



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination  
against Women  
Eighty-third session**

**Summary record of the 1914th meeting**

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 12 October 2022, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Acosta Vargas

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*Combined fifth to ninth periodic reports of Saint Kitts and Nevis*

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

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

*Combined fifth to ninth periodic reports of Saint Kitts and Nevis*  
([CEDAW/C/KNA/5-9](#); [CEDAW/C/KNA/Q/5-9](#); [CEDAW/C/KNA/RQ/5-9](#))

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Saint Kitts and Nevis joined the meeting.*

2. **Ms. Phillip** (Saint Kitts and Nevis) said that the Constitution provided for the prohibition of gender-based discrimination of any kind, and steps were being taken to repeal outdated laws that were discriminatory. For instance, in August 2022, the High Court had ruled that a colonial-era law criminalizing same-sex relations was unconstitutional because it discriminated against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer persons. The newly elected Government planned to form an interministerial committee to align its legislation, including the constitutional definition of discrimination, with the American Convention on Human Rights. It was also taking steps to mainstream gender in all ministerial programmes and activities. For example, the Department of Labour was in the process of appointing a gender officer to assess the Department's work from a gender perspective.

3. The National Gender Policy and Action Plan was aimed at rejecting gender stereotypes and toxic notions of masculinity that perpetuated discrimination and violence against women. Its strategic actions included promoting shared responsibility for household chores and care work, strengthening the role of fathers and men as caregivers and enablers of gender equality and investing in community-level parental education and support programmes that sought to redefine the gender roles of women and men. Activities had been organized under the Boys' Mentorship Programme, established by the Department of Gender Affairs in late 2021, and in conjunction with International Men's Day, to alter discriminatory attitudes and encourage healthy expressions of masculinity. Moreover, with the assistance of the Pan American Health Organization, the Government had integrated gender sensitization into the primary school curriculum and had introduced training for school counsellors accordingly.

4. To build trust in the police force and encourage women to report acts of gender-based violence committed against them, the Government was training more police officers in gender-sensitive investigation techniques and building the capacity of the Department of Gender Affairs to provide such training. A policy to address sexual harassment and inappropriate behaviour had been adopted for officers in the armed forces. The Department of Gender Affairs had not received any formal complaints of sex trafficking or sexual exploitation, but it would remain vigilant in that regard.

5. The Department of Gender Affairs had instructed the Legal Aid Centre to increase its efforts to raise public awareness of domestic violence legislation and avenues to justice for victims of such violence. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and faith-based organizations provided emergency accommodation for women who had suffered domestic abuse, and the Ministry of Social Development and Gender Affairs had signed a memorandum of understanding with a privately run shelter to provide further such accommodation. The Department of Gender Affairs offered short-term rental assistance to women who had left abusive partners.

6. Women's participation in political life had markedly increased under the new Government. Indeed, the Governor-General and 38 per cent of cabinet members were women. Regional organizations such as the Caribbean Institute for Women in Leadership had been instrumental in building women's leadership competencies. Although there were no legal quotas for women's political participation, every political party in the country counted women among its members. At the general debate of the General Assembly, held on 23 September 2022, the Prime Minister had reaffirmed the country's commitment to advance gender equality and youth empowerment in pursuit of Sustainable Development Goal 5.

7. Efforts to increase the number of women and girls studying science, technology, engineering and mathematics were ongoing. On 28 April 2022, at a robotics and

programming event hosted by the Department of Information Technology in conjunction with International Girls in ICT Day, 16 girls from schools throughout the country had acquired programming skills using mini-robots as learning aids. The Department had also established an internship programme so that girls in lower secondary school could gain experience of web development, programming and three-dimensional printing.

8. Free health checks for women were provided at regular health fairs held in community centres, churches and other public spaces. A new oncology unit had been opened at the main hospital, and local associations and NGOs raised awareness of the dangers of breast cancer, coordinated support groups and offered free mammograms throughout the year. The Ministry of Health provided free contraceptives from its office, and, in partnership with the Department of Youth Affairs, took steps to educate young people about sexual health. As a result, teenage pregnancy rates had fallen over the past five years.

9. **Ms. Reddock**, noting the central importance of up-to-date, gender-informed and gender-disaggregated data in the planning, implementing and monitoring of gender policies and programmes, said that she would like to know whether the newly elected Government planned to establish an effective system for the collection of statistics and data at the national level.

10. While congratulating the State party on its adoption of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Government's enactment since its last dialogue with the Committee of a host of laws aimed at reducing discrimination, she said that the Committee was concerned that many of those laws had not been effectively enforced. She therefore wished to know what monitoring mechanisms were in place to ensure the adequate implementation of anti-discrimination legislation, how many cases of discrimination against women had successfully been brought to trial in the past decade and whether any trends could be observed in those cases.

11. The Committee would be interested to hear whether the State party had taken steps to increase the visibility of the Convention and the Optional Protocol – for example by publicizing them on Government websites or incorporating them into public policies – and whether the Convention had been cited in court cases. Noting that the State party planned to align the constitutional definition of discrimination with that given in the American Convention on Human Rights, she said that she wondered whether it might also consider adopting a comprehensive definition of discrimination against women that would encompass both direct and indirect discrimination in the public and private spheres, including intersecting forms of discrimination. Was there a clear time frame for the incorporation of the Convention into domestic legislation?

12. She would be grateful to know whether the State party intended to abolish financial and administrative barriers to bringing cases before the High Court, such as the requirement to pay stamp duty and to produce an affidavit, and whether legal aid was provided to facilitate access to the High Court. The Committee would like to receive information on the measures taken to facilitate access to justice for women with low incomes and for women and girls in rural communities and on Nevis. She was eager to learn whether the courts provided Spanish and Creole translation and interpretation services for migrant women and sign language interpretation, Braille materials and other accommodations to facilitate physical access to courts for women and girls with disabilities, and if such services were available, whether people were made aware of them. Lastly, she wished to know whether, by law, married and unmarried women in the State party had equal access to justice.

13. **Ms. Phillip** (Saint Kitts and Nevis) said that data from the national census, which was currently being conducted, would be used to inform the Government's future programmes and policies. The Department of Gender Affairs worked with a number of pro bono lawyers to ensure that women with limited resources could have access to justice. Moreover, the Government was in the process of appointing an ombudsman to ensure more effective access to justice. Discussions were under way with the Attorney General on the appointment of a magistrate for family matters to deal with cases involving child protection and domestic violence, for instance. The courts provided interpretation in Spanish but did not currently provide any services or materials in Creole or Braille. The Government planned to address the difficulties encountered by persons with disabilities in accessing the courts. It also

planned to launch an initiative to raise awareness of the Convention and of the domestic legislation addressing women's rights.

14. **A representative of Saint Kitts and Nevis** said that amendments to the domestic violence legislation were currently under consideration with the aim of improving access to justice for victims of domestic and gender-based violence. The Department of Gender Affairs was seeking additional resources with which to assist those victims.

15. **Ms. Phillip** (Saint Kitts and Nevis) said that work was under way to improve the effectiveness of the Department of Gender Affairs in Nevis, and approval had recently been given for an officer from the Department to receive training overseas. Activities as part of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence were also held on the island.

16. **Ms. Rana** said that she wished to know whether the State party would consider revising the National Poverty Reduction Strategy to incorporate gender mainstreaming and whether the National Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan for the period 2022–2027 had been adopted. If so, she would be interested to hear what the plan's priority areas were, what steps would be taken to ensure its effective implementation, how progress would be monitored, what resources would be allocated for its implementation and what measures would be taken to raise awareness of it among stakeholders, including civil society. It would be useful to know whether the plan would also be applied in Nevis and, if so, how implementation would be coordinated between the islands of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

17. The Committee would like to know about the Government's plans to strengthen the national gender machinery on both islands to allow the State party to meet its obligations in terms of gender equality, and whether the Government intended to increase the machinery's financial resources, to hire qualified staff and to provide training for existing staff. She was keen to learn whether the Government planned to engage with civil society in efforts to bring about gender equality, increase support for the National Women's Council and create other entities to advocate for women's rights.

18. She would appreciate information on any steps that the State party would take to address the lack of available data and any measures that had been adopted to ensure that data collected during the 2021 population census covered topics important to women and girls. She wondered whether the State party would consider establishing 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 what obstacles had hitherto prevented the State party from creating such an institution.

19. **Ms. Phillip** (Saint Kitts and Nevis) said that the Poverty Alleviation Programme was being reviewed to acknowledge the fact that the majority of low-income and single-parent households were headed by women. The National Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan had been approved by the cabinet in 2021. It covered a range of policy areas, including agriculture, fisheries and food security; climate change and the environment; decent work and inclusive economic growth; education for all; elimination of violence against women; health and well-being; leadership and decision-making; rule of law, justice and gender rights; and gender mainstreaming. It was implemented taking into account the gender perspective so as to ensure that women played a central role.

20. A request had been made to recruit additional case management and general support officers for the Department of Gender Affairs. Several multilateral agencies had committed to hiring a gender expert with the aim of raising awareness in government agencies, and in the police in particular, in order to enable them to respond in a more gender-sensitive manner to reports of domestic violence.

21. The Government was awaiting the results of a poverty assessment, which would be used to revise and update the Poverty Alleviation Programme. It would continue to seek the support of experts in pursuing the policy at the national level. Consultations on the development of the policy were held with officials on the island of Nevis, and measures were taken to ensure that resources were allocated equally for implementation on both islands. Government ministries had been consulted during the preparation of the 2021 census to ensure that data disaggregated by gender were collected on the composition of households.

22. Discussions had been held between the Ministry of Community Development, Gender Affairs and Social Services and the Attorney General to develop an understanding of the country's international obligations with regard to the establishment of a national human rights institution, in line with the recommendations of various United Nations agencies. Plans to set up such an institution were still in their early stages. However, strong support from the Attorney General and the Prime Minister, and a recent serious case of domestic violence, were likely to accelerate those plans.

23. **Ms. Reddock** said that the State party might wish to consider incorporating gender issues into any future national adaptation strategy, since the previous strategy, addressing diversification after the reduction of sugar production in the period 2006–2013, had not considered the effects of diversification on the main sectors of the economy in which women were employed, namely tourism and hospitality. She wished to know whether the Government intended to make the National Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan more publicly visible, and whether women's rights groups had been consulted during the development of the policy.

24. **Ms. Phillip** (Saint Kitts and Nevis) said that broad consultations had been held during and after the development of the National Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan with organizations including the National Women's Council, public health organizations, public and private institutions and the National Youth Parliament Association. Separate consultations had been held on Nevis, and an event had taken place in June 2022 to raise awareness of the plan. To compensate for the lack of data, interviews were conducted with various government departments and their directors, legislation was analysed and secondary data sources, including reports by regional bodies and published papers, were used.

25. The first National Adaptation Strategy had been launched before the importance of a gender-based approach and gender mainstreaming had been widely recognized. The recently elected Government acknowledged the need to diversify the economy, especially for women, since they were more likely to engage in precarious forms of work, and it had been working to promote women's entrepreneurship. The Taiwanese mission had provided funding to that end, and training and microcredit schemes had been made available to women who wished to start their own business.

26. **Ms. Bonifaz Alfonzo** said that it would be useful to have information about the implementation of the Trafficking in Persons (Prevention) Act, including how many persons had been convicted of human trafficking offences, how many complaints had been received and whether there was a problem of impunity. She would like to know whether campaigns were being carried out and the relevant officials were being trained to combat human trafficking, and what protection was afforded to victims. The Committee would be interested to hear whether any link had been found between human trafficking and migration. Lastly, she wondered whether prostitution had increased since the submission of the State party's report and whether there was a relationship between it and tourism and migration.

27. **Ms. Phillip** (Saint Kitts and Nevis) said that prostitution and human trafficking specifically for the purpose of sexual exploitation were major problems. However, no reports had been published on those issues, and the Government had little information. Trafficking and prostitution were likely to be more prevalent among immigrants, who were often reluctant to report such crimes and to seek help.

28. Persons who engaged in sex work had access to health-care services free of charge. Migrant workers who had experienced violence or abuse and who wished to return to their home countries could request financial support from the Saint Kitts and Nevis authorities to do so. Such assistance was provided in full confidentiality.

29. **Ms. Bonifaz Alfonzo** said that she wished to know whether the State party intended to introduce legal reforms to guarantee the participation of women in politics through quotas or parity requirements and whether the Government intended to set up leadership workshops and training courses in order to progress towards gender parity. The Committee would like to hear whether the authorities had plans to prevent any violence against women who wished to participate in political life.

30. **Ms. Phillip** (Saint Kitts and Nevis) said that, while women's participation remained low, the number of women in senior government positions had increased significantly in recent years. In principle, there was little opposition to the introduction of quotas. However, women were generally unwilling to engage in political life, owing to cultural factors. The National Youth Parliament Association had been created, and the Department of Youth Empowerment was planning to establish youth councils as part of efforts to generate an interest in politics among young people from an early age. Women in high elected office could serve as role models and spark a shift in traditional cultural attitudes towards women in politics. The Women in Politics Leadership Institute, run by the United States Embassy, and the Caribbean Institute for Women in Leadership provided leadership training and workshops to women in countries throughout the Caribbean region.

31. **Ms. Bethel** said that she wondered whether the State party would consider employing temporary special measures to advance the agenda of the National Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan. She would be interested to hear whether the plan took into account the sectors in which women were severely underrepresented, such as the farming sector, and whether temporary special measures could be used to achieve equality. Would the State party consider adopting an official policy or programme specifically benefiting women farmers in order to increase their representation in the sector?

32. She would appreciate further information about the Government's concerns and the challenges it faced with regard to the use of temporary special measures. In the Committee's view, such measures were part of a necessary strategy to achieve substantive equality, and they did not discriminate against men. She would thus be grateful for an explanation of the apparent absence of a comprehensive strategy for adopting and implementing temporary special measures in areas in which women were underrepresented or disadvantaged, including political and public life, education, employment and health care.

33. **Ms. Phillip** (Saint Kitts and Nevis) said that, to forestall any reactive pushback, there was a need for public consultation and awareness-raising before temporary special measures could be implemented. Many people believed that gender equality was not an issue. One of the aims of the National Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan was to shift cultural norms and lay the groundwork for the use of temporary special measures in certain areas where women were most underrepresented, including in leadership positions, the military and the police force. During their initial meeting with the national security forces, the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Security had mentioned the possibility of targeted recruitment of women.

34. Women farmers currently tended to work on small plots in their back gardens rather than running larger farms as businesses. For that reason, they were less likely to be members of farmers' associations and cooperatives. Many agricultural projects were run by farmers' NGOs, some of which were working to increase the number of women working in agriculture.

35. **Ms. Bethel** said that it was essential for women to participate meaningfully in agriculture, as it was closely related to key issues such as food security and poverty reduction. The Government should therefore make efforts to explain to the public why temporary special measures were a justified and necessary means of increasing women's participation in such critical sectors. The Government might wish to consult the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 (2004), which contained useful guidance on the implementation of temporary special measures.

36. **Ms. Phillip** (Saint Kitts and Nevis) said that a planning and policy unit within the Department of Gender Affairs analysed the feasibility of implementing proposed actions and policies, including temporary special measures. The Government acknowledged the need to expand the agriculture sector in order to increase the amount of food produced in Saint Kitts and Nevis and reduce the country's reliance on food imports. It also acknowledged the need for women to play a meaningful role in that process.

37. **Ms. Bethel** said that she would welcome information on the impact of the workshop held in connection with the International Day of the Boy Child. The delegation might also describe the content of government information broadcasts aimed at highlighting the discriminatory effect of gendered roles within the home. She wished to know what broader

legislative and policy measures the State party might consider to counter gender stereotyping and sexism at all levels and in all spheres. In particular, she wondered whether it would consider adopting a national action plan to address the impact of gender stereotyping in areas such as gender-based violence, education, employment, reproductive health services and the family. The delegation might describe any steps taken to eliminate traditional stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes within the family and in educational curricula and society at large. She was curious to know whether the Government would work with media outlets to eliminate such attitudes and discriminatory stereotypes from television and radio programmes, including news reports on cases of sexual violence.

38. She noted that complaints of domestic violence were now heard by the High Court rather than magistrates' courts, which meant that complainants faced higher costs. She asked what the State party was doing to ensure that women victims of domestic violence were not deterred from bringing complaints by the cost. The Committee wished to know whether, in the delegation's view, rehabilitation orders, or orders to participate in counselling, were an effective means of protecting victims of domestic violence and whether the High Court could order the removal of perpetrators of domestic violence from their homes in order to protect the victims.

39. The Committee would be grateful for information on the implementation of the Domestic and Sexual Violence Complaints and Response Protocol, the mechanisms in place for its evaluation and the roles, responsibilities and procedures established under it. She wished to know what programmes were in place to raise awareness of domestic violence, to train stakeholders in tackling it and to collect appropriate data on reported cases.

40. She would appreciate receiving information on the status of the Domestic Violence Strategic Plan, including the timeline for its adoption and implementation. She wondered whether it included ongoing, gender-sensitive training for law enforcement personnel, members of the judiciary and social workers and whether it provided for the establishment of shelters and made medical care and psychosocial support available for victims of domestic violence.

41. The Committee was concerned to note that a woman by the name of Desiree Shield, who had filed complaints of domestic violence against her partner, had been arrested by the police for killing him during an altercation. In view of that situation, the Committee wished to know whether appropriate measures were in place to protect victims of domestic violence, whether the police responded effectively to complaints of such violence and whether the Domestic Violence Act provided for sufficient protection for victims. The delegation might wish to explain whether the High Court considered the possibility that victims of domestic violence who retaliated against their abusers might be suffering from battered woman syndrome and whether that possibility would be considered in the case of Ms. Shield.

42. The Committee would be grateful for statistical data on prosecutions and convictions of perpetrators of gender-based violence, including femicide, in the past five years, disaggregated by the victim's age, relationship with the perpetrator and the sentence handed down. She wished to know whether definitions of rape and indecent assault that were based on the lack of consent would be incorporated into national law and whether all forms of gender-based violence against women and girls, including marital rape and sexual harassment, would be established as offences. The State party might wish to consider conducting an awareness-raising campaign to explain why marital rape should be a criminal offence.

43. The Committee was concerned to note that perpetrators of child sexual abuse were sometimes able to escape justice by bribing the victim's parents. In view of that situation, the Committee would be interested to know how the State party intended to protect girls against incest and rape, whether any steps were taken to criminalize the payment and acceptance of bribes in such cases and whether any parents of victims had been charged with paying or accepting bribes.

44. **Ms. Phillip** (Saint Kitts and Nevis) said that it was too early to comment on the impact of the International Day of the Boy Child, as it had been observed for the first time in 2022. A mentorship programme had been set up with a view to changing boys' attitudes to gender roles and masculinity. Although victims of gender-based violence were currently required to

submit applications for restraining orders to the High Court, the Government was seeking to amend the law to allow such applications to be filed with magistrates' courts, which would be less costly. In the case of Desiree Shield, it was clear that the police response to her complaints of domestic violence had been inadequate. She had been released from police custody without charge in recognition of her status as a victim of domestic violence. Efforts would be made to raise all police officers' awareness of the seriousness of domestic violence so that victims received greater protection.

45. The Domestic and Sexual Violence Complaints and Response Protocol outlined the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Gender Affairs, police officers, the Ministry of Health, health-care providers, the Department of Social Services, child protection services and legal aid services, among other agencies. No formal evaluation of the protocol had yet been carried out, as efforts were still being made to implement it properly.

46. The child protection services were empowered to request the placement of children in foster care if there was evidence that they were being sexually exploited, including in cases where their parents were complicit in the exploitation. The Government was considering the possibility of criminalizing the use of payments to facilitate the sexual exploitation of children. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was helping the Government to review the country's child protection laws, with a view to increasing the State's power to investigate and prosecute child sexual abuse. Victims of sexual abuse were required to make a formal complaint to the Department of Gender Affairs and the Special Victims Unit of the police. If the complaint was substantiated, the case would be taken up by the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, which, if it so wished, could proceed with the case even if the victim or the victim's parents wished to drop the charges.

47. She said that the courts could order perpetrators of domestic violence to be removed from their homes. The Government had not yet established a clear position on whether to establish marital rape as a criminal offence.

48. **Ms. Narnia** said that she wished to know whether there were any socioeconomic, cultural, administrative or other factors that resulted in discrimination against applicants for citizenship or parents applying to transmit their citizenship to their children. She wondered what proportion of persons who acquired citizenship under the Citizenship by Investment Programme were women, not including those women who acquired citizenship because their spouses had done so under its provisions. The delegation might state whether any action was being taken to include the names of all fathers of children born out of wedlock in birth certificates so that mothers did not bear all the economic burden of raising their children.

*The meeting was suspended at 5.05 p.m. and resumed at 5.10 p.m.*

49. **Ms. Phillip** (Saint Kitts and Nevis) said that birth certificates were issued without fathers' names if the fathers were absent at the time of the birth, but their names could later be added. The Government did not hold any official statistics on the gender of persons who acquired citizenship under the Citizenship by Investment Programme. However, the majority of successful applicants were known to be men. No efforts were currently being made specifically to encourage women to participate in the programme.

50. **Ms. Gbedemah**, noting that boys rarely studied subjects traditionally associated with girls, said that she wished to know whether the Government would consider using temporary special measures, accompanied by an awareness-raising campaign, to change their attitudes. Given the geographical location of Saint Kitts and Nevis, the Government might consider encouraging more girls to study climate science, marine studies and other related subjects. She wondered to what extent the State party had implemented the recommendations on addressing gender bias in education that had been issued in connection with the education policy review in 2016.

51. Noting that twice as many girls as boys sat the examinations for the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate, she asked whether any action would be taken to reduce the school dropout rate for boys. It would be interesting to know why the subject entitled "daily living skills" appeared to be exclusively reserved for persons with disabilities. She would be grateful to learn what measures were being taken to reduce the proportion of schoolgirls who became pregnant. Such measures might include making contraception more readily available



and conducting campaigns to change the pronatalist attitudes prevalent in Saint Kitts and Nevis. The Government might also consider enhancing access to childcare so that girls who had children were able to resume their education. She was curious to know whether legal action was routinely taken against men and boys who committed statutory rape. The Committee would welcome data on the degree of integration of children with disabilities, migrant children and children belonging to other vulnerable groups in mainstream education.

52. **Ms. Phillip** (Saint Kitts and Nevis), acknowledging the challenge of encouraging boys to enrol in traditionally female-oriented courses, especially in secondary education and above, said that one avenue for breaking gender stereotypes might be to show boys at an earlier stage how the different subject areas translated into career opportunities. The Government was very conscious of the fact that, as an island nation, the country was particularly susceptible to the impacts of climate change, and it would look into adapting the curriculum to address the relevant environmental issues.

53. Regarding school inclusion, steps had been taken to help the large number of children of Spanish-speaking migrants to learn English faster so that they could keep pace with the curriculum. Integration of children with disabilities into mainstream schools was slower, however. Nevertheless, efforts were being made, to the extent that the country's limited resources allowed, to integrate children with autism into mainstream schools. An autism centre and NGOs provided parents with tools to address autistic children's needs. Both islands had a designated school for children with special needs.

54. The statistics on teenage pregnancy might be slightly skewed by the fact that they included girls up to age 19. The Department of Gender Affairs ran a mentorship programme to support adolescent mothers and also to identify vulnerabilities with a view to preventing early pregnancies. In recognition of the fact that early pregnancy often resulted from problematic family relations, and in an effort to take a comprehensive approach to the issue, the programme increasingly emphasized family counselling.

55. Gender mainstreaming had been made a part of the country's vision for a resilient future. For example, the Ministry of Environment had brought in gender specialists to ensure that its climate adaptation strategy incorporated a gender perspective.

56. **Ms. Manalo** asked what steps were being taken to reform the education sector by removing prejudices that perpetuated gender segregation and stereotypes. Was the State party encouraging girls and women to study science, technology and math, for instance?

57. **Ms. Reddock** asked whether adolescent mothers were able to return to school, and if so, how many did. The Committee would also like to know whether there were any measures in place to assist adolescent fathers.

58. **Ms. Phillip** (Saint Kitts and Nevis) said that there were programmes in place to support young mothers in their transition back to school. There were no parenting programmes specifically geared towards young fathers, though there were mentorship and training programmes to foster responsibility in men. Programming for adolescent boys tended to focus more on preventing criminal behaviour. The Ministry of Education was exploring ways of diversifying the curriculum to offer creative courses at an earlier age.

59. **Ms. Gbedemah** noted that the removal of structural barriers to the enrolment of girls in non-traditional fields of education should not be done at the expense of their opportunities in the arts and social sciences.

60. **Ms. Phillip** (Saint Kitts and Nevis) said that, in its efforts to diversify the country's economy, the new Government had created a ministerial portfolio devoted to the creative economy, with a focus on monetizing intellectual property. There was therefore a concomitant need to match course offerings with the country's aspirations.

61. **Ms. Akasaki** said that there were persistent gendered employment patterns. It would be useful for the Committee to know how the State party encouraged women to avail themselves of the opportunities offered through the People Employment Programme, why the Women in Construction Trades programme had not been successful and how lessons learned from that experience had been incorporated into the Skills Training Empowerment Programme. The Committee would also like to find out whether there were plans to lift the

ban on women working at night and in certain industrial occupations and how women were encouraged to take up employment in skilled trades and construction.

62. She would also like to hear how the implementation of the Equal Pay Act was monitored, whether any proceedings had been initiated against individuals or businesses for non-compliance with the Act, why the National Assembly had not adopted the bill to amend the Labour Code and what the bill's current status was. Lastly, she would welcome information on the State party's intention to enact specific legislation on sexual harassment in the workplace and on measures taken or envisaged to raise women's awareness about the issue. The Committee would like to know if the Government had plans to ratify the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) of the International Labour Organization.

63. **Ms. Phillip** (Saint Kitts and Nevis) said that the Skills Training Empowerment Programme would be revamped to include specialized training courses as an incentive for people to pursue training to boost their income. Furthermore, one of the first acts by the new Prime Minister had been to cancel tuition fees for tertiary education and continuing adult education at the local community college, with the aim of encouraging people to upgrade their skills. The previous Government had abruptly changed course on the bill that would have amended the Labour Code, prior to its second reading; however, the bill remained on the legislative agenda, and its adoption was simply a matter of completing the parliamentary process. The Ministry of Social Development had taken the lead on drafting a law on sexual harassment. Meanwhile, the military had itself adopted a policy related to sexual harassment. Hopefully the adoption of a law, combined with awareness-raising, would make women less reluctant to report cases.

64. **Ms. Manalo** asked what role women played in trade unions and what measures were in place to encourage them to aim for leadership positions in those organizations.

65. **Ms. Phillip** (Saint Kitts and Nevis) said that there were women on the executive board of the country's trade union. While she was not aware of specific policies concerning women in trade unions, partnering with unions would be an effective way of advancing discussions on sexual harassment in the workplace.

66. **Ms. Haidar**, commending the State party for its success in ending mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS and in rolling out the human papillomavirus vaccine, said that she wished to know the status of efforts to establish a policy of universal health care. She invited the delegation to comment on the apparent discrepancy between the establishment of the age of consent for girls at 16 and the maintenance of the requirement for girls of that age to obtain parental authorization for sexual and reproductive health services. She would appreciate hearing whether the Government would consider initiating a national dialogue on further decriminalization of abortion, at least in cases of rape, incest or severe fetal abnormality. In that connection, she drew the delegation's attention to work conducted by the United Nations on the interplay between faith and rights. Lastly, it would be interesting to learn why women in the State party were more prone to diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity, whether any research had been undertaken on those problems and how the State party intended to tackle them, especially from a preventive perspective.

67. **Ms. Phillip** (Saint Kitts and Nevis) said that the prevalence of non-communicable diseases in women was largely due to lifestyle factors and the strain of juggling work and family responsibilities, in addition to biological predispositions. Non-communicable diseases were the top health challenge in the country. If left unchecked, their side effects, such as amputation, would render the workforce less productive. As the new Prime Minister was a medical doctor, significant progress on the establishment of a universal health-care system could be expected during his term of office. Saint Kitts and Nevis acknowledged the need to harmonize the age of consent and the age of adulthood in a number of laws on various topics, but it was currently facing a shortage of policy drafters. Sexual and reproductive health-care services and information were available free of charge at community health centres. Decriminalizing abortion would involve reopening a debate on abortion rights, including with faith-based organizations. She was personally prepared to advocate for that discussion to take place.

*The meeting rose at 6 p.m.*