



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

Distr.: General
29 January 2009

Original: English

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

Summary record of the 856th meeting (Chamber B)

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 23 October 2008, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Gaspard (Vice-Chairperson)

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

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

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

Third periodic report of Kyrgyzstan (CEDAW/C/KGZ/3; CEDAW/C/KGZ/Q/3 and Add.1)

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

2. **Mr. Nazarov** (Kyrgyzstan), introducing the State party's third periodic report (CEDAW/C/KGZ/3), said that the Kyrgyz Parliament had a new committee on youth, gender policy, physical fitness and sport, which he chaired. Parliament was in the vanguard in promoting gender policy and, thanks to the political will of the President and the efforts of the women's movement, had the highest number of women members among all the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS): 23 out of a total of 90. In the 10 months since the election of the new Parliament, legislative amendments had been adopted setting a quota of at least 30 per cent for individuals of each sex among auditors of the Chamber of Accounts and members of the Central Elections and Referendums Commission. The Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women, a legislative initiative put forward by the President, had been signed, and amendments to the Family Code had been adopted.

3. Two major parliamentary hearings had been held on the topics of domestic violence and gender equality in politics. They had been well attended by representatives of NGOs, government and the media and had resulted in a decision to hold meetings in all regions of the country on domestic violence.

4. In May 2008, a Women's Alliance on Legislative Initiatives had been created and had contributed to the drafting of bills that were to be submitted to Parliament for consideration. The bills covered domestic violence and the setting of gender quotas at various levels of the executive branch, the judiciary and financial administrative bodies.

5. **Ms. Tashpaeva** (Kyrgyzstan) said that since the third periodic report covered the period from 2002 to

2005, she would focus on developments since 2005, a period during which her country had re-evaluated its political system, made significant changes to its Constitution and tried to find optimal models of governance, taking into account the interests of all sectors of society. The growth of citizen activism from 2005 had not only fostered social and political change but had also had direct repercussions on the representation of women in the executive branch.

6. In February 2005, despite the high level of women's activism in Kryrgyzstan, an unprecedented event had occurred: the election of an exclusively male Parliament, which had accorded no Government posts to women. Conservative forces advocating a return to the patriarchal order of society had attempted to convince the public that women must "know their place" and that women's "interference" in politics had led to a crisis in government. The result had been a growing aversion to all aspects of women's issues and a retreat from prior achievements.

7. During that difficult period, the secretariat of the National Council on Women, Family and Gender Development, together with activists in the women's movement and with the support of international organizations, had held the first national forum of women's organizations, which had been attended by representatives of over 100 bodies from all regions of the country. The resulting joint platform of action for the women's movement of Kyrgyzstan had subsequently served as the basis for setting priorities and developing plans for promoting gender equality.

8. In 2005, new versions of the Kyrgyz Constitution and the Electoral Code had been adopted by referendum. The Constitution now guaranteed equal rights and opportunities for men and women, while the Electoral Code accorded women equal opportunities both to vote and to be elected to national and local government. The Electoral Code also included special measures for increasing women's representation in the legislative branch: political parties must ensure that neither sex accounted for more than 70 per cent of the candidates on their electoral lists. Other noteworthy initiatives were efforts to bring women into government and the creation of the parliamentary post of Special Representative of the President on Matters of Gender Development.

9. The proportion of women in Parliament was currently 26 per cent. The Deputy Speaker was a

woman and four of the 13 parliamentary committees, including the Committee on Defence, Security, Law Enforcement and Legal Reform, were chaired by women. The Presidents of the Constitutional and Supreme Courts were women, and the overall number of women in the judiciary was increasing.

10. In the executive branch, 5 of the 23 members of the Government were women, one of whom was the Deputy Prime Minister. Women headed the Ministry of Finance and the State Agency for Information Resources and Technology and occupied two high-level posts in the Ministry of Justice. The overall representation of women in State authorities had steadily increased since 2005, reaching to 45 per cent in 2008. Nevertheless, there were still no women among provincial governors and the results of the latest local elections reconfirmed the need to introduce special measures to ensure women's representation in local legislative bodies.

11. The Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women, adopted in August 2008, laid down the foundations of Government policy for ensuring gender equality and provided for a transparent system of monitoring and reporting on its implementation. The National Council on Women, Family and Gender Development was responsible for monitoring the implementation both of national legislation and of international obligations in the area of gender equality and for coordinating the efforts of institutions at various levels. In May 2008 the functions of the National Council's secretariat had been transferred to the Social Development Division of the Office of the Government. In addition, the Government was required to prepare an annual report on the national situation with regard to gender equality.

12. The 2004 Labour Code prohibited discrimination in employment and contained special provisions for pregnant women and persons with children, such as entitlement to supplementary leave for childcare purposes. Gender issues had also been taken into account in the development of the national employment policy adopted in 2006.

13. Almost 60 per cent of the Kyrgyz population was of working age, but unemployment and underemployment were on the rise. In 2007 54 per cent of women had been economically active; among them, older women, including those of pensionable age, had had the highest rates of employment. From 2006 to

2007, the number of women employed in the financial sector, mining, construction and agriculture had increased. In 2007, average wages for women had been 67 per cent of those for men. The worldwide economic crisis had caused price hikes, which had hit the most vulnerable population groups particularly hard. The Government was working out a package of compensatory measures for those groups, which included women, children, the elderly and the disabled.

14. With regard to health care, the current priorities were maternal and child health, tuberculosis control, prevention of cardiovascular diseases and their complications and HIV/AIDS control. Infant mortality figures had been rising steadily for the past five years, partly because of higher birth rates and migration and partly because in 2004 the World Health Organization's definition of "live births" had been adopted in Kyrgyzstan. The maternal mortality rate, though generally on a downward trend, remained high, mainly owing to the lack of proper prenatal care, especially in socially vulnerable population groups, the inadequacy of emergency medical services and the high rate of anaemia among pregnant women. The official figure for the number of people living with HIV as at 1 October 2008 was 1,871, of whom 24.2 per cent were women. The main mode of transmission was contamination with infected blood.

15. Reforms were being carried out under the Manas Taalimi National Programme for the period 2006-2010 with the aim of enhancing the equity, accessibility and quality of health-care services. Such services were currently free of charge for children under five years of age and women during pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period, as well as a number of other population sectors, and there were plans to extend free provision further.

16. A National Strategy for Protecting Reproductive Health had been adopted, and staff at more than half of all midwifery centres had been instructed in safe maternity procedures based on the recommendations of the World Health Organization. A programme for perinatal care had also taken shape. A National Centre for Maternal and Child Welfare had been set up to provide high-quality medical care to women and children, and all inpatient clinics for women and children had been provided with up-to-date equipment.

17. Tuberculosis-related morbidity and mortality had both declined since 2005. In addition, the provision of

fortified flour to socially deprived population groups had helped to raise the iron and micronutrient content of their diet. Reproductive health, prevention of HIV/AIDS and other important health issues were being incorporated into the school curriculum.

18. With a view to improving rural health care, midwifery centres had been provided with modern medical equipment, and access to pharmaceutical services had been improved. On the initiative of the Government and of a number of international organizations, over 5,000 children were now enrolled in one of 150 community childcare centres.

19. In accordance with the Law on the Management of Farmlands, plots of land owned by citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic could be passed on to the owners' heirs and, following legislative amendments in 2006, could also be divided. However, legal documents on the division of plots of land could not be drawn up without the consent of both spouses. Women had equal rights to own and dispose of land; that rule had been introduced in response to the Committee's comments on the second periodic report of Kyrgyzstan.

20. The Law on Citizenship of the Kyrgyz Republic had been brought into line with article 9 of the Convention: Kyrgyz nationality could be transmitted to a child by written agreement between the parents, irrespective of the child's place of birth.

21. A broad range of measures had been undertaken to prevent violence against women, including updates of the relevant legislation; research to elucidate the scale of the phenomenon and the success of measures to address it; development of new statistical models; dissemination of information through the printed media, documentaries and radio and television programmes; awareness-raising measures for the judiciary, law enforcement agencies, local authorities and other groups; issuance of booklets and teaching materials on working with victims and preventing violence; funding of crisis centres and other community services; and provision of practical assistance to victims.

22. Still, the steps taken so far had not yielded the desired results. Violence against women remained one of the major social problems in Kyrgyzstan and was not traditionally viewed as unjust or demeaning. Therefore, a great deal of time and effort would be needed in order to change attitudes and behaviour in relations between the sexes.

Articles 1 to 4

23. **Ms. Dairiam** congratulated the Government of Kyrgyzstan on the measures put in place for the advancement of women. However, the replies to the Committee's list of issues and questions (CEDAW/C/KGZ/Q/3 and Add.1) had left her dubious as to whether there was a purposeful, long-term plan for the implementation of the Convention. Many activities and initiatives were listed, but they did not seem to address the range of problems that women faced in a coordinated manner. Nonetheless, the introduction of the report had shown that there was a good understanding in Kyrgyzstan of the impediments to the advancement of women, the deep-rooted causes of discrimination against them and the need for action that went beyond analysis, research and legislation.

24. A definition of discrimination was a critical component of legal standards for the protection of women's rights, yet such a definition seemed to be lacking in the new Constitution and the new law on equal opportunities. Moreover, in order for national legislation to be harmonized with the Convention, a comprehensive analysis should be carried out, not only of overtly discriminatory provisions of the law, but also of weaknesses and ambiguities that could be exploited to the detriment of women. She asked whether such an analysis was planned.

25. The response to question 1 of the list of issues indicated that to date no court actions had been initiated by women on the basis of the Convention. She asked whether the Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities had introduced any gender-sensitive procedures. The State party should also indicate what training had been given to judges and whether women had access to the courts and other legal remedies.

26. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** said that when the first female Vice-President of the German Parliament had been elected more than 30 years previously, she had actively encouraged women to take cases to court and had announced that she would support such initiatives. That was a symbolic gesture which the Kyrgyz Government might wish to consider.

27. She requested clarification of the phrase "approved by the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic" in the State party's report. She also asked whether the Government had accepted the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention. She applauded the

constitutional amendments made and wondered whether the State party had considered including a provision stipulating that the Kyrgyz State was responsible for ensuring that the principle of equality was realized in practice. A number of Western European countries had made such amendments to their Constitutions.

28. With regard to municipal government, she asked whether the State party had considered appointing equality officers to monitor local policymaking and the recruitment and promotion of female staff within local administrations. There was a wealth of experience and information relating to the work of such officers in both Western and Eastern Europe.

29. Lastly, she welcomed the reform of the Law on Citizenship but, noting that a child could be given Kyrgyz nationality by written agreement of the parents, she asked what happened if the parents did not agree, particularly since domestic violence was acknowledged to be a major problem. It would be better to stipulate that women had the same right as men to pass on Kyrgyz nationality to children. While the Law on Citizenship corresponded in a formal sense to article 9, paragraph 2, of the Convention, in practice the provision might not be given full effect, given the patriarchal structure of society.

30. **Ms. Neubauer** asked why the functions of the secretariat of the National Council on Women, Family and Gender Development had been transferred to the Social Development Division of the Office of the Government. That change seemed to diminish the importance of gender policy. She wished to know what had become of the secretariat's staff and whether its knowledge and expertise had been transferred to the new structure. Since the Social Development Division was now responsible for the national plan for gender development, she wished to know how it was carrying out its tasks, what mechanisms for coordination and cooperation with relevant actors were in place and what funding was available to ensure the full implementation of the plan.

31. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, said that it was essential to have properly trained gender focal points in ministerial departments in order to incorporate the principle of equality into Government policies. She wished to know whether such focal points existed in Kyrgyzstan. She also asked whether there were officials in municipal

administrations who had special responsibility for promoting equality between men and women.

32. With regard to the achievement of equal numbers of men and women in decision-making bodies, she noted that article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention suggested the institution of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality. Such measures could include quotas for the participation of women in public life; they should be subject to periodic revision and could be abolished once the desired results had been achieved. However, care should be taken to ensure that quotas acted not as ceilings but rather as steps towards the achievement of equal status for women.

33. **Ms. Tashpaeva** (Kyrgyzstan) said that the subject covered by Ms. Dairiam's questions had been discussed frequently in the past few years. The Constitution and the Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities both contained a definition of direct and indirect gender-based discrimination. The standards used for analysis were internationally accepted ones, although an effort had been made to adapt them to the situation in Kyrgyzstan. An inventory of all normative and legislative texts was carried out regularly and the texts were assessed in the light of the international norms adopted by Kyrgyzstan.

34. **Ms. Mambetali** (Kyrgyzstan), responding to the question on conformity of the nationality legislation to article 9 of the Convention, said that the general rule was that a child born in the territory of Kyrgyzstan was a citizen of the country and enjoyed its legal protection. He or she could not be extradited or deported to another country or stripped of his or her nationality without due cause. Only in the event of disputes arising from the fact that one parent was a citizen of another country or when both parents were foreign nationals or stateless persons did the need for agreement between the two parents arise. She agreed, however, that work was still needed on the legislation, and that mechanisms for judicial resolution of disagreements might need to be developed.

35. **Ms. Tashpaeva** (Kyrgyzstan) said that the recent constitutional amendments had emerged from a long process of reform entailing extensive discussions among leading political figures and representatives of NGOs, government bodies and parliamentary committees. A separate gender analysis of the

Constitution had been carried out, and new provisions had been introduced with the aim of putting the principle of equality into practice. All municipal authorities and other local administrative entities had designated individuals to address the promotion of gender equality, and special coordinating committees had been established with the participation of NGOs and the government institutions concerned.

36. Referring to the questions asked by Ms. Neubauer, she said that the National Council was a government organ which operated with the participation of representatives of NGOs and political parties. The main principle behind its reorganization had been the transition from policy formulation to policy implementation. Efforts were being made to ensure that the National Council represented all interested parties and incorporated technical experts. The expertise acquired by the staff of the National Council's former secretariat was being utilized: two former staff members were now before the Committee as members of the Kyrgyz delegation and others were working with the President of Kyrgyzstan on policy formulation.

37. Although 1.5 million som had been allocated from the State budget for specific measures under the national plan of action on gender equality, many activities relating to gender issues were funded from the budgets of individual ministries and departments: for example, the Ministry of Health had a generous budget for action to combat infant mortality. In addition, all government institutions, including ministerial departments, had a designated person who was responsible for gender equality matters. The Government was considering creating a council on gender issues to enable civil society to provide expert assistance to specific ministries and departments. It was also considering the institution of temporary special measures, including quotas, in all spheres of public life.

38. **Ms. Isakunova** (Kyrgyzstan), referring to Ms. Dairiam's comments, said that no legislative measures could be adopted by the Kyrgyz Parliament until the relevant analysis, including gender analysis, had been conducted. The recent reform of the Constitution and the Electoral Code had been carried out on that basis and had contributed to an increase in the number of women in Parliament.

39. With regard to Ms. Neubauer's comments, she said that many staff of the former Secretariat of the National Council on Women, Family and Gender Development would continue to make effective contributions under the new arrangements. A functional analysis was under way, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme, in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the new structure and to make improvements.

40. **Ms. Mambetali** (Kyrgyzstan), referring to the issue of women's recourse to the courts, said that women had brought some cases, mainly concerning their housing and property rights. Other disputes resolved in court covered such matters as the guardianship, care and place of residence of children, child support payments and dissolution of marriage.

Articles 5 and 6

41. **Ms. Patten**, noting that she had visited Kyrgyzstan two years previously, commended the positive measures taken since then, such as the conduct of a study on family violence. She would like to know when the study had been published and what concrete measures had been taken to follow it up. She also requested information about the budget allocated to addressing domestic violence and bride theft, since implementation of the legislation in those areas was extremely poor. A multidisciplinary approach was needed in order to address the problem of domestic violence, both in the community and in the family, and she asked whether such an approach was being applied. She welcomed the improvements in data collection by the National Statistical Committee and asked whether those efforts had been sustained or whether the elaboration of programmes to address domestic violence was hampered by a shortage of gender-disaggregated data.

42. Noting that women victims of violence were reluctant to turn to law enforcement agencies, she asked what efforts had been undertaken to increase the gender sensitivity of law enforcement officers and members of the judiciary. While the increased number of women in the judicial branch was encouraging, the training of judges, police officers and medical and social workers was also important. She wished to know whether any measures were in place to ensure that women were not revictimized by law enforcement officers, for example, whether police stations had special units made up of female police officers. She

also asked whether women were cognizant of the law and had access to legal aid.

43. The report stated that more than 11,000 individuals who systematically committed domestic violence offences had been placed on a register of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and that a further 33,000 were considered to be potential perpetrators of such offences. Those figures were alarming, but worse still was the lack of data on prosecutions. The Kyrgyz Government had an obligation to condemn violence and to ensure that the perpetrators were brought to justice.

44. Lastly, she had heard that there were only 10 crisis centres for domestic violence victims in Kyrgyzstan. She asked what efforts were envisaged by the Government to provide shelter and counselling to victims of violence.

45. **Ms. Begum** congratulated the Kyrgyz Government on the adoption of laws and initiatives to address domestic violence but noted that such violence remained a major problem. The fact that victims turned to crisis centres more often than to law enforcement agencies might be due to a lack of legal literacy among women and the patriarchal nature of society. She asked what strategies were in place to address those factors and whether any campaigns had been conducted to inform women about their rights with regard to marriage, family life, property and inheritance, about the laws and policies on domestic violence and about how to seek redress in the court system.

46. Bride theft was a serious violation of human rights but was the foundation for 51 per cent of all marriages, according to NGO sources. While it might be socially accepted in Kyrgyzstan, it was nevertheless a criminal offence. She wished to know whether any court cases had been filed to redress such crimes and whether the Government was organizing campaigns in order to change attitudes to bride theft.

47. Lastly, she requested information about policies for the provision of care to victims of domestic violence and asked whether sufficient shelters were available, whether women with children, especially minor children were allowed to reside in them and whether they were easily accessible and offered their services free of charge. She also asked what measures were provided for in the latest legislation on violence against women, especially with regard to protecting

women from domestic and workplace violence, marital rape and polygamy.

48. **Ms. Gabr** said that bride theft was prohibited under sharia law; therefore, Kyrgyzstan, as a predominantly Muslim country, must make greater efforts to eliminate the practice. She wished to know whether Kyrgyzstan's sharia experts, as well as the Government and the media, were helping to raise awareness of the issue. She also asked whether any training was provided to members of the judiciary, law enforcement officers and members of Parliament regarding the need to punish those responsible. The incidence of bride theft appeared to be increasing, yet victims tended not to report it. Kyrgyzstan should cooperate with other Muslim countries so as to benefit from their experience in dealing with the problem. Greater efforts to counter gender stereotypes would also be beneficial in that regard.

49. **Ms. Hayashi** welcomed the information provided in the report on government action to combat exploitation of and trafficking in women but wished to know more about the State party's strategy with regard to the key principles of prevention, protection and prosecution. She was pleased to note that legal assistance and rehabilitation services were available to victims, but was concerned that the country's crisis centres were not fully funded by the State. Moreover, she had heard that only one crisis centre, in Bishkek, could accommodate more than 12 persons, and that did not include women with children. For a city with a population of over 1 million which was a transit point for migration and trafficking, one such shelter was clearly not sufficient. The State party should therefore indicate whether it intended to expand the funding of such shelters.

50. NGO sources indicated that the legal assistance provided to victims of trafficking consisted solely of consultations and did not include representation by qualified lawyers in judicial proceedings. Victims of trafficking who voluntarily reported to the Kyrgyz authorities should not face automatic deportations; they should be granted immigrant status so that they could bring court action for unpaid wages or serve as witnesses for the prosecution of traffickers. She wished to know whether there was any legislative provision for giving victims new identities so that they could cooperate with the police without fear of revenge from organized crime groups.

51. **Ms. Tashpaeva** (Kyrgyzstan) said that one of the main lines of gender policy was the struggle against domestic violence. Despite the legal provisions aimed at punishing the perpetrators, victims did not always seek legal redress, out of concern for the effect on their families. The Law on Social and Legal Protection against Domestic Violence, adopted in 2003, was aimed not merely at punishment but also at prevention of violence in its early stages and at protection of victims through the use of temporary protection orders and court protection orders. Temporary protection orders had effect for up to 15 days and imposed restrictions on the activities of alleged perpetrators of domestic violence. Court protection orders were tougher and could be put in place for up to six months. Nevertheless, victims of domestic violence did not always receive the required assistance, particularly from law enforcement officers, owing both to the inadequate training of such officers and to traditional stereotypes of male-female relations. The Government recognized the problem and was working to change the situation.

52. Special courses on sensitivity to gender-based violence were included in the curricula for students of the Academy and the Secondary School of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the teaching staff were also provided with training on gender-related issues. With the help of NGOs, special handbooks had been developed for law enforcement officers who dealt directly with the problem of violence against women. In the past two months, all police officers in Bishkek and the surrounding region had attended a seminar on preventing domestic violence, and similar seminars would be held in all other regions of the country in the future. Legislative amendments were to be proposed in order to make it easier to serve temporary and court protection orders.

53. Although some improvements had been made to data collection methods, statistics on domestic violence still did not give a clear picture of the situation, partly because some victims were reluctant to report violence. Therefore, one of the aims of the national plan of action was to ensure that statistical data on victims and perpetrators of domestic violence were as up-to-date as possible. Special attention was also being paid to the collection of disaggregated data on victims of trafficking and domestic violence. Since 2004, the official statistics of law enforcement and judicial bodies had been supplemented by data from crisis

centres. Such data were published by the National Statistical Committee.

54. **Ms. Mambetali** (Kyrgyzstan) said that the country's laws criminalized bride theft, forced marriage, rape and incitement of minors to commit a crime. However, despite the recent adoption of specific legislation on violence against women, statistics showed that few women sought redress in the courts. Moreover, the use of protection orders was still limited.

55. Law enforcement officials often recorded cases of domestic violence as breaches of the peace or similar offences because the procedure for the latter was simpler. It was therefore necessary to educate such officials about domestic violence. In the judicial branch, judges completed compulsory courses once a year on legislative changes and law enforcement practice.

56. Trafficking in persons was an offence under the Criminal Code and involved not only the concept of buying and selling a human being but also sexual exploitation and unlawful imprisonment. In a number of cases involving the transport of women out of Kyrgyzstan for purposes of sexual exploitation, individuals had been convicted under migration laws and on charges of facilitating sexual exploitation. The establishment of premises for purposes of sexual exploitation and drug use was also a criminal offence.

57. With regard to legal redress for victims of domestic violence, crisis centres provided only preliminary legal consultations. Legal aid from qualified lawyers was funded by the State only when a case came to court; indeed, in those circumstances it was guaranteed under the Constitution. A law on witness protection had been adopted but, owing to a lack of resources, it had not yet been fully implemented.

58. **Ms. Isakunova** (Kyrgyzstan) said it was true that there were not enough shelters for victims of violence, especially in cities. However, some crisis centres offering services free of charge had been established within hospitals. Women, both with and without children, could go to crisis centres, although there was not always enough room to accommodate them. The number of appeals for help in connection with family conflicts was 8,000 to 10,000 per year, and over 3,000 domestic violence cases were brought before the courts each year.

59. Parliamentary hearings in June 2008 had given a strong impetus to practical application of the new legislation on domestic violence. A special manual had been prepared and was already being used in training courses. The goal was to furnish one to every police officer. In addition, a number of seminars had been held for municipal court judges and officials of the Supreme Court and the Ministry of Justice.

60. With regard to awareness-raising measures, she said that government institutions, NGOs and international organizations had been running joint information campaigns since 2004. Kyrgyzstan also participated in events to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and the “16 Days of Activism to End Violence against Women” each year.

61. In 2005 a special law had been adopted to prevent trafficking in persons. It set out concrete mechanisms for the protection of victims and provided for interaction among government institutions to prevent trafficking. In addition, the Government had recently adopted a national plan to combat trafficking in persons.

62. **Ms. Sagynbaeva** (Kyrgyzstan), replying to questions on health matters, said that medical statistics on victims of violence, both physical and psychological, had been collected since 2006 and showed that fewer than 300 individuals a year sought medical treatment as a result of violence. That number was probably lower than the actual number of victims; in the case of women, traditional attitudes and the patriarchal structure of society often prevented them from seeking help.

63. Victims of violence were given hospital treatment free of charge for three days, after which a decision was taken on the need for further hospitalization and medical care. When an individual was registered as a victim of violence, medical staff alerted the law enforcement agencies, and a forensic medical expert was asked to identify signs of infliction of harm. Medical institutions and hospitals maintained close links with crisis centres to ensure that treatment was available to people who turned to crisis centres rather than to medical institutions for help.

64. In order to encourage victims of violence to seek medical attention, efforts were being made to raise people’s awareness of their rights and of where they could go for help. In the past few years rural health

committees had worked to draw attention to health issues such as hypertension and maternal and child health. Most recently, they had focused on social issues such as alcoholism and drug addiction and the following year they would be focusing on violence against women and children. Such violence was also addressed in the media.

65. **Ms. Isakunova** (Kyrgyzstan) said that the problem of bride theft was acknowledged at the national level and efforts were being made to eradicate the practice. Although the Constitution and sharia law outlawed bride theft, the majority of citizens lived in accordance with their own interpretation of Islam. Cooperation with other Muslim countries was envisaged in the current strategy to eliminate bride theft. In addition, various information campaigns were being carried out; for example, in 2004 the theme of the “16 Days of Activism” had been “Bride theft — it’s not a tradition, it’s a crime”. Numerous information booklets had also been issued. However, it was clear that further efforts were required.

66. A campaign was currently under way to make people aware that bride theft was not a tradition of the Kyrgyz people, as corroborated by research conducted on marriage in Kyrgyzstan over the centuries. The practice had become common in the Soviet period and had spread even more in the years since the achievement of independence. The problem would be highlighted again during the 16 Days of Activism for 2008. In addition, the legislation on domestic violence, was being updated by a working group that included parliamentarians and representatives of NGOs.

67. **Mr. Nazarov** (Kyrgyzstan) said that parliamentary hearings played an important role in the work being done on domestic violence. Most of the recommendations made to national and local authorities after the recent hearings had been implemented, and the proposed amendments to existing legislation would be discussed at parliamentary hearings in due course.

68. **The Chairperson** invited members to ask follow-up questions on the articles discussed.

69. **Ms. Pimentel** requested information on how government authorities, prosecutors, police officers, judges, teachers and health and social workers dealt with violence against women in all its manifestations, including aggression and discrimination against sex

workers and discrimination against women on the basis of their sexual orientation.

70. **Ms. Dairiam** asked whether there was a legislative mandate regarding gender focal points and requested information about their relationship to the Social Development Division. The State party should also indicate whether all ministries were required to report to the Division on gender equality matters so as to ensure consistency of efforts.

71. With regard to the Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities, she asked what measures were in place to ensure that women could enjoy equal opportunities in practice. Moreover, women should be able to bring court cases not only in the domain of family law or violence, but also with regard to discrimination in access to public services, employment and other economic resources. She wished to know whether appropriate mechanisms were in place to enable them to do so.

72. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** asked whether any research had been done into the causes of the increase in bride theft. She wondered whether the men involved gained some sort of material benefit, or whether it was simply a power game.

73. **Ms. Mambetali** (Kyrgyzstan) said that Kyrgyz criminal legislation established penalties for the recruitment of minors to engage in antisocial behaviour, including prostitution, and for establishing or keeping premises for the provision of sexual services. Prostitution was not directly punishable, although cases could be registered as breaches of the generally accepted norms of behaviour in public places and brought before the courts.

74. Sex workers were particularly at risk of violence at the hands of their clients or of others, including law enforcement officers. They, like anyone else, could report such cases under Kyrgyz law, but had to do so in a timely fashion so that the extent of their injuries could be established. A number of such cases had resulted in convictions of law enforcement officers for violence and abuse of their official position.

75. **Ms. Tashpaeva** (Kyrgyzstan), responding to Ms. Dairiam's questions, said that the Social Development Division as the working body of the National Council on Women, Family and Gender Development, ensured smooth relations between the Council and other State authorities, NGOs and

international organizations. With regard to bride theft, efforts were being made to identify the reasons for the recent increase in the number of cases. One reason was the country's economic situation; another was the lack of opportunities for young people to socialize with members of the opposite sex. Efforts were being made to address that problem, for example by promoting leisure activities for young people and helping youth organizations to raise awareness of the fact that bride theft was a criminal offence.

76. **Ms. Isakunova** (Kyrgyzstan), responding to Ms. Pimentel's question, said that in-depth research had established that the groups most vulnerable to violence were women who were victims of economic or sexual exploitation, women of limited financial means and those who were members of sexual minorities. The identification of those groups and of the reasons why they were at risk would make it easier to address the problem. At the same time, data collection mechanisms must be improved and more research must be done so as to form a clearer picture of the phenomenon.

77. Research on the increase in bride theft had been carried out by NGOs, experts and State institutions, including the judiciary, the Ombudsman and law enforcement agencies. In addition, the American University of Central Asia had made a hard-hitting documentary on the subject, which was discussed at seminars for judges and law enforcement officers.

78. **Ms. Sagynbaeva** (Kyrgyzstan), referring to health care for vulnerable population groups, said that over 70 NGOs were involved in the State programme to prevent HIV/AIDS. The Ministry of Health carried out a yearly epidemiological analysis of the incidence of HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases and tuberculosis among sex workers and members of sexual minorities with a view to planning measures to support the affected populations.

79. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** said that much of the discussion on violence against women had focused on crisis centres for women and their children. However, it was the men who committed violence who should move out of the family home. Such a measure would allow women and children to remain in their homes and would also force violent men to reflect on the consequences of their actions.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.