



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination  
against Women  
Twenty-first session**

**Summary record of the 432nd meeting**

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 14 June 1999, at 10.15 a.m.

*Chairperson:* Ms. Kim Yung-chung

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*In the absence of the Chairperson, Ms. Kim Yung-chung (Vice-Chairperson), took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.*

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

*Initial and second periodic reports of Belize (CEDAW/C/BLZ/1-2)*

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

2. **Ms. Balderamos Garcia** (Belize), introducing the initial and second periodic reports of Belize (CEDAW/C/BLZ/1-2), said that the adoption of the Convention had catalysed national efforts to achieve gender equity and equality in Belize. The report had been a joint effort of the Government and the Women's Issues Network (WIN), a Belizean non-governmental organization. In recent years the population of Belize had shifted from rural to urban areas. That trend, which had been marked by a flow of immigrants away from agricultural work towards jobs in the construction and services sectors, as well as by the migration of urban Belizeans to North America, had had a significant effect on human resources and her country's capacity to address gender needs. Immigrants made up 14 per cent of the population: indeed, Belize's population was a highly diverse mix of, among others, Mestizos, Creoles, Garinagu, Maya, Mennonites, East Indians, Chinese and Lebanese. That multicultural reality had a significant impact on the development and implementation of laws and policies to end discrimination against women.

3. A majority of the population was under the age of 25, and the fertility rate, at 4.6 per cent, was among the highest in the region. Nineteen per cent of Belizean children were born to teenage mothers, and 59 per cent were born out of wedlock. A wide variety of gender relationships was accepted in that multi-ethnic society, and Belize was tailoring its laws and policies accordingly. Unfortunately, with the globalization of the economy, Belize's export markets had become increasingly vulnerable, and the growth rate had steadily declined, plunging a significant portion of the population into poverty. Among the major actors in Belize's development were a growing civil society, non-governmental organizations, the business

community and the churches, most of whose members were women. Many of the Government's current policies and laws, especially those relating to family planning and HIV/AIDS, were based on a church-State agreement.

4. Turning to articles 1 and 2, she said that the Constitution required the State to enact policies designed to eliminate economic and social privilege and disparity among citizens on the basis of race, colour, creed or sex and defined discriminatory treatment as affording different treatment to different persons on the basis of those characteristics. Women nevertheless still lacked access to the resources and opportunities available to men. Although Belizean laws and policies did not, in fact, discriminate against women, temporary special measures were necessary in order to eliminate discrimination against them based on cultural practices and customs.

5. With reference to articles 3 and 4, she said that the Constitution also required the development of policies that eliminated disparity among citizens on the basis of sex. The Government had recently formulated a policy which aimed to fill 30 per cent of top public service posts with women. The question whether to employ affirmative action measures to increase the number of women in the Cabinet was currently under debate, and a political reform commission had been set up to make affirmative action recommendations regarding the Constitution and the various political bodies. Other affirmative action initiatives included a social investment fund project that had earmarked 50 per cent of its loans for women, and a Government-sponsored Small Farmers and Business Bank, a significant percentage of whose loans were reserved for women. There were, however, no national affirmative action policies, laws or quotas.

6. Women were permitted to apply for twelve weeks of maternity leave, six before confinement and six afterward, during the first four of which they received full pay, and during the remainder, half pay. The social security system also provided maternity benefits. Those members of Belizean society who received the fewest maternity benefits were domestic workers and unmarried teachers who worked within the Church-State education system. The Government had established a domestic violence task force and was preparing a national family violence plan on the basis of a model developed by the Pan American Health Organization. It was also forming domestic violence

subcommittees and support groups, and setting up counselling rooms for victims of such violence in police stations. In addition, a national strategic plan on gender equity and equality had been developed to focus on family violence, employment, health, decision-making and poverty, with a view to carrying out Belize's commitments under the Beijing Platform for Action. The Government had also designated the National Women's Commission as the body which would monitor compliance with the Convention.

7. Turning to article 5, she said that laws on sexual harassment, domestic violence, families and children provided sanctions against traditional patterns of behaviour; and a bill that would permit spouses to bring actions for marital rape would soon be considered by the House of Representatives. A community parenting education and empowerment programme and the national committee for families and children were offering educational programmes on the provisions of the Convention to parents, teachers and members of the community; the National Organization for the Prevention of Child Abuse was also conducting educational programmes throughout Belize. In 1991, primary school textbooks had been revised, with a view to introducing gender-neutral texts and illustrations.

8. **Ms. Catzim** (Belize) said, with reference to article 6, that Belizean law prohibited persons from operating or managing brothels, or allowing their premises to be used for that purpose, subject to fine or imprisonment; and that prostitution constituted a petty offence. Despite such laws, many brothels operated under the guise of restaurants, bars or hotels. Prostitutes earned more money than domestic or garment workers, and most were labour immigrants or refugees from Central America, or immigrants from the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. In Belize's overloaded judicial system, it was admittedly difficult to prosecute someone for prostitution or operating a brothel. Public concern about prostitution was, however, growing, in view of the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS; several non-governmental organizations had begun the work of educating the public in those matters.

9. Turning to articles 7 and 8, she said that more women than men were registered voters in Belize. Representation by women at the parliamentary and local governmental levels was disproportionate: 50 of the 58 municipal seats were held by men; only 2 of the 29 members of the House of Representatives were

women. Statistics nevertheless showed a gradual increase in participation by women at the candidacy level. Although no political party had taken affirmative action measures to increase the number of women in the Cabinet, the majority party had instituted a policy calling for 30 per cent of top posts in public service to be reserved for women, and had appointed women as Speaker of the House of Representatives and as President and Vice-President of the Senate. The Senate was comprised of nine members, four of whom were women. Women had also been appointed as heads of boards of directors and as executive directors of important national institutions. Though there were few women diplomats, one out of six ambassadors was a woman. In addition, the National Women's Commission had conducted a study on opportunities for political participation by women, and its recommendations would contribute to a broader programme for political reform in Belize.

10. With reference to article 9, she said that all persons born in Belize had the right to claim Belizean citizenship. Persons either of whose parents were Belizean citizens could claim citizenship by descent; and persons married to Belizeans could apply either for citizenship or for residency status. Nationality laws made no distinction between men and women. Major advances had been made in the implementation of article 10. Belizean women had begun vigorously to pursue their education. Although primary school education was mandatory for children aged 5 to 14, boys showed a slightly higher rate of enrolment than girls. A truancy programme had been launched with a view to improving enrolment and participation, and school attendance officers had been hired. Those officers had found that the reasons for the failure to attend school were financial and social, and had referred families to social assistance and counselling services.

11. A number of cases of sexual abuse had been discovered, particularly of girls. The Government had instituted a new child abuse law, which imposed a penalty for the failure to report cases of sexual abuse to the police. Girls did significantly better than boys on the standardized test that marked the transition from primary to secondary schools, despite boys' higher performance in mathematics and sciences. Ninety per cent of girls and about 79 per cent of boys went on to secondary school. Those figures varied, however, by region, and the trend tended to reverse in rural areas.

Although 65 per cent of the students at Belize College were female, it should also be remembered that parents were more likely to send their male children abroad to pursue higher education.

12. Pregnancy was a major cause for dropping out of school, and continuing education programmes were ill-equipped to deal with the needs of pregnant girls. Under the Church-State education system, although both boys and girls could be expelled for a pregnancy, in practice boys were almost never dismissed. Only a few secondary schools allowed pregnant girls to continue their studies. The Government recognized the need to develop a national policy that would deal humanely with the issue of teenage pregnancy.

13. **Ms. Fuller** (Belize), referring to article 11, said that the constitutional prohibition against discrimination on the basis of sex also applied to employment legislation. Although there were no discriminatory labour laws, discriminatory attitudes towards women in the workforce persisted. Only 40 per cent of women worked, as compared to 78 per cent of men. Women were better educated, but that had not meant higher wages. Not only were women's wages lower than those of men, but the female unemployment rate was twice as high as the male unemployment rate, and women were more likely to be unemployed for longer periods. Since 1993, women had been dropping out of the formal economy, a phenomenon which might be related to the denial of equal opportunities in the labour force. Furthermore, women were concentrated in jobs that paid less than those of men who had achieved the same educational level.

14. The minimum wage regulations covered persons engaged in hourly employment, but failed to protect piece-rate workers in the garment industry. In addition, Belizean minimum wage regulations varied from job to job: domestic workers, for instance, were paid less than those who worked in exports. In 1992, the Belize Organization for Women and Development (BOWAND) had launched a minimum wage campaign which propounded one minimum wage for all workers and an annual cost-of-living adjustment. Although neither had been adopted, the Government had agreed to review existing regulations.

15. In addition, non-governmental organizations were developing a campaign on women and employment, which would, *inter alia*, advocate gender-sensitive policies and programmes on training and credit for

women. It would also review and make recommendations on labour laws, wages and social security and work benefits for women. It had been developed with input from the Women's Department in the Ministry of Human Development, Women and Youth. Furthermore, non-governmental organizations continued to fight for a policy that would put the minimum wage for traditional female dominated jobs on a par with that for male dominated jobs, to achieve equal pay for equal work. Currently, both the Women's Department and non-governmental organizations were endeavouring to improve the economic status of women through the promotion of training for women in non-traditional jobs. To that end, the Women's Department had started programmes offering training in areas such as elementary electrical wiring, computer science and automechanics, through the Centre for Employment Training.

16. Although the labour law prohibited the dismissal of women during maternity leave, schools operating under the Church-State system were allowed to fire unwed mothers if they became pregnant before they reached the stage of qualifying for maternity leave. In some cases, such women were rehired after they had delivered. No education policy was in place to prevent that practice, which was contrary to labour regulations. In that connection, Belize had just signed 10 International Labour Organization Conventions, including one on union recognition policy which, she hoped, would allow women more recourse to defend their rights as workers. The current Government was reviewing the 1996 Sexual Harassment Act to make it easier for women to prosecute sexual harassment.

17. **Mrs. Musa** (Belize), referring to article 12 of the Convention, said that, as a result of the focus of traditional health care services on reproductive health, women had had more access to health care than men. Approximately 95 per cent of pregnant women now received prenatal care. However, teenage pregnancy was still high. In 1998, 23 per cent of all babies were born to women under 19 years of age. Moreover, reported abortions were also on the rise, although abortion was illegal. Contraception was allowed by law. Female fertility had been slowly decreasing, especially in urban areas, as women gained more access to contraception. However, data suggested that the unmet need for contraception was as high as 65 per cent.

18. According to the most recent data, the primary causes of female mortality were breast and cervical cancer, kidney diseases, as well as pelvic diseases. In 1998, following the upsurge in cervical cancer deaths, the National Women's Commission had published a book to promote public awareness of cancer. Belize had the highest transmission rate of HIV/AIDS in Central America and more women were reported to have the virus than men, probably because more women were tested than men. To address that situation, the Government had established an AIDS Task Force which, together with non-governmental organizations, was seeking to implement HIV/AIDS-awareness and prevention programmes.

19. The Community Parenting and Education Programme within the Ministry of Human Development, Women and Youth was also incorporating HIV/AIDS education into its syllabus. However, some churches were reluctant to allow the Government and non-governmental organizations to teach HIV/AIDS prevention techniques, even at the tertiary level, and there was a lack of adequate systems to counsel and treat people affected with HIV/AIDS. The Government would conduct a review of the National Health Plan for Gender Equity, which had been developed as part of Belize's move into the Commonwealth Gender Management System.

20. As far as equality of economic opportunities was concerned, women, who were unable to provide collateral such as land titles, usually had more difficulties than men in obtaining loans. In many instances, they did not know how the loan system worked. There were two microcredit institutions that targeted women specifically, the Small Farmers and Business Bank and the Belize Enterprise for Sustainable Technology. There was a need for more education and training for women who wished to access loans. To that end, the Ministry of Human Development, Women and Youth had recently conducted training to give women information on how to obtain loans.

21. There were no legal obstacles to the participation of women in recreational activities, sports and culture, although women were minimally involved in most sporting activities. They tended, on the other hand, to be attracted to the arts, where they dominated. A gender review of primary school textbooks had been conducted in 1996. As a result, gender-biased

illustrations and narratives on physical activities had been changed to reflect gender neutrality.

22. There was a paucity of gender-disaggregated data on rural women, who were generally less educated and more likely to have higher fertility rates than urban women. Workshops on domestic violence, family planning and health care had been organized for rural women, who had been heavily involved in the development and adoption of the Village Councils Act. The Act included specific provisions focusing on the concerns of rural women, who were encouraged to stand for Village Council elections. Moreover, in order to boost women's confidence and participation in the national planning process, the Women's Department had begun to experiment with organizing social evenings for women and their partners or spouses.

23. **Ms. Marin** (Belize), referring to article 15 of the Convention, said that women had equal rights to enter into contracts, own land, litigate in their own names, act as trustees and personal representatives of deceased persons and succeed to property, even if they were married. Although statistics on land ownership were not disaggregated by sex, it was general knowledge that land was owned mostly by men. Once more accurate data were produced, the Women's Department might be able to justify the need for affirmative action measures for land distribution and tenure.

24. Women and men could legally marry at 14, with the consent of their parents, and at 18 without their consent. Except for the cultural practices among the recent immigrants from Asia, women for the most part married of their own free will and volition. A married woman might apply for a legal separation from her spouse on several grounds, including adultery and cruelty. Where the husband had been diagnosed as insane or had been convicted of rape the woman could file for separation. No-fault divorce was also permitted following three years of separation for irreconcilable differences.

25. Belize had a Domestic Violence Act whereby a spouse could, among other things, apply for a protection order prohibiting the other spouse from approaching the premises and from communicating with her in any form. The Government was presently drafting and would present by the end of June, an act to remove the marital exemption enjoyed by husbands from being prosecuted by their wives for rape. Women could apply for maintenance for their children, whether

those children were born within or outside wedlock and both parents of children born within wedlock had equal rights to custody and access to such children, the primary concern of the courts being the welfare of the children. However, as far as children born out of wedlock were concerned, the mother was entitled to custody, unless proven unfit. Whereas a wife could claim maintenance for herself, a de facto spouse could not.

26. Since a significant percentage of the country's population was part of consensual or common law unions, upon the break-up of the union, a de facto spouse could only claim maintenance for the children of the union and not for herself. Similarly, in a common law union, only the children could be successors to their father's property. That put many women in common law unions and their children in a financially disadvantageous position. Currently, upon dissolution of a marriage, women could only claim rights to matrimonial property if they had either indirectly or directly contributed to the purchase of such property.

27. **Ms. Balderamos-Garcia** (Belize), in conclusion, said that, although both women and men were required by law to have the same responsibilities to protect their children, in practice economic burdens, emigration and customs placed the greater responsibilities on women. Those three areas needed to be addressed by all segments of society in order to narrow gender gaps in family laws and practices. Gender equality needed to be further promoted through measures to combat sexual harassment, access to continuing education for young mothers, equal pay for work of equal value and gender neutral teaching materials. Even in areas where adequate provisions existed, attention was required to ensure greater compliance, through more consistent enforcement of laws and regulations, as well as through public awareness campaigns and education. That applied to such areas as fuller implementation of domestic borrowers' legislation, improved access to health services, regulation of brothels, and sexual offences, including against minors.

#### *General comments*

28. **Ms. Hazelle** expressed deep concern about the high rates of abortion, HIV/AIDS infection, prostitution and teenage pregnancy. Although the bulk of the population was Catholic, a large number of children were being born to single women. There

seemed to be some conflict between religious practices and beliefs on the one hand, and what happened in reality on the other. In that regard, she wondered whether the political will existed to address such issues as family life education, including safe sex and family planning, bearing in mind the relationship between Church and State. Moreover, while the Government was responsible for the salaries of all teachers at the primary level and 70 per cent of administrative costs, it did not have any say in the principles, programmes and policies governing primary schools, which sometimes even contravened the Constitution itself. She also wondered whether unmarried male teachers who became parents were dismissed from their jobs.

29. Furthermore, she was concerned about the lack of information on violence against women and children. Indeed, although the age of consent was 16 years, 19 per cent of births were to young mothers, who were doubly penalized: they had to deal with statutory rape and becoming pregnant and were then prohibited from continuing their education. Lastly, she enquired what action Belize was taking to implement its commitments under the Beijing Platform for Action, particularly with respect to gender-based violence.

30. **Ms. Abaka** expressed concern about the Church-State relationship. Belize was a secular State, yet in various sectors of society, especially in education and health, such secularism was not evident. The Church exerted considerable influence, yet the rate of teenage pregnancy was very high, despite the fact that the majority of the population was Roman Catholic. She hoped that the delegation could explain that ambiguity. She also wondered what the current Government, which was progressive, was doing to mitigate the adverse impact of structural adjustment, especially on women and on rural folk in general.

31. **Ms. Aouij** welcomed the action the Government had taken to make business loans available to women and to adopt a national plan on sexual violence. Corresponding legislation, however, had been slow in coming, and she would appreciate details of the forthcoming bills referred to by the delegation, the likelihood of their adoption and any prior consultation with non-governmental women's groups in their drafting. She would also like to know how the Government — in view of its obligation to safeguard women's rights to education and health and even life — was dealing with the widespread social ills of teenage school dropouts because of pregnancy and of

often fatal abortions, and whether it intended to decriminalize abortion.

#### *Article 2*

32. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** asked whether the Government had actually conducted a review of its existing legislation for any discriminatory provisions. She wondered if it had plans to draft legislation incorporating the provisions of the Convention against sexual discrimination, and suggested that, given the multi-ethnic composition of the country, it should contemplate concomitant anti-racial-discrimination legislation. In connection with the National Strategic Plan on Gender Equity and Equality, it would be interesting to know the targets and time frames established in each of the five priority areas chosen in fulfilment of Belize's Beijing commitments; and to learn more about the financing of the Plan and the extent to which the Ministry of Human Development, Women and Youth was involved in its administration. She would appreciate an explanation of the Commonwealth Gender Management System that Belize soon planned to enter, and what the impact of joining would be in the form of technical assistance and the like.

33. **Ms. Ferrer**, noting that the general picture given was one in which women were at a disadvantage in the economic, political, cultural and social life of the country, and that most discrimination occurred at the individual level, asked what publicity Belize was giving to the Convention, what specific training in its provisions, and what awareness women had of their rights under domestic legislation. She would like clarification of the statement in the report (para. 128) that the Constitution protected against discriminatory treatment "except in certain circumstances". She would also like to hear what the Government was doing to improve the overall situation of refugee women from neighbouring countries, many of whom were single mothers living at the poverty level.

#### *Article 3*

34. **Ms. Ouedraogo**, congratulating the Government on its obvious political will, requested further information about the National Women's Commission, designated as the prime mechanism to monitor compliance with the Convention, especially with regard to its functioning, its budget and how funds would be mobilized and allocated to various

programmes. The important task of consciousness-raising, especially among women, was costly and often required reliance on non-governmental organizations. She wondered if Belize had developed a national policy for the promotion of women's rights, applicable to all technical departments of the Government and covering all women's issues, in conjunction with non-governmental organizations; and if so, if the goals had been defined, since a clear-sighted calculation of available funds and available expertise within and outside the Government was always the first step in the crucial follow-up.

#### *Article 4*

35. **Ms. Abaka**, observing that the change of Government in Belize seemed to have ushered in a more hopeful era for women, said that the delegation's introduction had compensated for the dearth of information in the report itself. There were apparently many affirmative action policies in effect, including the commendable quota system for disabled student admissions (report, para. 117), but no affirmative action legislation had been adopted, presumably because of resistance to quotas on the part of the population or the political parties. More action was needed, however, to help teenage girls who had dropped out of school because of pregnancy re-enter the educational system.

36. **Ms. Ryel** said that although the Government had acknowledged the need for affirmative action to put more women in decision-making positions, it had as yet adopted no legislation to that end. The political parties, on the other hand, were routinely appointing women to positions on their committees; a very important development because it made women visible role models and allowed them in turn to help appoint other women. Since policies disappeared with political change, it would be safer for the Government to embody its policies in legislation, even though quotas might be controversial. It should start with a law confirming the Government's own obligation to promote equality in that sphere. To attract more support, the law could be phrased in a gender-neutral way, calling, for instance, for at least 40 per cent of each sex to be represented in any government agency.

#### *Article 5*

37. **Ms. Hazelle** welcomed Belize's forthcoming entry into the Commonwealth Gender Management

System, for which her own country had been the Caribbean pilot, and said that the move would mainstream gender issues in Belize and facilitate the involvement of civil society and a change in the ideas of the citizenry on gender issues. She wondered if the Government had any programmes to increase awareness of women's issues and deal with sexual stereotyping, whether their impact had been evaluated, what the target groups were, what the role of the media had been and whether the Church had been called upon to take part as a social institution or had been seen as a passive audience.

38. **Ms. Cartwright**, recalling the Committee's general recommendation No. 19, on violence against women as a human rights violation, welcomed the establishment of the Government's Domestic Violence Task Force and its start on an integrated National Family Violence Plan, since the problem seemed to be a very serious one in Belize as in many countries. The National Plan would need at the outset to include research on the extent and nature of the problem; it would require an amendment of the Criminal Code to criminalize sexual violence against women and girls and their psychological abuse; and it would have to protect women against the perpetrators. It would be interesting to know how far Belize's domestic violence law went, whether prosecutions were possible, whether it was widely used and enforced by the courts, and whether it had been made easier for women to come forward to give evidence in court, especially in case of marital rape. The problem also required systematic, ongoing education of men in general, and especially of authorities like the police and the judiciary and those in the health professions. Teachers could also help identify cases; and support and treatment must be provided for the victims.

39. **Ms. Corti** asked the delegation to elaborate on plans to eliminate stereotypes in the context of a multi-ethnic and multi-racial society, where a unified policy for the advancement of women seemed to be lacking and where the various ethnic groups held fast to their own customs, traditions and religion. She would also like to hear more about the relationship between Church and State.

40. **Ms. Ferrer** wondered why men and boys had not been invited to participate in the community training programmes mentioned in the report, as it had been shown that it was important to involve men in educational efforts to change stereotypes, and inquired

about the status of efforts to include family life topics in school curricula. Turning to article 6, she pointed out that women turned to prostitution mainly because they had no other means of supporting themselves and asked if any efforts were made to provide rehabilitation or job training for prostitutes and whether procurers were punished under the law as well. The situation concerning regulated prostitution around British military bases also needed some clarification. Finally, she would like to know the penalties for child prostitution and whether any programmes existed to help migrant women involved in such activities.

41. **Ms. Goonesekere** said that her concern was that the existing laws on prostitution, which penalized the open and public exercise of the profession, while simply regulating organized brothels, had no relation to the current reality in Belize which included sex tourism, a high rate of HIV/AIDS infection and some indications of trafficking in persons. She urged the Government to consider a more interventionist policy towards prostitution, similar to the approach that it had taken to domestic violence.

42. **Ms. Feng Cui** said that the existing legislation served to punish prostitutes, but not to prevent sexual exploitation. It was her hope that the Government would adopt legislation from a perspective of prevention.

#### *Articles 7 and 8*

43. **Ms. Regazzoli** said that it was difficult to accept the very low level of women's participation in decision-making. Although women had reportedly voted in high numbers in the last election, it was disappointing that the political parties did not see them as viable candidates for office. She wondered whether the national mechanism for implementing the Beijing Platform for Action intended to submit affirmative action proposals in that area to Parliament. The delegation had stated in its oral presentation that women did not get involved in the "dirty game" of politics, but in her view, increasing women's participation and access to the decision-making levels was the only way to clean up the political arena. Turning to article 8, she suggested that, while awaiting the passage of legislation to ensure women's political participation, a Presidential decree would send a strong signal from the executive branch that women should be involved in all sectors of Government.



*Article 10*

44. **Ms. Gabr**, referring to paragraph 102 of the report, said that she would like to know more about the plans of the National Council of Education to eliminate negative stereotypes of women at all educational levels, to maintain the balance between Church and State in the educational system and to provide education on reproductive health and prevention of pregnancy. The State should launch an effort to educate children about the CEDAW Convention similar to its efforts to teach the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

45. **Ms. Hazelle** said that she was concerned at the lack of a Government-led policy to allow pregnant teenagers to continue their schooling. Their right to education was not guaranteed under law, which was an infringement of both the CEDAW Convention and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The fact that teenaged fathers did not receive the same treatment as girls was clearly discriminatory, as well. Although there was no specific policy, she asked if there were any recent developments in the actions taken with regard to pregnant students. Their inability to complete their education would affect their future employability. Finally, she would like the delegation to elaborate on the apparent discrepancy between the statement that education was compulsory for children aged 5 to 14 and paragraph 111 of the report, which seemed to imply that many students were allowed to withdraw from school before that age.

*The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.*