



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
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Summary record of the 991st meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 21 July 2011, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Pimentel

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

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

Combined initial, second and third periodic reports of Djibouti (CEDAW/C/DJI/1-3; CEDAW/C/DJI/Q/1-3 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the members of the delegation of Djibouti took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Daoud** (Djibouti) said that her Government appreciated the opportunity to comply with its international obligations and hoped to engage in a regular dialogue with the Committee through the timely submission of reports. Djibouti had ratified nearly every international treaty concerning gender equality, including the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa in 2005, and was committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In 2010, the Government had also undertaken efforts to comply with its reporting obligations to several other international treaty bodies, thus ending a period of long delays in that regard.

3. The report submitted by Djibouti (CEDAW/C/DJI/1-3) covered the period from 1999 to 2009, which was marked by strong political will in support of women, children and vulnerable groups. The report was the result of a collaborative effort between the Ministry for the Advancement of Women and Family Planning, an inter-ministerial coordinating committee and the National Human Rights Commission, as well as parliamentarians, development partners and civil society.

4. Recognizing that sustainable development was not possible without women's participation and leadership, the current administration of President Ismail Omar Guelleh was striving to foster gender equality at all levels of the development process. Shortly after ratifying the Convention, the Government had established a ministry charged with addressing violence and discrimination against women, ensuring their inclusion in the country's socio-economic development and fostering the human development of children. In 2008, that ministry had been made an autonomous entity responsible for women, family and social welfare. The cabinet reshuffle in 2011 had led to the renaming of the current Ministry for the Advancement of Women and Family Planning, which reflected a new mandate focused on increasing

women's socio-economic empowerment, in particular through the professionalization of the informal sector, and, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, improving maternal and infant health and access to family planning.

5. Prior to ratification of the Convention in 1998, women did not hold any seats in national or local legislatures, nor did any woman hold the title of minister or municipal president. A law enacted in 2002 established a quota system calling for at least 10 per cent representation of women in elected posts, while a 2008 decree established a quota for appointment of at least 20 per cent women to high-level Government posts. In addition, the National Strategy for Integration of Women in Development was launched in 2002. As a result of those measures, women now made up 14 per cent of the Parliament and held seats on municipal and regional councils. In 2011, for the first time, women had been elected to head a political party and nominated to an ambassadorship. Though much work remained to be done, the transformation of the political landscape during past decade demonstrated the Government's commitment to accelerating de facto equality for women.

6. The reform of the educational system in 1999, which had made education compulsory until the age of 16, among other initiatives promoting the education of girls, had greatly increased their school enrolment. The ratio of girls to boys in primary education currently stood at 0.98. However, economic and cultural barriers continued to hinder the education of girls in poor and rural areas. Government initiatives to address that situation included provision of educational grants to girls and the establishment of dormitories for secondary school students from remote areas. In addition, a large-scale literacy programme had exclusively targeted women, who made up the majority of the illiterate population. Initiatives aimed at educating rural women and women who had dropped out or never attended school were also planned.

7. Efforts to address gender-based violence were focused on developing protection measures and educating women on their rights. For example, a legal guide to addressing gender-based violence had been developed and would be widely disseminated. Female genital mutilation was the most widespread form of violence perpetrated against women in the country. Despite sensitization and advocacy campaigns and a law prohibiting it, the practice was still prevalent. Given that female genital mutilation was a deeply

rooted tradition, its eradication depended on the will and involvement of communities and religious leaders throughout society. For that reason, the Government had placed priority on educating parents about the irreversible damage and health risks the practice inflicted on girls over the enforcement of punitive measures. Widespread sensitization efforts had led to a decrease in prevalence of the practice, from 98 per cent to 93 per cent of women, evidence of the slow but sure change taking place. Thirty-three communities had recently publicly renounced all forms of female genital mutilation following a three-year sensitization campaign conducted by the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, the United Nation's Children Fund (UNICEF) and the non-governmental organization (NGO) Tostan.

8. Access to the judicial system had greatly improved. In 10 years, the number of magistrates in the country had doubled and, based on the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Human Rights Committee, courts specializing in family law and juvenile justice had been established to better protect the rights of the most vulnerable groups. In addition, mobile courts (*audiences foraines*) had been deployed to rural areas to facilitate access to justice. A new law also provided for legal aid for people living in poverty.

9. In the area of health, the major priority was to improve the quality and access to services, in particular for women and children. In that regard, the Ministry of Health had undertaken a health mapping project and construction of a reproductive health centre and rural health units. Emergency response units had also been strengthened, resulting in a decrease in infant and maternal mortality. The feminization of the AIDS pandemic in the country was of concern. A programme had focused on preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV and a new national strategic plan on HIV/AIDS was under way. Legal protection of persons living with HIV had also been strengthened.

10. The National Initiative for Social Development launched in 2007 placed women at the centre of the development process. In addition, women were at the head of the State Secretariat for National Solidarity and Poverty Reduction and the State Secretariat for Housing, both entities that would be involved in strengthening women's economic power.

11. The Government recognized that much remained to be done to achieve gender equality in the country.

Specifically, education, professional development and literacy work in rural areas required concerted efforts. In addition, programmes aimed at integrating women into public life must be guided by the principle of gender parity. The media, in particular radio and television, would play a decisive role in the implementation of Government policies and raising awareness of women's rights. The Government would also strive to collaborate with civil society and development partners, as well as the Committee, in pursuit of the advancement of Djiboutian women.

Articles 1 and 2

12. **Ms. Açar** said that reporting State's efforts to implement the Convention under difficult social and environmental circumstances was evidence of its strong commitment to women's rights. While it was commendable that Djibouti had ratified the Convention without reservations, it could further enhance the protection of women's rights by ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention. In addition, she urged it to ratify the amendment to article 20 of the Convention, which would help to increase the meeting time available to the Committee and thus strengthen monitoring of the Convention at the global level.

13. Noting that, in its response to the Committee's list of issues (CEDAW/C/DJI/Q/1-3/Add.1), Djibouti had affirmed that there was no need to invoke the Convention within judicial actions, as the existing domestic legislation was sufficient, she emphasized that increasing the visibility of international law in the court system could in fact only serve to enhance the legal protection afforded to women. Furthermore, the Convention had not been fully integrated into domestic law. For example, many personal status laws appeared to be based on Islamic law or religious tradition. The provision in the Family Code permitting marriage under the legal minimum age of 18 with a guardian's consent was of particular concern and in violation of international standards. Several countries, including Turkey, had reconciled sharia with family law in a manner that was in line with the Convention, and she encouraged it to look to such models to adapt its legislation.

14. The legislation on female genital mutilation was not being adequately implemented. Although the practice had been criminalized, there had been no cases of prosecution. Effective punishment could help to decrease the incidence of the practice, which remained

widespread, as the Government's awareness-raising campaigns had not had a significant deterrent effect.

15. She urged the Government to take a holistic approach to eliminating discrimination against women, including by taking measures to increase use of the Convention throughout the educational and judicial systems, and especially by providing training to judges on international law.

16. **Ms. Šimonović**, noting that the State party had been late in submitting its reports, said that she hoped the dialogue was the beginning of a regular exchange with the Committee. The high level of the Djiboutian delegation was noteworthy.

17. The Committee had been promoting the engagement of national legislatures in implementing the Convention, and in that regard, she wished to know what role the Parliament had played in preparing the report. More information on the status of non-governmental organizations in the country would also be welcome, including their level of participation in preparing the report and implementing the Convention in general.

18. She asked whether the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations had been translated into a language that was understandable to the general population, in particular young people.

19. She wondered why the State party invoked national law before international law, given that the Djibouti Constitution provided that international treaties took precedence over domestic law. Information as to whether discrimination was defined in national legislation would also be welcome.

20. She commended the Government's repositioning of female genital mutilation as a form of gender-based violence and the high priority it had given to eradicating the practice.

21. **Ms. Daoud** (Djibouti) said that she was proud to announce that the Government had initiated ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention. The Council of Ministers was reviewing an assessment of the impact of the Protocol on various departments, and the National Assembly would then take over the process.

22. As had been noted in the report, the Convention had been integrated into the country's positive law. The provisions of civil and criminal law were in line with the Convention, and were therefore invoked instead of

the Convention. For example, ratification of the Convention had led to amendments to the penal code that enacted harsher penalties for carrying out female genital mutilation. In addition, the Government had been striving to improve access to justice and had recently passed a law to furnish legal aid to women and people living in rural areas.

23. Djibouti's pastoral population had long relied on traditional means of resolving conflicts, and the process of reconciling customary law with State legislation had left some discriminatory practices within the scope of the law. However, the adoption of the Family Code in 2002 was a great achievement in itself, as it represented the culmination of 10 years of work and had granted women access to the Personal Status Court. Corrective measures had been taken to prevent early marriage, which primarily occurred in rural areas. The institution of compulsory schooling until the age of 16 had also decreased its prevalence.

24. In terms of implementing punitive legislation on female genital mutilation, the State counselling centre for women victims of violence collaborated with the Ministry for the Advancement of Women to file claims on behalf of women. Several cases had been heard by the courts, although no final sentences had been issued yet.

25. She recognized the need to educate judges on women's rights. As an initial step, the Government had developed a guide for professionals in the justice system to addressing violence and rape.

26. As had been stated in the report to the Committee, non-governmental organizations were an integral part of the National Human Rights Commission. Six women were on the Commission, including the vice-president of a non-governmental organization. The report had been drafted by an inter-ministerial committee, which had integrated feedback from parliamentarians on the content.

27. The Government had requested assistance from development partners to translate the Convention. It should be noted that the Family Code had been translated into all national languages and had been widely disseminated.

Article 3

28. **Ms. Ameline** said that Djibouti's advancements in the areas of health, education and the elimination of violence against women were commendable,

particularly in view of the difficulties faced by the Horn of Africa, which was currently suffering through a famine.

29. The major challenge to implementing the Convention in the country appeared to be achieving recognition of women's equal status in society. She would welcome more details concerning the agenda of the National Human Rights Commission, in particular whether there were any concrete plans to amend personal status laws related to gender-based violence. Recalling that the report had recognized that its National Strategy for Integration of Women in Development had not yielded the results expected, she requested details on the obstacles that had hindered its implementation.

30. She wondered whether the Government's decentralization efforts had been part of a poverty-reduction strategy. She also wished to know whether international aid to the country specifically targeted gender issues, in particular addressing gender-based violence, given that the First Lady had made the eradication of female genital mutilation a priority in the national agenda.

31. **Ms. Daoud** (Djibouti) said that the assessment of the National Strategy for Integration of Women in Development launched in 2002 had found that, while progress had been made in the areas of education and health, political autonomy and especially the economic empowerment of women had not been given sufficient priority. A lack of professionalization had been revealed to be the major obstacle to women's development, given that they worked mostly in the informal sector. In response, the new department on tourism and crafts was providing microcredit to women and helping to formalize their small businesses. In addition, the new gender policy under development took a holistic approach to all aspects of development, approaching women's economic advancement as another means of eliminating discrimination. In 2011, the new Government administration had separated basic and higher education into different departments in order to better address the needs of women and girls. For example, preschool programmes were being expanded, particularly in rural areas, as a means of encouraging enrolment of girls in subsequent education levels.

32. The decentralization process, which had been initiated in 2004, had led to the establishment of regional offices for the advancement of women, which had

enabled more direct actions that had yielded immediate results. In addition, each ministry had a gender focal point responsible for actions at the municipal level, which had been particularly helpful in identifying and responding to the needs of rural women.

33. Poverty was a critical problem in Djibouti. The country had few resources and faced frequent droughts and food crises. The President had launched a national social development programme to address poverty-related issues in 2007, which was to be evaluated in 2011. The Ministry for the Advancement of Women would be participating in the review to ensure that gender was an integral consideration and that the problems affecting women in particular would be addressed in the future.

34. **Mr. Abdou** (Djibouti) said that the National Human Rights Commission had been created in 2008 in response to the recommendations issued by an assessment workshop conducted by the Ministry of Justice and the principal human rights organizations in Djibouti. The Commission worked closely with the Ministry for the Advancement of Women and the Ministry of Justice and had contributed to Djibouti's report to the Committee; women made up 40 per cent of its members. It had also participated in the universal periodic review and the assessment by the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Commission could issue recommendations independently and was charged with raising the visibility of human rights issues among public authorities and bringing national legislation in line with international human rights instruments. The Commission was currently drafting a legal guide on gender-based violence for law enforcement officials and updating the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure to adapt their provisions on youth participation, equality and non-discrimination against women to international law. In addition, the Commission supported the Government campaigns against female genital mutilation and advocated for investigation of cases of that practice. A new law had enabled non-governmental organizations to act as plaintiffs in judicial cases on female genital mutilation, which was the next step in combating the practice.

Article 4

35. **Ms. Šimonović** said that translation of the Committee's general recommendations was very important, in particular general recommendation No. 25, which articulated the difference between temporary

special measures and other special measures aimed at protecting maternity, as set out in article 4 of the Convention. The State party appeared to require clarification concerning temporary special measures, as some of the programmes described as such in the report were not relevant under article 4, while, in its opening statement, the delegation had mentioned pertinent quota measures that had not been included in the report. More details on the quota measures in place would be useful.

36. It was questionable whether the quota of 10 per cent political participation by women mentioned would lead to any substantial progress. Article 4 offered a powerful tool to accelerate the advancement of women and she encouraged the Government to make use of it.

37. **Ms. Daoud** (Djibouti) said that the law instituting the quota system for political participation had been enacted, and, although all quotas had not been fully met, in 2011, the number of women in ministerial positions had increased from one to three, and nine women were now members of the Parliament. There was not yet a system in place to sanction non-fulfilment of the quota requirements.

Article 5

38. **Ms. Murillo de la Vega** said that the elimination of stereotypes must be a major priority for the Government in order to improve the status of women in Djibouti. There was clear evidence of women's strength and skills, particularly in terms of managing limited resources while raising children, yet, despite being the majority, their political representation stood at a mere 14 per cent. She questioned the use of the word "vulnerable" to describe women throughout the report, as it appeared that women were better described as marginalized. Noting that the Government held a great deal of power and credibility on many levels, she wished to know whether Government officials had engaged in dialogue with religious leaders and spoken out in the media concerning women's value and many contributions to society.

39. Recalling that the practice of polygamy was only available to men, she was interested in the delegation's views concerning polygamy. She wondered whether the legal provision requiring investigation of a man's economic status before another marriage was granted had had any effect on the practice. The lack of laws criminalizing marital rape in many countries made

clear that matrimony should be viewed as an instrument of power. She wondered whether the Government of Djibouti planned to enact such a law, noting that the change simply required political will.

40. **Ms. Gabr** said she had been pleased to learn that an expert from Al-Azhar University had contributed to the dialogue with religious leaders concerning the practice of female genital mutilation. The precepts of Islam in fact urged respect for the rights of women both in society in marriage and condemned violence. It was also widely accepted that female genital mutilation was not connected to the Muslim religion. She wondered whether the Government had looked to the experience of other Islamic countries to address violence against women in all its forms. With regard to abortion, the case of Egypt provided a positive example of changes in attitude; State and religious authorities there condoned the procedure in cases of rape and incest and when a woman's health was at risk. She encouraged the Government to adopt a national plan to address violence against women that took into account the social and cultural barriers that kept women from speaking out about domestic violence. She would appreciate information as to whether the Government planned to ratify other international instruments that directly related to women's rights, in particular the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Convention concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers recently finalized by the International Labour Organization and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Lastly, concerning the problem of human trafficking, she wished to emphasize the importance of identifying victims.

41. **Ms. Daoud** (Djibouti) said that translation of the Committee's general recommendations into the national languages would be completed soon. With regard to women's low level of political representation, she noted that, in addition to more positive discrimination measures, efforts to increase women's autonomy were needed so as to empower them to take on leadership roles by their own initiative. Education was a critical component in that effort, and it was notable that in the recently established University of Djibouti, three of the five heads of department were women. Women were also very active in the media.

42. Recognizing that the practice of polygamy hindered the exercise of women's rights, she noted that the issue was not unique to Djibouti and grounded in

traditional religious views. The Family Code had reformed the practice to some degree with provisions calling for the wife's consent and requiring judges presiding over marriages to conduct a socio-economic investigation of the husband to ensure he had the means to provide for another wife. As polygamy was mostly practised in poor, rural areas, the latter provision had succeeded in limiting the practice. The Government intended to look to the experience of other Muslim countries on the issue.

43. With regard to domestic violence, the State counselling centre for women victims of violence had become an important source of information concerning women's experiences. While the centre provided access to legal and social services, a great need remained for psychological support services, and it was hoped they would be strengthened in the future.

44. Concerning the status of women, the expansion of preschools was a significant measure, not only in support of working women, but also to communicate the value of girls, particularly in rural areas.

45. The 2008 conference with religious leaders had led to an important consensus on condemning female genital mutilation and had raised awareness among its female practitioners. Many had publicly renounced the practice as a result and had received assistance in finding other ways of earning income.

46. The guides for law enforcement and justice officials to addressing rape and violence had created an opportunity to discuss the issue of abortion and the possibility of changing the law to allow the procedure, at least in cases of rape. The new gender policy would also include the issue of violence as a critical component.

Article 6

47. **Ms. Hayashi** said that the State party had not provided a clear answer to question 13 of the Committee's list of issues and questions (CEDAW/C/DJI/Q/1-3). It should therefore describe the measures taken to implement the Human Trafficking Act promulgated in 2007 and any steps taken to decriminalize the victims of trafficking. Since women asylum-seekers were potential victims of trafficking, the State party should also comment on its plans to promulgate national legislation on refugees and asylum-seekers and indicate, in particular, how it intended to incorporate provisions recognizing gender-

related forms of persecution in the determination of refugee status.

48. **Ms. Awori** said that Djibouti was to be commended for its legislative framework on human trafficking and exploitation of prostitution of women and girls. While it was her understanding that the Constitution had been amended in 2007 to prohibit labour and sex trafficking, she requested clarification as to whether it also provided for the protection of victims. Noting that Djibouti was a source, transit and destination country for human trafficking and that, according to alternative sources, 30,000 people, a fifth of whom were women, had been trafficked through the region of Obock in 2010, she requested further information on the implementation of the plan of action against trafficking in human beings mentioned in the State party's responses to the list of issues and questions, as well as on further measures envisaged or undertaken to prevent human trafficking and protect its victims. She would like to know whether the penalty of up to 30 years' imprisonment for convicted traffickers, as mentioned by alternative sources, constituted a maximum or a minimum sentence. Lastly, the State party should comment on information, also from alternative sources, that the Government had made significant efforts to prosecute migrant smugglers but had failed to take law enforcement action against forced labour or sex trafficking offenders. What further measures were in place to apprehend, prosecute and punish such offenders?

49. **Mr. Hachi** (Djibouti) said that the Government had organized a series of training workshops and seminars for professionals on preventing and combating human trafficking, and had completed a study of the situation in Djibouti. In January 2010, the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation and judges had conducted a training workshop on techniques for the investigation and prosecution of human traffickers. The country was also involved in regional programmes to combat trafficking, with the collaboration of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

50. A migration response centre had been built in Obock, which was a major assembly point for potential migrants. Another centre had been established on the border with Ethiopia and Somalia, with representatives of UNHCR and the Office National d'Assistance aux

Réfugiés et Sinistrés (national office for refugees and disaster victims), to provide advice to potential migrants and possible victims of trafficking. Lastly, the Government had established support centres for women in refugee camps, with the involvement of the National Union of Djiboutian Women (UNFD), UNHCR and the United Nations. The penalties for human trafficking were in the region of 3 years, not 30 years.

51. **Mr. Hersi** (Djibouti) said that the Human Trafficking Act promulgated in 2007 did not in fact amend the Constitution. Bearing in mind that Djibouti was a transit country for many people from the subregion seeking to migrate to the Gulf countries, the Act provided for the development of an action plan to implement its provisions, especially in relation to the training of justice and police personnel, the establishment of regional cooperation, and the provision of assistance to victims of smuggling. A committee charged with drafting the action plan had been established within the Ministry of Justice, with the participation of national law enforcement personnel and international partners, including UNHCR. While the action plan had not yet been completed, some training activities had already been carried out and the Government was in close contact with other countries in the subregion and with regional organizations.

52. The penalties for human trafficking were quite severe, ranging from 2 to 5 years' imprisonment for both perpetrators and accomplices. A number of convictions for human trafficking had been obtained since the promulgation of the Act.

Follow-up questions

53. **Ms. Gabr** asked whether Djibouti envisaged ratifying other instruments with close links to the Convention, such as the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

54. **Ms. Jahan**, noting the regional dimension of immigration and refugee flows and referring in particular to the conditions of women refugees, asked what mechanisms were in place to address the challenges in conjunction with other countries in the subregion. It also appeared that Djibouti had not ratified the International Convention on the

Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination which related, inter alia, to the rights of immigrants.

55. **Ms. Neubauer**, referring to the State party's difficulties in coordinating the implementation of its national strategy for the integration of women in development, requested further information on how the Government now coordinated its measures for the advancement of women, especially with regard to gender mainstreaming within all policies. She would also like to know what coordination and monitoring mechanism existed among the various focal points and regional offices for the advancement of women and whether the Ministry had been able to strengthen its human and financial resources and its capacity to provide an accelerated and appropriate response to the situation of women in Djibouti.

56. **Ms. Ameline** said that the decision to allow NGOs to participate as civil parties in lawsuits was a welcome initiative in support of women. Stressing the importance of strengthening legislative mechanisms and ensuring that cases could actually be brought to court, she asked what further steps could be taken to ensure the full judicial application of the law, particularly in relation to female genital mutilation. It would also be helpful to know whether the guide for judges encouraged the prioritization of particular types of conduct and the extent to which judges could be mobilized to uphold the priorities identified by the Government.

57. **Ms. Daoud** (Djibouti) said that her country had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 2009, and the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa in 2011. It was studying the ratification of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

58. With regard to regional coordination in addressing the needs of refugee women, she drew attention to the refugee centres that had been established. One such centre in the south of the country, managed by UNHCR, had been receiving refugees from the region for 30 years.

59. **Ms. Djibah** (Djibouti) said that the country's gender focal points and sectoral networks had been created in the context of the implementation of the

national strategy for the integration of women in development, with the aim of supporting gender mainstreaming in all public institutions, through awareness-raising and capacity-building, and thereby eventually achieving the effective integration of gender in development policies, programmes and projects. Regional offices for gender affairs to manage the Ministry's policies, programmes and projects in the various regions had also been established in 2008 in response to the decentralization of its activities. Lastly, a gender theme group, which essentially comprised the gender focal points of the United Nations system, and of which the Minister for the Advancement of Women was a member, had been established in 2007.

60. **Ms. Daoud** (Djibouti) said that two guides on rape and gender-based violence had been developed, one for justice and police professionals, especially investigating officers, and the other for victims. The Ministry for the Advancement of Women hoped to disseminate the guides widely and, after evaluating their impact, to work together with the Ministry of Justice to amend some legal provisions accordingly.

61. **Ms. Gabr** said that, if Djibouti had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, it should ensure that the information held by the United Nations was updated, since there was no record of that ratification. It was to be hoped that the State party would also accede to the ILO Convention concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers.

Articles 7 and 8

62. **Ms. Bareiro-Bobadilla** said that, while the report indicated that the Constitution was fully consistent with the principles articulated in the Convention, the State party must ensure that women enjoyed substantive as well as formal equality with men in terms of political participation. General recommendations Nos. 23, 25 and 28 were helpful in that regard. With regard to article 7, paragraphs (b) and (c), of the Convention, the State party should raise its quota for women members of Parliament from 10 per cent, which was lower than the current female representation of 14 per cent. It should also seek to develop women's leadership in all areas of society and work with all political parties, as well as the general public, to combat stereotypical attitudes about the participation of women in politics. In that connection, the State party should provide additional information on women's participation in the formulation and implementation of government policy,

as well as in political parties and trade unions. It should also ensure that more women diplomats and ambassadors were appointed. Although efforts to provide figures for female political participation were commendable, some data — such as the total number of voters in Djibouti — were missing from the report.

63. Whereas the Committee usually consulted with women's associations when considering a State party's report, it had been unable to do so in the case of Djibouti. Additional information on the country's most important women's associations would therefore be welcome.

64. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani**, stressing the Committee's willingness to provide support and assistance, welcomed the clear information provided in the report and said that Djibouti was to be congratulated for the significant progress it had made in the 33 years since its independence, despite facing many challenges. It was encouraging that the proportion of female deputies in the legislature had been increased to 14 per cent after such a short time. Additional information on the participation of women as judges and diplomats would be appreciated.

65. **Ms. Daoud** (Djibouti) said that, while the current quota system was clearly insufficient, it was a necessary transitional measure towards substantive equality. Competitive examinations that made no distinction on the grounds of gender had been held, and men and women with the same qualifications received the same salary. Women participated in politics at all levels of Government and had significant representation in decision-making positions. One in four political parties was headed by a woman, and while no figures were available in respect of trade unions, women were not restricted from serving as staff representatives.

66. The Ministry for the Advancement of Women worked with a number of women's associations in Djibouti, the most important being the National Union of Djiboutian Women (UNFD), which was chaired by the country's First Lady. UNFD had established numerous literacy programmes in French and Arabic and had played a key role in combating female genital mutilation. Lastly, the presiding judges of the Supreme Court and the Appeals Court, as well as 40 per cent of all judges, were female. Although Djibouti did not yet have enough women diplomats, it had a female representative to the African Union.

Article 10

67. **Ms. Bailey** noted that, despite the initiatives taken to reform the educational system, address infrastructure needs and encourage higher female participation, especially in poor and rural areas, girls' enrolment had increased by only 4.4 per cent. That suggested that more attention should be given to entrenched cultural norms that dictated attitudes about girls' education and relegated women to the home through a number of factors, including early marriage. She would like to know whether the in-depth analysis of the retention of pupils mentioned in paragraph 327 of the report had been completed. If so, what had been its findings and had the reform initiatives undertaken been influenced by them?

68. It would also be helpful to learn the extent to which the legislation imposing compulsory education for all children up to 16 years of age had been enforced. That would also require sufficient school places to be made available for all children in the age cohort. Noting that much of the training provided to girls who did not attend school was along traditional lines, which often constrained women to low-paid and informal work, she wondered whether consideration had been given to providing training in non-traditional areas, such as construction. The State party should indicate the percentage of women in teacher training institutions and comment on what could be done to address the segregation of girls and boys in technical and vocational education at the secondary and tertiary levels.

69. **Ms. Daoud** (Djibouti) said that much remained to be done in the field of education since population growth was significant and school enrolment rates for girls remained problematic. Her Government was seeking to increase the number of preschool establishments and raise parents' awareness regarding the importance of sending children to school at a young age. It had also increased the budget for basic education by separating the Ministry of National Education from the Ministry of Higher Education and planned to increase the number of schools throughout Djibouti. It had undertaken a number of awareness-raising measures, including the establishment of a national day for girls' enrolment; it had distributed school kits to the most disadvantaged families; provided scholarships for girls and young women, with the support of partners including the United States Agency for International Development (USAID); and

distributed food assistance to families to prevent girls from being kept out of school for economic reasons.

70. With regard to vocational training, there were plans to establish centres that would promote the training of girls in such areas as agriculture, livestock farming, fishing and beekeeping. Young women were also being trained to drive heavy vehicles, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had established science education programmes for girls.

Article 11

71. **Ms. Ameline**, noting that women had a role to play in innovative areas of the economy such as solar energy and sustainable agriculture, as well as medicine, said that the State party should indicate what areas of economic development it believed would be particularly attractive to women. She also asked for comment on information showing that women often worked at night, sometimes in difficult conditions, as well as on the absence of legislative provisions penalizing sexual harassment in the workplace.

72. **Mr. Bruun** requested additional information on the plan of action for raising the female employment rate and asked whether there were plans to introduce legislation to comply with the obligation to ensure equal pay for work of equal value, pursuant to the ILO Convention concerning Discrimination in respect of Employment and Occupation. He would also like to know whether legislation provided for obligatory maternity leave. If so, what were the rules and did they cover the informal sector? Lastly, noting that training on child labour issues had not been mentioned in connection with the plan of action against human trafficking, although there were clear links between the two issues, he asked how the State party planned to comply with the ILO Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and how it saw the relationship between child labour and education.

73. **Ms. Daoud** (Djibouti) said that, in addition to providing driver training to help women enter new fields of employment in the service sector, the Government had worked with female farmers and established wells to promote livestock rearing by families.

74. The absence of specific provisions on sexual harassment in the workplace was a weakness and

efforts would be made to amend the existing legal provisions. Following its recent reorganization, the Ministry for the Advancement of Women had taken over responsibility for promoting female entrepreneurship and had established precise institutional measures in that regard. Although no details about night work were available, some socio-professional categories and groups of women were considered to be particularly vulnerable, and support was provided — in the context of combating HIV/AIDS, for example — to help them find alternative income-generating activities. The employment of children under 16 years of age as domestic workers was prohibited, while specific legislative provisions applied to young people between 16 and 18 years of age.

Article 12

75. **Ms. Arocha Dominguez** said that, while she welcomed the breadth of the information provided in respect of article 12 of the Convention, and the State party's clear understanding of the problems faced, she wished to stress that women's health remained precarious in many respects. With regard to female genital mutilation, awareness-raising efforts must be based on medical facts regarding its consequences for reproduction, safe childbirth and a healthy sexual life. In particular, she would like to know the relationship between female genital mutilation and the haemorrhages that were the leading cause of maternal deaths. Furthermore, awareness-raising strategies should target not only religious and community leaders but also families, which played an important role in decisions on the practice.

76. The efficiency of the measures taken to reduce maternal mortality should be reassessed, since the maternal mortality rate remained high. Noting that the statistics provided had not been disaggregated by urban and rural settings, or by age, she asked what the maternal mortality rate was among nomadic women, who had the highest fertility rates, and whether there were specific programmes to reduce maternal mortality in that population group. She would also like to know the trend in maternal mortality for girls under 19 years of age. Lastly, it would be interesting to learn whether the impact of the 2003-2007 reproductive health programme had been assessed and whether that programme should be reviewed. It was hard to understand why the contraceptive prevalence rate

among married women remained so low if contraceptives were indeed supplied, as indicated in the report. It was also a matter of concern that the pill was the most common form of contraception, bearing in mind that it did not provide protection against HIV/AIDS, which remained a serious — and often hidden — problem for women.

77. **Ms. Daoud** (Djibouti) said that the medical implications of female genital mutilation formed an integral part of the awareness-raising programmes and policies implemented by the Ministry for the Advancement of Women in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health, within the context of the National Strategy for the Full Abandonment of All Forms of Excision and Infibulation launched in 2006. Family planning was a priority for the Government, which had recently changed the name of its women's ministry to the Ministry for the Advancement of Women and Family Planning. That Ministry intended to implement policies, with the support of the United Nations Population Fund, to raise awareness of contraceptive methods in order to address the problems associated with the country's spiralling birth rate, which was placing an additional strain on its already meagre resources.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.