



**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 524th meeting

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Chairperson: Ms. Abaka

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

(continued) (CEDAW/C/GIN/1)

Initial report of Guinea (continued)
(CEDAW/C/GIN/1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of Guinea resumed their places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Aribot** (Guinea), said that the delegation would provide the answers to Committee members' questions in four thematic areas: health, education, legal matters and institutional matters.

3. **Ms. Camara** (Guinea), replying to Committee members' questions concerning health, cited statistical evidence of improvements in women's and children's health as a result of the Government's primary health-care strategy based on the Bamako Initiative. According to the 1999 census and health survey, in the period between 1996 and 1999, the maternal mortality rate had dropped from 900 deaths per 100,000 live births to 528 deaths per 100,000 live births, the infant mortality rate had gone from 137 per 1,000 to 98 per 1,000, and the infant and child mortality rate, from 232 per 1,000 to 172 per 1,000. Life expectancy at birth had risen from 52 years in 1996 to 54 years in 1999, the overall fertility rate had dropped from 5.7 children in 1996 to 5.6 in 1999 and the gross birth rate, from 41 per 1,000 in 1996 to 36.9 per 1,000 in 1999. From 1996 to 1999, the number of assisted births had risen from 22 per cent to 35 per cent, prenatal examinations from 58 per cent to 71 per cent, the use of family planning services from 4 per cent to 11 per cent and the coverage of immunization against tetanus for pregnant women and women of child-bearing age, from 43 per cent to 48 per cent. The neonatal mortality rate had decreased from 51 per 1,000 to 48 per 1,000. All preventive treatment was administered to women and children free of charge. Refugee and displaced women throughout the country enjoyed the same health benefits as female residents in both health units and refugee camps. As for genital mutilation, in a 1998 survey conducted by the non-governmental organization *Coordination sur les pratiques traditionnelles affectant la santé des femmes et des*

enfants (CPTAFE), 96.4 per cent of women questioned said that they had been subjected to genital mutilation, usually in their tenth year. The operation was performed on all women without distinction as to religion.

4. The Statistics Bureau within the Ministry of Health compiled and analysed data from the various services within the Ministry and published an annual yearbook, an annual report, and a quarterly health bulletin. It formed part of a network of government ministry statistical services coordinated by the National Department of Statistics and Demography under the Secretary of State for Planning.

5. The national laws authorized abortion for medical reasons only, for example in cases of premature pregnancy or illness. The abortion rate had been estimated at 20 per cent in a survey taken by a non-governmental organization in Conakry. Efforts to reduce clandestine abortions were being made by Guinea's maternal and child health programme and by national and non-governmental organizations specializing in reproductive health. Family planning services had been expanded with the support of non-governmental organizations.

6. CPTAFE also formed part of an inter-African committee which worked closely with the United Nations. It had elaborated a plan of action for the period 2000-2002 to combat female genital mutilation in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs, Promotion of Women and Childhood, and, as a result of its large-scale awareness-building campaign, practitioners of female genital mutilation in Kouroussa, Kérouané and Conakry had voluntarily surrendered their instruments. That process was continuing throughout the country. In addition, projects were being implemented in cooperation with the World Bank and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to retrain practitioners of female genital mutilation for other jobs. The National Assembly had adopted legislation in July 2000 which criminalized female genital mutilation and entitled members of civil society to institute proceeding against its practitioners. Awareness-building programmes on female genital mutilation were aimed chiefly at the media, law enforcement officers, decision-makers, opinion makers, health workers and victims. Government-owned and private media spread the message in all the national languages of Guinea.

Programmes to counter discriminatory practices were carried out mainly by non-governmental organizations.

7. Under article 12 of the Convention, the Government had improved rural women's access to health services through the strengthening of the national primary health-care programmes (there were currently 385 local, regional and national health centres in Guinea. It had launched a safe motherhood programme, a programme to control sexually transmitted diseases and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and a reproductive health project with a family planning component. Gradually, mutual insurance companies which covered pregnancy- and childbirth-related deaths were being established for rural women.

8. She assured Committee members that campaigns to distribute condoms were being conducted by public and private health units and non-governmental organizations. The distribution of condoms was bolstered by a large-scale information campaign, using the media and other channels of communication. The right to health was guaranteed by the Constitution, and the Government was implementing health programmes for all citizens, particularly for women and children, society's most vulnerable groups. A number of non-governmental organizations, including CPTAFE, were training health workers to deal with violence against women and children. Women were also becoming more aware of their rights: many victims knew enough to obtain court papers before seeking a medical certificate from a hospital. With support from non-governmental organizations and the National Programme for the Control of Sexually Transmitted Diseases and AIDS, training programmes were being offered to prostitutes in certain towns and refugee centres with a view to improving their access to condoms and health services. Special efforts were being made to identify brothels and major highways, bars, hotels and other places frequented by prostitutes.

9. Awareness-building programmes for girls dealing with female genital mutilation, sexuality and contraceptive methods included school campaigns (for example, CPTAFE had trained selected groups of students to go out and inform other students); instruction modules; and campaigns organized by non-governmental organizations, including a summer vacation programme in which information on female genital mutilation, AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases, contraceptive methods and family life was

interwoven with leisure activities. Insufficient information on contraceptive methods, insufficient family planning services, as well as age-old customs, illiteracy and insufficient qualified personnel were accountable for resistance to family planning in Guinea. Reproductive health programmes and non-governmental organizations were taking measures to improve the availability of family planning services. Adolescents who feared meeting their parents at health centres could consult such services in the schools.

10. Under the medium-term plan for socio-economic development, the budget of the Ministry of Health had risen sharply — from 2.16 per cent in 1995 to 6 per cent in 2001 — and programmes for women and children had been accorded priority. A large percentage of the resources obtained as a result of debt forgiveness or rescheduling under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries' Debt Initiative would be allocated to the health and education sectors. Since 1984, the Government had authorized the privatization of certain medical and pharmaceutical sectors as a complement to public-sector services. Perhaps development partners could give further consideration to Guinea's financing shortfalls in the health sector.

11. A training and personnel deployment plan had been elaborated in order to remedy the severe shortage of health workers, particularly midwives, in the rural areas. As for cost recovery, while a nominal one-time fee had been charged in implementing the Bamako Initiative, in order to cover medicines and medical equipment, costs were subsidized mainly by the Government or by mutual insurance companies, including those specializing in pregnancy-related risks in the rural areas. Traditional medicine was valued in the overall health system in Guinea. Traditional practitioners participated in awareness-building campaigns on major health problems, and research was being carried out on medicinal plants and their effectiveness. Denial of sexual relations to menopausal women was considered a form of violence against women. In that connection, behaviour modification campaigns were being conducted by CPTAFE. Non-governmental organizations were attempting to heighten awareness that infertility was also a male problem.

12. Resources for the national health development plan for the period 2001-2010 would be mobilized within the framework of Guinea's national poverty reduction strategy. The plan emphasized the

development of reproductive health services and promoted family planning and the prevention and control of AIDS.

13. **Ms. Kourouma** (Guinea), replying to Committee members' questions concerning education, said that, while the school curricula did not explicitly embody the Convention and its principles, it was disseminated in courses offered by various entities of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Promotion of Women and Childhood and by national and international non-governmental organizations. In Guinea's eight administrative regions, modern and traditional communicators and others had been trained to promote the Convention. As to whether the Government drew on documents prepared by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to promote human rights education, she said that the Ministry of Pre-university and Civic Education, in cooperation with the Guinean Red Cross, had incorporated human rights education in primary and secondary school curricula. Certain schools in the capital and throughout the country had been targeted to participate in the pilot programme. In August, teacher workshops would be conducted with the aim of replicating the experiment on a larger scale. A human rights dimension had also been added to the curricula of teachers' training institutes.

14. The Committee had requested further information concerning the funds allocated to women's education, whether education was free and compulsory, and how resources were used at all levels in the education system to encourage poor families to keep their children in the system. Education in Guinea had been compulsory since the country became independent in 1958 and had always been free in the public sector. However, there were still problems for parents, who had to supply school stationery and uniforms and cover the cost of transporting their children to school. Private educational systems had started to spring up in 1984 and continued to grow. State spending on education had gone from 25.8 per cent of the budget in 1998 to 29.9 per cent in 2000. Under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries' Debt Initiative, the funds which Guinea recovered would be reinvested in the education and health sectors.

15. The Committee had enquired whether a system of quotas and scholarships for girls would be set up, whether all those with baccalaureates were admitted to university and what measures had been adopted to

encourage girls to opt for technological courses. Obtaining both parts of the baccalaureate did not automatically provide access to higher education in Guinea. Rather, girls and boys with baccalaureates had to pass a competitive examination for the places available, with positive discrimination for equally qualified girls. The number of places for girls at university had risen from 13 per cent in 1998 to over 45 per cent in 2000, with particular emphasis on the technological educational tracks. Girls were encouraged into scientific and technological careers by being made aware of them through conferences and debates in schools. She displayed a poster from the campaign to combat girls' preconceptions that they were incapable of such careers which showed a girl, encouraged by the teacher, writing in front of the class the correct answer to a sum which her male counterpart was incapable of completing. Scholarships had been made available for girls through programmes to women in science and technology, to improve pass rates in national examinations, to support girls who were candidates for national examinations, and through the initiative on education for democracy and development. Also, a committee had been established to make the case for women's scientific and technological education.

16. The Committee had asked what measures had been taken to encourage girls to attend school, to combat stereotypes and to make teachers aware of the need for an approach based on equality between the sexes. Education for girls and training for women had high priority in Guinea. Parity committees had been set up within the three ministerial departments responsible for education. A multisectoral approach and a partnership had been established between the public and private sectors and civil society to benefit girls and women, with the slogan that education for girls in Guinea was everybody's business, meaning that everyone had to be involved in the process. Consciousness-raising campaigns were being intensified using all the communications media and including interpersonal communication. A programme of functional literacy for women had been set up among women's groups in the 10 or so districts (*préfectures*) where 30 per cent or less of women had attended school. She noted in that connection that there were major regional disparities in those rates within the country. The 110 "second-chance school" centres in 29 out of 33 districts for children, with or without previous school education, between the ages of 10 and

16 was being increased and the way they operated was being improved; of the more than 5,000 students they served, almost all were girls. The Women's Self-Advancement Centres in Conakry were being renovated and job centres were being built in each of the capital's five communes. There was also a programme for girl mothers and adolescent peddlers working to support their families which provided literacy courses, apprenticeships and training in child-care strategies. Discriminatory stereotypes were being eliminated from curricula and textbooks by the national pedagogical Institute and the cleaned-up textbooks were being reprinted. Teachers were being trained on gender issues to change their behaviour so that they treated girls and boys equally in class by providing them with a system of dos and don'ts and a veritable code of conduct for their interactions with girls.

17. A number of positive discrimination measures were in place. There were excellence prizes for girls allowed to sit national exams and incentive prizes for families that were most assiduous in sending their girls to school; such prizes for the most part involved gifts of stationery, satchels and textbooks for the girls. In 1998, 55,000 girls had benefited from such incentives in the 17 districts where school attendance rates were lowest. There were catch-up courses for girls with low educational levels, a tutoring system and a national fund to support girls' education which was fed by voluntary contributions from the public and private sectors, non-governmental organizations and people of good will. New school infrastructure was being built, with separate latrines for girls and boys, and piped water supplies. Between 1998 and 2000, 3,500 classrooms had been added. There was now a fair distribution between boys and girls of tasks such as sweeping out classrooms and playgrounds: teachers had been trained in that regard, and knew that they were obliged to share out such tasks equally, and there was a poster campaign to remind them.

18. The Committee had asked how the Government worked with the media to alter the image of women and what it had done to enlist the media's assistance in achieving the advancement of women. The Government worked closely with both public and private media, with a view to ensuring that gender issues were taken into consideration in sectoral development policies and programmes and that all levels of society would observe and implement women's fundamental rights. On the local level, rural

radio stations, broadcasting in the local languages, were playing a very important role in all aspects of the advancement of women. Media professionals were regularly trained in suitable content for the new programmes for the advancement of women which they were making and in which they were responsible for getting the message concerning desired objectives, actions and impacts across to their target audiences. Under the Gender and Development Framework Programme, a communications expert had been recruited who acted as the interface between the Ministry of Social Affairs, Promotion of Women and Childhood and the media.

19. The Committee had enquired what role the non-governmental organizations were playing in connection with the media. Domestic and international non-governmental organizations were privileged and effective partners of Government in that field. The Government was developing a multisectoral approach not only among its own departments but also with the non-governmental organizations. One such organization was in the forefront in making the case for education for girls and women. Another had set up a "media group" which, after suitable training on gender issues, was conducting consciousness-raising activities, and making the case for girls to be in school, at the community level. A third took part in consciousness-raising activities in schools. Many others were contributing within their own areas to encourage school attendance by girls, literacy among women and the emergence of gender consciousness in Guinea. Also, there were educational "promoters", chosen from among local community leaders, who went door-to-door to raise gender consciousness among their people. Indeed, as part of the partnership between Government and the non-governmental organizations, the Ministry for Social Affairs, Promotion of Women and Childhood had held a workshop at which it had elaborated an integrated communication strategy for girls' education which identified the main communication obstacles and ways to overcome them in order to achieve high rates of school attendance by girls and to keep them in education until they succeeded at all levels.

20. The Committee had asked about specific programmes to improve girls' education and raise female literacy rates, and about what results had been achieved. In addition to the measures she had already mentioned, there were a number of activities targeting girls' education, including a project designed to

promote school attendance by girls and a two-phase education reform programme which involved quantitative and qualitative improvements with particular emphasis on schooling for girls. Also, the reduction in female illiteracy by over a percentage point to 78.14 per cent between 1998 and 2000 could be attributed to the new trends in national policy in that regard and relevant programmes which attracted women to literacy by meeting the real needs which they had expressed in the areas of health, nutrition, education and the environment, together with better literacy classes, targeting of the poorest women — rural women — and the involvement of civil society. School attendance rates for girls had risen from just over 17 per cent in 1990 to over 44 per cent in 2000.

21. Despite all the efforts of the Government, its development partners, the communities and the non-governmental organizations, however, shortcomings in schooling for girls and literacy for women persisted. To rectify them, a 12-year programme beginning in 2001 would cover all phases from pre-school to tertiary education with the aim of achieving universal primary school education by 2007, with a further three years for consolidation and stabilization; developing literacy programmes, particularly for adults; improving teaching quality; developing decentralized management capabilities; developing technical and vocational training; and improving the quality and relevance of tertiary education and scientific research while giving girls priority with a view to reducing the disparities between the sexes. That programme also laid special emphasis on improving the quality of education for girls and on reducing the number of girls repeating classes or dropping out of them.

22. The Committee had asked about girls at school who became pregnant and school health facilities. In 1989 the Government had introduced a new policy requiring that girls who became pregnant instead of being expelled, should be granted academic leave until after the birth. The impact of the change was shown by the fact that nearly 70 per cent of such girls came back into the school system. A schools health programme had been developed which operated within the schools to provide free medicines, micronutrients and antiparasitic agents to pupils in order to keep them in school. It had been shown that the children learned much better as a result of the programme.

23. As to education for parents, she informed the Committee that a network of associations of parents of

schoolchildren and friends of the school had been set up to work closely with schools to ensure that children in general and girls in particular were properly taken in hand. The associations operated on the national, regional, district and local levels right down to the level of individual schools. A programme of education for parents had been developed by the national pedagogical research Institute working together with the Ministry of Social Affairs, Promotion of Women and Childhood and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) with the emphasis on making parents aware of the need to pay special attention to their children's education and health.

24. The Committee had asked about the objectives and priorities of the panel established on 31 December 1999 to promote girls' access to higher education, particularly in the scientific and technological areas, with a view to reducing the disparity between the sexes. The panel had organized consciousness-raising activities both in schools and universities and for community leaders, girls, women, civil society and development partners, in the form of conferences/debates, round tables, and AIDS awareness groups.

25. The Committee had asked what relationships there were between the Ministry of Social Affairs, Promotion of Women and Childhood and the ministries responsible for education. The Ministry had very close links with the three ministries responsible for education: indeed, it had focal points within each of them. With the Ministry of Pre-University Education and Civics Education, it was responsible for promoting early childhood facilities, the "Development of Infants" aspect of the 12-year "Education for All" programme, which emphasized pre-school education, the enrolment of girls in school and their continued attendance, the establishment of excellence and incentive prizes for girls and their families, literacy for women, women's groups, support centres for women's self-advancement, and jobs centres. With the Ministry of Technological Education and Vocational Training, it cooperated in directing girls towards the technological and scientific education tracks and keeping them there, and in promoting training at the support centres for women's self-advancement and jobs centres. With the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, it monitored girls who had embarked on higher-education studies.

26. In conclusion, she informed the Committee that 21 June had been designated “National Girls’ Day” in Guinea, and was celebrated not only nationally but locally, down to the level of individual villages

27. **Mr. Traoré** (Guinea), replying to Committee members’ questions on legal matters, said that there was no multiple legal system in Guinea, combining Islamic and customary law on the one hand and positive law on the other: positive, judicial law was the only system. Customary law in fact referred to the colonial system, which had set up a system of judicial law for French citizens and customary law for the Guineans. That dual system had been abolished in 1957, a year before the country became independent. The Constitutions of 1958, 1968 and 1998 had reaffirmed that the Republic of Guinea was a secular State. The Committee having asked whether there were courts for family matters and what legislation they were based on, he confirmed that there were civil courts whose jurisdictions were based on the Civil Code, the Social Security Code and so on. As to the difference between what was illegal and what was accepted as traditional or customary, he stated that the legality of a measure was assessed with reference to positive law, not custom.

28. The status of childless widows was governed by four articles of the Civil Code, which upheld the rights of those widows and protected them from harm. The legislature had adopted those provisions because it was aware that, in some families, after the husband’s death the childless widow would receive practically nothing.

29. Much of Guinea’s domestic law predated the Convention and was being progressively brought into line with it. The intention was to amend the various Codes, so that no contradictions would remain. Current instances of discrimination against women in the provisions of the Civil Code on marriage and nationality were of great concern to the Guinean legislature and were currently under review by the National Assembly and the Government.

30. Concerning polygamy, which was prohibited by law (under article 315 of the Civil Code) but nevertheless practised, he replied that the practice was traditional, that exceptions were permitted under the Civil Code and that the women victims rarely went to court, fearing that they would lose their spouse, and also because they were subjected to socio-cultural pressure. The problem was worst in rural areas.

Measures to combat polygamy included consciousness-raising about the issues involved and publicity campaigns to explain the provisions of the Civil Code concerning marriage. Indeed, many of the provisions of the Code which advanced the status of women were not generally known. Accordingly, they too were the subject of publicity campaigns and were being translated into the local languages. Non-governmental organizations, civil society and the Government were all involved in the process.

31. Patriarchal laws had not been amended because patriarchy survived in Guinea for sociological reasons. However, quite remarkable developments in case law were gradually redressing the balance between the spouses, transforming “paternal” authority into “parental”.

32. The contradiction between the constitutional, de jure safeguards and the de facto situation of women existed because no situation could be remedied until it was brought before a court and seen to exist in legal terms. Many women had their rights violated, but the courts could do nothing unless those violations were brought before them for evaluation and punishment.

33. The only judicial forum for recourse against anticonstitutional laws was the Supreme Court, where cases could be brought by individuals or by the executive or legislative branch of Government. As to the feasibility of a plan of action for judicial reform to eliminate discriminatory provisions, he said that the only avenue was through legislative reform. On the issue of primacy of international law, article 79 of Guinea’s Constitution stated that international law took precedence over domestic law. It was in that spirit that efforts were being made to harmonize domestic legislation with international law.

34. There had been a question about the role played by the family council in matters of inheritance. The council was a consultative body, composed of family members, and its decisions, whether or not arrived at by consensus, were not binding on the judge, who evaluated them for their legality.

35. Legal aid centres, created for the promotion and protection of women’s rights, were places where women could go for discussion, advice and guidance, for example as to the appropriate jurisdiction for their problems. There were already five such centres operating experimentally in Conakry, and the

Government intended to expand the network soon throughout the country.

36. No amendment to reflect the Convention was currently envisaged to the Constitution, which was consistent with the Convention save for the definition of gender discrimination. As for revising the Civil Code's provisions on inheritance and marriage inherited from the Napoleonic Code, some colonial-era provisions had already been abolished in 1959 and since the Civil Code had been adopted in 1963 it had undergone three revisions. As part of the continuing dynamic of law reform, the Government had drawn up a draft Code of Personal Status and Family Law that was in the process of adoption by the National Assembly.

37. Responding to various queries concerning marriage, he said that a person contracting a polygamous marriage, or the government official conducting the ceremony, could be fined and imprisoned for from 5 to 19 years. There had been some prosecutions for polygamy, but few compared with the actual number of such marriages. Wives were reluctant to take action for fear of losing their husbands or being blamed by the family. However, numerous public discussions of the issue had successfully led to reform proposals in the draft Code of Personal Status and Family Law. There were no provisions criminalizing sororate or levirate marriage. To combat early and forced marriage, the Civil Code prohibited girls under 17 from marrying and specified that marriage had to be a consensual contract (article 281) freely consented to, as witnessed by the officiating authority (art. 382). Efforts were being made to heighten awareness of those provisions. Under Guinea's Constitution, which guaranteed secularism, marriages could not be forbidden on religious grounds.

38. As for female genital mutilation, article 305 of the Penal Code defined the ablation or mutilation of the genitals, whether in males or females, as castration, a crime punishable by life imprisonment or, if the mutilated individual died within 40 days, by capital punishment. When courts learned of such practices, even through anonymous reports, they systematically prosecuted the perpetrators, but in practice the victims of genital mutilation remained silent out of concern for the family's honour. More broadly, several plans of action to combat violence against women had been drawn up and some were already being carried out.

39. To promote women's rights and educate women, opinion leaders, young people and children about existing national, regional and international legal instruments, information campaigns were organized throughout the country not only by the Government but by civil society. Women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs), for example, had issued pamphlets, published training manuals and provided facilitators for discussion groups.

40. While there was no discrimination against women when it came to participation in political decision-making, a number of remedial measures were being applied to raise their low level of involvement. NGOs and civil society had carried out campaigns for a national identity card for women, brought discussants together at seminars and round tables, published pamphlets on marriage, divorce and inheritance, and issued guides for paralegals. Government officials had translated the "equality passport" into the eight national languages and distributed it widely, along with Guinea's various reports to CEDAW, had established a national observatory for women's rights under the aegis of the National Assembly, and had organized various information and advocacy sessions on the Convention for political, administrative, religious and other leaders.

41. A National Statistical Directorate was responsible for the collection and disaggregation of all data by sex. Under article 74 of the Civil Code children born abroad to a Guinean mother could choose their nationality on reaching their majority; the age of penal majority was 18 years and that of civil majority 21 years. As to women's involvement in drawing up the draft Code of Personal Status and Family Law, he said that many women from various quarters had participated in the drafting of the Code under the aegis of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Promotion of Women and Childhood.

42. **Ms. Aribot** (Guinea), replying to Committee members' questions on institutional matters, said that Guinea's report to CEDAW had been prepared with the help of a consultant provided, at the Ministry's request, by a committee concerned with the elimination of violence against women. A two-week workshop had brought together representatives of the Ministry and other ministerial departments, numerous non-governmental organizations including professional legal and medical women's associations, the five trades unions, the media, and United Nations agencies and

other development partners. The report was based on their cross-cutting discussions on the legislative, judicial, regulatory and other measures required to bring about gender equality.

43. The advancement of women necessarily involved a number of socio-economic sectors and government departments. Every such department had a high-ranking focal point on women to oversee interministerial coordination and policy. National policy on the advancement of women was implemented at three levels: that of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Promotion of Women and Childhood and its decentralized services; that of the various sectors with the help of focal points; and that of women's self-help and other organizations. As part of grass-roots implementation, given the important links of certain practices with Islamic traditions, it was vital to explain the policy to party and religious leaders as well. The establishment of the Ministry was indicative of the priority which the Government attached to sex equality, as were the creation of the Guinean Association of Women Leaders and its projected Network of Women in Politics, the Law and Women's Citizenship project, and the involvement of many grass-roots women's organizations.

44. She undertook, when reporting back to the Government, to convey CEDAW's recommendations and comments, including those on the low level of legal recourse against polygamy and genital mutilation. Non-governmental organizations would be asked to intervene as civil parties in such cases.

45. The Gender and Development Framework Programme was an instrument designed to implement national policy on the advancement of women. It had the five main elements described in the report in the section on article III (3.3). The Ministry maintained its own databases on women and children that were updated regularly in coordination with the National Department of Statistics and Demography.

46. A question had been asked about funding of programmes for the advancement of women and about the employment of women. The Ministry itself had financed five programmes and projects for women at a total cost of GF 5.4 billion between 1998 and 2001. Women working in the civil service had earned salaries totalling GF 1,900,384,000 in 1999 and GF 1,900,942,000 in 2000. The Fund for Support to Women's Economic Activities (FAAEF), a poverty-

reduction project financed by the Government and the African Development Fund, had GF 4 billion available to it. "Yètè mali" (self-help), a savings and credit network which had been in existence for three years, had disbursed GF 149 million to 1,379 women.

47. The Ministry of Social Affairs, Promotion of Women and Childhood was responsible for ensuring that all relevant legislation contained gender-specific provisions. Focal points had been created in the context of the Gender and Development Framework Programme, and sectoral policies were being amended to include a gender perspective. A national observatory for gender issues would be created in the near future. A United Nations-sponsored community re-insertion programme had been created, with a budget of GF 2 million, to facilitate the reintegration in their home communities of women and girls with disabilities. That programme included information and training for the family, awareness-raising in the community and financial support to assist the disabled in finding an income-generating occupation. In the past such persons had been virtual second-class citizens, reduced to begging, often in the streets of the capital. She also noted the existence of a national and two regional orthopaedic centres, an institute for blind young people, a school for deaf/mutes and a school for blind children. In order to increase women's role in decision-making, a survey had been made in 2000 of the current situation of women in the public, private and political spheres, the results of which would be taken into account in creating a national observatory on gender issues. In addition, a working group on gender and equity had been created in the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, an association of women graduates had been organized and a highly-effective lobbying group of women ministers and parliamentarians was also an active participant in efforts to resolve the conflict situation in the region.

48. Improvement of the situation of rural women was an important component of the Government's agriculture development policy, which was highly decentralized and currently being implemented nationwide. As a result, the proportion of women involved in information and awareness programmes had increased from 2 per cent in 1997 to 28 per cent in 1999, 25,470 members were receiving support in 749 groupings and 153,673 women were being helped through contact groups. Some organizations were headed by women, and women held positions of

responsibility in the groups and agencies involved in working with rural women. Various forms of micro-credit schemes had also been created.

49. In response to questions about violence committed against women refugees, she recalled that 10 years of war in Liberia and Sierra Leone had led to a large influx of refugees, currently equivalent to one tenth of the overall population, the highest proportion of any host country. The populations in the border regions tended to have family and ethnic links, and therefore most refugees had been taken in by the local Guinean population. Guinea was a signatory to the Geneva Declaration on the 1951 United Nations Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees and had done a commendable job in meeting the needs of those refugees with very little support from the outside world. The situation had deteriorated recently as armed incursions into Guinean territory had caused the number of refugees, including displaced Guineans, to increase. Her Government had endeavoured to provide for the education, health, nutrition and sanitation needs of the refugees and to facilitate the provision of international humanitarian assistance. Refugee women, like their Guinean counterparts, were often involved in small-scale commercial activities, such as selling fish, as a means of generating income. Some refugees had been assembled in camps, in order to facilitate access to international assistance.

50. In conclusion, she highlighted her Government's efforts to eradicate poverty, such as the involvement of all ministries in a three-year programme financed by the World Bank and development partners, and thanked the Committee for its recommendations on how best to continue to promote the advancement of women.

51. **The Chairperson** commended the delegation for its exhaustive and well-presented replies and encouraged the State party to continue its efforts towards the empowerment of women, in particular with regard to health, education and the elimination of poverty. While an adequate legal framework already existed, it was essential that society should be made more aware of women's issues in order to modify traditional attitudes and that women should take full advantage of their rights in order to achieve full equality. Women must also play an important role in promoting a culture of peace at the national and international levels. She encouraged the State party to disseminate the Committee's concluding comments and

recommendations widely and to build on the existing experience of innovative programmes and partnerships in promoting the advancement of women.

52. **Ms. Aribot** (Guinea) noted that her delegation had already decided to create a follow-up committee on implementation of the Convention and would transmit all the Committee's recommendations to its Government. A workshop would also be held as part of efforts to increase awareness of the dialogue with the Committee at all levels of society. Much progress had already been made in some areas; for example, over the past 16 years a national group had had considerable success in combating female genital mutilation. She looked forward to continued dialogue with the Committee in 2002.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.