



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

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

Twenty-ninth session

Summary record of the 612th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 2 July 2003, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Açar

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of Costa Rica*

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The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

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

Combined initial, second and third periodic report and fourth periodic report of Costa Rica (CEDAW/C/CRI/1-3 and CEDAW/C/CRI/4)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Britton and Mr. Stagno (Costa Rica) took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Stagno** (Costa Rica) said that women's issues were of fundamental importance to the Government of Costa Rica, and its efforts to implement the Convention included ratification of the Optional Protocol in 2001. The Government's commitment to the rights of women and girls was reflected in its cross-cutting approach to policies and programmes.

3. **Ms. Britton** (Costa Rica) said that her country, in line with its policy of accountability and transparency, had submitted its periodic reports covering the period from Costa Rica's adherence to the Convention in 1985 through March 2002 and would also provide updated information on the most important events between April 2002 and March 2003. The reports had been prepared in conjunction with women's organizations and other representatives of civil society and had been part of the preparatory process for the special session of the General Assembly on gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century.

4. After providing background information on the geography, economy and political structure of Costa Rica, she outlined the development of its national machinery for women. In 1986, the National Centre for Women and Family Development, under the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, had been established as the governing body for national policies on women. In an effort to strengthen the national machinery as recommended in the Beijing Platform for Action, in 1998 that body had become the National Institute for Women (INAMU), a high-level, independent and decentralized institution. As Minister-Secretary on the Status of Women and a member of the Council of State, she also served as its Executive Director.

5. The adoption of the Law on Social Equality for Women in 1990 had begun a period of intense development of legal instruments to protect the human

rights of women. That period had culminated in the adoption of the Law on Responsible Fatherhood in 2001, protecting women with children born out of wedlock from discrimination. During that period, the national mechanism had been strengthened from both a structural and a budgetary standpoint, and mechanisms to mainstream a gender perspective had been developed at the sectoral, institutional and local levels. Obstacles remained in the form of patriarchal attitudes among the judiciary, the legislature and society as a whole, and a limited commitment from the Government to adopt punitive measures against discrimination. The limited budget of INAMU also imposed constraints.

6. In the area of political participation, women had achieved the right to vote in Costa Rica fifty years earlier, yet they still struggled to participate fully in political life. The 1996 reform of the Electoral Code had established a quota of 40 per cent for women's political participation, which had helped open up equitable access to elected office and decision-making positions, although much remained to be done before true equality was achieved.

7. Women's health indicators showed marked differences between rural and urban areas and levels of education. Some progress had been made in providing access to health care for rural women and in maternity protection, and a Programme for the Prevention and Detection of Cervical, Uterine and Breast Cancer had expanded the health-care coverage aimed specifically at women. However, most health-care services emphasized reproductive health, and did not meet the needs of the women they were intended to serve. Conservative groups used their influence to limit sex education programmes and oppose contraception and AIDS prevention services. Prevention and health-care policy did not always take into account the cultural diversity of women and tended not to follow the new integrated model for women's health.

8. In Costa Rica, thousands of women of all ages were victims of gender violence, and a great deal of progress had been made, mainly through the efforts of women's organizations, to draw attention to the problem and confront it. Public and private efforts were involved in combating family violence. Since 1997, a telephone hotline had been available to offer assistance and support to battered women as part of a network to disseminate information on women's rights and programmes against family and gender violence.

Unfortunately, there was still some resistance to the enforcement of the Law against Domestic Violence.

9. The sexual exploitation of minors and forced prostitution were a growing problem in Costa Rica, and limited progress had been made towards recognition of the problem and the criminalization of commercial sexual exploitation. There was a lack of coordination among the National Plan to Combat Commercial Sexual Exploitation, government policy and institutions, and the non-governmental organizations which provided services to the victims. The strength of the organized criminal networks involved in such exploitation, coupled with a tolerance within society and the family for the abuse of minors, was difficult to overcome.

10. Women had taken advantage of educational opportunities to close the gap in salaries and access to skilled jobs due to gender discrimination. The Government had made efforts to use non-sexist language and images in textbooks and was working on programmes to eliminate gender stereotypes. Women and men enjoyed equal access to institutions of higher education, and women in fact outnumbered men among university students. However, that had not resulted in their participation in decision-making in the educational system, and vocational and professional training still followed traditional gender roles.

11. Women still did not have equal access to resources for production, although there was some slight narrowing of the salary gap between men and women, and their presence among higher professional and technical posts was growing. New legislation guaranteed women access to credit and the right to enter into contracts under equal conditions with men. As part of poverty eradication programmes, credit had been provided for women and micro-enterprise projects had been established. However, Costa Rica had no comprehensive employment policy, much less one that considered the special concerns of women. Women remained disadvantaged in the economy, owing in part to the prevailing stereotype of the man as the principle breadwinner for the family.

12. Rural, migrant and minority women were also of special concern. Progress had been made in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the agricultural sector, but rural women still suffered from a lack of visibility as an integral part of the production process, scarcity of social services, and lack of participation in

environmental protection. Migrant women, particularly from Nicaragua, had benefited from the Constitutional provision allowing them equal access to education and health care. However, few statistics were available on that population to allow a full analysis of the situation. The inclusion in the 2000 census of indicators concerning the standard of living of the minority population represented progress. However, Limon Province, where most of the population of African descent lived, remained socially vulnerable and excluded from many of the benefits of development. Indigenous people as a whole and women in particular also continued to suffer social exclusion.

13. A number of challenges needed to be addressed. Measures must be adopted to prohibit and punish all forms of discrimination against women. The draft electoral reform act should be adopted with the amendments proposed by the National Institute of Women (INAMU); its purpose was to ensure that at least 40 per cent of the members of party leadership bodies, holders of elected posts and high-level appointments were women. The comprehensive care model for women's health should be implemented in all Costa Rican health centres, taking women's diversity into account. Coordinated strategies and programmes to combat sexual violence and exploitation, including prostitution, must be developed in a manner that would be sustainable despite changes in the administration.

14. A national education policy designed to eliminate discriminatory practices in the classroom and promote gender equality must be established. The production and management capacities of women, particularly rural women, should be strengthened by giving them access to funding sources, land, credit, technical assistance, technology and training. Lastly, the problems of rural women entrepreneurs must be addressed through the provision of social security, training and genuine access to funding sources, taking women's diversity into account.

15. Costa Rican women had had the right to vote and to run for office since 1949, and a minimum 40 per cent quota for women's political participation had been established in 1996. The number of Legislative Assembly seats held by women had risen from 19 per cent in 1998 to 35 per cent (the fifth highest percentage of any country) in 2002; there had been a similar increase in the number of women elected to local-level posts, although it was disturbing that only 8.6 per cent

of mayors were women. Those statistics showed that women were interested in being elected to office and confirmed the importance of quotas as a temporary special measure aimed at accelerating de facto gender equality; the higher the post, however, the less likely women were to be elected to it. The current Government had also sought to increase the number of women appointed to high-level posts; at present, nine of the country's ministries were headed by women, who thus made up 42 per cent of the Cabinet.

16. The Government was working to provide comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care, including through programmes for the prevention and treatment of human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) and of cervical and breast cancer; to ensure that the promotion and protection of the sexual and reproductive rights of both men and women at all stages of their lives was incorporated into the health-care system; to involve men in matters affecting their own sexual and reproductive health and that of their partners and promote their active involvement as fathers; and to devote greater attention to differences between the sexes.

17. By the second half of 2003, the Government planned to set health-care goals at the national and regional levels; allocate additional funding to health care; establish an oversight and accountability mechanism; develop a system for monitoring domestic violence at the community level; provide disaggregated statistics to serve as a basis for decision-making; and strengthen the sexual and reproductive health counselling centres.

18. For the past ten years, Costa Rica had paid special attention to the situation of women living in poverty and, in particular, extreme poverty. Creciendo Juntas (Growing Together), a programme developed in 1994, was designed to promote women's growth as individuals and as a group, provide them with literacy and other training and help them find jobs; most of its beneficiaries were women heads of household. Although training for jobs most often held by men was offered, most participants opted for training in more traditional areas of women's employment and, to a lesser extent, in the fields of computer science and appliance repair.

19. In 2002, about 4 per cent of women recipients of such training were seeking income-generating

employment on their own or as part of a group; 29 indicators had been established to monitor the programme's success. Another programme, Construyendo Oportunidades (Building Opportunities), provided life skills training, health care, education, employment counselling and childcare for teenage mothers living in poverty. It was implemented at both the local and regional levels and involved various State agencies and members of civil society. Both programmes were part of the National Poverty Plan.

20. The National System for Care and Prevention of Domestic Violence was coordinated by INAMU and included 23 agencies, organizations and other bodies working in the area of domestic violence; eight State ministries; five independent agencies; members of the judiciary; and representatives of civil society and of local domestic violence prevention networks. A total of 39 networks for the prevention and treatment of domestic violence had been established throughout the country. Since January 2003, the Government, in coordination with the Fundación Mundo Solidario (Global Solidarity Foundation) and the Instituto de Masculinidad Wëm (Men's Institute), had provided an emergency telephone number for men with power and control problems.

21. An inter-agency public safety committee had been established to address problems in implementing the Domestic Violence Act. The Office of Women's Affairs in San José and Golfito provided assistance to women and child victims of domestic violence; the women's shelters in San José, Limón and Puntarenas had provided assistance to 276 women and 474 children during the reporting period. The "Let's Break the Silence" hot line had replied to over 73,000 callers between May and December 2002.

22. A high-level committee consisting of representatives of the Ministry of Public Safety, the judiciary, non-governmental organizations and INAMU had been created for the development of policies and mechanisms to prevent the deaths of at-risk women who had requested protection. A national policy for the prevention and treatment of child victims of violence and ill-treatment and a plan of action for disabled victims of domestic violence had also been developed.

23. By the end of the reporting period, 15 bills for reforming of legislation which discriminated against women had been in preparation or under consideration. There had been great resistance to adoption of the draft

act on the criminalization of violence against adult women. The draft legislation, which was based on the existing Criminal Code, included alternatives to prison sentences for offenders and applied only to serious offences (physical and emotional violence, sexual assault and property theft) committed against women over 15 by persons in a position of power or trust. The penalties, which varied according to the gravity of the act committed and the relationship between the victim and the offender, were higher than those established in the Criminal Code. Offenders could not be pardoned, and mediation was possible only in cases involving the property theft.

24. The debate on the draft legislation had led to discussion of the legal system's inability to respond in an efficient and timely manner to complaints by women victims. It had demonstrated the impunity and gender discrimination inherent in Costa Rica's criminal law and the degree to which women were subjected to attacks on their freedom and dignity and to the theft of their property. There was growing awareness of the need to adopt new legislation establishing penalties for violence against women, both in and outside the home, and to provide clear definitions of prohibited acts, including emotional abuse.

25. The revolutionary Responsible Paternity Act, adopted in April 2001, was based on the principle of shared parental responsibility. The Act had reduced the percentage of children for whom no father was declared at birth from 29 per cent in 2001 to 8 per cent at the end of 2002. In the past, paternity suits had taken three years, DNA tests had taken three to six months, and all legal and medical costs had been assumed by the mother. Since the Act's adoption, 60 per cent of such cases had been settled through voluntary declarations of paternity and 20 per cent through DNA tests; 20 per cent had presented problems of notification, and 10 per cent were still under investigation.

26. During the reporting period, the average woman's lifespan had declined to 79.9 years, fertility rates had fallen by 34.7 per cent (except in the case of Nicaraguan and indigenous women, for whom it had risen) and the infant mortality rate had risen slightly. INAMU had opened regional offices, and there had been progress in institutionalizing decentralized mechanisms for gender equality and equity. The adoption of the Responsible Paternity Act was a

significant achievement, as was the improvement in women's political participation.

27. However, the State and society were still reluctant to adopt measures to facilitate women's exercise of their rights and punish discrimination and violence against women, and women's diversities were not reflected in Costa Rican law. Women should be involved in national debates and agreements on employment, public services, foreign investment incentives, foreign trade policies and tax policies.

28. Legislation on flexible working hours and private hiring practices was needed, and action must be taken to counter the negative impact of free trade agreements on women's employment and quality of life. The principles of gender equality and equity should govern the management of family property and the draft family property act should be adopted. Monitoring of the actions taken by the components of the National System for Care and Prevention of Domestic Violence was also needed. Lastly, it was necessary to ensure that government programmes had the support of Costa Rican society.

29. **The Chairperson** thanked the representatives of Costa Rica for sending senior officials from their capital to present a frank and detailed written and oral account of the implementation of the Convention to the Committee. Costa Rica was a politically stable and peaceful country with a vibrant women's movement. It was a party to all the major international human rights conventions and to a number of regional human rights conventions. It stood out in the region as home to a number of human rights institutes. That made it all the more surprising that it had submitted its reports so late. A long silence had been broken, and she hoped that the Government of Costa Rica would abide by its reporting obligations under the Convention in future.

30. The Committee felt that timely reporting was essential not just as a sign of commitment to the Convention, but also for other reasons: the Committee's experience had shown that the process of preparing periodic reports, which involved civil society, and the process of dialogue with the Committee improved implementation of the Convention and ensured that women in Costa Rica were able to exercise their rights. In that connection, the Committee commended Costa Rica for ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

General questions

31. **Ms. Ferrer Gómez** said that she had been unable to tell from the periodic reports how much of the population lived in poverty and extreme poverty. The figures that she had seen suggested that poverty affected almost a quarter of the population, that half of the poor lived in urban areas and that extreme poverty was most common in rural areas. She asked for further details about the phenomenon. The feminization of poverty had been raised in the combined initial, second and third periodic report, and the fourth report had referred to the *Creciendo Juntas* (Growing Together) programme, which took as its legal basis the Act on Services for Women Living in Poverty. The Committee would like to know whether the programme had been evaluated to determine its results and the number of women who had benefited from it. Indigenous women had poorer education, health care and accommodation than other women; she wondered how the Government intended to ensure that indigenous women were able to exercise their rights under the Convention and to ensure that they received appropriate assistance.

32. **Ms. González Martínez** said that the updated information on the implementation of the Convention was welcome, but asked for it to be put in writing in a future report to provide a permanent record. Costa Rica's periodic reports had confirmed the country's good human rights record, as had the international reputation of Costa Rican women's rights advocates like Alda Facio and Elizabeth Odio Benito, a judge at the International Criminal Court.

33. **Mr. Melander** said that he wished to raise an often-asked question: that of the status of the Convention in domestic law. Although Costa Rica had established the primacy of international treaties over domestic law, he wondered whether legislation that was found to be contrary to the Convention was simply declared null and void. Costa Rica's constitution had enshrined the principle of non-discrimination, but the country had no definition of discrimination against women comparable to that in article 1 of the Convention. The Government should indicate whether it planned to promulgate such a definition. The Convention itself was of little value unless the population was aware of it. He asked if the legal professions were taught about it and whether it was mentioned in university courses. Costa Rica appeared to have a substantial population of refugees. More details should be provided on their status, since in

many countries refugees and nationals had very similar rights. Lastly, he asked if women refugees suffered twofold discrimination because of their gender and their refugee status, and whether their access to the labour market, to health care and to education was affected by such discrimination.

34. **Ms. Šimonović** said that the representatives of Costa Rica had apologized for the lateness of the periodic reports. Costa Rica, however, had not delayed reporting to other United Nations treaty bodies on schedule, and she wondered why it had not reported to the Committee earlier. The fourth periodic report had given details about its preparation, mentioning the involvement of two consulting firms, the Technical Division of INAMU and non-governmental organizations. She asked if the report had then been adopted by the Government, and who would follow up action on the Committee's concluding comments about the report.

35. **Ms. Saiga** asked the representatives of Costa Rica to ensure that future reports adhered to the new guidelines for reporting.

36. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** said that she felt rather overwhelmed by the volume of information that the representatives of Costa Rica had provided in oral and written form. Future reports should be less descriptive and more results-oriented. She had been disappointed in the lack of statistics in the reports under consideration. The Convention dealt with discrimination against women, which the Committee could not assess without figures.

37. The representatives of Costa Rica had mentioned that some groups in society had been obstacles to progress in implementing the Convention. The reporting State should indicate whether the public, legislators and Government officials had been informed that once Costa Rica had adopted an international convention, it was obliged to bring domestic legislation into conformity with it. The Constitution had established Catholicism as the State religion. She asked what role the Constitution had therefore given the Catholic Church: whether there was no separation between Church and State, and whether the Church had a quota of representatives in Government and quasi-governmental entities.

Article 2

38. **Ms. Gnacadja** said that, since the country's Constitution established the primacy of international conventions over domestic law, she wondered why there was such reluctance to make the required changes to that domestic law. The combined initial, second and third periodic report indicated that women could submit complaints about discrimination to the Office of Women's Affairs of the Ministry of Justice. She asked what remedies were then open to complainants, whether court cases could be brought and whether action following complaints would be followed up. The report also described difficulties in using the law to combat discrimination against women. It would be interesting to know whether the cases that had come to court constituted a useful precedent and to what degree women actually had access to the legal system to protect their rights. Legal representation was compulsory, but might be too expensive for many women.

39. She wished to find out whether the legal system was close enough to the citizen: whether it was accessible in rural areas and whether it was affected by language barriers. The reporting State should indicate whether the Office of Women's Affairs had local offices away from the main towns. She also wished to learn about the situation of women prisoners, particularly whether they were protected against body-cavity searches ostensibly carried out to find concealed drugs and against abuse by male prison warders and whether they were housed in conditions which provided sufficient health and hygiene.

40. The Committee was also concerned at an apparent lack of institutional cohesion: the National Centre for Women and the Family (CMF) had been an agency of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports. She asked how it was connected with the Ministry for Women's Affairs; similarly, there seemed to be no provision for harmonizing the channels for complaints. The reporting delegation should indicate whether any steps would be taken to improve cohesion in the structure for protecting women's rights. Lastly, the reports contained no specific information about black and indigenous women's ability to exercise their rights and be protected against discrimination.

41. **Ms. González Martínez** said that, while the combined initial, second and third periodic report referred to legal reform giving rise to a number of draft

laws (bills), the fourth report and the oral presentation to the Committee had failed to mention them. She wondered whether they had simply not been approved and whether the Draft Law on Gender Equity in the Labour Code and the proposed changes to Articles 40 and 41 of the Family Code, regarding community of joint property, had been approved. The oral presentation to the Committee had referred to a draft law on the criminalization of violence against adult women; she asked if it had been approved and was already in force. If it had not been approved, she wished to know why.

42. **Ms. Kwaku** asked why Costa Rica's periodic reports to the Committee had been so severely delayed. The Committee also wished to know if the reasons for the delay still existed and would therefore affect future reports, and whether the Division for the Advancement of Women could help to remedy them.

43. Article 7 of Costa Rica's Constitution stipulated that international treaties duly approved by the Legislative Assembly had primacy over domestic law. She enquired how long such approval took and whether the representatives of Costa Rica could provide examples of treaties that had been through that process in the past — particularly the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The fourth periodic report had mentioned the shelving of a number of draft laws. She asked whether the draft law on gender equity in the Labour Code and the proposed changes to the Family Code had been among the proposals shelved, and whether "shelved" meant "suspended" or actually "discarded".

44. **Ms. Morvai** said that the phenomenon of violence against women (domestic violence, sexual violence, harassment and trafficking) tended to be portrayed in Costa Rica's periodic reports as a public health issue. That was a mistake: violence against women was first and foremost a serious form of discrimination and a violation of human rights.

45. The reports had described the National Plan for the Care and Prevention of Domestic Violence (PLANOVI), but the very use of the words "prevention" and "care" medicalized women's experiences and rights. Women needed more than just emotional support: what was needed instead were laws, protocols and best-practice guidelines to use when women were victims of violence. The Government itself had been critical of the variety of responses

victims received from those taking care of them, but it was the job of the Government to lay down appropriate standards. It could take inspiration from the Convention and especially from Recommendation No. 19 on violence against women. With regard to PLANNOVI itself, she asked whether non-governmental organizations and academics had been involved in its formulation, and whether it had been regularly updated since its inception.

46. According to the reports, domestic violence was not criminalized, and the judiciary had received no guidelines for handling cases. However, assault and battery was always illegal, so other legal provisions could be invoked against that phenomenon. If judges' discretion was found to be too wide, for example when imposing protection orders, that discretion should be restricted. Lastly, the reports gave no statistics regarding prosecutions for domestic violence, the number of convictions or acquittals involved, the sentences handed down or the rate of recidivism. The Government should develop ways to obtain such statistics and analyse and act on them.

47. **Ms. Šimonović**, referring to paragraph 78 of the combined first, second and third reports, asked whether the Convention had ever been invoked in the context of *amparo* proceedings and whether any examples of such cases could be provided. Since the Government reported that it was having difficulties with the enforcement of the Domestic Violence Act (1996), she wondered whether it intended to introduce new legislation, take steps to ensure the passage of the draft law on the criminalization of violence against adult women submitted to the Legislative Assembly in 1999, or adopt any other measures to remedy the situation. She also enquired why that draft law was apparently intended to protect adult women only, not girls.

48. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** said that the reporting State should make clear what provisions existed in other legislation, in areas such as labour law, in relation to the definition of discrimination and its prohibition. For example, in a case between an employer and an individual employee, was it necessary for the latter to invoke the relevant provisions of the Constitution? She also wondered whether any general review of legislation had been conducted since 1986, in order to determine in a systematic manner whether discriminatory provisions were still in force or whether there were lacunae in the law that needed to be rectified.

49. She commended the reporting State for its ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention, and asked what steps had been taken to ensure that women were aware of their rights in that regard. Paragraph 109 of the fourth periodic report failed to make it clear that any individual complaints under the Optional Protocol were to be lodged with the Committee; the erroneous reference to "a specialized agency" in the English version of the report had been pointed out to the Secretariat.

Article 3

50. **Ms. Shin** welcomed the fact that the National Centre for the Development of Women and the Family (CMF), now called the National Institute of Women (INAMU), had been elevated to the rank of a Ministerial Department. She hoped that it would soon be elevated further so that it would have overall authority, and suggested that it should be renamed as the National Institute for Gender Equality, which would be a more concrete and goal-oriented name.

51. The reports made many references to "gender equality and equity". It should be borne in mind that the two terms were not synonymous, and clarification was needed as to whether the goal of INAMU was equality or equity. Also, the fourth report listed six strategic areas for the work of INAMU, but it was not clear whether they included training for all public servants regardless of which Ministry they belonged to. One of those strategic areas was listed as "women's legal status and rights protection"; she wondered whether information on the Convention, particularly the Optional Protocol, was provided in the context of the dissemination of information on women's legal rights.

52. Paragraph 157 of the fourth periodic report stated that in 2002, INAMU had received only 50 per cent of the funds due to it, owing to Government expenditure cuts, and that it had become necessary to seek outside funding. The reporting State should explain how that serious funding problem would be dealt with in future. Women's units should be created in the Ministry of Public Security and the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses, and the Ministry responsible for the Government's budget as a whole in order to introduce a gender-based budgeting approach to the overall analysis of Government spending. Lastly, gender focal points were badly needed in the audio-visual media in

order to bring about changes in relation to the traditional, stereotyped image of women.

53. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** requested statistics on groups of women who might be suffering multiple discrimination, such as older, disabled, indigenous or immigrant women and wondered whether such discrimination was being taken into account in the Government's plans to implement the Beijing Platform for Action.

Article 4

54. **Ms. González Martínez** reiterated her request for additional information on legislative reforms in relation to temporary measures to improve participation by women, such as the reform of the Electoral Code, and on the reasons why some proposed reforms mentioned in the reports had not been adopted.

55. **Ms. Gaspard** asked why measures to protect the rights of women in "common-law" marriages had been included under article 4 of the Convention; such measures should be permanent. The measures taken to promote political participation by women had produced significant results; however, she wondered whether the 40 per cent quota referred to required that there should be no less than 40 per cent of women in elected positions, or whether it meant that neither gender should be represented by less than 40 per cent. It was an unfortunate fact that a given percentage quota for women's representation was treated as a maximum rather than a minimum.

56. The Costa Rican delegation should also specify whether any measures were in force concerning the positioning of women on electoral lists, since in many countries the names of women candidates were placed so far down the lists that they were seldom elected. Costa Rica had a good record in terms of the numbers of successful women candidates, and could be held up as an example of the impact of women in the work of elected bodies. The delegation should, however, specify what additional electoral measures in favour of women would be implemented and when; and how measures taken to strengthen the role of women were implemented in terms of the internal structure of political parties.

Article 5

57. **Ms. Popescu** requested additional information on the planned future activities of INAMU aimed at

eliminating the traditional and stereotyped image and role of women, particularly in the areas of education and the media. There was still a widespread assumption that women belonged in private spaces such as the home and the family, and that men should play a more public role in society and should be providers and decision makers. The value of women's considerable contribution to the country's economy was not generally recognized, and that fact had a negative impact on their access to productive resources, education, social security and other forms of support.

58. She commended the Government's efforts to tackle the problem of gender stereotypes in education; many of those efforts deserved to be emulated by other countries, as did the Amor Joven (Young Love) programme, which reaffirmed the right of young people to receive education in the healthy and responsible exercise of their sexuality. The reluctance of the authorities and teachers to implement such programmes was however a matter of serious concern. She wondered whether any training was provided to teachers in order to make them aware of gender issues and the need for balanced gender roles. Lastly, the reporting State should indicate what was being done to improve the image of women in the media, particularly in the light of the fact that there were many valuable women leaders in Costa Rica who could act as role models for the younger generation, and whether there were any projects targeting parents and educators to promote the sharing of family responsibilities.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.