



**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 854th meeting (Chamber B)

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 22 October 2008, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Gabr (Vice-Chairperson)

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In the absence of Ms. Šimonović, Ms. Gabr, Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

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

Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Ecuador (CEDAW/C/ECU/7, CEDAW/C/ECU/Q/7 and Add.1)

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

2. **Ms. Abarca** (Ecuador), introducing the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Ecuador (CEDAW/C/ECU/7), said that Ecuador had adopted a new Constitution subsequent to the reporting period. The main aspects of the new Constitution that represented progress for women included the recognition of Ecuador as a secular State under the rule of law; equality of men and women; mainstreaming of a gender perspective; and progressive implementation of rights and freedoms, including sexual and reproductive rights. The Constitution recognized the principle of non-discrimination, including in relation to gender identity, and guaranteed parity for women and men in all election processes and in appointments to decision-making posts at the highest State levels. It also recognized the care economy, providing access to social security for women who performed unpaid domestic work and referring to men's shared responsibility for care tasks.

3. The National Assembly had taken measures to reduce informal employment and had recognized the need for protection and defence of natural resources, biodiversity and the rights of nature, which were fundamental for women's lives. Special attention was given to the rights of indigenous women in the context of institutional recognition of the indigenous system of justice.

4. Health, education and social security were the responsibility of the State and constituted human rights that could not be privatized. The State was responsible for the health and life of mothers during and after pregnancy and provided sexual and reproductive health programmes.

5. Women accounted for about half of Ecuador's population and 66 per cent of them lived in urban

areas, where the index of femininity was 103.6 per hundred men. Women headed 23 per cent of households, including 28 per cent of poor households and 22 per cent of non-poor households. If the highest earner of a household was considered its head, women headed 32 per cent of poor households.

6. The global labour participation rate of women was lower than that of men, although women were entering the labour market in increasing numbers: in 2005, 51 per cent of women were working, compared to 78 per cent of men. The national unemployment rate for women was twice as high as that of men and in rural areas was three times as high. Women spent more time than men on unpaid work and worked longer hours on average.

7. Women's life expectancy had increased from 52 to 74 years over the past 30 years. In 2006, the maternal mortality rate had been 55 per 100,000 live births, with a higher figure in indigenous regions. Adolescents accounted for 20 per cent of all pregnancies. The abortion rate was estimated at 20 per cent, but there was significant underreporting of both abortion and maternal mortality.

8. In 2006, women had accounted for 39 per cent of all reported cases of HIV/AIDS. The number of complaints of violence against women received by the women's and family police stations had increased from 49,000 in 2003 to 61,000 in 2006. Nine of every 10 complaints had been filed by women.

9. Equality in formal education had been achieved, as 17 per cent of women completed higher education compared to 18 per cent of men. At the national level, 10 per cent of women were illiterate, and 17 per cent of those lived in rural areas, while four of every 10 indigenous women were illiterate.

10. In 2004, women had accounted for 41 per cent of the candidates for local councils, but only 23 per cent of those elected. In the case of provincial councils, they had accounted for 39 per cent of candidates and only 15 per cent of those elected. In the 2007 election for the National Assembly, 45 women had been elected, accounting for 35 per cent of the total.

11. In 2006, 45 per cent of the 314,000 Ecuadorians who had emigrated had been women, and 78 per cent of them had been from urban areas. The budget for the social sector had increased to 6.5 per cent of GDP in 2006. The budget allocation to the National Council for

Women (CONAMU) had amounted to 0.022 per cent of the overall State budget. Direct spending on plans, programmes and policies for women had accounted for 4 per cent of the overall State budget.

12. Ecuador had ratified most of the international human rights instruments of both the United Nations and the inter-American system. During the reporting period, Ecuador had been governed by the previous Constitution, which had included important provisions for women's rights and the State's guarantee of the free and effective enjoyment of human rights for all without any discrimination.

13. Recent progress in the area of criminal law had included reforms to the Criminal Code to include new crimes such as trafficking in persons, sexual exploitation, child pornography and sexual tourism. Rape penalties had been increased, aggravating factors had been specified for sexual crimes and the definition of rape had been brought into line with the provisions of the Rome Statute.

14. In the area of civil law, Ecuador had adopted legislation on violence against women and the family, on elections, on sexuality and love, on free maternity and child care, and on labour protection. It had also adopted the Children's and Youth Code. The 1997 law on labour protection for women and its amendment in 2000 established penalties for private employers who did not employ the required percentage of women workers. Women were to hold a minimum of 20 per cent of posts for judges and other officials in the higher courts. In accordance with the law on quotas, the Constitutional Tribunal had ordered the Supreme Electoral Tribunal to provide ballots with alternating names of men and women for elections to the National Assembly.

15. CONAMU had been created in October 1997 to promote public policies with a gender focus and it currently reported to the Secretariat of Peoples, Social Movements and Citizen Participation. The Council had a Board of Directors consisting of representatives of the State and of national women's organizations. Under the new constitutional framework, CONAMU would become the Council for the Equality of Women. CONAMU was leading a national discussion with women's organizations to generate proposals in accordance with the constitutional provisions.

16. In 2008, the Ombudsman's Office had become the National Commission for Human Rights,

Nationalities and Gender, and was continuing its work to protect the rights of women, minority groups and sexual diversity. A number of ministries had departments or units for women's rights and several new ministries had been created which had responsibility for policies for women. Those policies included the Equal Opportunities Plan: 2005-2009, the National Plan on Education for Love and Sexuality, the National Plan for the Prevention and Elimination of Sexual Offences in Schools, and the National Plan to combat kidnapping, illegal trafficking in migrants, sexual, labour and other forms of exploitation, prostitution of women, boys, girls and adolescents, child pornography and corruption of minors. There were also policies to eradicate gender violence, labour policies with a gender dimension, and a national policy for health and sexual and reproductive rights. Emergency contraception was permitted, except for one commercial product that had been declared unconstitutional. The Free Maternity and Child Care Act and the Children's and Youth Code had been adopted. The Ecuadorian Social Security Institute provided insured women with prenatal, birth and post-partum obstetric assistance and a maternity benefit payable for 12 weeks. The Ministry of Health had implemented a campaign for the prevention of vertical transmission of HIV/AIDS which offered free testing to pregnant women and provided milk for six months to newborns whose mothers carried the virus.

17. Ecuador, in the context of the universal periodic review mechanism, had committed itself to working on the issue of sexual diversity to eliminate discrimination on grounds of gender identity, sexual orientation and HIV/AIDS status, and promote equality. All of those areas were covered by the new Constitution.

18. Women were the main participants in the Human Development Bond Cash Transfer Programme, which covered indigenous and rural women and over two million poor households and provided conditional transfers to protect human capital through health and education. The State had created a Trust Fund called Promujeres in 2003, which gave women living in extreme poverty resources to enable them to be independent and improve their quality of life.

19. With the approval of the new Constitution, Ecuador faced the challenge of consolidating the structural reform and establishing the national planning system and the national development plan as tools for defining national medium- and long-term priorities for

State intervention and investment. The reform of the electoral and justice systems, the formation of the Constitutional Tribunal, transparency and social control were to guarantee the principles of equality and non-discrimination and the inclusion of a gender perspective in all State action.

20. The process of institutional reform should continue with the support of the country's various women's organizations in order to ensure compliance with the provisions of article 70 of the new Constitution, which complied with the Convention's mandate to enshrine the principle of equality between men and women. The Constitution also specified that CONAMU would become the Council for the Equality of Women. In that context, further work was needed on the draft law on equality, which would then be submitted to the National Assembly. A budget allocation should be established for the formulation and implementation of equality policies. The necessary tools for monitoring and assessment of policies to promote equality were not yet available.

21. Women's presence in public and private life and their political participation were indispensable for the future development of Ecuador. It was State policy to work constantly towards reaching conditions of equality for women. The delegation would be happy to hear any recommendations that would help to improve the situation of women in Ecuador.

Articles 1 to 6

22. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** asked for further details of civil society's contribution to the report. Although women's organizations could make a very valuable contribution, it was important to understand that the responsibility for implementing the Convention lay with the State party. She also asked whether the report had been endorsed by the Ecuadorian Cabinet, as it seemed to contain recommendations addressed to the State.

23. It would be interesting to hear what were the obstacles to the adoption of the equal opportunities act by the National Assembly and whether there were still any discriminatory provisions in civil or criminal law. She also wondered whether any progress had been made in considering the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention.

24. **Ms. Neubauer** expressed concern that many new laws were still pending and wondered whether the

central gender equality mechanism had the necessary political visibility and impact. She asked whether there was a parliamentary body to address the human rights of women and gender equality and, if there was such a body, how the Government cooperated with it.

25. **Ms. Gaspard** asked about the process used to follow up on recommendations made by the Committee after its review of Ecuador's previous report. It was not clear whether the national equality mechanism was the National Council for Women set up in 1997 or the Council for Equality referred to in the new Constitution. It would be useful to hear more about its role and position in the political and administrative hierarchy of the State.

26. **Ms. Dairiam** asked for more information on the status of CONAMU and wondered how the Government planned to provide a legal mandate for the institutionalization of a gender perspective. In addition to the Constitutional guarantee, there should be other statutory provisions and an oversight body. It would be useful to hear whether the gender equality law would provide CONAMU with the necessary legal mandate.

27. She asked about the political and hierarchical position of that institution and whether it was located within the system of national planning. It would be interesting to hear whether the various local institutions with gender mainstreaming units used the Convention as a framework and how well the Equal Opportunities Plan was known to legislators and government departments.

28. She asked how the Government implemented legal protection for women refugees and asylum-seekers. Adequate legislation against violence was important, yet in Ecuador family violence was considered a misdemeanour rather than a crime, unless it was very severe. She wondered whether there was a specific programme to protect refugee women against gender-based violence and against sexual and labour exploitation. She asked whether there were measures to ensure that refugee women's rights were enforced and to help them enter the formal labour market.

29. Undocumented and unregistered refugee women were particularly vulnerable. Information should be provided about any measures to strengthen and accelerate refugee status determination, ensure access to health services and include refugee women in poverty reduction and social assistance programmes.

30. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, noted that the State party had responded positively to the idea of special measures in favour of women. However, there was a gap between its legislative measures and their actual implementation. She wondered what difficulties had been encountered and what additional efforts were being made to ensure implementation. Ecuador should make further efforts to improve the status of women and their education and promote social acceptance of women's expanded role.

31. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** commended the State party's recognition of the cultural specificities of indigenous peoples. However, she understood that the Latin American indigenous peoples had a cosmological worldview in which the roles of men and women balanced each other, but were not exactly equal. As such a view was contrary to the equality concept of the Convention, she wondered how CONAMU and the State were managing to ensure equal treatment of women, while recognizing cultural specificities.

32. **Ms. Pimentel** said that the report provided no analytical statistics to show the level of access for women victims of violence to the relevant institutional structures. There were also no data on the effectiveness of institutional mechanisms in terms of numbers of court cases and sentences imposed. She wondered why there were so many complaints of domestic violence filed at police stations and so few cases resolved. It seemed that husbands who abused their wives were often treated leniently. The fact that corporal punishment of children was legal at home could be reinforcing the idea that domestic violence was not illegal.

33. Ecuador's constitutional provisions with regard to respecting the rights of all persons, including those with a different sexual orientation, were very advanced. Yet she had heard that lesbians were sometimes confined in clinics. She asked whether the delegation was aware of that problem and whether action was being taken. It would be also interesting to hear about policies to close the gap between the Constitution and the ordinary legislation needed to implement it.

34. **Ms. Abarca** (Ecuador) explained that, although provision had been made for the creation of CONAMU in the 1998 Constitution, it had in fact been created through a discretionary presidential decree, which meant that its situation was somewhat unstable. A few

years previously, the Committee had recommended the adoption of a law to institutionalize and regulate the activities of CONAMU. The new Constitution had established a number of national councils for equality, one of which was to be the Council for the Equality of Women. Its main functions were to follow up and monitor compliance with Ecuador's commitments under international human rights instruments, including the Convention. The Council would also develop public policies in conjunction with the relevant ministries and work on mainstreaming a gender perspective in the monitoring and evaluation of public policies. That was the new legal framework for the women's mechanism in Ecuador. It had been proposed that the mechanism should report to the National Secretariat for Planning and Development (SENPLADES).

35. The Board of Directors of CONAMU consisted of equal numbers of representatives of the State and of civil society. Some Governments had interpreted that fact as an impediment to civil society having a direct influence on the action of CONAMU. The Council had always had a close relationship with the women's movement and its innovative role had sometimes led to confusion. The new Constitution established a very strong participatory model for all of the equality councils and reflected the fact that citizen participation was a fundamental element of social control and governance. Many changes were taking place in the country and steps were being taken to include civil society in the process of public policy-making. SENPLADES was responsible for the national planning system and promoted citizen participation in the formulation of medium- and long-term plans.

36. CONAMU was the central mechanism for equality but, in compliance with the Committee's previous recommendations, local governments and various ministries had also established special programmes or units. CONAMU was participating in the reform of the executive branch and working towards the establishment of a national system for equality of women and men that would include all the other mechanisms, departments or units within ministries and in all the branches of Government. The integrated and interconnected system should also include offices or mechanisms created at local government level.

37. Various State structures had been altered by the new Constitution. The National Congress had become

the National Assembly. There had previously been special congressional commissions for women, children, youth and the family and they would also be established under the new Constitution. CONAMU would ensure that there was a special commission for women's issues.

38. In answer to a question about CONAMU and the Council for Equality, she noted that the sixth transitional provision of the new Constitution provided that the National Council for Women would become the Council for the Equality of Women. It was the same institution but would be linked to the other five equality councils which addressed issues relating to children and adolescents, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and nationalities, Afro-Ecuadorians and the Montubio population.

39. The Government's mandate for gender equality was contained in article 70 and other provisions of the Constitution. The enforcement mechanism should be part of the new legislation on the equality of women and men. CONAMU should have a delegate in each sectoral cabinet to ensure that gender policies were applied in each sector. CONAMU and all other relevant State bodies used the Convention as their reference for implementing women's rights. The Equal Opportunities Plan also referred to the Convention.

40. CONAMU was participating in a campaign to ensure that all persons living in the northern border area, where most of the refugees were located, had identity documents. The aim was to achieve total coverage.

41. **Ms. Mera** (Ecuador) said that Ecuador had to deal with immigration as a receiving State, a transit State and a State of origin. The National Secretariat for Migrants was responsible for migration policy in Ecuador and had developed a National Human Development Plan for Migrations 2007-2010. There was also a specific development plan for the northern border area. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was responsible for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of State policies for refugees and cooperated with the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. CONAMU was in constant communication with ministries to work on gender mainstreaming in all areas. In the previous week, representatives of State institutions and non-governmental organizations had met to discuss gender and migration in Ecuador. CONAMU had

participated in document preparation and by providing input on a gender perspective for subsequent plans.

42. **Ms. Abarca** (Ecuador) said that culture was one of the main factors responsible for the gap between the law and reality. Cultural change required long-term efforts, but some significant changes had taken place during the period of existence of CONAMU, which was the period between the implementation of the 1998 and 2008 Constitutions.

43. Her delegation was seeking exact information to respond to the question about sexual orientation and the request for statistics on violence against women.

44. In response to a question about follow-up and evaluation, she said that the country had various statistical tools, including a system of integrated social information with a specific section on women which could be used to monitor public policies for women. CONAMU had also created a number of monitoring tools and had produced specific publications on the status of women.

45. The Ministry of Justice was responsible for ensuring the implementation of concluding comments received in the context of the Convention and other treaties. The Ministry of Justice and CONAMU had recently signed a cooperation agreement for the follow-up of such implementation.

46. **Ms. Begum** noted that no data had been provided on the numbers of women victims of trafficking, on trafficking cases filed or on the punishment of traffickers, although that matter had been raised in the responses to the list of issues and questions and in the previous concluding comments. She wondered whether the Government was conducting any study or analysis of that subject, as previously recommended by the Committee.

47. Information was requested on the number of shelters available and on the programmes provided for trafficking victims. It would be interesting to hear whether the shelters were easily accessible to refugees, asylum-seekers and migrant women and what type of educational programmes were available. She asked whether there were any educational programmes on sexual violence as part of the regular school curriculum. She wondered how many awareness-raising campaigns had been conducted, whether they covered the whole country and whether any progress had been made with the new draft legislation. It would

be interesting to hear how many victims and witnesses had been provided with protection.

48. She asked how many cases of sexual exploitation had been prosecuted and how many perpetrators had received the new penalty. As Ecuador was a destination country, she wondered if there were any bilateral agreements with countries such as Cambodia and Colombia. Excellent programmes and plans had been established but they would bring results only if they were translated into action.

49. **Ms. Hayashi** said that the report did not provide enough statistical data. She understood that, in areas where there were no family and women's police stations, the police were required to report cases of domestic violence to the National Directorate for Gender, but it was not clear whether they actually did so.

50. With regard to trafficking in women, she understood that it was difficult to establish statistics for illegal activities, but the Government required at least some hypothetical numbers as a basis for policy-making. Many reports by United Nations special rapporteurs had addressed the issue of trafficking in Ecuador, especially in relation to Colombians trafficked into the country. Information had been provided on the measures taken, but she wished to know more about the witness protection programme and the training programmes for prosecutors and judges. She asked whether the training courses provided by CONAMU in 2006 had improved the situation. If there had been no significant change, it would be interesting to hear why. She wondered whether there was any law to lighten the burden of proof on trafficking victims so as to help with the prosecution of perpetrators.

51. **Ms. Pimentel** asked whether the new Council for Equality had already been established and to what extent further legislation was required.

52. **Ms. Abarca** (Ecuador) said that all of the equality councils established by the new Constitution already existed. The Constitution had given them the new name of equality councils and had unified their functions. They did not have executive functions, as that was the responsibility of the sectoral ministries. The role of the equality councils was to formulate public policy, monitor compliance with international conventions and conduct follow-up and evaluation. The councils consisted of equal numbers of representatives

of the State and of civil society and specific conditions were set for the participation of civil society organizations. The Constitution referred to the main aspects of the councils and the equality law would provide more details about their relations with State bodies.

Articles 7 and 8

53. **Ms. Neubauer** said that participation in public life was a basic citizenship right, yet the report said nothing about women's and men's participation as members of political parties or as members of their decision-making bodies. There was no information on women in senior management and at other levels in the civil service. There was some information on participation in the judiciary and the State was clearly aware of the underrepresentation of women in certain judicial bodies. There was no reference to members of trade unions, chambers of commerce or professional associations. Such information should be included in future reports.

54. She asked whether the barriers to women's participation in political and public life in underrepresented sectors had been identified and, if so, what policies had been developed and implemented to overcome them. She wondered whether the Equal Opportunities Plan included gender balance and what additional measures and activities were envisaged. The situation in the diplomatic service had improved, but women still accounted for only 10 per cent of ambassadors. She asked whether there were any strategies in place to improve women's representation in the diplomatic service.

55. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** noted that Ecuador had made no reservation to the Convention, had acceded to the Optional Protocol and had a new Constitution that had brought improvements for women at the constitutional and legal level. Nevertheless, despite the immense legislative progress, the actual results were less visible and it was clear that progress could not be made without special policies to promote women's interests. If women were guaranteed their rights, they would enter the labour market and have greater access to resources. She asked whether the provisions of human rights instruments could be applied directly or whether they had to be implemented through domestic legislation.

56. She advised the State party to give extensive media coverage to the Constitution. As Ecuador had ratified the Optional Protocol, individuals could petition the courts to demand the application of the Convention.

57. Quota measures should be introduced rapidly to ensure 50 per cent representation in Parliament and in all other sectors, including the justice system and the diplomatic service. If Ecuador did not have the necessary resources, it should request international assistance from the developed countries that had made a solemn commitment in Beijing to provide help for countries that did not have means to finance their mechanisms for equality.

58. **Ms. Abarca** (Ecuador), on the subject of women's participation, said that there were eight women ministers in the current Government. Women had accounted for 41 per cent of all ministers at the beginning of the Government's term of office, but the percentage had decreased following the creation of a number of new cabinet posts.

59. **Ms. Del Carmen Vivar** (Ecuador), referring to the diplomatic service, said that the Ministry of Foreign Relations had recently introduced a new regulation that allowed married couples in which both spouses were diplomats to work abroad. In the past, one spouse would have had to request special leave or resign.

60. Despite the imbalance at the higher levels of the diplomatic service, parity had been achieved between men and women at the lower levels over the past three years. Furthermore, the two previous Ministers for Foreign Affairs had been women.

61. **Ms. Abarca** (Ecuador) provided some additional statistics. Women accounted for 36 per cent of the members of the National Assembly. There were six men and one woman in the Supreme Electoral Tribunal. Two of the 26 judges in the Supreme Court were women. The National Judiciary Council had one woman member, six male members and two vacant positions. In 2007, women had held 61 posts in the decision-making bodies of trade unions, compared to 637 men. In professional associations, women had held 63 posts, compared to 223 for men. The new Constitution stipulated that men and women would share management positions in political parties and in primary elections. Those provisions would apply to the elections in February 2009.

62. **Mr. Holguín** (Ecuador), responding to a question about implementation of the Convention, said that the new Constitution followed the provisions of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties. Once a treaty such as the Convention had been ratified by the State, any national law contradicting the treaty was automatically no longer valid. However, national legislation was needed to enforce the Convention. International conventions were negotiated by States with different legal systems, which made it difficult to apply them directly.

63. **Ms. Abarca** (Ecuador) said that millions of copies of the Constitution had been distributed to the people during the process of establishing the National Assembly. The National Council for Women had also produced a number of documents explaining women's rights. She welcomed the suggestion to make further efforts to publicize the Constitution and relate it to the Convention.

64. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** asked whether political parties received subsidies from the State and, if so, whether the State could link that funding to respect for the Convention. Political parties should alternate men and women on their ballots so that there was a chance of achieving equality. Any parties not following that practice should lose their subsidy.

65. **Ms. Abarca** (Ecuador) said that the Equal Opportunities Plan provided for gender policies to be included in the electoral process and in the political party system. In addition to ensuring compliance with constitutional and legal norms for the exercise of women's political rights, the Plan provided for promotion of and support for international and national social and institutional initiatives which provided for monitoring of election processes from a gender perspective.

66. It was difficult to answer the question about discriminatory laws. Some discriminatory provisions might still remain from the previous period, as the process of reviewing earlier legislation in the light of the new Constitution was not yet complete.

67. The new Constitution also contained provisions on the equality of the indigenous population. The indigenous justice system could not infringe the human rights of women and had to be guided by international conventions and treaties.

68. The report had been submitted to various government bodies: first to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and then to other ministries, a number of which had formed commissions to review the report.

69. The new Constitution contained a provision for political parties to receive subsidies and it was therefore more likely that the principle of equality would be observed in the future. Alternate listing of men and women had been used in previous elections.

Articles 10 to 14

70. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, said that poverty had a negative impact on education. She had been very concerned to read about the difficulty of allocating even the minimum budget level for the education sector. She wondered what the Government was doing to resolve the situation. No clear figures had been provided on education and its different stages, especially for girls. She asked for figures on illiteracy and how to combat it, as well as information on the current situation, especially among indigenous people. The report also lacked statistics on teacher training.

71. With regard to the school drop-out rate of girls, she wondered whether there was a policy to address that phenomenon as well as under-age pregnancies and the difficulties of young mothers returning to school. She asked whether any specific measures had been taken.

72. **Ms. Patten** noted that the report did not give a clear picture of the employment situation of women. Such data should be provided in the next report, as without statistics it was difficult to evaluate the success of the measures.

73. The informal sector had expanded owing to lack of opportunities in the formal sector. She asked what action was being taken to address the vulnerable situation of women in informal employment and whether any policies were in place to facilitate their entry into formal employment. As there were reports of widespread discrimination in the private sector, it would be interesting to hear what measures were being taken by the Government to enforce the Labour Code and other equal opportunities legislation.

74. Large numbers of women with higher education were either unemployed or underemployed. Reference had been made to agreements finalized for professional

training service and the public placement system. She asked how many women had benefited from such placement agreements, what was the target group of the service and in what field such training was provided. The report mentioned positive action with a view to hiring more women in public service but no details had been provided. In view of the difficulty encountered with the Quota Act and the Employment Protection Act in relation to Supreme Court judges, she wondered whether special measures had been implemented and whether there had been resistance.

75. It would be interesting to hear what measures had been taken to eliminate occupational segregation and wage gaps and to promote the equal participation of women in highly skilled jobs. She asked whether there was a mechanism to adjudicate wage discrimination issues and whether a review of wage structures in female dominated professions was planned.

76. There had been many complaints about termination of employment on the grounds of pregnancy. The out-of-court settlements were a cause of concern, as it would surely be more effective to prosecute employers in order to send a strong signal that the Government condemned such discriminatory practice. In view of the reports of widespread discrimination in the financial and banking sector and the pressure exerted on working women not to become pregnant, she asked whether any employers were being prosecuted.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.