



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination  
against Women**

**Twenty-eighth session**

**Summary record of the 599th meeting**

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 21 January 2003, at 10 a.m.

*Chairman:* Ms. Açar

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

*Combined third and fourth periodic report and fifth and sixth periodic reports  
of El Salvador*

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

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

*Combined third and fourth periodic report and the fifth and sixth periodic reports of El Salvador (CEDAW/C/SLV/3-4, CEDAW/C/SLV/5 and CEDAW/C/SLV/6, CEDAW/PSWG/2003/I/CRP.1/Add.2)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of El Salvador took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Marisol Argueta** (El Salvador), introducing her delegation's reports, stressed her Government's commitment to the advancement of women. Since the signing of the peace agreements in 1988, significant progress had been made towards the creation of a modern, participatory and democratic society, although natural disasters such as the hurricane of 1998 and two successive earthquakes in 2001 had been major setbacks. Consultations between the Government, civil society and international bodies on the creation of a women's policy had begun in 1989. The Salvadoran Institute for the Advancement of Women (ISDEMU), the government coordinating body for women's issues, had been created in 1996 and a National Policy on Women had been adopted in 1997. The National Policy identified 10 areas for action: legislation, education, health, citizen participation, the family, labour, domestic violence, agriculture, ranching, fishing, food, media and culture, and the environment. An initial plan of action had been established for 1997-1999, and a new plan of action 2000-2004 had been implemented in the context of the Government's "New Alliance" programme with a view to mainstreaming gender into public policy.

3. Women represented more than 52 per cent of the population and her Government recognized the importance of increasing women's role in decision-making in the private and public spheres. Accordingly, the Constitution asserted the equality of women under the law and banned discrimination on the basis of sex. Major international United Nations and inter-American instruments dealing with women's rights had been ratified.

4. Women's participation in decision-making, although growing, had been limited by a political

culture that favoured men. Nevertheless, political parties were opening their ranks to women, a political party led by a woman had recently been founded and the Association of Women Parliamentarians and Former Parliamentarians, the Association of Women Judges of El Salvador and the Salvadoran Association of Women Lawyers were very active. Women were increasingly well represented in the justice system, including at the highest levels, and in the Government, the administration, the Central Reserve Bank, the National University and local government. Since its creation in 1992, two women had occupied the post of Human Rights Procurator. Women were also increasingly present in the military, with 51 women cadets currently, and in the police, where they had represented 7.1 per cent of the total at the end of 2001.

5. In the area of education, the illiteracy rate had dropped from 23 per cent to 15 per cent, with great gains in the rural areas. Girls and boys had equal access to education and the educational indicators for 1990-2000 showed that progress was being made. The major challenge was to reduce the drop-out rate for boys and girls. Strategies had been developed to keep girls in school and maintain equality throughout the school system, including in technical and professional areas; 99 per cent of the public education system was mixed. Girls were being encouraged to consider non-traditional careers and efforts were under way to develop educational programmes aimed at overcoming obstacles to women's entry into non-traditional careers.

6. The curriculum and teacher training included gender equality, human rights, mental health, prevention of violence and sexual and reproductive education with a view to promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating gender bias. Given that most adolescent pregnancies occurred among girls not in school, strategies had been developed with the private sector, the churches, the media and the educational system to ensure girls stayed in school. Pregnant girls could not be expelled because of their pregnancy and the regulations were being reformed to eliminate discriminatory disciplinary measures against girls. Students were taught preventive health strategies and there was a specific project in the context of parenting schools and youth programmes on sexuality, HIV/AIDS prevention and prevention of domestic violence.

7. With regard to health, she said priority had been given to child and maternal health and family planning,

with women's health and reproductive health in particular stressed not only in the context of health system reform but also in the context of the family, the workplace and the educational system. An officer for women's health had been appointed to coordinate government and civil society efforts to promote women's health. Five areas had been highlighted: identification of women's health priorities; organization of health services for women; management, monitoring and evaluation of health care for women; decentralization and funding based on identified needs, in particular for women and children. Preventive health measures for women accounted for 35 per cent of funding and, since June 2002, those services were provided free of charge; currently 36 per cent of hospitals and basic health-care centres were headed by women.

8. Community networks had been strengthened and midwives and health-care providers had received additional training for the care of women and children. In-hospital maternity services had been improved in order to identify risk factors and reduce maternal morbidity and mortality. A maternal mortality monitoring system had been established in the 28 public hospitals to strengthen maternity care, in particular in hospitals damaged by the earthquakes. Maternal mortality rates had dropped to 62 per 100,000 live births; the main causes of maternal death nevertheless remained highly preventable.

9. In order to improve the nutritional value of basic foods, efforts had been coordinated with the agroindustrial sector to improve the health of women and children through the use of iodized salt, sugar enriched with vitamin A and iron-enriched flour. In addition, a National Council on Mental Health, made up of governmental and non-governmental organizations, had been established, with five intersectoral committees to deal with mental health issues.

10. El Salvador had ratified the following International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions: No. 111 concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation, No. 100 concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value, No. 156 concerning Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women Workers with Family Responsibilities and No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child

Labour. With regard to the latter, priority areas had been identified as sexual exploitation, the fishing and shellfish industry, and the fireworks, garbage, coffee and sugar sectors. A committee made up of governmental, non-governmental, labour and business representatives was drafting a national plan for the gradual eradication of the worst forms of child labour.

11. Since 2000 three offices had been opened in the duty- and tax-free zones to protect the rights of women workers and act as mediators between them and their employers. A labour relations monitoring and evaluation office had been established to study the labour market and influence policy, in particular with regard to the duty-free zones. A National Policy on Occupational Safety had been developed in order to guarantee safe working conditions and workplace safety committees and training activities had been strengthened. The Government's aim was to promote women's participation in the labour market on an equal footing with men; she noted that women currently dominated the micro-enterprise sector. The rights of the disabled and older persons were also protected by law and in a recent initiative consulates abroad collect alimony and support payments from fathers living outside the country.

12. Her Government was committed to United Nations social development goals. The World Bank considered it to be one of the three Latin American countries making satisfactory progress and if that trend continued, El Salvador should meet the millennium development goals by 2015. The United Nations Development Programme had given El Salvador a development index of 0.706, while taking note of the devastating effects of natural disasters in recent years; that index had nevertheless increased and El Salvador was currently classed 104th of 173 countries.

13. In addition to the Convention, El Salvador was a party to other international instruments such as the Inter-American Convention on the Granting of Civil Rights to Women, the Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence against Women, and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. The new Family Code of 1994 replaced previous discriminatory legislation; it guaranteed equality, recognized the value of work in the home and freed women of the obligation to allow the husband to choose the family's domicile. New non-

discriminatory provisions governed divorce and laws had been enacted to combat domestic violence.

14. The Salvadoran Institute for the Advancement of Women had been tasked to coordinate efforts to eliminate domestic violence. There had also been important legal reforms: the Labour Code, the Health Code, the Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure, the Education Act and the Domestic Violence Act. In follow-up to Beijing+5, the National Plan on Domestic Violence had been approved with a view to raising awareness of that issue and providing services to victims. The Institute had also created an inter-institutional legal commission in 2000 to harmonize national legislation with international instruments.

15. Full development of Salvadoran women depended not only on the Government but also on the effective participation of society as a whole in order to overcome stereotypes. Her Government was committed to the advancement of women and looked forward to continued positive interaction and dialogue with the Committee.

16. **The Chairperson** thanked the members of the delegation for their presentation and expressed regret that the written replies to the Committee's list of issues and questions (CEDAW/PSWG/2003/I/CRP.1/Add.2) had not yet been translated. She urged the Government of El Salvador to consider ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention and of the amendment to article 20 (1).

17. While progress had been made in the level of participation of women, for example in the judiciary, and in the legislative sphere, problems nevertheless remained in ensuring equality for women in the education, health and socio-cultural spheres. She recognized that conflict and natural disasters placed a heavy burden on societies and Governments and often had a disproportionate impact on women's lives and rights. Such situations could, however, provide a window of opportunity for women to overcome traditional stereotypes and enter into new roles while rebuilding society. She hoped the Government of El Salvador would continue to strengthen its efforts for the advancement of women.

#### *Articles 1 to 6*

18. **Ms. Ferrer Gómez** said that, in the aftermath of the recent natural disasters in El Salvador, the 2002-2004 development plan had had to be reoriented

towards reconstruction. She would like to have more information and any available statistics on how women's needs in the areas of employment, mental health and support to heads of single-parent households were taken into account in the reconstruction plan. It was also unclear to her whether the Government had a comprehensive poverty alleviation plan; if it did, she would like to know whether the plan had a focus on women in poverty.

19. Turning to the legal framework, she said that the concept of discrimination as such was not found in either the Constitution or laws, and she wondered whether there were any plans to include a definition of discrimination in the Constitution. In domestic violence cases, she asked whether reconciliation between the parties meant that the aggressor would no longer be punished. She asked whether ISDEMU, the national body in charge of women's policy, had the power to enforce commitments, and what the level of its budget allocation was. Finally, any information on plans and programmes aimed at indigenous women in rural areas would be welcome.

20. **Ms. González Martínez** noted that article 3 of the Constitution established the principle of equality, but since the list of grounds on which discrimination was prohibited was not exhaustive, she wondered whether economic, social and cultural status was covered. She was pleased to note that the Optional Protocol was under review in the National Assembly, but would like to know why it had not been ratified.

21. Prostitution had been criminalized, but she would like to know whether the clients were also punished and how prostitutes were protected from violence and exploitation. Finally, she asked whether trafficking in persons had been outlawed.

22. **Ms. Shin** said that she would like more information on the participation of non-governmental organizations in the preparation of the reports and the efforts made to publicize the reports and the Convention. She would also like to hear more about the operational aspects of ISDEMU, including its governance structures, staffing and resources, and how it had overcome the obstacles it had undoubtedly faced.

23. **Mr. Flinterman** inquired whether El Salvador had any plans to withdraw its reservation to article 29 of the Convention. He would also like to know the time frame for ratification of the Optional Protocol.

24. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** said that she would be interested to hear more about the relationship and interaction between the National Policy on Women, with its ten areas for action, and the Platform for Salvadoran Women. She also wondered whether the terms “equity” and “equality” were being used interchangeably, as in her view their meanings were not the same in substance. She would also welcome information about trafficking.

25. **Ms. Morvai** asked whether ISDEMU was the lead agency in the Government for implementation of the Convention and the Beijing Platform for Action and whether it had policy responsibility. She would like to know the amount of the budget allocation for the “New Alliance” programme and whether international support had been received for implementation of the plans adopted at the Beijing+5 conference. Finally, she asked whether the Convention was part of the curriculum of the faculty of law.

26. **Ms. Gnacadja** asked whether the family courts had jurisdiction in cases of family violence and whether they could provide the victims with protection under the law. She asked whether rural women had access to the courts and whether there were any costs involved in lodging a domestic violence complaint.

27. **Ms. Saiga** asked about the legal status of ISDEMU, how the director was appointed and what its powers were. She would like to know whether ISDEMU could submit bills directly to Parliament.

28. **Ms. Argueta** (El Salvador), in reply to the questions concerning ISDEMU, said that the Institute was under the National Secretariat for the Family, and was composed of the eight Ministries involved with women’s issues, which included the Ministries of Education, Labour and Agriculture. It had four operational committees, including one for implementation of the Convention. The Executive Board provided overall coordination and coherence. As a policy body, it had a small budget, but each ministry involved had allocated a total of \$1 million to the execution of related projects. Its budget was also supplemented by international assistance, but recently much of that funding had gone to disaster relief. After the recent earthquakes, priority had been placed on providing support to women heads of households, especially to restore their destroyed homes.

29. With regard to article 3 of the Constitution, which contained equality provisions, there was no ranking of

rights, and economic, social and cultural rights were included. El Salvador was also party to all the international human rights instruments. The recommendation to include a definition of discrimination in the Constitution would be considered in the constitutional reform process; any amendment must be approved by two sessions of the National Assembly. Concerning adoption of the Optional Protocol, a three-quarters majority of deputies was needed. After the upcoming parliamentary elections, that would be at the top of the agenda for the new Parliament. Withdrawal of the reservation to article 29 of the Convention was not currently under consideration.

30. With regard to questions about legislation in the area of prostitution, laws had been adopted to punish those who profited from the exploitation of prostitutes. Laws against trafficking in persons which carried a prison sentence of four to eight years had been passed in 2002.

31. **Ms. Argueta** (El Salvador) said that the issue of trafficking in persons was a priority concern for the Salvadoran Government. More than 1 million Salvadoran citizens had migrated to the United States alone, as a result of the conflict that had afflicted the country for more than 10 years, and the earthquakes. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs was giving priority attention to the human rights of migrant workers and had signed agreements regulating the situations of Salvadoran emigrants in transit countries such as Guatemala and Mexico. El Salvador had also reached a number of cooperation agreements on trafficking in persons and the protection of migrants, and was actively encouraging destination countries to take measures to protect Salvadoran migrants and regularize their legal situation. Examples in that context were the United States, Sweden, Italy and Spain, which all had large communities of Salvadoran immigrants. In 2002 El Salvador had signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, on trafficking in persons. She hoped that the Salvadoran legislative assembly would ratify the decision as a matter of priority.

32. El Salvador provided free health and medical services to persons involved in prostitution. The Ministry of Health ran programmes for the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and provided orientation and awareness-raising activities in that area. There was a wide range of attitudes towards

prostitution in El Salvador, ranging from those who rejected prostitution entirely to those who believed it should be legalized. Sanctions were imposed on those who promoted prostitution, and there were also regulations at the local level prohibiting prostitution in public places.

33. Regarding women's access to justice, especially in rural areas, she said that ISDEMU provided training programmes to the police on the Convention, legislation on domestic violence, and other norms guaranteeing women's rights and effective development. El Salvador's legal system provided punitive sanctions for those responsible for domestic violence against women and children. With regard to the distinction between equity and equality, she said that ISDEMU regarded equity as the means for achieving the equality guaranteed under article 3 of the Salvadoran Constitution. The two terms were therefore not synonymous in the Spanish language, as one led to the achievement of the other.

34. The Platform of Salvadoran Women, submitted by organized civil society, had played a vital role in the formulation of national policy, involving many months of work by non-governmental, governmental and international organizations. Thus, national policy on women had ultimately been adopted under a process of consensus. The Convention had been publicized and distributed through pamphlets and books containing its text, as well as information about all domestic and international legislation regulating and protecting women's rights. ISDEMU met on a monthly basis, and the major obstacles it had encountered to its work concerned evaluation and effective follow-up. As a result, a follow-up and evaluation commission had been established; one of its tasks was to design a monitoring mechanism, which would soon be accessible to the public on the ISDEMU web site. The Government was currently engaged in decentralizing the work of all institutions. The reduction of costs in all Government institutions had had a negative impact on ISDEMU's budget. El Salvador clearly needed assistance from the international community in terms of the necessary financial, specialized technical and human resources.

35. With regard to mental health, she noted that the Pan-American Health Organization had awarded El Salvador the annual George Alleyne Prize for introducing a special mental health programme into its national health services during the period immediately

after the earthquakes, during which many Salvadorans had suffered considerable trauma. Furthermore, a new entity, the National Board for Mental Health, had been set up to implement and bring up to date the country's mental health programmes.

36. The Government believed that the best way to reduce poverty was to provide employment opportunities. El Salvador had therefore adopted a policy of liberalizing its international trade relationships and increasing foreign investment, with a view to creating more jobs and making the Salvadoran workforce more competitive. It was also actively involved in the formulation of international rules for the protection of workers. With regard to the implementation of the gender focus within the Government, ISDEMU's primary achievement had been to set up permanent training courses within all Government bodies to ensure that staff continued to be aware of domestic and international norms protecting women and promoting their development.

37. **Ms. de Innocenti** said that ISDEMU's governing board was headed by a minister and comprised ministers and deputy ministers and representatives of four national non-governmental organizations who were elected by a general assembly of non-governmental organizations. The governing board, which met once a month, had consulted non-governmental organizations in preparing El Salvador's periodic reports. The 12 members of the ISDEMU governing board served on various commissions, which worked on individual questions in certain areas and submitted proposals to the governing board. The board was responsible for electing its Director. The largest obstacle to ISDEMU's work was its very limited budget. With regard to working mechanisms, ISDEMU had a permanent staff of 107 and various consultants were periodically called in to provide assistance on specific issues. Each member of the governing board worked with specialized counterparts at the various ministries who were responsible for implementing certain tasks. They met each December to review the past year's successes and failures. There was also a network of communicators from within all Government institutions, who met once a month and who were responsible for publishing their work regarding the Convention, domestic law, national policy on women and the Domestic Violence Act. Each Government adjusted the plan of action periodically, but the policy on women remained the same.

38. She shared the Committee's concern regarding the difference between equity and equality and was aware that the distinction between the two words had been a subject of intensive debate. Defining the word *equality*, she said that, although all Salvadoran citizens were born equal under the terms of the Constitution, some were evidently not able to compete on equal terms with others, either because they were less well educated or because they lacked access to health care or economic opportunities. For the most part, those concerned were women, young girls and the elderly, who were clearly in a situation of inequality. The word *equity*, on the other hand, referred to that which the State provided in order that such persons might compete on equal terms with others. An example in that context was the provision of day-care facilities for mothers who wished to attend school.

39. With regard to the legal protection provided to women victims of rape, she noted that 70 of ISDEMU's 107 staff members worked at seven regional offices. The police, doctors, psychologists, social workers, and personnel from the Ministry of Health implemented the related services. There was a help line for reporting incidents of domestic abuse, and victims and perpetrators of abuse were provided with crisis treatment and counselling. If a criminal act was involved, the individuals concerned were handed over to the legal authorities. Mothers and children whose lives were in danger were given shelter until their cases were resolved. ISDEMU members were also actively involved in mental health care and in local networks working to combat domestic abuse, and a national plan to combat violence had been set up in 2002, in compliance with the recommendations of Beijing+5. ISDEMU's 70 regional staff provided specialist training in all areas of gender equality. Services were being expanded to cover all areas of the country and provide access for those living in the most remote regions. Efforts were being made to restructure services, notably by empowering those working at the local level.

40. **Mr. Avelar Bermúdez** (El Salvador) said that Salvadoran legislation prohibited gender discrimination in the workplace. The Constitution contained a chapter dedicated exclusively to employment, in which the generic Spanish term "trabajador" (employee) was used to refer to both men and women. El Salvador had acceded to various international instruments, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and

Cultural Rights, which guaranteed equal treatment for employees of both genders.

41. The Government believed that the best method of reducing poverty was job creation. To that end, capacity-building programmes had been developed to provide the workforce with better training and initially more women than men had benefited from them. Unfortunately, following the earthquakes, those programmes had been suspended so that all available resources could be channelled into rebuilding national infrastructures.

42. **Ms. Padilla de Escobar** (El Salvador) said that, following the earthquakes, short-term measures had been introduced to improve women's access to reproductive and mental health care. Expert committees, comprised of health-care professionals and social workers, had been set up, and mobile health-care teams had been established with a view to treating women living in rural areas and in shelters. Mobile teams specializing in reproductive health care had also been created, and their responsibilities included the dissemination of family planning information with a view to preventing the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. Emergency childbirth teams were also in operation in remote areas. Reducing the impact of preventable diseases and lowering the maternal mortality rate were key factors that would affect El Salvador's human development.

43. Ten per cent of El Salvador's population was indigenous, and the Government had been cooperating with indigenous organizations and groups to devise an action plan to reduce maternal mortality among indigenous women. A similar initiative was being implemented in the department of Sonsonate in cooperation with the Pan-American Health Organization. At present, capacity-building in the area of obstetrics was being undertaken, and efforts were also being made to ensure that indigenous persons had access to both traditional and conventional medicines.

44. **Ms. Argueta** (El Salvador), addressing a question by Ms. Morvai, said that the budget for the Government's "New Alliance" plan was \$13 billion.

45. Turning to the issue of sexual exploitation, she acknowledged that El Salvador lacked suitable legislation to address the problem at the national level. However, she informed the Committee that a new draft law on the prevention of the sexual exploitation of

minors had been submitted to the Legislative Assembly.

46. Article 27 of the Domestic Violence Act provided for preliminary hearings, during which the judge engaged in dialogue with both victim and abuser about the effects of domestic violence on the family and explained the penalties applicable.

47. **Ms. Manalo** urged the reporting State to comply more promptly with its reporting obligations in future. The replies to the list of issues and questions had been submitted very late, which had deprived the Committee of the opportunity to engage in a substantive dialogue with the Salvadoran representatives and gave the impression that they did not take the issue of gender equality seriously.

48. With regard to article 7 of the Convention, she noted that, according to the UNDP *Human Development Report 2002*, El Salvador's gender empowerment measure (GEM) ranking was 52nd out of 66 countries, which meant that it had failed significantly to break with the systems and structures that hindered women's inclusion in decision-making processes and prevented them from holding public office. She asked the reporting State to explain the measures it was taking to resolve the situation.

49. She was disappointed that the Plan of Action 2000-2004 for the implementation of the National Policy on Women did not adopt a holistic approach to the advancement of women. Training alone was not sufficient to achieve that goal, and she enquired whether the Government's long-term plan in the area of gender equality included affirmative action and whether any programmes to encourage young girls to pursue political careers were envisaged. She also wished to know whether the Salvadoran media would be used as a tool to change public attitudes towards women. The sixth report made no reference to women's participation in local governance, and she would be grateful for some information on the current situation.

50. Referring to article 8 of the Convention, she expressed surprise that only one of El Salvador's ambassadors was female, particularly in view of the fact that the Minister for Foreign Affairs was a woman. She asked whether the Government had set up any programmes to encourage women to pursue diplomatic careers.

51. Referring to article 9 of the Convention, she noted that the reporting State's policy on citizenship was unclear, and inquired as to the measures in place to ensure the protection and transmission of women's nationality. According to the sixth report, it had been recognized that sexism in the language in which most of the nation's legislation, including the Constitution, was couched could have the effect of marginalizing women or making them invisible with respect to the protection that it could provide. She requested concrete examples of such language.

52. Lastly, she drew the reporting State's attention to the importance of employing the correct terminology in its reports, noting that, on several occasions, the word "equity" had been employed instead of the word "equality".

53. **Ms. Kapalata** noted that the number of female mayors had decreased between 1994 and 1997. She wished to know whether that decline had been due to natural disasters in El Salvador and whether any measures were being taken to redress the balance.

54. Referring to article 8 of the Convention, she said that she would like to see more statistics relating to the participation of women in international affairs and urged the reporting State to include gender-disaggregated data in its next report. Given the very low number of Salvadoran women involved in international diplomacy or the work of international organizations, there was no room for complacency.

55. **Ms. Achmad** asked whether, in the future, affirmative action would be used to increase women's participation in political life. She reiterated the importance of achieving de facto equality in that area and stressed the need to prevent reverse trends. She would be grateful to know which organization was responsible for monitoring political participation and how it coordinated its efforts with other bodies working in the same field. She also enquired about the extent of female participation in bodies other than executive public ones and how it was monitored.

56. According to the sixth report, the Salvadoran Association of Women Parliamentarians and Former Parliamentarians had been involved in training activities for female political leaders. She wished to know whether those activities had targeted women who were already members of political parties or those who had yet to enter politics.

57. Lastly, she observed that women's organizations had organized initiatives to provide training in planning participatory policies at the local level. She inquired whether those initiatives were being carried out in partnership with local government and whether similar schemes existed at the national level.

58. **Ms. Popescu Sandru** noted that some progress had been made in the area of ensuring the equal participation of women in political life, but pointed out that their rate of nomination to posts in frontline ministries remained low and that very few leaders of the major political parties were female. She wished to know what measures had been drawn up under the Plan of Action 2000-2004 to address that situation. She also asked why there had been a drop in the number of female members of the Legislative Assembly and enquired as to the rate of participation of indigenous women in political life.

59. With regard to temporary special measures, the Legislative Assembly had been presented with a bill amending the Electoral Code, under which political parties would be required to ensure that 40 per cent of their candidates for election to public office were women. She wished to know whether the bill had been approved and, if so, which, if any, political parties had begun to implement it.

60. Lastly, she asked for information regarding the participation of women in the country's economic life. She would be grateful to know, for instance, how many were company directors and how many of the women involved with small enterprises were employers.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*