



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

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

**Summary record of the 1732nd meeting**

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 30 October 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)*

*Sixth periodic report of Bosnia and Herzegovina (CEDAW/C/BIH/6; CEDAW/C/BIH/Q/6 and CEDAW/C/BIH/Q/6/Add.1)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Bosnia and Herzegovina took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Leskovac** (Bosnia and Herzegovina), introducing his country's sixth periodic report (CEDAW/C/BIH/6), said that the context in which the Convention was implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina remained challenging as the country went through a post-conflict period of economic and societal transition. Bosnia and Herzegovina had a complex, largely decentralized constitutional structure and 14 legal systems.

3. The Convention, which was an integral part of the Constitution, served as a framework for all the country's efforts in the area of gender equality. The Government prioritized the Committee's comments and recommendations by translating them into strategic documents and policies. The Gender Equality Law was the main instrument for the implementation of the Convention and mirrored its structure and content. In order to ensure the effective implementation of that law, the Government had adopted the second and third Gender Action Plans, which covered the periods 2013–2017 and 2018–2022, respectively. Those plans, which set out activities and deadlines, had been mainstreamed into government policies through annual operational plans adopted by the Coordination Board.

4. Institutional gender equality mechanisms had established strong partnerships with civil society organizations. The Gender Equality Agency of the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees had signed cooperation agreements with "Safe Network" – a network of over 20 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) dealing with gender-based violence – and with almost 20 NGOs dealing with the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. Moreover, the Agency and gender centres had been working closely with the Gender Equality Commission of the House of Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly to amend laws and policies, analyse reports on the situation of gender equality and organize thematic sessions and regular promotional activities. In 2014, at the proposal of the Commission, the Uniform Rules for Drafting Legal Regulations in the Institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina had been amended to require that all future regulations adopted by the Council of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly should respect the principle of gender equality. At the regional level, in 2014, the Joint Declaration on Cooperation of Institutional Mechanisms for Gender Equality in the Western Balkan Countries had been signed, and an action plan had subsequently been developed.

5. The Agency had taken a proactive approach to raising funds for the implementation of the Gender Action Plans to supplement regular budgetary funds, which were insufficient on their own. The implementation of the second Gender Action Plan had been supported through the first Financial Mechanism for the Implementation of the Gender Action Plan, which had covered the period 2010–2016 with funds of €2.5 million provided by the Governments of Austria, Sweden and Switzerland. The funds had been used for 65 institutional projects and 80 projects run by NGOs in partnership with institutions at all levels of government, which had involved over 100 consultations and more than 500 training sessions on gender equality. The second such mechanism, for the period 2018–2021, would support the implementation of the third Gender Action Plan.

6. During the period under review, the Council of Ministers had adopted the second and third action plans on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). In addition, a plan for the monitoring and evaluation of the action plans had been developed and used to improve activity planning and reporting on the basis of qualitative and quantitative indicators. A coordination board for the action plans had been set up and staffed with representatives from 18 competent institutions and agencies, including gender centres, and from NGOs. In the second action plan, a new strategic objective had been

launched to promote human security from the perspective of gender equality. Pursuant to the plan, five local action plans had been adopted and a further three were being drawn up. Local action plans focused on security issues and threats faced by citizens in private and public places.

7. The Government's activities to implement the resolution at the local level had been highlighted as examples of good practice in the global study on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Thanks to effective regional cooperation, and with the technical support of the Gender Equality Agency, a local action plan for the implementation of the resolution had been adopted for the Serbian city of Niš, and another one was being developed for the town of Ulcinj, Montenegro. In 2016 and 2017, at the invitation of the Governments of Albania, Finland and Moldova, the Agency had provided expert support and had participated directly in the drafting of the national action plans for those countries.

8. At the forty-fourth Group of Seven summit in June 2018, the Women, Peace and Security Partnership Initiative had been established with the aim of accelerating progress in the field. Under that initiative, each member country had to select a partner country, and the European Union had chosen Bosnia and Herzegovina.

9. The Government had invested significant resources in formulating public policies to protect the rights of survivors and witnesses of sexual violence during the Bosnian War. The Criminal Code had been amended to classify sexual violence as a war crime and crime against humanity. Furthermore, provisions on provoking or instigating hatred and violence had been strengthened in the Criminal Codes of the Republika Srpska and of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and training in that regard, and on gender equality and gender-based violence, had been given to judges and prosecutors. Compared with the previous reporting period, there had been marked increases in the number of persons charged with offences containing elements of sexual violence and in the number of completed court cases.

10. In line with a recommendation made by the Committee, witness support offices had been established at all the higher courts in the country. The offices employed psychologists to provide assistance before, during and after proceedings. The Inter-Religious Council had adopted a declaration urging citizens, local communities and public institutions not to discriminate against or stigmatize survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. The declaration had been signed by the heads of the four main religious communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Victims of wartime sexual violence were considered in the legislation of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina as belonging to a special category of civilian victims of war that entitled them to material compensation in line with that awarded to persons who had suffered physical injuries during the Bosnian War. Similarly, through the 2018 enactment of a law on the protection of victims of torture during the War, the Republika Srpska had granted victims of sexual violence a right to monthly cash benefits and health insurance, exemptions from health-care fees and incentives for employment and self-employment.

11. Thanks to the provision of technical support by the Gender Equality Agency, progress had been made with regard to gender mainstreaming, gender-sensitive budgeting and the use of temporary special measures to foster gender equality. The harmonization of existing laws and regulations with the Gender Equality Law was an essential part of gender mainstreaming. The harmonization of domestic legislation with gender equality standards was an ongoing process, bearing in mind that the country was an applicant for membership of the European Union.

12. The Agency and the two entity gender centres continuously provided opinions on legal and other acts prior to their adoption, and proposed recommendations to align them with the Gender Equality Law and relevant international legal instruments. Gender equality focal points responsible for the implementation of priority areas of the third Gender Action Plan had been appointed in more than 90 per cent of institutions at the State and entity levels, and gender equality material had been incorporated into most training programmes for civil servants, police officers, judges and prosecutors.

13. According to recent figures, 38 per cent of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina claimed to have experienced psychological, physical or sexual violence after the age of 15

years. The Government was determined to prevent violence against women and domestic violence as part of its efforts to achieve gender equality and combat discrimination and stereotypes. In 2013, Bosnia and Herzegovina had become the sixth member State of the Council of Europe to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention). Since then, strategies to combat gender-based violence at the State and entity levels had been adopted to provide a framework and basis for coordinated intersectoral action.

14. An important step towards establishing a uniform legal framework to protect against domestic violence had been the adoption of the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence in the Brčko District in March 2018. The Law, together with two entity-level laws, ensured that the whole country was covered by anti-violence legislation. Entity-level laws on domestic violence had been amended to offer better protection to victims, and had been aligned to a great extent with the Istanbul Convention. Most of the implementing regulations of anti-violence laws had been adopted and were in use, and extensive training in that regard had been provided to police and judicial officers. The Criminal Codes in Bosnia and Herzegovina had also been broadly harmonized with the Istanbul Convention.

15. In 2016, the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination had been amended to include explicitly, among the prohibited grounds of discrimination, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and sexual characteristics, making Bosnia and Herzegovina one of the few countries in Europe to have legislation prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of sexual characteristics.

16. The entity governments provided some regular budgetary funds to support the functioning of nine shelters for victims of violence against women and domestic violence in the country, and the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees had granted €50,000 to NGOs to help them to run the shelters. However, the shelters remained inadequately funded. A multisectoral committee had been created to monitor and assess the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, analyse data on cases of femicide and recommend measures.

17. Although considerable progress had been made with regard to the gathering of sex-disaggregated statistics, such statistics were still lacking at the sectoral level, and there was no consistent methodology for data collection. Accordingly, in 2017, the Gender Equality Commission of the House of Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly had held a thematic session at which participants had acknowledged the need to calculate the Gender Equality Index for the country in accordance with European Union standards and the methodology proposed by the European Institute for Gender Equality.

18. The High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council had undertaken activities to monitor cases of discrimination, and had upgraded its automatic case management codebook by including additional information. Following an analysis of the collection of data on gender-based violence, the Gender Equality Agency had recommended that the Council should populate the automatic case management system with additional data to enable comprehensive reporting in accordance with the Istanbul Convention. In 2016, the Council had adopted the Guidelines for the Prevention of Sexual and Gender-based Harassment within the Judicial Institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which were implemented in all courts. In 2019, the Council of Ministers, at the initiative of the Agency, had adopted similar guidelines for State-level institutions.

19. In 2015, the Council of Ministers had adopted the Action Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for the period 2016–2019, which provided for stronger punishments for trafficking-related offences and enticement to prostitution. In that connection, the 2015 Foreigners Law was in line with European Union standards relating to the granting of residence permits to third-country nationals who were victims of human trafficking. Also in 2015, the Ministry of Security had published a guide for multidisciplinary cooperation in the process of rehabilitation, resocialization, reintegration and repatriation of victims of trafficking in human beings in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Under the Criminal Codes, prostitution was not a crime, but enticement to prostitution was. Voluntary prostitution exit programmes were implemented in partnership with NGOs.

20. The canton of Una-Sana was among the most affected by illegal migration. The cantonal authorities had put in place protection measures for vulnerable categories of

women and had adopted standard operating procedures to prevent gender-based violence in the context of emergencies, crises and disasters. In response to the large influx of migrants into Bosnia and Herzegovina, activities were being undertaken to facilitate the registration of children born in the country to undocumented parents. Progress had been made with regard to the registration of Roma children. Municipal authorities were required to provide free professional assistance in the registration of births and deaths to persons who were socially disadvantaged or belonged to a national minority.

21. Despite significant efforts by institutional gender equality mechanisms and civil society organizations, women were still underrepresented in decision-making positions. Although the introduction of a 40 per cent quota for women in electoral lists had led to some progress, women's participation in legislative and executive bodies at all levels remained at about 20 per cent. In order to rectify the situation, gender equality mechanisms, in partnership with civil society, had launched public campaigns and had worked to bring about legislative amendments. More favourable conditions for women's participation in the military and the police force had been created through such amendments and through affirmative action measures and educational initiatives. In the labour market, women's representation was also low. Women accounted for 51.5 per cent of the working-age population, but in 2016, they had accounted for 61.5 per cent of the inactive population and only 35.9 per cent of employed persons. Consequently, work, employment and access to economic resources was considered a priority area in all Gender Action Plans.

22. Despite the complex structure of the country, the Gender Equality Agency and the entity gender centres had established continuous and successful cooperation and coordination. However, the financial and human resources available to those bodies were insufficient to enable them to fulfil their mandates. To conclude, Bosnia and Herzegovina remained committed to implementing a coordinated approach to gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment.

#### *Articles 1 to 6*

23. **Mr. Safarov** said that he wished to know whether the State party intended to incorporate the principle of gender equality into its Constitution and adopt a definition of gender-based discrimination or discrimination against women that was in line with relevant international instruments, including the Convention. He would also be interested to hear what problems the State party faced in implementing the principle of gender equality and what steps it planned to take to ensure the effective dissemination of the Convention and its Optional Protocol and provide training in the two instruments to civil servants, lawyers and human rights defenders, among others.

24. He would be grateful for information on the number of cases in which the Convention or the Committee's general recommendations had been cited by national courts and on any specific measures that the State party's authorities at all levels had taken to ensure that victims of gender-based violence and other vulnerable individuals had continuous, undisturbed access to information on the assistance available to them, including free legal aid.

25. Referring to paragraph 14 of the Committee's concluding observations on the State party's combined fourth and fifth periodic reports ([CEDAW/C/BIH/CO/4-5](#)), he asked what measures the State party had taken to incorporate into its Constitution a definition of equality between women and men and a prohibition of direct and indirect discrimination against women in the public and private spheres, in accordance with articles 1 and 2 of the Convention. He would appreciate information, including statistics, on criminal cases of sexual harassment, forced marriage and sex-based discrimination.

26. **Mr. Leskovac** (Bosnia and Herzegovina) said that the limitations of the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina were widely acknowledged. For that reason, 15 international treaties, the Convention among them, had been annexed to – and, thus, made an integral part of – the Constitution. In cooperation with civil society, proposals to amend the Constitution had been drafted with the aim of incorporating the gender dimension and including a definition of discrimination. Constitutional reform was a long and drawn-out

process in Bosnia and Herzegovina, however; those amendments had been pending consideration by the Parliamentary Assembly for a number of years.

27. Although in the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination lacked a specific definition of discrimination against women, gender was listed as one of the prohibited grounds of discrimination. In addition, the Gender Equality Law – considered to be a *lex specialis* – contained a definition of gender-based discrimination.

28. With regard to action taken in response to the Committee's previous concluding observations on his country's combined fourth and fifth periodic reports, the Council of Ministers had adopted a decision recognizing the recommendations made and obliging line ministries to take appropriate action. For example, the Gender Action Plan had been planned and drafted to take account of the Convention and the concluding observations, thus ensuring that the Committee's recommendations were translated into specific measures, programmes and policies. Efforts were being made to ensure that gender was mainstreamed into all government ministries and to introduce the concept of gender equality into wider society.

29. As a result of extensive training programmes on issues such as gender equality and gender-based violence for the judiciary, the Convention was increasingly being mentioned in the main arguments of court decisions. However, very few decisions had so far been based specifically on the Convention or on the Gender Equality Law, since judges tended to refer to criminal legislation as the main grounds for their decisions. Strategies to improve the training and capacity-building of the judiciary and the police, particularly with regard to combating gender-based violence, had been established, with assistance from international organizations and donors, such as the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and the United States Agency for International Development.

30. Recent figures showed that there had been a steady increase in the number of reported cases of gender-based violence, which demonstrated that victims were slowly but surely placing their trust in the public authorities. Police officers were also increasingly aware of gender-based violence as a criminal offence, formally recording incidents and, thus, initiating criminal proceedings. In the past, there had been a tendency for the police to treat domestic violence as a family matter rather than as a violent offence. Much remained to be done, however, in particular to raise awareness among the police and prosecutors of less visible forms of gender-based violence, such as psychological violence, which were rarely prosecuted.

31. **Mr. Safarov** said that amending the Constitution was crucial for the full implementation of the Convention. The Constitution was the cornerstone of the legal framework from which all legislation, policies and plans should be derived. For that reason, the State party should incorporate a definition of discrimination against women, including direct and indirect discrimination, into the main provisions of the Constitution, rather than consigning it to the annex. Until that was done, the Convention would never be consistently invoked by the courts. The lack of specific definitions or legislative provisions on discrimination against women, sexual harassment and forced marriage also compromised the State party's ability to collect statistics on those matters. Lastly, he wished to emphasize the importance of ensuring gender budgeting was in place not only at the national level but also at regional and municipal levels.

32. **Ms. Ameline** said that, in the light of the reforms that were under way, it seemed that the State party was at a turning point in its history. It was a candidate country for accession to the European Union, membership of which would entail a number of obligations, including equality between women and men. She wished to know how the State party intended to follow-up on the recommendations it had already received from the European Union in that regard, how it planned to incorporate the gender equality policies and strategies of the European Union into its institutional framework and how it was ensuring a consistent approach towards the implementation of the Convention and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Lastly, in the light of the fact that more than two decades had passed since the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Dayton Peace Agreement) had been signed, it would be helpful to know more about the status of the process of transitional justice in the State party

and the steps taken to achieve national reconciliation, including by ensuring that women victims of the conflict received adequate reparation.

33. **Mr. Leskovac** (Bosnia and Herzegovina) said that the prospect of accession to the European Union, and the attendant integration progress, was seen as an incentive for politicians to focus their attentions on human rights and gender equality and seize the opportunity to harmonize the national legislation with all European Union standards on gender equality. In preparation for European Union integration, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the European Union had signed a stabilization and association agreement, which contained a number of mandatory elements, including ensuring respect for the rule of law and human rights. As part of that integration process, the European Union regularly made recommendations to Bosnia and Herzegovina, among which it had highlighted the importance of improving not only gender equality but equality for all, including for minorities such as the Roma population and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community. The Council of Europe, of which Bosnia and Herzegovina was already a member State, had also made similar recommendations. On the basis of those recommendations, changes to the legal system were being made and specific measures were being implemented. For example, in the draft workplan of the Council of Ministers, it was envisaged that the Gender Equality Law would be amended to incorporate the European Union acquis – the body of common rights and obligations that were binding on all member States of the European Union. However, it was an ongoing process, for which much-needed support and capacity-building were being provided by the European Union through its Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance. Two major projects under that Instrument, concerning anti-discrimination and gender equality, were in the early stages of implementation. In addition, civil society was actively working to raise greater awareness among the public of the European Union – and, indeed, universal – values of human rights and gender equality.

34. On the issue of reparations for victims of the conflict, unfortunately a State fund had yet to be established. There had been some progress, however. For example, a law on protecting victims of war torture had been adopted in the Republika Srpska and an increasing number of court decisions had awarded compensation to victims. That being said, only a handful of those decisions had been fully implemented owing to the inability of the perpetrators involved to compensate their victims. Efforts were being made to overcome such deficiencies, including by setting up a State fund in the future.

35. **Ms. Rana** said that, in the light of the shortage of human resources in the Gender Equality Agency, she would appreciate information on what specific progress had been made in implementing the Gender Action Plan 2018–2022. She would also like to know more about the mechanisms to engage civil society in the development and implementation of that plan and other programmes related to gender equality. What was the budget for implementation?

36. She also wished to know what measures had been taken to strengthen the Institute of Human Rights to enable it to discharge its mandate in full compliance with the principles relating to the status of national human rights institutions (Paris Principles).

37. She would welcome information on the mechanisms in place to effectively implement the third Action Plan on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), in the light of reports claiming that those mechanisms did not permit broad civil society involvement. She would appreciate hearing about examples of meaningful participation by civil society in the Plan's development and roll-out, and about the financial and human resources that were available. She wondered how local communities were supported in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of the local action plans; according to alternative sources, they had not been developed on the basis of a real needs assessment and local authorities only paid lip service to their implementation.

38. She would like to know what steps were being taken to adopt the revised war crimes prosecution strategy and to continue effectively dealing with war crimes pending its adoption.

39. **Ms. Nadaraia** said that she wished to commend the State party for its broad application of temporary special measures to improve women's representation in public life.

However, even though the 40 per cent quota for candidates from the less represented sex, set under the revised electoral legislation, had been met in recent elections, women had in the end obtained only around 20 per cent of seats.

40. The Committee would appreciate hearing whether a new strategy to improve the situation of rural women had been prepared following the expiry of the Rural Development Strategy 2009–2015. What plans did the State party have to expand the application of temporary special measures in general?

41. **Mr. Leskovac** (Bosnia and Herzegovina) said that staff shortages were indeed a major problem for the Agency for Gender Equality, which had only four officers. It was sometimes possible to co-opt assistance from projects funded by the international community, and it was hoped that a monitoring and evaluation expert would soon join the team.

42. In addition, partnerships with civil society, some of them formalized in memorandums of understanding, were of great importance in the Agency's work. Civil society organizations were the eyes and ears of such government institutions and their analyses of social trends could translate into policy. In some cases, the State effectively outsourced certain functions by awarding grants to civil society organizations to deliver services on its behalf.

43. A bill on the strengthening of the Institute of Human Rights Ombudsman had been prepared by his own ministry, the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, and was currently before the parliament.

44. **Ms. Svetlin** (Bosnia and Herzegovina) said that, in designing the second Action Plan on the Implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), a memorandum of understanding had been signed with 17 civil society organizations, and they had made a significant contribution, each according to its agreed roles and responsibilities. That plan had contained good practices and had been sufficiently well structured that the implementing institutions could rely on it for their annual planning. The third Action Plan was closely based on the second, maintaining the Government's generally consistent approach to women and peace and security. Civil society organizations continued to be involved, albeit chiefly through online communications rather than face-to-face meetings.

45. She did not agree that the local action plans were not based on real needs. A detailed baseline study had been carried out with five local communities, which had all reported very different security needs and challenges. Sarajevo had provided a good example of implementation of a local action plan: noting that a group of women were at risk because they sold their wares in the street, the municipality had secured funds to provide them with a safe space for that activity, thereby boosting their monthly income. In general, however, although there was a great deal of interest in local implementation of Council resolution 1325 (2000), the complexities of the country's political decision-making process and administrative structure made it difficult for the State to work at the local level. Nevertheless, the institutions concerned were becoming better coordinated, taking their own initiatives and weaning themselves off Agency support. Moreover, the introduction of temporary special measures had had positive results, for example increasing women's representation in the police force.

46. **Mr. Leskovac** (Bosnia and Herzegovina) said that the revised war crimes prosecution strategy, which had been prepared by the Agency for Gender Equality, was currently before the parliament.

47. Provision was made for temporary special measures in both the Gender Action Plan and the Action Plan on the Implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). In addition, the Republika Srpska had included an action plan on the advancement of women as a temporary special measure in its Rural Development Plan, and that had helped strengthen the role of rural women; a new version of its Rural Development Plan had been developed.

48. In both entities, temporary special measures included adaptation of the criteria for obtaining grants, with special weighting for women. That had helped revitalize female entrepreneurship, for example. Moreover, once set in motion, trends of that kind seemed to



be sustainable, notably in the agriculture sector. Temporary special measures had also helped boost women's participation in the military and peacekeeping forces; the number of years' experience required before a member of the military could be sent abroad, for example, had been brought down from eight years to five, resulting in a doubling of the number of women in the country's peacekeeping forces.

49. The outcome of elections, with only half the number of women standing actually obtaining seats, showed that quotas were far from the only measure needed in order to increase women's participation in political life. The country's electoral system, with open lists and proportional representation, allowed voters to make their own selection of candidates, which could work against the quotas. That raised the question of the profile of women candidates. If parties did not invest enough in them, then they were not recognized by voters. In addition, women politicians needed to balance their professional and family life and therefore had less time than men to engage in lobbying and meetings. At the same time, surveys had shown that women were perceived to have greater integrity and better reflect the needs of the population.

50. **Ms. Tisheva**, noting that the State party had no comprehensive strategy to overcome stereotypical views on women's and men's roles and responsibilities, that 60 per cent of female politicians had experienced gender-based violence and threats and that female journalists faced discrimination and sexism, said that it would be interesting to learn what legislative and policy measures the State party intended to take, and with what timeline, to effectively counter gender stereotyping and sexism.

51. Given that just under half of women in the State party had experienced some form of abuse, violence or sexual harassment since reaching the age of 15 and that 84 per cent of women did not report violence to the police, she would like to know when the State party intended to improve and harmonize its legislation on protection against domestic violence and other forms of violence, in accordance with the Istanbul Convention, establishing full accountability for perpetrators, including compensation for violence suffered during the conflict, while ensuring protection of women during the procedure.

52. She would also like to know how the State party intended to raise awareness among women, including women from vulnerable groups, and encourage them to report incidents of gender-based violence, notably by guaranteeing full protection and access to well-resourced services. Was the State party considering establishing a unified special mechanism for protection against gender-based violence? What policies were in place to enhance cooperation with and support for women's NGOs?

53. Lastly, she asked whether the State party would consider developing and strengthening the mechanism for implementation and monitoring of the Istanbul Convention and mainstreaming measures on violence against women in all gender equality strategies and plans.

54. **Ms. Gabr** said that she wished to know the extent to which the guide on the rehabilitation, reintegration and repatriation of human trafficking victims referred to earlier had actually been implemented. She wondered whether the Government was planning to increase support for NGOs to enable them to build shelters specifically dedicated to trafficking victims. She would like to hear about government cooperation with the Roma community in order to prevent the labour exploitation of Roma children. She would be interested to learn about the training provided to law enforcement officers, public prosecutors and judges on trafficking-related issues.

55. It was not clear whether, as with other legislation, the entities had different laws on human trafficking. If so, that would hamper anti-trafficking efforts. She wished to hear what plans were in place to ensure that victims of trafficking were exempt from prosecution and that the identity of witnesses of such offences remained confidential. She also wished to know what was being done to help Labour Inspectorate staff stop recruitment agencies from engaging in forced labour. She asked what efforts had been made to reduce demand for prostitution and to protect exploited women in prostitution.

56. **Mr. Leskovac** (Bosnia and Herzegovina) said that the Gender Action Plan contained some measures to combat gender stereotypes and prejudices. Measures to tackle

stereotypes in the media included an action plan to train journalists and other media professionals on human rights issues.

57. The Government's civil society partners had carried out an exhaustive analysis of the content of school textbooks, and had found that many espoused stereotypical views of women in society. In response, recommendations had been issued to the relevant government departments and the editors and publishers responsible for the content of the textbooks, advising them to remove such content. Matters related to education fell within the remit of the various local authorities, and the capacity of State-level agencies, such as the Agency for Gender Equality, to intervene was relatively limited. In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, education policy, including the content of school textbooks, was decided at the cantonal level. Some authorities had proved more responsive than others in following the recommendations on combating stereotypes.

58. Part of the mandate of the country's Communications Regulatory Agency was to monitor media content and impose penalties for breaches of the media codes of conduct, which contained principles concerning respect for women's rights. The Agency had highlighted specific breaches of gender equality principles and had recommended measures, including the training of media professionals on gender equality and the imposition of penalties, in response to complaints from the general public and NGOs. A mechanism had been established under Gender Equality Act for following up on complaints lodged by the public.

59. The complex constitutional and institutional structure of the country had sometimes resulted in inconsistent legal standards, including with respect to some aspects of gender equality and gender-based violence. Nonetheless, some progress had been made in harmonizing discrepancies between national and entity laws governing such violence. For example, in the Republika Srpska, a recent amendment meant that domestic violence could no longer be classified as a minor rather than a major crime, in line with the law of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

60. In the Republika Srpska, the status and funding of safe houses for victims of trafficking was regulated by law, whereas no such legal framework existed in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. NGOs in the Federation therefore faced a precarious situation in terms of funding. However, a new amendment to the Domestic Violence Protection Act would regulate financing for safe houses in the Federation along similar lines as in the Republika Srpska. The national government had earmarked approximately €150,000 of the State budget for NGOs that ran safe houses. One of the Government's long-term goals was to ensure that all victims of gender-based violence received the same level of protection regardless of where in the country they lived.

61. Numerous initiatives to raise awareness of domestic and gender-based violence had been carried out, including the "16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence" campaign. The initiatives were run by civil society organizations, and the lion's share of the funding came from international organizations and bilateral donors, in addition to some national budget allocations.

62. Bosnia and Herzegovina was working with neighbouring countries to address human trafficking as a cross-border issue. The number of prosecutions for human trafficking had been increased and, in 2018, there had been 48 convictions for trafficking-related offences. The process of distributing the guide for the rehabilitation, reintegration and repatriation of human trafficking victims among the relevant authorities and stakeholders providing those services was in its initial stages. Social welfare centres catered for large numbers of women victims of domestic violence with diverse needs. Since the centres were often understaffed and underequipped, existing staff had little time to undergo training, meaning that the process of implementing the guidelines had been slow.

63. Institutional bodies had been established at all levels of government to monitor the implementation of the Istanbul Convention. In the Republika Srpska, the monitoring body was the Gender Centre, and in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it was a multisectoral team involving representatives from the relevant ministries, members of civil society and academics. The country was in the process of drawing up a report for the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and the

gender centres of the two entities were working together to collect the data required for the report.

64. **Ms. Gabr** asked whether the State party might consider including information on trafficking in persons in school textbooks.

65. **Ms. Rana** said that, given that victims of sexual violence continued to face stigmatization two decades after the conflict, it would be helpful if the delegation could provide additional information about the State party's reparation and free legal aid programmes, and specify what budgets had been allocated to them. She asked whether Bosnia and Herzegovina planned to incorporate more women into decision-making roles in the peacebuilding process.

66. **Mr. Leskovic** (Bosnia and Herzegovina) said that hotlines had been established for victims of domestic violence, some of which also dealt with cases of human trafficking. They were operated by NGOs, with some government funding. No hotline specifically dedicated to trafficking victims had yet been set up.

67. Owing to the political structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the fact that different approaches were favoured by different institutions, the Parliamentary Assembly had been unable to adopt a unified strategy to address war crimes committed during the conflict. Nevertheless, there had been a significant increase in the number of indictments for war crimes, including those of a sexual nature, in accordance with the Committee's recommendation from the previous reporting cycle (CEDAW/C/BIH/CO/4-5, para. 10 (a)). In February 2017, there had been 46 war crimes cases pending before the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina. There were legal channels whereby victims of war crimes could claim compensation. In the Republika Srpska, for example, compensation claims could be made in accordance with the Act on the Protection of Victims of War Torture.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*