



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

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

Summary record of the 937th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 21 July 2010, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Gabr

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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)*

Sixth periodic report of Turkey (CEDAW/C/TUR/6, CEDAW/C/TUR/Q/6 and Add.1)

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

2. **Ms. Kavaf** (Turkey), introducing the sixth periodic report, said that significant progress had been made in women's participation in the economic, political and social spheres in Turkey since the completion of the report, and she would endeavour to provide updated information where needed. The Committee's concluding observations on Turkey's fourth and fifth periodic reports had been brought to the attention of the relevant ministries and had also been conveyed to civil society organizations during the preparatory process for the sixth periodic report.

3. The Government of Turkey had affirmed its political will to promote gender equality and to transform social traditions and practices that fed into gender discrimination. A new and comprehensive law on discrimination that would define such concepts as direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and hate speech was being drafted. A package of constitutional amendments adopted in early 2010 for approval by referendum in September 2010 included an article which enshrined equal rights for men and women. Temporary special measures in such areas as education, employment and combating poverty would also be enshrined in the Constitution with the passage of the amendment package.

4. Work was continuing on the legislative framework for women's equality, through a review of and amendments to the Law on the Protection of the Family. The provisions of the Penal Code concerning sexual intercourse with minors had also been reviewed and amendments were being considered in the National Assembly.

5. The General Directorate on the Status of Women, affiliated with the Ministry for Women and Family Affairs, was the main institutional mechanism for the advancement of women in Turkey. An important development in 2009 had been the establishment of the Committee on Equal Rights and Opportunities in the

National Assembly, for the purpose of monitoring domestic and international action in relation to gender equality and reviewing legislation submitted to the National Assembly from a gender perspective. Moreover, the Ninth Development Plan included gender equality objectives in the areas of improvement of women's access to education and employment and activities to combat violence against women.

6. Education was viewed as a fundamental right in Turkey, and eliminating gender inequalities in that area was a priority. Progress had been made in increasing school enrolment overall, and the gender gap between girls' and boys' enrolment in primary education had almost closed, with a goal of 100 per cent primary school enrolment of both girls and boys by 2013. Financial support was being provided to girls from poor families in order to meet that goal. The Ministry of National Education was also conducting a project to increase enrolment of girls in secondary education. The rate of illiteracy among adult women had dropped from 19.7 per cent in 2005 to 13.8 per cent in 2009, and literacy campaigns were being conducted to improve the situation further. Priority was also being placed on girls who had been left out of the educational system for various reasons through accelerated efforts to establish an e-school system. Through the "catch-up education programme", children aged 10 to 14 who had never been enrolled in school or had had lengthy absences were able to fill in the gaps in their primary education and rejoin their peer groups. An absence management model had also been developed to address the problem of chronic absenteeism.

7. Unemployment had become a major problem in Turkey, affecting women more seriously than men. One of the contributing factors was migration from rural areas, where women had been involved in running family farms, to urban areas where they lacked the necessary education and job skills to find employment. The traditional family structure where caring for children and the elderly was considered "women's work" was also a factor.

8. There were some encouraging signs regarding women's employment, however. In 2009, the number of employed women had risen from 23.3 to 26 per cent, and a correlation between the increase in girls' school enrolment rates and women's increased participation in the labour force was an encouraging sign that the increase in women's employment would be sustainable. In fact, during the recent economic crisis, the employment rate for men had dropped more than the rate for women.

9. The Government had established the Women's Employment National Monitoring and Coordination Board to monitor implementation of laws on equal employment opportunity for women in the public sector and to ensure non-discrimination in job interviews, training, promotion and appointments to higher levels of management. Recent amendments to the labour laws regarding social security payments had also led to increased participation of women in the workforce. Programmes to provide training and jobs for vulnerable groups of women, for instance women in domestic violence shelters and girls raised in orphanages, had also been put in place. The issue of women's unpaid family work had been addressed through a programme to pay a minimum wage to such caregivers.

10. There had also been progress concerning the participation of women in politics and decision-making, with a steady increase in the number of women elected to Parliament over the past decade signalling an increase in awareness of that issue in society. Campaigns conducted by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had had a significant impact in that area.

11. Violence against women was the most important obstacle preventing them from fulfilling their potential. Legal and administrative action, effective cooperation among institutions and above all, a comprehensive social transformation were needed to combat it. The Law on the Protection of the Family of 1998 was the main legal instrument on the elimination of domestic violence; the New Penal Code of 2005 contained new regulations offering greater protection of women's rights. The most significant change was that sex crimes were now considered "crimes against persons" rather than "crimes against society". In another significant regulation, so-called honour killings were punishable by aggravated life imprisonment.

12. Research on violence against women in Turkey highlighted regional disparities and had provided data for a national policy framework. The national action plan to combat domestic violence for the period 2007-2010 would be completed by the end of the year and a new plan would be implemented starting in 2011. Training had been conducted to raise awareness among public officials, law enforcement officers, public health officials and family court judges who came in contact with victims of domestic violence. A programme to raise awareness among members of the clergy had also begun. The number of domestic violence shelters in

Turkey had risen to 57, with 8 more shelters planned by the Ministry of the Interior.

13. Progress had also been made in women's health. The maternal mortality rate had dropped from 28.5 per 100,000 live births in 2005 to 18.6 in 2010. A 2008 study showed that 92 per cent of women had access to prenatal care, 90 per cent of births took place in hospitals, and 84.5 per cent of women had access to post-natal care. Disparities between rural and urban areas still existed, however, and the national sexual health and reproductive health strategy was aimed at closing those gaps. Primary care, pre- and post-natal care and treatment for women victims of violence were free of charge.

14. Turkey's profile in the areas of elimination of discrimination against women and their equal participation in the country's economic, political and social life was improving. Despite that progress, however, gaps and problems remained. The Government had the determination and political will to eliminate discrimination against women, and would continue in its efforts towards the full implementation of the Convention.

Articles 1 to 6

15. **Mr. Flinterman** said that the inclusion of the principle of equality in article 90 of the Turkish Constitution was relevant and important, yet it would also be important to include the definition of discrimination as found in article 1 of the Convention in appropriate legislation. He would be interested to hear more about the comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation recommended by the Human Rights Council's universal periodic review, including the steps to be taken and a time frame for such legislation, and wondered whether it could include a definition of discrimination. He also asked if sexual orientation would be included among prohibited grounds for discrimination.

16. **Ms. Šimonović** asked whether the Committee's concluding observations on the presentation of Turkey's sixth periodic report would be presented to the Equal Opportunity Committee of the National Assembly and whether that body had responsibility for monitoring their implementation. She requested more information on the visibility of the Optional Protocol in Turkey. She also requested confirmation that articles 10 and 90 of the Constitution would be preserved in the forthcoming package of amendments.

17. **Ms. Ameline** inquired whether a comprehensive law that covered all forms and sources of violence and discrimination was being considered, as women suffered not just from physical violence but also from psychological violence. She wished to know why sentences for custom and honour killings were reduced in cases where they resulted from a wrongful act or undue provocation. It would be useful to know whether there were enough family courts in Turkey and whether women, especially Kurdish women and other minorities, had easy access to justice at no cost. It would also be useful for the State party to clarify the legal status of instruments such as the Prime Ministerial circular entitled “Measures to Be Taken to Prevent Custom and Honour Killings and Acts of Violence against Children and Women”, as well as training protocols and agreements signed between public agencies and non-governmental organizations to raise awareness of violence against women and to provide services to women victimized by violence.

18. It would be appreciated if the State party could inform the Committee whether Turkey’s partnership with the European Union had been useful in the development of its national equality policy; whether the budgetary allocation for equality was on a global basis or on a ministry-by-ministry basis, and how that was reflected at the local level; and the mediation initiative had not been confirmed.

19. **Ms. Popescu** wished to know whether the Committee’s previous concluding observations had been discussed with the Government, Parliament and civil society, and had generally been taken into account in the preparation of the current report. In view of independent reports that under the legislative amendments the right to constitutional petition was restricted solely to rights recognized under the European Convention on Human Rights and their infringement by a public power, she asked how the Convention and other human rights treaties could be invoked in respect of that right. More information was needed about the current status of article 10 of Law No. 4722 Governing the Enforcement and Implementation of the Civil Code dealing with the equal division of property acquired during marriage, which did not seem to apply to women who were married before 2002. She requested concrete examples of the temporary special measures taken under article 10 of the Constitution to protect women’s rights, particularly those of women with disabilities, minority Kurdish women and rural women.

20. **Ms. Kaya** (Turkey) said that under article 90 of the Constitution, all duly signed international agreements had the force of law in Turkey and in the case of a conflict between international agreements in the area of fundamental rights and freedoms and the domestic laws, the provisions of international agreements prevailed. As a result, the definition of discrimination contained in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was already part of the domestic law and had been invoked in a number of cases. The Turkish Penal Code, which had entered into force on 1 January 2005, included a provision that perpetrators of honour and custom killings would be punished with the severest sentence, and that unjust provocation could not be used to reduce the sentence or exonerate the perpetrator.

21. With regard to property acquired during marriage, the Constitutional Court had ruled in 2008 that the property regime of the Civil Code was not unconstitutional. Following the recent constitutional amendments, which were based largely on the European Convention on Human Rights, individuals had the right to file complaints with the Constitutional Court in case of alleged victimization or violation of their rights. Turkey did not yet have a comprehensive law that covered all forms and sources of discrimination, but broad coverage could be found in article 10 of the Constitution, which stated that all individuals were equal without any discrimination before the law, irrespective of language, race, colour, sex, political opinion, philosophical belief, religion and sect, or any such considerations. With regard to family courts, data would be provided to the Committee once they were collected.

22. **Ms. Coşkun** (Turkey) said that to promote the Convention and its Optional Protocol, the General Directorate on the Status of Women had produced booklets and distributed them to all parliamentarians and civil servants and had organized training workshops and seminars for judges, political and religious leaders and other public officials. The proposed action plan to combat violence against women, to cover the period 2012 to 2015, would include performance targets for public agencies. Gender-sensitive budgeting, a new concept in Turkey, was still being explained to public officials; a gender-sensitive budgeting team had been set up in the Ministry of Finance, which would help make the concept better known in the future.

23. Temporary special measures to strengthen women's status in the family and society included the Conditional Cash Transfer Programme, whereby educational allowances were paid directly to mothers to help pay for their children's education. As the focus was on increasing girls' enrolment and transition from primary to secondary education, the amounts transferred for girls were higher than those for boys. There were also microcredit schemes for the economic empowerment of women, with low-income individuals, women in particular, being provided with opportunities to engage in income-generating activities. With regard to people with disabilities, the State supported programmes for home care, offered financial assistance to centres that delivered care for elderly and disabled people, and provided free bussing services for disabled young people. It had also created a special package to facilitate the employment of disabled persons.

24. **Ms. Akşit** (Turkey) said that the Equal Opportunities Commission acted as a specialized body of Parliament, but also organized national and international seminars and conferences and distributed information to NGOs, universities and other institutions to raise awareness of violence against women. It had also set up a subcommittee on psychological violence against women.

25. **Ms. Kavaf** (Turkey) said that women had free access to the courts and were provided with the services of a translator if they did not speak Turkish, and legal aid if they required it. Turkey had made many changes to its domestic law in an effort to meet the standards of the European Convention on Human Rights. It also had joint protocols and agreements with the European Union that had enabled it to set new targets for increasing the level of female employment and access to education, health and care services for girls and women, and Turkey was introducing regulations with the help of funds obtained from the European Union to improve the quality of life and living standards of its people, particularly women and children.

26. The training protocols and agreements signed between Government agencies and NGOs had official legal status and were akin to legal contracts, even though there were no legal sanctions if any party failed to fulfil its responsibilities or commitments under the agreement. Nonetheless, they were important in the effort to promote and protect women's rights.

27. **Ms. Kaya** (Turkey) pointed out that Law No. 4230 on the protection of the family called for the issuance of instant protection orders in cases of

violence against women. There was also a bylaw to ensure that the law was enforced effectively. Details of mediation initiatives would be provided in writing.

28. **Ms. Awori** said that the State party had not provided sufficient information to allay the concerns which the Committee had expressed in its previous concluding observations about the stereotyping of women as inferior to men, and about practices such as early marriage and polygamy. Even though the State party had indicated that the law on custom or honour killings had been amended to impose stiffer sentences for perpetrators and that training was provided to law enforcement and other public officials, it had been reported that at least 800 women were still being killed every year in the name of honour. It would be useful for the State party to provide some data to show that the changes in the law were benefiting women in Turkey, and to indicate whether there was a monitoring mechanism in place to make sure that those changes were being implemented on the ground.

29. **The Chairperson**, speaking as an expert, said that the Vienna Declaration on Human Rights had recognized the concept of cultural specificities, provided such specificities did not violate human rights. Turkey had always tried to strike that balance since acceding without reservations to the Convention and its Optional Protocol, and had proven that Sharia law did not create conditions for the violation of women's rights. However, she wished to know how the State party intended to change the negative stereotyping of women which often led to violence and discrimination against them; how the media and churches were going to help in that regard; and how the State would ensure that women could dress as they wished without suffering from discrimination in the workplace.

30. **Ms. Arocha Dominguez** asked whether the revision of textbooks and curricula was combined with training for teachers, and what was done to monitor effectiveness.

31. The awareness-raising initiatives and literacy campaigns appeared to be excellent, and an ambitious programme was under way in order to eliminate persistent stereotypes regarding the role of women in the family. She wondered what action was taken to evaluate the outcomes of those measures.

32. The previous Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Ms. Yakin Ertürk, had visited Turkey and drawn attention to the large number of suicides among women and girls,

which often appeared to be connected to gender-based violence. The circular of the Office of the Prime Minister concerning honour killings constituted an important step; it would be useful to know of any follow-up mechanism.

33. **Ms. Šimonović** said that the reporting State should clarify the position of the Convention and of the European Convention on Human Rights in Turkish law. The two should in theory be equally binding; however, the delegation had apparently implied that there was a difference in status.

34. In the case *Opuz v. Turkey*, the European Court of Human Rights had found that the judicial system had been unresponsive, thereby creating a climate of impunity. She wished to know what measures the Government had taken to enforce Law No. 4320, which provided for specific measures for protection against domestic violence.

35. As often happened in many other countries, police officers in the case had sought to assume the role of mediator by trying to convince the victims to return home and drop their complaint. She would appreciate any clarifications regarding the practice of mediation.

36. **Ms. Coker-Appiah**, noting that the medium-term part of the national action plans had been scheduled to end in 2009, asked what progress had been made thus far. She wondered what agencies would fund the plans, what resources had been allocated, and what was being done to ensure that the resources were adequate.

37. The Committee had in the past expressed concern at the paucity of shelters for victims of domestic violence. Responsibility for shelters had been delegated to local authorities, which had not been adequately funded. She asked what developments had taken place, and how many shelters currently existed.

38. The previous Special Rapporteur on violence against women had found that many alleged suicides of young women in eastern and south-eastern Turkey might be murders or forced suicides. She had recommended that the Government should adopt a holistic strategy to address their root causes, denounce publicly and equivocally all forms of violence against women and not invoke any custom, tradition or religious consideration to excuse such violence. It would be useful to know what had been done to respond to those recommendations.

39. **Ms. Chutikul** said that according to Turkey's responses to the list of issues, 859 victims of human trafficking had been referred to protection and support programmes, whereas 1,641 traffickers were being prosecuted. The delegation should clarify why there appeared to be more traffickers than victims, and whether Turkey's definition of trafficking was consistent with the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Welcoming the new national action plan to combat human trafficking, she asked how it differed from earlier endeavours; what lessons had been learned; who had been involved in the planning; what actions and indicators had been determined; who was responsible for coordination; and whether sufficient human, financial and technical resources had been allocated. It was not clear whether the shelters for victims of human trafficking were the same as those for victims of violence. It appeared that they were operated by NGOs; might the Government consider providing funding to those organizations?

40. Turkey was both a destination and a transit country for human trafficking. She wondered what measures, such as bilateral or multilateral agreements, were in place to ensure systematic cooperation with countries of origin, and how the Government could be sure that repatriated individuals were reintegrated into society.

41. The periodic report stated that the Nationality Law of 2003 had been amended to prevent the exploitation of the marriage of foreign women to Turkish men. She asked what results had been achieved thus far.

42. She was not sure whether underage prostitution could be adequately addressed under child abuse legislation. The reporting State should explain how it tackled its obligations under International Labour Organization Convention No. 182 concerning the worst forms of child labour, whether any statistics existed, and what was being done to reduce demand.

43. **Ms. Coşkun** (Turkey) said that the legal system provided full guarantees of gender equality. A number of measures were being taken to challenge patriarchal stereotypes. Training programmes were in place in the concerned Government agencies, including the Ministries of Justice, Health and Security. Students enrolled in media studies courses underwent awareness-raising courses on gender and violence. Seminars on women and the media had been held in 2009 with the support of academics. The General Directorate on the Status of Women was cooperating

with the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation to produce public service announcements. Feedback forms from participants in awareness-raising programmes indicated that media organizations were increasingly aware of gender issues.

44. With regard to progress made in achieving short and medium-term targets, action was being taken to quantify violence against women and establish training programmes. Agreements had been signed with the police and social services in order to ensure that victims received proper assistance. A database on gender-based violence was being created.

45. There were now 57 shelters, 34 of which were administered by the Directorate of Social Services and Child Protection and 23 by NGOs and local authorities. The Ministry of the Interior planned to build a further eight shelters.

46. The General Directorate on the Status of Women was responsible for monitoring implementation of the circular issued by the Office of the Prime Minister, which defined the responsibilities of all concerned agencies. Each of those agencies submitted a quarterly progress report to the General Directorate, and thence to the Prime Minister. A Committee chaired by the Minister of State for Women and Family Affairs, comprising academics and representatives of NGOs, met at least twice a year to take stock.

47. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute, the suicides of girls were caused principally by health, financial and family issues and by failure at school. In other cases, the causes were unknown. The Ministry of Justice and the Office of the Public Prosecutor were reviewing each individual case of suicide.

48. The State did not interfere in any way with women's dress codes. The Presidency of Religious Affairs trained religious leaders on gender sensitivity and the relevant legislation, including ways to help the victims of violence. A pilot programme was in place in Ankara, and there were plans to replicate it throughout the country.

49. **Ms. Kaya** (Turkey) said that the Ministry of Justice published data on "honour killings" each year. Tough sentences were in place for individuals who coerced or pressured others into committing suicide. Prosecutors took all necessary steps to investigate suspicious cases and compile data.

50. Individuals had the right to submit a complaint to the Constitutional Court in respect of the Constitution or the Convention. The European Court of Human Rights had directed its criticism not at the legislation, but rather at its implementation. Family court judges and prosecutors received training on the issue of gender-based violence.

51. The Penal Code had been amended to stipulate that the involvement of minors in prostitution constituted a serious offence. A draft law to provide special assistance to victims aged between 15 to 18 was currently being debated in Parliament.

52. **Mr. Kaya** (Turkey) said that numerous measures existed to combat stereotypes. Teachers were provided with new instructional materials and guidelines on how to address the topic and interact with children. In the context of the Alliance of Civilizations, 1,500 teachers each year were trained in intercultural tolerance. The Ministry of Education had held brainstorming conferences with NGOs, most recently in March 2010 in Ankara. There were over 200 courses to raise awareness of non-traditional professions, and over 2.5 million women had benefited from them. The Ministry ensured that sexist statements were removed from teaching materials.

53. The Child Friendly Schools project was currently being piloted in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Starting in the school year 2011-2012, schools would receive additional equipment and staff to combat discrimination. Some 10 per cent of Ministry staff received training on the topic each year, as had 400 new school inspectors.

54. **Mr. Erbaba** (Turkey), responding to the concerns about domestic violence raised by the European Court of Human Rights, said that a circular issued by the Prime Minister in 2006 had established an agreement between the General Directorate on the Status of Women and the Turkish national police to train over 40,000 law enforcement officials on procedures for dealing with victims of violence. That had been a significant step, as police stations were often the first places victims turned to. The circular had also prioritized the strengthening of institutional capacity. Online forms and an intranet system had been launched to connect all of the information gathered on domestic violence cases throughout the country. That national database then facilitated monitoring of the issue and helped to identify and prevent problems at the institutional level.

55. A programme was planned to develop 23 master trainers who would conduct all training sessions and seminars on violence against women for law enforcement personnel. The training would last eight months, with the programme to be completed by 2011. In addition, a model for police intervention in cases of domestic violence was being finalized.

56. The discrepancy in the number of traffickers in relation to victims was due to the fact that traffickers were part of organized crime groups, which implicated a large number of people. Under a law enacted in 2006, all local government administrations were required to allocate funds to support shelters for victims of trafficking. The Ministry of the Interior also funded some shelters. Turkey had been among the first countries to sign the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols in 2000 and had also signed bilateral cooperation agreements with Georgia and other neighbouring countries of origin. The agreements facilitated the response to human trafficking, including the safe return of victims.

57. **Ms. Coşkun** (Turkey) said that the budget of the General Directorate on the Status of Women in 2009 had been US\$ 2.7 million. While women's NGOs did not receive financial support, they did receive indirect support through Government projects. For example, the social service agency had been collaborating on a long-term basis with an NGO to provide community training on women's human rights. In the Anatolian region, a new initiative by the regional government would be building institutional capacity and funding projects proposed by women's NGOs.

58. In response to the high suicide rates among women in the south-east and eastern Anatolian region, the Ministry of Health had established psychosocial units in hospitals and strengthened capacity at crisis centres.

59. **Ms. Gül** (Turkey) said that early marriages had serious repercussions on women's educational and employment opportunities. Sexual and reproductive health programmes in Turkey included strategies aimed specifically at adolescents and were considered a component of human rights, in line with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action. The marriage rate of adolescents aged 15 to 19 had decreased from 15.2 per cent to 9.6 per cent, and for the period from 2003 to 2008, the average age of

marriage had increased from 20.3 to 20.8, as a result of women's increased education levels. Recognizing that men's support was critical to preventing adolescent marriages, the Ministry of Health had been collaborating with the United Nations Population Fund and the military to sensitize men aged 18 to 22 on the issue during their compulsory military service. To date, 2.5 million men had received training.

60. The Ministry of Health had distributed a suicide prevention circular in all Turkish provinces and provided psychosocial assistance in hospital emergency wards. The Ministry had also been collaborating with 107 NGOs on reproductive health matters.

61. **Ms. Akşit** (Turkey) said that in response to the verdict issued by the European Court of Human Rights, the Parliamentary Commission on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men had conducted a ten-month study, which included input from various Government ministries and NGOs, to identify shortcomings in the legislation on violence against women. The Commission did not fully agree with the decision of the Court, as Turkey's legal framework was well developed and a great deal of work had gone into reforming legislation. It was the enforcement of laws that proved problematic. The Commission would be sharing its findings with all public institutions and civil society and would be following up to correct remaining legislative shortcomings.

62. The Commission had conducted a study on the causes of early marriage, which included religious, economic and educational factors, and was proposing solutions. It had shared its conclusions across Government agencies and also received complaints and testimony from individuals.

63. **Ms. Kavaf** (Turkey) said that a reform monitoring group, chaired by representatives from four ministries, met every two months to follow up on the verdict of the European Court of Human Rights. The verdict had dealt with a crime committed in the 1990s, and both the procedural law and the sentence for the crime had been different at that time. The relevant legal code had been amended in 2005 to include life in imprisonment, the most severe punishment after the death penalty. The Court had therefore issued judgement on a prosecution based on a law that had been amended since the crime was committed. Nevertheless, work was still ongoing to reform legislation.

64. Regarding the issue of women's clothing, she affirmed that Turkey was a democratic State, and its citizens were free to live as they wished.

65. In response to the question on citizenship, she said that a law passed in 2003 required foreign women who married Turkish men to wait three years to apply for citizenship, whereas in the past, they could apply immediately. Turkish citizenship was still immediately accessible if they chose to revoke the citizenship of their country of origin.

66. The Government supported the reintegration of women who had served a prison sentence or who were living in temporary shelters by providing access to flats for a period of up to two years. The programme was managed in collaboration with the European Union, and additional flats were also provided through an agreement with the housing administration.

67. Turkey was home to a variety of religions and ethnic groups, and in line with article 5 of the Vienna Declaration, all people were treated equally before the law. Traditions and faith were important to the country's cultural identity, and the democratic, secular State was in a constantly evolving process of facilitating modern development while sustaining tradition. The Presidency of Religious Affairs had signed a protocol to assist in Government efforts to prevent violence against women, which included training sessions for religious leaders. There was nothing in the country's religion or culture that promoted violence, and violent acts against women were universally outlawed; it was individuals with behavioural disorders who used religion to legitimize such acts.

68. In terms of the role of the media in attitudes on gender, the Government was in contact with faculty from media and communications departments to integrate training on gender and violence into university curricula.

69. **Ms. Pimentel** asked if there had ever been any research to determine if honour killings were effectively prosecuted and tried in rural and remote areas of the country.

70. **Ms. Murillo de la Vega** wished to know if the work of the Commission on Equal Opportunities to evaluate the draft laws brought before the Parliament included an analysis of their effects on women. In addition, she asked if that evaluation was only an

advisory process or if the amendments proposed by the Commission were binding. In regard to the early marriage rate, she wondered if it would be easier to change the legal age of marriage in the Civil Code instead of attempting to target the various societal causes of the problem. She also wished to know why the investigation of the large number of suicides had lasted a year and a half; such matters should be treated with more urgency.

71. **Ms. Kaya** (Turkey) said that the prosecutor and law enforcement officials had gone through an extensive process to collect thorough evidence on the suicides in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issue. A quick, generic analysis of the matter would not be useful, although she recognized that the ensuing evaluation should be expedited.

72. The Civil Code had already set the legal marriage age at 18.

73. **Ms. Akşit** (Turkey) said that the Commission on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men was a standing Commission and unique in that it received complaints from individuals, advised ministries and informed the public. The decisions of the Commission had the authority of the National Assembly, but they were non-binding in the sense that they did not carry sanctions for non-compliance. Nevertheless, the Commission followed up carefully on its decisions and coordinated with relevant ministries, which were supportive of its measures and recommendations.

74. **Mr. Erbaba** (Turkey) said that while crimes of honour occurred in remote areas, police forces were present in all parts of the country and all criminal acts were duly addressed by the justice system.

75. **Ms. Kavaf** (Turkey) said that only in very exceptional cases could the marriage age be reduced to age 16. The Turkish civil code clearly set the minimum marriage age at 18.

76. Regarding the number of suicides, she said that the legal registry, which was the Government's official reference, had not recorded 800 suicides and she wished to know where that figure had come from.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.