



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

Distr.: General  
28 October 2021

Original: English

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

**Summary record of the 1823rd meeting\***

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 26 October 2021, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Haidar

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*Combined eighth to tenth periodic reports of Egypt*

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\* No summary records were issued for the 1821st to 1822nd meetings.

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*In the absence of Ms. Acosta Vargas, Ms. Haidar, Vice-Chair, 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 eighth to tenth periodic reports of Egypt (CEDAW/C/EGY/8-10, CEDAW/C/EGY/Q/8-10 and CEDAW/C/EGY/RQ/8-10)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Egypt took places at the Committee table.*
2. **The Chair** said that, at the invitation of the Committee, other members of the delegation would be speaking via video link from Cairo.
3. **Ms. Morsi** (Egypt), introducing her country's combined eighth to tenth periodic reports (CEDAW/C/EGY/8-10) and accompanying her statement with a digital slide presentation, said that women had led the fight for their rights during the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood and the subsequent 2013 revolution. The National Council for Women, whose premises had been destroyed in 2011 when the Muslim Brotherhood had come to power, had been restored in 2016 and counted representatives of women with disabilities, rural women and young women among its members. Its activities had benefited more than 28 million women in 2020. One of its offices received complaints; provided legal, psychological and social services; made referrals to the appropriate authorities; and had obtained court rulings in favour of female complainants in more than 1,300 cases between January and September 2021.
4. The Government's work towards equal opportunities and women's empowerment at all levels was illustrated by the adoption of the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women for 2016–2030. Women were a focus of the recently launched National Strategy for Human Rights, and efforts to ensure that their needs were met during planning processes included a guide produced by the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development. The Ministry of Finance was reintroducing budgeting principles that were sensitive to women, and in 2021 State spending on women in areas such as health and social protection had increased significantly. The number of women benefiting from microfinance had also risen, while more than 4 billion Egyptian pounds (LE) had been loaned to women entrepreneurs over the previous two years.
5. Women's constitutional rights had been translated into a range of measures, including quotas for their representation in parliament, local councils and the Senate. A number of campaigns had been launched that aimed to, inter alia, protect women from violence and raise their awareness of their rights and the services provided by the State. A presidential campaign raised awareness of the dangers of illegal immigration, and a large-scale study was being undertaken in relation to domestic workers, whom the Government aimed to protect by means of a legal framework and a draft contract. A code of ethics on women in the media had been launched and an observatory established in that connection.
6. Measures to address the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic included hotlines providing economic and psychological support. Her Government had been the first in the world to monitor the impact on women of its COVID-19 response measures and had been the first in the region to adopt measures that took women's needs into account. Several surveys had found that violence in families, including violence committed by husbands against their wives, had increased during the pandemic; those data were updated periodically. Recent measures to protect women included the creation of a one-stop centre for women victims of violence, a code of conduct for the transport sector and units to combat harassment and violence in universities. Victims of violence could file reports with several Government bodies.
7. The court system comprised women's support offices, which had dealt with 552 cases; offices that supported persons with disabilities, which had assisted more than 1,100 women; and special and legal aid offices in family courts. Three forensic clinics had been established, and a forensic medical department had assisted in setting up medical units involved in women's safety in universities. Thanks to its efforts to empower and protect women, Egypt

had been selected as one of the first countries to implement a model providing a package of essential services under the aegis of the United Nations Population Fund and UN-Women. Training was given to professionals working with women victims of violence, such as judges, doctors and social workers. The National Committee for the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation had raised awareness of the crime among 81 million persons by September 2021, and prison sentences had been introduced for perpetrators. Of the 132 cases reported between January and September 2021, 92 had been reported before the commission of the crime, and the remaining 40 had been referred to the Office of the Public Prosecutor.

8. Women's representation in parliament, the Senate, the Cabinet, the diplomatic corps and the National Council for Human Rights, as well as in the positions of vice-minister and deputy governor, had increased. Women had recently been appointed to a range of positions for the first time in Egyptian history, including President of the National Council for Human Rights. The number of female judges had also risen, and a woman led the National Training Academy, which incorporated equality and women's empowerment into its training for State employees. Women's increased participation in elections and voting had been targeted by awareness-raising campaigns, training and mentoring programmes. Identity cards had been issued to 965,000 women.

9. Almost 60 per cent of university graduates were women, and the rate of girls' enrolment in education had reached almost 50 per cent, with increases also seen in rural areas. A guide to promoting gender equality, women's empowerment and equal opportunities in education had been produced. Dropout and illiteracy rates among women and girls had decreased significantly, and the gender gap in education had been closed. The unemployment rate had decreased to just under 18 per cent in 2020, and the proportion of women who held bank accounts had increased to over 47 per cent. However, the proportion of women in the labour force had dropped to under 17 per cent in 2020. An initiative to increase the early detection of breast cancer and other diseases had reached 19 million women. Seventy-five per cent of women benefited from social protection programmes, and 64 per cent benefited from programmes for small and medium-sized enterprises. The Government's efforts had increased the incomes of rural women through savings and loans programmes. Almost LE 3 billion had been allocated to family planning services for women.

10. The new Personal Status Code would guarantee children's and women's rights and combat all forms of discrimination. Other planned legislative measures included a code on child and forced labour and temporary marriage. The needs of persons with disabilities were addressed in the Constitution and by the National Council for Persons with Disabilities. Periodic visits to women's prisons were conducted to ensure that all relevant services were provided, including education and training. Imprisoned mothers could keep their children with them up to the age of 4 years. Her Government was drafting a national plan on the women, peace and security agenda. Women had received training on climate change and been encouraged to join environmentally friendly industries.

11. Despite the significant progress made towards women's equality, challenges remained, particularly in the form of negative cultural legacies and the low proportion of women in the labour force. Nevertheless, Egypt remained committed to non-discrimination and equality.

12. **Ms. Al-Rammah**, noting the State party's history of empowering women, said that the Committee welcomed the positive developments described in its periodic report, particularly given the difficult events of 2011 and 2013. She commended a number of measures taken by the Government, including the lifting of reservations to article 9 of the Convention and legislative reform that increased the Government's accountability for the protection of women's and girls' rights.

#### *Articles 1–6*

13. **Ms. Ameline** said that she wished to congratulate the State party on withdrawing its reservation to article 9 of the Convention. She sought assurances that the lifting of the State party's reservations to articles 2 and 16 and the adoption of the Optional Protocol remained under consideration. She would appreciate receiving details of the dialogue undertaken with Al-Azhar University and the Coptic Orthodox Church that had resulted in a guide on violence

in 2017, in particular whether that dialogue was ongoing and whether it could have a positive impact on drafting legislation.

14. She wished to know the Government's intentions in relation to the Supreme Committee for Legislative Reform, which had yet to be fully implemented, and what its format and composition were. The delegation should provide further information on the revision of the Penal Code, including with regard to articles 17 and 60. She asked how the State party planned to protect the freedom of expression of female activists, journalists and women's rights defenders, whose work was being hindered by measures that had been adopted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and those taken to combat terrorism.

15. Intersectional discrimination affected all women and girls who were unable to exercise their rights based on their poverty, rural status, ethnic origin, cultural or religious practices or sexual orientation. She asked what measures the Government envisaged to ensure the full recognition and systematic inclusion of such vulnerable persons under the law.

16. The judicial response to violence was vital to eradicating it. She would like to know how the Government planned to strengthen both the police and judicial responses to violence in an effort to combat all forms of impunity. The training of judges, prosecutors and security forces, and the establishment of an office dedicated to women's rights in the Ministry of Justice were positive developments; however, she would appreciate more information on efforts to strengthen the visibility of the Convention at all levels, in terms of training, legal assistance and celerity in processing complaints, with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of the law.

17. **Mr. Afifi** (Egypt) said that the reservations to the Convention formulated by Egypt must be understood in context and in conjunction with the explanations provided at the time they were made. However, the State's position regarding those reservations had no impact on the guarantees set out in the 22 articles of the Constitution that affirmed equality between men and women, which were in conformity with article 2 of the Convention. Its reservation to article 16 of the Convention applied to a small part of the article that concerned family relations and marriage and compatibility with Islamic sharia.

18. The Government was fully committed to upholding the State's international obligations towards human rights defenders. It recognized the importance of General Assembly Resolution A/RES/53/144 adopting the Declaration on human rights defenders and considered it to be a cornerstone of the defence of human rights, including at the national level. The Government took all necessary measures to guarantee the protection of the rights of all victims, including the right to a fair trial. Each ruling handed down by the courts was subject to oversight, and special measures were taken for those involving the deprivation of liberty. Each case was studied separately and thoroughly to ensure that all guarantees covered all citizens, both male and female.

19. **Ms. Ammar** (Egypt) said that the Supreme Committee for Legislative Reform, which was composed of judges, lawyers, law professors from Egyptian universities, jurists and public figures, prepared bills for implementing strategies and articles of the Constitution. Judges used discretionary power in keeping with the penalties set out in the Penal Code and with the principle of proportionality between the punishment and the offence.

20. In its 2021–2026 plan, the Ministry of Justice had paid particular attention to the most vulnerable segments of the population and had formulated several measures to assist them, including the provision of legal aid for women and persons with disabilities, the provision of children's services and the drafting of guides on forensic medicine for use in cases related to violence against women. The Ministry had also set up a human rights division that worked with women's and children's issues, as well as a liaison office that coordinated with international bodies and civil society organizations.

21. **Mr. Khalil** (Egypt) said that, in facing the challenges posed by negative cultural legacies in the context of legislative reforms, it was important to study the provisions concerned, monitor the cases in which they were applied, and raise awareness of the issues directly related to those provisions. The provisions were then revisited to close any loopholes from which perpetrators could benefit, and new legislative provisions were adopted. Since it was also possible for penalties to have negative effects, when the implementation of a law

was followed up, the Commission closely examined the results obtained from that perspective as well.

22. **Ms. Ameline**, referring to efforts to ensure the effectiveness of equality on the ground, asked whether the Government had carried out a granular, exhaustive assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on women's rights, one example of which was the noticeable increase in violence against women. It was important for economic reconstruction and recovery policies to take women's rights fully into account, but that meant ensuring also that the necessary financing and coordination were available. She wished to know how the Government envisaged taking women's equality into account in the reconstruction policies that would be developed following the COVID-19 pandemic.

23. A women's rights mechanism in the Egyptian parliament would be advisable because it would help to monitor the follow-up of the legislative agenda. She asked at what level coordination was carried out between the various policies formulated by the Government in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals, and what could be done to strengthen cooperation with local organizations, such as civil society organizations and municipalities.

24. The current challenges facing Egypt, such as poverty and unemployment, required the stepping up of efforts in cooperation with the United Nations. With regard to the Government's youth policy, the demographic trend in Egypt represented both a challenge and an opportunity, as well as a source of concern. One way of addressing it would be to strengthen policies for girls and teenagers, so that the values reflected in the Convention were an inherent feature of their culture.

25. **Ms. Akizuki** said that she wished to commend the progress made by the State party in adopting a constitutional amendment in 2019 specifying a 25 per cent quota for women's representation in local councils, as well as a law on the Senate in 2020 that included a temporary special measure requiring 10 per cent of Senate seats to be allocated to women. She asked whether the State party had any time-bound plan to increase the ratio of women to 50 per cent in the legislature, at both the national and local levels; what was the impact of the introduction of quotas in the legislature; and whether, to date, the Government had developed any gender-sensitive law or policy.

26. The Committee was concerned at the low representation of women in the justice system, which stood at only 0.5 per cent. She wished to know whether the Government envisaged any plans to introduce temporary special measures for women in the justice system or in other areas where women were underrepresented.

27. **Ms. Morsi** (Egypt) said that the National Council for Women had cooperated with several organizations and the Ministry of Awqaf to train female religious leaders as teachers. Working with religious leaders was an important means of coordinating issues related to women, and the participation of religious leaders in women's affairs could help to improve religious dialogue.

28. During the COVID-19 pandemic, a policy document had been drafted to take into account such issues as health information, social protection for elderly women and women with disabilities, education, and violence against women. An observatory had been created to clarify and define COVID-19 response measures, and a survey had been carried out between the first and second waves of the pandemic to determine its impact on Egyptian families. Studies had also been conducted on the economic policies to be followed during the pandemic and on the empowerment of Egyptian women following the pandemic.

29. The National Council for Women had 27 branch offices in all the provinces, which it coordinated very carefully. There was also a Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations, which brought together 55 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and established the Civil Society Forum, to which all NGOs were invited.

30. Egyptian women currently held 28 per cent of the seats in parliament, and there would be a push to reach 30 per cent in the next elections. Women's representation needed to be increased in other, less visible bodies as well, including in organizations, boards of directors, government administrations and private enterprises. The quota of 30 per cent was easier to achieve in some areas than in others.

31. **Ms. Sonbaty** (Egypt), speaking via video link, said that a national initiative for the empowerment of girls had been undertaken through the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood and through various ministries. The initiative focused on health and economic and social empowerment, and it addressed such areas as adolescence, COVID-19, the development of small business entrepreneurship skills, and countering female genital mutilation and child marriage.

32. **Ms. Ammar** (Egypt) said that she was one of the first generation of female judges, having been appointed in 2007. Egypt had made enormous progress in increasing the ranks of women judges, and there were now women judges in all judicial bodies. It was noteworthy that there was one woman judge in the Supreme Constitutional Court and three in the Commissioners Authority of the Court.

33. **Ms. Ameline** said that she would welcome further information on the role of the Office of the Ombudsman and on the complaints procedure it provided. She asked whether additional resources were made available to the Ombudsman during investigations, with the aim of increasing its effectiveness, and whether the Government had measures in place to strengthen its human rights institutions. Welcoming the introduction of the human rights division of the Ministry of Justice, which was led by a woman, she asked whether it, too, could benefit from being strengthened, given the current context.

34. **Ms. Ammar** (Egypt) said that the family dispute settlement units in family courts operated under the Personal Status Code and were composed of a legal assistant, a social worker and a psychologist. They provided services related to family matters and free legal assistance to women. Other offices in the Ministry of Justice were tasked with empowering and assisting women in all Egyptian courts.

35. **Ms. Toé-Bouda** said that, through the reform of its Constitution in 2014, Egypt had made some important strides, particularly in terms of reaffirming the duty of the State to protect women from all forms of violence and including the obligation for universities to teach human rights. However, patriarchal attitudes and violence against women persisted. The Committee had received reports that the Public Prosecutor had ordered the arrest of a number of women for having posted online publications, on the grounds that they were women. That constituted a violation of article 5 (a) of the Convention. The same source had informed the Committee that some peaceful women demonstrators had been killed, but that no inquiry had been conducted to identify the perpetrators. Moreover, there was evidence of systematic and widespread incidents of forced disappearance and arbitrary detention of women. The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention had stated that the widespread and systematic imprisonment of women in Egypt could potentially constitute crimes against humanity. The Committee had been told that women had to be accompanied by men when they went out, and the practice of polygamy persisted. She asked what steps the Government was taking to counter serious violations of women's rights, particularly by ending forced disappearances and freeing women who had been arbitrarily arrested.

36. She wondered whether Egypt could attain the Sustainable Development Goals and give effect to the recommendations of the National Council for Women concerning violence against women and early marriage, given that both phenomena persisted. Nor was the practice of female genital mutilation on the decline. Egypt was included in the 70 per cent of African countries still practising excision for girls between the ages of 15 and 19, contrary to all recommendations on the part of the United Nations. What measures did the State party envisage taking urgently to put an end to that practice, which threatened the life and physical integrity of women, and what steps were being taken by the Government to provide reparations or compensation to women victims of female genital mutilation?

37. She wished to know what measures were being taken for the benefit of boys and girls to eliminate traditional stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes concerning the role and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society at large, including in rural areas.

38. **The Chair** said that she wished to commend the State party for the progress it had achieved since its last interactive dialogue with the Committee. The legal framework adopted in 2010 had undoubtedly provided a good foundation for progress in many areas. However, there was still room for improvement. Migrant domestic workers, for example, needed

greater attention, as they currently faced multiple challenges, including the risk of being exploited or subjected to trafficking. Domestic workers needed a specific law to protect them, since they fell outside the scope of any legal protection under the current labour laws. How did the Government intend to address that lacuna?

39. She wished to know how the State party would address the problem of the lack of gender-disaggregated statistics on the migrant population. It would be helpful to know what measures the State party was taking to ensure that victims of gender-based violence, including refugees and asylum seekers, had access to quality public health services and that legal procedures were accessible and sensitive to gender issues. Noting that there were no immigration detention facilities and that migrants were detained in prisons, she wondered whether the Government would consider alternatives to detention for migrant women, especially those who had children or were pregnant.

40. **Ms. Morsi** (Egypt) said that efforts were ongoing to amend legislation to ensure that women were not subjected to violence, in accordance with article 11 of the Constitution. The number of women and girls who had been victims of female genital mutilation had in fact decreased among the younger generations and the Government was conducting an investigation to gather more information on the issue. The Cabinet had submitted a bill that would abolish child marriage, which was currently being debated by the parliament.

41. In Egyptian legislation, enforced disappearance did not match the definition under the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. In many cases, searches for disappeared women revealed that they had moved away and remarried and had not been forcibly disappeared in the strict sense of the term.

42. **Mr. Afifi** (Egypt) said that no one, including the law enforcement authorities, was above the law. There was a mechanism in place for dealing with violations of women's rights and strict legal safeguards existed to ensure that freedom of expression of human rights workers were respected.

43. Egypt, like many other countries, had seen a significant increase in migration flows, particularly from the Middle East, and trafficking in persons was a growing problem. The country had ratified all international conventions in that regard and had a legal framework in place, including Act No. 64 (2010) on combating human trafficking. Furthermore, a raft of measures had been adopted by the National Coordinating Committee for Combating and Preventing Illegal Migration and Human Trafficking.

44. One of the most important steps to protect the rights of migrant workers had been the adoption of an employment contract to regulate the relationship between employers and workers. The National Council for Women played a major role in overseeing the performance of such contracts and hearing disputes. The Ministry of Workforce was preparing a bill to protect the rights of domestic workers, which would be ready for submission in the near future.

45. **Ms. Ammar** (Egypt) said that the rights of children were enshrined in article 80 of the Constitution, which defined them as persons under 18 years of age. It was not possible to register the employment contract of anyone below that age. The Ministry of Justice was prohibited by law from ratifying marriage certificates where the spouses were minors, and persons who had used false documents to prove their age in order to marry were liable to penalties under the Penal Code. The parliament was debating a bill that explicitly set the age of marriage at 18 years and which contained measures to protect children from early marriage, including penalties for persons who performed such marriages.

46. Polygamy was the exception rather than the rule and measures existed to discourage it. Husbands were required to disclose any prior marriage. Clauses could be inserted into the marriage contract that allowed the first wife to sue for a divorce should the husband marry another woman without her approval, and the woman had the right to custody over her children in such cases.

47. **Ms. Al-Rammah** said that she would appreciate clarification as to whether leniency for honour killings was provided for in article 237 of the Penal Code. She would welcome additional information about the one-stop centres that had been set up to protect women from violence, especially in view of the fact that limited resources had been allocated to support

survivors of violence and that shelters were located mostly in Cairo. Noting that forms of rape other than vaginal penetration were regarded as indecent assault by force under the Penal Code, she wished to know whether the penalties for such crimes were comparable in severity to the penalties for rape.

48. **Ms. Toé-Bouda** said that she wondered whether the State intended to increase resources to protect women victims of violence.

49. **Ms. Morsi** (Egypt) said that the Office of the Ombudsperson for women's complaints provided support through a standardized working method. It received complaints or reports, provided counselling and followed up on cases. The Office comprised teams that dealt with specific areas such as personal status, violence against women, cybercrime, migration, assistance with the enforcement of judgments, inheritance and labour matters. It provided legal counsel for women in courts or police stations and notified the competent authorities when violations had been committed. Awareness campaigns were carried out to encourage women who had been victims of violence to come forward.

50. The one-stop centre had been set up so that women who had been victims of violence did not have to go from the police station to the prosecutor's office and then to a forensic medical unit for examination; all those services were now provided in the same place, to save time and avoid undue psychological pressure on the victim. The centre worked in coordination with all relevant line ministries and the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood.

51. **Mr. Khalil** (Egypt) said that the law clearly defined crimes of violence and it was the responsibility of the judge to impose sentences as he or she saw fit. Indecent assault by force was a mitigated form of rape, but amendments to the law were under consideration.

52. The parliament was debating new laws and legislative amendments to protect the rights of domestic workers. Pending their adoption, numerous measures had been taken by the National Council for Women in cooperation with the Ministry of Workforce, including steps to ensure that domestic workers were given national identity documents, thus granting them access to public services.

53. **Mr. ElKamary** (Egypt), speaking via video link, said that the Ministry of Social Solidarity was committed to protecting women from violence, whether physical or psychological, and provided nine shelters for victims across nine governorates. Psychological and educational support was provided to their children and the budget for the centres was just under LE 2.5 million. A new centre for victims of human trafficking had been built by the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood in cooperation with the Red Crescent, with a budget allocation of LE 1 million from the Ministry of Finance. The centre would enter into operation in the near future.

54. **A representative of Egypt**, speaking via video link, said that the National Council for Women provided education and training services to women and girls. The services had been developed with a number of different ministries, and support had been provided by various international bodies, including UN-Women, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Development Programme. The project was also being implemented at the local level in various governorates and data was being collected to assess the outcomes of the services provided.

55. **Ms. Stott Despoja** said that she would welcome an explanation of the specific measures taken to ensure that counter-terrorism efforts and laws did not restrict the work of human rights defenders or freedom of expression in the State party. Updated information on any laws that had been passed in that regard would be appreciated.

56. **Mr. Khalil** (Egypt) said that until very recently the country had been under a state of emergency, when special measures had been taken to deal with the threat of terrorism. However, even during that time, the necessary provisions were in place to safeguard fundamental rights as enshrined in the Constitution. After the state of emergency had been lifted, there was no longer any restriction on fundamental rights, including freedom of expression.

*Articles 7–9*

57. **Ms. Akizuki** said that she wished to know what progress had been made towards the target of 30 per cent women's representation in senior political decision-making roles under the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women for 2016–2030, and how the State party monitored the impact of the Strategy. She wondered what specific measures had been adopted to increase the representation of women at all levels of government and the judiciary, and in senior management posts and academia, and whether they included temporary special measures. What further measures were envisaged to increase the ratio of female judges to 25 per cent by 2030? She would be interested to hear whether female candidates were protected from gender-based violence during the electoral process. Noting that the State party had undertaken a range of activities to raise awareness about women in leadership positions, she would like to know whether any qualitative evaluation of their outcome had been conducted.

58. She wondered what conditions and requirements for the registration of NGOs had been established under the new legal framework and whether women human rights defenders faced additional barriers during registration. She asked how the new framework prevented the imposition of restrictions on civil society activities and how it tied in with the President's declaration of 2022 as the year of civil society.

59. **Ms. Chalal**, referring to paragraph 27 of the report, said that the Committee hoped that the Government would consider amending the nationality law to enable Egyptian women to pass their nationality on to their foreign husbands on an equal footing with Egyptian men.

60. It had been reported that some minority groups, for instance the Baha'i community, were at risk of statelessness owing to difficulties with claiming Egyptian nationality, and that women and girls were among the worst affected. She wished to know what measures had been taken to eliminate such statelessness. A description of the measures taken to strengthen the process of classifying a person as stateless would also be useful. Lastly, she would appreciate any up-to-date figures that might be available on the number of stateless women and girls, bearing in mind that Egyptian law recognized registration of birth as a right of all children.

61. **Ms. Morsi** (Egypt) said that, in 2018, women had held 48 per cent of all decision-making posts in the Ministry of Justice and 42 per cent of those in the Ministry of International Cooperation. Since most women were not employed in the public sector, the Government was also working with the private sector and the World Economic Forum to find solutions enabling more women to find private sector jobs. Although women held just 11.6 per cent of decision-making posts in companies listed on the stock exchange, a decision had been made that any company wishing to be listed needed to have at least one woman on its board of directors.

62. In order to support female electoral candidates and protect them from gender-based violence, the National Council for Women and the Cabinet were opening centres of operations in all governorates to receive any complaints filed by such candidates. Furthermore, the Government was working with influencers to promote the idea of men supporting women, with a view to changing male behaviour.

63. **Ms. Ammar** (Egypt) said that the Ministry of Justice was working with the National Council for Women to organize leadership training sessions intended to build the capacities of women prosecutors and judges. The Government was also seeking to increase the number of women prosecutors and judges, and women had recently been employed in several judicial structures, including the Court of Cassation.

64. **Mr. Khalil** (Egypt) said that nationality enjoyed all the safeguards enshrined in the Constitution. As part of the National Strategy for Human Rights, a potential review of the nationality law was under consideration, with the aim of preventing abusive practices that could impede parents' ability to pass their nationality on to their children.

65. **Mr. ElKamary** (Egypt), speaking via video link, said that, under Act. No. 49 of 2019, foreign funding of NGOs would no longer be punishable with custodial sentences. The 1 per cent cap on foreign funding had been lifted and NGOs could, for the first time, participate in the creation of a charitable investment fund. In respect of registration requirements, an NGO

could be set up once certain documents had been provided to the authorities, which also had to be notified within 60 days of any foreign or domestic funding. Up to 25 per cent of the members of NGO boards could now be foreigners; the previous maximum had been 10 per cent. Moreover, NGOs were free to organize themselves internally as they chose and, working with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they could open branches outside Egypt. Moreover, all restrictions on activities promoting local action had been abolished, including in the field of human rights; numerous human rights NGOs were going about their business in complete freedom, working with the State.

66. **Ms. Al-Rammah**, referring to paragraph 27 of the report, said that, under Act No. 154 (2004), the children of an Egyptian woman married to a foreigner were entitled to Egyptian citizenship “should they request it”. She hoped that the delegation could shed some light on the process of making such requests.

67. **Mr. Khalil** (Egypt) said that a request for nationality might not be compatible with the child’s nationality of birth. While Egyptian fathers automatically passed on their nationality to their children, Egyptian women first had to submit a request to ensure that all legal requirements had been met.

#### *Articles 10–14*

68. **Ms. Gbedemah**, congratulating the State party on achievements such as the reduction in the illiteracy rate, the education of refugees and migrants, and girls’ performance in sports, said that she wondered how improved teaching processes and the provision of 400 computers to students had improved girls’ access to education, in particular during the COVID-19 pandemic. It would be useful to know whether an impact assessment had been conducted of the extent to which those actions had narrowed the rural/urban divide in education.

69. Given that women’s labour-force participation stood at 16.8 per cent, she was curious as to what the State party was doing to improve girls’ rights through education. She would appreciate any available figures on the courses that girls pursued and information on how such courses were aligned to the job market. Were there any temporary special measures to ensure such alignment? Details of any available data on the vocational and technical courses that women and girls pursued would be helpful. She also wished to hear the specifics of measures to ensure that vertical segregation in education did not canalize girls into gender-stereotyped courses, such as cooking and sewing.

70. Referring to paragraph 80 of the replies to the list of issues, she said that she commended the committees established to curb dropout in 30 primary schools, but she wondered what the actual dropout rates were and what impact the mentioned policies had been. It was also unclear why only 30 schools had been targeted. Moreover, it would be useful to hear what specific steps had been taken to address dropout in response to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

71. She wished to know how the State party planned to institutionalize mandatory, universal, age-appropriate and comprehensive sexuality education that paid particular attention to sexually transmitted infections, early pregnancy and harmful practices. She would appreciate information on how sexual harassment in schools was handled, and in particular on what the reporting structures were, how many instances had been reported and whether confidentiality was guaranteed. It would be useful to know whether there were compulsory courses on sexual harassment and whether it was recognized that access to such courses was the first step in access to justice. She wondered how the education system was being used to address child marriage, child labour, stereotypes and female genital mutilation.

72. Lastly, she hoped to hear how actions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic had been used to open up spaces and introduce temporary special measures, where necessary.

73. **Ms. Morsi** (Egypt) said that the dropout rate for female students had fallen from 4.5 per cent in 2014–2015 to 2.5 per cent in early 2020. Despite remote learning in response to COVID-19, the rate had not increased.

74. In respect of vocational education, the National Council for Women was working with the Ministry of Education to organize leadership workshops with a view to gathering new ideas, in particular on the use of technology to encourage women to found small companies.

75. Egypt had a long tradition of sewing, by women and girls in particular; specializing in the art of sewing was not humiliating for women and girls. In fact, sewing and embroidery factories were often seeking women employees.

76. There was a hotline through which parents could report any instances of harassment of their children in schools.

77. **Ms. Ahmed Ibrahim** (Egypt), speaking via video link, said that all students had had laptop computers available and the Government had made use of that fact in its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. A digital library and knowledge bases had been created for students and teachers. Physical education classes had been offered via YouTube, as had programmes to combat harassment and enhance citizenship. The online drama activities made available had garnered praise from experts.

78. At the primary level, sexual education consisted of learning good hygiene. At later stages, students were taught about the sexual reproductive system. Awareness days, campaigns and workshops targeting parents, teachers and social workers had also been run across the country, covering subjects such as sexual harassment of women.

79. Female students were treated on an equal footing, whether or not they were Egyptian nationals. Non-nationals participated in artistic and educational workshops, and the best-performing students were granted awards. The Government also paid the education fees of refugee and non-citizen female students.

80. **Ms. Al-Rammah** said that she wished to hear about the efforts the Government was making to combat illiteracy, especially among rural women.

81. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that she had not meant to denigrate sewing; it was a question of stereotypes. It was also important to consider whether jobs in sectors in which men typically worked, such as construction, were better paid and to ensure that women could find work in such sectors.

82. While it was helpful to know that a hotline was available, she hoped to hear how many instances of harassment had been reported using it, how many such instances had been punished and what punishments had been imposed.

83. She wished to clarify that her question on digital technologies had related to how they had narrowed the rural/urban divide in education. It would be useful to hear about any impact assessment that had been done. She would also welcome information on how education was used to address harmful practices, such as child marriage and female genital mutilation.

84. **Ms. Morsi** (Egypt) said that there had been a significant decline in the illiteracy rate between 2020 and 2021. In addition to State initiatives at the governorate and village levels to tackle illiteracy in the sense of inability to read and write, the National Council for Women was working with the Central Bank to increase digital literacy, in particular for rural women.

85. While the Government aspired to enable more girls and young women to study engineering and other fields traditionally the preserve of men, changes to the curriculum in that connection were often not in line with the demands of the labour market, with the result that many educated young women dedicated themselves to their families rather than seeking jobs. Partnerships with several United Nations agencies and with the World Economic Forum had been established, with the aim of providing opportunities, in particular through the private sector, for women to enter non-traditional industries.

86. As part of efforts to bring an end to harmful practices, a campaign of home visits to rural women was being conducted, with a view to raising such women's awareness of issues including female genital mutilation and literacy. The Government had conducted over 35,000 such one-on-one interviews and had found them to be more effective at gaining women's trust than larger-scale awareness-raising campaigns.

87. **Mr. Khalil** (Egypt) said that he wished to make it clear that Egyptian citizens were entitled to Egyptian nationality regardless of their religion. If that right were not respected, they could have recourse to legal proceedings.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*