



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

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

Summary record of the 401st meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 8 July 1998, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Khan

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

Third and fourth periodic reports of New Zealand

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

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

Third and fourth periodic reports of New Zealand (CEDAW/C/NZL/3-4 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Lawrence, Ms. Morris and Ms. Snowden (New Zealand) took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Morris** (New Zealand), introducing the combined third and fourth periodic reports of New Zealand (CEDAW/C/NZL/3-4 and Add.1), said that the reports covered the period since 1994 and that their preparation had involved extensive consultation with non-governmental organizations.

3. After saying a few words about the population and economic situation of New Zealand, she noted that regular surveys were conducted on a variety of subjects thereby facilitating the analysis of the comparative status of men and women. For example, a comprehensive time-use survey sponsored by the Ministry of Women's Affairs — the full results of which would be available in the year 2000 — would provide information on the contribution of unpaid activities to the economy and on how people balanced their social and economic responsibilities. It would also provide valuable information on the Maori.

4. The internationally acclaimed Domestic Violence Act of 1995 empowered women to take legal action to protect themselves and their families from domestic violence. Reduction of such violence was a key component of the Government's crime prevention strategy. Local inter-agency family violence networks had been established in most towns and cities, and the 1996 budget had provided funding of \$11.7 million for a variety of domestic violence prevention programmes. A number of government agencies were developing better methods of dealing with both victims and perpetrators of domestic violence and violence prevention was now part of the health curriculum for schools. A new post of Women's Commissioner — who would report annually on the progress made in women's exercise of human rights — had been created within the New Zealand Human Rights Commission.

5. With respect to employment, women's average earnings in New Zealand represented about 80.5 per

cent of men's average earnings. To narrow the gap, the Government would adopt a broad approach that included improved data collection and analysis, employer education and programmes to enhance women's labour-force participation, qualifications and training. It had already set a positive example for private employers by unifying the pay system for primary and secondary school teachers, thereby increasing significantly the wages of primary-school teachers, most of whom were women and doubling the funding ratio for the Equal Employment Opportunities Trust to support efforts to change employer attitudes. New Zealand women were proving to be outstandingly successful in business and were being assisted by innovative support networks.

6. More women were participating in public life than ever before. The Government's director training initiatives included seminars for potential company directors and introductory courses for women wishing to serve on statutory boards. Over one fourth of the participants had been Maori women.

7. Major initiatives to improve the health of women and families included the introduction of free visits to general practitioners for children under the age of six and a sexual and reproductive health strategy. Under the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights, users of such services were entitled to freedom from discrimination, coercion, harassment and sexual, financial or other forms of exploitation. Beginning in December 1998, free biennial breast screenings would be provided to women between the ages of 50 and 64.

8. Under New Zealand's rigorous censorship legislation, expert decisions were taken on the classification of films, videos and publications, which were in conformity with the law and which constrained civil rights only to protect human rights. In addition, there had been successful prosecutions relating to the trade in pornography and child pornography on the Internet. With respect to the justice system, a project was being conducted on ways to make legal services more user-friendly for women. In the area of property rights, the Parliament was currently considering the Matrimonial Property Amendment Bill and the De Facto Relationships (Property) Bill, which were described in the addendum to the third and fourth periodic reports (CEDAW/C/NZL/3-4/Add.1).

9. New Zealand's reservation to the Convention in relation to women in combat continued to apply, but

career opportunities for women in the armed forces had been expanded somewhat and further progress was anticipated. In addition, the armed forces were working to address sexual harassment and to create an equitable organizational culture. New Zealand's other reservation, which concerned maternity leave with pay, also continued to apply, but both women and men were entitled to parental leave without pay. One advantage which women enjoyed under the current legislation was the ability to negotiate flexible periods of leave, including the use of other leave-with-pay provisions. Because a significant number of women were unaware of their right to parental leave, New Zealand's Human Rights Commission was preparing information on the rights of pregnant workers. In addition, New Zealand provided maternity leave with what could be considered "comparable social benefits" in place of pay, as provided in article 11, paragraph 2 (b), of the Convention. For example, the universal benefit system covered all medical costs associated with the birth of a child, and many families were eligible for various types of financial assistance. Moreover, during the reporting period, a number of private firms had introduced paid parental leave in order to retain their highly skilled women staff.

10. With respect to income support, a 1996 Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) study had shown that New Zealand's assistance to single parents equalled or exceeded the OECD average and that its income support arrangements for older women were among the best in OECD member countries. Single parents were eligible for income protection benefits, which were increasingly accompanied by measures to help single parents move into employment, education or training.

11. The Social Security Amendment Act of 1996 had increased the incentive for beneficiaries to seek work while maintaining support for those in genuine need. In its 1998 budget, the Government had made provision for a work-focused welfare policy that radically changed the orientation of welfare, based on the idea that paid work was the key to personal economic and social independence. Beginning in 1999, new work-testing obligations applicable to recipients of the Widows and Domestic Purposes benefits would require single parents whose youngest child was 14 or over to seek full-time work, and those whose youngest child was 14 or over to seek full-time work. Sanctions for failing the work test had been applied in only six cases,

as many female beneficiaries were excused from the work test, and most of those who failed were exempted on grounds such as illness or lack of child care. The Government had allocated an extra \$31 million for child-care subsidies over the next three years, including out-of-school care subsidies for working parents with children aged 5 to 13.

12. New Zealand's report contained a section on Tokelau, but not on the Cook Islands or Niue, since the latter two were self-governing States that were responsible for entering into and implementing their own international obligations. New Zealand was currently endeavouring, with the United Nations Secretariat, to determine how best to carry out their wishes to be represented before the human rights treaty bodies on their own behalf, and stood ready to help both countries to meet their reporting obligations.

13. Turning to the questions contained in the report of the pre-session working group (CEDAW/C/1998/II/CRP.1/Add.1), she explained, in reply to question 3, that the Human Rights Act applied to all activities of the Government, public bodies, private organizations and individuals in relation to employment, access to public places, provision of goods and services, accommodation, education and sexual and racial harassment. It outlawed indirect discrimination, which it defined as any conduct, practice, requirement or condition that had the effect of treating a person or a group of persons differently on one of the prohibited grounds.

14. With respect to question 4, she said that the Bill of Rights Act of 1990 and the Human Rights Act of 1993 were designed to implement international obligations, and their implementation would therefore involve references to the relevant international instruments. The decision of *Wellington District Services Committee v. Tangiora* (1998) contained a statement of principle to the effect that legislation should be read in a way that was consistent with New Zealand's international obligations. That principle had been further exemplified in the decision on *Quilter et al v. Attorney-General* (1998), in which the court, when determining the meaning of discrimination under the Bill of Rights Act, had referred, inter alia, to the Human Rights Committee's discussion of the Convention. As early as 1977, a New Zealand court had referred to the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, in invalidating discriminatory conditions laid down by the Ministry of

Education in respect of removal expenses reimbursable to male and female teachers.

15. In the case of *Northern Regional Health Authority v. Human Rights Commission* (1997), the High Court had relied on the Convention in order to interpret the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993. The New Zealand courts had not yet produced any case law on paid maternity leave. Steps had been taken to publicize the Convention and the high level of interest shown by women's non-governmental organizations in the reporting process suggested a high level of awareness of the provisions of the Convention.

16. With regard to question 5, she said that the Human Rights Act contained a specific definition of discrimination, and an understanding of indirect discrimination had developed more from the Act than from article 1 of the Convention.

17. In reply to question 6, she explained that all government policies had to comply with the Human Rights Act unless authorized by another source of law. Heads of departments were responsible for ensuring that government policies and practices complied with the Act, and did not discriminate on grounds of sex, marital status, religion or ethical convictions, colour or ethnicity. From December 1999 new grounds would be added: disability, age, political opinions, employment status, family status and sexual orientation. A guidance circular on the subject had been issued by the Secretary for Justice, and training would be offered to public sector agencies on the Human Rights Act and human rights principles.

18. In connection with question 7, she said that the time use survey would provide data on the amount of time spent by women and men on various day-to-day activities. Its purpose was to reveal the extent of the unpaid contribution to the economy made by women, and to identify areas of conflict between public and private responsibilities. Future policies would address any disparities in time use identified by the survey as between Maori and non-Maori women. They would also respond to any disparities between women and men in areas such as health services, transport and civil defence. The data would be used to test assumptions — including the assumption that women were available to provide caring services at home and in the community — and would help to identify areas where discrimination persisted.

19. Replying to question 8, she said that strategic policy development, which included work on mainstreaming gender analysis, would account for about 40 per cent of the budget of the Ministry of Women's Affairs in the period 1998-1999. Government departments were required to consult the Ministry on all matters relating to the economic and social status of women and government agencies were encouraged to incorporate gender analysis into their policy and programme development.

20. In response to question 9, she explained that the scale of the Consistency 2000 project had not been justified by its results, since only minor breaches of the Act had been identified. The Government had made it clear that the executive must comply with all the principles of the Human Rights Act of 1993.

21. With reference to question 10, she said that the Department of Labour provided information on employment rights and obligations by a variety of means, including a toll-free phone line, pamphlets and an Internet site. In 1995 the Ministry of Women's Affairs had two pamphlets about the rights of women in paid employment; these had been widely published. The Ministry of Education and the Human Rights Commission had developed guidelines for educational institutions, and the Commission provided training on human rights issues, including the rights of New Zealand citizens under international agreements including the Convention. Appropriate training was given to specific audiences including Maori, Pacific and other ethnic groups. The Convention had not been translated into languages other than English.

22. Replying to question 11, she said that discrimination based on family status was one of the "new grounds" introduced in the Human Rights Act 1993. Accordingly, an employee could lodge a complaint of discrimination based on family status with the Complaints Division of the Human Rights Commission. The Government was aware that individual employment contracts sometimes contained confidentiality clauses which could make it difficult for employees to ascertain whether they had a case under the Equal Pay Act 1972. However, salary details could be divulged without breaching the Privacy Act, since the information in question was not personal information within the meaning of that Act.

23. The Accident Compensation Scheme had not been abolished, and all New Zealanders enjoyed 24-

hour coverage for the purpose of accident compensation.

24. Labour market trends and workplace developments were monitored by the Industrial Relations Service of the Department of Labour. The data was disaggregated by sex, and policies were formulated in response to the survey results.

25. Finally, in connection with question 12, she explained that there had been only one reported attack on a woman of a certain ethnic group; there was nothing to suggest that it was motivated by her gender.

26. **Ms. Lawrence** (New Zealand), responding to questions 13, 14 and 15, said that section 73 of the Human Rights Act provided for special measures for certain groups in order to ensure equality. Under sections 61 and 63 of the Act it was unlawful to publish written matter or broadcast words which were threatening, abusive or insulting, or to use visual material and behaviour which was offensive or hostile.

27. The transfer of responsibility for disability support from the Department of Social Welfare to the Health Funding Authority had helped to reduce inequality between disabled and non-disabled women. In the period 1996-1997 there had been a 35 per cent increase in funding for services in the home, as well as extra funds to support careers and provide equipment. The enhancement of services for older people particularly benefited women, since disability increased with age and women were longer-lived than men.

28. The Government recognized and supported the New Zealand Federation of Ethnic Councils as a national body for people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The Federation was regularly consulted on measures to help migrants settle in New Zealand and to promote inter-ethnic harmony. Between 1990 and 1998 the Federation had received grants totalling 158,166 New Zealand dollars from the Lottery Grants Board.

29. In reply to question 16, she said that measures taken under section 73 of the Human Rights Act could be described as affirmative action or positive discrimination. Government programmes designed to redress inequalities in health, employment and training included a number of measures intended specifically for women. Programmes to help unemployed women included polytechnic courses for women seeking to

return to paid employment, schemes for female apprentices, aimed at encouraging employers to recruit women, and courses to encourage women to train for occupations in which they were traditionally under-represented.

30. In response to question 17, she said that the Equal Employment Opportunities Policy to 2010 for the public service sought to eliminate unfair discrimination in employment, through an organizational culture which permitted equal access to employment and equitable career opportunities, based on procedural fairness. Numerical goals were not included, because they were perceived as quotas. The New Zealand approach to equal employment opportunities was based on the concept of merit. The achievement of equal opportunities policies would be monitored on a regular basis until 2005.

31. She explained, in connection with question 18, that it was illegal in New Zealand to discriminate against women of any culture or ethnic origin on grounds of sex, and redress could be sought through the legal system. The Government, recognizing the wide differences of opinion on the place of women in society, demonstrated the equality of women and men in all cultures both through the legislative framework and through initiatives to appoint Maori women to government boards and committees and to key decision-making positions. It provided family violence programmes appropriate to the needs of the affected communities, including Pacific Islands and ethnic minorities. The State education system had an important role to play in countering stereotypical attitudes, and the curriculum endeavoured to reinforce non-sexism and provide for gender balance in the use of materials.

32. In reply to question 19, she said that since the entry into force in 1996 of the Domestic Violence Act, there had been 13,702 applications for protection, and 10,525 temporary orders and 6,880 final orders had been issued. Perpetrators of domestic violence were directed to attend special rehabilitation programmes, and approved programmes for children were about to be introduced. Almost 100 referrals a month were being made to optional programmes for protected persons. The working of the Act was now being evaluated. Forty-eight per cent of applicants for rehabilitation programmes under the Act were pakeha New Zealanders, 24 per cent were Maori and 8 per cent Pacific. The Act provided for special programmes for

both Maori and Pacific groups. It appeared that Pacific women were less likely than other groups to make use of the facilities available under the Act, and a series of workshops for Pacific programme providers had begun. The Ministry of Health was developing guidelines for health workers dealing with family violence.

33. Concerning question 20, she said that information on employment rights and obligations provided by the Department of Labour included information on protection against sexual harassment. Guidelines on preventing and dealing with sexual harassment in the workplace had been established, and the Ministry of Women's Affairs had produced a pamphlet for women workers containing information on sexual harassment. Most schools and tertiary educational institutions now had policies for dealing with sexual harassment, and were making increasing use of the training facilities available.

34. In reply to question 21, she said that the health education syllabus for schools included an optional sex education programme and all but 2 per cent of New Zealand schools included sexual and reproductive health in their health education programmes. No specific information was available about the effect of the programmes on gender stereotypes. Regarding question 22, she said there was no new data about changes in men's attitudes to sharing domestic work.

35. There were various provisions in New Zealand criminal law which would cover many situations which could be described as "trafficking" (question 23), specifically dealing in slaves, kidnapping, abduction of a woman or girl and abduction of a child under 16. The 1995 amendments to the Crimes Act made it a criminal offence to organize or promote child sex tourism. Efforts were being made to decriminalize prostitution (question 24) and a draft law to that effect was in preparation. A woman working as a prostitute had the same rights as any other woman (question 25).

36. Concerning question 26, there appeared to be no significant legal obstacles to eliminating all forms of traffic in women and the exploitation of prostitution of women. Procuring a woman for prostitution was an offence under the Crimes Act, and it was also an offence to live on the earnings of a prostitute or to keep a brothel. The practical difficulty of eliminating such activities lay in the fact that vulnerable women were likely to be strangers to the country, culturally isolated and knowing no English. No offences had been

recorded in 1997 in relation to New Zealanders participating in or organizing child sex tours overseas (question 27).

37. With reference to question 28, rape was defined in the Crimes Act 1961 as part of a broader offence of sexual violation. There had been 686 reported rapes in 1995, of a total of 1,155 sexual violation offences, and in 1996 there had been 819 rapes out of a total of 1,287 sexual violations. There was no separate compensation scheme for criminal injuries. The 1992 Accident Rehabilitation and Compensation Insurance Act did not include compensation for pain and mental suffering; instead, it provided for an insurance-based scheme to compensate and rehabilitate victims of crime, including rape victims. Offenders could be ordered to compensate their victims, and the courts could award part of the fines imposed to the victims.

38. **Ms. Morris** (New Zealand), replying to question 29, said that women had won increasing representation in the past five general elections, but it was not clear whether the trend was due to the proportional representation system. In 1993, women had held 21 per cent of the seats in Parliament; they now had 30 per cent. There was no significant difference in voter turnout between men and women. With reference to question 30, she said that 16 per cent of the women members of Parliament were Maori. There was one Asian woman MP, but no Pacific women MPs.

39. The reduction in the number of women in the public service (question 31) reflected an overall reduction in the staffing of the public service between 1991 and 1997. The proportion of women from the ethnic groups covered by Equal Employment Opportunity legislation had remained fairly stable: Maori women comprised between 6 and 7 per cent of the total, and Pacific Islands women between 2 and 3 per cent.

40. In reply to question 32, she said that no statistics were kept on the ethnicity of women appointed by the Government, but 24 out of 169 directors on the boards of State companies, both men and women, described themselves as Maori. The percentage of women directors was 22.5. A recent survey of private and public company boards showed that 10.1 per cent of directors were women, and 46 per cent of companies had at least one woman director.

41. Support services such as childcare and out-of-school care (question 33) were available to women in

public and political life as well as to other women in the workforce. There was a crèche in the New Zealand Parliament. Most local government bodies arranged meetings at times convenient for women with family responsibilities.

42. Replying to question 34, she said that no formal evaluations had been made of the centennial celebrations of women's suffrage; however, at the close of 1993 a handbook had been published describing 500 projects connected with the centenary, and many government departments had provided educational grants which were ongoing.

43. With reference to question 35, she said that there were 114 women in the diplomatic service, of a total of 303 people, and 54 women serving abroad out of a total of 141. There were 12 Maori women in the diplomatic service, two serving abroad, and 4 Pacific women, two serving abroad. Five women in the service were from other ethnic groups, one serving abroad. Administrative staff serving abroad included 36 women.

44. Replying to question 36, she said applications from women for policy officer posts in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade comprised about 50 per cent of the total, and the percentages recruited to such posts, all on the basis of merit, ranged from 47 per cent to 70 per cent over the past five years. The Ministry attracted female recruits through Maori and Pacific scholarships, visits by female officers to universities, the publication of profiles of women staff in its recruitment material, and "family-friendly" policies such as flexi-time and reimbursement for childcare costs. Women regularly headed overseas delegations or served on them as expert advisers. A New Zealand woman had recently been appointed to head the United Nations mission in Cyprus. The Ministry of Women's Affairs drew the attention of qualified women to vacancies arising in intergovernmental agencies, and encouraged recruitment from the non-governmental sector to government delegations to international conferences and negotiations.

45. With reference to question 37, she explained that the functions of the Women's and Girls' section of the Ministry of Education had been integrated into the core policy functions of the Ministry following a structural review in 1992. Educational outcomes for girls and women were now dealt with by the policy analysts in

those areas, with a view to providing a more focused gender perspective.

46. **Ms. Snowden** (New Zealand), with regard to question 38, noted that 48 per cent of the Maori children under five in early childhood education were female. The number of Maori children participating in Kohanga Reo (Maori language nests), had increased by 34 per cent between 1990 and 1997. There was a three-year programme for tutors and funding for new centres had been provided by a Capital Development Fund. The Early Childhood Development Unit (ECDU) assisted families in gaining access to formal early childhood education by setting up parent groups and support networks. It was also fostering the development of early childhood education centres for Pacific island children. The number of such children had increased by 15 per cent between 1992 and 1997. To date, 40 such centres had been licensed.

47. Concerning question 40, with respect to the number of children covered by existing programmes or state-supported institutions, she pointed out that a complete statistical profile had been submitted to the Committee.

48. On the issue of indirect discrimination, she said that the Government did not employ staff for early childhood education; neither did it establish pay rates or conditions of employment, nor did it foresee taking an interventionist role in the employment market.

49. On the issue of funding, she stressed that centres, programmes and services which met the licensing requirements were assured of State funding. In many instances, such funding was significantly greater than resources derived from fundraising. All licensed early childhood services were subject to review by the Education Review Office. The Early Childhood Development Unit was responsible for the administration of grants each year to 700 community-based playgroups and Pacific Islands Language Groups.

50. Responding to question 41, she said that the New Zealand gender-inclusive curriculum provided a coherent framework for learning and assessment that acknowledged the educational needs and experiences of all pupils. Implementation of the national curriculum statements and National Education Guidelines was monitored by the Education Review Office.

51. With regard to question 42 on wages and employment of women with high qualifications, the 1996 Census showed that 57 per cent of women with at least a bachelors degree were employed full time, as compared to 75 per cent of men at equivalent levels. For the population aged 15 years and over, the proportions of women and men employed full time were 34 and 60 per cent respectively; 12 per cent of women with degrees earned more than \$50,000 annually, compared to 46 per cent of men; of all university graduates in 1996, 51.5 per cent were female.

52. Concerning question 44 on the imbalance of women and men in industry training organizations (ITOs) and affirmative action policies, she referred to the combined country reports (CEDAW/C/NZL/3-4), pointing out that a number of policies and initiatives had been adopted. Organizations seeking status as an ITO were required to acknowledge that women were underrepresented in such programmes. Financial assistance and Government subsidies were available for projects and training programmes, and strategies had been developed to increase the participation of women.

53. On the issue of educational achievements and employment prospects of minority women (question 45), she said that the lower levels of qualification among Maori and Pacific women were reflected in higher unemployment rates, as compared to European women. However, women from other ethnic groups experienced higher unemployment rates than their European counterparts, despite being relatively better qualified.

54. Concerning question 48, she said 35 per cent of female graduates of the Training Opportunities Programme had gone directly into full-time jobs, 6 per cent had accepted part-time employment, and 12 per cent had continued in some form of training.

55. In reply to question 51, she said that measures taken to increase participation of women in senior positions at all levels focused largely on assisting employers in meeting their Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) responsibilities. Ongoing measures included the contracting of specific EEO training and support services for boards of trustees. Specific measures taken by schools had been documented in the annual report of the Education Review Office.

56. Regarding question 52, she said that men were increasingly interested in assuming parental responsibility and becoming involved in voluntary playgroups and educational programmes. Some parents developed a professional interest in early childhood education and a number of courses were available for such training. The recognition of previous experience was dependent on the training provider. The guiding document for early childhood education was the national curriculum statement which fostered an environment of equitable opportunities for learning irrespective of gender, disability, age, ethnicity or background.

57. Responding to question 53, she noted that increased tuition fees did not appear to have had a negative impact on women's participation in tertiary studies. In 1997, 54,203 women were granted loans under the student loan scheme, compared to 48,323 men. She drew attention to a table, provided by her delegation, giving details of loan repayment by gender, age and ethnic group.

58. **Ms. Morris** (New Zealand), turning to question 55, said that Maori and Pacific Islands people and women had been identified as priority groups to whom resources would be targeted. Details of the measures to improve the position of minority women in the labour market were given in the reports before the Committee (CEDAW/C/NZL/3-4).

59. Examples of discrimination on the grounds of sex that would be legitimate would include situations where an employee had to sleep in premises provided by the employer and accommodation was available only in one sex.

60. Responding to question 56, she said that the 1991 Employment Contracts Act aimed at promoting an efficient labour market and contained provisions inter alia on freedom of association, personal grievance and negotiation of employment contracts. It was underpinned by a minimum code of legislation and anti-discrimination provisions that facilitated flexible labour market practices.

61. With regard to question 65, accurate estimates of the percentage of employers providing childcare facilities were not currently available. According to a 1994 survey 43 per cent of eligible fathers had taken parental leave. Some 82 per cent of men could be considered to have taken paternity leave of up to 2 weeks, even if they did not recognize the leave as such.

62. Concerning question 66, figures showed that women increasingly regarded self-employment as a viable alternative. According to the 1996 Census, self-employed women worked for 31 hours per week whereas their male counterparts worked for 45. Similar Government measures for women in the workplace supported the self-employed. No conclusive data was available on the effect of globalization on self-employment, but it was clear that it opened up opportunities for women in the services sector or those working with sophisticated communication technology.

63. In reply to question 68, she said that the Ministry of Women's Affairs did not have the power to implement policies to end pay discrimination. The "equal pay for work of comparable value" approach was acknowledged as one of the ways in which pay discrimination could be addressed.

64. Regarding question 69, she pointed out that a number of significant employment initiatives targeting women were documented under article 11 of the report (CEDAW/C/NZL/3-4). In addition, there were important programmes under way which provided individual assistance, fully recognizing the special needs of women seeking to enter or return to the workforce.

65. Responding to question 73, she said that New Zealand had adopted a broad-based low rate income tax system which worked in tandem with the social policy programmes to provide financial assistance to the most needy. Successive governments had introduced various assistance packages to provide supplementary income and subsidies to low and medium-income families with dependent children.

66. **Ms. Lawrence** (New Zealand), referring to question 74, outlined a number of measures taken by the Government to address the special needs and extra costs, including health costs, of families. Government measures related to health which were provided through the income support system included sickness benefits for unmarried women during pregnancy, disability and handicapped child allowances and tax credits.

67. With regard to question 75 on Maori life expectancy, she referred to the written responses which outlined the health risks to which Maori children were exposed. The Government would soon present its *Child Health Strategy* which applied to all child health and disability support services and focused on the needs of

Maori and Pacific children, children with high health and disability support needs and those from severely disadvantaged families.

68. A number of other mechanisms had been set up; they included an intersectoral initiative aimed at improving health, welfare and education prospects for the underprivileged, strategies for specialist mental health services and suicide prevention, and an anti-smoking initiative.

69. Concerning the issue of health services to rural women, she said the range of services offered by publicly financed private health and disability service providers had not been reduced. Changes in contracting agreements had resulted in the engagement of private providers to supply publicly funded health services previously delivered by public hospitals.

70. **Ms. Morris** (New Zealand), speaking in response to question 86, drew attention to the statistics provided in the report (CEDAW/C/NZL/3-4) under article 13, which showed that the numbers of women enjoying positive education, employment and health outcomes had increased.

71. In conclusion, regarding question 90, she pointed out that attention was being paid to the training, recruitment, incentives, and other aspects of employment packages for rural staff, including midwives and practice nurses.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.