



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women
Fifty-sixth session**

Summary record of the 1171st meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 9 October 2013, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Neubauer (Vice-Chairperson)

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In the absence of the Chairperson, Ms. Neubauer (Vice-Chairperson) took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

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

Combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Tajikistan (CEDAW/C/TJK/4-5; CEDAW/C/TJK/Q/4-5 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Tajikistan, took places at the table.*

2. **Ms. Tagoeva** (Tajikistan), introducing the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Tajikistan (CEDAW/C/TJK/4-5) said that cooperation with the Committee was a State priority and that the key articles of the Convention had been incorporated into national legislation. It was planned to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention. The Committee's recommendations served as guiding principles for the work of all relevant State bodies. In the light of the concluding observations and recommendations issued in 2007 on the combined initial, second and third reports of Tajikistan (CEDAW/C/TJK/CO/3), State bodies and representatives of civil society had together drawn up a list of follow-up measures. Some of the measures had been fully implemented and others partially implemented.

3. Results achieved so far included the adoption in 2013 of the Domestic Violence Act. Its main aim was to protect the rights of family members and to make provision for legal, medical and psychological assistance to victims. For that purpose, 33 crisis centres and 3 shelters were now operational and offices providing advice and medical assistance for women and children who were victims had been set up in some municipal and district maternity wards. Pursuant to a ministerial decree, internal affairs agencies had introduced the post of inspector for the prevention of domestic violence. An inter-agency working group with representatives from ministries and State agencies and civil society had been established to devise a national programme on the prevention of violence for 2014–2023. In 2010, the legal age for marriage had been raised from 17 to 18 years.

4. As of 2007, gender issues had been taken into account in the national statistics and gender-disaggregated statistics covering all sectors were published by the National Statistics Agency. The State condemned any act that discriminated against an individual based on gender or that undermined the enjoyment of basic human or other rights. A national strategy for the advancement of women for 2011–2020 had been approved and a related action plan had been devised. Its goals included women's equal participation at decision-making levels, enhancing their professional skills, and guaranteeing social protection. With the support of development partners, the Committee for Women and the Family had established a gender network to strengthen institutional mechanisms, promote gender equality and introduce a gender perspective in ministries and State bodies. In addition, over 100 district information and consultation centres and a training centre funded by the local authorities had been opened. Awareness-raising and training activities were regularly conducted by international and local NGOs with the participation of the mass media on preventing discrimination against, eliminating negative stereotypes, and promoting the education of women.

5. The Government was taking the problem of human trafficking seriously and, as a result, Tajikistan had been removed from the human trafficking watch list. A comprehensive programme to combat human trafficking for 2011–2013 had been adopted and a similar programme for 2014–2016 was being drafted. Two draft laws on combating human trafficking and providing assistance to victims had been submitted to parliament for consideration; amendments to the Criminal Code relating to human trafficking, child

prostitution and child pornography had been drafted; a national plan to combat human trafficking for 2013–2014 had been approved. The Procurator-General had approved recommendations on the safety of and assistance to victims as well as on how to deal with witnesses in trafficking cases. As of 2009, the Committee for Women and the Family had been providing support services to girls who had been victims of sexual violence, cruelty and trafficking, including a free helpline and legal advice.

6. Increasing the participation of women in political and public life was one of the Government's priorities. In 2011, following a report by the Committee for Women and the Family on the implementation of the law on equal opportunities, 14 women had been appointed to decision-making positions in ministries and State bodies. As at July 2013, the percentage of women in the civil service had reached 23.5 per cent – an increase of 5 per cent since 2008; while, since 2007, the percentage of women holding senior positions in the central authorities had increased by 124 per cent and in the local authorities by 27 per cent. The Committee for Women and the Family and the Civil Service Department were preparing women for senior positions in the diplomatic services, including as ambassadors and heads of diplomatic missions; no Tajik women currently held such positions. The number of women employed in the diplomatic service had risen by 33 per cent since 2010. Over the last three years, three women had graduated from the Diplomatic Academy; and two women were currently studying there.

7. The percentage of women in parliament had also increased slightly since 2005 currently standing at 15 per cent in the upper chamber, and 19.4 per cent in the lower chamber. In addition, women's representation had increased more than threefold in local government bodies. The number of women judges was on the increase and 50 per cent higher than in 2008. Nine women were court presidents. Women's right to citizenship was enshrined in Tajik legislation and men and women had equal rights upon obtaining Tajik citizenship.

8. Specific measures had been undertaken to remedy the gender disparity in education that had occurred in the early years of the period of transition, inter alia, through the establishment of a gender education centre attached to the Academy of Education to promote gender equality at all levels of education. Temporary special measures had been implemented to attract young women into higher education. From 1997 to 2013, the presidential quota system had enabled 12,349 young people to enter higher education institutions, 69 per cent of whom were young women. For the academic year 2011/12, the completion rate for girls in primary education had been 5.4 per cent higher than in 2008. For the same period, the completion rate for girls in general education had increased by 23 per cent. However, despite the measures undertaken, the drop-out rate was still a problem. For the 2012/13 academic year, 2,672 children had dropped out of school, of whom 43.8 per cent had been girls. A law on the responsibility of parents for the upbringing and education of their children had been adopted to protect children's rights and interests, and, in 2013, administrative proceedings had been instituted against 4,760 parents under that law.

9. In 2012, the Government had approved a national programme for training women specialists and promoting their employment for 2012–2015. Special attention was paid to vocational training for adults through the development of adult learning centres. Since 2008, the number of permanent jobs for women had increased more than twofold. Since 2006, almost US\$ 1.25 million had been spent on presidential grants to promote female entrepreneurship and create jobs from which 23,000 women had benefited.

10. In the health sector, a number of legal and regulatory provisions had been adopted to protect women's general and reproductive health. Health-care services for mothers and children had improved. Consequently, the abortion ratio had dropped from 113.9 per 1,000 live births in 2002 to 71 per 1,000 live births in 2013, and the maternal mortality rate had

decreased from 49.6 per 100,000 live births in 2002 to 37.2 per 100,000 live births as at June 2013. Awareness-raising activities were conducted on reproductive health, family planning, cancer prevention and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS.

11. With the support of international organizations, offices providing psychological assistance to victims of human trafficking, violence and discrimination, including people living with HIV/AIDS, had been established in medical facilities. According to official statistics for 2013, the number of HIV-infected women had risen to 1,370. A programme for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission was under way and a protocol had been approved for prenatal testing for the HIV infection, timely detection of mother-to-child transmission and treatment of HIV-infected women during pregnancy.

12. Measures were being implemented to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas, to ensure their equal participation in the agricultural sector and access to medical and family planning services and to credit schemes. To ensure equal access to land, training was provided to government specialists on gender-sensitive issues in the agricultural sector and such issues had been taken into account in the programme of agricultural reform for 2012–2020. As a result, the number of women in charge of private farms had increased by 49.8 per cent from 2008 to 2013.

13. Steps were also being taken to eliminate discrimination against women in marriage and family relations and to safeguard children's interests. To strengthen the institution of marriage, in cooperation with civil society, the Government conducted awareness-raising activities, including among young people as, in recent years, the number of divorces had been increasing and mainly among young couples. Ensuring equality, defending the rights of women and protecting them against violence and discrimination were among the priorities of the Commissioner on Human Rights.

Articles 1 to 3

14. **Ms. Al-Jehani** welcoming the news that the State party intended to ratify the Optional Protocol asked when ratification was expected to take place. She also welcomed the adoption of the Domestic Violence Act and amendments to the Criminal Code bringing legislation into line with international standards. However, she wondered whether consideration had been given to the Committee's recommendations for amendments to the law on equal opportunities which did not cover important aspects such as the prohibition of direct and indirect discrimination or temporary special measures. She asked how the Committee on Women and the Family monitored the enforcement of that law and how many related reports had been issued. Had any gender assessments been done of existing or draft laws? Had any criminal cases been brought by women under article 143 of the Criminal Code, and if so, how many?

15. Although in accordance with the Constitution, international treaties took precedence over domestic legislation, it appeared that the Convention had not been invoked in courts. Was that because of a lack of training or awareness among the judiciary and women in Tajikistan? She enquired about the situation of older women and in particular whether women over the age of 50 were taken into account in the gender-disaggregated statistics referred to in the introductory statement. It appeared that current legislation on reproductive health covered women up to the age of 50, suggesting that the needs of older women were not systematically addressed in Tajikistan.

16. **Ms. Pires** said that it was not clear whether the Committee on Women and the Family was an interministerial body or was composed of civil servants. The report referred to 19 staff members, whereas the written replies (CEDAW/C/TJK/Q/4-5/Add.1) mentioned only 15. Had there been a reduction in staff and, if so, why? The Committee seemed to have a very broad mandate and she wondered whether it had enough suitably qualified staff

and funding to carry out that mandate. Were there any plans to change the name or status of the Committee, in keeping with its very broad mandate? What was the total allocation for activities relating to women's empowerment and gender equality in the State budget? Lastly, she asked whether all relevant ministries were involved in the implementation of the national strategy for the advancement of women and whether the budget allocated to it was sufficient.

17. **Mr. Ashurov** (Tajikistan), acknowledging that the question of ratifying the Optional Protocol had been under consideration for some time, said that all the necessary documentation had now been reviewed by the ministerial departments concerned and was ready to be submitted to parliament for approval. Furthermore, in April 2013, the President of the Republic had endorsed the national plan for implementing the recommendations made during the universal periodic review, one of which was to ratify the Optional Protocol by 2015; he anticipated that ratification procedures would be completed before that date.

18. **Mr. Vokhidov** (Tajikistan) said that according to available statistics, since 2009, only two cases had been taken to court for violations under article 143 of the Criminal Code. It was not the practice of the judges in Tajikistan to invoke the provisions of the Convention during court proceedings; they usually referred to national legislation such as the Code of Criminal Procedure and there was no conflict between the Code and the Convention.

19. **Ms. Mukumova** (Tajikistan) said that article 17 of the Constitution established equal rights for men and women. The Government was making considerable efforts to bring national legislation into line with international standards and to amend the law on equal opportunities. Working groups had been established to bring legislation into line with the provisions of the Constitution and international law and to draft a new Labour Code and new Criminal Code by the end of 2014.

20. **Ms. Tagoeva** (Tajikistan) said that the main functions of the Committee for Women and the Family were to implement State policy, to protect and promote the rights and interests of women, to ensure gender equality and the greater participation of women, to deal with their socioeconomic problems and to reform relevant legislation. It coordinated the activities of State bodies, NGOs and international partners to promote gender equality. The Committee was chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister. In 2012, staff cuts had been made in the civil service and the number of staff members in the central office had been reduced to 15. However, the number of staff in offices at district, municipal and regional levels had been increased and now totalled 200.

21. The Committee had a budget of more than US\$ 150,000. Its mandate included coordinating various national programmes, primarily the national strategy for the advancement of women, encouraging the participation of women in society and training young women for leadership roles. Approximately US\$ 50,000 had been allocated in the State budget to implement those activities from 2007 to 2017. Since 2009, in cooperation with partners, the Committee had established information and counselling centres nationwide that were financed by local budgets. The Committee was also responsible for the distribution of presidential grants and there were plans to increase funding for grants and double the number of grants to encourage female entrepreneurs. The question of changing the name and raising the status of the Committee was under consideration at different levels and would hopefully yield results. Women over the age of 50 were taken into account in national statistics. The results of the most recent census contained statistics disaggregated by age and gender.

22. **Ms. Latofat** (Tajikistan) said that, in 2010, women had accounted for more than 60 per cent of the elderly. The average life expectancy had been 68.2, but by 2012 it had reached 72.5 years and there had been twice as many women as men over the age of 90. In

2006, a gerontology centre had been established that provided assistance and therapy and organized educational, awareness-raising and leisure activities. The Ministry of Health had decided that, as of 2013, every district hospital would have a centre offering free consultations on health problems and active ageing for the elderly. Such persons were also entitled to free sanatorium and orthopaedic treatment. After the age of 80, they received a supplementary pension allowance. The social protection system had more than 20 centres that provided services for the elderly, including home helps and full-time carers, as required. With support from the European Union, 11 day centres had been set up and more were planned by 2015; 6 of them already provided services for the elderly.

23. **Ms. Jobirova** (Tajikistan) said that under the relevant legislation in force the reproductive rights of all citizens were protected and they were entitled to reproductive health-care services. Screening for cancer was provided for women over 35 twice a year. Women over 50 received information on cancer prevention. A clinical protocol had also been drawn up for post-menopausal problems. Women over 80 were entitled to free medical treatment and, in 2012, a new faculty to train specialists in geriatrics had been opened.

24. **Ms. Tagoeva** (Tajikistan) said that the Committee for Women and the Family was responsible for overseeing implementation of the national strategy for the advancement of women. Related activities carried out by ministries and State bodies were funded from the State budget allocated to those bodies and with donor contributions. The Committee had also worked closely with donors, NGOs, and international organizations which had provided input for the related action plan. It had been approved for a period of 5 years and would be funded from the State budget.

25. **Ms. Al-Jehani** sought clarification regarding the enforcement mechanism for the law on equal opportunities, the process for monitoring its implementation and related reports that under the law should be published in the mass media. She asked whether and how the concept of multiple discrimination was addressed, why the Convention was not invoked in the courts and whether a gender assessment of laws was undertaken before their adoption.

26. **Ms. Jahan** asked whether the Committee for Women and the Family received adequate financial resources and whether the action plan for the national strategy was binding on ministries.

27. **The Chairperson**, speaking in her capacity as an expert, asked whether the Committee's concluding observations on the previous periodic report had been translated into Tajik and disseminated, how their implementation had been coordinated and how the concluding observations issued following the consideration of the current report would be addressed.

28. **Mr. Ashurov** (Tajikistan) said that, while the provisions of the Convention were not directly invoked in courts in Tajikistan, all international instruments and norms were incorporated in domestic legislation. A decree on the compulsory application of international legislation by courts was due to be issued in December.

29. **Ms. Tagoeva** (Tajikistan) said that, in 2011, the Committee for Women and the Family had established a special department on gender issues to monitor the implementation of the law on equal opportunities, and its findings had been submitted to the Government. Consequently, a protocol for all ministries and regional authorities had been drawn up, which had brought some improvements, including in the number of women appointed to senior positions. A board had been set up within the Committee for Women and the Family that comprised representatives from key ministries and departments and from civil society. Among other things, the board discussed the results of the implementation of the law on equal opportunities and a range of programmes and

legislation, and issued guidelines to be implemented by the appropriate government departments and local authorities. The action plan was an internal document that had been approved by the Chairperson of the Committee for Women and the Family; its implementation was also monitored. The Committee for Women and the Family did not receive sufficient funds; funding came from both national and regional sources and it was hoped that funding would increase in future.

30. **Ms. Mukumova** (Tajikistan) said that a gender assessment of all legislation was carried out by the appropriate bodies, including the Committee for Women and the Family and a parliamentary committee on social issues. Civil society organizations could make proposals regarding draft bills; recent examples included legislation on domestic violence. It was hoped that such involvement would increase the impact of legislation.

31. **Ms. Tagoeva** (Tajikistan) said that after the recommendations issued in the light of the previous periodic report had been published, several panels and round tables with civil society had taken place to establish measures for their implementation by the relevant government ministries and departments, the results of which had been included in the current report. A body had been set up to monitor the implementation of all instructions and recommendations issued to government bodies, including on the drafting of periodic reports. A compendium of the recommendations on the previous periodic report had been translated into Tajik.

Articles 4 to 6

32. **The Chairperson**, speaking in her capacity as an expert, said that the Convention required both de jure and de facto equality of women; temporary special measures were a useful way of bridging the gap between legislation and the real situation of women, particularly disadvantaged groups. She asked whether the concept of temporary special measures was fully understood by policymakers in Tajikistan and expressed the hope that a working group would be established to provide a legal basis for the introduction of such measures.

33. **Ms. Jahan**, noting that traditional attitudes towards women prevailed in Tajikistan, asked what special measures the Government was taking to raise awareness of gender equality, particularly among community and religious leaders to remove gender stereotypes from school curricula and teaching material and to promote the positive portrayal of women in the media. She wished to know what concrete steps had been taken to disseminate the Convention and, given the low awareness of gender issues among public officials, what gender issues were included in their training. While the State party's recognition that traditional Muslim attitudes were obstacles to women's rights was a positive sign, the current ban on women on attending mosques and wearing headscarves in public education institutions should be revisited. There were reports that four female students had been expelled from the Tajik National University for wearing the hijab, was there an official ban?

34. **Ms. Šimonović** enquired about measures planned to promote implementation of the law on the prevention of domestic violence. She wondered whether the law properly addressed victims, especially women, and made provision for prevention and protection measures. She asked what the difference was between crisis and rehabilitation centres, how many there were, whether they would be financed by the State in future and whether their numbers would be increased. She wished to know more about protection orders: whether they facilitated the removal of perpetrators of domestic violence from the home and what happened after they expired. Lastly, she requested specific data on domestic violence.

35. **Ms. Leinarte**, after commending the State party's work against trafficking in women and girls, asked: how many victims had been identified; how many adolescent girls

had been assisted by dedicated support centres; how many calls crisis centres received annually; what financial and human resources such centres had; how many victims had received medical assistance in line with a 2009 Ministry of Health decree; and whether it was free of charge. She asked about the procedure for foreign female victims who wished to remain in the country and what was meant by the statement in the replies to the list of issues “specific requirements ensuring an accurate accounting of” Tajik tourists, including women, returning home from abroad. She expressed concern that such procedures might violate women’s right to freedom of movement. She requested more information on the draft law on trafficking with regard to victims of sexual violence. Turning to prostitution, she asked what measures had been implemented to assist victims, what remedies existed or were planned to prevent their engagement in prostitution and whether Tajikistan was considering introducing penalties for persons who purchased sex. She asked what measures had been taken to prevent the reported financial and sexual abuse of victims of prostitution by the police.

36. **Mr. Rahimov** (Tajikistan) said that the education system was undergoing reform aimed at ensuring that high-quality education was accessible to all and that gender issues were considered and inequalities overcome. It was hoped that gender equality in education would be achieved by 2015 and numerous measures improving the role and status of women had been introduced, including grants, quotas and teaching manuals. Assistance in setting curricula had been received from international bodies and proposals from the Academy of Education’s special unit for gender issues would be considered. He was unaware of the expulsion of the four students from the University; it occasionally happened when students failed to pass the requisite examinations or to wear the students’ uniform. The latter did allow them to wear the national headscarf.

37. **Ms. Tagoeva** (Tajikistan) said that there were different views on the role of women in society in different regions. Efforts were constantly made by central and local authorities, in cooperation with NGOs, to eradicate negative stereotypes via awareness-raising campaigns and other activities. As part of the national programme to train, select and recruit young women for leadership roles, the Committee on Women and the Family, in cooperation with the relevant State and local authorities, had provided a range of training courses and materials for more than 4,000 women to date. The national headscarf was part of the national costume and there was no prohibition against wearing it, or the hijab.

38. **Mr. Ashurov** (Tajikistan) said that the fatwa prohibiting women from attending mosques had been issued by the Council of Ulema — an independent body — and had been based on the instruction of Muhammad to one of his wives that she should pray in private.

39. **Ms. Solieva** (Tajikistan) said that the Domestic Violence Act defined a range of related offences and a series of preventive measures. The Government’s goal was to address the root causes of domestic violence; thus, the first task was to raise awareness of the issue among law enforcement agencies, the general public and civil society. Seminars had been organized for staff of the Ministry of Internal Affairs regarding domestic violence, including the timely identification of cases and gender sensitivity. Special television programmes were broadcast to help lift the stigma of domestic abuse. Since 2009, judges had received training in gender issues and a programme had been established to ensure the observance of equal rights for women.

40. Providing statistics on the number of convictions for various offences involving violence against women, she said that from 2009 to 2012, over 101 persons had been convicted for human trafficking, 223 for rape and 216 for offences related to domestic violence. Five offices had been opened with specially trained staff to deal with complaints from victims of domestic violence and more than 2,000 victims had filed complaints with internal affairs agencies. A special unit on violence against children had been set up in

2008, while prevention officers had been trained in detecting signs of abuse. Counselling services for victims of domestic violence were available at the local and regional levels.

41. **Ms. Tagoeva** (Tajikistan) said that, in addition to the Domestic Violence Act, an interdepartmental working group had been set up to prepare a nationwide action plan on domestic violence, which would be submitted to the Government by the end of November 2013. The 33 crisis centres and 3 shelters were mainly financed by NGOs. The Committee on Women and the Family had been running a project since 2009 to assist girls up to age 17 who had been victims of sexual abuse and trafficking. The facility was fully State funded and more than 200 girls had benefited from its services. Once they had spent six months in the facility, they were placed in special supervised apartments to continue their recovery and rehabilitation. There were also 105 district information points that were fully funded by the local authorities.

42. **Mr. Vokhidov** (Tajikistan) said that domestic violence was explicitly defined under the Act as deliberate psychological, sexual or economic harm, or threat thereof, committed in a family setting by one member of the family against another. All victims of trafficking were permitted to stay in the country for up to 30 days, irrespective of whether or not they cooperated with the law enforcement authorities. There were no records of trafficking offences committed against foreigners. The new anti-trafficking legislation would incorporate provisions regarding international cooperation and responsibility for redress and assistance. Both bigamy and polygamy were covered under article 170 of the Criminal Code. Between 2009 and 2013, more than 660 cases had been recorded by the law enforcement authorities; other cases might well not have been reported. Over the same period, 155 women had been murdered by men, although there was no data regarding the nature of their relationship with those men.

43. **Ms. Solieva** (Tajikistan) said that in 2013 alone, the centres run by the Ministry of Internal Affairs had admitted 21 victims of trafficking. In 2006, the Ministry had signed a memorandum of understanding with the International Organization for Migration pursuant to which the Government had set up a comprehensive referral service for victims of trafficking, including a variety of services such as legal aid and health care. The new legislation on trafficking would clearly define the State's obligations in that domain, increase human resources devoted to combating it, extend the scope of trafficking to child sex tourism and slavery, prioritize prevention, stipulate measures to avoid revictimization and to identify victims, thus ensuring their safety and providing them with a minimum package of services.

44. **Ms. Jobirova** (Tajikistan) said that the law provided for rehabilitation centres for victims of violence. To date eight such centres had been set up by the Ministry of Health in various medical institutions. The main mission of the centres was to provide primary and psychological care and report cases to the authorities. The cost of care would be charged to the offenders. A pilot project was also under way to combine psychological care, screening for sexually transmitted diseases and legal aid in hospital outpatient wards.

45. **Ms. Solieva** (Tajikistan) said that measures had been put in place to regulate the flow of illegal female migration. There were legal provisions against the recruitment of minors for sexual exploitation and efforts were being made on various fronts, including in the education and social sectors to prevent girls from falling into prostitution. The media were also fostering images of healthy relationships. However, work remained to be done to address the lack of awareness of prostitution and other forms of sexual violence. Purchasing sexual services was not an offence per se, clients would therefore only be held criminally responsible if they committed a related offence such as recruitment of a minor into prostitution or pornography.

46. **Ms. Tagoeva** (Tajikistan) acknowledged that prostitution was a reality and that some women and girls were involved against their will, but said that the Committee on Women and the Family, in conjunction with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, conducted periodic raids on brothels and helped sex workers who were interested in finding alternative employment or retrain. Some 1,500 individuals had contacted the helpline in 2012.

47. **Ms. Jahan** asked what measures would be taken to align other legislation, such as the Code of Criminal Procedure, with the planned amendments to the Domestic Violence Act. She also asked whether cases were ever investigated ex officio or without evidence of grave bodily harm. Concerned that there was no definition of the family, she wished to know whether women in relationships other than marriage were protected. She enquired about the Government's position on permitting women to pray in mosques, given that it — and not the Council of Ulema — was responsible for enforcing the law. How could women be barred from collective prayer in mosques on the basis of Muslim scriptures when they were welcome at the Ka'ba in Mecca?

48. **Ms. Acar** asked what legal provisions there were regarding violence against women other than domestic abuse, whether marital rape was an offence and whether acts such as stalking were considered a form of gender-based violence and, if not, whether the Government intended to broaden the scope of the law. She wished to know whether honour killings occurred in the State party.

49. **Ms. Šimonović** asked whether the State party planned to provide for long-term protective orders and whether it was possible to remove from the family home the person against whom the protective order was issued.

50. **Ms. Leinarte** asked whether sex workers could also turn to the crisis and medical centres for victims of trafficking and domestic abuse and, if not, whether it meant that they received no specific assistance.

51. **Ms. Solieva** (Tajikistan) said that at the time of the adoption of the Domestic Violence Act amendments had been made to other relevant legislation, including the Family Code and the Labour Code. When victims were not in a registered marriage, acts of violence they suffered at the hands of their partner, including murder, fell under the Criminal Code. Rape was an offence regardless of who was involved. Aggravating circumstances included the dependence of the victim on the perpetrator, for example, in a relationship between employee and employer, which would be considered an aggravating circumstance of stalking or harassment. If there was evidence of an offence, the subject of a protective order could be removed from the family home.

52. **Ms. Mukumova** (Tajikistan) said that the Domestic Violence Act applied to all citizens, foreigners and stateless persons residing in Tajikistan who were married or lived together and members of their family. Under the Act, either the victim or law enforcement officers could press charges. Protection orders could be extended for up to 30 days. Domestic violence was not always a criminal offence, but might fall under the Code of Administrative Offences.

53. **Ms. Jobirova** (Tajikistan) said that there were 80 reproductive health centres — where women could seek treatment and counselling confidentially — as well as HIV/AIDS prevention offices, including safe injection sites. Sex workers were welcome to use those centres and were not discriminated against in health-care matters.

54. **Mr. Ashurov** (Tajikistan), repeating the argument of the Council of Ulema, said that the pilgrimage to Mecca was mandatory whereas collective prayer was not; therefore, the example of the Ka'ba was not relevant.

55. **The Chairperson** recalled that the Committee's role was not to interpret religion but to help States parties improve the situation of women's rights.

Articles 7 and 8

56. **The Chairperson**, speaking in her capacity as expert, said that, despite some progress regarding women's political participation, women were still underrepresented at the highest echelon of the executive branch, in the legislature, at the local level and in the public service. She requested data on the representation of women in political parties' internal decision-making processes, trade unions, employers' associations and diplomacy. She asked what steps were being taken to encourage political parties to respect the principle of equal opportunity and suggested that, in the absence of quotas, the State party might consider financial incentives.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.