



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
Twenty-first session

Summary record of the 430th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 10 June 1999, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. González

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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 on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

(continued)

Third and fourth periodic reports of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (continued) (CEDAW/C/UK/3 and Add.1 and 2 and CEDAW/C/UK/4 and Add.1-4)

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

2. **The Chairperson** invited the Committee members to continue to raise questions and formulate comments on the third and fourth periodic reports of the United Kingdom (CEDAW/C/UK/3 and Add.1 and 2 and CEDAW/C/UK/4 and Add.1-4).

3. **Ms. Manalo** commended the United Kingdom for its comprehensive and interesting report and its impressive efforts to fulfil its obligations under the Convention. More nevertheless remained to be done. First, she would like to know how the United Kingdom treated female asylum seekers under the relevant provisions of international law, and, in that regard, whether the Government was considering the withdrawal of its declaration regarding immigration legislation. Turning to article 14, she enquired what measures the Government was taking to ensure that its rural development programme was properly managed so as to ensure access to employment for women in disadvantaged rural areas. In addition, it would be useful to know what steps the United Kingdom was taking to implement the Directive of the European Council on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in agricultural activities, and what measures were being taken to ensure the provision of health care to rural women. She wondered, in particular, whether the Government had contemplated ways of responding to the health needs of a society newly emerging from a violent conflict, which was the case of Northern Ireland.

4. Details would be welcome concerning the implementation of laws designed to promote equal opportunities in Northern Ireland: had the United Kingdom undertaken any programmes in training and

development with a view to the promotion of equal opportunities? Turning to the matter of domestic violence, she enquired what legal, financial and other measures had been taken to counter the mounting trends of domestic violence in Northern Ireland, and whether it was being monitored. In addition, she would like to know whether measures had been taken to increase the employment of Catholic women in Northern Ireland, who were almost twice as likely to be unemployed as Protestant women. The report discussed the number of unemployed women belonging to ethnic minorities in Great Britain: similar information would be welcome regarding Northern Ireland. Finally, it would be interesting to know why representation by women in public agencies was targeted at 50 per cent in Great Britain and only 40 per cent in Northern Ireland.

5. **Ms. Kim Yung-chung** said she was confident that the United Kingdom's approach to gender-mainstreaming would meet with success. She was curious about the use of the term "devolution": clarification would be welcome. It would be useful to know whether the United Kingdom had considered the development of a unified, coordinated plan of action regarding women's issues; she wondered why the Government agencies responsible for women's affairs had different names in the various parts of the Kingdom. Turning to article 10, she enquired whether the new teacher qualification standards also required teachers to participate in gender-education programmes. She had been pleased to learn that primary school teachers in North Ireland addressed the matters of children's rights, the use of non-gender language, and play methods that did not involve sexual stereotypes, and she hoped that that important initiative would be taken up throughout the Kingdom.

6. **Ms. Ouedraogo** said, with reference to article 16, that the United Kingdom had commendable family protection and child assistance policies. In view, however, of the increased rate of divorce throughout the world, it would be useful to know whether the Government had conducted a study into its causes. Was that trend rising or falling? In addition, she would like to know what assistance was provided to families at the greatest risk of disintegration, and whether the Government had assessed the overall impact of its protection measures on families.

7. **Ms. Regazzoli**, noting that the European Union had recently acknowledged that women were under-

represented in the Governments of all its members, enquired what measures had been taken to promote greater participation of women in decision-making posts, not only in Great Britain and Northern Ireland but also in the island territories.

8. The United Kingdom employed an excellent definition of violence. It was nevertheless worth considering whether a battered woman and her children should seek refuge in a shelter while the batterer remained in the comfort of his home. She would like to know whether the authors of such acts were offered psychiatric counselling, and whether they were subject to criminal sanctions. How was violence against women belonging to African ethnic minorities handled? Was there a policy for dealing with violence against older adults? Since the ratio of women to men over the age of 80 in the United Kingdom was three to one, it would be interesting to know what programmes, if any, the Government had established to ensure their participation in society. Finally, she would like to know whether the Government had instituted a policy to promote equal opportunity for women in the Falkland Islands.

9. **Ms. Ryel**, observing that the enactment and enforcement of legislation was a lengthy process, enquired whether a timetable had been set for the implementation of the recommendations of the Equal Opportunities Commission regarding gender discrimination and equal pay. It would also be useful to know whether the United Kingdom had considered the provision of parental leave with pay for the father of a newborn, so that a family could make a choice as to which of the spouses would remain at home.

10. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** commended the Government of the United Kingdom for its innovative form of governance and three-year budget plan, which seemed to be benefiting women. A gender perspective had been incorporated in some policy areas but not others: it was absent, for instance, in recent documents regarding disabled persons and health care. Since women accounted for at least half of the population, the Government should seek to ensure that the gender perspective was applied to all sectors. It would be useful to know what mechanisms were in place to ensure that women in all parts of the country achieved genuine equality; in that regard, she wondered whether the policy of devolution gave rise to inequities. The reports of constituent parts of the United Kingdom

were not handled in an equal manner: the fifth periodic report should endeavour to redress that problem.

11. Noting that the equal opportunities commissions went by different names in the various parts of the Kingdom, and sometimes focused on areas other than gender, she said that those bodies should consider the subject of women as an overarching concern, since it cut across all other sectors. The United Kingdom's Sex Discrimination Act, once model legislation, was now outdated, and should be reviewed in the light of article 4, paragraph 1. In that regard, she wondered why the United Kingdom was reluctant to enact legislation providing for temporary special measures. The Equal Pay Act must also be reconsidered: in female-dominated sectors of the labour market, comparisons between pay for women and men merely impeded progress. She urged the Government to make use of the vast body of research and practical theory that had been amassed in the United States of America regarding the matter of pay for work of comparable value and to educate employers, trade unions and Government officials in that subject.

12. **Ms. Shalev** observed that the report indicated that the rate of teenage conception in the United Kingdom was among the highest in Europe. Since that country had universal health care and free family planning services, she wondered what accounted for that phenomenon. The report indicated that no information was available on the use of family planning services by men; she wondered whether the Government had contemplated measures to overcome cultural barriers that prevented men from using those services. It would also be useful to know whether the Government had considered means of overcoming barriers in access to family planning services for adolescent women from ethnic backgrounds.

13. The report acknowledged that sex education was not provided in primary schools; yet, given the facts of contemporary life, secondary school might well be too late to begin such education. She urged the Government to consider adopting a holistic approach to reproductive health education, emphasizing male responsibility and tackling such subjects as alcohol, drugs, the risk of HIV/AIDS and sexual violence.

14. In addition, the Committee would welcome information regarding infertility from the United Kingdom, which was a pioneer in that field.

15. The report indicated that death rates from breast cancer were unusually high in the United Kingdom and that women were recommended to undergo routine screening for breast cancer every three years up to the age of 65. It would be useful to know whether the Government had considered making a similar recommendation to women over that age. Finally, she asked whether the United Kingdom had envisaged ascertaining the views of the public regarding the restrictive abortion legislation in force in Northern Ireland.

16. **Ms. Taya** said that although the Government had taken some steps to protect foreign domestic workers from abuse by their British employers, the tighter regulations it had adopted in 1991 and 1994 were not necessarily familiar to the workers concerned and still left legislation with a double standard. Currently, only domestic workers who had been working abroad for an employer could be given an entry permit and could come to the United Kingdom with that employer. Contrary to International Labour Organization (ILO) criteria, they were not allowed to change employers once they were in the country. In order to safeguard against mistreatment, it would be desirable to introduce greater flexibility.

17. **Ms. Abaka**, welcoming the establishment of a Cabinet-level Subcommittee on Women, a step that the United Kingdom should recommend to all Commonwealth countries, said she hoped that in taking decisions the Subcommittee would consult with the Women's National Commission and other appropriate women's agencies.

18. She asked what programmes the Government had set up to allow teenage girls who had dropped out of school because of pregnancy to re-enter the formal and informal education system.

19. **Ms. Reynolds** (United Kingdom), replying to questions from Committee members, observed that it was a key principle of the Sex Discrimination Act that the Government should take positive action to enable women to take full part in public life, a position not to be confused with the United Kingdom's relevant reservation under the Convention. The Government specifically encouraged women to apply for key posts and gave them the required training. In designating the skills sought for public appointments, the Government emphasized, in addition to the conventional experience in paid employment that men were more likely to offer,

the valuable experience women were likely to have had in caring responsibilities and in the voluntary sector. The recent Scottish and Welsh elections had given proof of that growing commitment to positive action. Nonetheless, appointment to public office was always, of course, on merit.

20. The political parties had also found a number of ways to expand women's representation in public office, and the parties had been encouraged to seek further advice from the Equal Opportunities Commission. The Government itself required each of its own departments to report annually on improvements in the proportion of women in government: the current average was 32 per cent, although it varied according to department, but the commitment to change was in any case very clear.

21. **Ms. Eastabrook** (United Kingdom) said specific legal provisions protected women belonging to ethnic minorities, as in the case of the minimum-wage laws. The Race Relations Act of 1976 mirrored the Sex Discrimination Act in giving them special protection in education, employment, housing and delivery of services, and one and the same court could deal with a case involving complaints under both Acts. The Government was committed to the mainstreaming of ethnic minorities and to positive action in terms of both race and gender. The New Deal for Young People had been designed expressly for those from ethnic minorities, in consultation with the Commission for Racial Equality; and innovative action had been taken to encourage Pakistani and Bangladeshi girls and their families to learn about opportunities in career service. Following a report from the Social Exclusion Unit, the Government had asked the schools to set clear targets for achieving equality for ethnic minority children and had established a ministerial programme of action, developed together with other representative organizations, to improve their performance in the schools. Recognizing the linguistic and cultural barriers to proper health care and lack of access to information in ethnic communities, the Government had published essential information on available health services in 10 languages and had set targets to meet the health needs of ethnic minorities.

22. Regarding the legislative review by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), she said that the Government was very seriously considering its recommendations on wide-ranging changes to the Sex Discrimination Act and the Equal Pay Act but before

reaching final conclusions had to study them in conjunction with the recommendations for legislative change from the Commission for Racial Equality and the proposals from the Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland and a recent task force review of anti-discrimination legislation. The Government might eventually want to set priorities within the EOC recommendations. Some of the special measures proposed were in fact already in place. It should be noted that the establishment of a quota system, a departure from the merit principle that was generally unpopular in the country, had not been specifically proposed by the Commission.

23. It was clear that many employers still needed to look critically at their pay systems to eliminate hidden discrimination and the EOC was currently developing a strategy to explain the benefits of such an approach to employers. The large number of equal-pay cases withdrawn before the commencement of court hearings was not necessarily a bad development, since many of the women concerned had in the interim obtained satisfaction via internal appeals or had resolved their cases by conciliation.

24. An independent review of pay and conditions in higher education would be published later in the month and if, as was likely, it showed that women were underpaid, remedial action would be taken. The educational institutions themselves, as the employers, would be expected by the Government to make their own reviews of any discrimination in recruitment, promotion, and award of permanent contracts. Major 1997 Government guidelines had been developed advising how the universities should monitor their policies.

25. New standards for teacher training had been set in 1998. Once appointed, teachers were expected to set high standards for all pupils, regardless of gender and cultural and linguistic background, and must ensure that all were given equal opportunities to achieve their potential.

26. **Ms. Owen** (United Kingdom) said that the current law made no provision for paternity leave, although in practice 98 per cent of employed men took time off at the birth of a child, with 40 per cent officially receiving a few days of leave. Implementing the family-friendly policies set out in a White Paper pending enactment of the Employment Relations Bill would, however, in January 2000, establish three

months of unpaid parental leave, after one year of work, for each parent, with a possibility of deferral to a later stage. That legislation would be the basic bill of rights on the matter.

27. **Ms. Jones** (United Kingdom) said that the number of women in prison had risen sharply; indeed, it had doubled in the previous five years as a result of the growing numbers of women who were being sentenced in the criminal court system and were receiving longer sentences. Fifty per cent of the increase was attributable to drug offences, 14 per cent to violence against persons, 10 per cent to robbery and 10 per cent to theft. Very few women were imprisoned for failing to pay fines and women were generally less likely to be imprisoned than men. Thirty-seven per cent of the women in custody had been imprisoned for drug offences and another 33 per cent for related crimes of theft. The Government had adopted a new comprehensive drug strategy, involving detection, drug treatment in prison and the possibility of community sentencing in place of imprisonment, which would be very helpful to women. Regarding the number of ethnic minority women in prison, 24 per cent in England and Wales were black or Asian women, but 67 per cent of those (15 per cent of all female inmates) were foreign nationals held for drug offences.

28. The Government would soon be publishing a report on women in the criminal justice system, for which the criminal justice agencies had been required to provide data indicating an absence of race or gender discrimination. The report would give the results of research on the treatment of women at each stage, from arrest to custody. It would be used to underpin a strategy with the aim of preventing crime by women and of using custody only as a last resort. In the meantime, those women currently in prison must be given education and training relevant to their needs, in order to help them resettle successfully in their communities later. The Women's Policy Group which she headed had been formed within the Prison Service in January 1998 precisely to develop appropriate regimes for women.

29. The number of women's prisons had increased, with a view to improving the facilities for women and keeping them as close to home as possible. In March, an important Government decision had stipulated that when the new custodial sentences for juvenile offenders came into effect in April 2000, girls would be placed in local authority care rather than in prisons,

and that meanwhile they would be held in separate young-offender facilities.

30. Concerning the prosecution of sexual offences, under the pending legislation on youth justice and criminal justice, she said that women witnesses assisting prosecutions of serious sexual offences would be able to give evidence in court with greater confidentiality and anonymity; the presumption would be that women who claimed rape would require assistance; and a complainant's own sexual behaviour could be introduced in court only if relevant and not for purposes of denigration.

31. The Government had launched a wide range of initiatives to address the problem of domestic violence. Among them were a national awareness-raising campaign; local crime and disorder audits; development of local strategies; new legislative protection against harassment, including measures enabling victims to occupy the family home safely; increased support for victims; and an additional allocation under the crime reduction programme specifically for initiatives to reduce domestic violence. An exciting initiative in the pilot stage involved a magistrate's court set up solely to deal with domestic violence cases and equipped not only to punish perpetrators, but to provide support and counselling to victims and institute programmes to prevent repeat offences. Separate Scottish initiatives took a similar multi-agency approach; they included an innovative project to change the behaviour of male abusers and made provision for protection to allow abused spouses to remain in the family home.

32. The Government had for the first time adopted a draft guidance on how police and social services should recognize and deal with the problem of child prostitution. The guidance recognized that child prostitutes were unwilling victims, and it emphasized that the chief aims should be to prosecute exploiters with the full range of legal penalties and to enable the children to leave prostitution. The Government was reluctant, however, to decriminalize prostitution, fearing that to do so would increase the number of children engaged in it by implying that society tolerated child prostitution. In the Government's strategy, applying the soliciting law against child prostitutes was seen as a last resort when all other options had been exhausted.

33. With regard to overseas domestic workers accompanying their employers to the United Kingdom, a number of changes designed to improve their conditions of entry had been put into effect. Moreover, domestic workers previously admitted who had left their employers because of abuse or exploitation could apply to regularize their stay.

34. **Ms. O'Neill** (United Kingdom), responding to questions concerning Northern Ireland, said that a decision on extending "kerb-crawling" legislation to Northern Ireland would have to wait until the new Assembly was fully functioning. Abortions were not legal in Northern Ireland, except to save the life or protect the physical or mental health of the mother, and there was strong public opposition to any change.

35. The unemployment differential between Catholic and Protestant women, while still unsatisfactory, was being reduced. The chief cause was the existence of high-deprivation areas, known as "black spots", in parts of West Belfast and the western part of the province traditionally inhabited by Catholics. The Government was addressing the problem with a project to meet social needs and incentives to create employment in those areas.

36. The percentage of women in public appointments was low, at 35 per cent, but had increased from 23 per cent in 1991. The Northern Ireland Office target for the year 2000 was 40 per cent, but the Secretary of State was committed to 50-50 representation. Her report on public appointments, giving full statistics on the composition of public bodies and appointments and identifying areas of under-representation, was available on the Internet. The new guidance issued by the Commissioner for Public Appointments was being implemented, and the Central Appointment Unit was considering ways and means of attracting more female applicants.

37. Monitoring levels of domestic violence was made more difficult because domestic violence was not defined as a separate criminal offence in Northern Ireland but had to be prosecuted under one of the categories of offences against the person. A consultation document recently released highlighted the need for better statistics. Measures that had been taken against domestic violence included the provision of specially trained domestic violence officers in each police division, the creation of the Regional Forum on Domestic Violence to coordinate official and voluntary

efforts, and the passage of the Family Homes and Domestic Violence Order providing for new protective orders for victims and protection from abuse during child contact arrangements.

38. The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, currently being set up, would unite the functions of several previous commissions designed to combat discrimination on the grounds of race, religion or political opinion, as well as gender. The Commission would have even greater powers of enforcement. So far from neglecting gender discrimination, it would be in a position to address cross-cutting discrimination issues, such as the situation of minority women.

39. **Mr. Kingham** (United Kingdom), speaking on health issues, said that the Prime Minister had asked the Social Exclusion Unit to work with the other government departments in developing an integrated strategy to cut rates of teenage parenthood and propose better solutions to prevent social exclusion, damaged life opportunities and lower levels of education that often resulted. Programmes needed to reach not only young mothers but young fathers as well. One of the questions under consideration was whether to introduce sex education in primary schools. A new public health policy being developed would favour complementary strategies for reducing ill health that would provide greater flexibility in meeting local needs and priorities. Work was under way on an inter-agency sexual health policy framework that would encompass actions across government departments to reduce the high rate of teenage parenthood, promote sex and relationship education and combat AIDS. With regard to men's access to family planning, an idea being considered was to combine family planning units with genitourinary health care in one location. The arrangement, however, might be less acceptable to older than to younger groups. Also being considered by the Social Exclusion Unit were the family and child support issues entailed in re-entry into education after teenage pregnancy.

40. In response to the interest expressed in the work of the Human Fertilization and Embryology Authority, he noted that much information from that source was available to the public on the Internet.

41. He explained that women 65 years of age and over did not receive invitations to come in for breast-screening because at the time the screening programme was instituted there had been reason to believe that

they would not find that approach acceptable. Women aged 65 or over were nevertheless entitled to free breast-screening every three years, and the number of requests for mammograms from women in that age group had risen from 39,000 in 1994-1995 to 67,000 in 1996-1997. The National Screening Committee was considering a change in the policy, subject to the outcome of three pilot feasibility studies.

42. With regard to women's health care in rural areas, the policy of the National Health Service was to provide universal access to care regardless of ability to pay. The precise structure and format of care delivery depended on local circumstances and was at the discretion of local planners.

43. Scotland had its own strategy for addressing the problem of teenage pregnancy. A health policy White Paper had set as a national goal a 20 per cent reduction in the rate of pregnancy among girls aged 13 to 15 for the period from 1995 to 2010. A pilot project had recently been launched with the aims of promoting sexual health and preventing sexually transmitted diseases, as well as preventing unwanted pregnancies.

44. **Mr. Bowen** (United Kingdom) described measures being taken to address the problem of poverty among older women, who made up the vast majority of the poorest pensioners. He said that the Women's Unit was working on a project on women's incomes over a lifetime, which would result in policy recommendations. In addition, the pension system was undergoing a comprehensive review with the explicit aim of narrowing the pension gap between men and women and developing pensions flexible enough to take into account women's often intermittent working patterns. Parliament currently had before it the Welfare Reform and Pensions Bill, containing many provisions that would benefit women: pension-sharing following divorce; stakeholder pensions, a retirement savings scheme for very low earners with no occupational pension; an improved State second pension scheme for low and moderate earners; and second pension credits for years devoted to caring. It was estimated that at least 4 million people, mainly women, would benefit from the proposed second pension provisions. Meanwhile, the Government was executing pilot projects to determine the best way to provide income support to the around 700,000 women pensioners not currently claiming it. The new budget also proposed extra help for pensioners on income support, two thirds of whom were women: a guaranteed minimum income

of £75 a week and a five-fold increase in the winter fuel payment.

45. The Government had proposed a “New Deal for Older Workers”, including an in-work supplement for those returning to work, advisory services and an in-work training grant. The government strategy for older people stressed the theme of active ageing. It called for an investigation into the reasons why older people leave work, the mental and physical benefits of work for older people and the obstacles to returning to work, and it advocated the development of programmes, such as mentoring, to facilitate re-entry into the work force, aided by the flexible innovations of the Government’s “family-friendly employment” strategy.

46. **Mr. Fifoot** (United Kingdom) said that the European Convention on Human Rights was due to come into force in the United Kingdom in October 2000. The reason for the delay was that a great deal of training was needed: not only the Bench, but every public authority would need to be aware of the past judgements (*acquis*) of the European Court of Human Rights. However, the devolved legislatures and executives were already forbidden under the respective Acts of devolution to act in any way contrary to the European Convention and so could be challenged under those Acts if they did.

47. The Government of the United Kingdom currently had no plans to incorporate the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women into its domestic legislation because it considered the Convention not easily justiciable given the *acquis* of the European Court of Human Rights and because its obligations under the Convention were programmatic in nature and therefore difficult to introduce into a common law system.

48. The Government of the United Kingdom had not so far taken any decision on ratification of the optional protocol to the Convention, following its adoption later in the year.

49. Implementation of the Convention in the Caribbean Overseas Territories and the Falklands was complicated because of their small populations. He noted that all the Overseas Territories, which had significant degrees of self-government, were in compliance with all the substantive areas of the Convention: women were equal before the law and had equal access to education, health care and special health services. There was no discrimination in

matrimony, and women’s employment had risen substantially. Discrimination in employment was prohibited by law in the British Virgin Islands and the Turks and Caicos, while in the Falklands discrimination was banned in Government employment only. However, legal protection against discrimination in employment in the Falklands was being upgraded to United Kingdom standards.

50. In that connection, he said the United Kingdom Civil Service codes were models of anti-discrimination legislation, merit being the only allowable criterion for advancement. Those codes applied in the Overseas Territories also, and women were very well represented at senior levels in the Civil Service there. Women were also well represented in the various legislative councils.

51. While there was no special department in the Falklands or the Turks and Caicos dealing with women’s issues, the British Virgin Islands had a “Women’s Desk”, with one very active woman running workshops on many matters of interest and benefit to women. The Women’s Unit of the Cabinet Office in the United Kingdom had great sympathy with the goals and activities of the “Women’s Desk” and would enter into such contacts with it as the “Women’s Desk” desired.

52. It would be difficult to expand the parts of the United Kingdom report dealing with the Overseas Territories for the same reason it was difficult to establish the machinery to apply the Convention there: small population size.

53. There was a difficulty with policy on teenage pregnancies in the British Virgin Islands: older girls were kept in school until they finished their schooling, but younger girls were removed from school in the belief that it was better for the girl and her family. The authorities in the British Virgin Islands had yet to get to grips with that issue.

54. Children born in the United Kingdom became British if their parents were British or were permanently settled there. If a child was born without a nationality, he or she became British: the Government of the United Kingdom did not want children to be born stateless.

55. **Ms. Hazelle** noted that, even though women were well represented in Civil Service posts in the British Overseas Territories, representation in elected posts

was not so satisfactory. Also, there were no women Governors.

56. The report had not been extensive enough in respect of the Overseas Territories, and in that connection she noted that it had been largely drafted using a questionnaire sent out by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Her contacts with the person behind the “Women’s Desk” in the British Virgin Islands had convinced her that the Government of the United Kingdom must do more to implement the goals of the Beijing Conference and the Platform for Action. To say that the Territories were “too small” was to miss the point: women needed and wanted their rights there as much as anywhere. To hide behind the self-governing status of the Territories was also to miss the point: the Government of the United Kingdom was obliged to ensure that the Beijing Platform was implemented in all its terms in all its Territories.

57. **Ms. Reynolds** (United Kingdom) said that the challenge of employment for women, particularly in remote parts of the United Kingdom, was well recognized by Government. The Rural Development Commission of England had merged with the Countryside Commission in April 1999 to form the Countryside Agency. The Agency, and its equivalents in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, were cooperating with other bodies in examining transport provision for people from remote rural communities who were seeking work. Employment for women in rural areas was disproportionately in the public services, tourism and other service-related industries. A tourism strategy was being developed which would recognize women’s contribution to the industry and re-examine their employment needs to see if specific forms of support could be provided.

58. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, like all other Ministries in the United Kingdom, was committed to gender appraisal and mainstreaming under the new policies deriving from the Agenda 2000 agreement in the European Union, which covered both agricultural and rural development policy. The Women’s Unit of the Cabinet Office would be working with the Ministry to seek practical ways to ensure that women benefited from the new policies. More young women than young men were entering agricultural training colleges, representing a significant change during the past few years, and institutions such as the Farming Woman of the Year Award and Rural Women’s Day, which brought women together from all over the

United Kingdom, celebrated the contributions women made in rural areas.

59. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** said that the Government of the United Kingdom should look again at the possibility of taking measures under article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention. The European Convention on Human Rights contained no similar provision, and although the judgements of the European Court were somewhat hostile to automatic quotas for women in employment, other, softer goals to advance women could be set and, instead of remaining merely targets, could be mandated by legislation.

60. She commended the Government of the United Kingdom for its many efforts to promote the advancement of women. She looked forward in the next report to a coherent picture of the legislation used to alleviate poverty and of the impact of that legislation and of devolution as shown by monitoring and evaluation.

61. **Ms. Eastbrook** (United Kingdom) said that her Government was cautious about proposing legislation unless there was a clear need for it. Also, it was too early to tell whether the non-legislative targets to which it had relatively recently committed itself would be achieved. However, it would continue to look for ways to ensure the advancement of women in keeping with European legislation as it developed through cases before the European Court of Human Rights and under article 13 of the Treaty of Amsterdam.

62. **Ms. Reynolds** (United Kingdom) stressed that her delegation had not come before the Committee complacent about the status of women in the United Kingdom, nor was it leaving complacent: it agreed with Ms. Schöpp-Schilling that even if the Government of the United Kingdom deserved a passing grade, there was always room for improvement.

63. **Ms. Donnelly** (United Kingdom) noted that a social inclusion strategy for Scotland had recently received official publication. The strategy took a comprehensive, integrated approach to tackling the root causes of poverty and exclusion in Scottish society and included specific initiatives such as the establishment of family centres designed to support parents and children so that they could achieve their full potential and make a full contribution to society. The strategy naturally had health and education aspects also.

64. Consultations on reform of the legislation on the family was under way in Scotland. Responsibility for amending that legislation would lie with the new Scottish Parliament. She noted that a leaflet setting out the various sources of assistance for families had been published together with the consultation documents. The high cost of breakdowns in family relationships had been emphasized in the leaflet and consultation documents, and ways of funding family mediation mechanisms were being sought in order to minimize bitterness where family breakdowns were inevitable and to try to ensure that family members could continue to relate to one another afterwards.

65. **Ms. Reynolds** (United Kingdom) stressed that the mainstreaming approach being taken in the United Kingdom was in its early stages; however, it was a Government commitment and universally binding. It had already resulted in enormous improvements in areas such as the Treasury, even if implementation was still patchy.

66. Her Government shared the Committee's interest in monitoring and evaluation and was particularly interested in the connections between various areas of policy, on which it would comment in its next report to the Committee.

67. The devolution process was providing new opportunities for women's voices to be heard. However, it was also providing challenges for the collection of statistical data, reporting and ensuring consistency. The need for all parts of the United Kingdom to continue to work closely together on all those issues was clear.

68. **Ms. Cartwright** commended the United Kingdom delegation on its spirit of openness and its undoubted commitment to the Convention. Clearly, the consultations the United Kingdom Government had conducted, with non-governmental organizations in particular, had been very broad, ensuring that its report had been rich in content and that large numbers of women in the United Kingdom had been informed about what the Convention could offer them. She commended the delegation also on its high level of expertise, which had enabled it to answer in depth a wide range of questions.

69. She stressed that gender mainstreaming must be applied across the whole of the United Kingdom, and that monitoring and evaluation alone could demonstrate for the next report how effective the new

initiatives had been. However, there had clearly been major advances between the second report and the third and fourth reports. It was to be regretted only that the gap between the reports had been so long, because the amount of change and new information had been overwhelming.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.