



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

Distr.: General
9 August 2005

Original: English

**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
Thirty-third session

Summary record of the 691st meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 11 July 2005, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Manalo

Contents

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 10 of the
Convention (*continued*)

Initial and second periodic reports of Lebanon

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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)*

Initial and second periodic reports of Lebanon (CEDAW/C/LBN/1, CEDAW/C/LBN/2, CEDAW/PSWG/2005/II/CRP.1/Add.8, CEDAW/PSWG/2005/II/CRP.2/Add.8)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the representatives of Lebanon took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Azouri** (Lebanon), introducing the initial and second periodic reports of Lebanon, said that Lebanon's accession to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1997 had been a genuine choice to pursue efforts to achieve the equality of men and women. On that score, substantial successes had already been accomplished in the realms of legal status, nationality, employment and social security, education, health and participation in political and public life, as detailed in the reports. Under its Constitution, Lebanon was also fully committed to the principles articulated in United Nations instruments and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The general legal framework for the protection of those rights was covered at length in a chapter of the second periodic report. She listed the key Covenants and Conventions to which Lebanon had acceded since 1972 and pointed out that Lebanon was an active member of the Arab Women Organization (AWO) and its various bodies, including a legal group tasked with examining the consistency of national legislation in AWO member States with the provisions of international and regional conventions on matters relating to women.

3. She emphasized that the particular make-up of Lebanese society, which comprised 18 different religious groups, each with its own specific laws to which the members were subject, remained an obstacle to removal of the reservation made by Lebanon to article 16, paragraphs 1 (c), (d), (f) and (g), of the Convention. In 1990, however, amendments had been made to the Lebanese Constitution with a view to eliminating sectarianism and the tension associated with it.

4. Lebanon was a vibrant society that generally sought to resolve its difficulties, including matters

relating to women and their status. To that end, the State and civil society were jointly engaged in tackling such issues as violence against women, with positive results that were reflected in the latest gender development indicator for Lebanon. The number of successful women candidates in the recent parliamentary elections had also doubled to six, and parliamentary work on amending the Penal Code in accordance with article 2 (f) of the Convention was expected to continue. A further new shift was that passport applications for minors now required signature by the father and mother of the child. The efforts to achieve equality between men and women were therefore ongoing and involved firm cooperation between Government institutions and women's NGOs, which enjoyed a distinct freedom of operation. In conclusion, she said that in the past the constant warring in Lebanon had impeded progress on women's issues, whereas peace now provided an incentive for action.

5. **Ms. Gabr** said that the denominational make-up of Lebanon was a truly complex and delicate problem facing that country and asked whether there were any current efforts to introduce a draft non-denominational personal code before Parliament. She trusted that Lebanon now had the necessary structures to make it possible to submit future reports to the Committee on time.

6. **Ms. Šimonović** asked whether the Convention was explicitly named in the preamble to the Constitution, and whether it was directly applicable before the courts. She would like to know what steps Lebanon was taking to bring the personal status codes of the country's 18 religious denominations in line with the provisions of the Covenant. The Lebanese Constitution contained the principle of equality before the law, but that was not the same as the principle of equal rights of men and women within the meaning of the Convention. She commended the Government for understanding that women's rights were human rights. At the same time, she would like to know what were the obstacles to the withdrawal of Lebanon's reservations to the Convention. Lastly, she enquired in what ways the Government was incorporating the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action into its work on behalf of women.

7. **Ms. Khan** said that unfortunately not much had changed in Lebanon since the ratification of the Convention, which called for the establishment of all

appropriate measures without delay. The justifications for the reservations to the Convention contained in the initial and second reports were confusing. The initial report stated that the reason for the reservation to article 16 was the lack of a single law affecting personal status, and indicated that the denominational laws were inconsistent with the Constitution. In the second report, the reservation to article 16 was justified on the ground of religious affiliation. And yet, the areas covered by the reservation, which included guardianship, custody, adoption and the right to choose a family name, had little to do with religion. Recognizing religious rights was different from allowing religious communities to establish their own level of human rights.

8. **Ms. Zou Xiaojiao** said that although some progress had been made in the enactment of legislation, much remained to be done in the area of enforcement. She would like to know, in detail, what measures the Government was taking to implement the Convention, whether it planned to promote awareness of the Convention, and what was the role of the National Commission for Lebanese Women in implementing the Convention.

9. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** asked whether gender equality was a genuine political issue in Lebanon and whether that notion was linked to the attainment of human rights and democracy for the whole of the society or viewed as a matter affecting women alone. The National Commission for Lebanese Women included no men, suggesting that the matter of equality did not concern them. She wondered whether measures were being taken to challenge the stereotypes deeply rooted in Lebanese society, to remove discrimination against women from the Penal Code, and to combat violence as an accepted part of daily life.

10. **Ms. Gaspard**, noting that the reports did not precisely fulfil the reporting guidelines, requested that future reports should follow them more closely. Referring to the immense gap between the sociological position of Lebanese women and their legal disempowerment and low participation in political life, she said that recent tragic events in that country could help to promote the rights of women. Although Lebanon was a democratic country, democracy between men and women did not exist. Comments on how the situation could be improved would be welcome.

11. **Ms. Azouri** (Lebanon) said that the bill on optional civil marriage had been approved by a majority of the members of the Cabinet but had not proceeded to the Parliament. Information on the subject was to be found in the second report. Lebanon had been established under a Constitution which had been drawn up by the many religious denominations of that country, some of which had refused to accept the option of an independent personal status code. A number of efforts had been undertaken before the outbreak of war in 1975; if the war had not occurred, the situation in Lebanon might be quite different. While past efforts to create an independent personal status code and enact an optional civil marriage law had been unsuccessful, new attempts to overcome obstacles would undoubtedly be made in the future.

12. Civil marriages could now be contracted between Lebanese and foreigners, and those marriages were formally registered. In the case of a dispute, it was the civil law that determined the outcome. That development showed that Lebanese society had the will to evolve into a civil society with civil laws. Denominational personal status arrangements had constitutional status in the Lebanese courts, and that affected the right of a Lebanese mother to pass her citizenship to her children. In 1995 — before Lebanon had ratified the Convention — civil society organizations had objected to a bill requiring proof that the children lived with the mother, together with a special decree, before the children could be granted the nationality of the mother; they had argued that citizenship in such cases must be automatic.

13. Lebanon was a vital and dynamic society whose future held possibilities. It was continually considering how to improve the situation for women. The 1990 amendment to the Constitution contained an important article regarding a mechanism that would eliminate denominations and “confessionalism” — a provision which many parties were trying to bring to the table for discussion.

14. There were three levels in the hierarchy of Lebanese law: first of all came the constitutional provisions, which superseded all other provisions. Although the Constitution made no explicit reference to gender, it did call for equality before the law. The preamble contained a clear commitment to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Constitutional Council considered every provision in the preamble to have the same legal

force as the Constitution itself. Therefore, no new legislative text could be approved by the Council if it contained provisions discriminating against women. The second level was domestic legislation, over which the third level, international law, had precedence. The courts were required to take into account international instruments when determining the legitimacy of the domestic legislation. Accordingly, the Convention had precedence over domestic laws, with the exception of those provisions which were limited by the reservations entered by Lebanon.

15. Lebanon had begun publicizing the Convention immediately after acceding to it, which had been made possible by a law passed by the Parliament. That law had been published in the Official Gazette, which had been widely distributed (to all Government offices, the law faculties of universities, members of the judiciary and others). School textbooks referring to the Convention, and the International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and on Civil and Political Rights were published and distributed by a single authority to all schools, whether public or private, so that children were aware of international human rights instruments even at the age of 10 or 11. One year after Lebanon's accession to the Convention, the Lebanese University had organized a regional seminar for the law faculties of universities in Arab countries to discuss how to integrate the Convention into their curricula. An ongoing project run by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the National Commission for Lebanese Women was focusing on how to promote the Convention.

16. She recognized that the National Commission for Lebanese Women had not strictly followed the Committee's reporting guidelines in preparing Lebanon's initial report. In trying to keep the second report consistent with the initial report, it had repeated the same error. When the next report was prepared, it would follow the Committee's guidelines. NGOs had heavily influenced the reports. The National Commission for Lebanese Women, was composed entirely of activists from civil society organizations. The experts had taken as their basis the organizations' written materials.

17. **Mr. Flinterman** thanked the delegation of Lebanon for explaining the country's constitutional order. He had learned from the reports, the responses to the Committee's list of issues and questions and the

delegation's oral presentation that the Code of Civil Procedure enshrined the primacy of international law over domestic law. Yet, the second report indicated that the ordinary courts could not declare any action of the legislature invalid because of incompatibility with Constitution or international conventions. It also referred to the exclusive powers of the Constitutional Council and the Consultative Council to monitor, and possibly invalidate, legislation.

18. He would like details of the division of powers between the Consultative Council and the Constitutional Council. He wondered who was entitled to institute proceedings before the Constitutional Council, whether discussion of legislation was suspended pending a decision of the Constitutional Council if incompatibility with the Constitution or international law was suspected, and whether lawyers, the courts, the Constitutional Council and the Consultative Council were made fully aware of the Convention through training.

19. In connection with article 2 of the Convention, he emphasized that human rights must be inclusive. Women's rights were no exception to that principle and must be adhered to without regard to such considerations as religion, place of residence or sexual orientation. He asked whether the Government planned to remove any discriminatory provision from the Penal Code, such as that against lesbians appearing in article 534.

20. **Ms. Shin** asked whether an individual woman could bring a case before the Constitutional Council on the ground that laws on personal status were restricting her rights.

21. Although the commitment to adhere to the Committee's reporting guidelines was positive, the delegation must also consider that its reports were late and make an effort to be timely in the future. Lebanon had been due to submit its initial report within one year of ratifying the Convention, in 1997, with subsequent reports in 2001, 2005 and 2009. She hoped that a combined third and fourth report would be ready in 2009. While she recognized the involvement of civil society representatives in the reporting process, she encouraged the authorities to consult women's organizations in writing to elicit views and constructive criticism, thereby providing an opportunity to raise awareness of the Convention and to use pressure from civil society as a catalyst for change.

22. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling**, raising the matter of reservations to the Convention, asked whether Lebanon was aware of the statement the Committee had made in 1998, on the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, confirming that some reservations were incompatible with the object and purpose of the Convention, and establishing a procedure for handling such reservations. While the Lebanese delegation had followed that procedure by explaining the origins of the reservations and the prospects for change in the future, it had indicated no time frame for change and had not specified the negative effects of the reservations. Firstly, she wondered whether the reservation to article 9, paragraph 2, would have a negative impact on children's education or access to health care. Secondly, she asked what was being done with respect to the general reservation to article 16. The scholar Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, who had written extensively on religious personal status laws, had advocated both intercultural dialogue and cross-cultural dialogue to deal with the issue. She wished to know if the Government talked to religious leaders to encourage a desire for change from within religious communities and movement towards a unified civil code.

23. **Ms. Pimentel** said that, while she was encouraged by the Government's efforts against discrimination, there were clearly gaps. The second report indicated an absence of specific laws against domestic violence — and therefore an absence of mechanisms to deal with it — and referred to the legal concept of "family privacy", which prevented investigation of such violence. Despite articles 1, 2 and 5 of the Convention, and general recommendation No. 19 of the Committee, that gap in domestic legislation enabled discrimination and violence against women to continue in secret. Given that Lebanon had been committed to eliminating discrimination against women ever since its accession to the Convention, she wondered why nothing had been done.

24. She would like to have more details on the special disciplinary institute for female minor prisoners referred to in the second report, and, echoing the comments of Mr. Flinterman, to learn about plans to eliminate the discriminatory provisions of the Penal Code, including article 534 on same-sex activities and article 562 on honour crimes.

25. **Ms. Maiolo** said that she was struck by the contradiction between the liberal structure of

Lebanon's economic life and the confessional structure of its society, which had led to a patriarchal environment and a lack of equality provisions in its Constitution. She would like to know whether any progress was being made to address that situation.

26. **The Chairperson**, speaking in her capacity as an expert, wished to know more about the relationship between the Constitutional Council, which was clearly a legal body, and the Consultative Council, which was clearly a political body. She wondered whether decisions of the Consultative Council could be appealed in the Constitutional Council. Anyone contemplating an appeal must know what strategy to follow.

27. **Ms. Azouri** (Lebanon) said that Lebanon's initial report had been delayed for administrative reasons. She believed that the next periodic report was due in 2006.

28. The Consultative Council was Lebanon's highest administrative court, and thus equivalent to the French Council of State. As such, it was actually a legislative rather than an advisory entity, with the power to invalidate executive orders and decrees, rather than laws. The power to invalidate laws that conflicted with the Constitution or with international conventions, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, lay with the Constitutional Council. There was no relationship between the Constitutional Council and the Consultative Council.

29. Laws could be referred to the Constitutional Council by the President, the Prime Minister or a group of ten or more members of Parliament. In addition, because of their status in the Constitution, religious leaders also had that power. Individuals, including individual women, could not take cases directly to the Constitutional Council.

30. The Arab Women's Organization had proposed a recommendation which, if adopted by its High Council, would call on member countries to permit all citizens to challenge the constitutionality of laws. The will for change therefore existed.

31. The reservation to article 9, paragraph 2, of the Convention had no effect on the access to social benefits or health care for non-Lebanese children of Lebanese mothers. They faced no discrimination regarding access to the schools of their choice and were entitled to residence permits. Although some jobs were not open to non-Lebanese, non-Lebanese children

of Lebanese mothers were given priority in the allocation of work permits, which furthermore gave them access to any job. Ultimately, she hoped that such individuals would be given full civil and political rights, and that resistance to changes in the nationality laws would disappear.

32. Dialogue with the leaders of confessional groups was a high priority, as was dialogue with the international community and civil society.

33. **Ms. Beydoun** (Lebanon) said that domestic violence was widely discussed in Lebanese society. The Government was very receptive to NGO proposals on how to deal with the phenomenon and planned to propose legislation to deter and punish perpetrators. The missing element was legislation, much having already been done to raise awareness and provide training. The Government's goal was to back those efforts with provisions embedded in law and in the Constitution.

34. **Ms. Azouri** (Lebanon) said that all the draft amendments to the Penal Code, which had been reviewed by the relevant parliamentary subcommittee, respected the principle of equality between women and men and would, as such, annul all previous discriminatory provisions.

35. She had updated statistical information on domestic violence in Lebanon which had been unavailable when the reports were submitted to the Committee. According to those statistics, during the period 2000-2004, the number of women reporting cases of domestic violence had increased dramatically, which showed that they were no longer afraid to denounce their abusers. In addition, owing presumably to women's increased willingness to report incidents, the number of acts of violence had decreased considerably. It was clear, therefore, that the efforts of the Government, civil society and other interested parties to eradicate the scourge of domestic violence were finally paying off, and it was hoped that those efforts would culminate in the adoption of appropriate legislation to criminalize all forms of violence against women.

36. On the issue of honour crimes, she reiterated Lebanon's full commitment to the eradication of honour killings, in accordance with article 3 of the Convention, and said that the proposed amendments to the Penal Code would eliminate any provisions that

allowed male perpetrators of those crimes to evade punishment on account of mitigating circumstances.

37. **Ms. Khan** said that she would appreciate further clarification of the role and composition of the National Commission for Lebanese Women, which had been officially reconstituted in 1998. She wished to know how the members of the Commission had been selected and whether a system of proportional representation had been implemented to ensure that all political and religious groups were represented. She asked whether any of the members of the Commission belonged to non-governmental women's organizations and requested further information about the relationship between the Commission and the Lebanese Women's Council.

38. She enquired whether the Commission was charged with monitoring the implementation of the Convention and whether it was independent from the Government. She also wished to know whether the Commission accurately reflected the views of the Lebanese women's movement, which had been calling on the Government to lift its reservations to certain articles of the Convention.

39. She stressed the importance of raising awareness of women's rights among the general public and, in that connection, asked whether the National Commission for Lebanese Women engaged in awareness-raising activities and whether school and university curricula contained references to the Convention. Lastly, she would be grateful to know whether the Commission had taken up the issue of legislative amendments to ensure gender equality and non-discrimination with the relevant parliamentary subcommittees.

40. **Ms. Gabr** emphasized the importance of lobby groups and asked whether Lebanese men were involved in the activities of such groups. Did the Lebanese women's movement intend to collaborate with and draw on the experience of other international women's organizations and, in particular, Arab women's groups?

41. She would be grateful for an outline of the major components of the general national strategy for Lebanese women and for further information about the obstacles encountered during its implementation. Lastly, she enquired about the role played by the National Commission for Lebanese Women in the fight

against gender-based stereotypes and domestic violence.

42. **Ms. Shin** advised the Lebanese delegation to verify the due date of its next report with the Committee secretariat. The changes that had taken place in Lebanese society since the country's accession to the Convention were unsatisfactory and, in that connection, she wished to know whether the Government had drawn up a specific plan of action for gender equality. If so, what were the plan's goals and objectives and were they time-bound? Did it deal with particular priority areas? It was essential to develop a focused plan of action and to disseminate it to all relevant Government departments in order to raise awareness of women's rights.

43. **Ms. Saiga** said that she would appreciate further information about the working methods of the National Commission for Lebanese Women. In particular, she wished to know whether it had permanent status and whether its role was primarily consultative. According to the second periodic report, the Commission was responsible for consolidating the broadest view of women's affairs and shaping it into strategies, action plans and recommendations. In that regard, she asked about the destination of those recommendations. Lastly, in the broader context of the national machinery for the advancement of women, she wished to know which specific bodies or Government departments were directly responsible for legislative proposals and policy decisions.

44. **Ms. Bokpe-Gnacadjia** commended the Lebanese Government for its political will to implement the Convention but regretted that the de facto situation of women in Lebanon remained a cause for concern. While the significant reduction in the number of cases of domestic violence and the proposed amendments to the Penal Code were encouraging, the underlying permissive attitude of the Government undermined the positive work it was doing and she therefore stressed the need for even greater political will, particularly in the priority area of the unification of laws on personal status.

45. While the Constitution recognized that all Lebanese citizens were fully equal before the law, domestic legislation did not provide specifically for equality between women and men, which left the door wide open to gender-based discrimination. Despite the Government's stated willingness to implement the

Convention, it had often fallen short of its obligations. For instance, in 1998, the Council of Ministers had failed to send the draft law on civil marriage to Parliament, which, according to the initial report, amounted to an explicit violation of legal and constitutional procedures. Four years later, in 2002, Parliament had blocked the draft law. She asked why the Government had not done more to rectify the situation and, in that context, expressed her doubts as to the success of the proposed amendments to the Penal Code. Lastly, she wondered how much influence the Government could exert over the leaders of certain religious communities in Lebanon, particularly since, pursuant to a ruling given by the Constitutional Council, a number of those communities had independent artificial personalities and were entitled to defend their own particular religious characteristics.

46. **Ms. Dairiam** said that, in her opinion, reforms designed to achieve gender equality in Lebanon were piecemeal. Consequently, she asked whether the Government had a long-term plan of action for the fulfilment of its obligations under the Convention and, if so, whether the three pillars underlying the reform process constituted an adequate framework for that plan. In particular, would those three pillars provide the standards necessary for the harmonization of domestic legislation with relevant international law, allow for the implementation of temporary special measures under article 4 of the Convention with a view to bringing about de facto equality between women and men, and ensure that measures for the protection of women's rights were introduced in both the public and private spheres?

47. She had been extremely alarmed to read in the initial report (CEDAW/C/LBN/1, chap. VIII.E) that religious leaders played a leading role in establishing and consolidating the status of the woman in the family and in urging her to accept her real and psychological suffering as inherent to her natural function. With an adequate legal framework, the actions of those religious leaders could be prohibited and she wondered why the Government seemed so helpless in the face of that situation.

48. She enquired whether, in the context of its plan for the implementation of the Convention, the Government had developed a time-bound programme of comprehensive legal reforms, including the removal of reservations. To that end, a strong institution to initiate and oversee those activities would be required,

and she asked which Government department currently had the authority to discharge those functions.

49. In conclusion, she urged the State party to develop a strategic plan and adequate institutional mechanisms for the achievement of gender equality with time-bound targets, benchmarks and indicators.

50. **Ms. Azouri** (Lebanon) said that the National Commission for Lebanese Women, an official body linked to the Office of the Prime Minister, had been established in 1998 as part of the national follow-up to the Beijing Conference. The Commission was composed of 24 women who were known for their activism in the field of women's affairs and who had been nominated by the Prime Minister. All 24 members of the Commission were associated with women's associations or NGOs, and had no specific political or religious affiliations. However, all female Ministers and members of Parliament, who were affiliated with particular political and religious groups, were regarded as legal members of the Commission with consultative status. Their participation in the Commission's work ensured that the executive and legislative branches were kept abreast of its activities.

51. The Commission was essentially an advisory body, empowered to make proposals and recommendations and give opinions, which had discretionary force, on all matters relating to women's issues. It was independent from the Government and was responsible for devising and implementing its own work programme. In that connection, she acknowledged that, on account of the extremely precarious financial situation of the country as a whole, the resources available to the Commission were insufficient.

52. The National Commission's strategy was aimed at ensuring full equality between men and women in civil legislation on social matters; guaranteeing women's human rights within the framework of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Lebanese Constitution; guaranteeing that women had a safe and sustainable means of leading a dignified life; enhancing women's capacity to benefit from equal opportunities; increasing women's participation in Government and decision-making at all levels; and promoting the legality and legitimacy of equality between men and women in Lebanese culture and attitudes.

53. While the Government had a role to play in preventing honour crimes, the responsibility for raising sons who were not biased against women fell on mothers.

54. The National Commission had set out four legal objectives in its strategy: adherence to international covenants and conventions; implementation of legal texts guaranteeing women's rights; the drafting of legislation to enforce women's rights; and the consecration of women's human rights in all legislative texts. In that context, efforts were being focused on promoting awareness of international conventions and accession to those to which Lebanon was not yet a party, and lifting Lebanese reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Lebanese Government was committed to realizing all those objectives, although it was not capable of doing so all at once; it was, however, achieving steady progress to that end. Inevitably, Lebanon would benefit from the achievements of other Arab States through its membership in the Arab Women Organization.

Article 5

55. **Ms. Simms** said that the National Commission must ensure enforcement of the human rights of all women in Lebanon, including domestic workers brought over from Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Africa and subjected to a modern-day form of slavery. The Committee had even received reports of Filipina women jumping from upper-storey windows to their deaths after being violently raped and abused. The Lebanese Government was responsible for the working conditions of those women and should uphold its own labour laws.

56. She did not believe that prostitution was mainly a juvenile problem. Most prostitutes were adult women, and rape also occurred within the institution of marriage. As for blaming honour crimes on mothers and the way they brought up their sons, she strongly objected to placing such an undue burden on women alone. It was incumbent on the National Commission to develop a strategy for a healthy dynamic between church and State. Ultimately, the State was responsible for guaranteeing the dignity of women, which could not be sacrificed in the name of any god.

57. **Ms. Saiga**, referring to chapter 2.III of the second periodic report (Obstacles to changing gender

stereotyping), asked what the function of the Media Council was, if it had no mechanism for monitoring the portrayal of women in the media. She would also appreciate details on government measures to change the portrayal of women in school textbooks.

58. **Ms. Popescu** said that the State party's reports should have been submitted about nine years earlier. She expressed concern at the persistence of certain patriarchal mentalities, stereotyping and prejudice against women in Lebanese society and, in particular, at the impact of religious leaders on legislation and private life, resulting in the toleration of such extreme forms of violence as honour crimes. Fathers bore as much responsibility as mothers for bringing up sons who did not harbour prejudices. Above all, it was the Government's duty to prohibit honour crimes by law. Was the Lebanese Government cooperating with NGOs to combat stereotypes, and were school textbooks being reviewed with a view to portraying a more modern and egalitarian image of women?

59. **Ms. Coker-Appiah** noted the slow pace of change in traditional male and female roles in Lebanon and said that the problem must be addressed early on. In that connection, she wondered what steps the Government was taking to eliminate gender stereotypes from school textbooks.

60. She expressed concern that battered women had no effective means of bringing action against their perpetrators or of receiving compensation and there was no integrated body of trained security officers, social workers and psychologists to assist victims and raise awareness of the problem. She wondered whether the Ministry of Social Affairs was allocated Government resources for shelters and counselling for victims, and whether it trained the police and the judiciary, including the judges in religious courts, to respond to and report incidents of violence against women.

61. **Ms. Morvai** pointed to the seeming contradiction between the decline in domestic violence mentioned in the delegation's introductory statement and the Government's lack of action, or, at best, misguided approach, to dealing with the issue (for example, the study on beating as a means of resolving marital disputes under the section on marital violence in the second periodic response (CEDAW/C/LBN/2, chap. 3.IV)). How many women had died in the past year as a result of domestic violence and, conversely, how

many had killed their husbands in an effort to defend themselves against abuse? She urged the State party to study international norms and the Committee's general recommendation No. 19 in that regard, drawing special attention to the two pillars of holding the perpetrator accountable and protecting the victim. She wished to know how many perpetrators of violence were prosecuted and convicted every year in Lebanon, and whether programmes were available for their rehabilitation, since it was those perpetrators — not their mothers or their wives — who needed to modify their behaviour. She would also appreciate information on the country's system of protecting victims, on the number of restraining orders and orders of protection issued, and on the number of shelters available and how those shelters were operated and financed.

62. **Ms. Tavares da Silva**, noting the State party's intention to accede to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, asked about the real situation of prostitution in Lebanon and government measures to prevent or address it. She wondered whether the regulation of prostitution by those who practised and benefited from it, particularly with regard to the preservation of public health, was truly in conformity with article 6 of the Convention. Was the issue one of moral standards, as the State party maintained in its initial report, or was it one of human dignity and women's right not to be bought and sold as merchandise?

63. **Ms. Beydoun** (Lebanon), replying to Committee members' questions concerning article 5, said that her Government was fully committed to integrating a gender perspective in school textbooks and had given clear instructions to textbook writers to eliminate stereotyping and portray a more favourable image of women. The reality was, however, that even those responsible for the content of textbooks, including teachers who had attended special awareness-raising courses, were reluctant to abandon stereotypes and had to be constantly prodded.

64. Until recently, domestic violence had been considered a private family matter rather than a public issue. Civil society organizations had launched the campaign against domestic violence, setting up a hotline and shelters for battered women, and the Government was now fully aware of the need to combat the phenomenon in all its forms. Women and

children at risk hid in secret shelters in the convents as well. The Lebanese Government and NGOs had opened shelters to protect non-Lebanese domestic workers and migrant workers and to provide for their treatment. In addition, about 100 members of the police force had received special training in dealing with battered women. The role and approach of social workers, particularly in rural areas, should not be underestimated. While respecting Lebanese culture and tradition and avoiding confrontation with men, social workers had had a revolutionary impact.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.