and to assist with the purchase of books were specifically targeted at girls in rural areas and, if so, she would like to know what the eligibility criteria were.

6. She noted that, as part of the Government's commitment to increasing the proportion of women teachers at the secondary level, a development project had been implemented to promote employment, training and accommodation of women teachers in rural non-Government secondary schools. However, she would also like to know what measures were being taken in that regard in Government schools in urban and rural areas. She welcomed the introduction of a curriculum and teacher training modules aimed at ensuring a girl-friendly school environment and requested further information on their design, content and impact.

7. **Mr. Bruun** regretted the lack of gender-disaggregated data in the field of employment and information on the implementation of labour legislation. He hoped that the next report would include more detailed information on those points. Although legislation in Bangladesh recognized the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, information received by the Committee indicated that the legal definition of wages was narrow. Furthermore, he expressed concern that the fact that the Minimum Wage Board seemed to set very low minimum wages for certain female-dominated occupations might lead to a form of discrimination. He asked the delegation to comment on those matters.

8. With respect to sexual harassment in the workplace, he noted that the Labour Act of 2006 prohibited behaviour that was indecent or contrary to the dignity and honour of the female worker. However, he had doubts that such provisions were adequate to protect against sexual harassment and he therefore wondered what the Government was doing to improve protection in that area.

9. He expressed concern that legislation designed to protect female workers through their exclusion from participation in certain sectors might have a discriminatory effect. He asked whether the Government was planning to investigate that issue. He commended the State party on its efforts to eliminate child labour, but, in light of the low rate of school enrolment of girls, he asked what further measures the Government was taking in that connection. Lastly, he asked whether the Government had plans to ensure minimum protection for workers in the informal and agricultural sectors, the majority of whom were women.

10. **Ms. Ameline** asked whether women had been fully involved in designing and subsequently implementing sustainable development programmes. With respect to microcredit projects, she asked whether the Government had carried out impact assessments and, if so, what their findings had been.

11. **Ms. Bareiro-Bobadilla** requested statistics on the incidence of domestic work in Bangladesh and detailed information about the situation of domestic workers, in particular with regard to employment contracts, working hours and social security and pension rights.

12. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** regretted that the State party had provided little disaggregated data on the situation of rural and urban women, indigenous women and women from religious groups. Such data was essential for evaluating whether the State party's programmes and legislation had been effective in promoting the advancement of women. The delegation should provide comprehensive data, either immediately, if available, or as soon as possible in writing.

13. The State party had implemented policies to promote women's sexual and reproductive health and reduce maternal mortality. Progress had been made but stereotypes

and customary attitudes about the role of women continued to hinder women's ability to take decisions concerning their own reproductive and sexual health in such areas as family planning, use of contraception, access to health care and early termination of pregnancy. She drew the delegation's attention to articles 5 and 12 of the Convention in that regard. She wondered what measures the State party had adopted to promote family education, proper understanding of maternity as a social function and the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing of children, as called for in article 5 (b) of the Convention, in particular through awareness programmes directed at men, including young men. Updated data on early marriage and pregnancy and the use of contraception should be provided as tools for assessing progress made towards guaranteeing the sexual and reproductive rights of women.

14. Very little information had been provided on HIV/AIDS in Bangladesh. She acknowledged that the prevalence rate was low, but stressed the importance of comprehensive data disaggregated by age group and gender in painting a clear picture of the situation. It was likewise important to increase awareness of HIV/AIDS with a view to protecting women's health, in particular given the fact that more women were active outside their homes, for example working in agriculture or in the business sector, which increased their risk of exposure to sexually transmitted infections.

15. **Ms. Rasekh** said that, while progress had been made towards implementing article 12 of the Convention, much remained to be done to ensure women's sexual and reproductive health and access to health care. Article 12 was an important article of the Convention yet the State party's periodic report contained little relevant data in that regard; comprehensive data should be provided to help the Committee assess whether progress was truly being made.

16. She welcomed the continued gradual reduction in maternal mortality to approximately 340 per 100,000 live births, but said that the mortality rate nevertheless remained high. Furthermore, most of the deaths were the result of preventable causes. More information should be provided on efforts being made to achieve the State party's Millennium Development Goal target of reducing maternal mortality to 143 per 100,000 live births. She enquired whether any data collection system existed for statistics on the causes of maternal mortality and the incidence of specific diseases and whether there had been any recent study of maternal mortality; if not, why not? She expressed concern that, according to the Committee's sources, violence was a contributing cause in 14 per cent of maternal deaths – a data collection system would help confirm or disprove that alarming figure.

17. She encouraged the State party to increase its efforts to raise awareness of women's sexual and reproductive rights and engage with civil society so as to combat traditional attitudes and stereotypes and strengthen legal provisions aimed at giving women more control over their own lives. Lastly, she requested information on measures to provide social support and services to women, particularly in the area of mental health, for example when dealing with depression or post-traumatic stress.

18. **Ms. Schulz**, turning to article 13 of the Convention, noted the pioneering use of microcredit schemes in Bangladesh to help lift women out of poverty, but wondered whether any effort was made to ensure that credit was granted solely for viable projects and prevent excessively onerous interest rates. She enquired whether any measures were being adopted to address the macroeconomic and structural problems that contributed to poverty among women, such as access to water and electricity. More information would also be welcome on what proportion of the State budget was allocated to such issues.

19. With regard to article 14 of the Convention, she said that although rural women were playing an increasingly important role in agriculture, the Committee had information

according to which the amount of land controlled by women was in fact dwindling. She asked what steps were being taken to improve the situation of rural women and their food and economic security, for example, by making them more independent and providing them with their own land to farm. She also asked about measures to overcome such obstacles as the effects of globalization, climate change and lack of access to markets with a view to alleviating poverty among women.

20. More information on efforts to ensure respect for the rights of women with regard to access to health care and education would be most welcome. The Committee was especially concerned at the continued discrimination against specific groups of women, for example lower caste women, in such areas as housing, employment, freedom of movement and access to credit. The State party's written replies (CEDAW/C/BGD/Q/7/Add.1) described measures adopted to help disabled, older and indigenous women, but she wondered what types of assistance were offered. How many women were receiving support? Had any targets been established for reaching all women eligible for support?

21. **Ms. Zou Xiaqiao** said that she regretted the lack of information provided in the State party's combined sixth and seventh periodic reports on the situation of rural women; comprehensive information should be provided in the next periodic report. She would like to know what policies were being adopted, for example with regard to access to health care and education, to assist rural women and whether progress was actually being made. Noting the high levels of poverty in Bangladesh, she asked whether the Government's poverty reduction and development strategies were proving effective in reducing poverty in general and among rural women in particular. While Bangladesh had been an innovator in the development of microcredit schemes, she asked whether the State party was working to facilitate women's ability to obtain credit, including microcredit, from traditional financial institutions.

22. **Ms. Chaudhury** (Bangladesh) said that strategies adopted to promote the enrolment of girls in school and prevent them from dropping out, such as waiving primary and secondary school fees for girls, had borne fruit: gender parity had been reached at the primary and secondary levels. Steps were also being taken to encourage girls to choose technical and vocational training programmes upon leaving junior secondary school. There were technical and vocational training centres and polytechnic and specialized schools throughout the country; it was proposed that some would operate on a double-shift basis. Furthermore, three polytechnic institutes for girls had been opened. However, the intention was not to segregate girl students; on the contrary, they were encouraged to attend the regular schools.

23. Education spending represented the largest single allocation in the national budget. There were nearly 19,000 secondary schools, more than 1,800 higher secondary colleges and approximately 1,470 general colleges, 9,370 madrasahs and 170 polytechnic institutes. The lack of textbooks had been identified as a problem; accordingly, in 2010, funds had been allocated to purchase some 19,000 books for girl students at the primary and secondary levels; in 2011, a further 23,000 books would be purchased.

24. As for the contribution of early marriage and pregnancy to girls' drop-out rates, she said that under the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 the legal age for marriage was 18 for girls and 21 for boys. The Government had instructed the judicial and police authorities throughout the country to intervene to prevent underage marriages. Steps had also been taken to combat sexual harassment. The Mobile Court Act of 2009 had been amended to include section 509 of the Criminal Code dealing with stalkers. The mobile courts were empowered to prosecute cases of early marriage and sexual harassment. Infrastructure-related issues, such as the lack of separate toilets for girls, that discouraged girls from attending school, had likewise been addressed. More than 39,000 toilets for girls were available in the nearly 19,000 secondary schools and there was at least one girls' toilet in

every college. She acknowledged, however, that more needed to be done, for example, with regard to ensuring regular maintenance of girls' toilet facilities.

25. **Mr. Hannan** (Bangladesh) said that he wished to emphasize that the Government's aim in establishing single-sex schools, colleges and polytechnics was not to segregate girls and women from mainstream education, but simply to fill gaps in availability. The Government was committed to a secular, co-educational system.

26. **Ms. Chaudhury** (Bangladesh) said that equal opportunities and equal pay were guaranteed under article 19 of the Constitution and the Labour Act of 2006, respectively. Women had equal rights to social security and a social safety net had been developed to protect the most vulnerable.

27. Acknowledging the dearth of gender-disaggregated data, she assured Committee members that her Government was working to implement the recommendations made in the Committee's concluding observations on the previous periodic report, and that it was in the process of developing a data collection and analysis system that would enable it to monitor trends and the impact of Government measures in various areas, including employment and domestic violence. Once completed, the gender-disaggregated database would serve as a tool for assessing the effectiveness of the Government's gender-responsive budgeting strategy, enabling it to verify that increased allocations to women's projects brought tangible benefits for women.

28. Most female workers in the informal sector worked in domestic labour or agriculture. There was no specific regulatory framework protecting their rights. Wages, for example, were determined on a purely discretionary case-by-case basis. However, that gap would be filled by a new piece of legislation being drafted at that time. The Government was aware of the informal sector's contribution to the economy and the need to reflect employment conditions in that sector in national development policies.

29. Gender considerations had been incorporated into policies on climate change and women's needs were taken into consideration in reconstruction work following natural disasters. For example, shelters always included separate rooms with adjoining bathrooms for women and facilities for pregnant and breast-feeding women.

30. Reducing maternal mortality was a top priority and the Government was working hard to achieve the corresponding Millennium Development Goal. The rate had fallen but remained high. Remedial measures included a voucher scheme that gave women a comprehensive package of maternity benefits, including a one-off financial grant, three antenatal check-ups, safe delivery under the guidance of skilled birth attendants, one post-natal check-up and transportation costs. In addition, around 88,000 impoverished women in rural areas were receiving a monthly maternity allowance of 350 taka, payable for a period of two years. In 2010, monthly maternity allowances had also been introduced for breast-feeding working mothers in urban areas, including female Government workers.

31. The Government had embarked on a large-scale, grass-roots health-care initiative that envisaged the creation of over 18,000 community clinics nationwide. The aim was to achieve universal access to basic primary health care and ensure that Bangladesh attained Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 by the 2015 deadline. By June 2010, more than 10,000 community clinics had already been operational and around 15 million patients had benefited. The clinics had been a major contributor to the advances in health indicators that had earned Bangladesh the United Nations Millennium Development Goals Award in 2010.

32. However, with statistics pointing to a shortage of skilled birth attendants and persistently high levels of home delivery, much remained to be done. To that end, the Ministry of Health had launched a far-reaching campaign to improve birthing facilities by

upgrading skills, equipment and logistics. Additional neonatal, maternal and childcare services were also envisaged.

33. The Government's efforts to promote reproductive health and family planning emphasized the need for involving more men, increased cognizance of reproductive rights and responsibilities among both sexes, and greater female involvement in family decision-making processes. Teenagers and young adults were another policy focus due to benefit from targeted services at the community level under the national plan of action being developed at that time in implementation of the Government's Adolescent Reproductive Health Strategy.

34. The Government's commitment to promoting reproductive health, gender equality, female empowerment and HIV/AIDS prevention was also evident in the variety of additional awareness-raising and service initiatives detailed in paragraphs 38 and 39 of the written replies to the list of issues (CEDAW/C/BGD/Q/7/Add.1).

35. The situation of rural woman was central to the National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction, which encompassed a range of measures to reduce female poverty, including direct financial support, food assistance, loans and training. The financial component extended the social safety net to include monthly allowances of 300 taka for widows and destitute women throughout the country, in addition to the pregnancy allowances mentioned earlier. Those allowances had been increased in the 2009/10 financial year, as had the number of beneficiaries.

36. Food insecurity was addressed mainly through the Vulnerable Group Development Programme, initially supported by the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), but now funded directly by the Government, with technical support from WFP, to ensure its long-term sustainability. Under that Programme, women living below the poverty line received monthly rations of rice and other foods combined with a package of services, including life skills and employment training. Around 80,000 women in remote areas were currently receiving monthly allowances of 400 taka together with training in income-generating skills at that time. On completing their training, they would receive a grant of 7,500 taka to fund the purchase of productive assets such as cattle or sewing machines that would help secure their economic independence.

37. Other programmes designed to increase self-sufficiency in rural areas included the One House, One Farm project and a system of easily accessible credit to fund training in agricultural skills and non-farm activities such as handicrafts and sewing. The development of non-farm rural activities was an effective poverty reduction strategy that the State party would be incorporating into its next five-year development plan. In addition, the Government supported small- and medium-sized female-run businesses through the provision of collateral-free loans, while older women and women with disabilities were entitled to specific allowances.

38. Microcredit had been a source of contention and more research was needed to determine whether support of that kind genuinely helped to alleviate poverty. Not all women necessarily had the requisite business skills and, while loans undoubtedly assisted initially, high interest payments sometimes became a burden subsequently. The Government was still studying the pros and cons. However, it had no reservations about the importance of social safety net programmes and skills development to poverty reduction strategies. Microcredit might be a component of those strategies even if it was shown to be ineffective in isolation.

39. **Mr. Hannan** (Bangladesh) said that, with enrolment parity now achieved in rural, primary education, within the next 10 years every household, including the most impoverished, should have at least one enlightened, educated female. That situation would change the face of the rural economy. The community health clinics would also contribute

to that transformation; the aim was that they should provide training as well as treatment so that local women could ultimately assume their management, with the Government acting solely as initiator and facilitator.

40. Bangladesh was confident that its Millennium Development Goal for maternal mortality would be attained; the statistics were in its favour, and the benefits of its education and health-care strategies would be cemented over time. He hoped that the Committee would be able to verify the success of those strategies when it considered the next periodic report of Bangladesh.

41. **Ms. Chaudhury** (Bangladesh) said that she would provide answers to Ms. Bailey's questions regarding higher education in writing.

42. **Ms. Schulz** asked for further information about land ownership, specifically female ownership and what was being done to give women greater control over the land they cultivated. She also sought information about measures to support Dalit women and improve their social status.

43. **Ms. Rasekh** said that bringing women's health up to international standards was undoubtedly a challenge for developing countries and that the progress of Bangladesh in that area must be applauded. She wished to emphasize, however, that there was a difference between access to health care and access to quality health care. If the community clinics did not provide quality care, women would not benefit, and maternal mortality and other indicators would not fall, no matter how extensive the network. She would therefore like to know how the Government ensured that quality increased in line with coverage, given the constraints on its budget, especially in the light of shadow reports indicating that less than 25 per cent of women in Bangladesh had access to comprehensive, quality prenatal care.

44. Lastly, recalling that Bangladesh ranked among the world's most densely populated nations, she asked if the State party had a specific population policy and, if so, how that policy impacted on women's health and reproductive rights.

45. **Ms. Zou Xiaojiao** said that, according to alternative sources of information available to the Committee, gender discrimination in Bangladesh remained a powerful obstacle to the realization of the right to food. In consequence, women were more malnourished than men and that in turn contributed to the low birthweight and high infant mortality in both girls and boys. She asked what measures the Government was taking to deal with that problem.

46. **Ms. Chaudhury** (Bangladesh), on the subject of land ownership for women, said that the Government had a firm guideline covering the leasing of agricultural land, namely that it should be leased to a husband and wife on equal terms. She undertook to supply more detail on land ownership for women at a subsequent time.

47. The issue of the Dalits was not a major problem. They enjoyed the same rights, and the same protection under the law as any other people, and special support could be provided by the Government if they considered that they were the victims of discrimination.

48. Access to health care was a major concern. Given the country's lack of resources, it was always difficult to meet the challenges as fully as the Government would wish, and thus priorities had to be set. The Government recognized the importance of quality health care, but the first step was to establish the facilities for basic health care. It was also possible to add major tasks to the Annual Development Project (ADP), as joint undertakings between the Government and its development partners. For example, the voucher scheme project to provide antenatal and post-natal care could be expanded under the ADP to cover the whole country.

49. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** reiterated the Committee's overall concern at the absence of a civil system of marriage and divorce in Bangladesh, which was a violation of human rights in general and discriminatory against women in particular. Much had been said earlier in the dialogue about laws relating to personal status, and the Committee had been informed that the possibility of a uniform family code had been discussed. She asked for further details of which matters were considered to fall under personal law, and therefore to be governed by religious laws, and excluded from the constitutional equality provision.

50. She sought clarification of the existing law regarding marital property. Upon divorce, what share of the property accumulated during the marriage were women entitled to keep, and did that share differ according to the religion of the couple concerned? Were women subject to the different religious rules on inheritance, rules that either did not recognize their inheritance rights at all or at best accorded them a meagre share? What weight was placed on the principle of the best interests of the child when custody was being determined?

51. None of the issues she had just mentioned had been covered in the State party's reports, perhaps because of a mistaken impression on the part of the State party that having entered reservations it was exempt from the obligation to provide information. She suggested that a progressive approach could be adopted to improve women's rights in such areas, even under an overall regime of personal status legislation. For example, all economic consequences of marriage could be redefined as civil contractual matters, and the concept of sharing in marital property could be drawn from the implied contracts theory that could be attributed to every marriage.

52. **Ms. Awori** wondered how in practical terms a uniform family code would work in a country like Bangladesh, with its variety of conflicting religious-based laws. She sought the delegation's comments on reports that men and women did not have the same rights in marriage and in the family, especially in relation to acquisition and ownership of property. She noted that the Government had recently introduced compulsory birth and marriage registration, but wished to know whether that was being enforced, and, if so, how.

53. While it was commendable that the minimum age for marriage had been raised, the fact that it was 18 for girls and 21 for boys could be regarded as discriminatory. The Government had pronounced a prohibition on child marriages, yet alternative sources of information asserted that it was not enforced at all, and that 68 per cent of girls were married below the age of 16. She invited the delegation to comment on that assertion.

54. She requested information on the implementation of the Guardianship and Wards Act, which dated back to 1890. It seemed to be discriminatory, in that women had no right to guardianship over their children, and to custodianship over boys only until the age of 7 and over girls until puberty.

55. **Ms. Chaudhury** (Bangladesh) said that the Government was willing to engage in discourse on the possibility of introducing a uniform family code, and to seek the most effective way to do so. A balance would have to be struck among the various religious groups and their different interests, which would require extensive debate in order to reach consensus.

56. The issues of marriage, divorce, maintenance, custody and guardianship all fell within the scope of personal law, and were thus regulated by each religion's personal law. With regard to marital property, Islamic law had the concept of dower money, which in the event of divorce the woman was entitled to keep, as established in the marriage contract. Other than that, there was no concept of sharing marital property, but a divorced woman was entitled to keep her own property, if she had any. Women had a right to maintenance, which the husband was obliged to supply for as long as the marriage existed. Women were entitled to open bank accounts jointly with anyone they pleased. If they were owners of property, they could manage it without interference from any quarter.

57. She welcomed the important suggestion of making use of the civil contract theory, while keeping personal law intact, and evolving that concept into a separate mechanism to address marital property issues.

58. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** observed that, in the light of the country's very high birth rate, it would be beneficial for a dialogue to be started in the country on the ideal number of children for families to have. Members of the Committee would be happy to help in that process of reflection. At the same time, media campaigns should be started to raise awareness of how the high numbers of children contributed to the country's enduring poverty.

59. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari**, **Ms. Awori** and **Ms. Rasekh** said that not all of their questions had been answered.

60. **Ms. Chaudhury** (Bangladesh) said that she did not think that the figure of 68 per cent for child marriages could be correct. The Government had a strong policy of preventing child marriage, as expressed in the Child Marriage Restraint Act, and issued instructions to the police and other officials to that end.

61. She confirmed that the Guardianship and Wards Act, although old, was still the law governing Muslim guardianship issues under personal law. However, the High Court Division of the Supreme Court had ruled that the concept of the best interests of the child outweighed the provisions of Islamic law, which held that mothers could have custody of their sons only up to the age of 7, and of daughters only until puberty.

62. She welcomed the idea of launching debates through the media, in support of awareness-raising, training and advocacy, which could be helpful especially in such areas as eliminating gender stereotypes and patriarchy.

63. The Government's population policy was that families should have no more than two children. Consequently, they could claim maternity leave and maternity allowance, for two children only.

64. **The Chairperson** commended the State party on the progress it had made to date, and on its observance of the Committee's recommendations. However, clearly much work remained to be done, especially in implementing legislation, such as the Domestic Violence Act. She encouraged the State party to take all necessary measures to address the various concerns of the Committee in order to ensure full compliance with the provisions of the Convention.

65. **Ms. Chaudhury** (Bangladesh) thanked the Committee members as well as the representatives of civil society organizations that had attended the constructive dialogue. It had been a unique and invaluable experience to participate, and to benefit from the comments of the experts. The suggestions and recommendations made would surely guide the Government's efforts towards fulfilling its obligations under the Convention and to achieve gender equality, gender justice and women's empowerment. As demonstrated by the representation of women at high levels of politics in Bangladesh, her Government was sincerely committed to those goals, and hoped that the international community would provide it with the resources, capacity-building and support to enable it to attain them.

The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.