



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

Distr.: General  
8 November 2011

English only

---

**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination  
against Women**  
**Fiftieth session**

**Summary record of the 1011th meeting**

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 13 October 2011, at 10 a.m.

*Chairperson:* Ms. Pimentel

**Contents**

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

*Combined third and fourth periodic reports of Kuwait*

---

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of this document* to the Editing Unit, room E.4108, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

Any corrections to the records of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

*The meeting was called to order at 10.00 a.m.*

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

*Combined third and fourth periodic reports of Kuwait (CEDAW/C/KWT/3-4, CEDAW/C/KWT/Q/3-4 and Add.1)*

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

2. **Mr. Razzoqi** (Kuwait), introducing the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Kuwait (CEDAW/C/KWT/3-4), said that women's rights were a central concern and focus of the activities of the Kuwaiti State and that violations of those rights were not tolerated under any circumstances, in line with the teachings of the religion of the State. Justice, liberty and equality were established as the cornerstones of society in article 7 of the Constitution of Kuwait, while article 29 prohibited discrimination on the grounds of race, origin, language or religion. Women enjoyed full legal personality from the moment of their birth. Extensive legislation had been developed to safeguard their rights and those laws constituted their best defence against violations.

3. The provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women were fully aligned with the Government's principles and aspirations and had been adopted as a key tool in its endeavours to uphold women's rights and dignity. The Convention was fully integrated within the domestic legal order as a result. The report under consideration described all recent developments concerning the situation of women in Kuwait. However, the State had many more projects in the fledgling stages and many more plans for action to enhance women's rights.

4. Since the consideration of Kuwait's initial report and second periodic report, a number of important legislative developments and decisions had significantly enhanced women's status. A 2005 amendment to the Electoral Act had given women the same political rights as men, including the right to vote and the right to stand for election to political office. That advance had been consolidated in 2009 when four female candidates had won election to the National Assembly. Restrictions on women's freedom of movement had been lifted following a landmark Constitutional Court ruling in 2009 that had declared the legal requirement that women must seek their husband's or guardian's permission to obtain a passport to be unconstitutional.

5. Under a 2011 amendment to the Housing Welfare Act of 1993, the right to housing welfare benefits had been extended to all women irrespective of their social status, including widows and divorcees. Under legislation governing the civil service, men and women were guaranteed equal rights and benefits in employment, while special provisions provided protection for maternity. The principle of equal work for equal pay was expressly recognized in the Civil Service Act and the principles of equality and equal opportunities were enshrined in various other legal texts. The empowerment of women was also one of the main objectives of the national development plan adopted in 2010.

*Articles 1 to 6*

6. **Ms. Patten**, commending the legal reforms that had allowed Kuwaiti women to enter parliament and the Kuwaiti Government to withdraw its reservation to article 7 (a) of the Convention, asked whether the Government was also reviewing the reservations to article 9, paragraph 2, and article 16, paragraph 1 (f), with a view to their withdrawal. To that end, she suggested that the approaches adopted by other Arab nations that had succeeded in withdrawing sharia-based reservations might be studied for guidance. She also enquired whether ratification of the Optional Protocol was under discussion.

7. In view of the large number of female migrant workers in Kuwait, an indication of the likelihood of ratification of the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families would also be appreciated. Given recent developments in Kuwait that had prompted the drafting of a bill purporting to extend civil and social rights to the *Bidun* population, she asked whether the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness might also be ratified.

8. She would also like information about Government measures to promote female representation within the judiciary, including an indication of the de facto obstacles, if any, to the appointment of female judges and prosecutors. Lastly, noting that gender was not included in the list of prohibited grounds for discrimination given in article 29 of the Constitution, she asked whether the Government planned to incorporate in national law the definition of discrimination against women contained in article 1 of the Convention, as had been recommended in the Committee's concluding comments on the State party's previous report.

9. **Ms. Acar** said she was concerned that certain laws had not been fully harmonized with the provisions of the Convention even though it constituted an integral part of the domestic legal order. The Nationality Act and the Personal Status Act, both of which were at the root of reservations, were notable cases in point. She encouraged the Government to address those discrepancies by considering the examples provided by other countries with similar religious and social structures.

10. The absence of penalties for discrimination against women anywhere in Kuwaiti law was a further concern. Since full implementation of the Convention would not be possible until that vacuum was addressed, she asked for details of any plans to incorporate such penalties in the Criminal Code.

11. Lastly, noting that knowledge of the Convention and other international instruments among members of the judiciary seemed to be insufficient, she would like to know of any plans to introduce instruction in human rights instruments, and specifically the Convention, in judicial training programmes.

12. **Ms. Gabr** said that, while there were various public and private sector institutions working in the area of women's rights, there appeared to be no dedicated State body responsible for monitoring implementation of the Convention and devising a corresponding strategy or action plan, even though recommendations to develop such mechanisms made in the universal periodic review had been well received. Similarly, while there were a number of parliamentary committees dealing with human rights issues, there was no independent commission based on the Paris Principles, even though the State party had accepted the recommendations to establish a national human rights institution in conformity with the Paris Principles made in the universal periodic review. She urged the State party to address those lacunae. She would also like more information about the development plan mentioned in the introductory statement, including details of the authority that would oversee its implementation.

13. **Ms. Altararwa** (Kuwait) said that women's political participation had increased dramatically since the amendment to the Electoral Act and that there were currently more women in ministerial roles than ever before. Following amendments to the Nationality Act, Kuwaiti women had the possibility of conferring their nationality upon their children irrespective of the child's country of birth or the mother's status. For fuller details of the amendments, she referred the Committee to paragraph 76 of the report.

14. **The Chairperson** said that she would like to remind the delegation that they should limit the scope of their responses to the cluster of articles under consideration. The

information about nationality would be better included in responses to questions under article 9.

15. **Ms. Alnaser** (Kuwait) said that there were no stateless persons in Kuwait and that the Kuwaiti Government was endeavouring to issue official documents, including certificates of birth, marriage and death, to all undocumented persons entitled to receive them. Over 10,000 birth certificates had been issued since the relevant agreement had been concluded. There were, however, persons or groups of persons who attempted to hide their nationality of origin and claim statelessness in the hope of obtaining Kuwaiti citizenship. It was not possible to issue identity documents to those persons. In any case, all persons living in Kuwait, including those who disguised their nationality and those who were present illegally, were entitled to receive free education and health care and enjoyed all other social and civil rights granted to Kuwaiti citizens.

16. **Mr. Razzooqi** (Kuwait), in response to a further request from **the Chairperson** to limit responses to the cluster of articles under consideration, asked whether it would be possible for the Committee to ask all its questions during the current meeting, thereby giving his delegation time to prepare its answers before the next meeting.

17. **The Chairperson** said that, unfortunately, she was unable to accommodate the request. After a discussion in which **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani**, **Ms. Patten** and **Ms. Šimonović** took part, she said that, if she heard no objection, in order to facilitate the proceedings, she would take it that the Committee wished to consider the State party's report article by article.

18. *It was so decided.*

#### *Article 3*

19. **Mr. Alansari** (Kuwait) said that the Institute of Judicial Studies, in conjunction with the Ministry of Justice, organized workshops and training events for judges and other public officials working in the legal system at which human rights issues were examined in the light of national and international instruments. Members of the Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour and Ministry of Foreign Affairs were also involved in those initiatives.

20. The universal periodic review had prompted a commitment from the Government of Kuwait to establish an independent national human rights institution that was in conformity with the Paris Principles. The Ministry of Justice had been working hard to draft a bill that would translate that commitment into reality, but the draft needed to be approved by various bodies including the Cabinet before it could be submitted to parliament.

21. **Mr. Razzooqi** (Kuwait) said that the Government did not envisage ratifying the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families because it did not view the foreign nationals working in Kuwait as migrant workers. Migrant workers went to a country to work with a view to settling and eventually obtaining nationality. The foreign nationals in Kuwait were contractual labourers, who entered the country after signing a contract and left when their contracts expired. The Palestinians who remained in Kuwait because they could not return to their homeland were the only exception to that rule.

22. With the International Labour Organization, the Kuwaiti Government had concluded a special agreement under which foreign nationals working in certain Gulf States were recognized as contractual labourers rather than migrant workers. The conceptual distinction excluded Kuwait from membership of the International Organization for Migration, but the Government voluntarily contributed to its work and was examining the possibility of becoming an observer State. With the World Health Organization, Kuwait had secured an

agreement that the term “migrant workers-contractual labourers” should be used in the final declaration in order to circumvent the conceptual obstacle and satisfy both parties.

23. **Mr. Alharbi** (Kuwait) said that the national development plan earmarked billions of dollars over three years to develop opportunities for women and that all ministries and specialized institutions were involved in its implementation.

24. **Ms. Gabr** said that she would like to know who was responsible for overseeing women’s issues at the national level. Did each individual ministry have oversight for its particular area of competence or was there a single body responsible for all action plans and strategies that had an impact on women’s interests? If not, was the creation of such an institution envisaged?

25. She also urged the delegation to address the earlier question regarding Government plans to introduce legislation specifically criminalizing discrimination against women and establishing penalties for those who failed to respect the prohibition.

26. **Ms. Jahan** said that she would appreciate clarification regarding women’s exclusion from succession to the title of Amir, the reasons for which were explained in paragraph 3 of the State party’s replies to the list of issues (CEDAW/C/KWT/Q/3-4/Add.1). She was particularly puzzled by the last sentence of that paragraph, which stated that under Islamic law women did not have the right to rule. Her country was also an Islamic State and an active member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) yet had had a female Prime Minister for the past 20 years. The current opposition leader was also a woman. Other OIC members including Indonesia, Pakistan and Turkey had also had female Heads of State. She therefore refuted that statement. Nowhere in the Koran was it stated, either directly or indirectly, that women were not permitted to rule.

27. **Ms. Neubauer** said it was regrettable that the report did not provide the information about the mandate and responsibilities of the various components of the national machinery for the advancement of women in Kuwait that had been requested in the Committee’s concluding comments on the previous report. The recommendation that a comprehensive and coordinated plan of action to promote gender equality should be developed and that gender mainstreaming should be ensured at all levels had not been complied with either. In that connection, she urged the delegation to clarify which body had central responsibility for the advancement of women and gender equality and to give details of the policy framework and its core components.

28. **Mr. Razzooqi** (Kuwait) said that women and gender equality constituted key components of the national multi-year action plan alongside health and other core policy areas. The General Secretariat of the Ministry of Planning was responsible for oversight, but individual ministries were responsible for implementing the plan components related to their specific area of competence and were required to report to the Ministry on their progress.

29. With regard to the question of succession, it was important to recognize the differences between Muslim countries as well as the similarities. The development of individual States was guided by differing considerations and circumstances. The system of governance and succession in place in Kuwait had been developed over 400 years in line with the wishes and requirements of its people. While Kuwait accepted and fully respected female Heads of State, the social contract on which the State was built, and which had been reflected in the Constitution since 1962, was that the State should be a hereditary Amirate and that the Amir should be male. While emphasizing that women’s exclusion from succession in Kuwait was based on a social contract and not on the Koran, he also wished to highlight that the Koran could be interpreted in many different ways and that no one interpretation should be adopted to the exclusion of all others.

30. **Ms. Altararwa** (Kuwait) said that the parliamentary Women's Affairs Committee, which was composed of representatives of all ministries, oversaw the implementation of those components of the national development plan that related to women's interests. Its work included cooperating with civil society organizations and women, coordinating the efforts of governmental authorities and organizing conferences and awareness-raising events.

31. **Ms. Rasekh** said she considered the statement that women could not be leaders according to the Koran to be, not only a misconception, but also disrespectful to women. There had been many female leaders since the time of Muhammad and many Islamic States had been led by women. Women's exclusion from succession could not therefore be based on the Koran. Since, in the State party's case, as the head of the delegation himself had explained, the exclusion was based on a social contract between the State and its people, it was a rule that could and should be changed.

32. **Mr. Razzooqi** (Kuwait) said that the existence of differing interpretations of the Koran and the need to accommodate those differences must be acknowledged nonetheless.

33. **The Chairperson**, speaking in her capacity as an expert, said that it was equally important to acknowledge that those interpretations were dynamic.

#### *Article 4*

34. **Ms. Zou Xiaojiao**, noting that the report made no mention of temporary special measures, urged the delegation to share its views on their application and explain why they had never been used in Kuwait since its ratification of the Convention. Was the Government aware of their importance as part of the necessary strategy for achieving de facto equality? Since, despite recent advances, women remained underrepresented in the National Assembly and diplomatic fields, information about any Government plans to adopt temporary special measures to improve female participation in policymaking and enhance women's status in society would therefore be appreciated. She also enquired about the existence of any programmes to raise awareness of temporary special measures among Government officials and legislators.

35. **Ms. Altakit** (Kuwait) said that Kuwaiti nationals accounted for just one third of the population of Kuwait, with foreign residents making up the remaining two thirds. Family planning and health advice was available through mother and child centres without charge to all women in the first category and under private health insurance schemes for women in the second category.

36. **The Chairperson** said that the delegation must limit its answers to temporary special measures only.

37. **Mr. Razzooqi** (Kuwait) requested clarification concerning the nature and purpose of temporary special measures.

38. **The Chairperson** said that temporary special measures might include, for example, the use of quotas to accelerate the election of women and their appointment to high-level positions.

39. **Mr. Razzooqi** (Kuwait) said that the adoption of quota systems had been rejected by women as they wished to be elected to the National Assembly on merit.

40. **Ms. Alqadi** (Kuwait) said that, after women had gained the right to vote and to stand for office, a number of initiatives had been launched in the run-up to the elections that could be described as temporary special measures. Although there was no women's movement per se, training for potential female candidates and campaigns to encourage female involvement in the political process had been organized by non-governmental

organizations (NGOs) active in women's affairs, the United Nations Development Programme and other international agencies. The Islamic committees had also established a women's political committee that had worked to raise awareness of the importance of women voting.

41. **Ms. Neubauer** said that it was important to be aware of the distinction between article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention which was about temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women, and article 4, paragraph 2, which was about special measures aimed at protecting maternity. Since that awareness appeared to be lacking, she asked whether any of the Committee's general recommendations on how to interpret and implement the Convention, including in particular general recommendation No. 25 on temporary special measures, had been circulated in Arabic. If the latter recommendation had been better known within Kuwait, the present discussion would not have been necessary.

42. **Ms. Alqadi** (Kuwait) confirmed that general recommendation No. 25 had been disseminated in Kuwait in Arabic and that it had helped increase women's involvement in decision-making.

#### *Article 5*

43. **Ms. Gabr** said that despite the progress achieved, many prejudices that were detrimental to women's status and role in society remained. For that reason, it was essential to disseminate the text of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations in Arabic and to ensure that they were read by members of parliament and could be invoked in court by members of the judiciary. The role of the media in society should also be enhanced to support the awareness-raising effort.

44. **Ms. Patten** said that she would like to draw attention to States parties' obligation to include information on gender-based violence and measures to combat it in their periodic reports, as established in the Committee's general recommendation No. 19. The report under consideration lacked such information. She was also concerned about the absence of a specific prohibition of domestic violence in Kuwaiti legislation and the fact that arrests and prosecutions were rare, despite the existence of procedures for reporting and investigating abuse. That situation reflected the entrenched social and cultural bias for intrafamily conflict resolution.

45. Further concerns included the lack of Government-supported hotlines and shelters for victims and the continuing, albeit infrequent, occurrence of honour killings, especially in rural areas. The legal provisions penalizing such offences were inadequate and even appeared to justify them to an extent, since the penalties could be reduced in supposedly mitigating circumstances such as adultery-induced rage.

46. Since violence against women and girls in its many varied forms was one of the most widespread and ubiquitous violations of human rights, it was vital that all States parties took appropriate steps to eliminate it. Noting that the Minister of Justice had recently revealed that around one third of Kuwaiti women had suffered domestic violence, she asked whether the Government envisaged conducting in-depth research to gain a proper understanding of the magnitude of the problem. Further noting that the Kuwaiti Government had co-hosted a conference on domestic violence with the Azerbaijani Government, she enquired whether the Government envisaged adopting a law on domestic violence like its Azerbaijani counterpart.

47. **Ms. Šimonović**, after commending the State party on the withdrawal of its reservation to article 7, said that, in future, it should consider amending the legal provision that only men could be the Head of State, which was not compatible with article 2 of the Convention, to which it had not entered any reservation. She would like information on the

results of the field studies referred to in paragraph 33 of the replies to the list of issues, particularly on the effect of the Internet on marriages, the reasons why some girls imitated boys and the impact of satellite channels on girls. Had any recommendations been put forward to eliminate stereotypes on the basis of the results of those studies?

48. She asked whether Kuwait intended to draft specific laws on violence against women and what preventive measures had been taken against such violence. It was not clear whether marital rape constituted an offence under the Criminal Code. She also asked whether the State party envisaged amending the law to punish honour killings more severely. She noted that article 153 of the Criminal Code made adultery a mitigating factor in cases of homicide, carrying penalties as light as a fine of up to 3,000 rupees. More information was also needed on the accessibility and availability of women's shelters.

49. **Mr. Razzooqi** (Kuwait) said that the increase in the level of development and education in the country had reduced the prevalence of stereotypes. Women participated in every facet of life and their situation continued to improve. They constituted the majority at universities. There were more female than male doctors and engineers. Women enjoyed good employment opportunities in both the public and private sectors.

50. Acts of physical violence against women were criminally punishable under the law. Although honour killings had occurred, they were extremely rare and the cases isolated. Nevertheless, such killings constituted a criminal offence. In addition, the Convention had indeed been invoked before the courts, including a case in which a woman had asserted her right to obtain a passport.

51. **Mr. Alharbi** (Kuwait) said that stereotypes had diminished considerably in recent decades through education, religious guidance and public-awareness campaigns. The increasing presence of women in institutions of higher education and the labour market had changed the perception of women's role, which was no longer restricted to the home.

52. **Mr. Alsaana** (Kuwait) said that marital rape was severely punished under article 191 of the Criminal Code. Article 153 of the Criminal Code did not exonerate the perpetrators of acts of violence or homicide, as those offences were punishable by the laws relating to the right to life.

53. **Ms. Jawhar** (Kuwait) said that although the law did not define domestic violence, the Criminal Code imposed severe penalties for any physical attack on women. Furthermore, victims of abuse were provided with psychological support and physical protection. By law, all doctors were required to report any signs of abuse of children under the age of 18 years. In addition, women who applied to the courts in cases of violence against them were entitled to seek witness protection. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour had shelters for young persons from broken homes.

54. **Ms. Altararwa** (Kuwait) said that the Convention had been incorporated into Kuwaiti legislation. The Convention had also been disseminated widely to Government institutions and NGOs and discussed in television debates and other media. Training sessions were conducted in governmental and non-governmental organizations to better inform women about the Convention.

55. **Ms. Alqadi** (Kuwait) said that there were hotlines run by the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, and that counselling was available to victims of violence free of charge. NGOs were also working on the issue of violence against women and had exchanged information on best practices with organizations from other Arab countries. Kuwait would observe the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November. Efforts had also been made at universities to raise awareness about the need to treat women with respect.



56. **Mr. Razzoqi** (Kuwait) said that the process of establishing a family court was under way, although it would take time before a law on the court was enacted. The by-laws had already been drafted and a location for the court was being explored. His Government hoped that the court would be in place within a year or so, and that it would address cases of violence in the family effectively.

57. **Ms. Schulz** said that it was not clear why married women were the target group of the field study on the effect of the Internet referred to in paragraph 33 of the replies to the list of issues, as men tended to spend more time on the Internet and visit pornographic sites, which might have an impact on their views of women. Referring to the field study on girls imitating boys, she wondered what the concern and aim of the project were and whether girls considered to be imitating boys ended up in mental hospitals or were otherwise punished because they did not conform to social expectations.

58. **Ms. Gabr** said that she would appreciate further clarification of the changes made to the school curriculum to eliminate stereotypes. She also welcomed the planned introduction of a family court. Recalling that neither the Constitution nor sharia law prevented women from holding judicial positions, she wondered whether women would soon be appointed as judges in Kuwait.

59. **Ms. Šimonović**, referring to paragraph 49 of the replies to the list of issues, which stated that families were responsible for the care of the victims of violence and that the State had established a shelter for women without families, asked whether married women who were the victims of domestic violence had access to shelters. Turning to the issue of honour crimes, she said that although the delegation had indicated that there had been a low incidence of such offences, specific data on them should be made publicly available. She would also appreciate information on plans to amend article 153, as the article allowed for discrimination against women, violence against women and impunity for men in the form of a fine for homicide.

60. **The Chairperson**, speaking in her capacity as an expert, said that there was a need to look very closely at the specific issue of violence against women and she urged the State party to follow the Committee's general recommendation No. 19. The recommendation could help the State party to draft a law on violence against women and, more specifically, a law on domestic violence, in line with the recommendation of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences.

61. **Mr. Razzoqi** (Kuwait) said that his delegation would prepare a written response to the questions by Ms. Schulz concerning the field studies and submit it to the Committee in due course. Although there were no women judges, the issue continued to be debated in Kuwait. Nevertheless, women were currently employed in the Public Prosecutor's Office.

62. **Mr. Alsaana** (Kuwait) said that there were no constitutional or legal obstacles to women working as judges in Kuwait. Women were currently involved in various aspects of judicial work, such as training or arbitrating in commercial cases.

63. **Mr. Alansari** (Kuwait) said that, while the law did not contain the phrase "domestic violence", violence between spouses was covered under the law and women had brought cases of such violence before the courts.

64. **Mr. Razzoqi** (Kuwait) said that Kuwait had a conservative, Muslim society. Whenever family violence was reported to the police, every effort was made to reconcile the family members. Before charges were pressed, there were attempts to get the parties together to reach a compromise. However, if charges were brought, the relevant authorities ensured that the proper procedures were followed.

65. **Ms. Jawhar** (Kuwait) said that Kuwait had centres to provide shelter to juveniles up to the age of 21 years and domestic violence victims of all ages. In such cases, humanitarian concerns were the determining factor.

66. **Mr. Razzooqi** (Kuwait) said, by way of illustration, that although there was no definition or specific provision for torture under domestic law, torture was nevertheless a criminal offence. The process of passing bills was long and complicated. One example was the law on women's right to vote, which had taken a long time for the legislature to pass, despite the repeated and persistent attempts by the executive branch to push the legislation through the National Assembly.

67. **Ms. Altararwa** (Kuwait) said that any law in Kuwait required approval by the National Assembly, which represented the Kuwaiti people.

68. **Mr. Razzooqi** (Kuwait) said that he was proud that the National Assembly currently included four women, who could best understand and address the problems facing women. Indeed, they had brought about many positive changes, including housing and better wages for women. The delegation would refer the recommendations of the Committee to the National Assembly so that it might help to amend legislation in accordance with the Convention and implement the relevant laws.

69. **Ms. Alharbi** (Kuwait) said that the Government was currently reviewing the laws pertaining to women's rights and their conformity with international human rights treaties, in particular the Convention.

#### *Article 6*

70. **Ms. Jahan** said that she would like information on the current status of the bill on trafficking in persons, including women, before the National Assembly referred to in paragraph 55 of the replies to the list of issues. She asked whether the definition of trafficking in the draft legislation was in line with the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and whether the text provided for the prevention and prosecution of the relevant offences. Information was needed on any national plan of action to address trafficking in women. It would also be useful to be informed about the stakeholders involved in efforts to combat such trafficking, including the relevant ministries, law enforcement agencies and NGOs.

71. Turning to women migrant workers, she asked what measures had been taken to protect those workers from human trafficking, including access to justice, legal aid and remedies. Further details were needed about the complaints mechanisms for migrant workers and victims of trafficking and how many grievances had been registered in the past year. It was not clear whether there was only one shelter for the victims of human trafficking and whether they shared the shelter with victims of other forms of violence. Lastly, she would appreciate information on the efforts to raise awareness among law enforcement personnel, immigration officials and the public about the problem of trafficking in persons.

72. **Mr. Razzooqi** (Kuwait) said that Kuwait was committed to combating human trafficking. His Government had plans to build more women's shelters, which he had discussed with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Kuwait also made concerted efforts to protect migrant workers from exploitation, including domestic workers, and cooperated with the embassies of the workers concerned, such as those of India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

73. **Mr. Alsaana** (Kuwait) said that the Criminal Code imposed severe penalties for offences involving human trafficking. Health care, social services and compensation were

provided to the victims. Various forms of labour exploitation were considered to be serious offences under the law, particularly those involving the use of physical violence, sexual abuse or slavery.

74. **Mr. Alansari** (Kuwait) said that Kuwait attracted a large number of foreign workers, some of whom were victims of prostitution. A bill to combat human trafficking was pending. Furthermore, his Government had cooperated with the League of Arab States on efforts to combat trafficking in persons.

75. **Ms. Murillo de la Vega** asked whether the State party could confirm the reports that she had received of female detainees in Kuwait being guarded by male officers during periods of pretrial detention and investigation. The use of male police officers put women in detention at risk of abuse.

76. **Mr. Razzooqi** (Kuwait) said that Kuwait did indeed have female prison guards.

77. **Mr. Alshamali** (Kuwait) said that Kuwait had a prison for women. All activities within the prison were closely supervised and cells were equipped with surveillance cameras. The prison administration had reported no cases of abuse of women.

#### *Articles 7 to 9*

78. **Ms. Bareiro-Bobadilla**, commending the recent strides made by Kuwaiti women in participating in public life as voters, said that there was still a need for a corresponding rise in representation in political office. Increasing the share of women in the National Assembly would help to ensure progress in areas such as domestic violence, inheritance, marriage, employment and a range of other issues. She asked how many ministers in the Government were women and what portfolios they held. She would also like information on the number of women holding diplomatic positions. Lastly, she noted with concern the lack of women's associations in the State party, since they could play a crucial role in promoting the implementation of the Convention.

79. **Ms. Pires**, noting that 1 out of 16 ministers in the Cabinet and 4 out of 50 members of the National Assembly were women, asked what measures were envisaged to increase those numbers. She would also appreciate information on efforts to establish women's NGOs in order to increase women's political participation. Clarification was needed on reports that the judicial authority responsible for appointments had refused to appoint women as judges and that no women prosecutors had been appointed by the prosecution services. As there was no prohibition against such appointments by law, she wondered what barriers there were to women becoming judges and prosecutors. It would be useful if the State party could submit in writing statistical data on the number of women working in leadership positions in the public sector, aside from those employed in the field of education. Information was needed on measures to increase the number of women diplomatic officials, as there were only two women heading missions out of the existing diplomatic missions throughout the world.

80. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** said that although there were only four women in the National Assembly that was nevertheless an important beginning. Kuwaiti women had a high level of education and skills and could be excellent representatives in parliament. She urged the delegation to make further progress in promoting women in public office, diplomatic missions and the judiciary. She hoped to see further progress made in other areas such as journalism. There were no obstacles under Islamic law to achieving such progress and Kuwait had the necessary legal framework and human and financial resources to set an example for other countries in the region.

81. **Mr. Razzooqi** (Kuwait) said that he agreed with the previous three speakers. Nothing in Islam stood in the way to the achievement of equality between men and women.

However, it took time for society to change. The four women who had been elected to the National Assembly marked a step towards the achievement of equality. Kuwait was divided into 5 districts with 10 parliamentarians elected from each district. In one district, a woman had won the highest number of votes and in another the second highest. Thus, although their numbers were still low, women had made a strong showing in the parliamentary elections. Women were represented in all sectors of the economy. There was a woman ambassador in Brussels and Chile. The time would come when there would be more women in such posts abroad. Two women had been appointed ministers, one of whom had recently resigned. The debate on whether to appoint women to the judiciary was still under way and the Government would continue to advocate for women judges. Kuwait was heading in the right direction and was striving to build on the positive changes that had been made.

82. **Mr. Alsaana** (Kuwait) said that two high-level judicial officials had stated that nothing in the law prevented women from taking up posts in the judiciary.

83. **Mr. Alansari** said that the delegation of Kuwait had made a commitment within the framework of the universal periodic review to appoint women in the judicial system.

84. **Ms. Altararwa** (Kuwait) said that there were no legal obstacles against women holding senior-level posts in the Government, including in the judiciary.

85. **Ms. Bareiro-Bobadilla** said that it was not enough to say that there were no legal obstacles against women enjoying equality, as there was also a need for de facto equality. She therefore urged the delegation to consider carefully the Committee's general recommendation No. 25. She requested the State party to furnish the Committee with more statistical data, which was greatly lacking in the report and in the replies to the list of issues. Turning to temporary special measures, she said that they should not be limited to quotas, but, instead, should extend to parity between men and women in electoral lists or courses, for grants and other forms of assistance to train women to become judges.

86. **Ms. Jahan** asked whether the parliamentary Women's Affairs Committee had any draft legislation before it.

*The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.*