



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Summary record of the 2064th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 15 May 2024, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Peláez Narváez

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

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

Third periodic report of Montenegro (continued) (CEDAW/C/MNE/3;
CEDAW/C/MNE/Q/3; CEDAW/C/MNE/RQ/3)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Montenegro joined the meeting.*

Articles 7–9

2. **A representative of Montenegro** said that the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, in cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in northern Montenegro and under the Strategy for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities from Discrimination and the Promotion of Equality 2022–2027, had gathered data on the discrimination faced by women in rural areas. A total of 14 legal and educational workshops had been held to educate women on their fundamental legal and human rights and on procedures for reporting discrimination. Since February 2024, eight educational workshops had been held for women with disabilities in rural areas. Questionnaires on the degree and forms of discrimination experienced by those women had been completed by 100 members of four target groups: women with disabilities from rural areas, women with multiple sclerosis, members of their families and representative organizations, and other citizens.

3. **A representative of Montenegro** said that the State Audit Institution monitored the use of funds allocated to political parties for women's organizations and that the misuse of those funds for any other purpose was subject to penalties, including heavy fines.

4. **A representative of Montenegro** said that the disconcertingly low number of women campaigning in recent parliamentary elections indicated that hurdles to women's full political participation persisted. Some female former parliamentarians had vacated their seats at that election, and women continued to hold less than 30 per cent of seats in the national legislature. Despite the provisions of the Law on Financing of Political Entities and Electoral Campaigns, some political parties, including the ruling party, had not used the funds available to them to establish their own women's organizations. The vice-president of the parliament was a woman, in line with rules of procedure stipulating that a member of the less represented gender must hold one of the leading parliamentary positions.

5. **A representative of Montenegro** said that, within the legislature, women chaired four of the permanent working bodies, namely the Administrative Committee, the Constitutional Committee, the Legislative Committee and the Gender Equality Committee.

6. **A representative of Montenegro** said that hate speech was not a stand-alone criminal offence in Montenegro, but committing a crime for motives of hatred was considered an aggravating circumstance and that it was punished in accordance with recommendations issued by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance.

7. **A representative of Montenegro** said that the Investment Development Fund had removed barriers to the realization of the full economic potential of women. An action agenda for women's empowerment had been developed following the first national conference for the economic empowerment of women, held in March 2022, and envisaged key initiatives to increase the presence and representation of women in managerial positions. Amendments to the legislation on businesses, prepared by a working group that included representatives of the Investment Development Fund and the Gender Equality Committee, would stipulate that members of the less represented gender on the managing body of a company should make up at least 40 per cent of its membership or should hold one third of the company's executive positions. The amendment would enter into force on 30 June 2026. Its provisions were in compliance with international standards and European Union directives, and managing bodies that did not comply with it would not be registered.

8. As part of a European Union initiative, Montenegro had implemented the Women on Boards Programme, which was the first of its kind in the Western Balkans and had provided training, in collaboration with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, to 21 candidates for positions on boards of directors. For the first time since the establishment

of the Central Bank of Montenegro, the chair of its management board was a woman. She was currently the only woman to preside over the management board of a bank in the country.

9. **A representative of Montenegro** said that women accounted for 61 per cent of staff and 55.5 per cent of the heads of diplomatic offices in Montenegro.

10. **A representative of Montenegro** said that a total of €693,500 had been allocated to political parties to fund women's organizations, and in January 2024, 20 parties had each received €58,000 for training activities and the strengthening of solidarity networks. The report of the State Audit Institution on the use of those funds would be released by the end of 2024. The participation of women in politics was hindered by online violence against them. Research had shown that 8 of every 10 women in politics were exposed to online violence.

11. **A representative of Montenegro** said that, under the Law on Montenegrin Citizenship, citizenship could be acquired by birth, naturalization or under international treaties and could be revoked at the request of the citizen in question. Two years after a document on a procedure for loss of citizenship was issued by the Ministry of the Interior, persons who requested loss of citizenship, regardless of their gender or sex, had to submit evidence that they had acquired the citizenship of another State, failing which the procedure was suspended so as to avoid statelessness. Legal provisions regarding stateless persons were set out in the Foreign Nationals Law of 2018 and would be developed further in line with the recommendations of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The status of stateless persons was recognized under the Strategy on Migration and Reintegration of Returnees, which aimed to ensure the effective exercise of rights by those persons. To date, 10 requests for the status of stateless person had been granted, 7 requests had been rejected and 12 requests were pending.

12. **Ms. Stott Despoja** said that she wished to know the number of female ambassadors of Montenegro. She wondered what sanctions were applicable if gender quotas were not met. She would appreciate it if the delegation would clarify whether hate speech was included as an aggravating offence under criminal law and whether the Government planned to adopt increased measures to address hate speech targeted at women working in politics.

Articles 10–14

13. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that she wished to know why the school enrolment rate of girls was lower than that of boys and how it could be increased. She wondered whether the gender analysis of school curricula that was required under the Gender Equality Strategy 2021–2025 had been conducted, whether reports that the gender equality curriculum contained no mention of women were correct, when the Government planned to implement recommendations to include information on gender stereotypes in school textbooks, how the implementation of those recommendations was monitored and what measures were in place to mainstream gender in school curricula. The Committee would like to learn whether gender studies had been introduced at the University of Montenegro, what percentage of the estimated budget for a gender equality acceleration fund had been allocated and how the fund had been used.

14. She wondered how sexism and hate speech, especially online hate speech, were addressed within the education system, whether any such offences had been prosecuted and how the education system had leveraged the role of the church in addressing such issues, especially in religious schools. It would be interesting to find out what steps the State party had taken or planned regarding the pledges it had made regarding human rights education, training and awareness-raising on the occasion of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Details of how the educational sector addressed child marriage, including relevant statistics, would be welcome.

15. She wished to know how teachers would be trained to provide mandatory sexual education and what steps had been taken to address gaps in the provision of sanitary products. The Committee would be interested to learn what measures were planned to improve the collection of data on inclusive education and to address the discrepancies in the number of boys with disabilities compared to girls with disabilities. How would the Government address the fact that the high academic performance of women and girls was not reflected in their status at the workplace?

16. **Ms. Reddock** said that she wondered which mechanisms were in place to monitor compliance with labour laws and to educate citizens and workers in the public and private sectors on their labour rights, including those relating to the prohibition of discrimination against women, the availability of pre-natal care, breastfeeding in the workplace, equal pay, equal access to promotions and decision-making positions, awareness of parental leave for fathers and the Labour Inspectorate's complaint mechanisms for workers. She wished to know whether the Government would reinstate the words "women and men" in the State party's equal pay legislation, intensify efforts to ensure equal pay for work of equal value, including in occupations dominated by women, and update the minimum wage on a regular basis. The Committee would like to know how the Government planned to address high levels of occupational segregation in employment and to facilitate equal and open access to all occupations by women and men, including by tackling gender stereotypes. She wondered whether the Government would consider instituting policies to reconcile work and family responsibilities for women and men, for example by providing for flexible working arrangements and childcare facilities in the workplace and by incentivizing or making mandatory the use of parental leave by fathers.

17. **A representative of Montenegro** said that a gender analysis of nine educational curricula had been conducted, and that following a thorough analysis of representations of families and social relations between men and women in school textbooks, harmful elements would be amended or removed. As part of teacher training on gender equality, two workshops on gender literacy had been held, and a further two were planned. A memorandum with the University of Montenegro would be signed to establish a master's programme in gender equality. Sexual education was not mandatory, but some relevant elements were included in modules on healthy lifestyles. Teachers would receive training on issues such as gender-based violence, which were included in other areas of the curriculum.

18. The National Council for Education had approved an optional media literacy learning module in 2022. The module would acknowledge stereotypes in the media, including gender stereotypes, and, according to data from the Ministry of Education, would be completed by over 3,000 students in 2024. A memorandum had been signed with the Agency for Electronic Media and the Montenegro Media Institute to implement other media literacy initiatives in schools. A national plan to implement media literacy education in elementary schools had been established, 10 training sessions on the topic had been provided to 195 teachers from three regions, workshops on critical media analysis had been held for elementary school students and seminars on media literacy had been attended by elementary and secondary school students.

19. **A representative of Montenegro** said that the Government's policy regarding inclusive education was based on a social model. Education programmes were individually tailored to meet the needs of children with disabilities, and expert support was available at the preschool and primary levels. Inclusive education policies had been successfully introduced in two cities and were expected to be adopted elsewhere in the near future. The prevalence of disabilities was significantly higher for boys than for girls.

20. **A representative of Montenegro** said that in 2023 the Ministry of Health had, together with the United Nations Children's Fund, implemented a project in support of water, sanitation and hygiene in schools. According to the Ministry's research, women and girls were not exposed to social stigma related to menstruation or menstrual hygiene. However, poverty adversely affected hygiene, and proposals to exempt feminine hygiene products from value added tax or to supply such items free of charge, or to grant women and girls days off during painful periods of the menstrual cycle, had not been adopted. According to data from the Office of the Ombudsman, the number of cases of hate speech had risen very slightly in recent years; five such cases had been registered in 2023. The Office had implemented a project with NGOs aimed at combating sexist behaviour.

21. **A representative of Montenegro** said that all employees, regardless of sex or gender, had the right to bring cases before the labour inspectorate to request protection and seek solutions to labour disputes, and ultimately to bring their cases before the courts. There were plans to carry out information campaigns and training activities to raise employees' awareness of their rights and of the available protection mechanisms. A new decent work programme, to be implemented in the period from 2024 to 2027, would aim to place value

on unpaid work at home, to ensure equal access to the labour market for men and women and to reduce occupational gender segregation. The programme would be analysed with the support of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in order to improve the situation in the labour market.

22. A bill had been drafted with a view to amending the labour law with provisions supporting a work-life balance, facilitating voluntary work from home, including after the birth of a child, and introducing parental leave for fathers.

23. The Government had in March 2024 adopted a law on the ratification of the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190). Its provisions would be implemented after its ratification by the legislature. The minimum wage had increased since 2021, from €222 to €450.

24. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that she would like to hear the delegation's comments on reports that women employed in the country's educational structure were underrepresented in supervisory and higher posts and overrepresented in lower positions. Regarding sexual education, she noted that the Healthy Lifestyles course referred to in the periodic report was an elective, but that the Committee considered that comprehensive sexual education should be age-appropriate and mandatory. Lastly, she would like to know whether the State party would be able to leverage its influence on religious institutions so as to encourage them to take a leading role in combating hate speech.

25. **A representative of Montenegro** said that 5 of the country's 11 ambassadors were women.

26. **A representative of Montenegro** said that women were exposed to hate speech in the media and online. The Government had recently for the first time adopted a media strategy with gender indicators and had begun developing laws governing the media with the aim of addressing hate speech. The Law on Prohibition of Discrimination included provisions defining hate speech as a form of discrimination, in line with the definitions given by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance. NGOs had conducted research, with funding from the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights, and had concluded that some 80 per cent of women had been exposed to hate speech. The delegation could provide written information on the campaigns and training conducted by the Ministry to counter hate speech.

27. **A representative of Montenegro** said that at least 30 per cent of the candidates on a political party's electoral list had to be women, or that alternatively, every fourth candidate in the party's ordered list of candidates had to be a woman, failing which the party was not permitted to take part in an election. Political parties were also mandated to use a certain percentage of their budget for women's organizations within their structures.

28. **A representative of Montenegro** said that, while sexual education was currently taught in elective classes, there were proposals to make such classes mandatory in coming years.

29. **Ms. Bonifaz Alfonzo**, said that in its previous concluding observations the Committee had expressed concern about the hygiene conditions in maternity wards, access to painkillers, lack of respect for privacy and the unavailability of means of contraception. She would like to know if those issues had been addressed. According to information from the World Health Organization, only about 30 per cent of women between 30 and 49 years of age had undergone early screening for uterine and cervical cancer. The Committee had heard reports that women and girls with disabilities avoided gynaecological care owing to fear resulting from negative experiences with health-care professionals and the inaccessibility of medical facilities. How was the Government addressing such issues?

30. She invited the delegation to comment on reports that forced sterilization was still practised on women with disabilities and transgender persons and that women with addictions received scant medical attention. According to a previous periodic report, entitlement to health care for refugee women and women asylum-seekers had been limited to emergency care. Was that still the case? Were Roma women provided with any specific health care or medical attention?

31. **Mr. Safarov**, noting that the economy in Montenegro was strong and that the country had a high economic growth rate, said that women were apparently not benefiting fully from that situation. Owing to discriminatory practices, women were more likely to work in the informal sector, and as a result, only 63 per cent of women above retirement age received a pension, compared with 100 per cent of men. Because women often renounced their inheritance rights in favour of male relatives and thus more rarely owned property, they more often lived in poverty and faced challenges in securing collateral to start businesses. Among the country's major companies, there were no women in senior management positions and only a limited number of women took part in innovative projects related for example to artificial intelligence or information technology. The Committee would like to receive information on the representation of women in those fields and also in entrepreneurship, financial services and the banking sector. It would also like to hear about action plans to support greater female participation in those areas.

32. **A representative of Montenegro** said that one of the strategic goals defined for the period up to 2027 was the improvement of the health of mothers, newborns and members of vulnerable groups. To improve early screening for breast cancer and cervical cancer, specific facilities had been set up in three cities, with digital mammographs and specific human papillomavirus infection screening programmes for women between the ages of 30 and 50, and campaigns, including one called Pink October, had been held to raise awareness of cervical cancer and to encourage early vaccination against the human papillomavirus. The campaigns made use of publications and fliers both for the general public and specifically for Roma women, and the material had also been published in Braille. The Ministry of Health had also conducted screening activities for sex workers.

33. Health care in Montenegro was universal. Roma women had the same entitlements and rights to health care as anyone else in the country. The Ministry worked with the Roma community to identify any special needs or risks faced by its members, for example by delivering training activities on reproductive health and sexually transmitted diseases and by providing counselling to pregnant women. The Ministry, along with the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights, had concluded agreements with Roma men and women to allow them to act as mediators with members of their community.

34. The Ministry was not aware of any cases of the forced sterilization of women with disabilities. All foreigners in Montenegro now benefited from the universal health-care system. The authorities were working on ways to integrate foreigners into the system from the administrative and budgetary points of view.

35. **A representative of Montenegro** said that forced sterilization was illegal for all persons and that the sentences applicable to persons who performed such sterilization had recently been raised from 3 months to a period of up to 8 years. If the sterilization was carried out on a child or resulted in the patient's death, the sentence was 5 to 15 years.

36. The law did not distinguish between the rights of men and women in cases of inheritance, which were generally handled by notaries. The notaries were responsible for informing people of their right to inheritance and of the consequences of a failure to make use of that right.

37. **A representative of Montenegro** said that access lifts, gynaecological chairs and other equipment had recently been acquired and distributed in the country, thus facilitating the access of women with disabilities to medical services. A number of doctors had recently undergone training in sign language. There were plans to amend the laws governing health care and mental health by the end of 2024 and to adopt a specific protocol for the treatment of persons with disabilities.

38. **A representative of Montenegro** said that foreign nationals who were granted international protection, regardless of their gender identity, had equal access to health services. All women foreign nationals with approved international protection were entitled to health care at all levels and were able to select their own general practitioners and gynaecologists and their own paediatricians for their children.

39. Among the internally displaced persons in Montenegro were relatively large numbers of Roma and Egyptian people. An action plan to find a solution for recognizing their status

conferred upon them certain privileges, sometimes with more extensive rights than foreign nationals, and also entitlement to permanent residence in the country. They generally had equal rights with citizens, except for the right to vote and to stand for election. They also had the right to receive government-issued identity papers as foreign residents, which made it possible for them to integrate into society and exercise all their rights, including the right to health care, along with the right to reductions of administrative fees.

40. **Mr. Safarov** said that, while the legal provisions were the same for men and women in respect of inheritance and career advancement, his questions related to the situation in practice, which was influenced by social factors such as gender stereotypes.

41. **Ms. Bethel** said that she wished to know what measures were in place to ensure access to non-contributory social protection schemes for rural women working in the informal sector or engaged in unpaid work. She wondered whether mobile courts were used to facilitate access to justice for women living in rural and remote areas and whether mechanisms were in place to protect them from gender-based violence, including sufficient numbers of shelters and support and rehabilitation services for victims.

42. The delegation might describe any measures taken to establish gender-responsive social protection floors to ensure that all rural women had access to essential health care, including screening for cervical cancer, mammograms and reproductive health services. The Committee would be interested to hear about the impact of the Rural Clustering and Transformation Project implemented in the mountainous northern region of Montenegro and any measures in place to ensure the sustainability of the benefits arising from the project.

43. She asked what was done to promote rural women's participation in political and public life at all levels of decision-making, including in the area of rural development, and what steps were taken to compile data on women members of farming families and their income and social benefits. The Committee would welcome disaggregated data on rural women's ownership of land, including land used for agricultural purposes.

44. She wondered whether the Government had conducted an assessment of the work of the Directorate for the Protection and Equality of Persons with Disabilities and of the degree to which women and girls with disabilities were integrated into society. She would be grateful for information on targeted measures, including temporary special measures, to address intersecting forms of discrimination against women and girls with disabilities, including in the areas of education and employment. The Committee would be interested to learn about any measures taken to ensure that women with disabilities had the right to choose the number and spacing of their children and the right to decide freely on matters relating to their sexuality without being subjected to coercion, force, discrimination or violence.

45. The Committee would welcome information on any measures taken to support women and girls belonging to the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities and to ensure that they had access to basic services and infrastructure. The delegation might describe any specific measures taken to alleviate poverty among them and to ensure their social inclusion.

46. According to alternative reports, women in detention lacked access to sexual and reproductive health services, were subjected to gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, and had limited access to educational programmes, treatment for drug dependency and reinsertion programmes. In view of that situation, she wondered what measures were taken to implement the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules). Lastly, she wished to know when legislative measures would be taken to eliminate the requirement for transgender women to undergo forced sterilization if they wished to have their official documents changed to accurately reflect their gender identity.

47. **Ms. Hacker** said that she wished to know why nothing was being done to raise the minimum legal age for marriage to 18 years. Given that relatively few women had been granted free legal aid in recent years, she wondered what steps would be taken to secure and increase women's access to justice and whether the law would be amended to ensure their access to legal aid in cases relating to the division of property, including in cases where the property was in the name of the spouse's family or the applicants had previously withdrawn

a legal claim. She asked why the new draft law on free legal aid did not provide for the inclusion of relevant NGOs in the government system for funding legal aid.

48. The delegation might indicate whether the national law guaranteed the right to free legal representation for children, including for girls who were married or were direct or indirect victims of domestic violence. If not, she wished to know whether the Government had any plans to ensure free and independent legal representation for girls in cases covered by the Family Law.

49. According to reports submitted by NGOs, victims of domestic violence were not notified of their right to legal aid and judges forced women to appear with their abusive partners as part of judicial investigations. Judges referred couples with a history of domestic violence to mediation services, ignored the harm caused to child witnesses of domestic violence and sometimes considered domestic violence to be a legitimate response to provocation. There was no requirement for a police presence in courtrooms to protect women. Mediators were paid only if the mediation process was successful, which incentivized them to continue with the process even when a woman had been subjected to domestic violence. Centres for social work were reluctant to take a stance in custody proceedings, including in cases involving abusive fathers, and also turned a blind eye to violence. The Committee would like to know whether such reports were correct and, if so, whether measures would be taken to protect victims of domestic violence during and after family proceedings.

50. Given that women's legal right to receive or inherit an equal share of family property was often not enforced, she wondered what steps were being taken to ensure that right for women undergoing divorce and daughters whose parents had died. The Committee commended the State party for establishing an alimony fund for mothers whose former partners failed to pay child support. However, NGOs claimed that the fund functioned poorly and that only about 30 mothers had received payment from it. She would welcome information on the number of fathers who failed to pay child support, any measures taken to enforce payment, the number of applications for payment submitted every year, the number of applications that were successful and any steps taken to make the fund accessible for single mothers, especially those belonging to marginalized groups. The delegation might also provide statistics on poverty rates among divorced mothers compared with those for divorced fathers 2, 5 and 10 years after separation.

51. **A representative of Montenegro** said that health services were provided for women in smaller towns and that doctors' offices had clinics that attended to men, women and children in villages at certain intervals. Mobile units and teams of doctors and nurses paid occasional or periodic visits to patients in remote areas, either upon request or following a medical examination. In the area surrounding the capital, health-care services were provided by 10 doctors' offices in villages and by mobile teams that carried out home visits to patients with impaired mobility. An institute for emergency medical support operated around the clock and covered 24 out of the 25 municipalities in the country.

52. **A representative of Montenegro** said that efforts were made to improve access to social services, including shelters, for rural women and women with disabilities. Three of the five shelters currently in operation were accessible to women with disabilities.

53. **A representative of Montenegro** said that the issue of unpaid work would be analysed in cooperation with ILO, with a view to gathering information, identifying shortcomings and formulating corrective measures.

54. **A representative of Montenegro** said that the Directorate for the Protection and Equality of Persons with Disabilities addressed the issue of access to employment for women with disabilities. One of the Government's goals was to develop public policies relating to the equality and protection of women with disabilities in order to reduce the level of discrimination that they faced in employment. Substantive work to develop such policies could not be carried out until the new version of the Law on Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities had been adopted. The Government had conducted an analysis of the benefits of employing persons with disabilities and had allocated a significant amount of subsidies to employers who hired them.

55. **A representative of Montenegro** said that the bill on the legal recognition of gender identity on the basis of self-determination had been prepared, the public consultation on the bill was complete and the resulting report had been published. The Government was currently collecting opinions from institutions whose representatives had formed part of the working group responsible for drafting the bill, which it intended to adopt by the end of 2024. Once the bill had become law, transgender persons who wished to change their official documents to reflect their gender identity could do so without undergoing any medical intervention.

56. **A representative of Montenegro** said that, under the Law on Free Legal Aid, the right to free legal aid was ensured for persons on low incomes, children without parental care and victims of trafficking or domestic violence, as defined by the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence. Amendments to the Law on Free Legal Aid would be adopted by the end of 2024 and would extend access to free legal aid to victims of torture, victims of offences against sexual freedom and child applicants for protection under the Family Law. Under the amended Law, the same lawyer would provide free legal aid for an initial application or proceedings and for all subsequent related proceedings.

57. Under the Family Law, adults had the right to enter into marriage and, on an exceptional basis, children aged 16 years or older could be issued with a marriage licence by a court. Over the previous 18 months, 45 applications for such licences had been granted. Of those, five had been submitted by members of the Roma and Egyptian communities. The licences were issued in strictly controlled court proceedings that took account of the views of health-care institutions and any parents, guardians or agencies with custody of the applicant. Studies had shown that 16-year old children could be sufficiently mature to marry.

58. The Law on Alternative Dispute Resolution established that the courts must not send couples for mediation if there was any suspicion that one of the parties had been subjected to domestic violence by the other. Mediators were required to stop the mediation process if they suspected that a person involved in the process was committing acts of domestic violence. They were also required to take action if they received any information indicating that a participant faced a risk of harm. Mediators were paid even if the mediation process was unsuccessful.

59. **A representative of Montenegro** said that the refugee camp in Konic had now been closed and apartments had been allocated to its former residents. The Government had made plans to build apartments for the Roma and Egyptian communities in Berane, in the north of the country. In the area of education, the Government granted scholarships to secondary school students from the Roma and Egyptian communities and also provided them with school transport and textbooks.

60. Montenegro had a traditional, patriarchal culture. He had inherited all his parents' property, as his sister had given up her share for his benefit. However, he intended to ensure that his daughter and son would inherit equal shares of his property. The percentage of women who owned property had increased significantly over the previous 30 years, indicating that progress was being made.

61. **A representative of Montenegro** said that older women in rural areas were entitled to receive a benefit from the State. According to the Law on Agriculture and Rural Development, that benefit currently corresponded to 70 per cent of the lowest pension in Montenegro. In 2024, €6.28 million would be allocated to recipients of the benefit for older women in rural areas.

62. The alimony fund had been operational since November 2022, but the delegation did not have the data requested by the Committee. The amounts of temporary maintenance allowance payable to beneficiaries were determined by the centres for social work. By March 2023, the centres had issued 17 decisions recognizing the right to temporary maintenance, and payments had been made amounting to over €23,000 on the basis of those decisions.

63. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that she urged the State party to consider raising the minimum legal age for marriage to 18 years. Research showed that girls who remained in education until the age of 18 years had higher incomes and better general health than girls who dropped out of school at an earlier age.

64. **Ms. Bethel** said that it was still not clear whether the State party implemented the Bangkok Rules to protect the rights of women in detention and whether such women had access to educational programmes, treatment for drug dependency and reinsertion programmes.

65. **Ms. Reddock** said that she urged the State party to strengthen its mechanisms for collecting institutional data, including data relating to the alimony fund.

66. **A representative of Montenegro** said that the Government looked forward to receiving the Committee's recommendations, which would motivate it to continue promoting gender equality and empowering women in Montenegro.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.