



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

Distr.: General
7 February 2007

Original: English

**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
Thirty-seventh session

Summary record of the 771st meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 26 January 2007, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Šimonović

Contents

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

Combined initial, second and third periodic reports of Tajikistan

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of this document* to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza.

Any corrections to the record of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

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

Combined initial, second and third periodic reports of Tajikistan (CEDAW/C/TJK/1-3; CEDAW/C/TJK/Q/3 and Add.1)

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

2. **Mr. Khamidov** (Tajikistan), introducing the combined reports, said that since its earliest days of independence, the Republic of Tajikistan had adhered to the principles of international human rights law enshrined in its Constitution. The international legal instruments ratified by it formed an integral part of the Tajik legal system and prevailed over national law. In the immediate post-Soviet period, the country had faced serious economic difficulties and a destructive civil war. All government efforts at the time had been geared towards achieving political stability and facilitating a transition to a market economy. Large-scale, multisectoral reforms had since created an enabling environment for post-conflict reconstruction, poverty eradication and economic growth. Progress had been made on many fronts and the Government was committed to furthering the Millennium Development Goals, including in the context of its National Development Strategy for 2006-2015.

3. The realization of equal rights and opportunities for men and women was being given special priority. A Presidential decree of 3 December 1999 on enhancing the role of women in society obliged the Government to implement the main provisions of the Convention by effecting the broad participation of women in public life and in the administration of the State, enhancing the social status of women and the health of the nation's gene pool and energizing the role of women in strengthening the moral bases of peace and unity.

4. Pursuant to the State policy to ensure equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women (2001-2010), the Government had approved a State programme for the training and recruitment of female administrators. Quotas had also been introduced to increase the participation of women in higher education. The law on guarantees of equal rights for men and women and equal opportunities in the exercise of such rights, enacted in March 2005, was aimed, inter

alia, at preventing gender discrimination. Other legislation — on reproductive health and rights, HIV/AIDS and trafficking in persons — was designed to ensure that women's interests were given priority. Efforts were under way to ensure de facto implementation of such measures, as would be clear from the combined reports (CEDAW/C/TJK/1-3) and the responses to the list of issues (CEDAW/C/TJK/Q/3/Add.1). Draft legislation on domestic violence was currently under consideration, with a view to addressing the legislative gap in that area.

5. However, despite the Government's concerted efforts to promote women's rights, economic, social, political, cultural and other barriers remained. It was no easy task overcoming entrenched attitudes and traditional gender stereotypes. The achievement of de facto equality was a long-term process, requiring far-reaching change and the participation of all members of society. Civil society, in particular, had an important role to play; to that end, it had been involved in the preparation of the report and of an "alternative report" on implementation of the Convention.

6. State policy, for its part, must focus on: promoting the equal access of men and women to material and non-material resources, increasing women's economic independence, raising the status of women's unpaid housework, ensuring joint responsibility for raising children and the fair division of household chores. Other priorities were to enhance women's participation in political, economic and social decision-making, ensure equal access to education of all types and levels and raise the employability of both men and women. Lastly, his delegation had not sought to paint a rosy picture, but to provide Committee members with the information that they would need to formulate an objective assessment of the situation of women's rights in Tajikistan.

Articles 1 and 2

7. **Mr. Flinterman** commended the State party for the inclusion of guarantees of gender equality in its Constitution and for the adoption of the 2005 Equality and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women (State Guarantees) Act. He wondered however whether there was any intention to establish a comprehensive mechanism to receive and investigate complaints of unequal treatment and, above all, to provide for effective remedies in cases of discrimination.

According to his sources, the State Guarantees Act had not had any practical effect, and he suggested lack of awareness might explain the absence of complaints. In that context, he noted that the State party had signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention, but stressed that the right to appeal to the Committee assumed the existence of effective domestic legal remedies, which had to be exhausted before turning to the Committee.

8. **Ms. Schöpp-Shilling** said the measures and legislation adopted by the State party showed a clear political will to implement the Convention. She enquired however whether the judiciary had received training about the guarantees of equal treatment contained in the State Guarantees Act and whether the State party was aware of the need to take steps to increase awareness of and eliminate not only direct, but also indirect discrimination against women. Referring to the Presidential Decree of 3 December 1999 on enhancing the role of women in society, she requested more information on any efforts to provide lawyers and judges with training in and increase public awareness of gender issues. Lastly, she asked if ministries allocated resources to training in gender issues and whether the free legal counselling centres for women were funded by the State.

9. **Ms. Shin** commended the State party for the quality of its report and written responses but expressed regret that the initial report was eleven years overdue; a fourth periodic report should in fact have been submitted in 2006. She wondered how that delay could be explained, especially in the light of the existence of bodies such as the Government Commission on Implementation of Tajikistan's International Obligations and the Department of Constitutional Human Rights Guarantees, and the fact that the State party had submitted reports to the treaty monitoring bodies of other instruments ratified after the Convention. She had concerns about the implementation in practice of the State Guarantees Act and asked whether additional legislation was planned for the application of its provisions relating to, for example, gender awareness training in the civil service, and equal remuneration for work of equal value. Such broad guarantees required complementary implementing legislation to define the concepts involved and how to achieve their objectives.

10. **The Chairperson**, speaking in her capacity as a Committee member, stressed that reporting was an integral component of implementation of the

Convention and requested more information on how the report had been prepared, for example whether non-governmental organizations and Parliament had been consulted. She also asked, given that the State party had signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention, whether it would soon proceed to ratification.

11. **Mr. Khamidov** (Tajikistan) said that the combined reports had been prepared using input from a plethora of ministries and committees, as well as from representatives of the judiciary, trade unions, television, radio and the National Bank. Consultations had also been held with members of Parliament and the general public, representatives of the Korean, Russian and Uzbek communities, academics, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations and experts, including Ms. Schöpp-Schilling and Ms. Dairiam.

12. During the years of civil strife (1992-1997), it had not been possible to prepare a report, since all the Government's energies had been focused on attaining peace and stability. In future, however, the State party would ensure that all periodic reports to treaty bodies were submitted on time, with special priority given to the Convention — out of courtesy to women and taking into account their role as mothers and peacemakers.

13. **Ms. Sharipova** (Tajikistan) said that both State and non-State actors had been involved in the drafting of the law on equal opportunities. It was a bold law, which did indeed contain declaratory provisions. The right of citizens to appeal to any State body for protection of their interests was provided for in a separate law, and a special unit had been established by the President to hear complaints. As many as 3,000 complaints had been received in January of that year, including some fifty per cent from women. Under article 163 of the Criminal Code, if State representatives did not adequately respond to a complaint, they faced criminal prosecution.

14. She confirmed that, at the drafting stage, the equal opportunities law had been the subject of parallel discussions by civil society and the judiciary. Direct discrimination was prohibited by law, and the Government was also taking measures to completely eliminate indirect discrimination. Considerable efforts were being made to raise awareness of all international and national remedies available. An institute had been established to that end the previous year, and grants

were available to enable members of the judiciary and general public to attend courses.

15. Since 2002, some 600 civil servants in two districts had received specialized training on gender issues, covering: basic gender theory; legislation; gender-mainstreaming of policies and studies; the participation of women in the labour market, national economy and decision-making; and gender budgets.

16. **Mr. Khamidov** (Tajikistan) said that the Optional Protocol had been signed and would be ratified in due course.

Article 3

17. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** noted that the combined reports referred to numerous plans and strategies in areas such as reproductive health, public health, poverty reduction, and the advancement of women, but wondered how a gender perspective would be integrated into those efforts. More information, therefore was needed, on the role of the Committee on Women and the Family, including whether it coordinated gender policy with ministries and its local branches and with the Parliamentary Committee on the Family, Health Care, Social Protection and the Environment, and the Coordinating Council on Gender Problems of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. She expressed concern in particular that, according to the delegation's written responses, the Committee on Women and the Family lacked the capacity to plan or monitor the implementation of gender policies, carry out gender analyses or evaluate the gender aspects of strategic programmes and stressed that there must be some national coordinating body with the authority and resources to ensure the effective promotion of women's rights.

18. **Ms. Zou Xiaojiao** also requested further information on the membership, activities and responsibilities of the Committee on Women and the Family, in particular whether it had made any proposals for legislation relating to the empowerment of women or influenced Government policies, and whether it cooperated with non-governmental and civil society organizations. More information would also be welcome on the drafting and implementation of the National Plan of Action for Enhancing the Status and Role of Women for the Period 1998-2005 and on any obstacles encountered during its implementation.

19. **Ms. Chutikul** noted that, according to the delegation's written responses, the Committee on Women and the Family was an independent government agency responsible for the implementation of gender policy but requested clarification on its degree of independence and on whether it had used its independent status to influence government policies and actions. She expressed concern at the State party's admission in its written responses that that Committee lacked the capacity to fully carry out its mandate. More information would be welcome on efforts to ensure that gender issues were incorporated into the National Development Strategy (2006-2015) and on the practical effects of the Guidelines for a State policy to ensure equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women of the Republic of Tajikistan for the period 2001-2010.

20. **Ms. Neubauer** wondered whether, with only 11 staff members, the Committee for Women and the Family had adequate resources to meet its responsibility for the implementation of gender policies. The delegation should indicate whether the Committee's gender department had additional staff and whether the Committee and department received adequate funding. She would also welcome more information on the voluntary coordinators for gender issues in Government ministries, specifically whether they were assigned to gender issues at the discretion of the minister and whether they assumed responsibility for gender issues in addition to their other responsibilities.

21. **Ms. Nosirova** (Tajikistan) said activities undertaken in the context of the National Plan of Action for Enhancing the Status and Role of Women for the Period 1998-2005 included the establishment in 2000 of a leadership training centre for young girls living in isolated areas, funded at first by non-governmental organizations and subsequently by the Government since 2004; and, with a view to improving women's standard of living, the organization in three regions of centres to train women in business skills, a cooperative venture with the Committee on Women and the Family. Microcredit facilities had also been made available to women, and 40 per cent of those receiving such loans were women.

22. Additions to the country's legal framework for the protection of women's rights included the Equality and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women (State Guarantees) Act of 2005, the Trafficking in Persons

Act of 2004 and the Guidelines for a State policy to ensure equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women for the period 2001-2010. Efforts to combat violence against women included the opening of thirteen crisis centres offering support to women victims, the establishment of a shelter for victims in one community with the cooperation of the local authorities and the preparation of a draft law on domestic violence by the Committee on Women and the Family in cooperation with non-governmental organizations.

23. The Committee on Women and the Family was the executive body responsible for implementing Government policies relating to women and the family and the empowerment of women in particular. Its responsibilities reflected the equality guarantees contained in the Constitution and relevant legislation as well as the international instruments to which Tajikistan was a party. It cooperated with other national and local government executive bodies and civil society organizations as well as with the deputy-ministers in each ministry assigned responsibility for gender issues. It had 11 staff members and, together with gender-related programmes, was funded from the State budget. One new programme was a programme approved in November 2006 for training young girls and women. Associations and non-governmental organizations working in the field of gender rights had also received Government grants. Lastly, she pointed out that women occupied high-level positions in a number of provinces, municipalities and districts.

24. **Mr. Khamidov** (Tajikistan) said that it might be preferable to describe the Committee on Women and the Family as an autonomous, rather than independent, coordinating body. It reported to the President of the Republic, who bore final responsibility for the implementation of gender equality policies. The implementation of gender policy would no doubt be strengthened if, for example, the gender coordinators in ministries were assigned to gender issues on a full-time basis and more resources were allocated for coordinating and implementing gender policies.

Article 4

25. **Ms. Schöpp-Shilling** encouraged the State party to ratify the Committee's proposed amendment to article 20(1) of the Convention and also to envisage the use of temporary special measures to promote equality of women and men, referring to the Committee's

general recommendation 25 in that regard. She wondered if the possibility of temporary special measures was not already implied in the State Guarantees Act and whether measures to promote education for girls in rural areas and the appointment of a Deputy Prime Minister responsible for gender issues were not a form of temporary special measure. On the other hand, no quotas for women's representation in political life had been established, and she wondered if the possibility of imposing temporary special measures should not be explicitly stated in the law.

26. **Mr. Khamidov** (Tajikistan) agreed that measures such as quotas to promote education for rural girls were examples of the type of temporary special measure envisaged in the Convention. More such measures had been and would be adopted, but he acknowledged that greater use of temporary special measures should be made.

Article 5

27. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** expressed concern at the gender stereotypes that were still prevalent in Tajikistan and at the number of cases of bigamy and polygamy. She noted that the number of convictions for bigamy and polygamy had increased from one in 1999 to 56 in 2003 and asked whether that increase was due to increased awareness or reflected an increase in the prevalence of the problem. The State party must make a real commitment to changing mindsets so that women could play their rightful role in society. Although there were many laws and programmes relating to gender, she asked if targeted efforts had been undertaken to change school programmes and textbooks to educate children about stereotyping and to organize public awareness campaigns, and whether the media had been made aware of their responsibility to educate the public, especially men and boys, about gender equality.

28. **Ms. Pimentel** expressed concern at the situation of second and third wives, who were not covered by secular law and therefore forced to endure violence on the part of the husband and his relatives. More information was needed on the situation of those women, whose rights should be protected, for example, on their rights with regard to the education and raising of their children.

29. **Ms. Dairiam** said that she was pleased to note that the Office of the Procurator-General analysed crimes against women and that action was taken on that basis. However, she assumed that the Office could analyse only those cases that were reported. As the consolidated reports acknowledged, the number of women victims of violence was probably higher than official figures indicated, since many incidents went unreported because victims were afraid of incurring the anger of their husband or his family, or because they did not trust the law enforcement agencies. The Committee therefore wished to know what further action was planned in order to form a more accurate idea of the scale of violence against women and what additional measures would be put in place to provide victims with psychological, social and financial support and to inform them of their rights. Lastly, she asked whether suicides of women that were caused by violence were classified as cases of violence against women.

30. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, wished to know when the bill on social and legal protection against domestic violence was likely to be adopted and requested more information on its content. Would it provide for protection orders and other measures such as free legal aid, counselling and shelters? The Committee would like to know whether the existing shelters were run by the Government or by NGOs, and whether they were provided with adequate funding. She also asked whether the Government planned to mount a campaign to raise awareness of domestic violence. Lastly, the delegation should explain how data on domestic violence cases were collected. Relevant figures, such as the number of women killed in such circumstances each year, did not seem to be available. Such data should be collected in the future.

31. **Ms. Mukhammadieva** (Tajikistan) said that school curricula were elaborated by the Ministry of Education in conjunction with pedagogical academies. Boys and girls studied together in mixed classes for all subjects and had complete freedom in their choice of subjects, irrespective of their gender. Lessons in computing were being introduced at all levels of the school system. Teaching on gender issues was gradually being introduced in schools. Gender analysis of textbooks was under way but the process was not yet complete.

32. The Criminal Code provided for penalties for the perpetrators of violence against women. Statistics on such cases were passed on to the State Statistics Committee, which analysed them and submitted monthly reports on that basis to the Government and the relevant ministries and departments. Research on domestic violence was conducted by means of surveys of the public, sometimes in conjunction with civic organizations dealing with gender issues. The information obtained had been used in the preparation of the bill on social and legal protection against domestic violence. Efforts were being made to incorporate indicators of violence against women into national statistical reports. General gender indicators were being integrated into national development and poverty reduction strategies.

33. **Ms. Sharipova** (Tajikistan) said that the number of convictions for polygamy had increased in recent years, which demonstrated the Government's commitment to eliminating the phenomenon and punishing the perpetrators. The number of cases of domestic violence being tried in court was also increasing. In 2006, a coordinating council comprising representatives of various ministries and NGOs had been set up to address the problem of violence against women. It would also touch on related issues such as polygamy.

34. Second and third wives in polygamous marriages did not enjoy property rights, since their unions were not recognized by law. However, the law did provide them with protection from any harm to their physical or mental health. They also enjoyed all the other personal rights accorded to women whose marriages were legally registered, as well as rights with regard to earning a living and the upbringing and education of their children.

35. Polygamous marriages formed 7 per cent of the total number of marriages, and most women who entered into such unions did so voluntarily. Some polygamous marriages involved minors. In 2006, 22 cases concerning marriages of persons below the legal marriageable age had been brought before the courts. Round tables had been organized, with the involvement of State authorities and religious associations, in order to raise awareness of the requirement for marriages to be legally registered before any religious ceremony consecrating the marriage took place. Lastly, the problem of polygamy was widely discussed in the

media and information was disseminated to the whole population in order to raise awareness of the problem.

36. **Mr. Khamidov** (Tajikistan) said that Tajikistan was a secular State and recognized only those marriages registered with civil registry offices. However, some women felt obliged to accept the status of second or third wife for financial reasons. The State was taking a full range of measures, from educational campaigns to criminal prosecutions, to reduce the incidence of polygamy. The rights of children of polygamous marriages, including property rights, the right of inheritance and the right to use the family name, were fully protected by law.

37. **Ms. Sharipova** (Tajikistan) said that a number of NGOs were involved in combating violence against women and providing shelter and counselling to victims. In many cases, women victims of violence were more willing to seek assistance from NGOs, particularly women's NGOs such as the League of Women Lawyers, than from the State law enforcement agencies. Such NGOs received some funding from the State but were chiefly supported by international assistance. The bill on social and legal protection against domestic violence placed an obligation on State organs to provide support for victims, including psychological support, and also obliged the law enforcement agencies to deal with the perpetrators.

38. **Ms. Nosirova** (Tajikistan) said that the existing shelters for women victims of violence were run with the support of international partners. In addition, a number of women's resource centres, some of which also functioned as crisis centres, had been established in rural districts in order to provide rural women with advice and legal aid. More centres were to be opened with State funding in 2007. Work was under way to improve the system of collection and analysis of data on violence against women. Police, medical personnel and teachers were receiving training on the prevention of violence against women. Seminars were being held countrywide to familiarize the public with the content and implications of the bill on social and legal protection against domestic violence.

39. **Ms. Sharipova** (Tajikistan) said that, in 2005 and the first seven months of 2006, 274 murders had taken place. In 64 cases, the victims had been women, and most of those crimes had been committed in a family or domestic setting. Suicides of women could be classified as cases of violence against women if there

was evidence to suggest that violence had caused the suicide.

40. **Ms. Mukhammadiyeva** (Tajikistan) said that, according to data from the State Statistics Committee, the number of such suicides had risen slightly in recent years.

Article 6

41. **Ms. Gabr** said that the Government of Tajikistan needed to pay more attention to the problem of trafficking in women. In particular, it should ensure that legislation in that regard was implemented effectively. She wished to know what resources were available for that purpose and whether there was genuine political will to combat the problem. She had independent information indicating that trafficking in minors was occurring more frequently and asked what measures the Government was taking in that regard, and whether it was cooperating with the Governments of neighbouring States in order to tackle the problem. In addition, certain sources indicated that some women victims of trafficking were being forced to take part in organized crime and drug smuggling. She requested more information in that regard.

42. **Ms. Chutikul** asked whether NGOs had been involved in elaborating the comprehensive programme to combat trafficking in persons and whether they were represented on the interdepartmental commission to combat trafficking in persons. She wished to know what mechanism was in place to monitor and coordinate the implementation of the comprehensive programme. Did the mechanism have sufficient financial, technical and human resources, and to whom was it accountable?

43. The Committee also wished to know whether there was an integrated system for the collection and analysis of data on trafficking from different sources. The State party should indicate whether its laws provided for special protection for minors who were victims of trafficking and whether sufficient shelters were available for victims. Lastly, she asked whether the State party had considered concluding bilateral or multilateral treaties with relevant countries so as to combat trafficking more effectively, and in particular to bring the perpetrators to justice.

44. **Ms. Begum** asked what socio-economic measures were being taken to prevent trafficking, especially with respect to women from ethnic minorities. Information

from certain sources indicated that trafficking in women of Slavic origin was particularly high. For effective enforcement of the Trafficking in Persons Act and the prosecution of offenders, it was necessary to identify the areas where trafficking was concentrated and the routes used by traffickers. More information was needed about the situation of the women victims of trafficking who had returned home from the United Arab Emirates. Were they being successfully reintegrated into the community?

45. The Committee would also appreciate statistics on the number of victims of trafficking infected with HIV/AIDS. What measures had been taken to ensure the safety of women who chose to migrate abroad, and had the State party entered into any agreements with destination countries for that purpose? With regard to prostitution, she asked whether the clients of prostitutes were subject to criminal penalties and whether any measures were in place to provide alternative livelihood options to women who wished to give up prostitution.

46. Noting that the level of violence against women remained high, she asked whether the bill on social and legal protection against domestic violence provided for the imposition of restraining orders on perpetrators. The Committee wished to know on whom the onus lay to file a complaint of domestic violence, and whether adequate measures were in place to protect the rights of underage victims. Lastly, she asked how many cases of domestic violence had been registered through the telephone helpline mentioned in the responses to the list of issues.

47. **Ms. Sharipova** (Tajikistan) said that, while there were economic reasons for prostitution, it was a criminal offence under the law and was on the decline; offenders were also subject to administrative measures, taken by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. With regard to trafficking in persons, particularly women and minors, a new law was to be adopted, together with other changes in existing legislation, within the context of the further development of State policy in that regard. A programme was in place for 2006-2010, which included provision for the rehabilitation of victims in accordance with international norms. Special information and awareness-building activities had also been undertaken to combat such trafficking, in cooperation with local authorities and NGOs. A commission had been set up to address the issue, together with relevant departments in the Ministry of

Internal Affairs. In 2005, the State had repatriated 75 women victims from the United Arab Emirates and had provided them with temporary housing and help. She cited a number of cases of trafficking in minors that had been the subject of criminal investigations and prosecutions.

48. **Ms. Mukhammadieva** (Tajikistan) said that in 2004 the Government had signed an agreement with the Russian Federation to protect the rights of migrant workers from the two respective countries. In 2005, the Ministry of Labour had also worked on a similar agreement with Moldova and Belarus which would soon be adopted. In 2006, the Government had adopted a programme on the migration of Tajik workers and had taken further measures to ensure their legal protection in the Russian Federation.

49. **Mr. Khamidov** (Tajikistan), referring to the issue of trafficking in persons, said that the Government had been working on a draft agreement with the United Arab Emirates which would soon be concluded. Cooperation was also being developed with other countries to prevent Tajik citizens from being taken out of the country by force or under false pretences and to repatriate victims of trafficking. Minors enjoyed reinforced protection under the law.

50. **Ms. Sharipova** (Tajikistan) said that the measures taken to combat trafficking in persons did not make any distinction between victims on the basis of ethnicity: since citizens all enjoyed equal status as Tajiks, the crime was equally serious for all of them. Tajikistan was a State of origin for victims of trafficking, who transited through neighbouring States.

51. **Ms. Pimentel** said that criminological studies showed that punishment was less effective than education and prevention in addressing issues determined by demographic and socio-economic factors. She had been glad to learn that second and third wives had rights but could not reconcile that with the statement in the combined reports that their rights were not covered by law and that they therefore had no choice but to endure the violence inflicted on them by the husband and his relatives (CEDAW/C/TJK/1-3, p. 12).

52. **Ms. Shin** asked about the time frame for enactment of the bill on domestic violence. She raised the question of disabled women, who were particularly vulnerable and not visible in most societies. The Committee wished to know whether any of the 13

shelters were equipped for disabled women and whether there were heavier penalties for violence against such women. She referred to the Committee's general recommendation No. 18 on disabled women and to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2006 and urged the delegation to provide relevant information in the next report.

53. **Mr. Khamidov** (Tajikistan) agreed that other measures besides punishment were needed to combat family violence, in particular economic measures to ensure greater freedom and independence for victims. Educational and cultural action was equally important. On the question of the time frame for the relevant bill, he explained that legislative changes were initiated by elected representatives, the Government or the President; upon their submission to Parliament, they were reviewed by the relevant committee and, if found to be appropriate, were adopted. He could not therefore say when exactly the bill in question would be enacted, but he assured the Committee that it would be soon. Second and third wives enjoyed all human rights and freedoms under the Constitution, and acts of violence against them were punishable by the courts. The only restrictions to which they were subject concerned rights specific to family life.

54. **Ms. Nosirova** (Tajikistan) said that in the crisis centres no distinction was made between victims of abuse, whether women, children or disabled persons. In the context of everyday life, the latter enjoyed specific benefits, in particular for lighting and transport.

55. **Ms. Mukhammadiyeva** (Tajikistan) said that, according to statistics on disabled persons communicated to the State Statistics Committee by the Ministry of Labour, some 41 per cent of the total number of disabled persons were women.

Articles 7 and 8

56. **Ms. Gaspard** noted from the report (CEDAW/C/TJK/1-3, p. 15) that the practice of "family voting" tended to mean that men voted for their wives, even though, since 2003 the electoral commissions had been seeking with the support of NGOs to promote voting by women. She wished to know whether any increase had been registered in the proportion of women voting on their own behalf in the 2005 elections. The number of women elected to both the lower and higher chambers of Parliament was still

inadequate. She asked whether any of the eight members of the higher chamber designated by the President were women and whether it was planned to introduce quotas, in accordance with article 4.1 of the Convention, in order to increase the very low participation of women in public and political life, particularly in rural areas.

57. **Ms. Neubauer** asked, in the light particularly of article 8 of the Equality and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women Act, whether the Government was planning any measures in the electoral legislation to ensure a higher number of women among candidates for election to public office.

58. **Ms. Maiolo** wondered whether, in the case of "family voting", it was always the man in the family who voted. If so, she recommended that the practice should be prohibited.

59. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** acknowledged that it was difficult for countries like Tajikistan, which had recently emerged from a war, to meet their international obligations. The Government was therefore to be commended for adopting legislation in line with the provisions of the Convention, particularly against discrimination; however, practical implementation still fell short of what was required. Women were insufficiently represented in public life, notably in Parliament, where they accounted for only 16.5 per cent of the total number of deputies. Wherever possible, women should be appointed to decision-making posts; it was just a question of political will. She urged the adoption of temporary special measures to that end, in accordance with the Committee's general recommendation No. 25. With regard to "family voting", the simplest solution would be to offer the possibility of a duly authorized proxy vote only when really justified, as for instance in cases of absence or sickness, under strict control.

60. **Ms. Shin** noted that article 19 of the Equality and Equal Opportunities Act prescribed the preparation of annual reports; she asked whether there had been such a report for 2006. The requirement that nominees for election to legislative bodies pay registration fees could be a particular source of difficulty for women and therefore constitute indirect discrimination. The Committee wished to know whether there were any incentives to achieving equal representation of women in decision-making positions in political parties, in particular by way of State funding. She regretted the decrease in the already small number of women heads of ministries and in managerial positions; the

President's decision to appoint women as deputy heads of department was welcome but could wrongly suggest to society that women were only fit for second position. Lastly, she raised the question of the training available to women for posts in the diplomatic service and requested quantitative information on the participation of women in international life.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.