



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

Distr.: General  
9 March 2012

English only

---

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

**Summary record of the 1029th meeting**

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 21 February 2012, at 10 a.m.

*Chairperson:* Ms. Pimentel

**Contents**

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

*Combined second to fifth periodic reports of Zimbabwe*

---

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of this document* to the Editing Unit, room E.4108, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

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

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

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

*Combined second to fifth periodic reports of Zimbabwe (CEDAW/C/ZWE/2-5, CEDAW/C/ZWE/Q/2-5 and Add.1)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Zimbabwe took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Ms. Muchena** (Zimbabwe), introducing the combined second to fifth periodic reports, said that, since the submission of the reports, three political parties had signed a global political agreement, thus bringing into being an inclusive governmental coalition and facilitating economic stability and growth, equality and national reconciliation. Zimbabwe had embarked on the task of drafting a new Constitution in accordance with the agreement, which sought to guarantee full citizenship and equality for all citizens. More than a third of the members of the parliamentary committee that had been set up to spearhead the drafting process were women, and 1 of the 17 thematic committees established to lead that process was devoted to women's issues.
3. Her Ministry, which was responsible for women's and gender affairs, had organized a national women's consultative conference on the new Constitution in 2009 which had paved the way for the establishment of a common position on social and economic rights, equal representation in decision-making positions and the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of customary law. An outreach campaign had been launched to raise awareness about the constitutional process among women, young people, children and persons with disabilities. Zimbabwe would, however, most likely face financial constraints in its efforts to inform society about the gender equality provisions of the new Constitution and incorporate them into current policies and legislation.
4. The Government was working to enhance women's access to justice through the establishment of a family law court system, marriage law reform and a legal literacy programme. A handbook and training manual on family law had been published, and simplified pamphlets on family law in local languages would be distributed to women and communities throughout Zimbabwe, subject to available resources.
5. The Government had adopted a programme to ensure that economic policies and strategies were gender sensitive. To date, 62 senior officials responsible for budget planning had been trained in gender-based budgeting. The Government was also continuing its efforts to strengthen national institutions working for the advancement of women. Gender focal points in various departments had been pursuing gender mainstreaming strategies in accordance with the Convention and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development. Resource constraints had led to a freeze on public service recruitment, however, which was having an adverse impact on national gender machinery effectiveness.
6. Women had an important role to play in conflict prevention and resolution and peacebuilding. Thus, one of the three ministers heading up the Organ for National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration was a woman. Furthermore, one quarter of the members of the committee that monitored the implementation of the global political agreement were women. Zimbabwean women were also represented in various United Nations peacekeeping missions throughout the world.
7. Zimbabwe had had a woman Vice President since 2005 and a woman Deputy Prime Minister since 2009. The President of the Senate, Deputy Speaker of Parliament and Judge-

President of the High Court were women. Women also held high-level positions in other parts of the judiciary, public service, the defence forces and prison service.

8. Zimbabwe had been endeavouring to end violence against women. The Domestic Violence Act provided for accessible, prompt and confidential services for victims based on a number of effective referral systems. A centre had been piloted in one province that had brought the appropriate services together under a single roof, established links between local communities and province-wide services and ensured access to health care, psychological and social support, and legal assistance. Efforts were also being made to involve men and boys in campaigns aimed at putting a stop to gender-based violence.

9. A health-care initiative had been launched in 2009 to reduce maternal mortality, improve maternity waiting homes and provide free maternal and child health care and family planning services. Zimbabwe had an overall contraceptive use rate of some 60 per cent, while knowledge of family planning methods was almost universal. The health sector did, however, continue to experience a high rate of attrition of skilled labour.

10. The economic independence and empowerment of women were a high priority. The economic policy for 2011–2015 provided for gender mainstreaming in economic activities. A framework had been established to ensure that women could participate in key sectors of the economy, such as mining, manufacturing, tourism and agriculture. Empowering women would entail significant resource requirements, which Zimbabwe could not meet on its own, however.

11. The indigenization and economic empowerment law enacted in 2007 assigned women a specific role in its implementation. The law provided for the transfer of ownership shares in business enterprises to local Zimbabwean communities and for the use of the proceeds to improve social and economic infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, roads, and water and sanitation works. There was a need to increase women's financial literacy to enable them to embrace indigenization and make the transition from informal businesses to formal economic ventures. Other means of empowering women economically included a women's development fund, which had extended loans to more than 2,500 women across the country in 2010. The fund had grown from an initial allocation of US\$ 1 million to US\$ 3 million.

12. Efforts were under way to set up a women's council to coordinate the work of women's rights organizations and the national gender machinery and to ensure the fulfilment of international human rights obligations, including the elimination of discrimination against women. Progress in that respect had been slowed, however, by the illegal economic sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe by some Western countries. Her delegation sought the support of the Committee in helping to lift those sanctions, which had a particular impact on women and girls.

#### *Articles 1 to 6*

13. **Ms. Awori**, noting that the last time that a delegation from Zimbabwe had engaged in a dialogue with the Committee had been in 1998, asked what steps were envisaged to ensure that it would be in a position to meet with the Committee again in four years' time. She would appreciate further details on the efforts of the Government and the thematic committee on women to ensure that civil society was involved in the constitutional review process. She asked what steps would be taken to repeal section 23 (3) of the Constitution, which encouraged discrimination in matters of personal and customary law. It would be useful to have more information on the countrywide educational campaign concerning the Administration of Estates Act, particularly as it related to women in customary marriages. She wondered why the crucial bill on the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission mentioned in the response to question 4 of the list of issues had not yet been enacted into law — four

years after the Constitution had been amended to establish the Commission — and what was being done to speed its promulgation. She also wished to know whether the Government planned to establish a separate commission on gender and what steps were being taken to ratify the Optional Protocol.

14. **Ms. Ameline** said that it was important to have a broad and exhaustive definition of discrimination that would form a clear legal basis for the implementation of the Convention, particularly as the State party had been engaged in a constitutional review process. Clarification was needed as to how the rule of law was actually applied, given the existence of various types of law, including statutory law, case law and customary law, and overlapping institutions such as the Office of the Ombudsman, the Human Rights Commission and others. She would like to know how their responsibilities were divided and what happened when conflicts between them arose, particularly with respect to the new family law. She would like more information on training for judges and the police and measures for raising their awareness about freedom of expression and the participation of women in public life. More information was needed as to whether sufficient technical assistance was being provided for peace and reconciliation efforts.

15. **Ms. Awori** said that women were overrepresented in, for example, teachers' colleges, which prepared people for relatively low-income jobs, and underrepresented in vocational training centres and polytechnic institutions that led to higher-paying ones. She welcomed the amendments to the Constitution aimed at promoting gender equality and would like to know what further steps were envisaged by the Government to promote gender parity in all areas in accordance with article 4 of the Convention.

16. **Ms. Muchena** (Zimbabwe) said that political and economic changes in her country had delayed the submission of its combined periodic reports. The constitutional reform process was highly participatory and included a range of outreach efforts. As for the question on repealing section 23 (3) of the Constitution, issues relating to gender equality had been thoroughly addressed in debates involving women and men, younger and older people, and traditional leaders, so she could confidently assure the Committee that all gender issues relating to customary law and traditional practices would be addressed in the new Constitution.

17. **Ms. Makarati** (Zimbabwe) said that there had indeed been an educational campaign on wills and inheritance laws. In addition, the courts were now reserving special days for inheritance cases involving women and children to ensure that such cases were dealt with speedily.

18. **Ms. Muchena** (Zimbabwe) said that the bill on the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission had been part of a package of legislation being negotiated in Parliament and that an unravelling of consensus regarding other matters had delayed its passage. In the meantime, the Commission was proceeding with those aspects of its work that did not require the bill's passage. The establishment of a commission on gender equality was indeed being considered.

19. **Ms. Makarati** (Zimbabwe) said that her Government was examining issues relating to ratification of the Optional Protocol and would take any necessary measures following the conclusion of its deliberations.

20. **Ms. Muchena** (Zimbabwe), in response to the question about her country's judicial system, said that traditional institutions were still held in high regard by most Zimbabweans and that customary law courts had been established in order to regularize those institutions.

21. **Ms. Makarati** (Zimbabwe) said that there was no duplication of functions among the Office of the Public Protector, which had formerly been called the Office of the Ombudsman, and the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission or the family courts

established by the High Court. At the time of the name change, the human rights mandate of the Ombudsman had been transferred to the Commission. The Public Protector investigated administrative injustices, and the family courts handled cases involving non-criminal aspects of family law.

22. **Ms. Shambare** (Zimbabwe) said that police officers were properly trained to deal with gender-based violence. All new recruits received such training, and all officers periodically attended follow-up seminars. All police stations had community relations officers who conducted anti-violence campaigns. When violence was reported, it was investigated thoroughly and professionally. Human rights organizations had been involved in developing the training materials.

23. **Ms. Holland** (Zimbabwe), in providing an overview of the efforts being made to address the culture of cyclical political violence that had long plagued her country, highlighted the role of the Organ for National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration established under the global political agreement that underpinned the country's new unity government. The Organ had drafted a code of conduct for political parties designed to ensure that they would put a stop to the violence. The code had been sent to the various parties in late 2011.

24. **Ms. Muchena** (Zimbabwe) said that the new Constitution would contain provisions to promote gender balance in fields where women were underrepresented. In the higher education system, measures to address the issue were already in place.

25. **Mr. Ndlovu** (Zimbabwe) said that the strategic plan for 2011–2015 of the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education provided for the promotion of gender equity through affirmative action admission policies.

26. **Ms. Acar** asked whether studies had been done to determine the nature and prevalence of harmful traditional practices. Information had been provided to the Committee concerning practices such as virginity testing, witch hunting, child marriages, and payment of bride prices (*lobola*). Had campaigns been conducted to increase public awareness of the harmful nature of such practices and, if so, had their impact been analysed? What legal measures were being used to combat those practices? She would like to learn more about the traditional referral systems mentioned in the Minister's opening statement and their role in combating domestic violence. She asked what steps had been taken to engage traditional leaders in efforts to root out harmful traditional practices. Given that many discriminatory practices occurred in the private sphere and that constitutional rights apparently did not apply in personal status matters, she wished to know whether the new Constitution would guarantee women's rights as enshrined in international human rights law, including the Convention.

27. **Ms. Muchena** (Zimbabwe) said that her delegation would be glad to obtain information on research into harmful traditional practices so that they could respond to the Committee's question in that regard. Practices such as virginity testing and child marriages were confined to certain groups. The Government was engaging in dialogue with some groups regarding the issue of child marriages. While *lobola* might be seen as harmful and discriminatory, it had traditionally been considered to be a way to cement relations between two families. There was as of yet no nationwide move to abolish it. The practice of polygamy remained well established, although perhaps on the decline. Some argued that it was preferable to condoning extramarital relationships in which women's legal status was less clear. The issue needed to be addressed in the context of traditional cultures.

28. In order to prevent domestic violence, it was necessary to study its causes, and the Ministry of Women's Affairs, Gender and Community Development was seeking funding for a study to be conducted in cooperation with a civil society organization and traditional leaders. As for traditional referral systems, in her country women exposed to domestic

violence customarily sought the help of traditional leaders, and the latter had challenged proposals to establish Government-run shelters. The leaders wanted the Government to strengthen their system, not impose a new one. While the new Constitution did not have a separate section on women's rights, women's issues would be addressed throughout the document.

29. **Ms. Gabr** asked for information on the State party's progress towards ratifying the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, otherwise known as the Palermo Protocol. She also wished to know whether the State party intended to develop a separate law on trafficking and whether it planned to establish shelters in addition to those provided by traditional leaders. Shelters were very important for trafficking victims, as were hotlines. It was necessary to develop an integrated national action plan, in cooperation with civil society and the business sector, to deal with illegal immigration and trafficking.

30. **Ms. Muchena** (Zimbabwe) said that, in addition to the facilities provided by traditional leaders, her country had three shelters for women who had been subjected to violence, as well as some shelters for refugees.

31. **Ms. Makarati** (Zimbabwe) said that her country had some shelters for trafficking victims along its borders but did not have comprehensive statistics on trafficking. Once her Government had completed its review of issues relating to the Palermo Protocol, it would take the necessary steps to ratify the Protocol.

32. **Ms. Šimonović** said that the constitutional review process was an opportunity to fully incorporate the principles of the Convention into the national legal framework. The report indicated that the Constitution of Zimbabwe prohibited gender-based discrimination, but that section 23 (3) of the Constitution and its discriminatory nature were the subject of wide debate in the context of the review process. She asked whether the State party was explicitly using the Convention as a basis for constitutional change. She would also like to know how the State party planned to fully incorporate the Convention into national legislation and, specifically, whether it envisaged including a provision equivalent to article 2 of the Convention in the new Constitution or in other national legislation.

33. **Ms. Schulz** said that, while the Committee was aware of the challenges faced by the State party, it considered the constitutional review process to be an opportunity to strengthen gender equality. She would welcome confirmation that the new Constitution would not contain any provisions that ran counter to the principles enshrined in article 2 of the Convention. According to information provided to the Committee, lesbian, bisexual and transgender women in Zimbabwe were discriminated against and exposed to violence by State and non-State actors alike and were not protected by the police. Would the new Constitution guarantee non-discrimination and equality for such women?

34. **Ms. Pires** said that she was encouraged by the Government's emphasis on an inclusive constitutional review process, which would help to ensure that the rights of women were upheld. With regard to the situation of women in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community, she hoped that a prohibition of discrimination based on sexual orientation would also be included in the new Constitution. She asked how many cases of violence against LGBT women had been investigated and how many had been prosecuted.

35. **Ms. Murillo de la Vega** said that Zimbabwean women worked long hours in many different fields and contributed to their families and to the economy as a whole. Given that they represented one of the country's chief resources, the Government should place their protection among its priorities. She asked how many persons had been convicted of committing acts of violence against women and whether methods such as mediation or

pardons for abusers were used to reduce penalties. She would also like to know whether the new Constitution would emphasize religious freedom for women.

36. **Ms. Awori** said that she would welcome additional information on the repeal of section 23 (3) of the Constitution, which was not in line with the Convention, as well as on any steps being taken to ensure that that provision was not included in the new Constitution. Information on the Administration of Estates Act and its implications for customary marriages would be welcome. She would also appreciate receiving details on the affirmative action measures being carried out in the higher education system in an effort to reach female enrolment targets. It was important to ensure that there were separate shelters for women victims of domestic violence and trafficking. Further information would be appreciated on plans to establish at least one shelter for victims of domestic violence in each province with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

37. **Ms. Muchena** (Zimbabwe) said that she could assure the Committee that section 23 (3) would not be included in the new Constitution. The principle of equality was being embedded in articles throughout the draft text.

38. In response to the question as to whether the new Constitution would provide a guarantee of non-discrimination for persons in the LGBT community, she noted that a survey conducted as part of the participatory drafting process had included a question on homosexuality and related issues. That question had elicited a high rate of response, with most respondents considering the subject to be culturally taboo and indicating that they did not want homosexuality in their community and could not understand why the Government had raised the issue. In view of the fact that the Government had framed the new Constitution as a people-driven process, the question arose as to whether other people's ideas should be imposed on Zimbabweans in spite of their clearly expressed and emphatic position on the subject. The people of Zimbabwe, in general, were categorically opposed to homosexuality, and the new Constitution was likely to reflect that view.

39. **Ms. Shambare** (Zimbabwe) said that the Victim-Friendly Unit of the Zimbabwe Republic Police Force dealt with cases of violence against women. Although she did not have statistics on how many such cases had been prosecuted, when cases were reported to the police, they were investigated and case files were compiled and forwarded to the courts.

40. **Ms. Makarati** (Zimbabwe) said that, once a case had been brought to court, it was processed appropriately, and guilty parties were convicted and sentenced.

41. **Ms. Muchena** (Zimbabwe) said that the new Constitution would guarantee religious freedom for all and, since it would be premised on the equality of all citizens, there would be religious freedom for all women.

42. **Ms. Makarati** (Zimbabwe) said that the Administration of Estates Act contained a definition of marriage that included marriages contracted under both civil and customary law and laid down specific procedures to protect women married under either regime. However, more awareness-raising campaigns on the ways in which women could exercise their rights under the Act were needed. The judiciary was grateful to its partners, especially civil society organizations, which already carried out such campaigns.

43. **Mr. Ndlovu** (Zimbabwe) said that the Ministry of High and Tertiary Education had set the goal of achieving gender parity in the country's universities by 2020. In the area of scientific studies, the target was to have 60 per cent men and 40 per cent women in the student body by 2015. One of the strategies for attaining that goal was to promote the enrolment of older students, who were selected on the basis of their mature age and previous experience rather than on competitive academic entry qualifications. Another affirmative action measure allowed tertiary institutions to admit female students who had lower scores than those required of male students. In addition, there were bridging

programmes for candidates who lacked sufficient entry points because they had not studied certain subjects, such as mathematics or science, which often posed a challenge for students from rural areas. Infrastructure development was another strategy for increasing access to tertiary education. As part of the 2011–2015 Strategic Plan, the Ministry planned to establish two universities, two teachers' colleges and three technical-vocational institutions.

44. **Ms. Muchena** (Zimbabwe), responding to the question on the use of mediation in domestic violence cases, said that the relevant legislation provided for the use of counsellors at the community level, but that, owing to a Government freeze on hiring, those services were not yet operational. She fully agreed that separate shelters should be used for women victims of domestic violence and human trafficking.

45. **Ms. Gabr**, supported by **Ms. Schulz**, said that she could well understand that some subjects were culturally taboo in Zimbabwe. However, the new Constitution should prohibit all forms of discrimination against all women, as required by the Convention. Accordingly, there should be no discriminatory laws, no discrimination in schools and no violence against women in any form whatsoever.

46. **Ms. Muchena** (Zimbabwe) said that she had taken note of the concerns raised by Committee members and had merely sought to report on the current state of affairs.

#### *Articles 7 to 9*

47. **Ms. Bareiro-Bobadilla** said that she welcomed the fact that Zimbabwe had signed and ratified several international and regional instruments on women's equality and participation in public and political life. She hoped that the provisions of those instruments would be fully implemented at the domestic level in the State party.

48. In 1998, when Zimbabwe had submitted its initial report (CEDAW/C/ZWE/1), it had described affirmative action measures that it had taken in the spheres of education, employment, and political participation and decision-making. Currently, however, there appeared to be no affirmative action measures — such as quotas — in effect for women's political representation. She asked whether that accounted for the fact that, following the 2000 elections, the number of women Members of Parliament had dropped from 21 to 14. In its initial report, the State party had also indicated that one of the biggest obstacles to the effectiveness of affirmative action was gender stereotyping. She enquired what specific measures were currently being taken to ensure that political parties and other organizations did not subject women to gender stereotyping or discrimination. She asked for clarification concerning reports of a newly emerging problem of political harassment in Zimbabwe.

49. She wished to know how the non-discrimination clause of the Constitution, referred to in paragraph 109 of the combined periodic reports, was applied in political life. Given the low level of women's participation in decision-making positions, it might be too optimistic to believe that parity could be achieved without quotas. Accordingly, she would be interested to know what led the Minister of Women's Affairs, Gender and Community Development to believe that parity could soon be achieved. She commended Zimbabwe for the fact that 30 per cent of its ambassadors were women, and she hoped that similar progress would be achieved in other sectors of the Foreign Service, given that, for example, there were no women consuls at all.

50. **Ms. Pires** asked for clarification of the statement made in paragraph 116 of the periodic reports that the number of female Members of Parliament had a bearing on female representation in the Cabinet. She would appreciate more information on Zimbabwean women's participation in international organizations. In the absence of quotas, she wondered whether the new Constitution would reserve a given number of seats for women in Parliament. She would also welcome more up-to-date information on women's participation in parliamentary standing committees.



51. She had received information indicating that political violence might be one of the reasons why women did not participate in public and political life, since women were being targeted as voters and candidates. She asked for more information on the steps being taken to prevent such violence, to protect women and to ensure that perpetrators of such crimes were prosecuted.

52. **Ms. Muchena** (Zimbabwe) said that, although parity had not yet been achieved, progress was being made. Women's participation was expected to increase exponentially through the application of constitutional provisions that would embed the principle of gender parity in decision-making processes. The challenge was to design an effective mechanism to that end. A proposal had been made to create a hybrid electoral system that would combine the existing first-past-the-post system with proportional representation.

53. No society was free from gender stereotyping, but the Government had put legal measures in place that would help to address certain stereotypes. A critical mass of elected women parliamentarians, for example, would help change societal attitudes about women's ability to perform in decision-making posts. The significant change in attitudes that had occurred since 1998 was evidenced by the number of women in decision-making positions and by the topics of public debate in the country. The number of women in the diplomatic service had increased, and precise figures would be transmitted to the Committee in due course. Each of the three political parties was allocated a certain number of Cabinet posts, but competition within each party often resulted in women candidates being elbowed out. Although her Ministry was not pleased with the fact that only six women were in Cabinet posts, that result was seen as a function of the prevailing political context.

54. She did not have precise data on the number of women who led standing committees in Parliament but believed there to be at least three. In Zimbabwean public institutions, where a woman acted as chair, a man was vice-chair, and vice versa.

55. The judiciary would transmit figures on the number of persons convicted for committing violence against women to the Committee in due course.

56. **Ms. Gabr** said that procedures for obtaining citizenship for children born on Zimbabwean territory appeared to create more obstacles for their mothers than for their fathers. Moreover, since Zimbabwe did not accept dual citizenship, foreign women sometimes had to travel to their country of origin in order to relinquish their original nationality. Following a divorce, such women often had difficulty in regaining their original citizenship. The simplification of procedures and affirmative action on behalf of women were needed in order to eliminate such obstacles.

57. **Ms. Muchena** (Zimbabwe), agreeing with Ms. Gabr on the need for simplified procedures, said that the issue of dual citizenship was currently under consideration as part of the constitutional review.

58. **Ms. Ameline**, referring to the climate of violence that had prevailed during the previous elections, asked what measures the Ministry of Women's Affairs, Gender and Community Development intended to take in order to not only protect women candidates but also encourage women to run for office. She enquired whether the Ministry envisaged a specific training programme for women candidates. In addition, she wished to know whether women who worked in human rights organizations had developed clear objectives and whether those were perceived as such by the population.

59. **Ms. Muchena** (Zimbabwe) said that it was not entirely correct to say that women did not participate in elections because they feared violence. There were other factors inhibiting their participation, such as cultural disapproval or a lack of economic resources. For that reason, her Ministry was very much focused on economic empowerment and on encouraging women to prepare well for their candidacy.

60. **Ms. Holland** (Zimbabwe) said that the framework for peace that was being put in place was based on the idea of “never-again” when it came to any form of violence against any Zimbabwean. The Organ for National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration was examining ways to help citizens deal with one another in an inclusive manner. That could be accomplished only if people came to the Organ and stated their case, however, since it could only work with the information it had before it. The code of conduct to which she had referred earlier was voluntary and had been accepted by all parties. It was a novelty in Zimbabwe for the various political parties to sit down together and devise systems for preventing violence. The outcome was still tentative and subject to continuing public debate.

*Articles 10 to 14*

61. **Ms. Bailey** said that the State party was to be commended for its free basic education programme and high literacy rate. However, the secondary education completion rate for girls was a major concern, as more girls than boys dropped out owing to pregnancy, early marriage or an inability to pay tuition fees, particularly in rural areas. She asked how the underlying issues of gender preference, religious beliefs, the distances that students had to travel to school and the threat of sexual violence were being addressed and what measures were in place to facilitate the return of young mothers to school. She wondered what concrete measures were being considered to confront the ideological and structural obstacles to girls’ exercise of free choice in relation to their curricula, especially in secondary education. Alternate sources stated that sexual misconduct by male students and teachers was often ignored, that there were no procedures in place to deal with such misconduct or any obligation to report cases to the police, and that when assaults were reported, cases were not thoroughly followed up on by the justice system. She wished to know what more decisive action the Ministry of Education would take to address sexual violence in schools, particularly in cases where the perpetrator was a male teacher.

62. **Ms. Awori** asked how the Government was evaluating the impact of the measures for fostering employment equality set out in paragraphs 185–190 of the report and if there were gender-disaggregated data that demonstrated any progress in that regard. Would the delegation like to comment on the results of the 2008–2009 rapid assessment survey of the worst forms of child labour, which indicated that some of those forms were present in Zimbabwe? She would also like to know if the planned amendments to the Labour Act would include a definition of “work of equal value” in keeping with the International Labour Organization (ILO) Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100) and the direct request to that effect made by the ILO Committee of Experts in 2010.

63. **Ms. Pires** asked for confirmation that the right to health was in fact not enshrined in the Constitution or the Public Health Act and, if that was indeed correct, whether there were plans to include it in the amended Constitution. Although there were exceptions to the prohibition on abortion, the procedure for obtaining a legal abortion was lengthy, and permission was sometimes granted too late for an abortion to be performed safely. Was the State party considering steps to simplify the process and ensure timely authorization? She also wished to know if there were any mechanisms in place to monitor and evaluate the comprehensive array of programmes targeting maternal mortality.

64. **Ms. Awori** said that the State party was to be commended on the tremendous efforts being made in the health sector and the resulting reductions in HIV/AIDS and maternal mortality rates. Referring to paragraph 204 of the report, she requested up-to-date information on measures undertaken to combat aggravating factors such as exploitative sexual relations, sexual violence and higher levels of female poverty. She asked what steps were being taken to provide antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) to marginalized women and if the Committee’s understanding that those drugs were not free of charge was correct.

65. **Ms. Zou Xiaogaio** said that Zimbabwean women still lagged behind their male counterparts in terms of access to family benefits and credit. Since most female workers were employed in the informal economy and rural areas, she would like to know how much social security coverage they had. Despite the prohibition of gender discrimination set forth in the Immovable Property Prevention and Discrimination Act, the fact that many banks still required collateral in the form of immovable property put women at a disadvantage. She wished to know if there were plans to revise legislation on real property rights in marriage and to take steps to promote women's access to credit and to require banks to take affirmative action in favour of women. The State party was to be commended for its Women in Sport Programme, but she would welcome additional information on residual negative cultural attitudes towards women, other measures to promote women's participation in sports and recreation, and the availability of recreational facilities in rural and urban communities.

66. Given that the Fast-Track Land Reform Programme had not as yet yielded results in terms of rural women's access to land ownership, she wondered if steps were being taken to tackle the underlying obstacles and if a mechanism was in place to properly implement and monitor that programme. According to the 2003 Poverty Assessment Study Survey, nearly three quarters of the general population and more than two thirds of female-headed households were below the poverty line. She wished to know how the Government was addressing the issue of poverty, especially in respect of rural women, and whether there was a national poverty alleviation strategy. She also asked if the Government was planning to decentralize health and education services to better reach marginalized women in rural settings.

67. **Mr. Ndlovu** (Zimbabwe) said that the low secondary education completion rate for girls was due to cultural, economic and religious factors and was mostly accounted for by girls in rural areas. The Government was focusing on infrastructure development so that children would not have to travel such long distances to attend school. Career counselling and parent-teacher associations were other tools being used to promote attendance. The Government was also tackling the issue of sexual violence in schools, notably through legislation such as Circular 27, which set out the procedure to follow in cases of child abuse, and Circular P-35 on the policy for assisting pregnant students. Under Act No. 1/2000, teachers found guilty of misconduct were relieved of their duties and school authorities were obligated to report serious assaults, such as rape, to the police.

68. **Ms. Muchena** (Zimbabwe) said that the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education had rolled out a campaign to educate young women in institutions of higher learning about sexual harassment. In addition, most scholarship recipients were girls, and science clubs had been formed to encourage girls to study science. She could confirm that the right to health would be enshrined in the new Constitution.

69. **Ms. Utete-Masango** (Zimbabwe) said that the country was having difficulties in collecting gender-disaggregated data and would welcome the Committee's support in setting up a database. The Central Statistical Office gathered data, but a separate database was needed to inform the decision-making process. A database on gender-based violence had, however, been developed in order to monitor trends in that area.

70. **Ms. Makarati** (Zimbabwe) said that the law set out the procedure for obtaining an abortion and, though there had only been one legal challenge, the issue was being discussed and the Government was considering ways of simplifying the process.

71. **Ms. Matongo** (Zimbabwe) said that the law permitted abortions when the life of the mother or foetus was in danger and in cases of incest or rape. Prophylactic treatment was also provided free of charge to rape victims. Legalizing abortion under other circumstances was a topic of discussion but had not yet been placed on the legislative agenda. The

Government had launched the Health Transition Fund to improve health care for women and children and, thanks to the Fund, fees would be waived for all prenatal care, post-natal care for up to six weeks and care for children under 5, provided that those services were delivered in public medical institutions. Blood transfusions were free during childbirth. Steps were also being taken to ensure that every delivery was overseen by a skilled birth attendant. An inter-ministerial committee had been set up to look into the causes of maternal mortality. It had been found that 25.5 per cent of maternal deaths were related to HIV/AIDS; therefore, every pregnant woman was counselled and testing was available, followed by free treatment if warranted. Antiretroviral drugs were free in the public health-care system, with one quarter of the cost of that service being covered by the AIDS levy and The Global Fund.

72. **Ms. Muchena** (Zimbabwe) said that some banks had begun to grant loans to women without collateral, a practice which she hoped would gain traction. All girls participated in sports in school. Women's football teams provided positive role models who were having an encouraging impact on participation and employment of women in sports and recreation activities. Up-to-date figures on land ownership would be available following the upcoming land audit and would be included in a subsequent periodic report. The medium-term plan for 2012–2015 had a gender mainstreaming component that included measures to address poverty in female-headed households and household food security. It was Government policy that no child should walk more than 5 km to primary school or more than 10 km to secondary school.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*