



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

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## Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Seventy-fourth session

### Summary record of the 1730th meeting\*

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 29 October 2019, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Gbedemah

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(*continued*)

*Sixth periodic report of Cambodia*

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\* No summary records were issued for the 1728th and 1729th meetings.

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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 Cambodia (CEDAW/C/KHM/6; CEDAW/C/KHM/Q/6 and CEDAW/C/KHM/Q/6/Add.1)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Cambodia took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Ms. Ing** (Cambodia), introducing her country's sixth periodic report, said that the Government was strongly committed to the advancement of women and gender equality through the empowerment of women and girls as agents for change in the country's socioeconomic development. Interministerial collaboration and cooperation with development partners and civil society were instrumental in strengthening the institutional gender equality architecture and in advancing the national development agenda. All line ministries and government institutions had adopted gender mainstreaming action plans to implement equality policy commitments and harmonize input from different stakeholders. The action plans had been completed and funds from the national budget and development partners had been allocated by the end of 2018.
3. Committees for women and children had been set up at the local level to assist with the empowerment and protection of women. The committees were also represented on working groups formed to address gender-based violence, which, since 2012, had grouped together law enforcement officials, social workers and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In recent years, progress had been made within the legislative and policy frameworks regarding women's rights in areas such as the justice system, labour, health care and education.
4. Over the previous 15 years, Cambodia had seen one of the highest rates of economic growth in the Asia-Pacific region. It had been classified as a lower-middle income country since 2015 and the poverty rate had fallen significantly since 2005. According to the most recent Human Development Report in 2018, there had been improvements in the health, education and living standards of women and girls. The Global Gender Gap Report of 2018 had found that the gender gap had decreased in respect of health and survival, educational attainment and economic participation and opportunity.
5. The Government had introduced budgetary reforms to increase transparency and shift towards programme budgeting, which was a prerequisite for gender responsive budgeting. In 2018, 39 ministries and government institutions had implemented programme budgeting, and 3 per cent of the national budget had been allocated to gender-related activities. That proportion was set to increase under future administrative and financial management reforms. In the long term, the Government was seeking to build an efficient and financially sustainable social protection system as a tool for reducing poverty and promoting equality. The National Social Protection Policy Framework for the period 2016–2025 had been developed through a life-cycle approach and focused on social assistance and social security. The social assistance aspect of the Framework envisaged action in the areas of emergency response, human capital development, vocational training and welfare for vulnerable persons, with a focus on lifting vulnerable people, including children, women, persons with disabilities and older persons, out of poverty. The social security aspect of the Framework covered pensions and health, workplace injury, unemployment and disability insurance.
6. The Government continued to work tirelessly towards ending all forms of violence against women and girls through multisectoral mechanisms and plans, including the National Action Plan to Prevent Violence against Women, the Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence against Children and its national plans of action to combat trafficking in persons. Significant progress had been made in developing and implementing gender responsive guidelines and systems, and in training law enforcement personnel, government officials and the general public on how to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. Data had shown that the number of women victims of violence had been declining and that increasing numbers of victims sought help.

7. Between 2014 and 2019, the Government had significantly increased the budget allocation for justice services, including legal aid for low-income women. In 2019, the Cambodian National Council for Women had signed a memorandum of understanding with the Bar Association of the Kingdom of Cambodia to expand the provision of legal aid services for women on low incomes. Moreover, the Prime Minister had recently established a group of lawyers to provide pro bono services for women and girl victims of violence. A forthcoming legal aid policy, due to be adopted by the end of 2019, would include specific provisions to ensure adequate and specialized legal aid for women.

8. The literacy rate among women and girls between 17 and 24 years of age had reached 96 per cent in 2017. Gender parity had been achieved in primary and secondary education, and women accounted for almost half of all students on bachelor's degree programmes. Completion rates at primary and secondary school levels were higher among girls than among boys. In order to address gender inequalities in education, scholarships for students from low-income backgrounds were mostly targeted at girls and the number of university dormitories had been increased. The vast majority of students staying in dormitories were women. In secondary schools, vocational training and life skill programmes had been enhanced to better prepare female students for the world of work. In 2015, a career counselling service had been introduced for secondary school students, and training was provided to teachers who worked as career counsellors. The Government was encouraging women and girls to enrol in subjects relating to science, technology, engineering and mathematics, particularly at the higher education level. Access to preschool education had been steadily increasing. One objective of the country's education policy was to expand early childhood education services for children under 6 years of age, and particularly for children from low-income families and ethnic minority groups and for children with disabilities.

9. Cambodia had been one of only 10 countries worldwide that had achieved Millennium Development Goal 4 on reducing child mortality and Goal 5 on improving maternal health. The Government was committed to reaching the target set by the Sustainable Development Goals to reduce the maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births. That commitment was outlined in the Fast Track Initiative Road Map for Reducing Maternal and Newborn Mortality 2016–2020. Antenatal care was provided to the overwhelming majority of expectant mothers. Between 2016 and 2018, the provision of contraception had been expanded under Ministry of Health gender mainstreaming plans: short-term methods of contraception, including condoms and the contraceptive pill, were available from all health centres.

10. In 2017, the National Social Security Fund had been extended to cover workers in the informal sector, in which most women worked. Companies with as few as one employee were now allowed to register with the National Social Security Fund, whereas previously only companies employing a minimum of eight employees had been able to do so. The Government had launched a cash support programme in 2019 for pregnant women and mothers with children under 2 years of age to improve health and nutrition. Women were entitled to up to US\$ 190 under the programme.

11. Cambodia had a high level of women's participation in the labour force and the percentage of women in paid work had increased by six percentage points in the period 2014–2017. In the garment industry, 90 per cent of employees were women. As a result of a tripartite dialogue between the Government, employers and workers, wages increased on a yearly basis, and the Government had made significant improvements to the rights and working conditions of female workers. They were entitled to benefits including free health care during and after pregnancy and paid maternity leave.

12. In 2018, women's participation in the National Assembly and the Senate had reached 20 per cent and 19 per cent, respectively, and women held senior positions in the National Assembly. At the local level, the number of women in leadership roles had increased. Women had accounted for over 40 per cent of all civil servants in 2018. There had also been a rise in the number of female teachers at all levels of schooling, and approximately one fifth of all school principals were women. In line with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, 285 Cambodian women had

participated in United Nations peacekeeping missions since 2006 and, in 2019, Cambodia ranked seventeenth out of 122 countries for the number of women sent on such missions.

13. The Government recognized the importance of promoting micro, small and medium-sized enterprises as a path towards women's economic empowerment. Those types of enterprises accounted for over 99 per cent of all business establishments in Cambodia. Women managed or owned 65 per cent of them, and over 60 per cent of their employees were female. The Government had expanded microcredit schemes with low interest rates for low-income farmers to increase income generation and boost agricultural production. More than 80 per cent of borrowers under the scheme were women. Considerable progress had been made in improving access to water and sanitation in rural areas: in 2018, almost three quarters of women and girls in those areas had access.

14. Specific measures had been taken to prevent multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination against women, especially against women living with HIV/AIDS, older women, migrant women, women living with disabilities, those living in remote and rural areas, and indigenous women. Under its national plans and strategies, the Government aimed to eliminate new HIV infections by 2025. In 2018, virtually all pregnant women had undergone voluntary testing for HIV and, where appropriate, had received anti-retroviral treatment and counselling on family planning, free of charge. The mother-to-child transmission rate of HIV had declined as a result. The HIV prevalence rate among female workers in the entertainment industry had also fallen, from 45 per cent in 1998 to 3 per cent in 2016.

15. The Ministry of Women's Affairs played an active role in promoting and protecting the rights of women with disabilities and in ensuring that the national plans for disability covered issues relating to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. As a result of its efforts, there had been an increase in the number of women with disabilities working in government ministries and institutions.

16. The Provincial Action Plan on Preventing Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancies for the period 2017–2021 had been implemented in Ratanakiri Province, which had the highest rate of child marriage in the country. The plan aimed to improve prevention, enhance multidisciplinary cooperation and coordination, and establish a data-collection and evaluation system. If the plan proved a success, it would be scaled up nationwide.

#### *Articles 1 to 6*

17. **Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia** said that she wished to know whether the definition of discrimination under the Constitution was in line with the Convention's definition, and whether it covered both direct and indirect forms of discrimination. She wondered how many discriminatory laws or legal provisions, other than those contained in the Law on Marriage and Family Life, had been repealed. She would appreciate an explanation as to why women had to wait for 190 days after a divorce to remarry, whereas there was no waiting time for men. She would be interested to learn whether women's rights organizations, academics and civil society organizations or other stakeholders were engaged in the process of identifying discriminatory laws and whether they played a part in repealing them. She wished to know what mechanisms were in place to tackle discriminatory practices against women, and whether women's NGOs were involved in ensuring the mechanisms' effectiveness. It would be helpful to have statistics on any pecuniary and non-pecuniary damages awarded as a result of acts of discrimination.

18. She wondered whether any rulings or judgments handed down by the courts had cited the Convention or provisions aligned therewith and, if so, she would welcome information regarding specific cases. She would be grateful to hear whether the penalties contained in articles 265–273 of the 2009 Criminal Code served as a deterrent for acts of discrimination.

19. She would be interested to learn what had been the outcome and impact of the Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency, and whether the strategy had benefited women. She wished to know what economic sectors had recorded measurable growth in terms of women's participation. She asked whether legislation would

be introduced to make the implementation of the finalized National Gender Policy obligatory for the relevant stakeholders.

20. She wondered whether the 3 per cent of the national budget set aside for gender-related activities had been allocated to government at the national or provincial level. It would be useful to know who was responsible for the implementation of the National Gender Policy and whether technical assistance was available. The delegation might wish to explain how effective the strategies used by the Ministry of Civil Service had been in training gender focal points.

21. In view of the dissolution of the Cambodia National Rescue Party and the five-year ban on political participation by its members in 2017, she would appreciate an indication as to how the State party planned to strengthen the rule of law in accordance with international human rights standards. She would like to know what steps had been taken to safeguard women's rights to freedom of assembly, association, expression and privacy. Would the Government collaborate with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Cambodia to strengthen the State party's capacity to protect and promote women's human rights in line with international norms, standards and best practice? She wondered whether the Government would establish a national human rights institution that complied with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles), and whether the Government would mobilize funds for the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia in order to provide redress for Cambodian women.

22. How many political, religious and community leaders and law enforcement officers had received information about the Convention following the awareness-raising campaigns carried out by government agencies? Lastly, she would appreciate examples of cases in which the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations had been applied in domestic court proceedings relating to gender-based or other forms of violence or discrimination.

23. **Ms. Ing** (Cambodia) said that article 31 of the Constitution recognized all international conventions to which Cambodia was a party, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The substance and the spirit of the Convention were reflected in the country's laws. The Convention served as the legal framework of reference in areas pertaining to the advancement of women and gender equality.

24. A definition of gender discrimination had been drafted as part of the National Gender Policy, according to which gender discrimination meant the differential treatment of an individual based on their sex. It covered areas including pay, access to resources and participation in decision-making. It was hoped that the policy would be adopted at the end of 2019 or in early 2020.

25. Direct and indirect discrimination were punishable under articles 265 to 273 of the 2009 Criminal Code, and the 1997 Labour Law prohibited discrimination against any group. Labour inspections were carried out on a regular basis by government ministries, the Human Rights Commission and civil society organizations, among others.

26. **Mr. Kim** (Cambodia) said that the 2009 Criminal Code prohibited discrimination on the grounds of membership of an ethnic group, nationality, race, religion, political affiliation, union activities, family situation, gender, state of health or disability, and provided for punishments ranging from fines to imprisonment.

27. **Ms. Ing** (Cambodia) said that, although, by law, women were prohibited from remarrying until 120 days after the day of their divorce or the annulment of their previous marriage, in practice, the relevant provisions were not enforced. The purpose of the provisions was to protect the best interests of the child by allowing time to ascertain if a woman was pregnant, and, if she was, to establish paternity. Thanks to technological advances, however, pregnancies could be confirmed in shorter time frames, which meant that women could remarry within 120 days so long as they provided a certificate attesting that they were not pregnant.

28. In Cambodia, democratic space was respected. There were 5,441 non-governmental organizations operating without geographical restrictions in all the provinces of the country, more than 400 newspapers, 40 journalists' associations, 21 foreign correspondents and numerous television channels and radio stations. Opposition political parties were entitled to make radio broadcasts, including at the district level. In December 2018, in the context of the universal periodic review process, Cambodia had accepted 17 recommendations related to the rights of women and children.

29. In total, 3 per cent of the State budget was allocated to the implementation of gender activities, including those provided for under the National Gender Policy. The Ministry of Women's Affairs was in charge of monitoring the implementation of the Policy, but all government ministries shared responsibility for implementation. Gender mainstreaming processes had been institutionalized across the Government by the Ministry and the National Council for Women.

30. The Technical Working Group, which dealt with gender issues and included representatives of civil society organizations, comprised three subgroups, with one focusing on gender-based violence and another on economic empowerment. The minimum wage for garment workers, which was high compared to the equivalent wages in other countries in the region, rose annually, and the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training had introduced a new policy aimed at improving working conditions.

31. Women accounted for 65 per cent of the owners or managers of the 500,000 or so registered small and medium-sized enterprises in Cambodia, and for 61 per cent of their employees. The Government considered it a priority to promote the activities of such enterprises, and, to that end, offered tax incentives and access to finance at low interest rates.

32. The Government had granted official victim status to persons known to have been subjected to gender-based violence, including marital rape, during the Khmer Rouge regime, and had launched projects to rehabilitate them, 13 of which had received judicial recognition from the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia.

33. **Ms. Rana**, while commending the positive steps taken by the State party to foster gender mainstreaming and equality, said that, according to alternative sources, more needed to be done. With that in mind, she asked what mechanisms were in place to ensure that gender responsive budgeting was mainstreamed into all budget decisions at the national and subnational levels, what percentage of the State budget was allocated to promoting gender equality and how the Government encouraged the meaningful engagement of all stakeholders, including civil society organizations, in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of national gender policies.

34. Noting that the number of government ministries that implemented programme budgeting had increased from 7 in 2013 to 15 in 2016, she asked whether targets for the shift towards programme budgeting had been achieved. She would be grateful to receive information on the impact of the National Disability Strategic Plan 2014–2018, and on whether a new or updated plan had been developed.

35. In January 2019, the State party had reported, as part of the universal periodic review process, that, in consultation with civil society, it would draft a law on the establishment of a national human rights institution that was fully compliant with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles). She would appreciate details of the progress made in that regard, particularly in terms of guaranteeing the involvement of civil society organizations.

36. She wished to know what institutional arrangements were in place to protect human rights defenders and ensure the full participation of women in the ongoing peace process, whether the State party would consider preparing an action plan to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, what efforts had been made to eliminate conflict-related sexual violence, how the issue of women and peace and security was addressed in the pre-deployment training of United Nations peacekeeping

personnel and whether that training included instructions on the protection of schools and universities from military use.

37. **Ms. Bethel** said that she would welcome details of whether the State party had adopted any temporary special measures to promote de facto equality between women and men. She also invited the delegation to comment on the fact that less than 25 per cent of the land titles granted between 2013 and 2017 had been awarded to women, and to indicate whether the State party would consider introducing temporary special measures to promote the equitable allocation and distribution of land.

38. She wished to know whether the 2014 National Housing Policy provided for temporary special measures to meet the needs of particularly vulnerable groups of women, including rural women, indigenous women and women from other ethnic minorities, and, if not, why not. In that connection, she asked whether the State party would consider introducing quotas in the infrastructure development sector to boost economic opportunities for rural women.

39. Noting that, according to paragraph 217 of the State party's report (CEDAW/C/KHM/6), women accounted for only 5.75 per cent of police officers, and that women's representation in the judiciary had remained almost unchanged over the previous five years, she asked whether the State party would consider using temporary special measures to increase women's participation, including in leadership positions, in the police force and judiciary.

40. Lastly, the delegation should describe the impact of the high turnover in subnational elected government positions on women's capacity and gender representation, and the measures being taken to ensure the full representation of women in such positions.

41. **Ms. Ing** (Cambodia) said that the overall budget for gender activities had been growing year on year, and that each government ministry had its own budget. The aim of the public financial management reform was to ensure transparency and accountability, which were prerequisites for the mainstreaming of gender responsive budgeting. The Government had made a commitment to setting up a national human rights institution in line with the Paris Principles and would take steps to that end. Civil society organizations were invited to provide feedback in relation to all bills and draft policies.

42. The participation of women in the police and armed forces had increased in recent years, and police officers had been given training on gender-based violence, including sexual violence. The Government was committed to implementing Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and to enhancing women's capacity to play important roles in conflict situations. Over the previous five or six years, the political situation in Cambodia had been stable, and the number of human rights defenders falling victim to violence had decreased.

43. The Government had taken steps to improve access to education for women and girls, and had provided leadership and management skill training to women civil servants. While the term "quota" was avoided, there had to be at least one woman secretary or undersecretary of State in each government ministry. Women accounted for 41 per cent of all civil servants and 25 per cent of those in decision-making positions. Women's representation in decision-making posts in government ministries was reviewed annually, and all ministries were required to appoint a woman director or deputy director, including, if necessary, by creating a new department. A woman was currently serving as Permanent Deputy Prime Minister, and 10 per cent of ministerial, 16 per cent of vice-ministerial and almost 17 per cent of undersecretary of State positions were occupied by women.

44. At the subnational level, a woman had been appointed as vice-governor of a province for the first time five years previously, while at the city level, there was at least one woman vice-governor in all 25 provinces. At the commune/*sangkat* level, the number of women in leadership and other decision-making positions had increased.

45. One of the major obstacles to women's representation in decision-making positions in Cambodia was the persistence of traditional attitudes, including the widely held belief that women were limited by a glass ceiling. Efforts to change such attitudes were hampered by the fact that around 80 per cent of the population lived in rural areas, where access to

education was often insufficient. Government ministries were working to disseminate relevant information, and a campaign had been launched to promote female role models with a view to increasing the number of women and girls in higher education.

46. **Ms. Chann** (Cambodia), summarizing the information contained in paragraphs 98 and 99 of the replies to the list of issues, said that, as at May 2019, 18.25 per cent of land certificates had been registered to married and single women and 3.63 per cent to widows. Since 2004, land concessions had been offered to vulnerable groups and landless families – amounting to almost 500,000 households – of which 30 per cent had been women-headed households.

47. **Mr. Chan** (Cambodia) said that Village Development Committees encouraged women in rural areas to participate in decision-making and empowered women to take part in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of plans at the village level. It was necessary, however, to build women's capacities through training in order to facilitate their full participation.

48. **Ms. Ing** (Cambodia) said that her Government had recently accepted recommendations made in the context of the Human Rights Council universal periodic review to establish a national human rights institution. Civil society organizations had been tasked with guiding the development of a bill to create that institution.

49. **Ms. Bethel** said that she wished to emphasize that temporary special measures to accelerate de facto equality were not restricted to the introduction of quotas but could also involve the reallocation of resources. For example, temporary special measures to facilitate access to housing could include giving preferential treatment to women from ethnic minorities, older women or indigenous women, who might be in particular need. She would therefore be interested to hear more about the variety of temporary special measures that had been implemented to increase women's recruitment in rural areas, recruit women to the police force and the judiciary and encourage their promotion, and reallocate land titles to women.

50. **Ms. Rana** said that she wished to know what mechanisms were in place to ensure that women affected by conflict were systematically involved in peace processes, including peace negotiations. In that connection, she noted that Cambodia had endorsed the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict in 2013 and wondered what action it had taken in that regard, including how many perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict had been apprehended, in line with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security and the Committee's general recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations.

51. **Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia** said that she would welcome specific information on the number of persons or organizations that had been sanctioned for discrimination against women under the Criminal Code. She also wished to know how many women had received any kind of reparation under the programmes providing redress for victims of offences committed under the Khmer Rouge regime. In that connection she wondered whether legal aid was available for those seeking justice through the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia and, if so, how many women beneficiaries there had been.

52. She asked whether the Government intended to enact legislation to support its National Gender Policy, thus establishing a legal obligation for its implementation. She was concerned at reports that women had not brought any court cases to assert their rights under the Constitution or the Convention and its Optional Protocol. She wondered whether women were aware of those rights and informed of the legal remedies available to them.

53. She noted that, according to paragraph 109 of the State party's replies to the list of issues (CEDAW/C/KHM/Q/6/Add.1), a divorced woman who obtained a medical certificate declaring that she was not pregnant could remarry without being subject to a 120-day waiting period. She wished to know whether women were aware of that new rule and whether any other discriminatory laws or practices had been abolished. Lastly, she welcomed the information that had been provided with regard to the creation of a national human rights institution and wondered if there was a specific time line for that institution's establishment.

54. **Ms. Manalo** said that she wished to know what measures were being taken to ensure that the national machinery for the advancement of women had sufficient budgetary resources to fulfil its mandate and to increase funding allocated for gender mainstreaming, women's empowerment and gender equality policies. Regarding access to justice, she was concerned at the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and discriminatory social norms that limited women's access to effective justice. She would welcome information on how the State party intended to eliminate the legal, institutional, economic and social barriers to women's equal access to justice, including with regard to legal aid.

55. With reference to paragraph 16 of the replies to the list of issues, she would be interested to know how the services of the 66 district, khan and municipal justice centres, the Conflict Resolution Mechanism and the Committee for Dispute Resolution differed. In the same paragraph, she noted that domestic violence had been referred to as a minor issue, and she would welcome clarification in that regard, including how effective the informal system of justice was in providing remedies for victims of domestic violence and whether victims could seek formal legal redress if they so wished. She pointed out that the law on domestic violence, which provided for the use of mediation only, was not consistent with the Convention.

56. She invited the delegation to explain what was meant by the term "programme budgeting", which, according to the State party's periodic report (CEDAW/C/KHM/6, para. 196), was a prerequisite for implementing gender responsive budgeting. She wished to know what the State party was doing to tackle rampant corruption and impunity in the country and how women and girl asylum seekers were registered by the Cambodian Refugee Office in the Department of Immigration. Were they registered as stateless individuals?

57. Lastly, she would be interested to know what steps the Government was taking to combat gender stereotypes, including in the home, where women and girls were almost exclusively responsible for household chores.

58. **Mr. Chan** (Cambodia), describing the work of the Village Development Committees, said that women's participation in road construction projects currently stood at between 30 and 40 per cent, although there were plans to increase it to 50 per cent. Roadbuilders were provided with a list of women who had expressed an interest in working in road construction, with most women wishing to work as unskilled labourers in areas such as cooking, cleaning and traffic management. Efforts to increase the proportion of women working in road construction had not yet achieved gender parity, partly because women preferred working indoors, in factories and the like, rather than outdoors.

59. **Ms. Chann** (Cambodia), summarizing the information contained in paragraph 97 of the replies to the list of issues, which concerned access to social housing for low- and middle-income families, said that the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction had signed memorandums of understanding with a number of real-estate investment companies with a view to providing more than 11,000 low-cost housing units to families.

60. **Ms. Ing** (Cambodia) said that women in Cambodia had been involved in the peace process and peace negotiations from the outset. One of the main challenges in recruiting women police officers was their reluctance to apply for those roles. However, there were certain measures in place to give priority to women applicants. Women police officers were often assigned to deal with cases of gender-based violence, especially sexual violence, and to support the victims. Counselling and negotiation skills training had been provided to some members of the police and the judiciary. Lastly, a one-stop service centre providing women and girl victims of gender-based violence with access to comprehensive services, including medical and legal services, was currently being piloted in two provinces. If successful, it would be rolled out nationwide.

61. **Mr. Kim** (Cambodia) said that there was no difference in the services of the 66 district, khan and municipal justice centres, which provided legal assistance for civil cases, such as land conflicts. The Government intended to establish such centres in all districts, including near villages in order to provide legal assistance at the local level. With regard to legal aid, the Prime Minister of Cambodia had recently established a group of lawyers to

provide free legal services to women and children. The Government also provided annual funding for a lawyers' organization providing free legal aid, including to poor women. He wished to emphasize that court costs were borne by the perpetrators and that forensic examinations were provided free of charge for victims of rape or other offences.

62. Several mechanisms were in place to prevent and combat corruption. For example, the Supreme Council of the Magistracy played a role in monitoring the conduct of judges and punishing those involved in corruption or bribery. There had been several cases, one of which had culminated in the dismissal of a judge.

63. **Ms. Ing** (Cambodia) said it should be pointed out that Cambodia was, and always had been, a matriarchal society. Patriarchal attitudes did not exist. As far as access to justice for women was concerned, funding for legal aid for women and girls from poor families had increased threefold over the past six years. Women without means had the right to free legal aid, funded by the Government and offered in conjunction with the Bar Association and other organizations, thus facilitating their access to legal advice and information about their civil rights. However, women were already well aware of their rights under the Convention and the Optional Protocol, which had been disseminated widely and regularly. In that connection, all divorce lawyers had been informed of the change in practice with regard to article 950 (2) of the Civil Code. Any woman seeking a divorce would therefore be informed by her divorce lawyer that, instead of having to wait 120 days before remarrying, she could present a medical certificate to prove that she was not pregnant.

64. Mediation was used in cases of domestic violence. There was still a stigma attached to the issue, for which reason women were often reluctant to seek legal redress. Awareness-raising campaigns were being conducted to inform the public that domestic violence was a criminal offence, tackle the social stigma surrounding the issue and encourage women to file legal complaints.

65. Programme-based budgeting had been introduced to replace budget lines in order to monitor the performance of programmes in all ministries and facilitate gender mainstreaming. Lastly, information on statelessness and the acquisition of citizenship had been provided in paragraphs 101 and 102 of the periodic report.

66. **Ms. Reddock** said that she wished to congratulate the State party on its adoption of the very ambitious Strategic Plan for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment 2014–2018. If its goals were to be achieved, close attention would have to be paid to gender ideologies, stereotypes and social norms. However, it seemed that implementation had been too dependent on international funding and had therefore made only limited headway. She would like to know how the State party intended to ensure that adequate human and financial resources were allocated so that implementation could continue. She would appreciate an update on efforts to address gender norms and attitudes that discriminated against women and girls, as expressed in the news media and social media, and on the Government's work with men and boys in collaboration with civil society and community leaders. Had an evaluation of the Plan been carried out? What lessons had been learned for the future in respect of gender stereotyping?

67. *Chbab Srey*, the traditional code of conduct for women, embodied a philosophy that socialized women into acceptance of male dominance and therefore worked actively against the other aims of the Strategic Plan, such as the promotion of gender equality, the reduction of gender-based violence and the promotion of women's leadership. She therefore commended the State party's efforts to remove *Chbab Srey* from the educational curriculum. She would be interested to know whether teacher training courses included a gender-sensitive critique of *Chbab Srey* and emphasized equality between women and men and the sharing of responsibility for unwaged household work and childcare.

68. She welcomed the launch of the second National Action Plan to Prevent Violence against Women, in 2015, and on plans to provide redress to all victims of gender-based violence committed under the Khmer Rouge regime.

69. She was however concerned that a study carried out in 2014 had found that around 50 per cent of women interviewed accepted at least one justification for wife beating. In addition, the majority of women survivors of intimate partner violence continued to resort

to informal mediation for solutions, in many cases offered by individuals who were not aware of the contents of the Action Plan, and that survivors tended never to have heard of protection orders or other provisions for women's safety. She would like to know how the State party proposed to ensure more effective outreach to educate women and men, police officers, public servants and civil society on the provisions of the Plan.

70. She welcomed the news that a third Plan was in the pipeline for 2019–2023. Had an evaluation of the second Plan been carried out? She would like to know whether the review of the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims to be carried out as part of the third Plan would cover the possibility of including marital rape in the Law and expanding the definition to include intimate partners and other household members.

71. She would like to know what State systems were in place for the collection of gender-disaggregated data on gender-based violence against women. Noting that the Media Code of Conduct for reporting violence against women was a voluntary code, she asked whether an accountability mechanism could be incorporated, with penalties for non-compliance.

72. **Ms. Leinarte** said that the State party's legal framework on human trafficking covered only trafficking for purposes of labour exploitation or sexual exploitation. She would like to suggest that the State party consider criminalizing all forms of trafficking, for purposes such as begging, organ removal and forced marriage.

73. As part of its collaboration with other countries on the protection of migrant workers' rights under the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Convention against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, the State party had repatriated 37 Vietnamese women who had allegedly been trafficked to Cambodia. She would appreciate more detailed information on those cases, in particular whether the women had been formally recognized as victims of trafficking and whether the perpetrators had been prosecuted.

74. Conversely, the State party had accepted 584 female Cambodian nationals, apparently undocumented migrants, repatriated from other South-East Asian countries. It was not clear whether the victims' human rights had been protected during the cross-border exchanges, which raised questions concerning the national identification and referral system. The State party's report used the terms "migrants", "migrant women", "trafficked persons" and "trafficked women" interchangeably. In addition, the State party's repatriation of undocumented foreign women to other countries and acceptance of undocumented Cambodian women repatriated from other countries appeared to be carried out on the basis of the legislation on trafficking. However, undocumented migrants were not always trafficked and documented migrant women could be the victims of trafficking. Two different legal frameworks had been conflated, so she would like to know how, if the State party simply sent women back to their countries, it could protect them from revictimization there.

75. In 2010 the police in 10 provinces had made 346 arrests in connection with prostitution. She would like to know who had been arrested: women in prostitution, pimps or clients? She wondered why Cambodian law penalized prostitutes but ignored clients. She asked whether there were any programmes to help women leave prostitution if they so desired.

76. **Ms. Ing** (Cambodia) said that implementation of the Strategic Plan for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment was coordinated across several ministries, since gender equality was a cross-cutting issue. Civil society organizations were crucial partners as they worked in the field and could report on the challenges and issues facing ordinary women.

77. It would take time to change the traditional view of women in Cambodia but one campaign in particular, called the Good Men Campaign, aimed to engage men and boys in changing stereotypes and attitudes to gender-based violence, masculinity and men's and women's roles in the home. Gender issues and life skills were also mainstreamed in primary and secondary schools, in coordination with the Ministry of Education, with a view to changing the mindset of young people.

78. The Ministry of Information had undertaken to work with journalists and the media on gender-sensitive reporting of violence, in a way that refrained from placing responsibility on women victims.

79. *Chbab Srey* was not a formal code but a customary codification of behaviour. It was important to bear in mind that there was also a code of conduct for men, the *Chbab Proh*.

80. **Mr. Nath** (Cambodia) said that the *Chbab Srey* had already been completely eliminated from the school curriculum. In its place, as part of the Strategic Plan, new ideas had been incorporated, including discussion of roles within the family. Gender issues were also taken up in both initial and in-service teacher training.

81. **Ms. Nhean** (Cambodia) said that a midterm review of the second National Action Plan to Prevent Violence against Women had been carried out in 2016 and the lessons learned carried over into the third Plan.

82. According to the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims, local authorities or courts could issue protection orders but only at the victim's request. Women generally did not make such requests and were reluctant to take the husband to court, fearing to lose their economic mainstay.

83. A special working group was to be formed to review the domestic violence legislation from a gender perspective. In addition, a system for gathering gender-related data would be put in place in cooperation with the National Institute of Statistics in time for the next Demographic and Health Survey in 2020.

84. **Ms. Sovann** (Cambodia) said that, under the new Labour Migration Policy for 2019–2023, both female and male migrants, and their families, would be protected. Her own ministry, the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, was working with other ministries and the National Committee on Combating Trafficking to protect women victims of trafficking for labour purposes. A large number of undocumented workers in Thailand had been regularized. Trafficking victims who so desired were placed in vocational skills training programmes, which helped them gain access to the labour market.

85. **Ms. Ing** (Cambodia) said that guidelines had been developed to assist in identifying trafficking victims and migrants, and also on the reintegration of trafficking victims, setting minimum standards for residential care and enabling them to avoid falling back into the trafficking network.

86. **Mr. Kim** said that the legal age of consent was 15. Sexual intercourse below that age was illegal, even with consent. Forced sexual intercourse above that age was also illegal. Sex work was not legal, and sex workers working in public places could be penalized, though generally punishments were light – 1 or 2 days' imprisonment or a fine; women who worked in the sex entertainment sector tended not to be punished. Persons seeking sexual services who did not use violence were not punished.

87. **Ms. Ing** (Cambodia) said that, because prostitution was illegal, women working as prostitutes were not protected by the law and were therefore vulnerable. The Ministry of Women's Affairs, worked closely with international and local NGOs to find ways of protecting them from sexual harassment and gender-based violence.

88. Trafficking for the purposes of organ removal was not a major issue in Cambodia. Trafficking for purposes of marriage did occur, one country in particular being the main destination, and women could find themselves being exploited as a family's domestic worker rather than a wife. A bilateral agreement had been concluded with that country in order to protect such women.

89. **Ms. Manalo** said that there were significant structural challenges confronting women who aspired to leadership in public life, exacerbated by an absence of temporary special measures or of political will to change traditional power structures. She asked the delegation to explain what solutions the State party intended to pursue to overcome those obstacles.

90. She would like to know whether Cambodian women had the same opportunities and preparation as men to represent their country in international organizations, diplomatic missions and peacekeeping operations.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*