



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

Distr.: General
1 April 2010

Original: English

**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
Forty-fifth session

Summary record of the 918th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 28 January 2010, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Zou Xiaoqiao (China)

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In the absence of Ms. Gabr, Ms. Zou Xiaoqiao (Vice-Chairperson) took the Chair.

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 sixth and seventh reports of Egypt (CEDAW/C/EGY/7, CEDAW/C/EGY/Q/7, CEDAW/C/EGY/Q/7/Add.1, CEDAW/C/EGY/Q/7/Add.1/Annex)

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

2. **Ms. Hassan** (Egypt) said that the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Egypt (CEDAW/C/EGY/7) had been compiled by the National Council for Women, drawing on the input of experts and concerned parties. The findings had been discussed with members of Parliament. The Council was conducting an intensified campaign to raise awareness of the report through such methods as public events, media coverage and pamphlets. A drawing competition on the Convention had been organized, and the winning entries had been disseminated on postcards and posters.

3. Egyptian women were guaranteed absolute, unconditional equality under the Constitution. That right was backed by political will in the form of recommendations of the President. Tangible progress had been made in all areas; indeed, females now outnumbered males in secondary school and in certain subject areas at university, including dentistry, medicine, media studies, economics and political science. There was no gender disparity in public-sector wages. There were women judges, including the Deputy Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court. However, private-sector wages for women were on average only 80 per cent of those of men. In an effort to address that disparity, a gender unit had been established within the Ministry of Investment. Ten private-sector businesses had recently been awarded an “equal opportunities seal of approval”.

4. After the adoption of the Nationality Law, Egypt had withdrawn its reservation to article 9 of the Convention. However, in accordance with the position of the League of Arab States, the children of a Palestinian man and his Egyptian wife could not

receive Egyptian nationality except under special circumstances, in order to preserve the Palestinian identity until the establishment of a Palestinian State.

5. Family courts had been introduced, and the Tax Law had been amended to remove the provisions that discriminated against women. The new Family Insurance Fund Law provided divorced women and their children with alimony where the former husband refused to do so. The divorce rate had not changed between 1985 and 2008. A personal status act was being drafted which would address outstanding issues.

6. The National Council for Women had submitted to the Government a draft amendment to the Inheritance Law in order to introduce a penalty for depriving male or female inheritors of their inheritance. Currently, a Christian wife could not inherit from her Muslim husband, and, by the same token, a Muslim husband could not inherit from his Christian wife, not as an issue of discrimination against women or against any religion, but as a matter of civil law. The legislative committee within the National Council for Women was examining ways to change it.

7. The Council had submitted a draft law to amend the legislation on harassment and rape, in particular for crimes involving information and communication technology. Statistics for such crimes were low, but many cases went unreported. The Council had also amended the legislation in order to raise the age of marriage to 18 and ban female genital mutilation.

8. The process for developing national plans was being modified to include a gender perspective, thereby increasing the input of non-governmental organizations and women, in particular rural women into such plans. The Council was training a health worker, a social worker and an agricultural adviser for each of 4,700 villages.

9. Article 62 of the Constitution had been amended to allow a quota for seats allocated to women members of Parliament, which had been set at 64 seats in 2009. The previous attempt to introduce a quota had been declared unconstitutional in 1986. In order to circumvent that problem, the new quota had been established as a temporary measure for two parliamentary sessions only.

10. Intensified efforts were being made to improve the image of women in the media. The Council had taken part in a media strategy which included a new

statistical method to assess the progress made. Progress had been remarkable, although stereotypes continued to be widespread in television serials and advertising. Through the National Council for Women and the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, the Government had launched ambitious strategies to tackle human trafficking and the roots of violence against women.

11. A permanent Unit for the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was in place at the headquarters of the National Council for Women. Within every ministry except the Ministry of Defence, there was an equal opportunities unit which addressed any discriminatory practices against women in the workplace. Several hundred such cases had been resolved. The equal opportunities unit at the Ministry of Finance had been particularly successful in integrating a gender perspective in the general budget. Women's committees had been established in 21 of the 23 professional unions.

12. In 2001, a Complaints Bureau for women's issues had been established within the National Council for Women. Its tasks were to monitor, examine and address the obstacles to women's effective participation in public life. The Bureau had first been based at the Council's headquarters, but now had branches across the country. It had no judicial or executive powers. Instead, its task was to provide guidance, seek voluntary solutions or direct the case to the appropriate authorities. Recurring complaints were referred to the Secretary-General of the National Council for Women, and thence to the Head of Government or to Parliament. The Government was currently finalizing the establishment of an independent body with all of the recognized prerogatives of an ombudsman's office.

13. In its efforts to promote women's rights, Egypt had been at the forefront of the Arab world in a number of respects. However, several areas still required improvement. Cultural misconceptions and mistaken understandings of religion were a continuing challenge and legislation was not always implemented. Penal law treated male and female adulterers differently; a draft amendment to establish the same penalties was now before Parliament. Because the rights and privileges of women were sometimes misused, some employers were reluctant to hire female staff members. Although illiteracy among women was steadily declining, further efforts were needed in order to eliminate it completely.

Upholding women's rights was not just an end in itself, but also a means to promote development and social harmony. On its return to Egypt, the delegation would discuss the outcome of the Committee's report with a range of stakeholders.

Articles 1 to 6

14. **Ms. Jaising** said that it would be useful to have examples of legal provisions that had been declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Constitutional Court on the grounds that they were inconsistent with the right to equality and non-discrimination on the grounds of sex. She also wished to know whether court judgements referred explicitly to international conventions.

15. The periodic report stated that although polygamy was still practised, a sound understanding of the relevant Koranic verse would prohibit it. There was scope to develop a progressive, feminist and non-discriminatory interpretation of Islamic tenets. It would be interesting to know of any debate or specific ideas to promote such an interpretation and amend legislation.

16. She asked whether the Government was considering withdrawing its reservation to article 2 of the Convention. In the Committee's view, that article constituted a non-derogable core obligation.

17. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** said that in 2000, the delegation of Egypt had indicated that a decision on the withdrawal of the reservation to article 2 of the Convention was imminent; she wished to know what progress had been made.

18. The Committee had taken the position that reservations to article 16 were impermissible and should be reviewed and modified or withdrawn. The law on *khula* enacted in 2000 had been described at the time as a major step towards withdrawal of the reservation to article 16. It was a source of grave concern that the current report did not indicate any progress towards that goal.

19. She was aware of the complexities involved; similar issues arose in her own country with regard to Jewish law. The Committee had heard from a neighbouring Middle Eastern country of a very interesting review of family and personal status laws, which was being conducted in cooperation with the

Grand Mufti and women's non-governmental organizations.

20. **Ms. Šimonović** said that she would appreciate any examples of cases in which the Convention had been applied as national law. In view of the broad nature of the reservation to article 2, she wondered how judges decided which parts of the article were in force.

21. The Cairo Declaration on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Islamic Jurisprudence (2009) was a welcome document. A similar approach could be extended to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which was closely linked to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In the same way, the National Council for Women should consider working more closely with the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood.

22. **Ms. Ameline** asked how the legal system addressed inconsistencies between the sharia and national legislation. She wondered if any training programmes were organized for magistrates and police officers in order to raise awareness of the rights of women. She would appreciate any comments on the extent to which legal penalties were an effective deterrent, and on ways to strengthen the judicial framework in order to improve implementation.

23. **Mr. Flinterman** said that he had hoped the delegation would announce the withdrawal of Egypt's reservation to article 2. In its responses to the list of issues and questions with regard to the consideration of the report (CEDAW/C/EGY/Q/7/Add.1), the Government had indicated that signature of the Optional Protocol was imminent. Further information on that process should be provided.

24. The report and responses to the list of issues had referred to an ombudsman's office within the National Council for Women, and plans for the establishment of a new ombudsman's office had been mentioned. It was unclear whether that new office would replace the existing one or complement it.

25. The functions of the existing ombudsman's office also needed clarification. He wondered whether it invoked the provisions of the Convention, what it could do if its recommendations were not implemented, and whether it could initiate judicial procedures.

26. **Ms. Popescu** said that she would welcome additional information on the staffing of the National

Council for Women, and in particular what proportion of its staff members were permanent; how it was funded, whether its function was purely advisory or included decision-making; its position within the structure of Government; and its coordination capacity. The function of the Unit for the Implementation of the Convention should also be explained. She requested a progress report on the new method for national gender planning and asked how it integrated information from the grass roots and what feedback had been received at the national level.

27. **Ms. Neubauer** said that it would be useful to have more information about the capacity and staffing of the equal opportunities units within the ministries and any mechanisms to coordinate the work of the units. She asked whether the training courses organized by the National Council for Women were ongoing or organized on an ad hoc basis.

28. **Ms. Jaising** said that the establishment of the quota for women Members of Parliament was an impressive achievement. In the understanding of the Committee, a parliamentary quota should be established only as a temporary special measure to correct a historical disadvantage. It would be interesting to know of any quotas for specific professions, an idea that had been applied successfully in her own country.

29. **Ms. Hassan** (Egypt) said that she hoped that the reservation to article 2 would be withdrawn in the near future. Article 2 of the Convention did not in fact contravene the Constitution. The major obstacles had been overcome, and the remaining issues were not substantive.

30. The question of article 16 had created delays in the discussion of article 2. The Council had therefore decided to defer its consideration in order to tackle the two issues separately. Some provisions of article 16 were not problematic, but others would grant women less rights than they currently enjoyed. There remained some discrepancies between article 16 and national legislation, and it would take time to reconcile them.

31. With regard to areas where national law was inconsistent with the provisions of the Convention, she said that tax laws had been amended to recognize that women could be breadwinners, and women were now eligible for the appropriate tax exemptions.

32. The National Council for Women and the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood acted as separate bodies: they cooperated, but would not merge. The former answered directly to the President, the latter to the Ministry of the Family and thence to the Prime Minister.

33. For over seven years, judges and police had received ongoing training on women's rights. The parliamentary quota for women was a temporary measure in accordance with the Convention. Parliament made reference to the Convention in its discussions. The Convention was applied directly in the courts; however, rulings were formulated with reference to the relevant national law. While referring to the ideas contained in the Convention, court rulings did not quote it directly.

34. **Mr. Aboul Magd** (Egypt) said the challenge in a globalized world was to stress commonalities and dialogue without jeopardizing the blessing of diversity. Article 40 of the Constitution clearly prohibited any discrimination on the grounds of sex, a term which had sometimes mistakenly been rendered as "race". He was not aware of any case currently before the courts involving gender discrimination specifically. However, one court decision in 1996 referred to article 40 prohibiting all forms of discrimination.

35. **Ms. Abdel Mouaty** (Egypt) said that the head of each equal opportunities unit answered to the office of the Minister. In the Ministry of Finance, the unit was a core part of the organizational structure with 7 staff members and another 18 representing the unit in other branches of the Ministry. Since its inception in 2005, the equal opportunities unit at the Ministry of Finance had conducted a successful project to integrate a gender perspective both in the general budget and in such areas as health, education, employment and social security.

36. The unit addressed cases that had been referred to it by the Complaints Bureau. Some 70 per cent of those cases involved social security or pensions, and over the previous four years, 65 per cent of cases had been resolved. The remaining 30 per cent had to do with employees of the Ministry of Finance who had been dismissed, passed over for promotion or arbitrarily transferred.

37. Each equal opportunities unit met periodically with the National Council for Women. Every six months, the units met with each other to ensure

coordination. A report on the work of the units was prepared annually.

38. **Ms. Amin** (Egypt) said that a policy resource group and steering committee were in place in order to bring together national and international stakeholders and ensure coordination between the National Council for Women and the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood. Cases of female genital mutilation were now referred to the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood.

39. **Ms. Hassan** (Egypt) said that the Unit for the Implementation of the Convention had been established as part of a project in which several international organizations had taken part. The Unit had been integrated into the structure of the Council, and was funded from the general budget and grants from other States and donors. It was not just a consultative body; it also planned and proposed policies for ministries, Parliament and non-governmental organizations. Its decisions were referred directly to the President, who notified the relevant agencies. Although not an executive body as such, the Council implemented small-scale projects as a model for other agencies.

40. The Complaints Bureau was not an ombudsman's office, which had not yet been established. The Complaints Bureau dealt specifically with women's issues, although it could also receive submissions from men.

41. **Ms. Bibers** (Egypt) said that the Complaints Bureau was completely different from an ombudsman's office. The Complaints Bureau coordinated between women and the relevant parties, such as equal opportunities units. It could also refer cases directly to the legislative committee at the Council for discussion at the policy level. The proposed ombudsman's office would act as a public prosecutor, a role that was currently fulfilled by the Ministry of Administrative Development.

42. **Ms. Hassan** (Egypt) said that the parliamentary quota was only temporary but the National Council for Women was pressing for a measure that would ensure equality on a permanent basis.

43. **Ms. Hayashi** said that, despite the enactment of new laws, the Government's approach to the prevention and elimination of violence against women could not be considered holistic. Egyptian law still

lacked provisions on physical and psychological assault in the context of domestic violence or that specifically addressed violence against women. The report did not include any information on the number of women who had taken refuge in shelters.

44. She therefore wished to know whether the Government planned to conduct a comprehensive study on violence against women and to enact legislation on domestic violence. The Committee would also welcome additional information on the number of women who made use of shelters, whether they had access to psychological counselling and free legal aid and whether the courts had ever ordered the eviction of an abusive husband from his home for the protection of his wife and children.

45. The State party's Penal Code contained provisions that condoned violence against women by exempting perpetrators of domestic violence from punishment or reducing the sentences imposed. She wondered how many times those provisions had been invoked in court and whether the courts had permitted such a defence. The Committee had been informed that there was no law that specifically addressed sexual harassment and that the Government had no statistics on the incidence of such harassment. Moreover, a public opinion poll had found that nearly half of all respondents held the victims responsible.

46. She therefore wished to know whether the Government planned to enact legislation on sexual harassment and take measures to change the attitudes of both men and women in that regard.

47. **Ms. Pimentel** said that, despite the enactment of legislation criminalizing female genital mutilation, the occurrence of that practice remained disappointingly high. She wondered whether the Government had conducted any studies on the practice, with a view to developing an effective strategy for its elimination; whether a mechanism had been established to monitor implementation of the law on female genital mutilation; and whether a time frame had been established for the elimination of female genital mutilation. In that connection, she asked whether Egypt was utilizing the Committee's general recommendations No. 14 and No. 19 in its efforts.

48. **Ms. Ara Begum** said that she wished to know why the incidence of female genital mutilation and honour crimes remained high and what factors were

preventing the Government from effectively enforcing the law in that regard.

49. The Committee had been informed that domestic violence was on the rise and marital rape was not criminalized. In fact, all forms of domestic violence were considered private matters and victims were discouraged by police from reporting incidents of domestic violence. She therefore wished to know whether the Government planned to enact a law that specifically addressed domestic violence. She also wondered what measures the State party had taken to protect street girls from ill-treatment, sexual abuse and rape.

50. Recalling that article 17 of the Penal Code allowed judges to reduce the penalties imposed on men who committed honour crimes, rape or other acts of violence against women, she wondered whether the State party planned to repeal or amend that discriminatory article. She also asked for more information regarding the Egyptian police practice of taking women as hostages in order to force male suspects to surrender in exchange for the freedom of their female family members or relations.

51. **Ms. Šimonović** said that, despite globalization and the emergence of new technologies, progress in securing women's rights remained very slow. It was therefore the responsibility of Governments to underscore that violence against women was a violation of human rights. Given that legal measures alone would not put an end to violence against women, she wished to know whether the Government planned to launch a national campaign to combat violence against women and female genital mutilation. Although the State party had already begun working with religious institutions in that regard, its efforts should also target parents because they played a crucial role in respect of violence against women and female genital mutilation.

52. The laws currently in force regarded those who performed female genital mutilation as criminals, which was contrary to the Committee's position that such persons should be offered alternative employment. On the other hand, some United Nations bodies had recently begun to advise against offering alternative employment. In the light of that information, she wished to know whether the State party would reconsider its policy concerning those practitioners. The Committee would appreciate information on the

progress made in implementing the law on female genital mutilation, particularly in view of the prevalence of that practice.

53. She also requested an explanation as to why State-operated shelters for abused women were restricted to women less than 50 years old. Given increased life expectancy, the Government might wish to consider removing that limit.

54. **Ms. Chutikul** said that she would appreciate further information on the draft law to combat human trafficking, including the penalties provided therein. She wished to know what measures the Government had taken to curb so-called summer marriages, in which wealthy foreign males on summer holiday in Egypt married young village women for short-term sexual pleasure and then divorced them at the end of the holiday season. The Committee would also welcome more specific information on the national plan of action to combat human trafficking, including its objectives and how it was to be implemented.

55. Recalling that female domestic workers were often forced into prostitution, she wondered whether the State party's labour laws protected such workers against abuse and exploitation and whether the Government worked with countries of origin to prevent human trafficking.

56. **Ms. Rasekh** said that the Government should provide further information on the steps it had taken to prevent human trafficking, assist the victims and prosecute traffickers. According to a number of sources, Egypt was a country of origin, transit and destination of trafficked persons, yet the Government's report stated only that it was a transit country. The delegation should clarify that apparent contradiction.

57. **Ms. Neubauer** said that she wished to know whether the proposed amendment to the Penal Code criminalizing the solicitation of prostitution also stipulated penalties for those who organized prostitution, rented premises for the purpose of prostitution or coerced others into prostitution. In that connection, the Committee would welcome statistics on the number of convictions for prostitution and related offences. She also asked whether any measures had been taken to discourage women from becoming prostitutes and assist those who wished to leave prostitution.

58. **Ms. Hassan** (Egypt) said that the laws currently in force dealt with sexual harassment and rape in a haphazard manner. However, the Ministry of Justice had recently submitted to the Government a draft law that comprehensively addressed all of the Committee's concerns.

59. It was not reasonable to expect that female genital mutilation would suddenly disappear because the practice was an ancient tribal tradition and the law on female genital mutilation had only recently been adopted.

60. A comprehensive draft law on human trafficking was now before Parliament. In that connection, she recalled that a member of the Committee, Ms. Náela Gabr, had overseen the drafting of that law in her capacity as the head of the National Coordinating Committee to Combat and Prevent Trafficking in Persons.

61. There were approximately 20 women's shelters in Egypt. That number was clearly insufficient and the Government intended to open more shelters in the near future.

62. **Mr. El Anany** (Egypt) said that Egyptian law criminalized all forms of violence against persons, including domestic violence. Moreover, domestic violence served as legal grounds for divorce. All international instruments to which Egypt was party, including the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, were incorporated into domestic law and could be invoked by the national courts. The Government was also striving to amend existing laws in order to stamp out all forms of domestic violence.

63. **Mr. El Nagar** (Egypt) said that Islamic law prohibited husbands from demeaning or verbally abusing their wives and considered physical and emotional violence to be equally wrong. In fact, the family courts had granted many women a divorce on the grounds of psychological abuse.

64. **Ms. Abdelazziz** (Egypt) said that her country's response to domestic violence was not restricted to enacting legislation. The Government was aware of the pressing need to develop a comprehensive strategy to address the question of domestic violence. Such a strategy would be developed in cooperation with the

National Council for Women and would include preventive measures, development and awareness-raising programmes, legislative reform and the provision of services.

65. Non-governmental organizations had been at the forefront of raising awareness of and conducting research on domestic violence. Unfortunately, the studies published by those organizations had been unscientific. With the involvement of the National Council for Women and the introduction of scientific research methods, reliable data on all forms of violence against women were now available, and it was clear that violence against women was a problem in Egypt.

66. There were very few women's shelters because there was little demand for them. The Government attributed that lack of demand to the unwelcoming environment of those shelters and had developed a strategy to improve conditions. There had been few prosecutions for domestic violence owing to the low number of incidents reported.

67. It was not Egyptian police policy to take hostages and any person who took a hostage would be punished in accordance with the law. The application of article 17 of the Penal Code was not restricted to honour crimes and judges could reduce any sentence at their discretion, regardless of the nature of the crime or the sex of the offender. The reduction of sentences in honour crime cases would be addressed in the context of ongoing legislative reforms.

68. **Ms. Hassan** (Egypt) said that the National Committee for Women had submitted its proposed amendments to article 17 of the Penal Code to the Ministry of Justice. Those proposals would restrict the ability of judges to reduce the penalty for certain crimes, including rape and sexual harassment, to a less severe one. In the case of rape, which was punishable by death, the judge would only have discretion to commute the sentence to life imprisonment.

69. Acknowledging that the police did not always treat abused women and street girls in an appropriate manner, she said the National Council for Women had proposed that such cases should be assigned to women police officers. The Council had also suggested the creation of a hotline in the Ministry of the Interior to receive complaints from women. Both proposals had been endorsed by the Minister of the Interior and would be implemented pending the completion of administrative procedures.

70. **Ms. Abou Steit** (Egypt) said that the Government had been slow to draft comprehensive legislation on human trafficking because, until recently, Egypt had only been a transit country for trafficked persons. As awareness of the scope of the problem had grown, the authorities had decided to establish the National Coordinating Committee to Combat and Prevent Trafficking in Persons and had instructed the National Centre for Social and Criminal Research to prepare a comprehensive national study, which would be completed in the fall of 2010. The findings of the study would enable the Government to define its strategy on the basis of scientific information.

71. With regard to so-called summer marriages, the National Council for Women and the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, in cooperation with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), had launched a programme to combat violence against women that included a component aimed at raising awareness of such marriages.

72. Although the provisions of the Labour Code did not apply to female domestic workers, it would be wrong to conclude that, ipso facto, female domestic workers were being trafficked or abused. The assertion that female domestic workers were being forced into prostitution was also not correct. Many women were gainfully employed as domestic workers, with only isolated cases of abuse having been reported. An employer found guilty of abusing a domestic servant was subject to severe penalties.

73. With regard to prostitution, she said that the laws currently in force punished prostitutes but not their clients. However, any person who abetted or facilitated prostitution was subject to a harsher penalty than the prostitute herself.

74. **Ms. Hassan** (Egypt) said that it was difficult to stamp out certain aspects of human trafficking because they were legally sanctioned. For example, as in the case of summer marriages, it was perfectly legal for a couple to marry and then divorce a short time later. The Government must therefore develop creative solutions to such dilemmas.

75. **Ms. El Bahtimy** (Egypt) said that some of the statistics on female genital mutilation were not being interpreted correctly. For example, the statistic indicating that the incidence of female genital mutilation was 90 per cent applied only to women aged 15 to 49 who had ever been married.

76. A 2008 national study of school girls performed by the Ministry of Health, in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO), had found that the incidence of female genital mutilation in the 10 to 18 age group was 50 per cent nationwide. The rate was higher in rural areas than in urban areas, and higher in the south than in the north.

77. The Egyptian approach to combating female genital mutilation was based on partnership between civil society, international organizations, the Government and individual citizens. The entire country understood the magnitude of the problem and was committed to combating the practice.

78. Responding to public outrage following a 1994 report by an international news channel on female genital mutilation in Egypt, in 1996, the Government had issued a decree that prohibited doctors from practicing female genital mutilation. That decree had been highly politicized and, as a result, contained some loopholes. In order to close those loopholes while avoiding controversy, in 2003, the Government had decided to approach the problem from a children's rights perspective.

79. A campaign had been launched in rural areas to raise awareness of the practice and provide families with information and answer their questions. The campaign had been met with a positive response and eventually succeeded in changing public perception of female genital mutilation. In 2007, a group of independent religious scholars had issued a fatwa calling for the criminalization of female genital mutilation. The campaign had culminated in 2008 with the enactment of the law prohibiting the practice.

80. Parents were not currently subject to criminal charges in relation to female genital mutilation. Instead, the Government was continuing its efforts to convince them to shun the practice. A free counselling hotline was available to families with young girls and to women who had been subjected to the practice.

81. The Government, working through the Ministry of Health and various medical associations, sought to identify and punish doctors and other medical professionals who practiced female genital mutilation. In addition, the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood had launched the "Doctors against Female Genital Mutilation" campaign aimed at raising doctors' awareness that the practice was illegal and against the medical code of ethics. Experience showed that

families only reported female genital mutilation when the procedure had caused injury or other harm to the girl.

82. **Ms. Hassan** (Egypt) said that a nationwide campaign was under way to rid villages of female genital mutilation and a number of villages had already been designated as being free of the practice.

83. **Ms. Awori** said that, although the provisions of the Penal Code concerning adultery had been amended, it appeared that those provisions continued to discriminate against women, particularly with regard to penalties and burden of proof. She therefore wondered whether the State party intended to repeal those discriminatory provisions.

84. **Ms. Pimentel** said that she wished to know whether female genital mutilation procedures were performed exclusively by doctors or whether persons without medical training also performed such procedures. Did the reporting State offer traditional practitioners, who were usually women, the opportunity to take up alternative work?

85. **Mr. Flinterman** said that he welcomed Egypt's stated intention to withdraw its reservation to article 2 of the Convention in the near future. In that connection, he wondered whether its imminent withdrawal would lead to the ratification of the Optional Protocol.

86. **Ms. Rasekh** said that she wished to know the proportion that women constituted of the National Coordinating Committee to Combat and Prevent Trafficking in Persons and whether that body coordinated its efforts with non-governmental organizations.

87. **Ms. Hassan** (Egypt) said that amending the discriminatory provisions of the law on adultery was one of the challenges facing the National Committee for Women. A proposal to repeal those provisions was being studied by the Ministry of Justice but no decision had been made.

88. **Ms. El Bahtimy** (Egypt) said that, for the most part, traditional practitioners had ceased performing female genital mutilation procedures. In fact, approximately 85 per cent of all reported procedures had been performed by doctors and nurses. Consequently, the Government did not offer practitioners alternative employment, with the exception of traditional birth attendants.

89. **Ms. Hassan** (Egypt) said that the National Coordinating Committee to Combat and Prevent Trafficking in Persons was composed of representatives of the various Ministries and other Governmental bodies. The number of women members therefore varied, although the representatives of the National Council for Women and the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood were always women. The National Coordinating Committee cooperated closely with non-governmental organizations and research institutes

90. The imminent withdrawal of the reservation to article 2 of the Convention would allow the Government to consider accession to the Optional Protocol.

91. **Mr. Aboul Magd** (Egypt) said that it would take some time to convince both the judiciary and the public to support accession. However, he was confident that Egypt would accede to the Optional Protocol in the near future.

92. **Ms. Hassan** (Egypt) said that, like other States, Egypt was of the view that certain provisions of the Optional Protocol had implications in respect of State sovereignty. The Committee should therefore remove those provisions in order to facilitate accession to the Optional Protocol.

93. With regard to the staffing and organization of the National Council of Women, she said that the Council employed a full-time staff of 318. The Council had utilized a centralized planning scheme up to 2006-2007, after which it had switched to decentralized planning. It prepared a plan for each of its 279 branches throughout the country; those plans were subsequently incorporated into a plan for one of the country's 27 provinces. Its successful transition to decentralized planning had been responsible for the partial implementation of decentralized planning across the entire Government.

Articles 7 to 9

94. **Ms. Ameline** said that she would welcome further information regarding specific measures the Government was considering to increase women's political representation in general, and at the local level in particular. She wondered whether financial and other forms of assistance would be offered to women candidates. Would women candidates be protected from gender-based violence during the electoral

process? She also requested information on the Government's plans for consolidating women's status in other aspects of public and professional life.

95. **Ms. Popescu** said that, despite both the Government's commendable efforts and the progress already made, women's political representation remained low. In that connection, she wondered why the Constitutional amendment setting aside a quota for women in Parliament applied only to the People's Assembly and not to the Shura Assembly.

96. The addition of 64 new seats specifically for women candidates in the People's Assembly was not equivalent to establishing a quota based on the total number of seats. Although the previous quota system had been found to be unconstitutional, it had nonetheless been a temporary special measure.

97. She therefore wondered whether the Government would consider creating a true quota for women in the People's Assembly. Perhaps it could follow the example of other States and establish a quota for both men and women, thereby allaying any concerns of discrimination against men.

98. She wished to know what measures the Government had taken to increase the participation of rural women in local decision-making bodies, such as village councils, and would welcome any data on the representation of women in local government.

99. The report noted that, although women formed a substantial portion of the membership of political parties, those parties had few incentives to promote women through the ranks. She wondered whether the Government had taken any measures to encourage political parties to promote women and nominate them for elected office.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.