



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

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

Summary record of the 832nd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 1 July 2008, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Šimonović

Contents

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the
Convention

Sixth periodic report of Yemen

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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 Yemen (CEDAW/C/YEM/6, CEDAW/C/YEM/Q/6 and Add.1)

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

2. **Ms. Kaid** (Yemen), introducing the sixth periodic report of Yemen, said that Yemen had been one of the first countries to sign and ratify the Convention in 1984, and had made a significant effort to implement it without reservations, with the exception of one article, which did not affect the substance.

3. Since the presentation of the fourth and fifth periodic reports in 2002, there had been various developments in the life of Yemeni women. In 2003 several laws had been enacted to implement article 2 of the Convention in the area of labour, personal status, citizenship, civil registration and prison arrangements. Also, following submission of the current report, laws had been enacted on civil service pensions and retirement funds to remove any discrimination against women. The new laws gave equal rights to men and women when they retired, and increased maternity leave to 70 days. Furthermore, the respective parliamentary committee had recently approved a law on the diplomatic service that allowed husband and wife to be appointed to the same diplomatic mission with equal privileges.

4. A committee of national legal experts continued to study the country's laws and to propose amendments to guarantee full rights for women as specified in the Convention. The 2003-2005 national strategy for the promotion of women explicitly stated that Yemen was committed to the implementation of the Convention and the Beijing Platform for Action; moreover it had been updated to take into account the Millennium Development Goals 2006-2015. Yemen had sectoral strategies in the area of working women, agricultural development and food security and the promotion of women's health, which had been incorporated into the National Poverty Reduction Strategy. The plan included new elements such as the improvement of political participation by women and combating violence against women, which indicated the Government's willingness to tackle those issues.

5. The Women's National Committee had created a monitoring and evaluation division to oversee policy implementation and, at its urging, the Ministry of Finance had created a general directorate for gender-responsive budgeting and the corresponding training guide; training sessions would be started shortly with the aid of Oxfam and the German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ). In an unprecedented action in the region, the Women's National Committee, in conjunction with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) had conducted a gender-auditing process in six major Government sectors to evaluate the level of gender mainstreaming in their policies and programmes.

6. Government policy towards violence against women was embodied in a national plan, which had created a network to combat such violence. Unfortunately, the policy had insufficient financial and political support. The Government had adopted a quota system to improve the participation of women in public life and decision-making by implementing an affirmative action process to narrow the gap between women and men. That attitude had been reinforced by the electoral platform of the actual President of Yemen, which had included a commitment to the economic, social and political promotion of women. The President had recently guaranteed that at least 15 per cent of parliamentarians would be women, and the Women's National Committee hoped that the rate would rise to 30 per cent in the long term. Currently, women in prominent positions included two ministers, 19 in leading positions in the diplomatic corps and 32 judges, one a member of the Supreme Court.

7. In Yemen, more than 200 civil society organizations were working in the area of women, the family and children, some with the support of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and had created networks, such as the national network to combat violence against women and for the reduction of poverty. The Women's National Committee called upon international organizations, especially the United Nations agencies, to increase their support to Yemen. Above all, local organizations needed to receive training so that they could help improve the status of women, particularly in rural areas. Support was also required for governmental mechanisms to promote the interests of women and to develop cooperation mechanisms to overcome the

remaining challenges and obstacles to the adoption of wide-ranging changes to promote women.

8. Regarding article 9 of the Convention, in 2003, Yemen had amended its laws to establish that the child of a Yemeni mother and foreign husband should receive equal treatment to a Yemeni child, and to grant that child citizenship should the parents divorce. Also, the legal residency of the foreign husband was increased from two to five years, and that period could be extended.

9. Yemen was committed to providing education for all by 2015. An effort was being made to narrow the gap between boys and girls and to increase the rate of school enrolment for both. Currently, nearly 90 per cent of boys and 65 per cent of girls were enrolled in primary school. The literacy rate among girls was increasing, together with female enrolment in colleges, universities and vocational training establishments.

10. Regarding employment, despite current efforts to downsize government, the Women's National Committee was trying to increase the number of women in the different sectors, especially in health and education. It was also encouraging the private sector to absorb women workers and introduce promotional policies.

11. In the health sector, efforts were being made to reduce maternal mortality and to provide improved and expanded health services for mothers by increasing the number of mother and child health centres; one effect had been a decline in the number of home births. In addition, there had been an increase in both the number of women using birth control and the number of women giving birth supervised by qualified medical personnel.

12. A revised law on social welfare had been enacted recently; it increased the ceiling of financial support for the poor and ensured that women were targeted more specifically. In the case of rural women, efforts had been made to enrol them in literacy programmes and to keep girls in school, at least until they had completed primary education. Improvements were also being introduced in the health services and outreach programmes in rural areas, with mobile clinics, together with food programmes to improve the nutrition of rural women, especially new mothers and pregnant women. Agricultural agencies also provide technical and advisory services to women farmers, as well as credit on favourable terms. The current

decentralization process focused much of its attention on projects relating to sanitation, water, health, and education to improve the situation of women.

13. In Yemen, men and women were equal before the law; however, social and cultural obstacles still existed that were gradually being reduced with the spread of education, and the influence of the media. The increase in the number of women in the Judiciary and the police, which were traditionally male-dominated sectors, showed that new opportunities were opening up for women.

14. The status of women in the home had improved, again owing to education, but the improvement was relative owing to the resistance of Parliament to legislate on some of the shortcomings in the Personal Status Law, particularly in relation to the minimum age for marriage. Despite the efforts of women's organizations in Yemen, it has not been possible to amend the law.

15. The Women's National Committee was trying to disseminate information about the Convention and again asked for the collaboration of all donor agencies to help Yemen achieve its Millennium Development Goals, especially the third goal on gender equality and the promotion of women, as well as article 10 of the Convention on the empowerment of women.

16. **The Chairperson** noted that Yemen had not yet ratified the Optional Protocol and the Committee would be interested to know whether it was considering ratifying it, and also lifting the reservation it had made to the Convention.

Articles 1 to 6

17. **Mr. Flinterman** said that, despite the progress reported, there was still much to accomplish. Yemen had been one of the first States to ratify the Convention; however, it would be useful if the delegation could provide information on the Government's understanding of the Convention, since it was a binding legal instrument to which no reservations had been made at the time of ratification. Some of the obligations were of an immediate nature and, consequently, all discriminatory laws should have been repealed immediately.

18. The Committee had been informed that some NGOs that had invoked provisions of the Convention when assisting women in their struggle to obtain

recognition of their human rights had been portrayed as enemies of Islam. He would welcome the delegation's comments in that regard and would like to know how the Government protected human rights defenders.

19. It was clear that the Yemeni Judiciary was not fully aware of the significance and relevance of the Convention and he would welcome information on what the Government was doing to increase its awareness as well as to open up access to justice to women and women's organizations so that they could defend their human rights.

20. Lastly, it would be useful to know what efforts were being made to ratify the Optional Protocol and any obstacles to that effort.

21. **Ms. Pimental** said that the report made it clear that it was very difficult to amend the existing legislation; however, that meant that a greater effort was required. Special attention should be paid to amendment of article 6 of the Personal Status Law that defined marriage as a commitment between spouses through a legal contract under which a man "enjoyed his woman lawfully". She wished to know why the Government did not consider that article 6, which reinforced the perception of women as objects, discriminated against women.

22. **Ms. Maiolo** said that article 2 (g) of the Convention called on States parties to repeal all national penal provisions that constituted discrimination against women. Although reference had been made to new laws, the repeal or modification of article 232 of the Penal Code had not been mentioned; furthermore, the report noted that there was no specific law on domestic violence or rape. She asked why there was no specific law and whether the Government was prepared to enact one, and why there had been no mention of repealing article 232.

23. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** said that the report raised questions about the commitment of the Yemeni Government and the formal legal system to abide by the Convention. The Committee had heard from both formal and informal sources that the Yemeni Government was endeavouring to comply with both sharia law and the norms of the Convention. However, neither polygamous marriages nor child marriages had been eliminated, and although it was proposed to establish a minimum age for marriage, there was no proposal to invalidate unlawful marriages or to sanction criminally those who married underage girls.

24. Lastly, regarding access to justice, it would be useful to have information on women who were eligible for legal aid and know what the Government offered them to ensure their rights.

25. **Ms. Begum**, referring to child marriages, said that Yemen had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991, and according to that instrument, every human being below age 18 was considered a child. It was urgent to change the minimum age of marriage, as mentioned in the report, and to establish a time frame for that change. Access to justice and free legal aid should also be ensured for young girls.

26. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, said she would be interested to learn about the process used to prepare the report. Had the report been submitted to the Cabinet and formally adopted by the Government before submission to the Committee? Had it been discussed with NGOs or presented to Parliament to raise its visibility?

27. The concluding comments on the previous reports had noted the large number of discriminatory laws. The challenge for the Government was not only to amend the legislation, but also to change attitudes. She would welcome information on the mechanisms being used to bring discriminatory laws in line with the Convention.

28. **Ms. Kaid** (Yemen) said that the Optional Protocol had not yet been signed. The Government had accepted the proposal made by the Women's National Committee to ratify the Optional Protocol and had referred the issue to the Ministry of Human Rights and the Ministry of Legal Affairs. Although the Convention had been signed at an early date, subsequent progress had been slow.

29. The reunification of Yemen into one State in 1990 had brought many changes, but many social groups would still not accept radical changes in women's lives and had not welcomed the signing of the Convention. There were very few women in Parliament, and the few individuals who supported women's issues did not have much of a voice. The Women's National Committee continued its strenuous efforts, but of course, time was needed to bring about social and cultural changes.

30. There were no legal obstacles to women's access to justice under Sharia law, although women faced other kinds of obstacles, especially in rural areas. However, several organizations, supported by Oxfam and the United Nations Development Fund for Women

(UNIFEM), provided legal assistance to women. It was difficult to obtain data on women's access to justice, but some information was available from the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice. Oxfam had a legal support programme and also provided some information.

31. With regard to article 6, the definition of marriage in the Personal Status Law was based on sharia law. The members of the legal committee that had drafted the definition probably did not consider it to be discriminatory, but the Committee's comments would be passed on to them. Nine articles of the Personal Status Law, and possibly some other provisions, required discussion and amendment, and the efforts to review all laws and legislation would continue.

32. With regard to article 2, marital rape was not recognized as a problem in Yemen, as no complaints had been filed. As for polygamy, sharia law allowed a man to have up to four wives, but only under certain conditions, and a wife who did not wish her husband to have other wives could ask for a divorce. A change in the law had been requested.

33. The minimum age for marriage, specified in the Personal Status Law, was a matter of great concern, and a campaign to set a minimum age was supported by Oxfam and by civil society organizations. The Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood also supported the campaign because of Yemen's commitments under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Government had approved a change in the law and had referred the matter to Parliament, where the change had been resisted. The parliamentary committees on education and health agreed that early marriage was harmful to the growth and education of young women. It was also harmful to national economic development as it increased the rate of population growth.

34. In relation to forced marriages, religious law required that the woman give her consent to the marriage. The legal group was proposing an amendment whereby the person performing the marriage should hear that consent given in person, as it was often the case that the girl's parents or guardian had taken the initiative in making the decisions.

35. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) had provided technical assistance and training for the preparation of the sixth

report. The national group had consisted of Government representatives and representatives of the Women's National Committee, ministries, governorates and civil society organizations. Some of the civil society organizations had participated in the earlier part of the training and had then withdrawn under the misconception that they should prepare a shadow report. When the report was ready, workshops had been held at central, governorate and local levels. It had been distributed to all ministries and their observations and corrections had then been included. Copies had been sent to all Cabinet members and to the Prime Minister, who was also the head of the Supreme Council for Women, but not to the Parliament, which had not been involved in the process.

36. The Women's National Committee was continuing its efforts to change discriminatory laws. The recommendations from the current meeting would be submitted to the Cabinet and to the relevant committees. They might also be submitted to Parliament so they could be taken into consideration when amending legislation.

37. **Ms. Zou Xiaqiao** asked about the priority areas of the National Strategy for Women's Development and for details of the human and financial resources provided to ensure its effective implementation. She wondered whether evaluation mechanisms were in place and whether civil society, including non-governmental organizations, had participated in developing the strategy.

38. If the Women's National Committee was responsible for implementing the Convention, she wondered whether, in publicizing the Convention and implementing the conclusions, it had included decision makers in its training activities and whether there were monitoring mechanisms to ensure implementation of Convention in Yemen.

39. **Ms. Dairiam** noted that the report acknowledged that economic growth required the development of women and enhancement of their capabilities. She recalled that the Committee's concluding comments on the fifth periodic report had also referred to the link between women's equality and national development. The Committee had stated that the continuing high rates of illiteracy, school dropout, early marriage and child labour were impediments to national development and had recommended that the goal of gender equality be integrated into all national

development policies and programmes. She asked whether such an integrated approach to national development had been taken and whether it included measures to protect women's right to equality.

40. The present report seemed to describe the same problems that had been mentioned in the previous report. She wondered if women could benefit from the poverty reduction strategy (page 4 of the report) in terms of job opportunities, or through participation in all aspects of development rather than merely as recipients of welfare benefits.

41. **Ms. Arocha Dominguez** said she understood that the Women's National Committee was a consultative and executive body. As its membership included representatives of civil society and the private sector, she wondered to what extent they participated in the executive function.

42. Seven ministries were represented on the National Women's Committee, and she asked how policies were coordinated with other ministries that were not represented on the Committee. She also inquired about the scope of the mechanism, and how it operated at the district and local level, as there was a large rural population.

43. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** said that, while the report gave a positive evaluation of the legal reforms, special programmes and strategies and empowerment and advocacy efforts, at the same time, it seemed that progress was very slow, as confirmed by the responses to the list of issues and questions. She therefore wondered whether the Government took its commitments under the Convention seriously and whether there was a real political will to implement the Convention. Almost the entire delegation was made up of members of the Women's National Committee, yet implementation was a task for the Government and for all ministries.

44. **Ms. Shin** noted that the Women's National Committee was responsible for implementation and evaluation of the National Strategy for Women's Development. She wondered what action the Women's National Committee could take if the Ministry of Human Rights did not implement the plan as discussed or if the Ministry of Legal Affairs redrafted an amendment, and thereby changed or distorted the meaning. She hoped to hear a frank response on the challenges so that the present Committee could offer help with its concluding observations.

45. **Ms. Neubauer** wondered whether the Women's National Committee's current budget of about \$350,000 was sufficient for its work. She asked whether it covered the staff costs at headquarters and in governorate branches, and whether it was also used for activities such as awareness-raising and capacity-building. It would be interesting to know what financial resources were lacking and what efforts were being made to supplement the funds available.

46. As the periodic report had not been submitted to Parliament, perhaps it should be submitted to the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights and Public Freedoms. She asked whether there was any cooperation between that Committee and the Women's National Committee.

47. **Ms. Kaid** (Yemen) said that schooling for girls was a priority concern, mainly at primary level, but they were also encouraged to go on to secondary and tertiary education. Illiteracy was rife, particularly among women, and was a factor in poverty. The General Development and Poverty Eradication Plan (2006-2010) addressed that concern, by seeking to qualify women to enter the labour force and contribute to sustainable development. Moreover, women's needs, particularly in the field of health, had been taken into account in development plans and measures had been taken to improve the level of social protection available to them.

48. Priority was also being given to combating gender stereotypes and violence against women, notwithstanding the scant financial resources available. However, useful support was provided by the United Nations system and by civil society organizations, which effectively partnered some of the efforts of the Women's National Committee. The importance of giving women a say in national and municipal affairs was recognized; they were increasingly represented in governmental departments and it was hoped that the trend would continue throughout the country, including in local government. The number of women members of Parliament had dropped from nine to one, but that was because of a decline in women candidates. The same situation could be seen in every Arab country, owing to forces currently at work against women.

49. The Women's National Committee was the main body responsible for implementing the Convention. It conducted awareness-raising campaigns for the population at large, but also for members of the

judiciary, who were sometimes ignorant of the Convention. Judges did not always understand that there was no contradiction between its provisions and the rules of Islamic sharia, which were both based on human rights. It shaped and monitored policy and, through its gender focal points in governmental departments, worked to ensure the effective translation of the principles of the Convention in everyday life in all sectors. It had a membership of 50 male and female officials in ministries and in civil society. Its annual budget covered its operating costs alone; additionally, it received assistance from Oxfam and other NGOs, particularly for training and advocacy activities, studies, data collection and the publication of brochures.

50. The Women's National Committee was distinct from the Supreme Council for Women, which regulated issues relating to the status of women and whose membership included the Prime Minister and seven Government Ministers, together with leading representatives of the private sector. It had adopted the National Strategy for Women and approved all the related legislative amendments.

51. **Ms. Mohammed** (Yemen) said that, under the five-year Development Plan, which also served as a framework for evaluation and monitoring, there were initiatives under way to promote capacity-building for women's integration and to advance gender equality.

52. **Ms. Kaid** (Yemen) stressed that the Government did indeed take the Convention seriously, as was reflected in its national strategies in support of women. The Women's National Committee also took it upon itself to remind policymakers of its principles and to bring to their attention the difficulties involved in putting them into effect. At its second national conference, it had recommended that the national machinery for women's affairs should be raised to the level of a ministry, which could be headed equally by a man or a woman. In response to the question why all the women in her delegation were from the National Committee, she said that other groups of women, including civil society organizations, had been involved in the preparation of the report but had not been able to send representatives to the meeting because of financial constraints.

Articles 5 and 6

53. **Ms. Gaspard** said that, while she did not doubt the National Committee's devotion to the cause of women, she wondered about the Government's commitment to applying the Convention. With regard to stereotypes, it was not acceptable to impute their persistence to tradition. Traditions were susceptible to change. In the eighteenth century, women had moved more freely and without a veil in Yemen. The National Committee and civil society were to be commended for their awareness-raising activities, but under the Convention it was the State Party, in other words the Government, that was required to take measures to combat stereotypes.

54. **Ms. Coker-Appiah** wondered in turn what the Government was doing to eradicate socio-cultural practices bound up with stereotypes that were demeaning for women. Since Yemeni society was largely illiterate, she wondered how awareness-raising activities were being conducted to reach people, particularly in rural areas. She also wished to know what was being done to raise awareness of the issue of violence against women, not only among the judiciary but also among people at large.

55. **Ms. Shin** said that she had been surprised to learn from the responses to the list of issues that there were no reported cases of marital rape in Yemen, as she had recently read of three cases of very young girls forcibly married to elderly men who had abused them to such an extent that they had sought the protection of the courts. The responses also provided a table taken from a survey on violence against women which, however, merely showed the number of female prisoners. The Committee would appreciate an indication of the results of the studies on the subject, together with relevant statistics.

56. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** said that the periodic report (CEDAW/C/YEM/6) discussed temporary marriages in the context of trafficking, which was in contradiction with the response to the list of issues where, in paragraph 26, they were said to have a "sound legal basis". She requested clarification. Furthermore, while the report noted a call to curb such marriages for the sake of the welfare of the Yemeni family, she wished to know what was being done to protect the girls themselves, since they were the primary victims.

57. **Ms. Begum** asked whether there were any legal measures in place to protect women and children from trafficking, notably under agreements with Saudi Arabia, and whether traffickers were exposed to penalties. Fuller details would also be appreciated about the new chapter reportedly incorporated in the Penal Code on child exploitation.

58. **Ms. Chutikul**, referring to the distinction between smuggling and trafficking, stressed the importance of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol thereto. She wished to know what provisions could be invoked in Yemen to combat such practices and what penalties were imposed on parents who smuggled their children. As the State Party had ratified International Labour Organization Convention No. 182 on elimination of the worst forms of child labour and the Protocol thereto, it would be interesting to know whether its provisions were reflected in the new law on children's rights currently before Parliament and whether a plan of action was envisaged in that regard, especially for girls. The response to the question on trafficking (para. 10) set out a number of measures reported to have been taken. Since, however, in each case, it was said that action "should" be taken, she asked whether the measures had in fact been implemented. Clarification would also be appreciated regarding the status of the memorandum of understanding and plan of action referred to in paragraph 10 of the responses.

59. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, noted that while a Decree had been promulgated in 2001 against female genital mutilation, the practice was still not treated as a criminal offence. The Committee wished to know whether the Government was contemplating its criminalization as a form of violence against women. Information would also be appreciated about any awareness-raising action directed towards communities.

60. **Ms. Kaid** (Yemen) said that Yemen considered education to be very important in empowering women and combating stereotypes that negatively affected women. While print media was not useful for education and awareness-raising, in particular in rural areas, visual and audio media were quite effective. Television was also more widely used as a means of educating on the equality of the social roles of men and women and on the disadvantages of early marriage. The mosque had also been influential in awareness-raising as

religious officials were encouraged to dedicate Friday sermons to the education of girls and its benefits for the family. While change had already begun to occur in cities, with men assuming more childrearing activities and women assuming more political and civil society roles, change was gradual. While it might seem that there was less freedom of movement for women in 2008 than in the eighteenth century, a trip to the countryside would show that unveiled women working alongside men was common. Furthermore, the Government had issued a decree to curb female genital mutilation, focusing its efforts on coastal areas. A 2007 conference on health also made female genital mutilation its central issue and religious leaders had been encouraged to raise awareness on the negative impact that female genital mutilation had on women's health.

61. The issue of violence against women was very sensitive in both political and civil society; the Women's National Committee believed that violence against women affected development as well as individuals, and had made a number of recommendations that had not been taken into account. After 2000, when limited sample studies had proven that violence against women existed, the climate became slightly more open to conversation. Since then, the Government had included domestic violence in its five-year plan on the empowerment of women and recommended that domestic violence be criminalized. Domestic violence was mentioned in the Penal Code, under which certain forms of violence were punishable. A law defining forms of violence and corresponding punishment was in the draft stage. Awareness-raising was the focus of the Women's National Committee, however.

62. The Women's National Committee acknowledged that child marriage was blatant violence against women and had called for fixing a minimum age of marriage. However, under the Personal Status Law early marriage was legal and there was a great deal of resistance to proposed amendments to the law. While the Women's National Committee lamented the incidents regarding early marriage that had been cited, she noted that the girls had obtained access to justice. Still, pressure to amend the Personal Status Law would continue. With regard to temporary, or tourist, marriage, it was legal with the consent of the girl and her father. It left the girl subject to exploitation because most often the husband was a wealthy Saudi Arabian

who would bribe the girl and her family with gifts and money, then divorce her and return to Saudi Arabia. The Women's National Committee was studying ways to combat temporary marriage because it contradicted marriage as defined under sharia law. There had been a decline in the number of such marriages in 2006-2008, as girls and their families increasingly understood its disadvantages.

63. Regarding the number of female prisoners, there had been great difficulty collecting relevant data. The report and responses offered detail on the number of female prisoners. Studies had found that crimes committed by females included adultery, perjury, homicide and crimes that were accidental and moral in nature. A number of female prisoners had paid monetary fines and been released, and still more had been pardoned by the Government in 2006.

64. The report and responses referred to child smuggling rather than trafficking. Smuggling occurred along borders with Saudi Arabia and other countries, by poor families who sent their children, usually boys, as girls could not go for reasons of honour, to work outside Yemen. The Government was working to curb this practice by forming a committee to study it and implement punishment for people who facilitated it. Prohibiting children below 15 years of age from leaving Yemen without their parents would be one method of decreasing the activity. Yemen had shelters for children, including orphanages and homes, mostly in the cities. She did not know if there were any signed agreements with Saudi Arabia with respect to child trafficking or smuggling, but she would investigate and report her findings to the Committee. Yemen was party to all International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions and agreements.

65. **Ms. Mohammed** (Yemen) said that the Government had sponsored groups to train the judiciary and police on human rights in general and women's rights in particular. The Women's National Committee had requested that the issues of human and women's rights be included in all subsequent training.

66. **Ms. Addin** (Yemen) said that there had also been training of the media with regard to propagating negative stereotypes of women and that, as a result, positive changes had taken place. Programmes had been established for women, and women were increasingly participating in the media. Furthermore, Yemen was party to the Convention on the Rights of

the Child and had established public orphanages, or "care homes" to protect children, supervised by women. Yemen was also working with Saudi Arabia to prevent child smuggling. Finally, the Government had set the goal of reducing female genital mutilation by 30 per cent by the end of 2008.

67. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, said that it would be useful to know what minimum age for marriage was proposed in draft legislation.

68. **Ms. Kaid** (Yemen) said that the minimum age for marriage had been fixed at 15 in 1994, but had subsequently been amended. Article 15 of the Personal Status Law granted the girl's guardian the right to enter her in the marriage contract if she was considered of childbearing age. The Women's National Committee had proposed fixing the minimum age at 18, bringing it in line with the Convention and with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but had met with considerable resistance from Parliament and even from conservative women in civil society.

Articles 7 to 9

69. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** said that it seemed that the only obstacle to full implementation of all of the articles of the Convention was the political will of the Yemeni Government.

70. **Ms. Neubauer** said that there was no evidence of respect for the principle of equal representation of women and men in political and public decision-making. She welcomed more information on the quota policy that had been adopted for the 2009 elections, and how the Government could garner support for the policy from Parliament and use its power to accelerate implementation of the Convention. It would also be interesting to learn what steps the Women's National Committee would take so that women would participate more in the diplomatic services of Yemen.

71. **Mr. Flinterman** noted that the percentage of women in the Foreign Service was low; it was unclear what obstacles the amendment to the relevant legislation faced in Parliament, and how the Women's National Committee could aid in its adoption. He welcomed progress on article 9, paragraph 2, of the Convention, but noted that there was no provision for Yemeni women married to nationals of other Arab countries to transmit their nationality to their children if their husbands agreed. He would be grateful for

information on the status of an earlier amendment to the Nationality Law regarding the application of the principle of reciprocity, as well as information on the Government's time frame for compliance with the article.

72. **Ms. Gaspard**, referring to paragraph 9.1 of the report, noted that while a Yemeni woman married to a Muslim non-Yemeni had the right to retain her nationality, there was no information on the right of a Yemeni woman married to a non-Muslim foreigner to retain her nationality.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.