



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

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

Summary record of the 569th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 6 August 2002, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Abaka

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

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

Fifth periodic report of Mexico (CEDAW/C/MEX/5)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Espinosa, Ms. Carranza, Ms. Bonfil Sanchez, Ms. Wolthers and Ms. Rocio Garcia Gaytán (Mexico) took places at the Committee table.*

2. *A video on the work of the National Women's Institute was projected.*

3. **Ms. Espinosa** (Mexico) said that, in the 20 years since it ratified the Convention, discrimination against women nevertheless remained a constant in Mexican society. With the change in government and the democratic transition which had begun in July 2000, the political will to support the advancement of women had been demonstrated in many ways, including the revision of article 1 of the Mexican Constitution expressly to prohibit all forms of discrimination and gender discrimination. The Government in office clearly understood that democracy could not flourish without the equal participation of women and men in all aspects of national life.

4. The first step towards that objective had been the establishment of the National Women's Institute (INMUJERES), the embodiment of the political will to foster a culture of gender equity at all levels of society. The Institute had established an equal opportunity and non-discrimination plan of action for the period 2001-2006, known as PROEQUIDAD. It was working with individual state and municipal governments to set up women's institutes at those levels and at the national level and had established a mechanism to evaluate progress in mainstreaming a gender perspective in Government departments. Recognizing the need for accurate indicators and diagnostic and follow-up tools, the Institute was developing a gender indicators model. It had also submitted 30 pieces of legislation to the current session of the Legislature on questions affecting women, including political participation, sexual harassment, social security, job discrimination and violence.

5. She was pleased to report that Mexico had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention. In

collaboration with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Institute had developed an interactive follow-up system for the Convention, for the Latin American and the Caribbean States parties, which included 73 reports from 23 countries. The Institute was also working to implement the Beijing Platform for Action by designing programmes to combat gender stereotyping. The Federal elections code had been amended to make gender quotas for candidates obligatory for the next five Federal elections. Other achievements included a scholarship programme to help keep girls in school, modernization of labour laws from a gender perspective, a "Women and Health" programme to reduce the impact of gender inequality and an overall poverty eradication strategy with a gender component.

6. One of the priorities of PROEQUIDAD was to reduce violence against women and the Institute had taken a number of measures to that end. An inter-institutional panel to coordinate preventive action had generated a National Programme for a Life Without Violence; it was under discussion with civil society groups. Fifteen states had passed legislation on violence, and 16 had specific anti-violence programmes. A study had resulted in the recommendation for a "single window" through which women victims could receive legal, emotional and medical support.

7. One gender violence issue of particular concern to the Government was the situation in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua State, where a wave of violence had resulted in the killing of over 300 women. Special efforts were being made to investigate those murders, prevent future violence, restore the shattered fabric of society and care for the children of the murdered women.

8. A number of measures had been instituted to combat trafficking in women and children. In addition, Mexico had ratified the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child which deal with children in armed conflict and the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The Government was building a new relationship with indigenous groups, with special emphasis on the needs of indigenous women. The Institute was involved in efforts to strengthen dialogue with civil society, especially about human rights and women's rights.

9. Many challenges had to be overcome in the empowerment of women in such matters as equality before the law, institutional mechanisms, attitudes and values in society, employment, education, health and public participation. The Government was committed to achieving those goals and was ready to demonstrate the political will to do so.

10. **The Chairperson** invited Committee members to pose questions to members of the delegation of Mexico on issues raised in the report and the oral introduction.

Articles 1 to 6

11. **Ms. Regazzoli** commended the Government of Mexico for its ratification of the Optional Protocol and its accession to the Convention without reservation. Clearly there was political will to implement the Convention and the Beijing Platform for Action.

12. After the submission of the third and fourth periodic reports, the Committee had stressed the need to accelerate the updating of discriminatory legislation in the Federal States, but very little had been accomplished thus far. She would like to know whether the budget for the National Women's Institute was sufficient to allow it to reach women nationwide, and how many municipalities had been reached. It would also be interesting to have preliminary results of the PROEQUIDAD programme and specific changes it had produced. Finally, she was concerned that no information was available on the number of times the Convention had been invoked before the courts. It could be inferred from that absence of information that women were not informed about CEDAW, and therefore, did not know their rights.

13. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** said that although pre-election measures had established a 30 per cent target for women representatives, no explanation had been given as to why the result had been a mere 1.6 per cent increase in the number of women in the Senate and an actual decrease of 1 per cent in the number in the Chamber of Deputies, a phenomenon most likely linked to the low position in which women had been placed on the lists of candidates. She wondered what the reaction had been and what measures were envisaged. She welcomed the news that the quota system would become obligatory and hoped that it would also help to give women an equal position on the list. She inquired whether the measures would also help

to increase the participation of women in both local and higher levels of government.

14. She drew attention to article 6, noting the lack of information in the report on improvements in the prostitution situation, and pointed out that data on trafficking had concentrated on the rights of the minors involved. Without underestimating the importance of children's rights and child pornography, she would welcome information on measures to address the trafficking of women and the progress made in that area.

15. **Ms. Ferrer Gómez** expressed gratification that the law creating an autonomous National Women's Institute (INMUJERES) had been welcomed by the new Government that had taken office in 2000, and that its mandate *inter alia* was to consolidate a culture of gender equality in all the country's institutions. She would welcome information on the Institute's structure, human and material resources, operating budget, percentage of the federal budget it represented and the federal ministry to which it was attached.

16. She sought clarification as to why PROEQUIDAD was included in the budget of the Ministry of the Interior, also appeared under the Ministry of Health, and was not directly attached to INMUJERES. It was a positive step forward for the women's movement that the Institute had embraced the interactive system for monitoring implementation of the Convention.

17. In pursuance of the Committee's recommendation following the presentation of the country's fourth periodic report the need to reduce poverty levels remained urgent. Some 26 million of Mexico's population of 40 million poor, most of them women and children, lived in dire poverty, and the numbers were increasing daily owing to the neoliberal policies implemented. While the report spoke of a vast array of activities in the area of education, job creation and health, it would be interesting to learn whether PROGRESA's impact had been evaluated. For example, she would like to know exactly how many women, including heads of households, it had benefited, whether it had been applied equally in different areas or whether separate programmes had been formulated for each area and sector.

18. She would also appreciate further information concerning the CONTIGO project referred to by the delegation, which had a poverty-reduction component.

For instance, did any parts of it deal specifically with rural and indigenous women?

19. Noting that there were reportedly 16,000 sexually exploited Mexican children, some of whom, in the 12-14 age range, were sold for US \$2,000 and sometimes exported for sexual and other purposes, she would like more information on the status of the various programmes including campaigns for awareness-raising, eradication of commercial exploitation of children, rehabilitation structures, codification of the crime of sexual exploitation and similar offences. In particular, she wanted to know which of the existing measures had been replaced by new ones and whether they formed part of CONTIGO.

20. She would also like to know whether progress with regard to trafficking in children had been evaluated. She asked what measures the Government had taken to put an end to trafficking in women and what was the success rate of the special department set up in the Office of the Public Prosecutor to locate and repatriate abducted children. Had Mexico formulated a policy to address the issue of women who migrated to the country from Eastern Europe, other Latin American countries or other regions, or entered into agreements with those countries? Lastly, she requested further background information on the sexual abuse and murder of some 300 girls in Ciudad Juárez.

21. **Ms. Raday** said she shared the concern expressed by other members as to the implementation of programmes of action and the effectiveness of laws regarding children, and girl children in particular. She would like further information especially on girl street children in the light of the 1999 amendment of the Constitution, which had specifically incorporated the rights of the child, and the 2000 amendment of the federal Criminal Code, which increased penalties for trafficking in children and child pornography, and of the action plan to eradicate sexual exploitation of minors.

22. In that connection, she noted with concern that the girl child specifically should be given priority in programmes for minors living in exceptionally difficult circumstances; those programmes appeared to lack a gender perspective. The Committee would be interested to learn how many offences had been prosecuted under the new legislative provisions, specifically against persons who exploited girl children through their sale and through trafficking and

pornography, how many had resulted in convictions and what sentences had been imposed. The delegation's reference to the "cybernetic police" in that context was unclear. She would like to know whether there was any aspect of that police force that dealt with the problems of girl children and what was being done to introduce a gender perspective in solving the problem of children living in difficult circumstances, which had apparently been lacking in 2000.

23. **Ms. Corti** observed that, as a temporary special measure, PROGRESA did not precisely respond to the need, expressed in article 4, paragraph 1, for de facto equality of women, and was geared more to alleviating the poverty of families, with no specific reference to women. Nonetheless, it was a positive and necessary measure in a country like Mexico and it would be interesting to know whether the authorities had evaluated its activities and were satisfied that they reached indigenous women, and had an impact on the feminization of poverty. She would also like to know what effect specific programmes on health, education, and domestic and sexual violence had had on indigenous women and whether Mexico had concluded bilateral or multilateral agreements regarding trafficking and, if so, how they were enforced.

24. On the subject of refugees, while it was true that many women left Mexico, it was equally true that there was immigration to Mexico from border countries. She would like to know how the authorities dealt with illegal immigrants from their arrival up to the time they received permits to stay, and what conditions prevailed in the refugee centres to which they were taken and in which children were often housed. The bureaucratic procedure for acceptance or refusal of asylum should be radically shortened.

25. **The Chairperson** invited the delegation of Mexico to reply to the questions put by Committee members.

26. **Ms. Espinosa** (Mexico) acknowledged that all of the obstacles to the development of a truly democratic culture in Mexico were still in place despite the valiant efforts of many women's organizations to dislodge them. There was still a culture of discrimination against women in education, business and other areas in which women were not adequately involved. Women's work, especially within the family, was still grossly undervalued. However, changes were gradually emerging with the increase in resources allocated to

women's issues, and more intensive lobbying on their behalf.

27. The long-awaited National Women's Institute (INMUJERES) was now a reality. It was a decentralized body answerable directly to the Office of the President. As its president, she was a member of the President's Cabinet. Its Governing Board consisted of 16 state secretaries representing the Federal administration and 16 women appointed to represent the various branches of civil society. It also had permanent invited members representing all government institutions, with divisions established according to their respective activities. The INMUJERES staff consisted of 140 senior and middle-level officials and 40 assistants. Although it had received US \$22 million from the House of Representatives, it would henceforth have its own official budget.

28. The law creating INMUJERES had been unanimously approved by both houses, and attempts were being made to accelerate reforms of the legislation; a review of the Civil and Criminal Codes was scheduled for 2003. It was no easy task to coordinate gender-equity activities in a country with a 51 per cent female population, but INMUJERES was striving to do so. As stated in the law, the Institute was a standard-setting body that would work in horizontal cooperation with other associations and organizations, coordinating existing programmes and work done by industry and government bodies, maintaining links with departments for women's issues in the states and municipalities, the executive and the judiciary. Although the Institute's municipal network involved only 300 of the country's 2,400 municipalities, they were those that accounted for the bulk of the population.

29. The main purpose of the PROEQUIDAD programme, established on the basis of 54 countrywide forums, was to institutionalize the gender perspective, and was the source of the work that it would be performing.

30. Commenting on the status of the Convention, she pointed out that although under article 133 of the Mexican Constitution judges were obliged to apply its provisions, many judges were reluctant to do so when they were contrary to domestic legislation. Accordingly, awareness-raising workshops had been organized in the states for judges and court officials to

reiterate the rule that international treaties had precedence over federal and state law and were subordinated only to the Constitution.

31. One temporary measure had been the recent adoption of a law to ensure greater equality in the position of women on the list of candidates for the 2003 elections. Similar temporary measures had been taken with regard to education and health. As far as local governments were concerned, she conceded that the 3.4 per cent of women mayors was inadequate and that the same measures adopted to increase the participation of women legislators would be extended to local governments through a quota system in an effort to increase the number from 84 where it had stood for the past nine years.

32. Under the PROGRESA programme, renamed OPORTUNIDADES, funds had been allocated directly and specifically to women so that they could now decide what proportion of the family's resources they could spend. The beneficiaries claimed that the programme had enhanced their autonomy in decisions affecting the family. The programme had influenced social relations and created new forms of social capital among the beneficiaries, who attended monthly meetings, health lectures and other social events such as visits to collect their allowances. They had been empowered to establish a mutual support system on those occasions, where they discussed matters informally among themselves. Since its establishment in 1996, the programme had been extended from rural to urban areas and by the end of 2001 it had benefited 3.2 million families living in extreme poverty. While she was unaware of the precise causes of the Ciudad Juárez murders, improved public security measures were clearly called for to prevent repetitions of such painful events and were being planned by the Ministry of the Interior, in collaboration with the State Government and the municipality.

33. **Ms. Carranza Aguayo** (Mexico) said that while Mexican legislation needed further reform, considerable progress had been made in the last five years. The concept of prohibiting gender discrimination had just been incorporated into the Mexican Constitution, the Optional Protocol to the Convention had been ratified in December 2001 and a series of legislative reforms had been undertaken on the problem of domestic violence.

34. The Mexican legal system was extremely complex, as it comprised both federal and local (state) legislators. Therefore, incorporating a gender perspective into Mexican legislation entailed a great deal of coordination with the 32 federal states. The Mexican Government had been taking steps to meet the challenge and in 2002 had provided training workshops for judges in more than 29 states. That same year, a legislative review of women and children's human rights had been undertaken with a view to unifying legislation on issues such as violence and discrimination. Women had also been working with legal experts to launch a programme on the follow-up to judicial sentences delivered in application of the Convention or other legal instruments.

35. Scant progress had been made regarding references to the Convention in the courts. The problem was that in Mexico it fell to lawyers, and not judges, to cite the instruments on which their cases relied. The very recent emergence of Supreme Court case-law in that area and the ratification of the Optional Protocol meant that it was still too early to measure progress on that front.

36. The Mexican Government was still not adequately prepared to deal with the problem of prostitution at the legislative level, especially when it involved invisible international networks. The problem was exacerbated by the recent influx of foreign women who were vulnerable to exploitation. It was acknowledged that more convincing punitive measures were required and that the relevant campaigns should be interlinked.

37. **Ms. Bonfil Sánchez** (Mexico) said that poverty represented the most significant challenge for Mexico's development. There was, however, an increased awareness of the need for an integrated treatment of the problem and in that connection the *Education, Health and Food Programme*, "*PROGRESA*" (now renamed *OPORTUNIDADES*), had received particular attention. To qualify for the programme, which offered educational scholarships to girls and boys, mothers had to prove that their children were attending school and both they and their children had to undergo regular medical check-ups. There were still problems associated with the programme, especially in rural and indigenous areas. Beneficiaries in particularly remote locations had complained that they could not meet the requirements of the programme because they lacked access to health and educational services and that the

programme conditions, especially those relating to medical check-ups, were applied in an authoritarian fashion. In addition, the need to share insufficient resources had led to divisive and competitive behaviours among populations. On the other hand, beneficiaries had welcomed the programme as a means of increasing household incomes and of emphasizing the importance of their role within the family unit. Furthermore, rural and indigenous women were also beginning to see themselves as the focus of institutional and political attention, which validated their opinions and meant they had more influence in other decision-making processes. It was too early to measure the nutritional impact of the programme, or the impact of the scholarship programme on school re-enrolments.

38. Health programmes in indigenous areas were directed to provide women with lifelong, rather than simply reproductive, health care and the Ministry of Health had carried out a study to investigate priority areas. The new *ARRANQUE PAREJO* programme focused, inter alia, on pre- and post-natal care for mothers in order to reduce infant and maternal mortality. The use of traditional medicine and birth attendants was highlighted as a culturally-appropriate method of providing rural and indigenous populations with adequate health care. The nutrition and health care programme, based on the use of nutritional supplements and targeted to children under two and pregnant and breast-feeding mothers, had also been implemented. In addition, the Ministry of Health was working with mobile units to bring cervical cancer prevention and treatment to remote areas. Family planning campaigns in indigenous languages had been aimed at putting an end to phenomena such as non-consensual sterilization and increasing the availability and accessibility of services.

39. She highlighted the fact that the "*PROGRESA*" programme had been tailored to fit the cultural needs of different groups of indigenous beneficiaries. In Chiapas, the 'collective consultation' model had been implemented. Traditional doctors and birth attendants had held consultations with pregnant women from different communities in order to identify high-risk pregnancies and channel resources into reducing infant and maternal mortality rates.

40. In spite of all the efforts being made, the various programmes were still inadequate, the outcome being that welfare and development indicators for indigenous

women were still well below the national average. To rectify the situation, the Mexican Government was attempting to create interlinking programmes for indigenous populations to deal with women's health and violence against them. Mechanisms had to be devised, adapted to the varied cultural and social situations of indigenous populations, enabling the women benefiting from the programmes to participate in their design and implementation.

41. She was pleased to note, however, that some progress had been made in health care. The IMSS-SOLIDARIDAD programme, aimed at preventive and protective health care for young people in rural and indigenous communities, had involved close collaboration with over 30,000 birth attendants throughout the country to develop strategies for identifying potentially risky births and to promote the use of satellite communication in preventive and diagnostic health care. The National Indigenous Institute had set up a programme of collaboration with practitioners of traditional medicine which incorporated support for birth attendants and female health leaders. That was particularly important since health was highly valued from a cultural standpoint and indigenous women could make a valuable contribution to its promotion. Pilot programmes had also been developed for training young people as birth attendants or in community health and prevention of violence. A health-care project for indigenous women currently being developed would involve traditional medical practitioners in providing varied cultural environments with health services.

42. **Ms. Wolhers** (Mexico), addressing the question asked by Ms. Corti about female migrants, said that many foreign women came to Mexico, either en route to the United States or with the intention of staying, and since they were not in possession of the required documents, they were particularly vulnerable to violations of their rights. At the invitation of the Mexican Government, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Migrants had visited Mexico in May 2002 to assess the situation and had confirmed that the human rights of migrants were indeed being violated and that the authorities' attention should be drawn to the problem. Although Mexico had no specific policies with regard to migration, several GRUPOS BETA [Mexican security patrols] were currently working with migrant women in the border areas under the aegis of the Institute of Migration. In addition, two non-

governmental organizations had been drafting a manual on sexual violence and migration and had been working with members of the GRUPOS BETA to improve the treatment of female migrants. It was stressed that the absence of documents did not necessarily mean that migrants were illegal immigrants.

43. Female migrants could be detained in special centres, which were not prisons. The National Women's Institute and the National Migration Institute had proposed that the women should be placed in individual units so that their children would be protected and also that if the women requested refugee status, they could be interviewed by female staff. In 2000, Mexico had signed and ratified the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Protocol to that Convention, so that the decision to confer refugee status was now taken at Government level. UNHCR in Mexico was working to ensure that women who did not qualify for refugee status were deported to their countries of origin in a dignified fashion under the protection of the Mexican Government. Furthermore, following Mexico's signature of the Convention on the Status of Refugees, a new initiative had been introduced enabling women who were legal immigrants but were not Mexican nationals to be joint owners of property with their husbands.

44. As a new member of the International Migration Association, Mexico was in a position to develop more migrant protection programmes. Nevertheless, it was still very difficult to guarantee protection for female migrants and to change the attitudes of public servants and customs and immigration officials towards them.

45. **The Chairperson** invited the experts to pose the second round of questions.

46. **Ms. Goonesekere** congratulated Mexico on its fifth periodic report; it provided continuity with previous reports and demonstrated the country's holistic approach to women's issues covering the status of the Convention and legislative and budget reform. The higher school dropout rate for boys than for girls indicated that policies to keep girls in education were working.

47. On the other hand, the Mexican delegation's replies to the questions from the Committee indicated that it was left to lawyers rather than judges to invoke the Convention in court cases. She urged that that gap should be bridged by an effort in education and training

for the legal profession to improve gender sensitivity. Access to the legal system also raised questions. Mexico's achievements in promoting women's rights were likely to have created expectations which could not be met, especially in the light of the country's substantial urban population, and more particularly, its proportion of urban poor. She asked if there were legal advice clinics or legal aid arrangements to help women take legal action, for example in cases of unequal wages or marital rape. Access was important in the context of the Optional Protocol to the Convention, which required that all available domestic remedies must be exhausted before a case was taken to the Committee. If women had no access to the legal system, such domestic remedies would rapidly be exhausted. She also asked if there was any form of public-interest litigation, in which women's groups, for example, could bring lawsuits on behalf of individuals.

48. **Ms. Shin** commended Mexico for having hosted the very first world conference on women's issues in 1975, and on its early ratification of the Convention and Optional Protocol. She was disappointed, however, that the pace of progress had not matched expectations. She asked how the National Institute for Women differed from its predecessor, the National Commission for Women (CONMUJER), particularly in terms of its budget and powers. She also asked how the latest National Programme for Women differed from the last such programme, and whether it had introduced any change of emphasis.

49. With regard to violence against women, she welcomed the concern of the Mexican Government and President about reports of disappearances and killings in border areas with *maquiladora* plants, but wondered what immediate action had been taken to ensure the safety of the women in those areas. Paragraph 342 of the fifth periodic report had described measures to combat domestic violence, showing that 18 out of the country's 32 states had criminalized the phenomenon. However, there was no information on prosecutions indicating how many offenders had been convicted, and what sentences they had received. Similarly there was no information on the number of shelters for victims of violence. Mexico had a population of 100 million, half of them women, and a high rate of domestic violence. She wondered if there were plans to increase the number of shelters nationwide, and what mechanisms existed to help and protect women reporting crimes of violence. In addition, 10 per cent of

Mexico's population was of indigenous origin, and indigenous women had reportedly been harassed by members of the armed forces and paramilitary personnel. She asked if indigenous women received specific attention.

50. The National Institute for Women had been described as having the task of promoting coordination and cooperation with the country's 32 states and with municipalities. She felt, however, that if there was genuine political will to improve the situation of women, its role should be wider, encompassing guidelines, incentives and funding for initiatives at the level of the states and municipalities as a more efficient way of eliminating long-standing traditions of discrimination and violence. In that connection, she asked what was being done to help non-governmental organizations, financially and in other ways, to improve cooperation with the Government.

51. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** echoed both the congratulations and concerns expressed by other members of the Committee, but said that she had found the fifth periodic report too descriptive in general and not gender specific enough. It was difficult to use it as an instrument for assessing the level of discrimination against women, yet that was precisely the task of the Committee and the Convention. She urged that future periodic reports should provide more information about the situation of women in comparison to that of men. There was also a lack of sex-disaggregated statistics: although two institutions (the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics — INEGI and the System of Indicators for Follow-up regarding the Situation of Women in Mexico — SISESIM) were supposed to collect and compile those figures; there was no such information for health and education, for example. She asked if there were any plans to make such statistics mandatory nationwide.

52. She also expressed concern that Mexico's federal structure had an adverse effect on promoting women's rights issues. It was a pity that the individual states' autonomy had led to such wide variations in the legal situation and living conditions of women across the country. She asked what methods were available under the Constitution to even out such differences, which affected issues ranging from abortion laws to education standards. Federalism should not be used as an excuse for tolerating such wide disparities.

53. While she applauded the budgetary analysis of gender issues, she wondered if such analysis had applied only to activities targeted specifically at

women, or if it had also been applied to generic activities targeted at both men and women. Only if the latter approach had been taken could there be comparability.

54. With regard to article 4 of the Convention, she asked if the National Institute for Women or the Government had contemplated introducing temporary special measures in education and employment, or specifically for rural women. She was also surprised to see the Education, Health and Food Programme (PROGRESA) included in the section of the periodic report dealing with temporary special measures. She regarded it as a general programme, unless there were specific numerical targets in education for girls as compared to boys. She requested further details in the next periodic report on the use of temporary special measures to introduce preferences for women through specific goals and targets, in order to be able to accelerate de facto equality.

55. **Ms. Achmad** said that she wished to emphasize the importance of institutional mechanisms as a means of quantifying results on the ground in the individual states and in individual municipalities. They were particularly needed for the purpose of poverty alleviation: to determine whether women had been made poor because of discrimination, or whether they had been discriminated against because they were poor. She asked how those institutions had dealt with improving the decision-making power of women in public life and at the grass-roots level, particularly in the context of efforts to promote democratic relations within the family: if they did not exist there, they were not likely to exist outside that environment. She also asked what efforts the institutions had made to encourage the participation of non-governmental organizations.

56. Echoing Ms. Goonesekere's comments, she asked how far the institutions were able to improve women's access to the legal system, and whether (as had been the case in Indonesia) training for the legal profession had included gender issues. She also wondered if Mexico had contemplated using temporary special measures to improve that access.

57. **Ms. Gaspard**, directing her questions to prostitution and trafficking, which had been referred to

often in the fifth periodic report only in connection with minors, asked if there were figures for trafficking in women, arrests for such offences and sentences handed down. The report had not addressed the issue of adult prostitutes. Because Mexico was geographically a hub for travellers and had high poverty rates, women were at substantial risk from exploitation by traffickers. She asked what had been done to help adult women escape such exploitation, and whether prostitutes were treated as criminals or victims. She also asked what specific measures had been taken to assist prostitutes with health care, inasmuch as they risked playing a role in the spread of HIV/AIDS. In general, the periodic report had provided little detail on article 6 of the Convention (trafficking and exploitation of prostitution); she requested more information if not immediately, then in the next periodic report.

58. **Ms. Saiga** said that her interest had been engaged by the efforts of the Government Employee Social Security and Services Institute (ISSSTE) to promote the professional development of women. She asked for more details about its functions, and those of the related Internal Commission for the Admission and Promotion of ISSSTE Personnel to Positions of Trust.

59. **Ms. Espinosa** (President of the Mexican National Institute for Women) said that she would direct her remarks to answering questions regarding social development aimed at making certain essential benefits available to all Mexicans by promoting social protection for everyone, and improving people's capacities and opportunities, thus giving strong impetus to economic development. Another goal was to promote property ownership as a means of improving solvency.

60. The National Institute for Women was an entity with its roots in the efforts to decentralize services; it was independent, and exercised control over its own budget. It had double the number of staff of its predecessor (140 rather than 70) and a budget of US \$22 million (compared to US \$3.2 million). The Institute worked with all areas of government and all stakeholders of budgets to ensure that a gender perspective was incorporated into their work.

61. Commenting on the country's federal structure, she pointed out that the Institute acted as a channel of communication with the governments of the states, through their mechanisms for promoting the interests of women. Since the Institute had a federal budget, it

also negotiated with the Secretariat for Finance and Public Credit to earmark funds for programmes which would be implemented by women's representatives in each state. To those ends, it was vital for the Institute to remain in permanent dialogue with state governments and civil society. The programme to encourage women to report violence against them, and PROEQUIDAD, the 2001-2006 national programme for equal opportunities and non-discrimination against women, were based on such a dialogue and on consultation and monitoring discussions on a variety of issues.

62. It was clear that without increasing representation of women in public life democracy could not truly be achieved. Equality of men and women was especially vital in economic and social development. The Institute was working through the consultative and monitoring boards to eliminate the 25 to 30 per cent pay gap between men and women, and was seeking a central role in the decades-long battle to reform labour laws. It was particularly active in working to ban employers from requiring certificates of non-pregnancy.

63. In order to compile sex-disaggregated statistics, databases were being updated in collaboration with the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics (INEGI) and the entire administration. The Office of the President had a trend chart which was sex-disaggregated thanks to the Institute's efforts. In that connection, the Institute had developed a statistical model known as the MIG. It combined three indicators, one to measure equality, one to measure gender mainstreaming, and one to measure decision-making power. It hoped to spread the use of the model to all government departments.

64. As part of training in gender sensitivity for the legal profession, the Institute was working with certain universities to incorporate a gender focus into their courses.

65. **Ms. García Gaytán** (Member of the Chamber of Deputies), responding to questions about women's access to the legal system, said that the only available source of advice on the Convention was women's non-governmental organizations but, the suggestion that law schools should provide specific training was very helpful, as it could incorporate a focus on public defenders.

66. Responding to questions about numbers of victims and facilities for them, such as shelters, she

pointed to a significant gap: there were figures from universities and non-governmental organizations, but few official figures. The most serious problem was lack of attention and underreporting.

67. Responding to questions about the federal structure of the country acting as an obstacle to progress on women's issues, she observed that beginning in 1997, progress in federal and state legislation had accelerated considerably.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.