



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Summary record of the 1706th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 12 July 2019, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Gbedemah

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

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

Ninth periodic report of Guyana ([CEDAW/C/GUY/9](#); [CEDAW/C/GUY/Q/9](#) and [CEDAW/C/GUY/Q/9/Add.1](#))

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Guyana took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Ms. Amna Ally** (Guyana), introducing her country's ninth periodic report ([CEDAW/C/GUY/9](#)), said that since ratifying the Convention in 1980, Guyana had made good progress on gender equality and the empowerment of women, despite facing the financial and institutional constraints of a small upper-middle-income country. The Government remained committed to implementing the Convention and to upholding the human rights and dignity of all persons in their diversity. It attached great importance to the Committee's recommendations and concluding observations, which had guided the design, formulation and implementation of regulatory frameworks and public policies that advanced the agenda for the rights of women and girls and underpinned efforts to guarantee their rights.
3. Equality and non-discrimination were enshrined in the Constitution and the Government recognized its responsibility to prevent discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. For that purpose, the Government had reformed and implemented several pieces of legislation that were consistent with the purpose of the Convention, while the Ministry of Social Protection maintained an active dialogue with stakeholders and worked to fill gaps in the law. The Government also recognized the need to strengthen the four rights commissions, respectively dealing with women and gender equality, the rights of the child, indigenous peoples and ethnic relations, and it planned to review the adequacy of their mandates and resources in view of the results achieved. The structure of the Human Rights Commission would also be revisited, with a view to strengthening its independence and powers. The National Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy would guide institutions so that all of their practices, policies and programmes incorporated a gender perspective.
4. Guyana had been selected as one of six Caribbean beneficiary countries of the Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls. In that framework, a country programme document was being formulated with the assistance of the European Union, United Nations agencies and other stakeholders and was expected to be finalized and approved in November 2019. Actions would be geared towards enhancing prevention strategies and strengthening multisectoral responses to violence against women and girls. The Government believed that every individual had an inherent human right to live free from violence, abuse and discrimination. It condemned the recent attack on a leading LGBTQ rights activist, which had no place in Guyanese society. The Guyana Police Force had been working with Society against Sexual Orientation Discrimination – the leading organization representing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons in the country – and had initiated a number of measures to train police officers on how to respond professionally to complaints from members of the LGTB community.
5. With regard to women in politics, the Representation of the People Act stipulated that one third of candidates for national and local elections must be women. Women comprised 40 per cent of the Cabinet and sat as elected members on the executive of all major political parties. During the period 2011–2015, women had accounted for 33 per cent of seats in the National Assembly, and since then, their share had increased to 36 per cent.
6. The Ministry of Social Protection had implemented numerous initiatives to tackle the continuing challenge posed by gender-based violence, including by commissioning a study on its prevalence, drivers and associated factors and by conducting a survey of women's health and life experiences. In 2017, Guyana had been the first country in the Caribbean to establish a specialized sexual offences court, and it had set up a second such court in May 2019. The two courts covered the two regions that were home to the bulk of the population and were operating with a conviction rate of about 50 per cent. They applied the Model Guidelines for Sexual Offence Cases in the Caribbean Region, which had been developed on

the basis of international best practice. The Government had two shelters for survivors of domestic violence, it also subsidized a privately operated shelter in the Demerara-Mahaica region, and it had taken steps to establish more shelters throughout the country. A national action plan on domestic and sexual violence, focusing on the protection of victims, the prevention of gender-based, sexual and domestic violence, the prosecution of offenders and the rehabilitation of victims, had been finalized and was pending approval. The Government was working with the United Nations Population Fund to identify the essential services that various sectors should provide for the survivors of gender-based violence.

7. Guyana continued to fight the scourge of trafficking through numerous programmes and policies. For three consecutive years, it had maintained its Tier 1 ranking in the Trafficking in Persons Report published by the United States Department of State. The Government had increased funding for victim assistance and consequently was identifying and assisting more victims of trafficking. The National Plan of Action for the Prevention and Response to Trafficking in Persons 2019–2020 had been adopted in June 2019.

8. The Government continued to prioritize initiatives to achieve universal access to sexual and reproductive health, in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals. It strove to ensure that investment in public health was geared towards improving service delivery. In education, the Government invested in initiatives to encourage girls' and women's participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The Ministry of Education sought to reduce the dropout rate through various policies and measures, in particular with the aim of preventing teenage pregnancy and reintegrating adolescent mothers into the school system. Given that a situation analysis by the United Nations Children's Fund had revealed that the hinterland accounted for the highest rate of teenage pregnancy, the Ministry of Public Health and its partners had developed a project which aimed to reduce teenage pregnancy in hinterland regions by 10 per cent by 2022. In addition, the Cabinet had approved a new sexual and reproductive health policy that focused on reducing barriers and improving access to health services for priority population groups. The Gender Affairs Bureau, the Child Care and Protection Agency, the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Policy Unit and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) held regular seminars and workshops to address negative customs and traditional practices in rural and hinterland areas.

9. Major oil discoveries and the attendant likelihood of increased production had led some analysts to predict that Guyana would soon become one of the world's fastest-growing economies. Such rapid growth would undoubtedly have a positive impact on the Government's capacity to expand its programmes, in keeping with its continuing commitment to the advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Articles 1 to 6

10. **Ms. Reddock** said that, while Guyana was to be congratulated on having ratified a number of international instruments since the submission of its previous report, the signing and ratification of conventions were worthless without robust systems of implementation and access to justice. She welcomed the increase in the number of female magistrates, which carried the potential for a similar increase in the proportion of women judges. The establishment of the sexual offences courts was also a positive development. In that regard, she was interested to know whether the courts had audiovisual facilities which might allow for better access for persons with disabilities, including women and girls. To what extent did indigenous women in the hinterland have access to justice through mobile courts, time set aside in regional magistrates' courts or other arrangements? She was also interested to know whether the State party planned to strengthen the capacity of judges to rule on gender issues, for example by partnering with the Institute for Gender Studies of the University of Guyana to systematically provide gender education programmes for judicial officers. The delegation might also provide an update on the status of amendments to the Sexual Offences Act. Recognizing that legal aid clinics were particularly important for women, she asked whether the Government planned to expand such services to ensure access to justice for all women, particularly those who lived in regions that did not have such clinics.

11. The Committee was concerned that Guyana did not yet have an adequate legal mechanism that recognized the collective ownership of land, which had economic and gender

implications for indigenous people and other communities. She suggested that the State party should engage constructively with indigenous communities in order to put such a mechanism in place and to implement previous treaty body recommendations to bring the Amerindian Act 2006 and other laws into line with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

12. Encouraging the State party to do more to make the Convention widely known throughout Guyana, and noting that the International Year of Indigenous Languages was being celebrated in 2019, she asked whether the State party would be willing to have the Convention translated into at least two indigenous languages and to prepare and distribute recordings in those languages in order to raise awareness among indigenous women of their rights. She took note of the Government's plans for economic development and expressed the hope that gender and social equality would continue to be priorities during the country's development in the years to come.

13. **Ms. Bethel** said that she would appreciate clarification of the information provided in the periodic report on the legal status of the Convention and its incorporation into domestic law. She was concerned that women and girls in Guyana had no protection from indirect and intersecting forms of discrimination and that the definition of discrimination contained in the Constitution was not in line with article 1 of the Convention. In that regard, she asked whether the proposed amendment to the Prevention of Discrimination Act, which would incorporate the Convention's definition of discrimination into national law, would cover the full panoply of rights, or would cover only employment rights. What time frame was envisaged for the amendment?

14. Recalling that the State party was obliged to harmonize its provisions on equality and non-discrimination with article 2 of the Convention and target 5.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals, she asked when the Government would enact laws to decriminalize same-sex intimacy and further protect lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women against violence and against discrimination in accessing health care, social services and employment. Did the Government plan to review legislation with the aim of eliminating all discrimination against women and allowing them to invoke the full Convention before the courts?

15. **Ms. Amna Ally** (Guyana) said that the visibility and accessibility of justice for indigenous women had improved significantly since 2015. Courts had been established in the hinterland regions of Upper Takutu-Upper Essequibo and Barima-Waini, where many indigenous people resided. While the geography of the interior was not conducive to the holding of daily court sessions, the Government had taken some initial steps to improve access to justice and it hoped to further improve it. Similarly, it aimed to expand legal aid services throughout the country.

16. The issue of land tenure and use was a serious one that had not gone unnoticed. The Government treated it as a matter of priority and planned to put in place a regulatory framework on land use in indigenous areas. A commission had been established to examine and regularize the distribution of land in interior locations, and it had commenced work in some areas. To increase the visibility of the Convention, the Government had organized awareness-raising activities in all 10 regions, including programmes in Macushi and other indigenous languages. Radio stations, sometimes broadcasting in indigenous languages, had been launched to communicate with communities in hinterland regions. The Government believed in the importance of a level playing field and did not discriminate against the LGBTQ community. It had participated in programmes and sessions with civil society, the police and the judiciary to develop a shared understanding and to ensure non-discriminatory treatment for members of that community.

17. **Ms. La Fleur** (Guyana) said that the Government used various types of media to promote the visibility of the Convention. Its content was taught at some secondary schools and was included in the outreach work of the Gender Affairs Bureau. Public service announcements were broadcast on different channels, including those of Amerindian communities, and they explained what the Convention stood for and how it benefited both women and men. The Ministry of Social Protection sensitized its staff on the Convention in preparation for the work they carried out on social issues in all 10 regions. The Women and

Gender Equality Commission had recently hosted workshops in Georgetown and in the Cuyuni-Mazaruni region in which *Toshaos* (indigenous community leaders) had been provided with information that they could share with their communities. Government ministries coordinated their awareness-raising efforts through an interministerial committee, and it was expected that they would further popularize the Convention in the course of their work in different regions and communities, with the support of United Nations agencies and other actors.

18. **Mr. Tanner** (Guyana) said that every year for the previous 10 years, the Government had increased the subsidy that it had provided to the Guyana Legal Aid Clinic. It had moved to ensure that legal aid services were provided to victims of trafficking in persons and to youth in conflict with the law in all 10 regions. It was currently working with the Clinic to extend capacity so that legal aid services would be available for women and girls in all regions. To raise awareness of the Convention, the Government was in the process of establishing gender committees within individual ministries. The Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs specifically had community development officers who raised awareness of human rights in indigenous villages and communities. The Government was planning to hold a workshop with media personalities who worked for radio stations in the hinterland. The Society against Sexual Orientation Discrimination, the National *Toshaos* Council and the Amerindian Peoples Association had all been included in the consultations on the National Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy.

19. **Ms. Jerome-Reece** (Guyana) said that, although Guyana had not entered any reservations upon signing the Convention, the National Assembly had approved a constitutional amendment providing that the Government would only implement international treaties to the extent that the country's resources and sociocultural environment permitted. The Government did not believe that the amendment had hindered the implementation of the Convention, since it had been able to devote significant resources to the Convention's implementation.

20. **Ms. Amna Ally** (Guyana) said that she welcomed the suggestion for the Government to work with academia to build the capacity of the justice system and that she would look forward to a conversation about how that might be achieved.

21. **Ms. Reddock** said that she would welcome a comment from the delegation on the claim that women's organizations had not been included in the drawing up of the report, despite the Committee's request in its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/GUY/CO/7-8) for the State party to consult a variety of women's and human rights organizations. While she congratulated the Government on the establishment of regional courts, she said that she would also like to know whether such courts had a special component for dealing with sexual offences and whether judges received the necessary training and guidance to handle such cases.

22. **Ms. Bethel** said that she was interested to know the State party's position on the possible ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention, which would provide women and girls with another avenue for the protection of their rights. She stressed the importance of establishing a time frame for the review and harmonization of the State party's laws so as to avoid exposing women and girls to further violations of their rights. The Equal Rights Act and the Prevention of Discrimination Act dealt with the formal aspects of discrimination, but they did not address indirect discrimination or pre-existing inequalities. She urged the State party to consider paragraph 5 of the Committee's general recommendation No. 28 (2010) on the core obligations of States parties under article 2 of the Convention and to conclusively address the issue of indirect discrimination, by incorporating a new definition of discrimination into its legislation.

23. **The Chair** said that she would like to know whether the Convention had been invoked before the courts or cited in any decisions.

24. **Ms. La Fleur** (Guyana) said that a workplan based on the Sexual Offences Act had been drawn up a few years previously and was now being used by members of the judiciary. She did not know whether the Convention had been cited in any cases, although she was sure that officials in the justice system were aware of it, as it was often mentioned in their interactions with civil society.

25. **Mr. Tanner** (Guyana) said that the Government had relied on the regional democratic councils to help mobilize the organizations that it had consulted on the report. A list of those organizations could be provided to the Committee.

26. **Ms. Amna Ally** (Guyana) said that there was no set timeline for legislative reform or the completion of social protection programmes. The Ministry of Social Protection had worked in partnership with other government ministries to develop a programme of action to guide its efforts. While individual programmes normally lasted for one budgetary year, they could be extended.

27. **Ms. La Fleur** (Guyana) said that the delegation would later explain its position on ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

28. **Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia** said that, while the State party was to be commended for its efforts to strengthen the national machinery for the advancement of women, which comprised the Gender Affairs Bureau, the Women and Gender Equality Commission and the Regional Gender Affairs Committees, the Committee was concerned that the performance capacity of those bodies was constrained by a fragmentation of services and a lack of coordination. Moreover, the funding allocated to them appeared to account for only 1 per cent of the national budget and, according to a 2017 government policy assessment, the gender perspective had not been systematically mainstreamed into national development strategies. In addition, there were no data or indicators to measure the progress made in achieving gender equality or in promoting women's empowerment. To date, there was no evidence that a gender-responsive budgeting system had been introduced or that investments had produced gender-specific gains or resulted in transformative and substantial equality for women and girls. She asked how many sectors had dedicated funds for gender equality programmes and what the impact of those programmes had been.

29. It would be useful to hear more about the outcome of the engagement of the Women and Gender Equality Commission with the Ministry of Legal Affairs and the Attorney General in ensuring the enforcement of laws to prevent discrimination against women, and to know whether the training dispensed to female *Toshaos* had served to increase their participation in the public and political life of the country. How many men had been empowered to champion gender equality, and in how many sectors? She would also like to find out whether the Guyana Women's Leadership Institute offered certification programmes to men trained by the former Men's Affairs Bureau or the Men Empowerment Network, with the aim of institutionalizing male involvement in defending gender equality.

30. The existence of a functional national machinery for the advancement of women was a prerequisite for the effective implementation of article 3 and, consequently, of all other articles of the Convention. She would appreciate more information on the human resources and technical competencies of the Gender Affairs Bureau and on the oversight, regulatory or licensing functions performed by the national machinery in respect of specific services for women. It would also be helpful to know whether the national machinery had developed enforcement mechanisms and sector-specific standards to advance gender equality. She asked what systems were in place to enable the national machinery to perform its mandate, and whether it cooperated with other institutions.

31. Turning to article 4 of the Convention, she noted with satisfaction the State party's commitment to making greater use of temporary special measures to increase women's participation in the economy. She wished to ensure that the State party and the Committee shared a common understanding of the purpose of temporary special measures under article 4 and general recommendations Nos. 5 (1988) and 25 (2004), and how such measures should be applied. Temporary special measures were interventions conceived to address vertical, horizontal, direct and indirect discrimination and other forms of exclusion through concrete measures that were time-bound and aimed at achieving identified goals, targets and milestones. They could take the form of legislative, administrative or other regulatory instruments, or of quotas or mechanisms to remedy historical gaps or to remove barriers to inclusive development. Progress made in that connection should be tracked, and priorities should be reviewed and updated in response to realities on the ground. She asked whether the State party shared that understanding of temporary special measures, and whether the microcredit programme, the Women of Worth Programme, the Single Parent Assistance

Programme, the Public Assistance Programme, the Special Circumstances Programme, the Education for All Fast Track Initiative 2003–2015 and the School Feeding Programme were in fact routine social protection programmes or temporary special measures. If they were temporary special measures, the delegation should explain how they met the aforementioned criteria, how they had accelerated progress towards achieving gender equality and what stereotypes they had challenged. She would also like to know what explicit temporary special measures had been adopted to assist vulnerable women, including women with disabilities, rural women and women affected by oil exploration, climate change and natural disasters.

32. **Ms. Amna Ally** (Guyana) said that the primary objective of the programmes listed by Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia, all of which were still in effect, was to empower women. Under the Sustainable Livelihood Entrepreneurial Development Programme, women could come together and apply for a grant to fund income-generating projects. Most of the funding allocated to the Programme had already been disbursed and had for the most part benefited indigenous communities. Many indigenous women had formed community groups and begun activities, for example working as cooks or manufacturing school uniforms for local schools. The Five B's Programme – Boats, Buses, Bicycles, Books and Breakfast – mostly benefited families living in isolated areas who could not afford to send their children to school or to cover the associated expenses. The programme had led to an improvement in both school attendance and literacy rates. There were plans to expand the programme in the future. The Women of Worth Programme had fewer beneficiaries than the others, for the simple reason that the funding that it provided was a loan and had to be repaid. While women were the target beneficiary group of the certification programmes offered by the Guyana Women's Leadership Institute, the possibility of expanding the programmes to include men was under consideration.

33. **Mr. Tanner** (Guyana) said that the first task of the Gender Affairs Bureau, which had started operating in October 2016, had been to complete the drafting of the National Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy and to adopt a national action plan for its implementation. Upon completing that task, it had focused its efforts on filling its vacancies. It was seeking to hire individuals with a background in areas such as economics, small business development and education. The job descriptions for those vacancies had been approved and a circular with all the relevant information had just been published. The purpose of the School Feeding Programme was to provide impoverished children from rural communities with at least one meal per day. The school attendance rate in those communities had increased sharply as a result of the programme. Given its success, the Ministry of Education might consider expanding it in 2020. Mainstreaming the gender perspective in the public and private sectors was widely held to be the key to achieving gender equality in Guyana and, as such, had been included in the national action plan for the implementation of the National Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy. Pending the approval of funding from the Caribbean Development Bank to support efforts in that area, the Gender Affairs Bureau had begun to conduct activities to develop regional and ministerial capacity, in partnership with the interministerial committee on gender and the Regional Gender Affairs Committees. The police training programme now included a module on gender-based violence. Discussions were under way to develop and include a further module on gender issues. While most of the courses offered by the Board of Industrial Training already included a gender component, as of 2020, the inclusion of such components would become mandatory.

34. **Ms. La Fleur** (Guyana) said that the involvement of men and boys in activities to address gender issues was guaranteed through specially designed programmes carried out in the workplace, in the context of health and family life education at schools and within the University of Guyana and religious organizations, or as part of sports activities. The programmes were led by men who were advocates of gender equality and who sought to re-educate boys about the roles of men and women in society and about how they should treat the women around them. There were plans to expand those programmes. Staff working in State-run health-care centres addressed gender-related issues in their discussions with patients. Data was currently being collected to assess the impact of that approach. Gender-related issues were also discussed in primary and secondary schools to ensure that boys had a clear understanding of gender and of how to interact with their female counterparts. The Ministry of Public Health had requested additional funding for a specific women's health programme to be carried out during the 2020 budgetary cycle.

35. **Ms. Jerome-Reece** (Guyana) said that a specific unit of the Ministry of Social Protection provided financial assistance to people in difficult circumstances. Among the beneficiaries were disadvantaged women, including women with disabilities and single mothers who were interested in setting up small businesses as a means of lifting themselves out of poverty.

36. **Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia** said that it would be useful to know whether the State party had introduced a gender-responsive budgeting system that set out mandatory targets for the various ministries and guidelines for meeting those targets. She would appreciate more information on how coordination was ensured among the different bodies, both regional and national, that made up the national machinery for the advancement of women. The delegation might also provide an overview of the technical competencies of the Gender Affairs Bureau and explain how, given its lack of staff, it oversaw the gender-related activities of other government ministries. It would also be helpful if it clarified which of its social protection programmes had begun as temporary special measures, at what stage they had become generic social protection programmes and what gender equality targets had been achieved to trigger such a transition.

37. **Ms. Reddock** said that the Gender Affairs Bureau might also perhaps consider hiring individuals with qualifications and expertise in gender studies and gender analysis. It was clear that more needed to be done to build the Bureau's capacity to fulfil its mandate and to effect social change. She asked which institution had overall responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the Convention and follow-up to the Committee's concluding observations. She would also welcome more information on the content of the National Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy and the national action plan for its implementation, and on the curriculum used for teaching the subject of health and family life. Lastly, she wished to know when the State party would appoint an individual to serve as chair of the Human Rights Commission so that it could finally begin its work.

38. **Mr. Tanner** (Guyana) said that the staff shortage within the Gender Affairs Bureau indeed made it difficult to adequately monitor the gender-related activities of other ministries and institutions. He acknowledged the need for the staff of the Bureau to have qualifications and expertise in gender studies and gender analysis. The Bureau had already sent a staff member to attend a technical course in Barbados, as the Institute of Gender and Development Studies of the University of Guyana was not yet fully operational. Once it was in operation, all staff of the Bureau would receive the relevant training at the university. The Women of Worth Programme had started as a temporary special measure intended to address the specific challenges faced by impoverished single mothers who were already beneficiaries of the Public Assistance Programme. The Women of Worth Programme was meant to reach 20 per cent of such single mothers, over five years.

39. **Ms. Anna Ally** (Guyana) said that the Government took an inclusive approach to budgeting. Each social protection programme had its own line within the national budget, regardless of the sex of its intended beneficiaries. While institutions such as the Women and Gender Equality Commission received a specific budgetary allocation, in general, there was no separate accounting for activities that were of benefit exclusively to women. Coordination functions were performed by dedicated groups and teams in different sectors. The Women and Gender Equality Commission exercised oversight over women's organizations. Every effort was made to ensure that public assistance reached the persons who were most in need. The Sustainable Livelihood Entrepreneurial Development Programme empowered women across the country. The difficult circumstances unit within the Ministry of Social Protection provided financial and material assistance on a permanent basis to women who, for instance, could not afford to buy food, to repair their homes or to bury family members. Additional budgetary funds had been requested to meet the growing demand for the unit's services. Now that the National Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy and its associated national action plan had been completed, the Gender Affairs Bureau could prioritize the recruitment of qualified staff to remedy the current shortage. The Human Rights Commission was made up of the leaders of all the other constitutional commissions. It was for civil society to select a chair from among those individuals. To date, no candidate had been put forward.

40. **Ms. Rana** said that, while the State party was to be commended on its efforts to address discriminatory practices, patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes, it still

needed to adopt a more holistic approach to combating gender-based violence. It would be useful to hear more about the impact of the ongoing public education initiatives in the media and in other public forums to tackle discriminatory patriarchal attitudes and stereotyping and about any plans to make those initiatives permanent. According to alternative sources, many female victims of violence, especially those living in hinterland areas, remained unaware of awareness-raising campaigns and support services launched for their benefit. She wished to know how the State party planned to remedy that situation and how the right of victims to information was guaranteed in practice. She would also appreciate more information on the measures in place to address the specific needs of indigenous, Amerindian and migrant women. Noting that, according to the State party, misrepresentation of women and perpetuation of violence against women in media programming and advertising was often overlooked, she asked whether a media policy was already in effect to address that issue, and, if not, when it would be adopted. Had the State party considered adopting legislation to regulate media programming and advertising in cyberspace? She would also like to receive more detailed information on the subjects designed to combat stereotypes and to promote equality that had been incorporated into the revised school curriculum, and to know whether the latter included sex education and, if so, whether that subject was mandatory at all schools. It was encouraging that the State party had made efforts to enlist men and boys in the fight against gender stereotypes. Had the work of the MenEngage Alliance been assessed?

41. Despite considerable efforts by the State party to effectively implement its numerous laws and policies to combat violence against women, including sexual and domestic violence, significant gaps remained in enforcement, in the training dispensed to law enforcement personnel and judicial officials and in the coordination between the different bodies engaged in the fight against gender-based violence. Noting that the national action plan on domestic and sexual violence had been finalized, she asked whether women's groups, particularly groups based in hinterland areas, had been involved in the drafting process, what financial resources had been earmarked for its implementation and when exactly it would be adopted. She also wished to know whether there was an institutional mechanism for collecting disaggregated statistical data on cases of domestic and sexual violence. While she welcomed the holding of workshops for judges, magistrates and the Director of Public Prosecutions and her staff on the Model Guidelines for Sexual Offence Cases, she would be interested to know when such training had most recently been provided and whether there were plans to dispense it on an ongoing basis. She would also like to know when and where the State party intended to establish new sexual offences courts and to learn more about the nature of the cooperation between the National Domestic Violence Oversight Committee, the National Task Force for the Prevention of Sexual Violence and the Domestic Violence Policy Unit, and about the nature of the relationship of those bodies with the Gender Affairs Bureau.

42. **Mr. Safarov** said that, despite the measures taken to prevent and combat human trafficking, Guyana remained a source and destination country for human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation and forced labour. Women from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, the Dominican Republic and Suriname were reportedly forced into prostitution in the country's interior mining communities and urban areas and were forced to work in the agriculture, forestry, domestic service and retail sectors. Guyanese nationals were also allegedly trafficked to Jamaica, Suriname and other Caribbean countries for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labour. In addition, every year some 60,000 Venezuelans reportedly entered Guyana on a temporary basis in search of medical care, food and other basic necessities.

43. According to some sources, the statistical data collected by the State party on the number of cases of human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation were unreliable and the number of cases recorded did not reflect the true prevalence of the phenomenon. He asked what measures the State party planned to take to remedy that shortcoming and how many of the recorded cases had actually resulted in prosecution. He would appreciate it if the delegation could provide more information on the anti-trafficking unit operating within the Ministry of Social Protection and on the nature of its cooperation with other State agencies involved in combating human trafficking. He also wished to know whether any new shelters for victims of human trafficking or domestic violence had been opened and what specific reintegration and rehabilitation programmes were available. Separate support services were required for victims of human trafficking and for victims of domestic violence. It would be

helpful if the Committee could receive more information on the new national action plan to combat human trafficking that had been launched in June 2019; any cases of police corruption that had resulted in prosecution; and the procedure for identifying and registering trafficking victims. What kind of compensation was provided by the State to trafficking victims? Had a special fund been set up for that purpose?

44. The approach taken to preventing and combating human trafficking apparently varied from region to region, and some regions of the country lacked support services such as shelters and hotlines for victims and were excluded from public awareness-raising campaigns. He asked how the State party intended to remedy those regional disparities and to guarantee the availability of a comprehensive range of centralized support services in shelters for trafficking victims while responding to concerns about security and confidentiality. He asked when the State party planned to remove the obstacles preventing foreign victims of trafficking from benefiting on an equal footing with Guyanese nationals from support services and rehabilitation and social reintegration programmes.

45. **Ms. Anna Ally** (Guyana) said that women living in hinterland areas were proactive in identifying their own needs and that the job of the Ministry of Social Protection was simply to design programmes to respond to them. More than half the funding available under the Sustainable Livelihood Entrepreneurial Development Programme had been invested in hinterland communities. The situation of Venezuelan migrants in Guyana was indeed a cause for concern. At least 20 displaced Venezuelan families would soon receive grants to help them cover the cost of essential services following the launch of a shock-responsive social protection system.

46. **Mr. Tanner** (Guyana) said that the awareness-raising programmes conducted so far had led to an increase in reporting of cases of gender-based violence both to government agencies and to NGO partners. The Gender Affairs Bureau was working with a men-against-violence group and the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Policy Unit to provide training to groups of like-minded men. The Guyanese courts awarded compensation to victims of human trafficking. The anti-trafficking unit and the National Task Force for Combating Trafficking in Persons were able to offer health-care services, shelter and financial assistance, as necessary. While he recognized the value of adopting a one-stop shop approach to providing support services to trafficking victims, the simple fact was that, currently, not all those services could be provided under one roof. Transportation could be arranged for victims who needed to travel to avail themselves of a certain service. In some cases, service providers could be brought to shelters. Educational and awareness-raising materials on the prevention of human trafficking and domestic and sexual violence were produced in English, Portuguese and Spanish. Programmes to prevent human trafficking, which were evidence-based and targeted the areas with the highest prevalence of the phenomenon, were carried out jointly by the Government and NGOs. The latter also played a key role in raising awareness of human trafficking in communities and in identifying and reporting suspected trafficking cases. A task force chaired by the Ministry of Citizenship had been set up to address issues affecting the migrant population.

47. **Ms. La Fleur** (Guyana) said that a number of government ministries, the United Nations Population Fund and the Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association were working in partnership to address issues related to human trafficking. The delegation could subsequently provide more information on their activities.

48. **Ms. Rana** said that she would like to know whether a media policy had been drafted and introduced. She also wished to know when the national action plan on domestic violence was going to be approved and if women had been engaged in the drafting process. It would be helpful to have the time frame for the expansion of special courts throughout the country and for the opening of new shelters for the victims of domestic violence.

49. **Mr. Safarov** said that it would be useful to know how many criminal cases for trafficking in persons ended with judgments against the perpetrators. He would also appreciate information on ad hoc compensation provided to victims of trafficking. The Committee had received information that criminal cases would not be opened if the victim did not lodge an official complaint. Was that the case?

50. **Ms. Amna Ally** (Guyana) said that, although the goal was to have a domestic violence centre in each administrative region, the time frame to achieve that objective was subject to budgetary constraints. The regions with the greatest prevalence of domestic violence would thus be prioritized. A holistic approach was taken with regard to compensation for victims, which meant that any assistance required for their reintegration into society was provided, including funds to find employment or start a business.

51. **Mr. Tanner** (Guyana) said that statistics on prosecutions for trafficking in persons would be submitted within 48 hours. The media policy would be developed and implemented once a grant from the Caribbean Development Bank had been approved and the funds released. In addition to health and other social services, such as assistance for victims and their dependents, victims of domestic violence received financial assistance, which included help to start small businesses and support to resume their education.

Articles 7 to 9

52. **Ms. Manalo** said that, although the law provided that at least one third of the candidates for each political party must be female, there was no requirement for parliamentary seats to be allocated to those women. She therefore asked if the Government planned to implement the recommendation of the Carter Center to adjust the electoral system in order to equalize representation of women in Parliament. She would appreciate information on the childcare facilities available for women who participated in public and political life and on awareness-raising efforts undertaken to promote such participation. Given the ethnic tensions which accompanied elections in Guyana, she wished to know if the Government had complied with the Carter Center's recommendation to consider electoral systems that would better promote support across ethnic lines. She would also like to know what was being done to attract more women, including lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women and women with disabilities, to high-level work in the diplomatic service of Guyana and what incentives women were offered to gain access to such posts. She would appreciate information on women's participation in the defence and security services and would like to know how women were encouraged to become more involved in the senior management of firms in the private sector. Lastly, she would appreciate information on how the Government encouraged participation by NGOs in public and political life.

53. **Ms. Akizuki** said that she welcomed the Government's humanitarian approach to the reception of migrants from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and its willingness to provide them with temporary three-month permits that gave them access to health and education services in Guyana. She was aware that women and men had the same rights to acquire, change or retain their nationality and to confer nationality on their children. However, she would like to know what measures were being taken to ensure birth registration for the 9 per cent of children who were not currently registered. It would be helpful to the Committee to receive data disaggregated by gender on stateless indigenous persons and on stateless migrants from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, particularly in the case of persons of Guyanese descent. The Committee had heard that many such returning migrants wished to claim Guyanese citizenship but lacked the appropriate documentation. She would like to know how the Government ensured that documentation on nationality was provided to returning migrants of Guyanese descent and whether citizenship was provided to women and men equally. Lastly, she wished to know if the Government intended to ratify the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

54. **Ms. Amna Ally** (Guyana) said that the requirement for 33 per cent of candidates to be female was stipulated in the Constitution. Although the allocation of parliamentary seats to women was not mandated by law, the proportion of women in Parliament had increased to 36 per cent, and the Cabinet was currently 40 per cent female. A facility for vulnerable children and families was currently under construction and would soon be completed. The electoral process was governed by an independent commission, which took note of all recommendations, including those of the Carter Center. There were no restrictions on women's participation in the diplomatic corps, in which competence was the only basis for selection. The Minister of Foreign Affairs was a woman, and many women served as ambassadors and first secretaries. The Government believed in inclusionary politics, and it

applied that policy to lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women and their organizations. Women were encouraged to become more involved in public life through training and leadership seminars. To address the fact that many persons from the hinterland and riverine communities did not have birth certificates, the Ministry of Citizenship had begun sending staff into such communities to conduct registration. The Ministry of Citizenship would provide the Committee with further data on foreign nationals in Guyana.

55. **Ms. Jerome-Reece** (Guyana) said that the Guyana Women's Leadership Institute was working to involve more women in politics. Over the past three years, 480 women had participated in programmes for women leaders involved in community work. The programmes focused on enhancing leadership skills and preparing women for participation in local government elections. They included courses in leadership, organizational skills, gender and local government, local development through women's eyes, planning and budgeting.

56. **Ms. Akizuki** said that she would appreciate clarification on the Government's intentions regarding international conventions on statelessness.

57. **The Chair** said that many issues related to discrimination against women would be addressed if women were equally represented in public and political life and in a position to make policies that would bring equality. The dialogue would be facilitated if the Committee had more specific information, for example on the number of women ambassadors. The achievements regarding the increased numbers of female representatives in Parliament and in the Cabinet were very welcome, but if they were not institutionalized in law, they depended on the goodwill of whoever was in power at the time and were vulnerable to regression.

58. **Ms. Reddock** noted that Guyana had made a commitment to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees that it would accede to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol thereto.

59. **Ms. Amna Ally** (Guyana) said that the Government was contemplating a quota of 50 per cent for female membership in Parliament. However, the current quota was 33 per cent of the list of candidates, and that figure had been exceeded.

Articles 10 to 14

60. **Ms. Song** said that she was impressed by the State party's achievements in women's education, including the fact that it had achieved gender parity in primary education and that there were more female students than male students at secondary schools. She would appreciate information on the percentage of the national budget allocated to education. She wished to know the dropout rates of girls in general, and indigenous girls in particular, from both primary and secondary schools. Were there adequate schools in the hinterland to ensure access to education for young indigenous persons, especially women? She would like clarification regarding reports that the Government did not cover fees for exams, which might prevent some girls from completing their schooling. The Committee would also like to know whether women and girls with disabilities had equal access to education at schools and what measures had been taken to facilitate such access. She wanted to know if the Government worked with parents to ensure that their school-age daughters received an education instead of getting married early and whether incentives were provided to parents who sent girls to school. Had the policy on reintegration of teenage mothers in the school system been fully implemented, and what support was available for teenagers who had children?

61. She would like to know how many of the participants in the Youth Entrepreneurship and Apprenticeship Programme were women and how many of those women were indigenous. In the light of information that several regions of the country had no vocational training centres, she would like to know how the needs of women for technical, vocational and education training programmes were met in those regions, and if there was a mechanism that enabled them to access training centres in other regions.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.