



**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 657th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 14 July, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Açar
later: Ms. Shin (Vice-Chairperson)
later: Ms. Açar (Chairperson)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

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

Combined initial, second and third periodic report of Latvia (CEDAW/C/LVA/1-3)

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

2. **Mr. Jegermanis** (Latvia) said that he wished to provide a historical context for the presentation of his country's combined initial, second and third periodic report. Latvia had been erased from history for 50 years during the period of Soviet rule and had regained independence only in 1991. It had immediately set about rebuilding its economy, its society and its legislation. Although it had achieved a great deal, it had not had time to achieve all that it might have wished. Russia's troops had not left the country until 1994 and Latvia's priority then had been to become a member of the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). It was only now that it had achieved membership of those organizations that it could turn its attention to other matters. However, he did not wish to give the impression that his delegation had come before the Committee in order to justify itself. On the contrary, it was open to all critical remarks and questions. He also welcomed dialogue with non-governmental organizations, as it was only through dialogue that results could be achieved.

3. **Ms. Druviete** (Latvia), introducing her country's report, said that since regaining its independence Latvia had ratified many international human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which had come into effect in May 1992. The Constitution of Latvia included the general principle of prohibition of discrimination, as well as the principle of equality. Her Government had established a legislative foundation for promoting equality between men and women, prohibiting gender discrimination and enacting regulations for the advancement of women. In that context, the most significant laws were the Law on Labour Protection, the new Labour Code and the Law on Sexual and Reproductive Health. Actions undertaken by public institutions were prescribed by

laws that regulated their operation and that were subordinated to and harmonized with the Constitution, thus ensuring that the principle of gender equality was observed. Provisions aimed at eliminating discrimination against women were included in laws related to each specific area, such as education, the media and the judiciary.

4. The Department of Social Policy Development in the Ministry of Welfare had been established in 1999 to coordinate gender equality issues, and the Division on Public Integration and Gender Equality had been created in 2000. In October 2001 the Cabinet of Ministers had adopted the Concept for the implementation of gender equality in Latvia, incorporating an institutional mechanism for gender equality issues. At the end of 2001 a working group on coordination of gender equality had been established, comprising representatives of ministries, non-governmental organizations and research institutions. The working group was charged with formulating a programme for the implementation of gender equality and coordinating efforts to include the principle of gender equality in existing and future legislation.

5. Other noteworthy institutions that had been established in recent years were the Latvian Association for Gender Equality (2000), the Gender Equality Council and the Ministerial Secretariats for Children's and Family Affairs and for Social Integration Affairs (2002), and the Parliamentary Subcommittee on Gender Equality (2003). Furthermore, the Programme for the Implementation of Gender Equality (2005-2006) would soon be adopted by the Council of Ministers.

6. Latvia's traditional cultural base was the patriarchal peasant family, in which women were highly respected, but were viewed primarily as mothers. The influence of Christian traditions and canon law tended to reinforce that tradition. Women had enjoyed political and civil rights on an equal basis with men from the foundation of the Republic of Latvia in 1918 to its annexation by the former Soviet Union in 1940. The gender equality practised during the Soviet period had often ignored women's specific physiological and psychological needs.

7. Since the restoration of independence, attitudes towards gender equality had been slowly evolving. The community had access to information concerning the activities of women's organizations, political parties

and associations aimed at changing stereotyped attitudes. However, although some progress had been achieved, much remained to be done by her Government, non-governmental organizations and society as a whole.

8. With respect to the prevention of discrimination in political and public life, particular attention had been paid to gender equality issues at all levels of decision-making. There were no restrictions regarding electoral rights. Of the 100 seats in Latvia's current Saeima (Parliament), 18 were occupied by women, while the Commission on Human Rights and Public Affairs, the Commission on the Implementation of Citizenship Law and the Commission on Social and Labour Affairs were all headed by women. Moreover, Latvian law imposed no restrictions on women's participation in the formulation of national policies or their right to hold public office. Since 1999 the Presidency had been held by a woman, and the Ministers of Culture, Justice and Welfare were all women. There was also a comparatively large number of women serving in the Latvian diplomatic service.

9. The right to work was an inalienable right guaranteed equally to men and women, and the Labour Law prohibited unequal treatment on grounds of gender. Women who believed that their employment rights had been violated were entitled to seek redress in the courts, although very few complaints concerning clear cases of gender discrimination had been submitted to the Latvian National Human Rights Office (LNHRO). Citizens were able to participate in various areas of economic life without facing discrimination and no gender-related restrictions were imposed on the free choice of profession and employment. The Law on Civil Service established the criteria for testing applicants and discrimination on gender grounds was not permitted. Women made up 60 per cent of the civil service. Although men continued to dominate the higher ranks of civil society, women's participation continued to increase. Trade unions had developed a specific programme for promoting equality for working women.

10. The right to equal pay for equal work was enshrined in the Labour Code. In 2002, however, women's average gross salary had been 82 per cent that of men. Part of the reason for that was gender segregation in the labour market. For example, statistics showed that most women chose to work for public or municipal enterprises, which offered secure

social benefits, but lower pay. The social security system guaranteed equality in social services, regardless of gender, nationality or religious affiliation. However, according to the LNHRO, poverty had a clear gender component. Women with children were poorer than those without children, since caring for a child restricted women's economic potential. Regulations on unemployment benefits did not discriminate according to gender.

11. In order to prevent discrimination against women on grounds of marriage or maternity, the Labour Law included a provision preventing employers from trying to determine whether potential women employees were pregnant. Moreover, the law also provided that pregnant women or women with children under three years of age could not be dismissed. Access to health care continued to improve, and special attention had been paid to reproductive health. The Law on the Sexual and Reproductive Health of the Population had entered into force in July 2002. The Health Promotion Centre, the National Family Health Centre and the Association for Family Planning and Sexual Health all provided information on family health, family welfare and family planning. Drug dependency and HIV/AIDS infection were both increasing rapidly, however. Most HIV/AIDS sufferers were between 15 and 49 years of age. There were worrying signs that the rates of heterosexual and vertical transmission would increase further. With regard to domestic violence, she noted that the LNHRO had received few complaints about domestic violence. However, although national laws provided for criminal liability in cases of physical violence, the law enforcement authorities had not always paid sufficient attention to the manifestations of physical violence. Moreover, the laws did not recognize psychological violence, either at work or in the home. In an effort to improve the attitude of the police towards domestic violence, the Central Criminal Police Board worked with a crisis centre, and police officers were given training on crisis situations and family violence.

12. Latvia was a signatory to the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others. National laws, however, did not fully comply with international standards in that regard. In an effort to remedy the situation, the Cabinet of Ministers had adopted the National Programme for the Prevention of Human Trafficking (2004-2008). Although national legislation

did criminalize the encouragement of prostitution and trafficking in persons, sex tourism and trafficking in women were both increasing, and the involvement of minors in prostitution also gave cause for concern.

13. With respect to education, she noted that women's right to education without discrimination was guaranteed by the Constitution. For the 2002-2003 academic year, 61.7 per cent of students in higher education were women. There were no gender-based restrictions regarding access to student loans. However, successful implementation of the Programme on Gender Equality required that society become more aware of gender equality issues, and that would in turn require changes in educational content. Educational institutions had also taken steps to eliminate negative stereotypes, but the Latvian Association for Gender Equality had indicated that further efforts were needed in that regard.

14. **Ms. Gabr** said she fully appreciated that Latvia's recent political priorities had been to achieve membership of the European Union and NATO, but that the priority for the Committee was the State party's contractual obligations under the Convention. She welcomed the re-election of Latvia's woman president and hoped that the delegation would be able to provide information that was missing from the report, such as gender-disaggregated statistics and details concerning the practical implementation of legislation. The absence of complaints submitted by Latvian women did not mean that none existed; it was frequently the case that women failed to submit complaints owing to a lack of awareness of their rights, a lack of safeguards and a lack of follow-up and implementation mechanisms.

15. **Ms. Šimonović**, noting that Latvia had ratified the Convention in 1992, asked why it had delayed so long in submitting its report and expressed the hope that future reports would be more timely. It would be helpful to know whether the report had been translated into Latvian and whether it was available to the public. It would also be useful to know whether non-governmental organizations (NGOs) other than the Latvian Association for Gender Equality had been involved in the preparation of the report. Information should be provided on the government funding available to NGOs, as well as further information on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and Beijing+5. She additionally requested data on the current and potential future number of women in the

judiciary and asked whether Latvia intended to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

16. **Ms. Morvai** requested details of the gender equality projects already implemented and the results achieved. She also wished to know how the Programme for the Implementation of Gender Equality for 2005-2006 was to be implemented and monitored and whether ministries had standardized channels for working with the relevant national machinery in the light of gender-mainstreaming needs. It would also be helpful if the State party could indicate in what way NGOs were involved in planning for the short, medium and long terms and in monitoring. Detailed information on the number of women's NGOs and their activities would be appreciated; in particular, she would like to know whether they received government funding and, if so, what the conditions and procedures for application were. Furthermore, concrete figures should be provided on the funding granted to NGOs in recent years, as well as details on the recipients.

Article 2

17. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** asked the State party to indicate whether references to the Convention had been introduced into the Latvian laws that had recently been amended to bring them into line with European Union directives. Furthermore, the legal basis for the introduction of special temporary measures should be clarified, bearing in mind that as a country in transition, Latvia still had many discriminatory practices and traditions to eliminate. In that connection, she would be grateful for information on any temporary special measure included in the Programme for the Implementation of Gender Equality and in what areas of activity. If no such measures were included, the reason should be specified.

18. Latvian judges were clearly in need of gender-specific training. Latvian women in visible public positions should encourage other Latvian women to claim their just rights.

19. Lastly, she wished to know why Latvia had issued no publications on women's rights under international instruments, in particular the Convention, and urged it to do so. It would be useful to learn whether the human rights publications which had been issued at least included a gender dimension.

20. **Ms. Šimonović** requested examples of any cases in which the Convention had been applied by Latvia's

national courts or by its constitutional court. She also wished to know whether the Convention was included as a regular topic in the law school curriculum.

21. **Ms. Patten** asked whether Latvia had any intention of bringing its Constitution into line with the Convention by including a definition of discrimination. Details should be provided on the gender equality projects already implemented and the efforts under way to ensure the full implementation of the laws enacted to protect women's rights. She would also appreciate information on steps the Latvian Government had taken to raise women's awareness of such laws. In particular, it would be helpful to learn whether any legal aid system was in place and, if so, what its budget was, whether it covered all types of cases, including those relating to employment and family, and how many women had benefited from it. Lastly, she requested data on the number of women members of the judiciary.

22. **Mr. Flinterman** wished to know more about the role of the National Human Rights Office, namely, the size of its budget, the number of cases it had dealt with, whether it could bring court proceedings, whether women were obliged to complain to it before bringing court proceedings and whether its procedures were well known. He further wished to know about its role in informing, educating and raising awareness among women and also whether it made recommendations to the Government and other bodies.

Article 3

23. **Ms. Shin** asked to be provided with a government organizational chart in order to identify clearly which of the many bodies mentioned was responsible for the design and implementation of policies on gender equality. She also wished to know how many people were employed in each body and the budgets allocated to each, bearing in mind that a strong national machinery for gender equality was essential to the success of gender mainstreaming. Lastly, the relationship of such machinery to the National Human Rights Office, and whether it referred complaints to that Office or dealt with them itself, should be clarified.

24. **Ms. Ferrer Gomez** said that she, too, was confused as to the functions of the individual entities within the national machinery and how they interacted. She requested clarification of how the Ministry for

Children and Family Affairs carried out the wide range of work involved; it would be more appropriate if the Ministry were to include the word "women" in its title, in view of the importance of the gender perspective. Given that the activity of Latvian civil society in gender-related fields was considered insufficient, she wondered why the establishment of a centre for the promotion of gender equality and a mechanism for the examination of gender-related disputes had been rejected. She also requested information on the main features of the Programme for the Implementation of Gender Equality and on the activities and outcomes of the gender equality projects already implemented.

25. *Ms. Shin (Vice-Chairperson) took the Chair.*

26. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** requested clarification of the national machinery for gender equality and of whether the proposed centre for the promotion of gender equality was a new mechanism or the same as the Gender Equality Council. As there were 33 women's NGOs in Latvia, the reporting State should explain the reason for the apparently special relationship between the Government and the Latvian Association for Gender Equality in particular. She would be grateful for details on whether the Government had a formal relationship with NGOs or whether they were integrated into a council, and whether they worked on projects on an ad hoc basis.

Article 4

27. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** drew the attention of the Latvian delegation to general recommendation 25 and asked whether all the general recommendations of the Committee had been translated into Latvian.

28. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** said that the advancement of women could be accomplished much more rapidly through the adoption of special temporary measures and stressed the importance of using the entire range of media to raise the profile of women, publicize the Convention and increase awareness of the benefits to be gained from its implementation. She therefore suggested that the Latvian delegation should carefully consider and systematically implement general recommendation 25 in order to achieve gender equality as early as possible.

29. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** drew attention to the statement in the report that de facto equality-promoting measures were not characteristic for Latvia since the subject was covered by constitutional guarantees; that

was surprising since other parts of the report made it clear that inequalities persisted in spite of those guarantees. Legislation was not enough; even with a woman president, for instance, less than 30 per cent of the members of Parliament were women, and the figure was not increasing. More was needed to effect real changes in society; sometimes that demanded special measures as well, and the delegation would do well to consider carefully the content of Recommendation 25.

Article 5

30. **Ms. Patten** expressed concern at the lack of data on violence against women and government measures deal with it, since gender-based violence was a form of discrimination and a serious hindrance to equality between men and women. She wondered whether the lack of a specific law in that respect had to do with the Government considering domestic life to be a private sphere. No new information had been provided in the oral statement beyond what was stated in the report; she would be interested to know whether any new law on the subject was envisaged, and she urged the Government to take all appropriate measures including legislation, since it was an obligation of States to protect women from violence and provide support to its victims. The report mentioned cooperation between the police and a crisis centre, and it would be helpful to know how many crisis centres there were and also whether there were shelters. The Criminal Code did not specifically mention domestic violence. She wondered whether special training was provided for the judiciary and law enforcement agencies on gender-based violence and how many female officers there were in the police force.

31. The report mentioned the low number of complaints to the National Human Rights Office concerning domestic violence; it would be helpful to know what powers the Human Rights Office had in such cases and how it dealt with complaints.

32. **The Chairperson**, speaking in her personal capacity, wondered whether any national surveys had been carried out on the subject of violence against women, especially domestic violence. Surveys showed that, in some countries, domestic violence accounted for 30 per cent to 70 per cent of all violence. Compiling statistics which showed the reality of the situation for women was the starting-point for dealing with the issue. The reporting State should indicate whether there was an action plan for women and if so,

whether the issue of violence, especially domestic violence, was covered in the plan.

33. **Ms. Achmad** drew attention to the statement in the report that measures to realize equality often achieved the reverse effect. The Government should indicate how it proposed to address that issue, the report further stated that since Latvia had regained its independence in 1991, emphasis had been placed on women's individual choices. It was important to monitor not only whether equal opportunities existed, but also whether they achieved equal results; often the opportunities were there, but the results were lacking. The National Human Rights Office had recommended amendments to the criminal law, but it would be interesting to learn how the Government planned to address the need for a specific law on domestic violence, since that was a sphere in which governments had an important role to play.

34. More information would be appreciated on the national machinery for women's rights and human rights, and also on the role of NGOs in that respect. A reading of paragraphs 34 and 35 of the report showed how important it was for all actions to be implemented simultaneously, with the national machinery coordinating all the efforts.

35. *Ms. Açar (Chairperson) resumed the Chair.*

36. **Ms. Morvai** said that data should be provided on the number of women killed each year by a husband or partner or a former husband or partner, since an assault which resulted in death was often expressed statistically as an assault rather than a homicide. Normally such killings were preceded by long years of domestic abuse, which the State had a duty to curtail, for instance, by a restraining order, since it was a basic principle of justice that the perpetrator of violence and not the victims should be forced to leave the home. It was unclear whether the concept of a restraining order existed in the Latvian system; if so, she would be grateful for information on how many such orders were issued each year, and if not, on how many arrests were made to curtail domestic violence. It was the obligation of the police, not the National Human Rights Office to respond to domestic violence. She drew attention to the need for sufficient numbers of shelters for battered women even if orders of protection were issued (General Recommendation 19); it would be useful to know how many shelter beds were available, and what funding existed to support them.

37. Although, abortion was usually dealt with under article 12, the rates were high in Latvia as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, and that meant that abortion, too, was a form of abuse. She welcomed the fact that the incidence of abortion had fallen, but wondered whether the delegation was aware that their figures were five or six times higher than the average for the European Union as a whole. Abortion interfered with both the body and the soul of a woman, and it was important to be aware of men's responsibility for family planning.

38. **Ms. Khan** welcomed the fact that Latvia had dwelt in detail in both the report and the oral statement on the lack of understanding of the principle of non-discrimination and the prevalence of the peasant and patriarchal mentality; nevertheless, she found the Government's approach fragmented rather than comprehensive. Temporary special measures were needed, such as efforts to implement gender-sensitive education, since, Latvia's educational system still promoted gender segregation. She welcomed the Law on Advertising, which prohibited gender discrimination, but gender-discriminatory recruitment policies were not being penalized. If it was really the case that television commercials and other media did not depict women as sex objects, then that was very laudable, but it would be useful to know whether there was any censorship board overseeing such matters. It would also be interesting to learn what measures were being implemented to popularize the Convention, in Latvian, Russian or other languages, how the national machinery coordinated its activities with those of the Ministry for Children and Family Affairs and the Social Affairs Subcommittee in Parliament, which body was ultimately responsible for disseminating information about the Convention, and whether its provisions were incorporated in the Government's Programme for the Implementation of Gender Equality (2005-2006).

39. **Ms. Coker-Appiah** said that further details should be provided on any programmes to train the law enforcement agencies, the police and judiciary, and health workers in dealing with violence against women. The report showed that the attitude of all those entities and individuals determined whether and how women reported violence to the police. It was unclear whether there was a programme to sensitize the public to that issue. The report mentioned a patriarchal attitude towards women that was prevalent in Latvia;

gender stereotyping was one cause of violence against women.

40. **Ms. Ferrer Gómez**, referring to the seminars, workshops and media campaigns to counter stereotypes that were mentioned in the report, requested the State party to indicate whether they were one-time or regular events, and whether they were intended for the whole of Latvian society or only for women. The report referred to the Association for Gender Equality; she wondered whether there was any systematic work being done by the Government in that field as it was important that NGOs should not shoulder the burden alone. There was no mention in the report of any government programme to counter stereotypes, for instance, by training teachers, doctors and lawyers and making sure that women knew their rights. Information on whether the Convention had been translated into local languages, and whether it had become law in Latvia, would be welcome.

Article 6

41. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** pointed out the seriousness of the situation with regard to prostitution. Very young women and girls who had been sexually abused in childhood and had no permanent place of residence were being shipped to neighbouring countries, or to Latvia from neighbouring countries and were unable to help themselves. The report cited Latvia's socio-economic situation as the reason why more help and support was not available to reintegrate them into society. The most basic and fundamental rights of those young women were at stake. Measures had been taken to cooperate with other States on the problem, and that was laudable, but more needed to be done; their rights and dignity required no less than a full-scale response. Mention had been made of the 2004-2008 Programme for Prevention of Human Trafficking, to include preventive and rehabilitation measures, and it would be useful to know whether the programme was already set up and working effectively.

42. **Ms. Morvai** said that specific figures should be provided on what was a very serious crime, for instance, on the issue of how many women had been trafficked to, from or through Latvia. The data on the number of women and girls engaging in prostitution would afford an idea of how many men were their clients, an aspect of the problem that was not always taken into account. The work of the United Nations and experience with instruments dealing with the

trafficking of women showed that the best way to prevent trafficking was to tackle the closely related problem of prostitution, and the best way to tackle prostitution was to attack the demand. It was easy to calculate the number of clients by taking the number of women engaged in prostitution and multiplying by 5 to 10 per day; that showed the number of men, usually married men with children, who were using those women and girls as objects, and they should be the first to be targeted. She wondered what the specific results had been of the Nordic campaign to combat trafficking in women, and what Latvia's budget contribution to that campaign had been. Further details should be provided on whether it was a crime to use children under the age of 18 in prostitution, and whether it was possible to prosecute the prostitutes' clients.

43. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** pointed out that there was still room for Latvia to be more active in efforts to combat trafficking on both a bilateral and a multilateral basis, since some Conventions remained to be ratified. As had been pointed out, however, the most important thing was to address the causes of trafficking. It would be interesting to learn whether a study had been conducted of why young women were being lured abroad more and more often, whether it was by being offered lucrative "jobs" which turned out to be something very different from what they expected, and whether they were being taught in school or told by NGOs of the dangers involved. If the causes of emigration were economic, it would be useful to know what jobs were available for them in Latvia.

Article 7

44. **Ms. Gaspard** said that clarification should be provided on the percentage of women in the Latvian Parliament. She welcomed the high number of women elected to local office. Local authorities had an important part to play in combating violence and in organizing aspects of daily life such as the balance between work and home. Many Scandinavian countries practised "gender budgeting" and she wondered whether Latvia too encouraged such practices. The reporting State should specify how many women had been candidates for election to the European Parliament.

45. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani**, noting that the voting age for local and parliamentary elections was 21, asked whether candidates for president also had to be 21 years old. There were very few women in the executive

branch, and she wondered whether the bill to combat discrimination would move faster towards adoption if they were more numerous. Parliament had rejected a proposal that in lists of candidates, men should account for no more than 75 per cent and women no less than 25 per cent; that proposal should be resubmitted, because the Inter-Parliamentary Union had suggested that women must represent, at minimum 30 per cent of the members of parliaments in order to ensure their effective influence on decision-making and eliminate discrimination against them. She also wondered whether judges were elected or appointed and if the latter, why so few of them were women.

46. There should be specially trained women police officers to work on combating prostitution and trafficking in women and to lead prosecution teams in such cases.

Article 9

47. **Ms. Coker-Appiah** asked for clarification of the nationality laws: did persons born in Latvia of Latvian parents acquire citizenship automatically or, as implied in paragraph 77 of the report, by registration; could women as well as men pass on Latvian citizenship to their foreign-born spouses and their children?

48. **Mr. Flinterman** applauded the Government's policy of integrating its Russian-speaking minority — which, despite its long ties to the country, was denied citizenship — through naturalization under the 1994 Citizenship Law; he asked whether the women within that minority fully enjoyed their rights under the Convention. It was difficult to imagine a case in which a Latvian-born child of 13 was not recognized as a Latvian citizen because (s)he had been imprisoned for more than five years for having committed a crime (report, para. 76). He also wondered why more women tended to apply for naturalization than men (*ibid.*, para. 79) and wished to know how many women had been naturalized. The statement (*ibid.*, para. 80) that professions dominated by men were held in higher esteem by society was not compatible with the provisions of the Convention.

Article 10

49. **Ms. Manalo**, asked if women — who represented 50 per cent of students — were following more traditional courses rather than courses in scientific and technical fields. The report provided no information on

how many women were professors or held senior positions in universities; outside sources indicated that there were very few, and it would be interesting to learn if Latvia had any plans to remedy that situation by taking special measures under article 4, paragraph 1 of the Convention. She urged the Government to devise special study programmes for girls who had dropped out of school, for whom nothing was currently being done (report, para. 110): perhaps it could seek the assistance of non-governmental organizations, setting aside funds for the purpose. It was good that social studies courses on women's rights were being taught in primary and secondary schools, but she wondered if the textbooks used were monitored for the avoidance of stereotypes.

50. **Ms. Achmad** requested information on the kinds of courses that were taught in continuing education (report, para. 108) and statistics on the number of school dropouts and the number of private versus public schools. The statistics should be disaggregated by sex, age, ethnic origin and rural versus urban background. She would appreciate an explanation of why unemployment among women had risen. Perhaps, because of stereotyping, women had been channelled into courses of study that did not prepare them for the jobs that were available.

51. **Ms. Gaspard** asked whether there was any discrimination between men and women in the training offered in the qualifying courses for professorships and whether the schools sponsored campaigns to direct girls towards scientific and engineering studies. It would be useful to have a large quantity of educational statistics, broken down by sex, especially with regard to higher education.

Article 11

52. **Ms. Khan** wondered whether many women retired early as a result of the critical level of unemployment among women, especially in rural areas, what percentage of Russian-speaking, Roma and other minority women were unemployed, and what percentage of unemployed women were receiving unemployment insurance. It was not clear if the wage gap between men and women in all professions (report, para. 151) existed in the public sector as well, and whether there were any trade unions operating in the public sector that advocated special measures. It would be useful to know what the Government was doing to reduce unemployment and narrow the wage gap.

53. **Ms. Ferrer Gómez** observed that although the Labour Code was said to forbid gender discrimination, it apparently allowed exceptions in cases where a particular occupation could be performed only by a member of a specific sex (report, paras. 124-125). She asked if certain types of work were considered the exclusive preserve of men, and if women had ever successfully challenged such a contention.

54. **Ms. Gnacadja** said that women were at a disadvantage in finding jobs since they were often passed over because of the possibility of pregnancy or the fact that they had small children (report, para. 125). Discrimination obviously existed, although the report (para. 127) cited only two court cases involving violations of the principle of equal opportunity. Women suffered from exclusion from certain occupations, lower-paying work and lack of welfare benefits (report, paras. 152-153). Inadequate data and a lack of suitable rapid-response machinery had been cited as reasons for the persistence of labour discrimination. She hoped that the forthcoming Programme for the Implementation of Gender Equality (2005-2006) would remedy the situation and would be well funded. It was not clear which government agency was responsible for day-to-day monitoring of equal opportunity in employment, or whether the social assistance provided to persons not covered by social security was available also at the local level.

55. **Ms. Patten** asked whether the Labour Code provided for any monitoring mechanisms such as industrial tribunals to hear complaints, including complaints of sexual harassment, and whether women were being made aware of their rights. Did the National Human Rights Office have a mandate with regard to labour law violations? Statistics should be provided on the positions held by women in such sectors as the civil service, particularly at the senior level, and information on what the Government was doing about the gender-segregated labour market and the lack of equal pay for equal work. A gender-neutral job evaluation system might pave the way for remedying that situation.

56. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** asked whether the ministries currently setting new pay scales were alert to hidden gender biases in the system. A remark in the oral introduction about the special physiological and psychological needs of women disturbed her, because such differences had long since been disproved. She was concerned as well that the amount of

compensation to victims of discrimination was left to the discretion of the courts, which might mean that remedies were not provided.

57. **Ms. Gabr** asked what new legislation the Government was considering in the labour field to benefit women, and how it was assisting mothers with children, who were particularly vulnerable to poverty.

Article 12

58. **Ms. Coker-Appiah** said that the report had provided no information on the Government's HIV/AIDS policy and any plan for providing free drugs, which was crucial in view of the alarming 100 per cent increase in the disease among women between 1998 and 2000.

59. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** asked for information about the Government's family planning policy, including the age at which young girls had a right to use contraceptives and whether they were provided free of charge or cheaply. It would also be useful to know whether men were also educated in contraceptive methods and if there was a real effort to move beyond the male pleasure principle to a more modern attitude. One of the key elements in the Convention was the liberation of women by restoring to them full control over their bodies.

60. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** asked if older women received free health care or if they were obliged to pay fees that might restrict their access.

Article 14

61. **Ms. Šimonović** asked whether men as well as women received only primary education in rural areas and whether any secondary education was available to the rural population.

Article 16

62. **Ms. Manalo** requested clarification as to the exceptional circumstances that would allow 16-year-olds to marry although the legal age for marriage was 18 (report, para. 301).

63. **Ms. Šimonović** asked the delegation to resolve a discrepancy. The report (para. 321) stated that a married man had the right to recognize his paternity of a child born to another woman irrespective of the consent of his wife, whereas information from non-governmental organizations implied just the opposite,

namely, that under civil law, paternity could be recognized only by a legally free man and that the wife's consent was needed in the case of a married man.

64. **Ms. Druviete** (Latvia) expressed appreciation for the Committee's thorough reading of her Government's report, its interest in gender equality in Latvia and the helpful questions raised. Through a common effort, Latvia should be able to achieve equal rights according to international standards.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.