



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

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

**Summary record of the 972nd meeting**

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 26 January 2011, at 3 p.m.

*Chairperson:* Ms. Pimentel

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*The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.*

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

*Combined fifth to seventh periodic reports of Sri Lanka* (*continued*) (CEDAW/C/LKA/5-7, CEDAW/C/LKA/Q/7 and Add.1)

1. **Ms. Wijayatillake** (Sri Lanka) said that, in addition to efforts already under way to combat human trafficking, a task force set up by the Ministry of Justice was preparing a plan of action in that regard. The bill on the establishment of a witness protection programme would be reintroduced during the next session of Parliament. The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Convention), signed in 2000, had been ratified in 2006. The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing that Convention, had been signed in 2000, and the ratification process for the Protocol was under way. Lastly, she said that she was perplexed by the question relating to the Hindu tradition of *devadasi*, whereby young girls were “married” or dedicated to a deity and used by priests or upper-caste patrons for sexual favours, since that practice did not exist in Sri Lanka.
2. **Ms. Schulz** noted that Sri Lanka had been a pioneer in the area of women’s rights, having granted women the right to vote in 1931. It was therefore all the more disappointing to see that so few Members of Parliament and provincial elected officials were women. Women from minority groups, for example the Tamil and Muslim communities, were also severely underrepresented. There would seem to be little commitment on the part of the main political parties to put forth women candidates. The delegation should provide information on any Government plans to remedy that situation at all levels of elected office though, for example, such temporary special measures as quotas with a view to ensuring substantive equal representation for women.
3. She expressed concern at reports of violence against women candidates and their supporters and wondered what the State party was doing to ensure their safety. She asked whether the State party planned to implement measures to enable Sri Lankans working abroad to vote in elections. Lastly, she enquired whether the Buddhist Temporalities Ordinance of 1931 would be amended to allow women to become monks and heads of temple.
4. **Ms. Popescu**, acknowledging the difficulty of promoting women’s rights during the long conflict in Sri Lanka, said that those types of difficulties had been recognized in Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), which underscored the importance of increasing the participation of women at decision-making levels in conflict resolution and peace processes and meeting the needs of women and girls during post-conflict reconstruction. She therefore wondered whether women were adequately represented in the State party’s reconstruction efforts. She noted, for example, that only one of the eight members of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission was a woman and that there were no women at the decision-making level in the Bureau of the Commissioner General of Rehabilitation or the President’s Task Force on Northern Development. Measures must be adopted to increase women’s role in such bodies, which would play an important part in shaping the country’s future. It was also regrettable that there were few women in the diplomatic service; updated information on the number of female senior officials and ambassadors should be provided. Women should be encouraged to join the diplomatic service and be offered the training they would need to qualify for positions of responsibility.
5. Temporary special measures and affirmative action were essential tools for the advancement of women. She was therefore concerned that, according to the Committee’s sources, the Supreme Court had interpreted article 12, paragraph 4, of the Constitution on special provisions for the advancement of women, children or disabled persons rather

narrowly, implying that such special provisions could not be used to circumvent article 12, paragraph 1, on equality before the law. She wondered whether that decision could be challenged in view of the importance of temporary special measures in overcoming obstacles to the advancement of women.

6. **Ms. Bareiro-Bobadilla** said that, although, according to paragraph 15 of the periodic report (CEDAW/C/LKA/5-7), the representation of women at decision-making levels and political life was increasing, the numbers remained unacceptably low. Figures from the Inter-Parliamentary Union indicated that only 10 countries had lower levels of political participation by women. Although there were constitutional guarantees of equality for women, there were no mechanisms to ensure that those guarantees were implemented in practice.

7. Temporary special measures, as provided for under article 4 of the Convention, could be used to eliminate prejudice and practices relating to stereotyped roles for women, as called for in article 5; that would open the way for women's increased participation in political and public life. Stereotypes and some customs also contributed to such problems as sexual abuse and the early marriage of girls, often to older men. Much more data should be provided on those issues. Moreover, a lack of information or complaints did not necessarily mean that there was no problem; it could also be a sign that victims were afraid or simply felt that complaining would be futile.

8. She underscored the importance of increasing the participation of women at the community level, where they could play an active role in ensuring the development of their communities. The State party should study success stories from other countries with a view to adopting strategies that could play a crucial part in the advancement of women.

9. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani**, welcoming the fact that the delegation was headed by a woman and that some progress had been made towards increasing the representation of women in public and political life, said that more must nevertheless be done to significantly increase the number of women in public life, in particular at the local level. Political parties, especially the party in power, must nominate more women candidates; State subsidies for political parties should be denied to parties that did not increase women's participation.

10. The end of the war should mean that additional resources could be allocated to women's issues in order to, for example, increase the number of women in the diplomatic service and strengthen women's role in the fulfilment of the State party's international obligations under the Convention. More resources should likewise be made available for the advancement of women in the fields of politics, education, health, employment and agriculture with a view to making Sri Lanka a country where women could prosper.

11. **Ms. Gabr**, recalling that a former member of the Committee had been Sri Lankan and welcoming the fact that the delegation was headed by a woman, said that it was important for the State party to make the promotion of women's rights a priority despite the difficulties caused by the long conflict and natural disasters. Stereotypes had a negative influence on women's ability to participate in political life and contributed to violence against women. Awareness of women's issues should be increased, and the media and civil society should be encouraged to discuss gender-related issues. Subsidies for political parties could be a tool for promoting women's participation in politics; women should also receive training to prepare them for an increased public role. She agreed with other experts who had called for increased representation of women at the international level.

12. **Ms. Wijayatillake** (Sri Lanka) said that her Government was making every effort to increase the number of women in public life. While there were relatively few women holding elected office, there were many women at decision-making levels in the civil service. Although their numbers were already on the rise, she did not exclude the possibility of establishing a quota. There were many women judges, including on the Supreme Court,

and the Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka in Geneva was a woman. A policy of equal recruitment for all Government positions was in the process of being implemented.

13. **Mr. Ranasinghe** (Sri Lanka) said that a team of 10 women, working with the clinical psychologists attached to the Bureau of the Commissioner General of Rehabilitation, visited centres throughout the country to assess levels of de-radicalization. A majority of the counsellors and psychiatrists working at headquarters and in rehabilitation centres and relief villages were women, and all rehabilitation centres for women were administered by women. Six female officers of the National Cadet Corps had been assigned to those centres, two of whom had continued working with the Commissioner General after the female internally displaced persons had returned home.

14. **Ms. Wijayatillake** (Sri Lanka) said that the delegation was not familiar with the Supreme Court decision concerning temporary special measures to which Ms. Popescu had referred and would appreciate more detail.

15. **Mr. Nawaz** (Sri Lanka) said that temporary special measures, as defined in article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention, had been applied in Sri Lanka in the past, and he referred Committee members to a Gazette notification issued in September 2006. He doubted that the Supreme Court had imposed restrictions on such measures; he would need to consult the decision in question to be certain.

16. The mechanisms necessary to ensure that Sri Lankans working overseas could exercise their franchise had been incorporated into the National Plan of Action. Those mechanisms were based on absentee balloting systems in place in other countries and ought to be implemented within six months.

17. **Ms. Popescu** said that the Supreme Court decision in question was Special Determination No. 2-11 of 2010 concerning the permissibility of affirmative action. She had been alerted to its existence by a shadow report submitted by the Women and Media Collective. The special determination stated that article 12, paragraph 4, of the Sri Lankan Constitution could not be used as a weapon to depart from the basic principles laid down in article 12, paragraph 1, and, accordingly, could not be used to authorize affirmative action on behalf of women, children and disabled persons. She was surprised that the Supreme Court should issue a ruling that ran counter to article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention, given the importance of that article.

18. **Ms. Bareiro-Bobadilla** noted that the State party's report (CEDAW/C/LKA/5-7) clearly stated that temporary special measures had not been taken in any area. However, Mr. Nawaz had indicated otherwise. If that was the case, it was important for the Committee to know in what sectors those measures had been applied and whether they had served to advance women's position.

19. **Mr. Nawaz** (Sri Lanka) said that he wished to emphasize that the core equality provisions set out in article 12, paragraphs 1 and 2, which were the cornerstones of the Sri Lankan Constitution, did not in any way prohibit affirmative action. The special determination likewise contained no absolute prohibition. He could confirm that a number of Gazette notifications authorizing temporary special measures had been issued from 2006 onward and that none of those notifications had been invalidated by the Supreme Court as contravening equality provisions. Temporary special measures were permitted but might be subject to reasonable qualifications in certain circumstances. He would need to read the special determination carefully before he could comment on the qualifications made in that particular case.

20. **Ms. Acar** said that Sri Lankan women's progress in primary, secondary and tertiary education had been remarkable but that she would like to have more statistical data to give her a fuller picture. In particular, she would appreciate a breakdown of women in education,

by minority group and area. She would also be interested in hearing an explanation for women's underrepresentation in traditionally male areas of higher education, since, although they outperformed boys in school, with lower repetition and drop-out rates, girls were poorly represented in computing, science and engineering degree courses and, in vocational and technical education, were concentrated in secretarial and sewing-related courses. That situation was indicative of gender stereotyping in education, which was inevitably reproduced in employment.

21. In that connection, she wished to draw attention to an anomaly in the last sentence of paragraph 97 of the combined periodic reports. Assuming that the reference to increased stereotyping was simply a drafting error, she had still been disturbed to read that change would take place "at its own pace". Sri Lanka had ratified the Convention without reservations specifically so that progress towards equality would be accelerated, not left to develop at its own pace. Targeted measures, including temporary special measures, were essential to counteract women's underrepresentation in traditionally male areas and their overrepresentation in traditionally female ones. Information about specific Government measures to eradicate stereotypes, including systematic efforts to eliminate gender-discriminatory references from school books and other teaching materials and to train teachers in non-discriminatory approaches, would therefore be appreciated.

22. In view of the important role of female teachers and academics as role models and mentors in all areas of education, she also sought information about the presence of women in decision-making positions in academia.

23. Lastly, noting that women's rights were frequently violated in times of conflict and disaster, she wished to emphasize that such times could also provide a window of opportunity for change, as the exigencies of the situation led women into unconventional positions of empowerment. She urged the State party to incorporate those kinds of situations into its routine education and training systems so that women's presence in non-conventional areas and leadership positions could be carried one step further as the reconstruction process progressed and peace was consolidated.

24. **Mr. Bruun** said that he had been pleased to see the subjects of the situation of female migrant workers and unemployment among women included among the key concerns highlighted in the State party's opening statement. The country's huge, female-dominated informal sector made the high jobless rate among women especially worrisome, and he would like details on any concrete measures to address that situation. He also sought information about measures to ensure a basic minimum of protection for women working in the informal economy.

25. He was concerned, especially given girls' success in education, about the pronounced gender segregation existing in the labour market, with women being overrepresented in low-skilled, low-paid jobs. Sri Lanka had ratified the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention concerning Equal Remuneration (No. 100) but, according to ILO, the Government had provided no evidence that the principle was reflected in its legislation. Could the delegation explain how it was addressing that deficiency?

26. Citing reports of frequent sexual harassment in the private sector, especially on the tea plantations, he urged the State party to adopt specific legislation outside the realm of criminal law to deal with that problem more effectively, as ILO experts had recommended. Lastly, he asked what the Government was doing to promote the employment of women with disabilities and shield them from multiple discrimination.

27. **Ms. Ameline**, noting that Sri Lanka's recent elevation to lower-middle-income status by the World Bank and its consequent eligibility for increased aid should facilitate new investment and employment plans, asked how prominently women's equality

programmes would feature in those plans. Was a targeted approach envisaged that would be based on a proactive policy to ensure women's involvement in the country's post-conflict and post-tsunami reconstruction? She would like to know which sectors were being prioritized for economic reconstruction. It was vital to use the process as an opportunity to move women from informal employment into key sectors of the formal economy in which unmet labour demand existed, whether in services, tourism, industry or new technologies. What specific strategies were envisioned for that purpose?

28. Referring to the continuing existence of discriminatory references and measures in legislative texts, which had been highlighted during the morning session, she wished to emphasize that a new legislative framework, underpinned by a more robust economy, was essential in order to attain sustainable development and equality. In that regard, she wondered whether the State party was investigating ways of ensuring that women were not victims of irresponsible and exploitative planning and that they were included as active participants in decision-making concerning preventive and crisis management measures.

29. Lastly, she asked how the State party dealt with incoming fund transfers from Sri Lankans working overseas in the absence of specific regulations. Since those transfers could be quite substantial and could be used for investment as much as consumption, she wondered whether any special investment or credit mechanisms had been introduced.

30. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** observed that table 42 of the report showed a drop in contraceptive use since the year 2000 in rural areas, but not in the estate sector, where it was continuing to rise. She asked for an explanation for that apparent anomaly. She understood that contraception was used primarily by adult married women rather than adolescent or single women. She was concerned that that might indicate that adolescent sexuality was not considered a topic with which society should engage; looking the other way would not make adolescents any less sexually active. She would be interested in the State party's views on that aspect and would like further data on the use of contraceptives by people under the age of 18. She also would like to know what type of sex education and sexual health services were provided to adolescents and wondered what links might exist between the lack of preparation for informed and responsible sexuality, on the one hand, and unwanted pregnancies, on the other.

31. Table 41 of the report revealed an increase in HIV/AIDS, and although the rate for women was somewhat lower than the rate for men, it was rising faster. She asked whether the delegation had any information broken down by age group, noting that the general trend in smaller and less developed countries was for new infections to be concentrated among persons up to the age of 24.

32. **Ms. Rasekh** said that the rate of condom use among teenage boys and girls and, indeed, among all unmarried people, appeared to be very low, which was one factor that might explain the rise in HIV in the country. She asked what measures, such as awareness-raising campaigns, the Government had taken to make condom use more accessible. She had read in an NGO report that women had been arrested for carrying a condom about their person in public. Was there a legal prohibition on condom use by unmarried women and girls?

33. She asked about the access of internally displaced persons and those in camps to general and/or reproductive health-care services, noting that the report gave no information on that subject. Given the history of the country, in particular its years of armed conflict, one might expect to see high levels of psychosocial disorders, such as depression or post-traumatic stress disorder, but there was no information in the report on that either. She wondered what information had been gathered on such disorders and what trauma counselling services were available to women.

34. **Ms. Hayashi**, turning to the issue of women's land rights, said that, as the country rebuilt itself, it was very important to empower women at the grass-roots level. They should be given access to loans and bank credit, which were difficult to obtain for women who had no property to provide as collateral. Alternative sources had indicated that land was granted only to heads of household, which would mean that fewer women would have access to land allocated by the State. Noting that the Government was currently reviewing the concept of "head of household", she asked for information about the time frame and nature of the review process.

35. The Government policy under which land could be owned by one person only was discriminatory against women. The Attorney General had issued an opinion according to which the State Land Ordinance did not prohibit joint ownership of land, but that opinion had never been acted upon. Permitting joint ownership by women and their partners would be particularly advantageous during the resettlement process, since it would enable women to construct their own houses on their own land. She asked what mechanisms were used to settle disputes over land entitlements and what remedies were available to women whose claims were denied. Since women who had been affected by the tsunami or the armed conflict were unlikely to have any documentation of property ownership that pre-dated those calamities, she wondered how they could challenge decisions of the authorities that went against them.

36. **Ms. Zou Xiaoqiao**, noting that, according to the report (CEDAW/C/LKA/5-7, para. 140), the Development Framework for 2006–2016 clearly indicated that development had bypassed the rural population and that disparities had widened in education, health, the economy and employment, asked what concrete measures the Government was taking to remedy the situation. The disparities mentioned in the report were presumably those existing between the urban and rural environments. Were there also disparities between men and women? She asked whether there were any sex-disaggregated statistics in that regard and how the gender perspective was integrated into the Development Framework. Recalling that, in its concluding observations on Sri Lanka's combined third and fourth periodic reports, issued in 2002, the Committee had urged the State party to mainstream the gender perspective into all economic policies and programmes, she noted that the current report did not contain any information on the implementation of those earlier recommendations. She also asked whether the Development Framework included targeted support for rural women.

37. Earlier in the constructive dialogue there had been a reference to a programme launched by the Ministry of Economic Development to help village women engage in home-based or small-scale economic activities, and she sought more information on that or similar initiatives.

38. Referring to the issue of land ownership raised by other Committee members, she added that, if a woman could own land jointly with her husband and work the land with him, that would improve her status in the home, reduce the risk of domestic violence and improve her access to credit. She urged the Government to take affirmative action in that area and thereby bring about substantive equality.

39. **Ms. Gabr** said that, after all that women had faced during the country's armed conflict and its natural disasters, surely the least that could be done for them would be to recognize their right to own land. Bringing that about should be an essential part of any comprehensive plan or policy to improve the lot of Sri Lankan women. Women in rural areas were less respected if they were working on land owned by third parties, and that type of discrimination would be eliminated if they could work their own land. She asked whether rural woman had access to the same health-care, water-supply and housing services as were available in towns and requested further information about programmes to empower women to work in the production of crafts or agricultural goods.

40. **Ms. Wijayatillake** (Sri Lanka) replied that projects that sought to improve access to safe drinking water and to social and other services were being implemented in rural areas. Those projects focused on providing services to the entire family and did not discriminate on the basis of gender. As a national policy, empowering village inhabitants was a high priority, and the country's ministries had been instructed to identify projects that could be carried out by the village people themselves, with a special focus on income-generating activities that could be performed by women at home. The Development Framework also placed special emphasis on rural women.

41. There was no barrier to co-ownership of land by a woman and her husband or to the joint sale of land except in a few specific cases, including, possibly, cases where land grants from the Government might be earmarked for certain types of persons. Restrictions were imposed to limit the fragmentation of land, but that was not an issue of gender discrimination.

42. The use of contraceptives by persons under the age of 18 was an issue to which consideration had been given when Sri Lanka was formulating its National Human Rights Action Plan. It was true that adolescent sexuality was not socially accepted, nor openly discussed. At present, little effort was directed towards that age group, but the Action Plan would provide for programmes for persons under the age of 18 as well. The delegation did not have any further statistics to give the Committee that disaggregated contraceptive use by age groups.

43. Turning to the Committee's comments on the need for sustainable development, she assured the Committee that all of the Government's action plans focused on achieving results which would ensure sustainable development and included indicators to monitor progress towards that goal. In reply to an earlier question about remittances sent back from migrants, she said that those funds were paid into private accounts. The recipients could obtain advice on how to invest them, but there was no official oversight of those completely private funds. In response to a question about maternity benefits, she referred to the detailed information given in paragraph 107 of the report (CEDAW/C/LKA/5-7).

44. **Ms. Sugathadasa** (Sri Lanka) explained that there was no gender-based wage disparity in the plantation sector. On the subject of sexual harassment in the workplace, she reported that a memorandum of understanding had been drawn up among the employers' federation and the ministries responsible for women's affairs and for labour relations. Under the terms of that memorandum, a voluntary code of conduct had been drafted which defined sexual harassment and set forth the steps that should be taken if it occurred.

45. **Ms. Wijayatillake** (Sri Lanka) added that, while the Committee had suggested that special actions should be taken against sexual harassment in the plantations sector, above and beyond those provided for in the criminal code, that was neither feasible nor desirable: sexual harassment was a crime in Sri Lanka, and it would be inappropriate to handle it outside the bounds of the criminal code, in the plantations or elsewhere. Occurrences of election-related violence against women were dealt with under the criminal law regime, just like any other offence.

46. **Mr. Nawaz** clarified that there was no law that criminalized the possession of condoms.

47. Several programmes had been set up to provide health-care services to internally displaced persons, along with a health centre in each relevant zone of the country. Some 150 doctors had been detailed to work in those centres and nearby hospitals, and mobile laboratory, radiology and dentistry units had been dispatched. The health centres had facilities for the treatment of psychosocial disorders. In addition, a dedicated management unit had been established at the Ministry of Health and a coordination unit had been set up in the north of the country.



48. Sex education and information about reproductive health were imparted to all children in grade levels six through nine. The topics were also covered as an optional subject in senior secondary school.

49. Sri Lanka had established a development bank which provided microfinancing facilities to women entrepreneurs in rural and marginalized areas.

50. **Ms. Wijayatillake** (Sri Lanka) said that no data on educational attainment that were disaggregated by ethnicity were available. As to stereotyping and women's underrepresentation in engineering and technical courses, she referred the Committee to information contained in the report and the replies to the list of issues (CEDAW/C/LKA/5-7; CEDAW/C/LKA/Q/7/Add.1). Her Government was making a determined effort to create an enabling environment for women to pursue the studies of their choice. In 2007, women had accounted for nearly 25 per cent of total university staff and, in 2006, for nearly 40 per cent of the teaching staff. In reply to a question concerning persons with disabilities, she said that Act No. 28 of 1996 on the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities provided for the establishment of a national council for persons with disabilities. Furthermore, several initiatives had been taken by the Ministry of Social Services to safeguard disabled persons' rights, including schemes to provide financial assistance and equipment.

51. **Mr. Nawaz** (Sri Lanka) said that the Government had established a job centre to assist persons with disabilities to find employment. It had also organized a job fair in 2008 to facilitate contact between disabled people and prospective employers, and there were plans to hold similar fairs in the future.

52. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** requested details on the administration of personal laws under the different legal regimes and, in particular, regarding the roles and jurisdictions of the various courts and the percentage of women judges in those courts. She asked whether it was still the case that, under the general legal regime, divorce was fault-based and, if so, whether grounds for divorce were equal for men and women. She enquired whether, in cases of divorce, property accumulated during a marriage was divided equally between spouses, regardless of who held title to given assets. Recalling that polygamy was in contravention of the Committee's general recommendation No. 21, she requested information on its incidence and the measures taken to do away with it.

53. **Ms. Wijayatillake** (Sri Lanka) said that the same courts administered the law irrespective of the legal regime concerned. Currently, under the General Marriage Ordinance, divorce was fault-based, but the Law Commission had prepared a bill which provided for divorce on grounds of the irretrievable breakdown of a marriage. With respect to matrimonial property rights under Kandyan law, she said that alimony orders or orders for the division of property were issued upon dissolution of a marriage. It was the courts that ultimately determined the division of property in the case of joint ownership. As to women's representation in the judiciary, she said that there were currently 3 female Supreme Court judges out of a total of 11. There had been an influx of women into the lower courts thanks to non-discriminatory recruitment policies, and it was only a question of time before women achieved parity in the judiciary.

54. **Mr. Nawaz** (Sri Lanka) said that, although polygamy was permitted under Islamic law under certain specific circumstances, it was virtually non-existent. The *Kathi* courts, which handled matrimonial disputes among Muslims, functioned as separate judicial bodies.

55. **Ms. Schulz** asked the delegation to confirm that the Vagrants Ordinance was not used to detain persons in possession of condoms. She expressed concern that the criminalization of lesbianism exposed lesbian women to the risk of abuse and exploitation by health professionals who, for example, might threaten to disclose their sexual orientation. She was also concerned about reports that families sometimes sought to "cure" female

family members suspected of being lesbians through forced measures such as institutionalization, psychotherapy and confinement. She would welcome information on those matters. Lastly, she asked whether the Government intended to take steps to improve the situation of lesbian women in regard to their right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

56. **Ms. Hayashi** asked whether the Government intended to instruct the Land Commissioner General to comply with the opinion of the Attorney General regarding joint ownership of land. She would like to know why the Minister for Child Development and Women's Empowerment had not been included among the ministers who sat on the National Disaster Management Council.

57. **Ms. Šimonović** asked whether the Government intended to fully incorporate the Convention into the domestic legal system in accordance with the Committee's recommendation to that effect.

58. **Ms. Wijayatillake** (Sri Lanka) said that possession of condoms was not a criminal offence. If law enforcement officials were arresting persons for that reason, the Government would speak to those responsible in order to find a solution. As to lesbian women's health, she said that services and facilities were provided to all women irrespective of their sexual orientation. With regard to the question concerning the Minister for Child Development and Women's Empowerment, she said that there was a clear definition of the functions of Government institutions, but that did not preclude extensive consultations and cooperation among bodies on specific issues. The bill on women's rights provided for the establishment of a national commission on women with a mandate to ensure that the State fulfilled its obligations under the Convention.

59. **Mr. Nawaz** (Sri Lanka) said that there was no bar to joint ownership of land and that he would look into the question of the implementation of the Attorney General's opinion in that regard. He said that lesbianism had been criminalized following a 1995 amendment of the Criminal Code.

60. **Ms. Wijayatillake** (Sri Lanka) thanked the Committee members for their observations and suggestions and said that her Government would continue to improve the quality of women's lives in Sri Lanka.

61. **The Chairperson** thanked the delegation for the constructive dialogue that had taken place and said that she hoped that the State party would take all necessary measures to address the Committee's concerns with a view to full implementation of the Convention.

*The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.*