



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

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

Summary record of the 645th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 26 January 2004, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Açar

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Combined fourth and fifth periodic report of Ethiopia

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention

Combined fourth and fifth periodic report of Ethiopia (CEDAW/C/ETH/4-5) (attached)

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

2. **Ms. Asfaw** (Ethiopia), describing the general context for Ethiopia's combined fourth and fifth periodic report, noted that there were two categories of rural population in her country. The first category was known as the sedentary rural population, which was engaged in agriculture and farming, using methods and tools that had barely changed since Pharaonic times. In that context, she was sure that the Committee could imagine the kind of poverty that existed in her country. The second category was the pastoral rural population, which was engaged in animal husbandry. Improving the living conditions of women in the second category required a major and protracted struggle. The Constitution and the overall improvement in women's condition were the result of women's own bitter struggle. The Constitution contained economic, political and social components that had led to cultural advances, but the process of overall cultural reform was severely hampered by backward attitudes, women's lack of education and their lack of access to education and resources.

3. **Ms. Abasiya** (Ethiopia), introducing her country's report, noted that the Convention was one of the international human rights instruments and other treaties integrated into the Constitution, and was therefore part of domestic law. Basic human rights were therefore clearly protected under the Constitution, and violations of international treaties ratified by Ethiopia were also regarded as violations of the Constitution. Ethiopia had an independent judiciary as well as an active civil society comprising professional associations, non-governmental organizations and community-based groups, which were all involved in the promotion of human rights. Major efforts had been made over the past decade to spread awareness of the Convention at the local community level, through advocacy and through Information, Education and Communication (IEC) programmes. Human rights

conventions had been translated into local languages, and the media and the Ethiopia Media Women Association had both played key roles in the dissemination process.

4. Describing Ethiopia's efforts to implement specific articles of the Convention, she noted that the definition of discrimination set forth in article 1 had been adopted as part of the Ethiopian Constitution. With respect to article 2, the principle of equality between men and women was enshrined in the Constitution, and the Government had taken various initiatives and developed a range of policies and strategies to advance women's rights. Discriminatory legislation had been amended and measures taken to correct the country's long tradition of gender bias against women. With regard to article 3, she noted that Ethiopia had introduced policies to advance gender equity and that national machinery had been established at all levels of government, ranging from the federal to the local. With respect to article 4 of the Convention, on temporary special measures, she noted that the Ethiopian Constitution guaranteed equality between men and women.

5. With respect to article 5, on modifying social and cultural patterns, she noted that the Constitution addressed the historic legacy of gender bias by providing that women were entitled to benefit from special affirmative action measures aimed at ensuring their ability to participate fully in society on an equal basis with men. With respect to the exploitation of women, addressed by article 6, she noted that one major challenge was to provide women with better and safer jobs. Illegal migration had been banned and consular offices set up in neighbouring countries. Ethiopia had also been exchanging experiences with other countries. With regard to article 7, she said that Ethiopia's Constitution recognized women's right to participate in political and public life on an equal basis with men. Many women had taken part in the country's latest two elections, and women were being elected to Parliament. There were no restrictions on women's participation in government and international organizations. Referring to article 8, she noted that the number of women ambassadors was increasing, and that many Ethiopian women worked for international companies. Although the number of women participants was still too low, long-standing stereotypes made it difficult to change the situation.

6. Concerning the remaining articles of the Convention, according to the Constitution no Ethiopian citizen could be deprived of his or her nationality and all Ethiopian men and women had the right to change their nationality. The Government had introduced various rules and regulations in that regard. It had also introduced various measures to ensure the equal access of girls to education and to increase retention rates among girls. With respect to employment, the Federal Civil Service Commission had introduced reforms aimed at giving priority to women in promotion and had introduced special provisions regarding maternity leave, an issue that was also provided for in the Constitution. A programme had been developed in 1997, aimed at improving women's access to health care. The Constitution provided for equality between men and women with respect to economic and social rights, and the Government had introduced various strategies aimed at increasing women's access to resources. Also, a number of microfinance institutions had been set up in collaboration with non-governmental organizations and development partners. Men and women were equal before the law, as provided for in the Constitution, and there were no legal restrictions on women's ability to conclude contracts.

7. **The Chairperson** noted that the Optional Protocol to the Convention, which had been in force since 2000, was an essential instrument for improving the effectiveness of the Convention's provisions on the ground. She would therefore be grateful to learn more about Ethiopia's procedures and plans for ratifying the Optional Protocol. She also noted that the Committee's agenda for its present session included consideration of the proposed amendment to article 20.1 of the Convention, and asked the delegation to inform the Committee of its intentions regarding ratification of the amendment.

8. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling**, noting the lack of data in Ethiopia's report, asked whether its central statistical office was authorized to conduct gender-disaggregated surveys, and how the Government planned to obtain more data. She said that although she welcomed the new Family Code, she understood that six of nine regional Governments continued to apply the previous law, and wondered what measures had been taken to ensure consistent application of the new Code. She also wondered who was responsible for monitoring the impact of affirmative action policies, and asked

whether Ethiopia could give a timetable for its planned revision of the Penal Code.

9. **Ms. Gabr** said that while the Committee understood the difficulties Ethiopia faced in its efforts to implement the Convention, it must demonstrate the political will to do so. She wondered which organizations had helped to prepare its draft report, and whether there had been input from civil society. Ethiopia had provided information about measures taken to increase women's participation in political life, but the Committee would appreciate more information about the financing and strategic foundation of those measures. Ethiopia had not followed the guidelines for preparing its report, and the Committee would be grateful if it would do so for future reports, especially since there were a number of experts on human rights and women's rights in the country.

10. **Ms. Kahn** noted that Ethiopia's machinery for implementing the Convention included the National Policy on Women and the Women's Affairs Office (WAO), and that its report had described good cooperation between the WAO and non-governmental organizations. However, the report had also stated that women were no better off than before, especially in rural areas. It also appeared that very little progress had been made in a number of areas, including poverty reduction, schools and health. She wondered whether there was any way to produce gender-disaggregated data and whether the delegation could provide more information about the budgeting sources for women's institutions. She also wondered whether law enforcement and other agencies had been made aware of the legal status of the Convention.

11. **Ms. Gnancadja** said she would welcome further information on the national machinery to promote the advancement of women, particularly the specific measures that the National Committee on Harmful Traditional Practices had taken to combat such practices. Clarification was also needed on the relationship between the National Committee and the Women's Affairs Office.

12. **Ms. Saiga** requested clarification of the relationship between the Women's Resource Centre, the National Committee on the Advancement of Women and the Women's Affairs Office. Noting the discrepancies in the periodic report concerning revisions to the Penal Code, she enquired about the current status of the revisions to make the Code more

woman-friendly and whether the Government of Ethiopia had established a time frame for changes to be enacted. An update on the progress made by the office of the ombudsman in charge of children and women's affairs since July 2002 would be helpful. It would also be useful to know how the Penal Code dealt with harmful traditional practices.

13. **Ms. Shin**, referring to article 3, asked to what extent the Government's development plans were gender sensitive and woman-friendly. She asked whether the contribution of women, particularly in rural areas where they played a crucial role, had been included in calculations of gross national product. More information on the number of women who participated in the training programmes and the number of women who led those programmes would also be helpful. She commended the study by the Women's Affairs Department of the Ministry of Water, which revealed that in the 122 villages covered, only two women had held the position of chairperson and only five women had been members of the community water committees. Further information would be welcome on whether participation in such committees required the approval of husbands and on any efforts under way to ensure that women were included in the management of water resources.

14. **Mr. Melander** requested a more detailed account on the level of gender sensitivity in the use of development assistance from countries such as Sweden. Clarification was also needed of the extent to which regional legislation had incorporated the Convention and whether such legislation took precedence over the Convention.

15. **Ms. Asfaw** (Ethiopia) said that, although her Government had not ratified the Optional Protocol or the amendment to article 20, she was hopeful that it would do so. A tradition of discussing all public matters, including the Constitution, at the grass-roots level had begun in rural areas 30 years earlier. Acknowledging a lack of data in the report, she said her country did not have the requisite number of highly educated women and men to collect such information. The national statistics office had begun to collect data broken down by gender, although more work needed to be done.

16. While six regional states of Ethiopia, largely pastoral regions, had not yet ratified the new Family Code, the highly populated states all had. The vast

majority of the population had therefore approved the Code. She acknowledged, however, the need for more work on bringing the legislation of regional states in line with the Constitution.

17. Her Government had instituted affirmative action programmes in education and the civil service. For example, entrance exam requirements for universities were more rigorous for boys than girls. In civil service examinations a woman who scored within 3 per cent of a man would be hired over the male candidate.

18. Efforts had been made to mainstream gender issues in the Penal Code. For example, the minimum penalty for rape had been increased to five years and the maximum to 20. Consideration was being given to handing down even more severe penalties for men who raped children. Previously, punishment for rape could have consisted of a mere fine, such as payment of one camel. She emphasized that her country had travelled a great distance towards revising criminal law for the protection of women. The rights of migrant workers must be respected in the countries to which they migrated, although admittedly they were often mistreated. This had been further aggravated by the lack of consulates in some of those countries. Her Government was working, however, to establish consulates in countries with Ethiopian migrants with a view to affording them better protection.

19. Concerning why so little progress had been made in the area of women's rights despite 12 years of legislation, she said that, while women enjoyed full rights to participate in politics, vote and own land, her country bore a burdensome and tenacious conservative heritage. Moreover, 14 million of the 70 million people in her country had been affected by drought. She assured the Committee that women's issues were part and parcel of Ethiopia's national strategy to promote rural development and, more broadly, its sustainable development and poverty reduction programme.

20. A change in the attitudes of Ethiopian citizens was necessary to make the efforts to ensure women's rights a reality. Without significant economic growth and development, however, her country's harmful cultural practices would be unlikely to change. Hundreds of thousands of women had joined grass-roots campaigns to stop such horrendous practices as female genital mutilation and to inform women of their rights. Unfortunately, progress had been slow, partly because the attitudes of women themselves were slow

to change. She trusted, however, that with the help of partners, international organizations and civil society, her Government would defeat harmful practices.

21. **Ms. Abasiya** (Ethiopia) said that, despite strong political will at the national level, many obstacles remained to gathering gender-disaggregated data from Ethiopia's various ministries. An important challenge was to raise awareness about gender issues, which her Government had begun doing only 10 years earlier. Although gender focal points and civil society had been monitoring progress on women's rights, Ethiopia suffered from a lack of capacity, qualified personnel and financial resources. Gender issues had been incorporated in the national poverty reduction programme in a cross-cutting manner. Donor agencies were working with the Government to fund efforts to mainstream gender issues, and the Committee on the Advancement of Women was closely cooperating with non-governmental organizations to implement national gender policies at all levels. With respect to harmful cultural practices, the National Committee on Harmful Traditional Practices had been established to coordinate efforts by various agencies and non-governmental organizations to increase awareness about violence against women and girls. The revised Penal Code would also help to raise consciousness. Finally, the Women's Affairs Office would be working with women's organizations and activists to ensure that policies and legislation to protect women were carried out.

22. **Ms. Asfaw** (Ethiopia), referring to article 3 of the Convention, said that her Government's development plans were woman-friendly not only in the rural sector, where development was essential, but also in the industrial sector, which was largely based on agricultural production. To ensure women's participation in the development of the economy, affirmative action plans had been implemented. Women's production had been included in economic indicators such as gross domestic product. She recognized, however, that women had not always asserted their rights as producers.

23. Concerning the training of women, every effort was being made to increase their capacities, but a huge gap in education between men and women remained an obstacle. Education efforts had been stepped up over the past 10 years. Thousands of schools had been opened in rural areas and the number of boys and girls in school was growing by leaps and bounds, although

the 20 per cent gap between boys' and girls' enrolment had not been bridged. However, affirmative action policies were targeted at increasing girls' enrolment, and parents were encouraged to send their daughters to school. The increase in school attendance would serve to increase respect for and awareness of women's rights.

24. While she regretted that the participation of women in the management of water resources had indeed been low, the fact that women were increasingly taking part in decision-making was encouraging. Her Government would continue to promote equality between men and women in decision-making on that precious resource.

25. Concerning the level of gender sensitivity with respect to development assistance, every effort had been made to ensure that women were included. More progress was needed, however, in increasing the participation of pastoral women in development projects.

26. Although women enjoyed equality before the law, further work was needed to raise women's awareness of their legal rights. The more educated women were, the more likely they were to seek legal remedies. Some traditional religious practices, such as polygamy, also tended to discourage women from seeking justice in court.

27. Finally, her Government was actively involved in changing attitudes towards female genital mutilation, a centuries-old practice that had its roots in neither Christianity nor Islam but rather in the customs of the Pharaohs. There were several theories about the origin of that practice. Whatever its reasons, pastoral women themselves endorsed female genital mutilation. Indeed, the practitioners themselves were women. Having spent several months in settlements, she had been able to observe just how entrenched traditional attitudes towards the practice were. Her Government's activities to combat female genital mutilation were therefore aimed at changing attitudes, particularly those of women. Education, the great liberator, was the only answer to the problem.

28. **Ms. Šimonovic**, noted that contradictions persisted between regional laws and practices and Ethiopia's obligations under the Convention and that individuals could seek protection of their rights only by themselves challenging those laws and practices in the local courts. She asked what other mechanisms were

available to the Government to bring those laws and practices in line with the Constitution and the Convention. With regard to the new office of the ombudsperson, she asked whether any of the office's staff were assigned specifically to women's affairs.

29. **Ms. Morvai** expressed dismay at the extent of the burden of poverty in Ethiopia, which shamed the international community, in particular the developed countries, and asked how much aid the country received from the developed world to combat poverty and advance the position of women. She also enquired about the extent to which the design and distribution of such funds were determined by and transparent to women. She would appreciate more facts about the size of the staff and budget of the Women's Affairs Office and how the Office worked with women's affairs departments in the sectoral ministries and with non-governmental organizations. She also requested information about the National Policy for Ethiopian Women, in particular when it had been formulated, when it would be updated, what its time frame was, how it was monitored and how it related to the national poverty reduction strategy. Facts and figures on the extent of poverty, how it affected women, its depth and trends and the Government's plan for eliminating poverty would also be welcome. In conclusion, she asked about the number of non-governmental organizations in Ethiopia, in particular non-governmental organizations working with women's issues.

30. **Mr. Flinterman** asked about the implications of government structures in Ethiopia for the country's compliance with its obligations under the Convention. What was the division of powers between the federal and regional governments in areas covered by the Convention, such as education, land rights and employment? What instruments were available to the federal Government to encourage regional governments to comply with the Convention and what kinds of sanctions were available to punish non-compliance? Finally, he asked whether there was a national commission on human rights and, if so, whether its mandate covered rights under the Convention and whether there were similar commissions at the regional level.

31. **Ms. Kwaku** asked whether there was any explanation for the fact that the Committee's guidelines had again not been followed in drafting Ethiopia's report and whether the Government needed any

assistance in following the guidelines. Had any non-governmental organizations participated in the drafting? She asked for more information on the operational modalities, achievements and time frame of the national policy to stop harmful traditional practices against women.

32. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** noted that the report was rather descriptive, rich in intentions but short on evaluation and analysis. She asked for more information on the National Committee on Women's Advancement and how it differed from the Women's Affairs Office. In its discussion of violence against women the report mentioned HIV/AIDS and harmful traditional practices but not other forms of violence against women, such as violence in the home and sexual harassment of girls. Referring to the Government's responses to issues raised by the Committee with regard to previous reports, she asked what sort of limitations had been placed on the way in which abduction and domestic violence had been considered in the revised draft penal code. In particular, could a man who had perpetrated rape or abduction escape prosecution through marriage?

33. **Ms. Manalo** noted that violence against women still seemed to be a problem in Ethiopia; she asked whether any specific Government policy or programme existed to combat it and whether there was any intent to adopt a specific law to address it. She also asked whether there were any analytical studies rather than descriptive surveys on such violence and whether the Government had sought international assistance to carry out such studies. The problem of migrant workers was complex as both the receiving country and the sending country had responsibilities. In particular, the sending country should provide training to workers before they left and provide advisory information with regard to certain countries. The United Nations International Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families was now in force and should be consulted in that regard. In conclusion, she asked whether gender mainstreaming for rural men and women was part of the new national plan of action.

34. **Ms. Ferrer Gómez** asked for more information on measures to combat harmful traditional practices, of which there had been a long history in Ethiopia. She also asked whether gender issues were included in the training of educators and journalists and what was being done to combat stereotypes, especially in

pastoral areas. Noting that in the Government's responses to Committee questions regarding the national machinery for the advancement of women mention was made of concerns regarding the "competence" of the national machinery, she asked what kind of competence was meant. She would also like to know whether the difficulties in changing laws and in implementing new laws referred to in the report were due to resistance on the part of communities or the authorities.

35. **Ms. Patten** said she welcomed the revisions in Ethiopia's Family and Criminal Codes which strengthened the protection of women's rights. She asked what the Government was doing to sensitize people, in particular women, to their rights. Were any programmes of that kind targeted towards poor and rural women? She requested information on women in the judiciary and the police. How many women judges were there? According to the report women tended to choose not to go to court for redress on certain issues, especially with regard to traditional practices, because of traditions, lack of education and religious concerns; she asked whether the problem was not simply that women really had no choice, as they had little or no access to the courts. In that connection she asked whether there were any legal aid programmes for women or non-governmental organizations that provided women with legal aid.

36. **Ms. Abasiya** (Ethiopia) said that regional laws could differ from federal laws but could not run counter to the Constitution. The Women's Affairs Office, a national body, met biannually with regional bodies involved in women's issues to review progress, share experience and detect and try to remedy gaps in laws or policies. The Office also had a working relationship with women's departments in sectoral ministries, which were responsible for gender policies. Regrettably, the Committee's guidelines had reached the body preparing the report late in 2003 and it had not been possible to use them for the current report; she assured the Committee that they would be used in the future. Non-governmental organizations had not been involved in the preparation of the current report, which was intended to be the Government's report. The non-governmental organizations had other channels for reporting. She hoped, however, that closer collaboration would start with the next report.

37. **Ms. Asfaw** (Ethiopia), responding to a question about the relationship between customary laws and the

Constitution, said that laws that were not consistent with the Constitution were not applicable. It was the Constitution that was binding on individuals and in courts. Enforcement of respect for all international agreements signed by the Government was difficult, as men, in particular, liked the old ways. The challenge was to enlighten people to respect international agreements and the Constitution. An office of the ombudsman had been created and many people had applied to work there. It was hoped that the office would also help to protect the rights of women and children in particular. With regard to the question whether Ethiopian women were involved in tailoring international aid, she said that power-sharing came slowly but steadily: of the 16 ministers, one was a woman and five more women were at the State minister level, which was an improvement over the situation as it had stood a few years earlier. In Parliament, membership in the Women's Affairs Committee had trebled to 42 of the total 448 members of Parliament. Participation of women at lower levels and at the grass-roots level was much higher, reaching 30 per cent. Women lacked the education to participate in large numbers at the higher levels, which was why women's groups focused on education. Concerning the number of non-governmental organizations in Ethiopia, she said there were very many overall but not so many at the grass-roots level. Most non-governmental organizations comprised elite groups that had education and knew foreign languages. There were many health-oriented non-governmental organizations, in which women were very active. With regard to transparency in how non-governmental organizations used their funds, she granted that there were problems with some, but thought those that were devious would be eliminated over time as being ineffective. Responding to a question about what the Government did to influence regional governments to ensure compliance with the Convention, she said that the Convention was the law of the land and that the Constitution, which the regions had endorsed, required the regions to obey the law of the land. Women needed confidence, which would come with education, to seek redress through the courts to deal with problems at the level of family life and practice. One of the problems was that the courts were male-dominated and traditional. Typically judges, like many men, liked the old Civil Code and resisted change. It would take time and much work to change mentalities.

38. Turning to law enforcement, she noted that a large number of women had now been recruited into the police force and that members of the police force and judges had received training about human and women's rights. While she hoped that such training had been absorbed by the recipients, she knew that changing men's attitudes and strengthening women's confidence would require a long and protracted struggle. In that regard, the economic empowerment of women was perhaps the answer. Referring to a question about violence in the family, she noted that incest was prohibited and abhorred in Ethiopia. If abortion was ever allowed, it was when the pregnancy was the result of incest. However, she did not think that people, especially men, were ready to consider the issue of marital rape. She wanted that topic to be addressed, especially when the woman's resistance to relations with her husband was from fear that he would transmit the HIV/AIDS virus to her. Information on whether marital rape had been considered would be included in Ethiopia's next report to the Committee.

39. Regarding international assistance, Ethiopia had always been extremely interested in securing international support for work at the grass-roots level. Gender issues were indeed included in education. Civic education was taught to children even at the elementary level and it included a women's component. Journalists were trained and women were encouraged to become journalists. For example, the media played a very important role in action to combat AIDS and every newspaper had a column about HIV/AIDS as well as columns about women. However, more needed to be done in that area. The marriage age for girls had previously been 9 or 10 years because people had been very eager to grab land from the girls' parents as dowry. It had gone up to 15 and now stood at 18. However, since the date of birth was not recorded at the grass-roots level, where the bulk of Ethiopians lived, nobody could really tell a girl's age. The parents' declaration in that regard was accepted at face value. Unfortunately the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS has so frightened parents that the marriage age was falling again; they were all scrambling to marry off their daughters as soon as possible.

40. During the war, when land was issued to girls at the age of 12, there had been equal access and control of land by men and women. Men had not been interested in marrying very young girls because they were just additional mouths to be fed and did not offer

any property; the law had changed that. A return to the requirement that only a woman of 17 and older and boys 22 or older could have land was a very good idea.

41. As to government action to sensitize women to their rights, she noted that the most important action was that women could organize and discuss their problems and sensitization could be effected through the media. There was the civil service reform programme, which was gender sensitive. Members of the judiciary and police were being educated through seminars and symposiums, and when they failed to do their duty they were punished. Ethiopia was a very traditional society, which had nevertheless embarked on a democratization process that would take a very long time. However, she believed that the country was on the right track. Women's access to justice was at a still nascent level. There were women's groups such as the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association to provide assistance in that area. However, there was a considerable need to provide training for paralegals. In that regard, the lack of capacity had been identified by the Government as a cross-cutting issue and that was why capacity-building was the Government's key strategy.

42. **Ms. Abasiya** (Ethiopia) said that, with respect to planning, implementation and monitoring, Ethiopia's gender machinery did not have the capacity to implement gender-mainstreaming and gender-budgeting matters. Gender focal points had been established at the federal and regional levels to mainstream gender issues into sectoral development programmes. However, finding the competence and financial resources was a problem. The National Committee on Women was composed of different non-governmental organizations and government agencies. It addressed and evaluated activities concerning gender issues in all areas and provided technical support to gender machineries. However, it was not part and parcel of the Government.

43. Regarding the poverty reduction strategy paper and national policy, she said that PRSP included the Millennium Development Goals, which contained a gender dimension. The national policy advocated equality of women and empowerment of women in all areas and PRSP incorporated gender issues as cross-cutting issues. Attitudinal change was needed to implement that policy. Harmful traditional practices included not only female genital mutilation, but many others. However, priority was being given to 10

practices, including early marriage, female genital mutilation and rape. Human and financial resources were needed to overcome harmful traditional practices.

Articles 7 to 9

44. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** thanked the delegation for its sincerity and the progress and improvements achieved in Ethiopia — a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country — to date. Ethiopia had signed the Convention and men and women working together would be able to achieve results in the battle for equality. With regard to article 7, the participation of women in politics represented tangible progress, but that was not enough. Such a deep difference in the involvement of men and women in the political sphere was a serious matter. Age-old traditions and customs could be damaging, since they ran counter to human rights, to equality and to the Convention. They must be eliminated. To that end, perhaps a system of quotas could be introduced in Parliament to enable women to have chances of being elected. In that regard, Ethiopia could make use of article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention on temporary special measures. Other countries, both developing and developed, including Canada, had successfully introduced and used quota systems for women. Noting that women were interested in representing Ethiopia abroad and that they should be encouraged, not only in United Nations agencies but in African organizations, she wondered how many Ethiopian women were represented in the African Union and how many were involved in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

45. **Ms. Coker-Appiah** wondered whether an Ethiopian woman married to a non-Ethiopian man had the right to pass on her nationality to her children and whether a foreign spouse could acquire Ethiopian citizenship. During the recent war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, a number of spouses had been deported, leading to a separation of families.

46. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** sought clarification with respect to the conflicting statements made in the report and the oral presentation concerning the women's movement.

47. **Ms. Asfaw** (Ethiopia) said that, while Ethiopia did not have a quota system for Parliament, it had set a quota of at least 30 per cent in the educational sector, especially at the university level, for women. However, that figure currently stood at 25.3 per cent. That system

included supportive arrangements to encourage women to attend university, including a reduction of the grade point average requirement from 3.5 to 3 for women and the provision of tutorials. The Constitution had been the result of the struggle of Ethiopian women, who had proved that, in an almost biblical society, they could fight for their rights and have them enshrined in the Constitution. Moreover, women had constituted 30 per cent of the fighting force that had brought down the previous fascist regime in Ethiopia. If they could do that, then women could fight for and claim their rightful place in Parliament. Power achieved through sweat and toil was much more effective.

48. Another problem with quota systems was that it was always the elite that claimed quota seats and they were not interested in grass-roots work. That was why she supported the spread of education to all corners of the country through affirmative action and a quota system as the springboard for assault on Parliament. Agreeing that women and men must work hand-in-hand, she noted that without any quota, thousands of democratic men had stood by women because they realized that without women's participation no progress could be made. On the representation of Ethiopian women in international organizations, she noted that an Ethiopian female candidate nominated for a post in the African Union had not been selected. There were four women ambassadors and many other women in the diplomatic field, including at the consular level. As far as citizenship was concerned, men and women enjoyed exactly the same rights to nationality and children with a foreign parent had the right to decide to opt for either parent's nationality. She did not wish to discuss the Eritrean question.

49. **Ms. Abasiya** (Ethiopia), responding to a question on the women's movement, said that there were mass women's associations in some regions, including strong movements in three regions. However, that was not a national movement. A very strong women's movement would be established at the federal, national, regional and zonal levels.

50. **Ms. Asfaw** (Ethiopia), explaining the structure of the State, noted that Ethiopia had nine regions and two cities with different identities. In the four most populated areas, there were strong women's movements. For instance, in Tigray, with 3.5 million people, 400,000 adult women had organized themselves. The same applied to the Amhara region, where 500,000 women were organized. Each region

presented a different picture. It was difficult for the pastoral people to organize, as they were always on the move. In order to address that issue from an educational perspective, schools and even clinics would now be moving with the pastoral people. The women's movement was strong among the peasantry but not among the pastoralists.

51. **Ms. Kapalata** noted that child marriages were widespread in four of the five regions of Ethiopia. One consequence of such marriages was obstructed labour, which resulted in fistula. She wondered whether the Government had any rehabilitation programmes to assist child mothers to deal with that problem and whether measures were being taken to address the interruption in their education. In its next report, the delegation should provide information on specific programmes aimed at assisting women with HIV/AIDS.

52. **Ms. Achmad** said that it was important to recognize the huge constraints encountered by Ethiopia and to appreciate the progress made so far and the delegation's deep commitment to the cause of women. She was concerned about the absence of information on studies on the causes and impact of existing gender gaps. If the Government had not undertaken such studies, she wondered whether it planned to do so. If it had, she wished to know whether the results had been used in educational and curriculum reform in all fields and at all levels of education, particularly in teachers' training colleges and institutes. Citizenship education should be rights-based and given by all educational institutions. She wondered whether the Government had considered promoting girls' and women's enrolment in science and technology courses at all levels. Sensitization was not enough to eliminate gender discrimination, violence against women and harmful traditional practices. Training was very important for legislators, law enforcement officials and the judiciary. In that regard, she wondered how many members of those bodies had been trained and whether training had been carried out for legislators in the nine regions and two cities with special status.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.