



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women
Sixty-fourth session**

Summary record of the 1410th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 8 July 2016, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Hayashi

Contents

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

Combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of France (continued)

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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)

Combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of France (continued)
(CEDAW/C/FRA/7-8 and Add.1; CEDAW/C/FRA/Q/7-8 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of France took places at the Committee table.*

Articles 1 to 6 (continued)

2. **Ms. Moiron-Braud** (France) said that she would discuss the relationship between the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking, adopted in May 2014, and the policy of the Government of France on the abolition of prostitution, which had recently been laid down in the Act of 13 April 2016. The Plan took a comprehensive approach to the problem of human trafficking, and had three main thrusts: the prevention of trafficking, the protection of victims and the prosecution of perpetrators. It sought to combat each and every form of human trafficking, with special emphasis on the sexual exploitation of women, children and especially girls. The task involved improving victim support through better identification methods, training professionals, and developing learning tools for police, gendarmes and judges, inter alia. Child educators were also instructed in methods for teaching children about exploitation.

3. The Plan provided that victims of trafficking should have access to the temporary residence permit; accordingly, the Act of 13 April 2016 stipulated that victims of human trafficking who brought a criminal complaint could remain in France for an automatically renewable period of six months. The permit was also readily available to victims of human trafficking, whether or not they cooperated with the prosecution. If the perpetrator was convicted, the victim was granted a residence permit. Victims of trafficking were exempt from administrative fees.

4. Under the Act, the victim also benefited from enhanced assistance from social services, within the framework of a national secure protection network, which provided them shelter and care in a location that was distant from the place where they had been subject to exploitation. Victims of trafficking benefited from priority treatment in the provision of social housing.

5. Protection was provided to victims and witnesses, who were permitted to provide testimony without revealing their identities. Those who cooperated with the judiciary were given the highest degree of protection and could be given shelter by a lawyer or an association. They were also given a temporary assumed identity in order to protect them from possible reprisals. The Act provided that proceedings could be held in closed chambers.

6. Turning to the matter of prevention, she said that the Plan focused on reducing the demand for sexual services; the Act of 13 April 2016 accordingly provided that purchasers of any and all forms of sexual exploitation would be subject to criminal prosecution.

7. **Ms. Gabr** said that she wished to know what measures the State party was taking to combat stereotypes of migrant and Muslim women. She was particularly concerned by the high number of rapes per year; in that regard, she would like to know what percentage of the victims of rape were migrant women. It would also be interesting to know how the various human rights mechanisms in the country coordinated efforts to implement the action plan against racism and anti-Semitism.

8. **Ms. Acar** said that the Committee was pleased that France had ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), an instrument that was closely related to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It had, however, entered reservations to article 44, paragraphs 1 (e), 3 and 4, of the Istanbul Convention. She was not sure that she understood the intent of those reservations. It was not clear why the State party, in entering a reservation to article 44, paragraph 1 (e), would prosecute crimes committed outside France, such as female genital mutilation, forced marriage and rape, only if the perpetrator was a national but not a resident. Why did the State party, in entering a reservation to paragraphs 3 and 4 of that article, intend to limit its prosecution of crimes of violence against women to offences that the victim had reported to the authorities in the country in which they were committed and to offences that were criminalized in the country in which they were committed?

9. **Ms. Schulz** asked why the State party's efforts to combat trafficking focused on sexual services provided by women, when sexual exploitation took so many forms. She would also like to know if the State party had considered whether punishing the user of sexual services might result in greater secrecy and therefore lesser access to security and health services, including measures for the prevention of HIV/AIDS. She asked on what basis France had decided that the exploitation of women through the purchase of sexual services should be a category 5 offence. It would also be helpful to know whether the police had the means to bring perpetrators to justice effectively, since there were few prosecutions and even fewer convictions, and whether the recommendations of the High Council for Gender Equality on the Fourth Interministerial Plan to Prevent and Eradicate Violence against Women, in particular greater funding for the associations concerned and improved data collection, would in fact be carried out.

10. **Ms. Gisand** (France) said that there were currently no statistics showing how many rape victims were migrant women.

11. **Mr. Vinquant** (France) said that information on the prevalence of rape was drawn from large-scale surveys on violence against women. Owing to the anonymous nature of such surveys, there was no means of determining the ethnic origin or migrant status of victims.

12. **Ms. Gisand** (France) said that, in cases involving forced marriage, the law was clear that, even when no complaint had been lodged in the country where the act was committed, the public prosecutor's office was obliged to prosecute a resident of France who had committed it.

13. **Mr. Vinquant** (France) said that the delegation would transmit in writing, within the 48-hour time limit, a complete and precise answer to the questions raised regarding the reservations of France to article 44, paragraphs 1 (e), 3 and 4, of the Istanbul Convention.

14. **Ms. Rossignol** (France) said that the question raised by Ms. Gabr regarding the relationship between stereotypes and violence against migrant women was an interesting one. It was assumed and understood that the great majority of migrant women had been victims of sexual violence at some point during their experience as migrants. Therefore, they were provided with health care and psychological support on arrival in France. Such support was not easy to give, first, because women had difficulty reporting rape while living in refugee camps where the smugglers (who were also perpetrators) were likely to be present and, secondly, because they were faced with a language barrier. The Government of France shared the concerns of the Committee about sexual violence against migrant women.

15. It was important to understand that there was no national consensus on the law adopted by France providing for the criminalization of prostitution and encouraging women to leave the practice. France had made the same choice as had Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

The bill had been the subject of intense scrutiny. Some of the questions raised by the Committee concerning, for example, the enforcement of the law or budget implications, were very similar to those that had been posed by parties opposed to the law during the lengthy discussions over the draft legislation.

16. The Act of 13 April 2016 was of considerable historical importance. It posited that the purchase or sale of sexual services was an attack on prostitutes, that prostitutes were victims of sexual exploitation, that clients exploited the bodies of other persons, and that a society could and must envisage a future in which the bodies of others were not for sale. The Act sought to reduce the demand, and also to achieve equality between men and women. In her view, if, in the collective mind of a society, a woman's body could be purchased or sold, it was difficult for any and all women to achieve equality. That depiction of women was not conducive to the attainment of equality between men and women. Statistics had shown that 90 per cent of prostitutes were victims of trafficking; from that perspective, the question of the freedom of the woman to choose prostitution was moot.

17. As for the question of whether category 5 was an appropriate classification for such a serious offence, the drafters of the Act had chosen effectiveness over idealism. Some 60 cases involving violations of that law had already been brought. In addition, there had been a surge in the number of women seeking help to free themselves from the life of prostitution. The question that must be asked was what the neighbouring countries of France, Iceland, Sweden and Norway were doing to help. She believed those countries deserved support from the Committee in their ambitious effort to curb the demand for the services of both male and female prostitutes.

18. **Ms. Moiron-Braud** (France) said that, in France, prostitution was the most common and highly developed form of sexual exploitation; therefore the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking accorded it the greatest attention. Turning to the matter of forced labour, she said that the Act of 13 April 2016 had expanded the scope of activities of labour inspectors; currently, the Ministry of Labour was developing teaching aids to assist them in identifying and recognizing the use of forced labour. It was envisaged that agreements would be drawn up between union and employers' associations with a view to raising awareness about the gravity of employing victims of human trafficking. A new mechanism had just been launched, consisting in a network of child support centres staffed by professionals trained in human trafficking, whose purpose was to care for children who had been forced to commit crimes or who had been victims of sexual exploitation.

19. **Ms. Seydoux** (France) said that the intermediate evaluation report of the Fourth Interministerial Plan to Prevent and Eradicate Violence against Women had proposed a number of avenues for advancing efforts to combat violence. The Fourth Plan had emphasized interministerial cooperation, with the tracking of budgetary allocations for that purpose. Each Plan had introduced a new element. The Second Plan had addressed conjugal violence; the Third had addressed all forms of violence against women. The Fifth Plan, which bore the slogan "No Violence without a Response", emphasized informing all of France, including the overseas departments and territories, of the available mechanisms for eliminating violence against women, and sought to identify forms of multiple discrimination, affecting, for instance, women with disabilities and migrant women.

Articles 7 to 9

20. **The Chair**, speaking in her capacity as an expert, said that despite the existence of the law on parity, gender parity had not been achieved in French political life. Apparently, political parties preferred to pay fines rather than to allow female candidates to stand for office. She enquired whether penalties other than fines had been considered to achieve full gender parity in the electoral system. In that regard, she would like to know what measures were being taken to encourage the participation of women in local governments.

21. **Ms. Rossignol** (France) said that the Government had many means available to persuade the political parties to put forward female candidates, but since it was the legislators themselves who voted on the measures that would require them to comply with the law, she admitted to being powerless at times to convince the persons to whom the law applied.

22. **Ms. Nadaraia** asked whether rules governing the acquisition of French nationality through marriage applied in the overseas departments and territories. She would also like to know whether measures had been taken to simplify birth registration for residents of French Guiana living in remote areas. Lastly, she asked what measures had been taken to integrate Mayotte, the newest overseas department, into the French legal framework, including registration procedures.

23. **Mr. Leschi** (France) said that French nationality could indeed be acquired by marriage, although it was not automatic. If a person was found to have another spouse abroad, for example, in violation of French civil law, the new marriage would not be valid.

24. **Ms. Alcade** (France) said that there had been a 1998 law governing birth registration for the population of French Guiana living along the Maroni river and in the nearby forests; the law, which had been misused by persons trafficking in Brazilian babies, had been abolished. A decision had been made to transport judicial services into that region in order to give the population greater access to legal rights. In 2013, a mobile court had been established in Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni; hearings were held along the riverbank. In 2015 the number of judges had been considerably increased; the same year, an agreement had been signed with the Justice and Law Centre of Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni. A parliamentary report had been established on the Amerindian question, which proposed installing an administrative support unit in the region and setting up a public service centre in Maripasoula.

25. **Ms. Gilberg** (France) said that the bill to modernize the justice system for the twenty-first century, which was awaiting parliamentary approval, contained provisions to increase the deadline for birth registration from three to five days, and even up to eight days in special circumstances, thereby resolving some of the barriers to registration in certain areas of French Guiana. In that connection, 29 mobile courts had taken place in remote or hard-to-reach areas of French Guiana in 2015 to enable around 400 cases in which birth registration had not been completed within the required three days to be resolved. Lastly, the Ministry of Justice had been tasked with creating and disseminating information to inform the population of the importance of birth certificates and the reasons why birth registration was necessary.

26. **Mr. Leschi** (France) said he wished to add that a mobile registry office, staffed by a magistrate and a court clerk, navigated the Maroni River by boat to enable people to register births. Moreover, a justice and law centre was to be opened in Maripasoula, which was located midway down the Maroni River, and the locally elected Ministry of Justice representative had worked diligently to improve access to the justice system for the local and indigenous populations.

27. **Mr. Vinquant** (France) said that certain services available throughout metropolitan and overseas France had not previously been established in Mayotte but were now gradually being introduced. By way of example, benefits for persons with disabilities had now been established and would take effect once the departmental council had set up a departmental centre for persons with disabilities, which was expected to be completed in 2016, with a view to carrying out evaluations of and providing support to persons with disabilities.

28. **Ms. Schulz** said that she wished to know what measures had been taken or were envisaged to increase women's political representation on executive boards at communal,

regional and departmental levels. She wondered whether the provisions of articles 21 to 24 of the Civil Code, which related to the acquisition of French citizenship, had been assessed to determine whether they might lead to the indirect discrimination of foreign women married to French men. Lastly, she asked whether the measures implemented in French Guiana to address the difficulties associated with obtaining birth certificates and other identity documents had also been put in place in other overseas territories such as New Caledonia or French Polynesia.

29. **Ms. Rossignol** (France), regarding political parity, said that, while under French law there was a requirement for women's equal representation on executive committees at local, territorial and departmental levels, enacting legislation to ensure that a gender balance in respect of the chairs of those executive committees was more problematic, since candidates for that position were appointed by members of the committee and not by the political parties in question. While there were women chairs in a number of departments, the rate of progress in regional and local executive committees was still below expected levels. It was worth pointing out, however, that the current Government had achieved a gender balance in its cabinet of ministers.

30. **Mr. Leschi** (France) said that article 21-4 of the Civil Code permitted the Government to reject applications for French citizenship by marriage on the grounds of failure to assimilate, excluding linguistic assimilation. Moreover, to date, that provision had been applied only in cases of polygamy involving men who had been found to have wives in other countries.

31. **Ms. Alcade** (France) said that, as part of the transition of Mayotte towards becoming a French overseas department, a commission had been established in 2000 to assess the local legislative framework in order to facilitate the implementation of civil law. The overseas territories of New Caledonia and French Polynesia, however, had retained a great deal of autonomy and had their own competent authorities for dealing with civil status issues.

Articles 10 to 14

32. **Ms. Acosta Vargas** said that she shared the concerns raised by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its most recent concluding observations (CRC/C/FRA/CO/5) regarding the negative impact that children's socioeconomic background had on their achievement in school and the disparities in the allocation of resources to schools. In that connection, she wondered what measures had been taken by the Ministry of Education to halt the deterioration of quality schooling for certain segments of society and whether any temporary special measures had been considered to allocate additional resources and enhance the educational system, particularly in disadvantaged areas and in overseas departments and territories. In a similar vein, she asked what action had been taken by the State party to improve access to education for girls living in indigenous communities, including in French Guiana, in the light of the difficulties they faced in obtaining identity documents or owing to their cultural background and geographical situation and whether priority education zone programmes might be extended to overseas departments. Lastly, it would be interesting to know whether the State party intended to assess the implementation of the law of 2004 on conspicuous wearing of religious symbols in public schools with a view to verifying that its provisions had not inadvertently given rise to acts of discrimination, and what action had been taken in schools to promote respect for cultural difference.

33. **Mr. Bruun** said that fundamental problems persisted in the French labour market, notably horizontal and vertical segregation, sexual harassment and the gender pay gap, among others. He expressed concern that some of the provisions contained in the recently adopted French labour law were disadvantageous to women employees, particularly women

in part-time employment, pregnant women or women with small children. In that connection, he asked what was meant by the principle of neutrality, which was contained in that law, and how it ensured that women's rights were respected in companies' internal working regulations; whether an impact assessment had been conducted to determine if the new law might result in the indirect discrimination against women, and whether the concerns raised by women's organizations had been sufficiently taken into account.

34. While the reforms aimed at encouraging fathers to take paternity leave were commendable, the Committee had received reports that the aim of those provisions had not been realized on the ground. Data or follow-up reports on the impact of those reforms would therefore be gratefully received.

35. In the light of reports that the Constitutional Council had repealed the provisions of the Civil Code on punishing cases of sexual harassment, he asked whether recent legislation on sexual harassment and sexist behaviour contained similar provisions and whether it was applicable to the public as well as the private sector.

36. The Committee was concerned that the 30 per cent quota for women in managerial positions related only to new appointments and that the target had not even been achieved by the Government's own departments. In that connection, he wondered what action had been taken to ensure that the administration complied with those targets, rather than accepting the fines associated with failure to do so. He would be interested to know how the money collected through those monetary fines was used.

37. Lastly, he asked what measures had been implemented or were envisaged to bridge the pay gap in the public sector, and whether the State party intended to ratify the International Labour Organization (ILO) Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189).

38. **Ms. Chalal** said that inequality with regard to access to health care persisted, both in metropolitan and overseas France, particularly in relation to sexual and reproductive health. In that connection, she would be interested to know how the State party planned to tackle those disparities and ensure that the recently updated health-care legislation was applied consistently throughout all French territories. She wished to know what initiatives were envisaged to ensure that rural women, particularly those in areas of metropolitan France affected by maternity unit closures, as well as Roma women, women with disabilities, women migrant workers and refugees, could gain access to appropriate health-care services. She was also concerned that intersex children were victims of prejudice and discrimination, and she wondered what measures the Government intended to implement, including through legislation, in order to safeguard their right to health care and physical integrity.

39. She asked what steps were being taken to remove the barriers women faced in accessing health care in overseas France and to tackle the discrimination faced by indigenous women, particularly in French Guiana. In that vein, she wondered whether any strategies were in the pipeline to improve the distribution of health services in French Guiana, particularly in view of the territory's size and the difficulties associated with obtaining identity documents. As to the plight of the French Polynesian women suffering from radiation poisoning, she would welcome information on whether a compensation fund had been established, whether the complaints process was to be accelerated and whether there were measures to increase awareness of the risks of working in affected areas.

40. Lastly, she asked what initiatives had been implemented or were envisaged to reduce maternal and infant mortality in French Guiana, what measures were in place, in both metropolitan and overseas France, to reduce the incidence of early and undesired pregnancies, and what their outcomes had been, whether policies in France aimed at preventing new HIV infections were being rolled out to the overseas territories and what basic health-care services were available to foreign women who did not have medical insurance.

41. **Mr. Clavreul** (France) said that the below average school achievement of the children of immigrants was of major concern to the Government. While it was clear that both general and targeted measures were needed to improve their results, research on that issue had also shown that some of the children from those backgrounds did excel in their studies. By way of example, girls from the Maghreb region, central Africa and East Asia had achieved results that were above the French national average. On the other hand, girls of Turkish origin were not only lagging behind Turkish boys in school but were also well below the national average for French children.

42. **Mr. Leschi** (France), regarding the Act of 2004 on conspicuous wearing of religious symbols in public schools, said that the primary concern of the Government had been to ensure that all girls could access the full range of subjects taught under the national curriculum in public schools. Notwithstanding a few isolated cases, the ban on visible religious signs had not led to an increase in girls' absenteeism or dropout rates. Moreover, the French system gave parents the freedom to choose the most appropriate school for their children, and that included the option of enrolling them in independent private schools or religious schools where the veil could be worn and the curriculum taught was set by the schools themselves.

43. **Ms. Pétreault** (France) said that the rate of attendance in schools in Mayotte and French Guiana was similar to the national average in metropolitan France. A priority education policy contained provisions for extra resources to be allocated to schools whose communities were experiencing social and educational difficulties, and investments in education in French Guiana had resulted in an increase in teaching staff and the building of new schools and colleges. In Mayotte, there were also plans to develop the educational infrastructure, provide additional resources under the priority education policy, promote bilingual teaching and improve the professionalism of teaching staff.

44. **Ms. Alcade** (France) said that efforts to facilitate school attendance among children from indigenous and Bushinenge communities living along the Maroni River included a pilot project to provide accommodation and school meals to those children. Initiatives were also under way in both French Guiana and Mayotte to promote bilingualism among schoolchildren by offering teaching in locally spoken languages and in French. It was hoped that, in so doing, a balance could be struck between preserving and respecting the local culture and traditional family life and opening the doors to the French-speaking world through a modern approach to education.

45. **Ms. Rossignol** (France), regarding the new labour law, said it was expected that by involving employees more closely in collective bargaining processes in the workplace, negotiations were more likely to be successful and to the benefit of workers. The Government had, for example, preserved certain legal safeguards to ensure that broad agreement was required for exemptions from the minimum number of working hours. It was worth highlighting that the new labour law contained many provisions aimed at promoting equality in the workplace. By way of example, it included measures to prevent sexual harassment and sexist behaviour, protect pregnant women or those on maternity leave from loss of employment and provide additional safeguards to enable women to return to work after having a baby.

46. A bill on equality and citizenship included provisions on sexual harassment in the workplace and was applicable to the public sector. Concerning parental leave, the Government's family policy showed its commitment to gender equality in the workplace. Some 60,000 new day-care places had been created since 2013, for example, and parents had more flexibility in terms of the placement of very young infants in day nurseries for specific periods of time without having to register the child for the entire year. Shared parental leave, which for the first child amounted to six months each for the mother and the

father, was considered to be advantageous in terms of helping women to return to work. Monitoring of that policy was ongoing, and the first results were expected in early 2017.

47. **Mr. Vinquant** (France) said that, as part of the National Health Strategy for Overseas Departments, €20 million had been earmarked for the development of outpatient facilities and services for persons with disabilities and older persons, with priority given to particularly underserved groups, such as children with disabilities in French Guiana and persons with multiple disabilities, behavioural problems or autism in Mayotte.

48. The national plan to combat HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases included a component on the overseas departments that placed special emphasis on French Guiana and Guadeloupe, which had large at-risk populations owing to prostitution and drug use. Significant progress had been made through the distribution of free self-diagnostic tests and the organization of large community screening operations in areas with a high incidence of disease and among migrant populations.

49. Maternal and infant mortality was particularly high in Mayotte and Guiana. In Mayotte, 75 per cent of women who gave birth were of foreign origin, and many arrived in Mayotte weeks before delivery, thus precluding appropriate prenatal care and resulting in higher maternal and infant mortality rates than elsewhere in France. The National Health Strategy for Overseas Departments called for strengthening prenatal and post-partum protection for women and infants.

50. **Ms. Rossignol** (France) said that issues relating to intersex children would be dealt with as part of the review of the bioethics law, which would be conducted in 2017.

51. **Ms. Alcade** (France) said that, during a recent visit to French Polynesia and Wallis-and-Foutuna, the President of the Republic had announced the allocation of sizeable funds to address health problems related to radiation from nuclear testing, including improvements to the oncology department in Papeete, to check for mercury contamination and to provide access to clean well water. The National Health Strategy for Overseas Departments provided in-depth analysis and information on the efforts being conducted to contain tropical diseases.

52. **Ms. Pomeranzi** asked whether there were plans to introduce separate income tax reporting for married couples or partners in civil unions, whether measures to improve gender balance in sports and culture had been effective and what agencies were supported by the Government's €256 million investment in multilateral programmes on sexual and reproductive health.

53. She would welcome information on the Government's efforts to improve the situation of women in agriculture, particularly in New Caledonia, where women were subject to discriminatory customary laws regarding access to land, and on its position on the efforts of indigenous women in French Guiana to defend their lands from mining and other land-use projects that seriously affected their health. She asked what measures had been taken to combat discrimination against migrant women and French women of African descent in accessing the labour market and health and educational services, and their exposure to violence. Would the State party consider halting the expulsion of Roma women from unauthorized camps so long as no alternative housing was available for them, and had measures been taken to address their needs for education and employment? She would appreciate information on how the recommendations of the Inspector-General for Detention Facilities that were set out in her 2016 report were being implemented, particularly in terms of promoting alternatives to imprisonment and improving the quality of cells, sanitation and medical care in prisons. The delegation should comment on the extension of deadlines set by law for making public buildings accessible to persons with disabilities.

54. **Ms. Rossignol** (France) said that proposals for separate reporting by spouses or partners had to be reconciled with the overall tax policy of France, which was oriented towards the family. France was moving towards a system of deduction at source, and there were proposals to allow couples greater flexibility in reporting income.

55. **Ms. Seydoux** (France) said that, although the Gender Equality Act stipulated the obligation to ensure parity within sports federations, women were still insufficiently represented in the leadership of such federations. The Ministry of Sports was engaged in dialogue with sports federations, and a public anti-sexism campaign and events that highlighted women's sports were being planned. As to women's representation in the area of culture, there were still too few female artists in positions of responsibility; however, the Ministry of Culture had made commitments to ensuring equality between men and women in its agreements with hundreds of partner cultural institutions.

56. **Mr. Vinquant** (France) said that an interministerial committee on rural issues had adopted measures to promote women's participation in areas traditionally reserved for men, such as agriculture, and had formulated a plan for female entrepreneurship with a component on rural women that called for promoting women's participation in farm management and increasing the public funding of agreements for training in agritourism and environmental preservation.

57. **Mr. Leschi** (France) said that employment restrictions on the Roma and on Bulgarian nationals had been lifted in late 2013, and efforts were being made to provide occupational training and information on contraception to Roma girls and women. In some cities, training programmes on ecology and selective recycling were producing excellent results. The Government worked in close cooperation with the Government of Romania concerning Roma camps and families.

58. **Ms. Alcade** (France) said that, in general, indigenous lands were inalienable, non-transferable and non-interchangeable. A recent report on overseas landownership systems would be examined carefully through the prism of women's issues and discrimination.

59. **Mr. Vinquant** (France) said that information concerning the implementation of the Act of 11 February 2005 on equality of rights and opportunities, participation and civic rights of persons with disabilities was contained in the initial report of France (CRPD/C/FRA/1) that had been submitted to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Deadlines for compliance with provisions on the accessibility of public buildings and transportation had been extended since the works required were particularly lengthy, given the large number of old buildings concerned.

60. **Mr. Clavreul** (France) said that there were pending amendments to the Labour Code that would allow company policies and procedures to include restrictions on employees' outward displays of their beliefs. Such restrictions must be justified by the exercise of other fundamental rights and freedoms or necessitated by the proper functioning of the company and be commensurate with the objective sought; they represented a clarification of existing provisions rather than a departure from them.

61. **Ms. Seydoux** (France) said that the 30-per-cent quota for the appointment of women to executive posts in the public sector had been reached in 2015 and was expected to be reached in 2016 too, although there were doubts about achieving the 40 per cent quota by 2017. Efforts were being made to identify the precise obstacles to women's holding of such posts, such as periods in their life cycle when they were less likely to be capable of assuming an executive post.

62. **Ms. Rossignol** (France) said that the Government was establishing a talent management policy to help plan for the promotion or retirement of managers.

63. **Mr. Clavreul** (France) said that, not only was a complaint mechanism available to children or young persons who were subjected to discrimination or violence at school, but school administrators provided protection and reported such incidents to the competent authorities. All forms of discrimination were addressed with the same level of commitment.

64. **Ms. Pétreault** (France) said that the policies and principles of all enterprises called for respecting others without distinction.

65. **Ms. Gilberg** (France) said that the Inspector-General for Detention Facilities had recommended setting up a network of women's places of detention in order to preserve family ties. Women accounted for only 3.6 per cent of the prison population in France. That situation was somewhat offset by the existence of family units that organized regular visits between women prisoners and their families. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Justice recognized that more needed to be done and had thus made plans for a new women's prison with 60 places that would be inaugurated in 2017 in the south of France.

Articles 15 and 16

66. **Ms. Schulz** asked whether the Government intended to increase the budget for legal aid to ensure that low-income women in divorce cases had access to a qualified lawyer. She wished to know whether, when naming a child, parents were informed about alternatives to using the father's surname, whether the bill on the modernization of justice in the twenty-first century would allow transgender persons to change their name on the basis of a simple request to the civil registry and whether there were plans to provide legal protection for couples in unmarried cohabitation in the event of disability of one of the partners.

67. She asked whether efforts were being made to modernize customary law in New Caledonia in the areas of marriage, inheritance or divorce, and whether such efforts had been undertaken in other overseas territories. With regard to Regulation (EU) No. 650/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 July 2012, she asked whether the new general connecting factor for determining jurisdiction and applicable law, namely the habitual residence of the deceased at the time of death, could have the effect of discriminating against women and girls living in France whose husbands or fathers, respectively, had died in a country outside of France in which inheritance laws discriminated against women.

68. **Ms. Gilberg** (France) said that the percentage of legal aid provided to low-income women in divorce cases represented more than 80 per cent of all legal aid for women. The bill on the modernization of justice in the twenty-first century would amend the Civil Code in order to allow persons to change the registration of their sex directly with the civil registry. Parents were informed of the system that they could use to name children using both parents' surnames.

69. **Mr. Vinquant** (France) said that the Government would transmit its reply on the application of Regulation (EU) 650/2012 to the Committee in writing.

70. **Ms. Rossignol** (France) said that the frankness of her delegation's replies to the Committee's questions demonstrated the importance that France attached to them. Although not mentioned by the Committee, protecting women from harassment and physical violence as a result of their choice to free themselves from a religious culture into which they had been born was included among her Ministry's responsibilities.

71. **The Chair** said that she wished to thank the delegation for having engaged in a fruitful dialogue with the Committee, which had provided further insight into the situation of women in France. She encouraged the State party to take all necessary measures to address the various concerns of the Committee, which would be set out in its recommendations.

The meeting rose at 5:35 p.m.