



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

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

**Summary record of the 817th meeting**

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 18 January 2008, at 10 a.m.

*Chairperson:* Ms. Šimonović

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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 France*  
(CEDAW/C/FRA/6; CEDAW/C/FRA/Q/6 and Add.1)

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

2. **Ms. Létard** (France), introducing the sixth periodic report of France (CEDAW/C/FRA/6), said that her Government attached great importance to its international obligations in the sphere of women's rights; inter alia, it had been a sponsor of the General Assembly's resolution on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women (A/RES/61/143) and promoted the effective implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. It cooperated at the multilateral and bilateral levels with a number of United Nations funds and programmes and in the second half of 2008, in its capacity as President of the Council of the European Union, would be responsible for developing European indicators on the issue of women and armed conflict.

3. In accordance with the Beijing Platform for Action, France had adopted a two-pronged national policy on gender equality that not only focused on women's specific needs, but also mainstreamed a gender perspective into all public policies. In that connection, the national Charter on the Equality of Men and Women, adopted in March 2004, set out 280 commitments designed to promote gender equality in the public and private sectors. A recent evaluation revealed that three quarters of those commitments had been honoured or were in the process of being addressed. Gender budgeting was an important part of the national policy: as of 2006, all public bodies engaged in efforts to promote gender equality had been obliged to submit objectives and performance indicators, which were subsequently incorporated into a cross-cutting policy document and attached in annex to the annual draft financial act.

4. In light of the significant progress made in improving rural women's access to social security benefits, the Government had initiated the necessary procedures for withdrawing its reservation to article 14, paragraph 2 (c), of the Convention. However, despite

the introduction of a law allowing parents to choose whether they wished to transmit the father's surname, the mother's surname or both surnames to their children, the reservation to article 16, paragraph 1 (g), could not be withdrawn because domestic law was not yet fully in line with the provisions of that article.

5. France had a comprehensive legal framework designed to protect women from discrimination, which would soon be further strengthened by the incorporation into domestic law of a number of European directives on equal treatment. In order to facilitate the implementation of that body of legislation, a new independent authority, the High Authority to Combat Discrimination and Promote Equality (HALDE), had been established. It was competent to hear complaints from alleged victims of discrimination, had significant investigative powers, carried out mediation activities and made recommendations to the courts. Women must be further encouraged to avail themselves of its services.

6. Since women immigrants and their daughters were particularly vulnerable to discriminatory treatment, the authorities had developed a three-pronged approach, tailored to their specific needs, which focused on raising women immigrants' awareness of their rights; preventing domestic violence, female genital mutilation and forced marriage; and improving access to educational and employment opportunities.

7. The measures taken pursuant to article 5 of the Convention included increasing the penalties applicable to those responsible for sexist remarks, eliminating all gender-based stereotypes from school textbooks and educational materials and promoting a positive image of women in the media.

8. In order to combat the trafficking and exploitation of women in accordance with article 6 of the Convention, the 2003 Internal Security Act subjected those convicted of human trafficking to seven years' imprisonment and a fine of €150,000. Under the Act, women and girls who had been trafficked were entitled to witness protection and, where appropriate, safe accommodation. A temporary residence permit, valid for up to six months and granting employment and social security benefits, was also available to women who had severed all ties with their alleged traffickers. Once the latter had been convicted, they could be awarded permanent residence permits.

9. With regard to women's participation in public and political life, the current Government was composed

of equal numbers of men and women and, for the first time in its history, France had a woman Minister of the Interior and a woman Minister of the Economy, Finance and Employment. However, although women now headed half of the Government's ministries and accounted for almost 50 per cent of the elected councillors of towns with over 3,500 inhabitants, as compared to around 25 per cent in 1995, there were only 107 women in the 577-member National Assembly (18.5 per cent) and women were not well represented on executive bodies at the local and regional levels. To address those shortcomings, a law adopted in January 2007 had increased the financial penalties applicable to political parties that failed to observe legal provisions on parity and had made gender parity mandatory in the executive bodies of municipal and regional councils. Furthermore, the President of the Republic had recently announced his intention to commission a study on the possibility of incorporating into the preamble of the 1958 Constitution provisions that would ensure gender equality in all spheres.

10. In the education sector, although girls performed better than boys at school, their choices of courses and careers continued to be influenced by a traditional understanding of gender roles. The inter-ministerial agreement on equal opportunities for boys and girls and men and women in the educational system for the period 2006-2011 set out a number of measures designed to counter that trend.

11. Inequalities also persisted in terms of women's participation in the labour market. Since women were less likely than men to obtain the most senior posts in the most lucrative sectors and were more likely than men to work part-time, the overall wage gap between the sexes stood at 25.3 per cent. Steps taken to address that issue included the March 2006 adoption of the Law on Equal Wages for Women and Men, the aim of which was to abolish the wage gap within five years. Moreover, following the Government-sponsored conference on professional equality, any company that failed to adopt a plan to equalize salaries by 31 December 2009 would be subject to a fine. In order to allow women to balance their personal and professional lives more effectively, the Government had invited its social partners to reflect on improving the arrangements for parental leave and had decided that issues relating to childcare would be addressed in the context of the imminent introduction of relevant draft legislation.

12. In the health sector, the number of unwanted pregnancies remained high, despite the widespread availability of contraceptives. The "IVG en ville" programme made it easier for women to voluntarily terminate a pregnancy through drug-induced abortion with the help of a family planning centre and the Government had increased the sum paid to hospitals for surgical abortions under the national health scheme. A national awareness-raising campaign on the importance of choosing a suitable method of contraception had also been launched. Existing legislation to prevent and combat domestic violence had been strengthened: it was now possible to obtain an order evicting a violent spouse from the marital home, and prevention and victim support services had been improved.

13. Lastly, since the Convention was directly applicable throughout the national territory and took precedence over national legislation, its provisions were also binding in the overseas departments and territories. Given that customary law frequently prevailed in those areas, the Government had taken a number of steps to ensure respect for the principle of equality between women and men: in Mayotte, for example, polygamy, as well as discrimination against children on the basis of their sex, had been prohibited. In New Caledonia, a maternity insurance scheme had been established, with benefits payable in cash and in kind, and female employees in French Polynesia were now entitled to maternity leave with full pay. Further efforts were needed, however, to ensure that the legislation on gender equality was applied in practice.

#### *Articles 1 to 6*

14. **Mr. Flinterman** pointed out that in the almost 25 years since France had ratified the Convention, the Government's reservations to certain of its provisions appeared to have lost some of their significance. In particular, the reservation to article 14, paragraph 2 (h), did not appear to restrict the State party's obligations under the Convention; he therefore hoped that it would soon be withdrawn. Furthermore, since women were now permitted to transmit their names to their children, it should be possible to withdraw the reservation to article 16, paragraph 1 (h), or at least to narrow its scope.

15. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, asked whether Parliament was involved in the reporting process and whether the Committee's concluding comments on the fifth report had been

disseminated to the parliamentary delegations on women's rights and equal opportunities for men and women. She encouraged the State party to disseminate widely the concluding comments to be adopted at the present session and to include Parliament in the reporting process.

16. She asked what was being done to implement the concluding comments, including the Committee's advice that measures should be taken in order to create awareness of the Convention and the Optional Protocol thereto among the judiciary, prosecutors and lawyers, and sought clarification of the obstacles to direct implementation and application of the Convention by that group.

17. **Ms. Patten** noted that to date, only 5 per cent of the complaints filed with HALDE had emanated from women. She urged the State party to include data on complaints lodged by immigrant women in the next report. She also asked about measures taken to raise awareness of the establishment of HALDE among women, especially those who were members of vulnerable groups suffering from multiple forms of discrimination.

18. She sought further information on the steps envisaged by the Government in view of the strongly-worded HALDE ruling that the decision of the Constitutional Council to require DNA testing for prospective immigrants wishing to join their families in France, was discriminatory, stigmatizing to women and contrary to article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

19. The wording of article 276 of the Criminal Code (on defamation) had a particular impact on women since any defamatory remark could theoretically result in prosecution, women were deterred from reporting sexual offences. She wished to know whether the Government was likely to review the provisions of that article.

20. **Ms. Gabr** said that she welcomed the establishment of HALDE, as a single institution to which women's discrimination and status issues could be referred; it was important to ensure that HALDE played its role to the full. The low percentage of gender-based complaints could be attributed to ignorance of the Authority or to fear of the consequences; the matter should be studied. She hoped that the role of the Authority would be enhanced and its profile raised through the media and other means so that women could make themselves

heard more easily. HALDE should address the problems of migrant women, such as documentation issues. Lastly, women should be well represented among the Authority's members.

21. **Ms. Shin** pointed out that HALDE had received some 4,000 complaints to date and appeared to have a reasonably high profile. However, it was important to consider the reasons behind the low percentage of complaints of gender discrimination. The report noted that foreigners were informed on arrival that they had equal rights and asked whether foreigners and immigrants could also be informed of the existence of HALDE and told that they could resort to it in the event of gender-based discrimination. She also asked about efforts to inform women in the overseas territorial units that they could register complaints of gender discrimination with the Authority. It was important to consider whether women feared retaliation, even though it was prohibited by law. She hoped that the next report would contain further information on that topic, including an analysis and evaluation of trends.

22. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** commended the Government's gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting efforts, although she wondered about the extent to which gender mainstreaming was being applied in practice. The recent immigration law appeared to have an impact upon women in particular, notably women and their children who sought to reunite with spouses in France. She asked whether such women were offered language and culture-oriented courses that would enable them to meet visa requirements.

23. She suggested that in future reports, implementation of the concluding comments could be covered by a separate section.

24. The report and the responses to the list of issues provided insufficient information on implementation of the recommendations made in the concluding comments on the fifth report. The Committee had requested information not only on the legal and other measures taken by the Government to implement the Convention, but also on the impact and results of such measures. She suggested that the next report should provide such information in order to demonstrate the extent to which the principle of equality had been reflected in practice.

25. With regard to health and poverty protection for older women nationwide and in the overseas territorial units, she asked whether the Government had an

overall implementation plan based on the outcome of the second World Assembly on Ageing (held in Madrid in 2002). The next report should provide a comprehensive picture of efforts to apply all articles of the Convention as they related to older women.

26. She found the information contained in the report, the responses and the delegation's introductory statement to be uneven with regard to the situation of women and the implementation of the Convention in overseas territorial units. The reports of other States parties could serve as a model for future reports. She asked whether women and government officials in the overseas territorial units were made aware of legal developments so that they could claim their rights and escape the discriminatory elements of customary law.

27. **Ms. Chutikul** asked about the composition of the 11-member HALDE college and the method and criteria used in their selection. She would also welcome further information on the HALDE advisory committee and on the possibility of non-governmental organization (NGO) representation on both mechanisms. She asked whether an analysis of complaints brought before the Authority on issues other than gender discrimination was available. She wished to know whether the Government had followed any of the 151 recommendations made by the Authority and about the procedure for lodging complaints through an NGO. She requested clarification of the national mechanism for implementation of the Convention and for coordination between the numerous actors involved and asked whether it might be possible to establish a national body for overall coordination, monitoring and evaluation, including the development of indicators to ensure progress, under the authority of a full minister.

28. **Ms. Dairiam** noted that the Committee expected high standards of implementation from France since it had ratified the Convention some 25 years previously. She, too, would appreciate information on the status of women in the partly autonomous overseas territorial units. Although the present report listed a number of government interventions, it did not provide information on the strategic approach and normative standards behind those interventions, the goals, time frames and benchmarks for measuring progress, the institutional arrangements for implementation of the Convention, and the budgets and training or capacity-building programmes for those institutions.

29. **Ms. Simms** asked whether the Department of Women's Rights and Equality used the positive action recommended by the Convention in its staffing procedures in order to ensure the representation of women of non-European origin at the highest levels. As a result of France's colonial history, there was a pool of women who could benefit from such measures. She asked whether the representatives of the Department in the overseas territorial units were effectively empowered, in terms of funding and status, to lobby their local authorities and whether the people of the territorial units were represented in the Department's overseas offices.

30. **Ms. Zou Xiaqiao** asked whether the location of the Department of Women's Rights and Equality within the Ministry of Employment and the Family affected the drafting and implementation of national policies and whether the Government planned to raise the status of the Department in order to empower it to perform more effectively. She wondered whether the Department provided training or other assistance to the institutions established by the Government at the departmental level in order to ensure equality. She also requested information on difficulties encountered in implementation of the Charter on the Equality of Men and Women and the time frame for meeting its 280 commitments.

31. **Ms. Létard** (France) said that her country's reservation to article 14, paragraph 2 (h) of the Convention would be withdrawn in 2008. Its maintenance of the reservation with regard to family name should not obscure the progress made under the Act of 4 March 2002, whereby the parents could give their children the family name of the father or mother or a third name. In almost all cases, the father's family name was given as traditions were strong and the new legislation was not well known. Names could be changed at a later date, on a case-by-case basis.

32. **Ms. Sirinelli** (France) said that the withdrawal of her country's reservation to article 14, paragraph 2 (h), was imminent and the Secretary-General of the United Nations would be duly notified at the conclusion of the inter-ministerial consultations. With regard to the reservations to article 14, paragraph 2 (c), major legal changes had occurred since France's ratification of the Convention. The Government had taken note of the view that the reservations were interpretive in nature and was prepared to conduct a fresh round of consultations on the subject with particular reference to the reservations to article 16.

33. **Ms. Létard** (France) said that although the Convention enjoyed the same visibility and was as accessible as French legislation, its provisions were rarely invoked, in part because they also existed in community directives and domestic law. To date, the courts had not given an opinion on its application as no cases that would enable them to do so had been brought. French magistrates were not unaware of the Convention, but they were bound by the arguments brought before them and could not simply decide to resort to an international convention. Efforts were being made to make lawyers aware of the international instruments to which France was a party and to include them in the curricula of the nation's law schools.

34. The sixth report brought together contributions from all the relevant ministries and authorities of the overseas territorial units, and a draft had been submitted to the national advisory commission on human rights and to French women's groups. Responses to the report of the NGO, *Coordination Française pour le Lobby Européen des Femmes*, had also been drafted based on input from the ministries concerned. The sixth report had been widely disseminated to women's groups and the relevant governmental authorities, and the Committee's concluding comments and recommendations would be submitted to Parliament.

35. HALDE sought to combat discrimination, disseminate information, assist victims and identify good practices in promoting equality. The Authority had the power to investigate cases brought to its attention and to impose fines of up to €3,000 for individuals and €15,000 for entities. It also served as a mediator to help settle disputes amicably, and provided its legal services to victims free of charge. As HALDE had received only a small number of complaints involving job discrimination against women, there was a need to raise awareness of such issues and to enhance the Authority's profile. The majority of complaints lodged involved job discrimination based on ethnicity. Her delegation would provide more detailed information on those complaints in writing. The Authority had been involved in a study of migrant workers, which should provide activists with the tools necessary to combat job discrimination against migrant women. Legal provisions relating to the Authority extended to all the overseas territorial units.

36. DNA tests for the children of prospective immigrants had been introduced in November 2007.

The new legislation was experimental and would be reviewed in late 2009 in order to determine whether it would be renewed. The tests were carried out on a voluntary basis at the request of applicants for a residence permit, and involved only the children's mothers, and not their fathers. Assistance had also been provided to the countries of origin of immigrants so that they could establish reliable identity documents. According to a Senate report, 30 to 80 per cent of such documents for Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Togo, Madagascar and Comoros were fraudulent, which raised problems for people acting in good faith who wished to reunite with their families. The Constitutional Council had ruled that the tests were not prejudicial to women; if they made it more difficult to enter French territory, they did so for both men and women. However, HALDE had recently issued an opinion that the tests were discriminatory and although that opinion did not have the force of a court ruling, the Government was paying close attention to it.

37. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Solidarity was responsible for matters relating to women's rights. She held the post of Minister of State attached to the Minister of Labour, Labour Relations and Solidarity and dealt with the rights of older persons, persons with disabilities and women. The Government was coordinating efforts to promote gender equality among all ministries. Her role was to ensure comprehensive coordination of those efforts; for example, she had worked to coordinate an inter-ministerial plan to prevent domestic violence.

38. In 2002, the Government had conducted a significant reform of its policies for welcoming and integrating immigrants, a substantial part of which dealt with women. Every foreign national seeking to reside in France by legal means was requested to sign a reception and integration contract that referred explicitly to equality between men and women, the emancipation of women in daily life and the sharing of parental authority. Language assistance and other social services were provided. The "*Guide de l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes de l'immigration*" (Guide to Equality between Women and Men who are either immigrants or born of immigration) had also been issued by the Government.

39. Recent legislation was aimed at promoting gender equality in the overseas territorial units. The abolition of polygamy in Mayotte, for example, was an

important measure taken in recent years. Lastly, she took note of the Committee's request for precise data on the overseas territorial units in future reports.

40. **Ms. Augustin** (France) said that gender equality policies for the overseas territorial units were aimed at ensuring universal application of the law. The task was considerable as it involved gaining acceptance of those policies by the population, especially women, and overcoming cultural barriers since access to employment remained the major problem for women in the overseas territorial units, there had been efforts to enhance and diversify girls' and young women's educational and career options.

41. **Ms. Létard** (France) said that the issue of older women was a major concern for her Government. There was a significant action plan covering all areas affecting such persons, including health, employment, retirement, pensions and other benefits. The problem of inadequate retirement benefits, which affected rural women in particular, would be discussed in the coming year.

42. HALDE was comprised a college of 11 members and sought to achieve a balanced representation of women and men. The provisions on defamation in the Penal Code applied only where intent to harm was proved. There were ongoing efforts to increase women's access to positions of responsibility and there were many women in the current Government. Efforts were also being made to increase diversity within the Government, especially by the current Minister of Justice and the Minister of State attached to the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs with responsibility for foreign affairs and human rights. Progress towards equality had been made at both the national and local levels. In particular, many women held high-level posts at the municipal level.

43. **Ms. Voisin** (France) said that the Charter on the Equality of Men and Women, adopted in 2004, set forth activities for promoting gender equality. A review of the funds allocated by each Ministry for that purpose would also be carried out and a cross-cutting policy document, including both quantitative and qualitative information would be published. The document would be binding on the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Solidarity, which would have to report annually on the performance of its gender equality programmes. Some 75 per cent of the commitments set forth in the Charter had been achieved since its adoption. Among

those commitments was to publicize the Convention in order to raise awareness about it.

44. **Ms. Maiolo** said that she would appreciate further details on the Government's efforts to combat sexist stereotypes, including in the media, in advertising and in textbooks.

45. **Ms. Simms** stressed that racism must be dealt with in a targeted manner. Immigrant women tended to hold part-time or short-term jobs that left them without pensions as they grew older. The recent, widely broadcast confrontation between young immigrant men and French society had stemmed from their sense not only of their own marginalization, but of the marginalization of their mothers; there was a need to change the image of immigrant women among the French. In addition, harmful practices such as female genital mutilation must be identified, prohibited explicitly and punished, regardless of whether they were committed within or outside the country.

46. **Ms. Ara Begum**, after commending France on its effective awareness campaign against prostitution, including child prostitution, noted that sex tourism was nevertheless on the rise. She would like to know what steps the Government had taken to combat child prostitution, child pornography and the sale of children.

47. Concerning violence in the workplace, she would appreciate details on the number of complaints, the penalties for such violence and the laws in place to combat it. There were reports of increased violence against women, especially within the immigrant population. Information on the applicable civil and penal procedures, as well as on shelters to protect the victims, was needed.

48. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, noted the high number of murders of women and requested clarification of the preventive measures being taken. In the light of the delegation's reference to a proposed amendment to the Constitution would enshrine the principle of gender equality, she drew attention to article 2 (a) of the Convention, which required all State parties to embody that principle in their national legislation.

49. **Ms. Chutikul** said that the report seemed to equate prostitution with human trafficking. However, although measures to prevent them could overlap, not all prostitutes had been trafficked. She would like to know whether the wording of the Act on internal

security, referred to on page 25 of the report, was consistent with that of article 6 of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and of the Principles on Human Rights and Human Trafficking and whether those victims were subject to deportation under the Act. She would appreciate hearing about any bilateral efforts being made in the area of prevention and reintegration once the victims returned to their country of origin. It would also be helpful to know whether there had been any cases of trafficking for purposes other than prostitution, how many French nationals had been involved in trafficking abroad, what role the French embassies played in preventing trafficking to France and what the status of the Central Office for Combating Trafficking in Persons was.

50. **Mr. Flinterman** said that he was interested to hear more about the impact of the policy towards prostitution applied since 2003 under the Act on internal security. The response to question 12 on the list of issues (CEDAW/C/FRA/Q/Add.1) seemed to indicate that the Act was being applied unevenly throughout the country; furthermore, there was little information about proceedings against clients. Frankly, it seemed to him that government policies had not had the desired effect and that prostitutes were even more vulnerable than before the adoption of the Act. He would be interested to hear the delegation's assessment of the situation.

#### *Articles 7 to 9*

51. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** said that the impact of the Act on parity in the political sphere had been remarkable overall, yet it was surprising that parity had yet to be reached in the National Assembly and the Senate. She was interested to know whether Act No. 2007-128, stipulating new requirements and penalties for failure to achieve parity in political party lists, had yielded any results thus far. She also wondered whether there were any plans to abolish the practice of "accumulation of mandates", by which some government officials were permitted to hold more than one elected office.

52. **Ms. Zou Xiaojiao** suggested that the Scandinavian countries might be willing to share their successful experience in achieving parity in government. She asked for more information about the 2004-2007

project to increase women's access to high-level posts in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, namely, its content, whether any quotas had been established and an assessment of its impact.

53. **Ms. Neubauer** said that she also found it surprising that women's representation in the National Assembly was lower than the European Union average. She recommended that the Government should seek assistance and expertise from the European Union before taking further steps. Indeed, there was a low level of representation of women at higher levels in the public sphere as a whole, including such areas as the civil service, academia and medicine. She wondered whether any message received from the 2004-2007 plan would help improve that situation.

54. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani**, referring to the question of nationality under article 9, said that the right of a mother to transmit her nationality to her children was a fundamental human right. She had heard reports, however, that some women who wore the Islamic veil had been refused French nationality or denied a residence permit and identity card, which was a serious violation of their human rights. The wearing of the veil should not be a factor in decisions regarding nationality. Further, in her view, the family reunification provisions of the new immigration legislation contravened a number of international human rights instruments. She would like to hear the delegation's comments on the issues surrounding nationality.

55. **Ms. Létard** (France) clarified that the wearing of the veil was not prohibited in France except at school, under the Act of 15 March 2004 on the wearing of obvious religious symbols in schools. The Act was intended to protect girls, rather than penalizing them, by giving them an opportunity to have the experience of not wearing the veil. They were then able to choose freely whether or not to wear it when they came of age. France was a party to the human rights conventions of the European Union and did not believe that its immigration legislation was in violation of those agreements.

56. With regard to stereotypes of women in the media, including the Internet, a working group composed of media professionals had been formed under the auspices of the Audiovisual Council in order to study the problem in depth and to address the effect of discriminatory images in such areas as immigration and equality in the workplace.



57. The “Plan Banlieue”, an economic recovery programme for disadvantaged urban and suburban neighbourhoods, would soon be announced. It included a component of affirmative action for women in the areas of job creation and education. In 2006, an inter-ministerial committee had made commitments through 2011 to increase access to all levels of education for girls and encourage them to enter scientific and technical fields. Women often had smaller retirement pensions than men because the number of years they contributed was reduced by time taken out from paid employment for childrearing. The President was studying a plan to increase the minimum pension level and to make contributions for the years women had stayed home with their children or had worked on family farms or in family businesses.

58. Tradition and custom could not be used to justify excision and forced marriage, which were closely linked with sexual violence. The legal arsenal against forced marriage included annulment of the marriage on the grounds of lack of consent by one of the spouses or of coercion or undue influence by a parent or by one of the spouses. There were approximately 85,000 cases of female genital mutilation per year in France. Such acts could be punished under French law, even if performed abroad on a girl whose habitual residence was France, and the statute of limitations on the crime had been extended to 20 years as from the age of majority of the victim. In addition, education and awareness campaigns were aimed at eradicating the practice.

59. **Mr. Kilque** (France) said that although solicitation of an adult for prostitution was not a crime, solicitation of a minor was criminalized. Only a dozen or so cases of that nature were reported each year, mostly involving adolescents between 16 and 18 years of age.

60. **Ms. Létard** (France) said that the three-year inter-ministerial plan to prevent domestic violence had been launched in 2006. It began with interventions at primary school level to teach boys and girls to respect each other. Other activities were aimed at rehabilitation for the perpetrators of domestic violence, as well as for victims and for children who had witnessed such violence. Police officers received training in dealing with victims, and work was under way to devise a single medical examination certificate that would hold up in court if the case was prosecuted. The aim was to develop a one-stop referral process to meet all the victim’s needs. A national hotline for women victims of violence had also been set up.

61. She did not expect any changes to the law covering trafficking and exploitation of prostitution, which had been established in order to dissuade traffickers and encourage victims of trafficking to cooperate with the police. Decisions on deportation of trafficked women were made on a case-by-case basis, and many exceptions were allowed. None of the trials of women engaged in prostitution had led to their imprisonment; rather, the trials had helped to uncover procuring networks linked with transnational organized crime networks in Eastern Europe. The numbers of victims of trafficking had dropped steadily in 2005, 2006 and 2007.

62. She expected gender parity in elected office to be achieved in the forthcoming local council elections because of the intensive training in executive functions that had been recently offered to women, which would in turn generate more qualified women candidates for the National Assembly and the Senate. The process could take time, but the Government intended to continue its efforts. The issue of “accumulation of mandates” was part of the current discussion on work-life balance, but she was unaware of any plans to change the relevant laws.

63. An assessment of the 2004-2007 plan to increase the numbers of women in the diplomatic service and raise the level of their posts was currently under way. Gender-disaggregated statistics on women in the civil service were being gathered and were included in a report to the National Assembly every two years; the latest such report had been presented in 2006.

64. An equality committee established by the Ministry of Education and Research had led to the appointment of more women to university councils. Under the woman Minister of Justice in the current administration, many more women were being appointed to posts in the judiciary. A “glass ceiling” remained, however, in private scientific research since few women were entering scientific fields.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*