



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

Distr.: General
22 September 2006

Original: English

**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
Thirty-sixth session

Summary record of the 747th meeting (Chamber B)

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 15 August 2006, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Manalo

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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 second and third periodic report of Georgia (CEDAW/C/GEO/2-3; CEDAW/C/GEO/Q/3 and Add.1)

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

2. **Ms. Makharashvili** (Georgia), introducing her country's combined second and third periodic report (CEDAW/C/GEO/2-3), noted that in November, 2003, there had been a revolution in Georgia, and that as a result much had changed in the country since the submission of Georgia's initial report to the Committee in 1998. Part of the work of preparing the second and third periodic reports had been carried out by the State Commission on Elaboration of State Policy for Women's Advancement, established in 1998, which had ceased to exist after the Rose Revolution.

3. Under the new Administration, reforms had been implemented in various sectors. Gender equality issues were being addressed by the Advisory Council on Gender Equality, which had been established in 2004, with a membership consisting of representatives of the Parliament, Government and the NGO sector. The Council's mandate included drafting new laws and preparing State policy regarding gender equity. In 2005, the Governmental Commission for Gender Equality had been set up and given a one-year mandate to draft a national action plan to strengthen gender equality in Georgia. Since 2004, legal provisions had been adopted by the Parliament on such matters as pensions, combating human trafficking, labour and domestic violence. A national strategy document was being drafted on gender equality.

Articles 1 to 6

4. **Mr. Flinterman** asked if there were provisions in the Constitution of Georgia which contradicted the Convention. If so, Georgia was obligated under international law to change its Constitution. It would be of interest to learn who was authorized to decide if a provision of the Constitution was incompatible with international conventions. If it was the Constitutional

Court, it would be helpful to know the implications of the decision it took.

5. It was regrettable that the Convention had never been referred to in any court case. Perhaps that omission was due to ignorance on the part of the legal profession, judges or the parties to a case, and perhaps there was a need for legal literacy programmes, not only for the judiciary, law enforcement officials and lawyers, but also for the women of Georgia. Information on measures the Government was taking to implement article 13 of the Optional Protocol would be appreciated.

6. It would be helpful to know more about the role of the Office of Public Defender (Ombudsman) in settling disputes about alleged violations of women's rights and to receive more information about the kinds of cases submitted and the role of the Convention in resolving complaints submitted to that Office. He asked whether the Government of Georgia intended, in its national strategy for internally displaced persons, to give special attention to vulnerable categories, such as female-headed households and single elderly women. Finally, information on the right to family reunification in the context of refugee laws would be appreciated.

7. **Ms. Dairiam** noted that the Ministry of Justice had concluded that there were no directly discriminatory provisions in national law. However, the State party's report acknowledged that women had suffered disproportionately as a result of wars and economic crises. If women's rights were being violated de facto, the State had not fulfilled all its obligations under the Convention. She wondered if the State intended to conduct a further assessment of practical discrimination against women, and determine in what areas discrimination occurred and which demographic or ethnic groups were the most frequent victims. It would be helpful to know what capacities the Government would require to ensure the de facto realization of the right to equality. Information on whether the State had done an analysis of the impact of economic difficulties and conflict on the situation of women would be appreciated. If the State had not done such an analysis, it would be useful to know whether it was willing to do so and whether it would develop an appropriate plan of action based on the analysis.

8. According to the State party's report, the plan of action of the State Commission on Elaboration of State Policy for Women's Advancement had not been

implemented owing to a lack of political will and resources. How, then, would the Government ensure that the National Gender Equality Strategy and Gender Equality Concept of Georgia were effectively implemented, funded and centrally coordinated? It would be useful to know whether the Strategy incorporated the principle of “substantive equality”, which required elimination of both direct and indirect discrimination and practical implementation of rights, whether the policy prohibited discrimination by private actors, whether it contained provisions for temporary special measures to compensate for past discrimination and whether the needs of the most vulnerable groups, including internally displaced persons, would find a place in the document.

9. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** commended the State party for its efforts and, in particular, for its adoption of the State Concept on Gender Equality. However, referring to paragraph 42 of the report (CEDAW/C/GEO/2-3), she expressed surprise that the proposed plan of action on minorities, which had now been superseded by the aforementioned Concept, had included measures geared specifically towards women. It was difficult to see how viewing women as a minority group could be compatible with the promotion of gender equality.

10. In their concluding comments and recommendations, both the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination had dwelt on the difficulties faced by minorities in Georgia. In that connection, she would like to know whether the Government had taken any steps to address the specific vulnerabilities of minority women. She had heard from other sources that the State party had adopted a national strategy on internally displaced persons. Since women accounted for around 55 per cent of the domestic refugee population, she enquired whether a gender perspective had been mainstreamed into that strategy.

11. **Ms. Popescu** urged the State party to pursue its efforts to promote and protect women’s human rights. The constant restructuring of Georgia’s national machinery for the advancement of women might have undermined the effectiveness of its activities. The State party should therefore provide an evaluation of the work undertaken by the two interim structures, especially the Governmental Commission for Gender Equality, and the obstacles encountered. It should also supply additional information about the new national machinery, including a description of its mandate, an

indication of its position within the overall institutional structure and an overview of its staffing table and budgetary allocation.

12. Rather than setting out a strategic plan on gender equality, the State Concept took a theoretical approach to the issue and did not contain any explicit references to the Convention. According to the responses to the list of issues and questions (CEDAW/C/GEO/Q/3/Add.1), the Concept would serve as the policy framework for the Government’s future work on gender equality, but it addressed only a limited number of sectors. Consequently, steps should be taken to broaden its scope to include vulnerable groups, including women from ethnic minorities, rural women, internally displaced women and female heads of household. The Concept should also address the issues of violence against women, trafficking and gender-based stereotypes. Lastly, she enquired whether the State party intended to develop indicators of achievement and monitoring mechanisms for the National Plan of Action on Gender Equality.

13. **Ms. Makharashvili** (Georgia), responding to the questions put by Mr. Flinterman, confirmed that the Georgian Constitution took precedence over any other legislation adopted by the country, including international law. The Constitution, which was applicable to every citizen, prohibited all types of discrimination and did not, therefore, conflict with the provisions of the Convention. If a conflict did arise, however, the case would be referred to the Constitutional Court and Parliament would have to amend the Constitution accordingly. If necessary, constitutional amendments could also be proposed directly by the Government and approved by Parliament.

14. The absence of court cases invoking the Convention might be attributable to the fact that it was not well known in Georgia. Although a great deal of money had been spent on awareness-raising campaigns, they had not yielded significant results because the previous Government had not been fully committed to their implementation. She acknowledged the gap between de jure and de facto implementation of the Convention and other human rights instruments. However, the authorities were trying to strengthen the general legal framework in the area of gender equality by adopting additional legislation, such as the Law on the Elimination of Domestic Violence.

15. The National Gender Equality Strategy, which would be funded primarily from the national and regional budgets with support from donor organizations, comprised the State Concept on Gender Equality and the National Plan of Action. The latter, which detailed the objectives to be achieved, the actors involved and the resources allocated, would be adopted by the Government in the forthcoming six months. It consisted of a limited number of measures to be implemented within a two- or three-year period. The Advisory Council on Gender Equality would monitor the implementation of the Plan and propose any necessary amendments.

16. The Concept was not comprehensive: it included only those areas in which all stakeholders had been able to reach agreement. However, the Georgian Government had already shown its political will to address the issues of domestic violence and trafficking by enacting legislation to combat them, so additional measures under the Concept were not required. While the authorities certainly could do more to implement the provisions of the Convention and the Optional Protocol, the current Government had been in power for only two years and 80 per cent of the country's parliamentarians were newly elected. The previous Government had developed a wide range of action plans on the advancement of women but had not taken any responsibility for their implementation. The current administration preferred to concentrate on a smaller number of priority areas and ensure that the relevant measures were implemented successfully.

17. As evidenced by the development of the State Concept and the National Plan of Action, the current Administration had the political will to address gender issues in a holistic and participatory manner. In conjunction with International Women's Day (8 March), the Government had celebrated "Gender Equality Week", during which publicity campaigns had been launched and various events on the topic of gender equality had been organized. Furthermore, the Speaker of the Georgian Parliament had sponsored an award scheme to encourage employers to offer equal opportunities to women and men. However, to make further progress, the State party needed moral and technical support from the international community.

18. The staff working in the Office of the Ombudsman (or Public Defender) performed advisory and support functions, but since Georgia had only one Ombudsman, the Office had a limited capacity to deal

with the many complaints referred to it. Nevertheless, further attention must be devoted to the promotion of women's rights and, to that end, the Head of the Department of Gender Equality at the Ombudsman's Office had become a member of the Advisory Council on Gender Equality. The complaints referred to the Office generally related to specific violations of the Convention and often provided the inspiration for legislative amendments.

19. In recent years, very little had been done to improve the situation of internally displaced persons in Georgia. Although the national budget had increased sixfold, social security and pension benefits still amounted to only \$20 per person per month, and, while efforts were under way to initiate a far-reaching reform of the pension system, such a reform would take several years. In that context, it was impossible to give priority attention to women because both genders were facing the same difficulties. At present, the Government was focusing on preserving the nation's territorial integrity. In those circumstances, efforts to promote the advancement of women were of secondary importance.

20. She agreed with Ms. Tavares da Silva that women should not be viewed as a minority group and therefore acknowledged that it had been inappropriate to include women's rights in the plan of action on minorities. Upon her return to Georgia, she would take steps to ensure that the Advisory Council on Gender Equality participated in the development of the national strategy on internally displaced persons. While women from ethnic minorities were no more susceptible to domestic violence and other social ills than Georgian women, Islamic traditions tended to discriminate against Muslim women. However, the Government was committed to assisting all women, regardless of their ethnic or religious affiliation.

21. In 2005, members of the Advisory Council on Gender Equality had visited Sweden, where each Government minister took responsibility for gender issues for a six-month period. She would like to introduce a similar type of rotation mechanism in Georgia, to facilitate coordination and raise awareness across the board.

22. The Government's short-term objective was to extend the term of the Governmental Commission for Gender Equality for the duration of the term of the National Plan of Action. The Commission would be

composed of deputy ministers and all the ministries would be represented. In the past, the Commission had received most of its funding from United Nations organizations; it was hoped that in future the National Plan of Action would allocate budget lines for the Commission's programme of work. The Gender Equality Concept of Georgia referred to the articles of the Convention but did not provide for vulnerable groups such as internally displaced persons, victims of domestic violence and trafficking because specific laws had already been enacted in those areas. The Concept addressed the issue of gender stereotyping, but at the same time the Government would have to make a concerted effort to change attitudes. At the legislative level, the Government had not taken specific measures to increase the political participation of women, and it would be important to focus on increasing the participation of women at the party level, in leadership positions and elective organs. In relation to the benchmarks and indicators for laws on gender equality, the Government intended to bring the National Plan of Action into closer line with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

23. **Ms. Patten** said that the second and third periodic reports did not refer to temporary special measures, though the Gender Equality Concept mentioned special measures aimed at enhancing gender equality. Further information should be provided on the role of the national machinery in the implementation of that concept and the time frame envisaged. It should be clarified if those special measures corresponded with the definition of temporary special measures set out in article 4 of the Convention and if the Government had followed general recommendation No. 25, which provided States parties with guidance on implementing article 4 and which identified the participation of women in public life and women's access to employment and education as two areas that would benefit from the implementation of special measures. The reporting State should indicate whether special measures had been implemented in those two areas or if other areas had been targeted. Furthermore, it should be clarified whether the Gender Equality Concept had been formulated in response to the gender analysis of domestic legislation conducted by the Ministry of Justice, which had found that there were no legal provisions protecting women against discrimination. It would be interesting to know if it would be possible to establish a fully fledged ministry for gender equality or to amend the Constitution so that it included a more

comprehensive definition of discrimination and further provisions to protect women against discrimination.

24. **Ms. Shin** said that accurate gender-disaggregated data were an important tool for achieving gender equality, and more data should be provided on the status of women in Georgia. Further information was required on how the census had been conducted, on the data collection methodology used and on the training that had been given to the State Department of Statistics in relation to gender-disaggregated data. It should be clarified whether the Advisory Council on Gender Equality and the Governmental Commission for Gender Equality would continue to share the responsibility of preparing the National Plan of Action. In relation to violence against women, it was unclear why domestic violence remained a taboo subject, because legislation had already been enacted in that area. Furthermore, it was difficult to understand why the reporting State had stated that most domestic violence was carried out in small towns and villages because it was generally acknowledged that domestic violence occurred in all social groups and all geographical areas. It would be interesting to have more specific data on domestic violence, including on the number of women killed as a result of domestic violence. The reporting State should indicate whether the police forces had received training on how to respond to domestic violence incidents and if any shelters had been established to protect women victims. In relation to the violence committed against women as a result of trafficking, it would be useful to know if trafficking was viewed in the context of prostitution. In that connection, further information should be provided on the cooperation mechanisms that had been established with neighbouring countries and on any witness protection scheme that had been implemented.

25. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** said that further information was required on the measures that had been taken to instigate social and cultural change in relation to sex role stereotyping and prejudice under article 5 of the Convention. In particular, it should be clarified whether the Ministry of Education had ensured that new textbooks at the secondary school level gave due attention to gender issues and if authors of school textbooks had followed the guidelines that had been issued by the Ministry. Further details should be provided on other areas of action, including awareness-raising campaigns on women's rights and

violence against women, the distribution of tasks in public and private life and the role and responsibility of the media. The Committee would welcome further information on the effects of the increase in the number of women in key positions in the media, and it would be interesting to know whether the images of women in advertising campaigns had become less stereotypical. In its concluding comments in response to the initial report of Georgia, the Committee had recommended that comprehensive measures must be taken to eliminate stereotypes in textbooks, to sensitize teachers and carry out research on the history of women's roles in Georgia. It was unclear whether the Government had implemented those measures. In relation to internally displaced persons and refugees, financial resources alone would not improve the quality of their lives. Internally displaced persons faced serious violations of their human rights in the refugee camps, including rape and the threat of sexual violence, and it was important to address the gender-related concerns of those people in preparing a national strategy on internally displaced persons.

26. **Ms. Popescu** said that further information should be provided on the Law on the Elimination of Domestic Violence, including the implementation methodology, the government body responsible for monitoring implementation and the legal and medical services available to victims. It would be useful if the Government established its shelter for victims of domestic violence before the planned date of 2008. It would be interesting to learn more about the amendments and additions to the Administrative Procedural Code of Georgia, including the time frame for such amendments. Given that domestic violence was still considered a private matter, the reporting State should clarify the national machinery that had been implemented to change that mindset. Further information should be provided on the definition of marital rape in that Code and the relevant sanctions.

27. **Ms. Makharashvili** (Georgia) said that Gender Equality Concept of Georgia was the first national document to introduce special measures. However, the Concept had been adopted as recently as 26 July 2006 and a number of meetings had been scheduled for September 2006 to work on defining the temporary special measures. In relation to gender equality mechanisms, it was expected that a fully fledged ministry for gender equality and a standing committee in Parliament would exist within 10 to 15 years. The

special measures that would be taken to enhance the employment opportunities available to women and the participation of women in political life would be determined by the ministries, Parliament and NGOs. The government body responsible for implementing those measures, the timeline and the partners involved would also be defined.

28. It was true that domestic violence remained a taboo subject but there had been a public debate prior to the enactment of the Law on the Elimination of Domestic Violence. Domestic violence had been associated with physical violence and the law had extended the definition to include psychological and economic violence. In that connection, it would be necessary to carry out a public awareness campaign and it was clear that more data on domestic violence would be needed. There were data indicating the number of women killed in 2005 but no data specifying the number of victims of domestic violence. The only relevant data available in 2005 related to the 3,500 telephone calls that had been made to the police in regard to domestic disputes. The police force was receiving special training to qualify it to deal with domestic violence, and the Ministry of the Interior had drafted a protective order for police which would serve as an official document and provide useful data.

29. Data on domestic violence would be collected during the following year in preparation for the budget discussions of October 2007, and the 2008 budget would include budget lines for the services and shelters provided to victims of domestic violence. There were no special courts for domestic violence in Georgia, and domestic violence cases would be heard in the administrative courts because most of the cases would be initiated by the new protective order, which was an administrative act. Amendments to the Administrative Procedural Code of Georgia had been prepared at the same time as the enactment of the Law on the Elimination of Domestic Violence. Marital rape was the most difficult form of domestic violence to address and remained a taboo subject. While most cases of child abuse were taken to court, many women were reluctant to report marital rape. The Government had organized television and radio programmes to raise awareness about marital rape and to attempt to change the stereotypes and misconceptions.

30. The Law on Combating Human Trafficking was not specifically linked to prostitution; it made no distinction as to the purpose of trafficking or the age or

gender of the victims. The Ministry of the Interior and the Prosecutor General's Office were working with neighbouring countries on the issue, because, for the most part, trafficking in Georgia was a matter of transit trafficking from and to other countries. Training of the police had been enhanced, with funding and support from the United States Government, and good statistical data were being collected on the crime of trafficking.

31. Witness prosecution was the biggest problem in relation not only to trafficking but to all criminal proceedings. Georgia was a small country, with a population of only 4 million, and the Government was currently working, at the conceptual level, on a strategy that would eventually take the form of an agreement with other countries within the Commonwealth of Independent States to cooperate on hiding witnesses in each other's territory.

32. Turning to Ms. Tavares da Silva's questions on gender equality in education, she explained that Georgia's entire education system, from elementary school to university, was undergoing drastic and painful reforms, against considerable resistance from the universities and the National Academy of Sciences. It was the first time since the independence of Georgia in the early 1990s that real education reform had been launched, and therefore to have obtained political support at the current stage for the introduction of gender awareness into elementary school textbooks was already a major accomplishment. It was a huge task, but she was confident that as educational reform moved through the system, it would be possible to work more actively on breaking gender stereotypes at every level of education.

33. With regard to the remarks about the role of the media, she had to say frankly that the media were not interested in the topic of gender equality. Even to interest the media in the issue of domestic violence had been very difficult; in the end, getting their attention had proved possible only through the unwitting help of some male parliamentarians whose vocal opposition to the new law had awakened an appetite for scandal. By the time of the second and third hearing of the bill, however, it had once again proved impossible to induce journalists to file a report. The lack of media interest was truly disappointing, but the Government would continue its public awareness campaigns and its paid commercials on radio and television, with a view to

awakening public interest in issues relating to women's rights.

34. As to the question of altering stereotypes, she fully understood the importance of a change in mentality, but as people grew older, such a transformation became increasingly more difficult. If persons aged 50 believed that domestic violence was a normal way of life, it was almost impossible to persuade them to change their mind. It was therefore necessary to work with the younger generations, introducing the concept of gender equality to schoolchildren and continuing its study with students. She was pleased to report that at the Tbilisi State University there were elective lectures on gender equality, and that students did take such classes.

35. On the question of sociostructural change, she said that too many unfamiliar terms could weaken a bill's chances of passing. Consequently, the actual term "sociostructural change" had been removed, but the idea was still there in different words.

36. As to issues involving internally displaced persons and women's rights, she said that she was not very involved in or informed about such matters, but that as soon as the national action plan on them moved forward, she would supply relevant documentation to the Committee.

37. **Ms. Popescu** sought clarification about the difference between two existing institutions that had been described. One appeared to be mainly a parliamentary body, the other primarily a governmental one, but both of them included government representatives, parliamentarians and NGOs. To monitor implementation of the national plan, Georgia needed a body with accountability, authority and visibility: in other words, it required permanent machinery that had its own staffing.

38. She sought clarification regarding the status of the Concept. Did it have legal standing, providing a legal basis for gender equality? It was very important for such a legal basis to provide a holistic approach to gender issues and to mainstreaming of a gender perspective throughout policies and institutions.

39. **Ms. Dairiam** expressed interest in the answers to those two questions, adding that if the Gender Equality Advisory Council was a parliamentary body, with a legal basis, then it would remain in existence regardless of who was in Parliament.

40. **Ms. Makharashvili** (Georgia) explained that both the Council and the Commission had legal standing. Originally, consideration had been given to the possibility of creating a parliamentary committee, but that option would not have been realistic, especially in 2004, and the option had been abandoned in favour of a commission, initially envisaged as reporting to the prime minister, then to a deputy minister instead. However, commissions were temporary bodies, usually with a maximum life of six months. A longer-term solution was to establish an advisory council under the direction of the Speaker of Parliament, who was empowered to set up groups to examine and give guidance on specific issues. Such groups depended almost 100 per cent on the goodwill of the Speaker and on her interest in the issues. If the Parliament or the Speaker changed, then the Gender Equality Advisory Council would not necessarily continue in existence.

41. Only one person served on both the Council and the Commission, namely herself. Her role was to ensure that the Council and the Commission remained complementary to each other and did not do anything contradictory. Otherwise, representation of the Government, the Parliament and the NGOs was different on the two bodies.

42. The term of the Commission had already expired. However, it had prepared a preliminary draft of the national action plan for the Government's review, and with the support of Parliament it was working with the Prime Minister's office on having its term extended, so that it could continue its legislative effort. It would be a useful medium for expediting specific amendments to the law.

43. The Concept was a legal document, but it was not a law, and its provisions were not binding. Under the legal system of Georgia, Parliament could lay out the main directions for tackling a specific issue in a concept paper. It had been decided to take that approach in respect of gender equality in order to make the concept familiar and to promote gender equality as a policy of the country. Parliament had adopted only two concept papers, one on the national security strategy and one on gender equality. The consequence of having a concept paper was that the Government was mandated by a legal document, and not merely by political will, to establish a national action plan. Additionally, especially in the light of the general lack of interest in gender equality, having a concept paper

enabled progress to be made in small steps, seeking one small concession at a time, rather than asking for too much and being disappointed.

Articles 7 to 9

44. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** noted that Georgia had undergone major political changes, particularly after November 2003. It was difficult to have a clear picture of the country owing to the lack of updated information in the report, the responses and the oral presentations. In particular, the situation with respect to women's political participation was not evident, although it did seem clear that women were underrepresented in politics, notably at the lower levels. Paragraph 84 of the report referred to the successes of a few individual women. They were laudable, but what interested the Committee was not only the advancement of a few women to posts of importance but also, and above all, the creation of conditions that would enable women from all segments of the population, at all levels, to be elected or appointed to public office. It was a matter not only of creating a theoretical legal right to equality of opportunity but also of ensuring that that right could be exercised in practice. What had been done at the district and community levels to increase the numbers of female candidacies in the elections? Success in that endeavour depended on the willingness of women to stand and of voters to vote for them or, in the case of appointment to public office, the readiness of senior office-holders to consider women for positions under them. It was not simply a matter of culture.

45. She urged that future reports should include statistics covering women from the urban and rural areas and from the autonomous regions, as well as from all ethnic minorities.

46. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** drew attention to paragraph 84 of the report, which stated that an initiative to reserve 25 per cent of political candidacies for women had received significant though not sufficient support (68 out of 235 MPs). She wished to know what were the developments in that regard.

47. In the list of responses, paragraph 10 noted that one of the six major goals identified by the Government election plan for gender equality was promoting full and equal participation of women at all levels of decision-making. She asked how that goal was going to be achieved and what were the reasons

for the resistance to it. Were quotas regarded as a relic of the former Soviet system?

48. She found it curious that paragraph 87 of the report should state that women were also adequately represented in decision-making positions. When 123 of 339 diplomats were women, a rate of 36 per cent. That did not seem to her to be adequate or balanced representation. Given that women did not advance in other areas, such as the judiciary, she asked why they were not equally successful in the diplomatic service or in political life. She also found it curious that the report should state (para. 83) that the Ministry gave particular consideration to participation of women in the process of negotiations, while only three paragraphs later it should say that women were not actively involved in preparation and the process of negotiations. She asked how the participation of women could be a particular consideration when they were not, in fact, involved.

49. **Ms. Makharashvili** (Georgia), responding to the questions of Ms. Arocha Domínguez and Ms. Tavares da Silva, recalled the failure in 2002 of the first legal attempt to introduce election quotas for women in Georgia. She could not share the optimism expressed in the last sentence of paragraph 84 of the report. On the contrary, the issue of quotas was dead; there would not now be a single parliamentarian who would dare speak in their favour. Instead of following the quota approach, she had been working very hard with the political parties to establish or strengthen the women's organizations within them. It was her aim to encourage women within the party system to ask for promotions, to seek candidacies, to be stronger, to know that they were supported. That would mean a fight. Georgian women had not had to fight for the right to vote; the Soviet Union had simply given it to them. It might have been true that women were active in politics only because of quotas, but, currently merit was the sole criterion for female candidates, though not necessarily for male candidates.

50. With regard to Ms. Tavares da Silva's reference to a rate of 36 per cent of women in decision-making positions, she recalled that when consideration had first been given to the introduction of quotas, the figure called for, primarily by NGOs, had been 30 per cent. That had become an unofficial benchmark, and in many cases an organization, party or Government structure would express pride if it had reached or exceeded 30 per cent. Meanwhile, of course, those

seeking gender equality wanted 50 per cent and were consequently meeting resistance.

51. There had been no progress in the participation of women in negotiation processes. Political negotiations tended to be at a very high level, with perhaps the most junior person at the negotiating table being a minister. There was a long way to go before women would achieve anything like equal representation.

52. Women's lack of desire to participate in politics did have a cultural basis: the stereotype that politics was a male preserve was still deeply rooted, especially in rural areas. There had also been cases in which male candidates had persuaded the husband of a female candidate to pressure her to withdraw her candidacy, even though she had had a good chance of winning. Needless to say, the woman should not have agreed. Accordingly, there was much work to be done to increase public awareness and publicize women's achievements, so that incentive and motivation would drive other women to participate, at least at the local level, in their community's decision-making.

53. The rise of women in the political arena had been slow, but steady. There had been nine female parliamentarians in 1995 and 17 in 1999, and there were currently 23, including the Speaker and the leader of the majority. Two out of 13 parliamentary committees were chaired by women. Proportionally, there were more women in high positions in the Parliament than men, but the absolute numbers remained too low. Furthermore in its first month in office the current Parliament had adopted amendments to the Constitution which in 2008 would reduce the size of Parliament from its present 235 members to 150. Some optimists thought that the number of female parliamentarians would increase in consequence; her personal suspicion was that it would decrease.

54. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** agreed that quotas had negative connotations and suggested that there were other formulations that could be used to avoid those unfortunate overtones: minimum percentage of both sexes, or balanced participation, or attainment of a particular threshold. She urged Georgia not to abandon the search for positive measures.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.