



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

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

Summary record of the 1014th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 14 October 2011, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Pimentel

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

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

*Combined initial, second and third periodic reports of Côte d'Ivoire (continued)
(CEDAW/C/CIV/1-3, CEDAW/C/CIV/Q/1-3 and CEDAW/C/CIV/Q/1-3/Add.1)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Côte d'Ivoire took places at the Committee table.*

Article 6 (continued)

2. **Ms. Coffie** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that there was no legislation dealing specifically with trafficking in women for the purposes of sexual exploitation although articles 334 to 341 and 362 of the Criminal Code relating to procuring, offences against public morality and trafficking in or kidnapping of minors could be used to prosecute perpetrators. She and her Ministry, the Ministry for Family, Women and Children, would work with NGOs to encourage the Government to draft specific legislation in that area. As for the independence of the National Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, she stressed that 5 of the 11 members of the Commission were women, each of whom was an expert in women's rights.

Articles 7 and 8

3. **Ms. Pires** requested more information on the draft presidential ordinance on a quota for women political candidates, in particular on the priority given to such candidates, on why the quota was 30 per cent and on any sanctions that could be imposed on parties that did not comply. Noting that according to the report (paragraph 350) only 6 of 47 chiefs of diplomatic missions were women, she asked what measures, if any, the State party envisaged to increase the proportion of women representatives at the international level. She also requested updated information on any measures aimed at bringing women into the military and gendarmerie as well as information on the number of women, if any, currently in the military and gendarmerie.

4. **Ms. Ameline** said that the imminence of the legislative elections increased the urgency of the need to ensure that quotas for women political candidates were implemented and she enquired about the status of the relevant draft presidential ordinance. Noting that there were currently only five women ministers, she said that the State party must make a commitment not only to increasing the number of women candidates but also to increasing the number of women appointed to positions at the highest level.

5. Women's representation in the civil service, including in positions of added responsibility, should also be increased and she enquired about the availability of in-service training for women. She noted that the French *École Nationale d'Administration* (ENA) had offered its expertise for training programmes and she asked whether the State party intended to take advantage of such offers from international partners. In other countries such cooperation had contributed to the preparation of strategic plans for post-conflict reconstruction and implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security.

6. **Ms. Coffie** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the President's signature of the draft ordinance on a quota for women political candidates had been delayed by the recent crisis. Two respected women jurists had been involved in reviewing the text. She was lobbying for rapid signature, preferably before the forthcoming legislative elections in September. She noted that there was some reticence about the ordinance on the part of certain women in the Government, on the ground that it should call for a 50 per cent quota. Once it had been

signed, the implementing decree, which would include sanctions for non-compliance, would have to be prepared.

7. She agreed that it was important to increase the number of women in the gendarmerie, despite the resistance of the military authorities, an opinion shared by the President, but that would take time. It was also important to increase the number of women cabinet ministers. The five currently in office had been appointed to some extent to provide women with an opportunity to prove themselves following the crisis. She was proud of the work they were doing in such key areas as health, education, housing, hygiene and women's affairs, all of which had been severely affected by the crisis. She was confident that the new cabinet to be appointed following the legislative elections would include many more women.

8. The assistance of international partners for training and reforming the civil service was most welcome; many reforms had already been implemented. As for the development of strategic plans, she said that the National Women's Coordination Committee for Elections and Post-Crisis Reconstruction had been established to support gender mainstreaming in the electoral process and was playing a major role in informing strategies to address women's issues, including the psychological and physical well-being of women following the recent conflict.

9. **Ms. Ameline** underscored the importance of the forthcoming legislative elections as a test of the national and international commitment to a reconstruction process that was in keeping with international law as well as the Convention.

10. **Ms. Coffie** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that she, too, had high expectations for the elections and the next legislature. She looked forward to reporting back to the Committee in the near future on increased representation of women in the Government and progress on women's issues in general.

11. **Ms. Pires** wondered whether the proposed ordinance on a 30 per cent quota for women candidates would also require that women be placed high on party lists or put forward for winnable seats, in order to ensure that they were actually elected.

12. **Ms. Coffie** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that her Ministry's hope was that parties would alternate the names of men and women candidates on their electoral lists, which should ensure that the 30 per cent quota was met.

Article 9

13. **Ms. Schulz** expressed concern that, pursuant to article 14(3) of the Nationality Code, the Government could object to the acquisition of Ivorian nationality by a foreign woman, but could not do so in the case of a foreign man. Furthermore, in cases where a couple divorced in the first 10 years of marriage, the foreign spouse would lose Ivorian nationality. Although that provision applied to both men and women, it increased the vulnerability of women, who would be more adversely affected in such situations. She wondered whether the State party intended to eliminate those discriminatory provisions.

14. She was also concerned that under article 52 of the Nationality Code, an Ivorian who had dual nationality and effectively acted like a national of a foreign country could be stripped of Ivorian nationality; she wondered whether that applied to both men and women. Given the political problems faced by Côte d'Ivoire in the area of nationality and the right to vote, especially with regard to the population in the north of the country, she said that interpretation of that provision was open to abuse. It should be repealed in order to avoid situations where individuals, especially women, might be deprived of Ivorian citizenship despite being long-time residents.

15. **Ms. Kaba** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that human rights organizations had requested reform of the Nationality Code to eliminate problematical provisions. She stressed that foreign spouses and the children of an Ivorian and a foreigner automatically acquired Ivorian nationality.

16. **Ms. Sangaré** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that currently a foreigner marrying an Ivorian citizen had to elect formally to acquire Ivorian nationality at the time of the marriage.

17. **Mr. Gleglaud** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that according to the Nationality Code a person could acquire Ivorian nationality by either birth or personal decision. That applied to both men and women. Likewise, pursuant to articles 6 and 7 of the Code, a child with at least one Ivorian parent automatically acquired Ivorian citizenship.

18. **Ms. Schulz** said that it was discriminatory for the Government to have six months to object to the acquisition of Ivorian nationality by a foreign woman marrying an Ivorian man, and that the provision by virtue of which a person holding dual nationality could be stripped of Ivorian nationality for acting like a citizen of a foreign country likewise could increase the vulnerability of foreign women who had acquired Ivorian nationality through marriage. Those provisions should be amended, especially in the light of the severe problems that had arisen in relation to Ivorian identity during the recent crisis.

19. **Mr. Gleglaud** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the decision to strip a foreign spouse of his or her Ivorian nationality was taken by the competent authorities. In accordance with the practice followed in other countries, that decision could be reviewed by the same authorities in the light of new or previously undisclosed facts or evidence.

20. **Ms. Schulz** emphasized that the provisions to which she had referred discriminated against women and required amendment.

21. **Ms. Coffie** (Côte d'Ivoire) assured the Committee that her Ministry would review the provisions relating to nationality with a view to addressing the concerns raised. She recalled that foreign spouses, both men and women, could acquire Ivorian nationality upon marriage to an Ivorian.

Article 10

22. **Ms. Bailey** said that education for girls continued to be plagued by a number of problems in the State party, largely as a result of the years of conflict as well as cultural attitudes. School curricula must be revised to eliminate stereotyping and teachers should be provided with compulsory pre-service and in-service training on gender. Such measures should be implemented at all levels of the education system.

23. She was also concerned that the enrolment rates of girls were significantly lower at the secondary level than at the primary level, 23 per cent as compared to 53 per cent according to the report (paragraphs 397 and 410) and she suspected that girls' enrolment rate in post-secondary education was even lower. Girls' education and dropout and repetition rates were affected by such factors as pregnancy, early marriage and traditional attitudes. She would therefore welcome information on any measures implemented under the national education/training development plan (2007–2010) and the strategic plan for girls' education adopted in 2006, the results achieved and any revisions to those plans based on evaluation of the results.

24. According to the report (paragraph 442), the integration into the education system of Koranic schools, which were attended by large numbers of girls, had begun in 2008, although their curricula had not yet been recognized and validated. She would welcome information on the current status of those curricula and on whether attendance at the Koranic schools could be a barrier to girls' progression to higher levels of education. She wondered whether the Koranic schools charged no fees, and, if they did, whether the slow

pace of their integration into the educational mainstream was creating a dual system of education, thereby contributing to continued gender inequality.

25. **The Chairperson**, speaking in her capacity as an expert, expressed concern at the high rate of illiteracy; for example, 40 per cent of women between the ages of 15 and 24 were illiterate. The delegation, in its oral statement, had appealed to the international community for assistance in reducing poverty and illiteracy and she wondered if the delegation could suggest specific measures that could be adopted to reduce poverty and illiteracy among women and girls.

26. **Ms. Coffie** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the crisis had affected efforts to improve teacher training as well as schedules for school examinations and graduation. With the return to a more normal situation, her Government intended to increase capacity for teacher training. In order to increase enrolment rates for girls, it would work to eliminate traditional attitudes about education for girls, implement the national education/training development plan and the strategic plan for girls' education and review the results of those plans. With a view to increasing enrolment rates in general, beginning in the next school year, education up to the age of 15 would be provided free of charge.

27. **Ms. Kaba** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that as of July 2011 the curriculum of 43 Koranic schools had been reviewed to ensure conformity with the basic curriculum of the public schools. The Ministry of Education had developed a technical operational plan to facilitate the accreditation and modernization of Koranic schools that accepted the measures set out in that plan. Progress had already been made in the areas of basic infrastructure and the appointment of teachers. Examination results for the Koranic schools at the end of primary level were similar to those in the public system.

28. **Ms. Sangaré** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that in 2006 the Government had increased efforts to eliminate illiteracy, and the illiteracy rate for women had in fact gone down. While such factors as poverty affected girls' enrolment rates, she pointed out that another significant factor during the crisis had been the difficulty in obtaining appropriate identity documents, in particular birth certificates, which were necessary for enrolment. That was the case for some three million children.

Articles 11 to 14

29. **Ms. Murillo de la Vega** said that the lack of women in the military and police could directly affect women's safety, and could be in violation of the Labour Code. She asked for accurate statistics on the number of women in the police. She expressed concern that child labour was common, especially in the agriculture sector and asked for information on whether employers, including the multinational companies that produced much of the country's agricultural exports, could be or had been prosecuted for using child labour and on any sanctions, for example fines, that could be imposed.

30. She would welcome more information on the situation of women in family farms and businesses, for example if they owned their own businesses and if so, how many, and whether they had any guarantees of job security or land for meeting their basic needs. According to information reaching the Committee, very few women had their own farms; she asked whether women were allowed to attend agricultural training institutes and, if so, how many were enrolled. Noting that, according to the report (paragraph 124), some CFAF 417 million had been made available to microfinance institutions to support women's business ventures, she asked for information on the number of businesses helped and on the results obtained.

31. **The Chairperson**, speaking in her capacity as an expert, expressed concern at the high incidence of HIV/AIDS, in particular among women. While the State party had established a programme to reduce mother-to-child transmission, she asked what policies

had been adopted to reduce infection rates in general and among women in particular, taking into account their increased biological, social and economic vulnerability. HIV/AIDS awareness-raising campaigns must include gender-specific measures aimed at women and girls. Programmes aimed at eradicating female genital mutilation should be strengthened and underscore the effects that practice had on the health of women and girls. She called for strict application of the law prohibiting that practice.

32. According to the report (paragraph 535) abortion was illegal, although it was allowed under medical supervision when necessary to save the life of the mother; yet the abortion rate was just over 41 per cent. Most of those abortions were illegal and she requested information on the conditions in which clandestine abortions were carried out and stressed that the after-effects of such abortions contributed directly to maternal mortality rates. The State party must address that problem by revising its legislation and implementing new policies.

33. **Ms. Rasekh** acknowledged that the long period of conflict had severely affected the health-care system and that lack of resources had restricted the Government's ability to improve the situation. More information should, however, be provided on the results of programmes that had been launched, for example the National Plan for the Development of Health Care and the national programme on reproductive health and family planning, to evaluate whether they had been effective, for example in reducing maternal mortality. She expressed concern that many women did not have access to health care during pregnancy, a situation which, along with such factors as HIV/AIDS and malaria, increased maternal mortality. Noting that, according to the report (paragraph 530), women were not allowed to make independent decisions about their fertility, she also urged the State party to launch awareness-raising campaigns to combat traditional attitudes and practices in that regard.

34. She requested clarification on the reference in the report (paragraph 520) to malnutrition caused by dietary deficiencies and "excessive consumption". She wondered whether programmes that for example provided vitamin supplements were undertaken under a doctor's supervision and pointed out that some supplements could in fact be harmful to women or the foetus.

35. According to the report (paragraph 512/523) barely 5 per cent of the national budget was allocated to the Ministry of Health and Hygiene; that was clearly insufficient, especially in the light of the enormous challenges in the health sector. More resources must be allocated to health, in particular to women's health. The State party should likewise enlist the support of international partners in providing aid and technical assistance for improving health care. She wondered whether there was a two-tier health-care system which favoured the rich, and stressed that the State party had a responsibility to ensure that the entire population, including the poor, had access to quality health care.

36. **Ms. Coffie** (Côte d'Ivoire), responding to questions concerning article 11 of the Convention, said that there were female police officers in her country; they had a high profile and could be seen patrolling the streets and directing traffic around the cities; there were even female police superintendents. However, there were no women in the gendarmerie.

37. There were currently no legal penalties in place to punish companies that employed children. However, she had no knowledge of children working in large, structured companies or in industry. On the other hand, children aged about 13 to 17 were often employed as home helps or in the informal sector as street sellers or agricultural workers. As a result of the two armed conflicts, since 2002 the number of widows and women heads of household had dramatically increased, which meant that more and more women were running their own businesses in the highly developed informal sector, in order to support their families and provide their children with an education. Those businesses were not

restricted in any way and did not have to bear the additional weight of paying taxes. The President had stated that the provision in the Personal and Family Code that only a man could be the head of a household would be removed from the revised version of the Code currently being drafted.

38. With regard to cooperatives, which were widespread in her country, she considered them to be a useful economic tool that encouraged women to work together and manage all aspects of a business. Legislation had been introduced to support cooperatives and the Ministry for Family, Women and Children had decided to provide training to cooperatives as they were essential to the national economy. An initial training course on microproject management for five cooperatives run by rural women had already been carried out and was deemed to have been a success.

39. On the subject of HIV/AIDS, she said that the new Government had decided to create the Ministry of Health and the Fight against AIDS as a sign of the importance that was attached to combating HIV/AIDS. During the civil wars, sex had been used as a weapon against the civilian population and as a result the number of persons infected with HIV/AIDS had increased. The Government had been running a vigorous advertising campaign for several years to promote the use of contraceptives and abstinence. The Ministry for Family, Women and Children planned to launch another family planning campaign in December 2011. Within the Ministry of Health and the Fight against AIDS there was a Family Planning Department, which worked closely with health-care centres and social services nationwide to provide advice and contraceptives. However, much still needed to be done to change social attitudes as many men did not approve of their wives taking the pill.

40. In her previous professional experience she had been acutely aware that female genital mutilation, together with vaginal fistulas, constituted a serious public health problem in her country. A campaign to highlight the impact of female genital mutilation on girls' lives had been launched. Unfortunately, no figures were currently available on the number of girls affected but she undertook to ensure that precise figures were provided in the next periodic report. With regard to the issue of maternal mortality, the President's wife was spearheading a nationwide awareness-raising campaign to reduce the maternal and neonatal mortality rates.

41. In response to the questions on abortion, she confirmed that it was not authorized as the State was bound to protect the lives of its citizens, not endanger them. The Ministry of Health and the Fight against AIDS was organizing an awareness campaign, particularly in schools, to provide girls who had been raped by their teachers and become pregnant as a result with information on different options.

42. She agreed that more than 6 per cent of the State budget needed to be allocated to health in order to address many different issues, but it should be borne in mind that her country was just emerging from a very difficult period. She hoped that more resources would be earmarked for health, after the forthcoming elections, in the 2012 budget, but other priority areas, such as education and infrastructure, were also in dire need of funds. However, external sources of funding had been provided for the programme to combat HIV/AIDS and to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality rates; in particular, the Government of the United States of America helped to finance the National Strategic Plan to Combat HIV/AIDS, pursuant to the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) to implement the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. The Government was responsible for providing health care for the population, but any external help from neighbouring countries, the United Nations agencies or other sources was welcome to ensure that as many people as possible had access to basic health care, particularly vulnerable persons such as HIV/AIDS patients, expectant mothers and children.

43. Poor nutrition was also a problem facing the Ivorian people. A highly effective national nutrition programme, in which she had been personally involved, had been implemented in recent years that provided dietary information to new mothers and explained the importance of giving their children a balanced diet based on local products.

44. **Ms. Sangaré** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that a national programme to distribute mosquito nets was in place to combat malaria. With regard to HIV/AIDS, testing was provided free of charge by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), notably the National Family Welfare Association (AIBEF), and retroviral drugs were free for women. All pregnant women were systematically tested for HIV/AIDS and, if they tested positive, they were provided with help and advice on how to prevent the disease being transmitted to their unborn child.

Article 13

45. **Mr. Bruun** said that social and economic rights were crucial to rebuilding the State party. It was therefore vital to abolish any discriminatory legislation that could restrict women's ability to be economically active. He noted from the State party report that if a couple were both wage earners, only the man could collect family allowances for all their children. A woman wishing to receive family allowances for the children was required to secure the agreement of their father, which was blatant discrimination. He queried whether the changes to the Personal and Family Code would remedy that problem. He also raised the issue of the discriminatory taxation system, whereby men were entitled to a tax deduction for their children, but women were not and therefore paid more tax.

46. He also expressed his concern at the fact that the National Women and Development Fund, which had been established in 1994 specifically to provide funding and credit to small businesses and women's initiatives, had been closed down. As loans were not readily available, he wondered how cooperatives and women in general would be able to access credit. He asked about the status of the proposed innovative management project and whether the State party intended to introduce microcredit schemes, for which international support could be available.

47. **Ms. Coffie** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that social service provision in her county had been discriminatory for many years. The private system had already been revised in an attempt to eliminate socio-economic discrimination against women, and the Government was now looking to do the same in the public sector to promote gender equality not only with regard to socio-economic rights, but in all aspects of public life. The reform of the Personal and Family Code was under way, which was vital to obviating problems in the future. She hoped that the situation would be resolved in the coming months.

48. With regard to women's access to credit, she assured the Committee that the National Women and Development Fund did still exist, and was in fact under the supervision of the Directorate for the Promotion of the Family, Women and Socio-economic Activities, within the Ministry for Family, Women and Children. The reason that it still existed was that the Ivorian women and cooperatives who had received loans were highly organized and enterprising and had been able to pay them back. The conditions of eligibility for a loan were kept to a minimum and the interest rates were low. Microcredit finance structures did exist and were well established in her country.

Article 14

49. **Ms. Zou** Xiaoqiao expressed concern at the situation of rural women in the State party, particularly as poverty rates in rural areas had increased from 41.8 per cent in 1998 to 62.5 per cent in 2008, with 72.6 per cent of households headed by women living in poverty

in some areas. She hoped that the Government would redouble its efforts to improve the situation.

50. She noted that the National Gender Policy, adopted in 2007, had facilitated the integration of a gender approach into national policy framework documents, including the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper for 2009–2013. She asked what measures had been taken to implement that strategy paper and how many internally displaced women had benefited.

51. With regard to rural women's access to land, she welcomed the fact that the Rural Land Act provided for equal access to land for both men and women; however, as the report noted, in reality Ivorian women rarely became landowners because of customs, traditional values, practices and women's ignorance of their rights and the law. She asked what steps had been taken to implement the Rural Land Act and to ensure that information on land rights was disseminated to women, particularly in rural areas. Finally, she expressed concern that rural women were underrepresented in public life, as their participation was estimated to be only 10 per cent, so local development plans did not reflect their needs. She wanted to know what the Government was doing to encourage their equal participation in local development plans and whether it had considered offering leadership courses for rural women.

52. **Ms. Coffie** (Côte d'Ivoire) thanked the Committee for raising the question of rural women, particularly in the light of the fact that the International Day of Rural Women would be celebrated the following day. The Ivorian Government had been campaigning for many years to combat illiteracy amongst rural women, which was essential to improving their overall quality of life. Rural women were making a vital contribution to the national economic recovery. It was essential that they were made fully aware of their rights and responsibilities. Women's access to land was also a priority. Traditional social views and practices meant that women could not inherit land. The Government was working to overcome entrenched stereotypical views and practices through the revised Land Code and a campaign had been undertaken in 2006 to raise awareness among local religious leaders of the inheritance rights of women.

53. **Ms. Kaba** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the Rural Land Act provided for equality between women and men, but that customs meant that sons were more likely to inherit their father's land. However, as a result of the recent political upheaval in Côte d'Ivoire, men's attitudes towards women were beginning to change, as witnessed by a recent study by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It was hoped that as men began to recognize women's contributions to working the land and caring for their parents in their old age, fathers would be more likely to leave their land to their daughters.

54. **Ms. Sangaré** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the President was taking steps to address the problem of women's inheritance rights.

55. **The Chairperson** invited the members of the Committee to ask follow-up questions on articles 12, 13 and 14.

56. **Ms. Rasekh** asked whether the State party had considered introducing any education programmes aimed at men to promote family planning and contraception. She also wanted to know whether victims of sexual violence were allowed to have an abortion. Finally, noting the reference, in paragraph 530 of the State party's report, to discrepancies between legislation and prevailing practices in the area of women's reproductive health she asked the delegation to clarify what those discrepancies were and what was being done to address them.

57. **Mr. Bruun** asked whether any legislation was in place to protect women from sexual harassment in the workplace.

58. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** asked whether inheritance rights were the same for Muslims as for the population at large, or whether Muslim women inherited 50 per cent of what was willed to the male members of the family, in accordance with Islamic law.

59. **Ms. Zou Xiaojiao** said that she agreed that rural women were a force for stability in the State party and noted the Government's efforts to help them on many different levels; however she wondered if there was a Government policy in place to tackle the problem of poverty and whether the situation was improving.

60. **Ms. Ameline** said that policies needed to be based on qualitative and quantitative indicators and carried out according to a realistic timetable. More needed to be done to encourage the promotion of women to positions of leadership and responsibility within the Ivorian security forces, as part of a broader attempt to ensure women's access to justice.

61. **Ms. Kaba** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that all Ivorian citizens were covered by the same laws; there was not a different legal system for Muslims. However, customary law was often observed by individuals. The National Gender Policy had been applied in all activities carried out by the Ministry for Family, Women and Children, including support to cooperatives and help for women living in poverty.

62. **Mr. Bedou** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that, according to a recent study, 48.9 per cent of the Ivorian population was living in poverty. All Government policies in that area were geared to achieving results on the basis of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).

63. **Ms. Coffie** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that a campaign had been launched to combat sexual harassment in schools, and many boarding schools had been reopened to provide a safe environment for those girls who were unable to live at home during the school year.

64. The fact that many men opposed family planning meant that women, particularly those living outside of the capital, had to hide the fact that they were taking the contraceptive pill from their husbands. The Ministry of Health and the Fight against AIDS and a number of NGOs were working to raise awareness of family planning among couples. With regard to the question of the right of women to abort a pregnancy resulting from rape, she said that abortion was not encouraged, particularly in the advanced stages of pregnancy, if it would endanger the life of the mother. Psychological support and counselling were available for the victims of sexual violence. However, the decision on whether or not to have a child was a personal choice.

65. **Ms. Schulz** said that women who became pregnant as a result of rape during the armed conflicts were doubly victimized, as they had to give birth to and raise a child who was the product of sexual violence. She was puzzled by the delegation's reply as it was possible to perform an abortion in the first 16 weeks of pregnancy without endangering the woman's life.

66. **Ms. Rasekh** asked whether there were any education programmes in place to raise awareness of family planning issues among men. She noted that women were advised against having abortions, but surely they were free to make their own choice in that matter.

67. **Ms. Popescu** stressed that the Convention affirmed women's right to reproductive choice. It did not advocate abortion, but it was a woman's right to decide when and in what conditions to have her children. She recalled that the State party was obliged to follow the provisions of the Convention.

68. **Ms. Coffie** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that women who had been raped could not be advised to have an abortion if they were in the late stages of pregnancy, for health reasons; therefore, psychological support had been put in place to help such women come to terms with their situation. However, she agreed that women had the right to choose.

Articles 15 and 16

69. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** requested clarification on the legal framework relating to marriage, because according to the report (paragraph 707) many issues relating to personal status were regulated by custom, often without regard to the law. She wondered, for example, if sharia law applied to Muslim marriages, when the amended Personal and Family Code would be adopted and whether the new Code would address such issues as women's inequality with men in marriage, women's unequal inheritance rights, polygamy and the practices of levirate and sororate.

70. She expressed concern that customary marriages were not recognized in law but were officially considered to be merely cohabitation, which conferred no legal protection on the partners, especially the woman, for example with regard to the sharing of assets in the event of separation. Separation could have severe economic consequences for the woman. She was also concerned that a divorced woman had to wait two years before remarrying, which was not the case for a man and that the marriageable age for women was 18 whereas the age for men was 20. She wondered whether those discriminatory customs were authorized by the civil law and whether polygamy was also allowed or was merely a customary practice. She asked if the grounds for divorce described in the report (paragraph 727) could be invoked by either spouse and in particular if the criteria for intolerable breach of honour applied equally to the man and the woman and could be invoked by both.

71. **Ms. Coffie** (Côte d'Ivoire) admitted that there were many situations that amounted to de facto injustice against women, in particular in areas where customary practices continued to hold sway. Her Ministry was aware of the effects on women of such traditions as levirate, sororate and polygamy and would continue to work to eliminate them. She emphasized that, despite the survival of customary marriage in some areas, officially such marriages were not recognized and in principle all religious groups were bound by the same legislation.

72. **Ms. Kaba** (Côte d'Ivoire), referring to the concept of intolerable breach of honour as grounds for divorce, mentioned the example of a man who, to protect his children, had divorced his wife because she was a drug addict and he had discovered that some of the couple's children had begun to use drugs as well. That showed that the breach of honour provision could also be invoked by a spouse in order to protect other family members.

73. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** reiterated that her concern was whether both spouses could invoke the breach of honour provision and whether the same criteria applied to evaluating a breach of honour no matter whether it was the husband or the wife who had invoked it. Moreover, if a husband entered into a relationship with another woman, could the wife divorce him on those grounds?

74. **Ms. Coffie** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the response was an emphatic yes; both spouses were treated equally. She said in conclusion that the rebuilding process had begun in Côte d'Ivoire after some 10 years of instability and conflict during which women and children had suffered greatly. The forthcoming legislative elections would lay the foundations for a new beginning and her Government would take on the difficult task of rebuilding the country's educational, health and judicial infrastructure. She called on international partners to continue to provide assistance, which would be essential to overcoming the many obstacles ahead.

75. Her Government was fully aware of the essential role women would play in the reconstruction and rebirth of Côte d'Ivoire and was open to any suggestions and recommendations the Committee might make in order to promote equality for women and men and ensure full implementation of the Convention. She recalled that a French journalist had once said that women would achieve real equality with men when a woman who was incompetent was appointed to a high-level position.

76. **The Chairperson** thanked the delegation for a constructive dialogue. The Committee commended the State party for its efforts and encouraged it to take all necessary measures to address the concerns of the Committee and ensure comprehensive implementation of the Convention, for the benefit of all women and girls in the country. It looked forward to receiving the State party's next periodic report.

The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.