



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Summary record of the 1837th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 4 November 2021, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Acosta Vargas

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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 report of South Sudan ([CEDAW/C/SSD/1](#), [CEDAW/C/SSD/Q/1](#) and [CEDAW/C/SSD/RQ/1](#))

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of South Sudan took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Ms. Warille** (South Sudan), introducing her country's initial report, said that, with a view to ending gender-based and conflict-related sexual violence, the Government had established 17 special protection units in police stations and 12 one-stop centres providing integrated services to survivors. Mobile courts were competent to try cases of such forms of violence; any cases involving members of the armed forces were tried by the Military Court. Officials involved in the investigation and prosecution of sexual and gender-based violence cases received relevant training on a regular basis. The Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Justice were striving to ensure that the bill on combating gender-based violence would be adopted. The Government was also working towards the approval of national guidelines on shelters to accommodate survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.
3. With regard to women's participation in governance, the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan made provision for a quota of 35 per cent at all levels of governance. Women currently made up 28 per cent of legislators in the Transitional National Legislative Assembly, 25 per cent of legislators in the Council of States and 26 per cent of members of the Council of Ministers. Elsewhere, women's participation was much lower: 8 per cent of undersecretaries, 3.3 per cent of independent commissioners and 10 per cent of governors were women. There were also concerns about the decline in the number of women appointed as ministers, advisers, commission chairs and county commissioners. To ensure further progress was made towards reaching the 35 per cent quota, a bill on affirmative action was being drafted with the aim of establishing a mechanism to oversee the quota's implementation.
4. A gender-mainstreaming exercise was under way in the security sector. Special training was provided to women working in that sector.
5. With support from development partners, the Government had commissioned a gender adviser to advocate for gender-sensitive reforms to public financial management. The Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict provided for the establishment of a Women's Enterprise Fund. Nationwide public consultations would take place between November 2021 and January 2022 with a view to drafting a bill on the Fund. The Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare had earmarked US\$ 100 million for the Fund over a period of 10 years.
6. Although progress had been made towards protecting women's land rights, including through the adoption of the Land Act and the Local Government Act, challenges remained owing to the fact that women's statutory rights were not applicable under customary law.
7. In July 2021, a national task force had been formed to conduct public consultations to inform the design of legislation intended to establish the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing. The Council of Ministers had approved the legal process that would establish the Hybrid Court. The Government had worked with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development to draft terms of reference for the establishment of the Judicial Reform Committee.
8. The bill on the permanent Constitution, which had yet to be passed by the national legislature, contained provisions setting out a minimum threshold of 35 per cent with regard to women's participation in the constitutional drafting committee and the preparatory subcommittee.

9. The Government acknowledged the numerous challenges affecting the promotion and protection of the rights of women and girls, and wished to appeal for support from the international community in tackling those challenges.

Articles 1 and 2

10. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that she wished to congratulate the State party on its historic first appearance before a human rights treaty body.

11. **Ms. Ameline** said that she would appreciate the delegation's comments on reports that limits were imposed on freedom of expression in the State party.

12. The Committee was concerned at the lack of a precise definition of direct and indirect discrimination and at shortcomings in the Transitional Constitution that made it difficult to build a robust legal framework to tackle violence. Although the Transitional Constitution made it clear that international law prevailed over domestic law, the coexistence of customary, written and other sources of law meant that the Convention was not directly implemented. She would welcome details of how the State party planned to disseminate the Convention. She wished to receive an update on plans to establish a Customary Law Research Centre in Rumbek and to engage in dialogue with religious leaders with a view to harmonizing laws and ensuring a coherent and efficient judicial system. Given the many customary law systems in operation, it was unclear how women could bring cases before common law courts. What progress had been made in reforming the Criminal Code to ensure uniformity across the legal system? Were mobile courts accessible to all women, including those living in rural areas? Was a support system in place to guarantee access to justice?

13. **Ms. Rana** said that the Committee was concerned at reports of widespread atrocities committed against women and girls, including unlawful killings, torture, sexual violence and arbitrary arrest and detention. It was critical to ensure that transitional justice processes addressed the gender aspects of the causes of the conflict and its consequences for women and girls.

14. She would appreciate information on the operations of the Hybrid Court and on the proportion of women in the technical committee for the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing. It would be helpful to receive an account of how the Government ensured that the participation of women in the transitional justice programme was inclusive and substantive, without fear of interference, prosecution or social stigma.

15. According to numerous sources, the appeals launched by the 10 soldiers found guilty of sexual offences in the Terrain Hotel Juba case remained pending following the disappearance of a case file in 2018. She would welcome an explanation of how the State party planned to ensure that the victims in the case would have access to remedies and that the defendants received a fair trial without undue delay.

16. An unknown number of women and girls had been abducted since December 2013. While some remained unaccounted for, others who had been rescued had later been abducted for a second time. She would appreciate details of any measures in place to investigate abductions and prevent more from occurring in the future, and to rescue women and girls still being held and facilitate their safe return to their families. Details would be welcome on the services available to women and girls who were released from captivity by armed groups.

17. It was unclear whether United Nations ceasefire monitors and humanitarian partners were given unrestricted access to all government- and opposition-run cantonment sites and military bases where abducted civilians might be held. The Committee had received information on a number of documented cases of women and children being arbitrarily detained by soldiers and subjected to torture and ill-treatment at the Blue House, Riverside and Hai Jalaba detention sites run by the National Security Services in Juba. How many women were being held in detention facilities and in the national prison service, and how many of them had been charged or tried in accordance with the law? What measures were in place to ensure that women in detention had access to specialized care and were not subjected to torture and gender-based violence?

18. **Ms. Eluzai** (South Sudan) said that, under the Transitional Constitution, any treaty or convention ratified by South Sudan became an integral part of the Bill of Rights. Workshops

were being held throughout the country to raise public awareness of the Convention. The specialized court set up to tackle the backlog of cases of gender-based violence was fully operational. It had begun its work in December 2020 and had been modelled on a similar court in Zambia. Support services were provided in partnership with non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies. Five women were currently serving on the technical committee for the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing.

19. **Ms. Kenyi** (South Sudan) said that the Government was working with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to ensure that any abducted women and children who were found were reunited with their families.

20. **Ms. Majok** (South Sudan) said it was true that the Transitional Constitution of South Sudan contained some gaps. For example, it recognized the customs and traditions of the people as a major source of law without characterizing them as positive or negative and it did not specify a legal minimum age of marriage for women and men. However, women were actively involved in closing those gaps and in the ongoing constitution-making process, specifically through their membership of the National Constitutional Amendment Committee.

21. **Ms. Ameline** said that she wondered whether the State party might consider setting up a women's rights committee within the country's newly constituted parliament to monitor the implementation of the Convention and the alignment of current legislative bills with its provisions. It might also consider drawing up a comprehensive national training plan for State officials and judges.

22. **Ms. Manalo** asked whether there was a concrete timeline for eliminating the civil, criminal and labour law provisions that discriminated against women, what legislative and programme measures the State party had taken or intended to take to counter violence against women and whether it envisaged adopting legislative measures to eliminate discriminatory customs and practices.

23. **Ms. Kenyi** (South Sudan) said that the constitutional bill contained gender-related provisions. The Government was working with different groups, including women legislators, to secure the adoption of a gender-sensitive Constitution in South Sudan. There was a committee for gender both in the parliament and in the Council of States. The female parliamentary caucus could assist in monitoring the implementation of the Convention. The process of training judges on how to investigate and try cases involving gender-based sexual violence and conflict-related sexual violence had begun. A training manual had been developed for prosecutors and investigators attached to the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs. Well-trained judges would be crucial for the effective functioning of the mobile courts established to try such cases.

24. The national action plan for implementing Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) had expired in 2020. A recent assessment had underscored the need to adopt a further national action plan on women and peace and security. A review of several major laws, including the Criminal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Child Act, had revealed a number of gaps and inconsistencies, which would be addressed in the bill to prevent and combat gender-based violence currently before the Council of Ministers. It was hoped that the bill could be used by judges to try cases involving gender-based sexual violence and that the review process described might go some way towards addressing discriminatory customs and practices.

Article 3

25. **Ms. Tisheva** said she hoped that the State party would soon emerge from the post-conflict situation and that lasting peace, which was a prerequisite for the advancement of women and girls, would soon be established. The State party should make women's rights and protection against gender-based violence a development priority in the years to come. The establishment of an efficient and properly resourced national machinery for the advancement of women and girls was essential.

26. The Committee had learned from alternative sources that the underfunding of the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare and other State institutions often hampered the effective implementation of policies, laws and procedures designed to protect women and girls and restricted their access to basic services. Moreover, the lack of gender-responsive budgeting and the continued prevalence of corruption remained causes for concern.

27. She would like to hear more about the measures taken to mainstream a gender perspective in all areas and sectors and to enforce anti-corruption measures. She would appreciate an update on the status of the Anti-Corruption Commission Act and on the investigations opened into the diversion of funds from the National Revenue Authority. The delegation might also indicate whether the State party intended to introduce a policy of gender-responsive budgeting and how it would ensure that sufficient human, technical and financial resources were allocated to the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare and to national and local institutions and mechanisms tasked with promoting gender equality, and that a gender-sensitive response was taken to the COVID-19 pandemic. She would also welcome information on the National Gender Policy Strategic Implementation Framework and on the guidelines on the rights of women and children for the South Sudan national police and their impact.

28. It would be helpful to know how NGOs working in the area of women's rights would be involved in strengthening the national machinery for the advancement of women and how the Government planned to support women's rights organizations working in South Sudan. She would also be interested to know whether the mandate of the South Sudan Human Rights Commission specifically covered women's rights and what human, technical and financial resources it had at its disposal. She wondered how the Commission could be strengthened so that it could effectively and independently discharge its mandate in accordance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles). Lastly, she wished to know how women would be included in the country's national adaptation programme of action to address the challenge of climate change and in any mitigation or other climate-related plans and policies.

29. **Ms. Warille** (South Sudan) said that reforms were already under way in the State's financial institutions as part of the Government's overarching institutional reform agenda. Reforms in the financial sector were overseen by a public finance management oversight committee. Financial reform specialists were advising the Government on how to draw up a gender-responsive budget. Local NGOs were involved in providing training on gender-responsive budgeting to parliamentarians and others.

30. **Ms. Eluzai** (South Sudan) said that the ongoing public financial management reform process would provide an opportunity for the Government to introduce gender-responsive budgeting. Officials at the Ministry of Finance and other senior government officials had begun to receive the necessary training. It was hoped that the national consensus necessary to introduce gender-responsive budgeting in all government ministries could be reached.

31. The Anti-Corruption Commission Act was currently under review; steps were being taken to strengthen the Anti-Corruption Commission to enable it to discharge its functions and responsibilities more effectively. Sourcing adequate funding for government ministries and institutions remained a challenge. Efforts were under way to build the capacity of the Ministry for Gender, Children and Social Welfare; it was hoped that the introduction of gender-responsive budgeting would help to alleviate its current financial difficulties. The South Sudan Human Rights Commission monitored the human rights situation in the country and reported on violations and specific issues affecting women and children. It would need increased technical, financial and human resources if it was to carry out its work effectively.

32. **Ms. Majok** (South Sudan) said that the Council of States had met with key stakeholders in the oil sector to discuss issues related to oil production and the allocation of resources to communities. A national audit had been carried out to verify that the resources generated by oil production had been duly distributed to the relevant states and communities, in keeping with constitutional requirements. A similar state-level audit would also be carried out. The report on the national audit had highlighted some gaps in implementation and the allocation of resources. The Government was taking steps to remedy those payment gaps and to fulfil its obligations towards communities in that regard.

33. Members of the Council of States had visited areas adversely affected by oil production and had seen first-hand its impact on local communities. Following the above-mentioned stakeholder meeting, a comprehensive environmental audit had been ordered. Women were often disproportionately affected by climate change and needed to be part of government solutions. Awareness-raising campaigns had been launched to encourage more women to take a stand against climate change.

Article 4

34. **Ms. Toé-Bouda** said that article 4 of the Convention and general recommendation No. 25 provided for the adoption of temporary special measures to accelerate the achievement of de facto equality between men and women and to bring about the structural changes necessary to remedy the effects of discrimination against women. It was indeed regrettable that the 35 per cent quota for women's representation at all levels had not been attained and that women remained underrepresented in the Electoral Commission and in the leadership of political parties. It would be useful to know whether the State party planned to introduce temporary special measures at all decision-making levels and to hear more about the proposed mechanism to monitor their implementation and impact, especially in rural areas.

35. **Ms. Eluzai** (South Sudan) said that the 35 per cent quota for women's representation was only one of the temporary special measures adopted by the Government. The General Education Act provided for affirmative action measures to increase school enrolment rates for girls. Several programmes designed to keep girls in school and to provide them with a quality education had also been launched. The Transitional Constitution and the Labour Act provided for temporary special measures in the area of maternity. Political parties had been reminded of the need to fulfil the gender-related obligations set out in the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. Stakeholders had agreed on the pressing need to adopt an affirmative action law to promote women's participation at all levels and to put in place an effective oversight mechanism to enhance the implementation of temporary special measures.

36. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that she wondered whether women were adequately represented in the bodies responsible for managing oil revenue and the distribution of resources at the state and community levels.

37. **Ms. Reddock** asked whether the terms of reference for the environmental audit of the country's oilfields made mention of the specific impact of oil production on women and girls.

38. **Ms. Majok** (South Sudan) said that general concerns relating to the environmental impact of oil production had been raised in the Council of States, which had lobbied the Government to carry out an environmental audit. As the audit had not yet begun, she could not comment on whether it had confirmed women to be disproportionately affected by oil production.

Article 5

39. **Ms. Tisheva** said that the State party was to be commended on its legislative efforts to outlaw harmful practices, such as early marriage and forced circumcision, and to prohibit sexual abuse and exploitation and female genital mutilation. However, the delay in submitting the bill to prevent and combat gender-based violence and the bill on legal aid to the parliament and the fact that the courts established to try cases of sexual gender-based violence were not yet operational created a serious protection gap. Moreover, women victims of gender-based violence were often stigmatized, and women in general were often excluded from decision-making processes and from peacebuilding efforts.

40. Gender stereotyping and harmful practices remained widespread, and the existence of alternative custom-based legal systems gave rise to multiple forms of discrimination and to violence against women and girls in conflict and other settings. The coexistence of international and customary law led to impunity and protected perpetrators and reoffenders instead of women and girls. The State party should take steps to do away with such alternative legal systems and to counteract their negative impact on women. The customary practice of bride prices and the high prevalence of female genital mutilation, child marriage, forced

marriage, early childbearing, gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS were indicative of the low status enjoyed by women in society in South Sudan.

41. She wished to know when the State party intended to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to eliminate discriminatory gender stereotypes and what measures were being taken to implement the provisions of the General Education Act concerning the promotion of gender equality through education and those of the Transitional Constitution and the Child Act designed to combat harmful practices. She wondered whether the training dispensed to chiefs across the country had led to a reduction in the prevalence of early marriage and whether that training might be expanded to cover other harmful practices and gender-based violence. Did the State party plan to provide regular training to police officers, judges and medical personnel on countering gender stereotypes?

42. Gender-based violence special protection units had been created in police stations but their funding, human capacity and documentation skills were inadequate and some perpetrators, especially high-ranking officials, enjoyed impunity. Women who did not reside in Juba were reportedly unable to access the Gender Based Violence and Juvenile Court in the city. She therefore asked whether there were plans to create similar courts in other areas.

43. The Penal Code prohibited rape, but sexual intercourse between spouses could not constitute rape, even in cases of lack of consent or child marriage. The Committee would appreciate statistical data on all forms of gender-based violence, disaggregated by age, ethnicity, disability and socioeconomic status. Further information about violence prevention mechanisms, the existence of shelters and crisis centres and the remedies and legal aid available to victims, especially in light of the fact that many women were illiterate, would also be appreciated.

44. She asked whether there were plans to employ more women in the National Police Service and whether there was a timeline for enactment of the Gender Based Violence Bill.

45. **Ms. Kenyi** (South Sudan) said that female genital mutilation was an extremely rare phenomenon, since it was not part of her country's culture. The Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare was implementing the Road Map to End Child Marriage in South Sudan (2017–2030) and was distributing an awareness-raising document among communities throughout the country.

46. Women police officers were currently handling cases of sexual and gender-based violence in the special protection units. All such units were required to have at least one female member to provide victims with psychosocial support and access to services. Furthermore, units had been established in a number of states and were not confined to Juba.

47. Continuous training was provided for police personnel, also in local areas, in partnership with the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). Two training courses held in July 2021 had focused on juvenile justice. The strategic framework on justice for children adopted in 2014 was currently being amended, in partnership with UNICEF, Save the Children and local organizations, and the amended version would shortly be implemented. The Child Rights Coalition, which was composed of many civil society organizations, was also working with the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare.

48. Vigorous action was being taken at the national, state and local levels to eliminate gender-related stereotypes. A training course had been organized in 2020 for 32 chiefs on ending child marriage, and they had undertaken to ensure that girls under the age of 18 would not be forced to marry.

49. **Ms. Eluzai** (South Sudan) said that customary laws were frequently inconsistent with statutory legislation, especially in matters relating to harmful traditional practices and gender-based violence. The goal of elimination of stereotypes was reflected in many laws and policies. The Ministry of General Education and Instruction was successfully implementing a policy aimed at combating stereotypes in educational institutions, including in the area of sport. Training on sexual and gender-based violence had been incorporated into the curriculum of the National Police Service. With regard to access to the gender-based violence court in Juba, mobile courts were being established in the states by the judiciary, with the support of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan and development partners. The Penal Code had not criminalized marital rape, but it was criminalized in the bill on

gender-based violence, which addressed most of the gaps in the current legal framework. Steps were being taken by the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare to collect data on sexual and gender-based violence, especially from the courts.

50. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that the Customary Law Research Centre established in Rumbek to undertake studies on the harmonization of laws did not seem to have ever been in operation. She wished to know what obstacles were standing in its way.

51. **Ms. Tisheva** underscored the need to amend the Penal Code in order to criminalize marital rape.

Article 6

52. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that trafficking reportedly occurred in the State party for the purposes of forced marriage, domestic servitude, and sexual and labour exploitation. South Sudan had also been identified as a transit and destination country for trafficking. Such cases were underreported owing to public distrust of law enforcement agencies and stigmatization of victims, and because labour inspectors tended to focus on the formal economy. Furthermore, no officer had been prosecuted for the recruitment and use of children during the armed conflict. It would therefore be useful to know how the State party proposed to build the capacity of judicial authorities to conduct investigations on trafficking in a gender-sensitive manner and to prosecute the perpetrators, in bilateral cooperation with relevant States.

53. Steps should be taken to ensure that immigration and security agencies collaborated with the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare in order to share information on trafficking in women and children. She asked what measures would be taken to enhance the verification of parties to marriages under the Civil Registry Act in order to prevent child trafficking. She also would like to know whether the State party had a timeline for ratification of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. At the domestic level, she wondered whether there were any plans to implement a comprehensive and gender-sensitive national policy against trafficking, to enact national anti-trafficking legislation and to provide resources for the task force to combat such trafficking. With regard to prostitution, she asked whether exit, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes had been established to deal with such cases.

54. **Ms. Kenyi** (South Sudan) said that a ministerial order had been issued in 2019 on the establishment of a national task force to combat human trafficking and smuggling of persons. The Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare had appointed one of its members. The task force had implemented a series of programmes and had undertaken state visits to raise awareness of trafficking issues among local communities. It had also developed a road map that included consultations with neighbouring countries about sound practices and procedures for tackling the problem of trafficking. Two members of the task force had attended a workshop on trafficking in Egypt in September 2021 and had reported on the outcome to the task force.

55. The task force had developed a policy on how to tackle trafficking and had undertaken an analysis of the country's legislation in order to identify shortcomings and propose amendments. A high-level awareness-raising campaign would shortly be held for ministers and state governors. Steps would also be taken to provide victims with protection and legal aid and to promote the prosecution of perpetrators. The Government and the task force would ensure that the Trafficking in Persons Protocol was ratified in due course.

56. **Ms. Manalo** asked what programmes existed to prevent or minimize the exploitation of women through sex tourism, the recruitment of domestic labour from developing countries to work in developed countries and marriages organized between women from developing countries and foreign men.

57. **Ms. Kenyi** (South Sudan) said that the trafficking of persons was a new phenomenon in her country. The task force established by the Ministry of the Interior in 2019 was fully operational and was endeavouring to raise awareness of the issue throughout the country and to collect information which would then be made public. Since her country had not ratified

the Trafficking in Persons Protocol, there was no legislation that criminalized trafficking or made provision for the prosecution of traffickers. The task force was working closely with the International Organization for Migration to address the issue, however. A high-level forum of Governors was taking place and, by November 2021, all decision makers would be brought on board, with a view to ensuring that the police and immigration officers checked everyone entering the country at official entry points and that the reason for their entry was ascertained. However, as South Sudan had six neighbouring countries, the borders were porous and people could still be smuggled across them. Within the country, the police conducted identity checks and persons unlawfully present in the country were immediately deported. In 2020, some women and children who had been smuggled into the country had been sent back to their country of origin. The task force was trying to elicit political support to make sure that it received adequate funding.

Articles 7 and 8

58. **Ms. Nadaraia** noted that article 16 of the Transitional Constitution required the Government to increase women's participation in public life and their representation in the legislative and executive organs to at least 35 per cent in order to redress imbalances created by history, customs and traditions. The participation of women in peacemaking and political procedures was crucial, since they provided a unique perspective in post-conflict situations. While the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict contained essential provisions regarding gender equality, their degree of implementation was minimal. She would therefore welcome comprehensive information on how the State party planned to ensure sustainable implementation of the Affirmative Action Law. She also wished to know how the State party planned to include more women in the security sector and to ensure their equal participation in sector reform procedures.

59. According to the State party's report, public perception of gender equality was biased in favour of men owing to certain cultural beliefs, which limited women's decision-making power. She asked whether measures were being taken to counteract the adverse impact of such beliefs. She was also interested in hearing about policies to promote women's participation in the judiciary and other sectors.

60. What strategies were being implemented by the State party to support women's participation in civil society organizations, to promote their right to freedom of opinion and expression, and to protect women human rights defenders?

61. According to the report, only 5 per cent of the State party's 57 high-level ambassadors were women. She therefore wished to know about any plans to promote women in the diplomatic service and to support their inclusion in international forums.

62. **Ms. Majok** (South Sudan) said that, in 2016, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement had adopted a 35 per cent affirmative action quota for women's participation and a 20 per cent quota for youth participation. The 35 per cent quota had subsequently been adopted by all parties to the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict and had been incorporated into the Transitional Constitution.

63. The National Elections Act provided for the inclusion of women in political parties' electoral lists, and the Council of States and the National Legislative Assembly had incorporated the 35 per cent quota into the Conduct of Business Regulations. The reconstituted Council of States, which would establish 13 committees, planned to appoint at least five women chairs and five women vice-chairs. It was essential to persuade all political parties to implement the quota. The Vice-President and the Minister of Defence and Veteran Affairs were women, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs had recently been a woman. In addition, the Speaker of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly and the Deputy Speaker of the Council of States were women. Action was also being taken to promote an increase in female high-level representatives at the state and local government levels.

64. **Ms. Eluzai** (South Sudan) said that, although it was indeed crucial to ensure that the 35 per cent quota for women's participation in political life embodied in the Revitalized Peace Agreement was respected, in practice a lack of disaggregated data made it difficult to track women's advancement and political participation. Mapping of gender equality in public administration had therefore been conducted three months earlier by the Ministry of Gender,

Child and Social Welfare. While it was easy to enforce the quota in the executive branch, it was a challenge to do so in the civil service. The mapping exercise had shown that only 172 of the 1,124 top positions were occupied by women. Gender analysis was also required in the security forces, universities and civil society organizations. Most of the women employed in the diplomatic service were first or second secretaries, but there were few women heads or deputy heads of missions. The information collected through gender analysis would help to identify the areas where women's representation had to be improved through a reform of the civil service. The Ministry was also mapping women's civil society organizations to determine which organizations existed and to obtain information about their operations, the locations where they were working and their funding. The aim of the mapping was to see how the Ministry could best cooperate with those organizations. Women human rights defenders were supported as they were advocates of gender equality and the rights of women and girls.

Article 9

65. **Ms. Gbedemah** noted that the State party's nationality law discriminated against women by requiring them to provide male witnesses to prove their nationality. The Committee therefore wished to know what measures would be taken to ensure that article 8 of the Nationality Act was fully implemented without discrimination on the basis of sex and that effect was given to nationality regulations prohibiting bias in administrative or executive decisions. She would be grateful for statistics on the extent of statelessness and for details of measures to prevent statelessness and of steps to collect data on the subject.

66. With regard to the civil registration, she emphasized that it was very important to ensure that birth certificates were issued, as girls and children could be protected from child marriages only if there was a document showing their real age. She would therefore like to know if there was a timeline for the comprehensive issue of such certificates.

67. **Ms. Kenyi** (South Sudan) said it was true that a clear action plan was needed to ensure the de facto implementation of the progressive provisions of the Nationality Act. She confirmed that, as a woman, she could not act as a witness in court or a police station. As no data was compiled on statelessness, she looked forward to receiving the Committee's recommendations on that subject. The Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare had worked very hard to ensure that the Civil Registry Act had been passed by the parliament in 2018. She agreed that birth certificates were a vital means of proving the age of child victims of abuse. Currently it was merely assessed. Again, she therefore looked forward to seeing the Committee's concluding observations on the matter.

Article 10

68. **Ms. Haidar** asked whether the delegation could provide up-to-date statistics on the illiteracy rates of girls and boys and the number of children enrolled in education. What measures were being taken to address what was the lowest rate of school enrolment in the world and to combat the extremely high level of illiteracy? The Committee wished to know whether the proposal of the Ministry of Defence and Veterans Affairs to define military attacks on schools as an offence had been adopted by the parliament and whether the occupation of schools by the military had been criminalized and prohibited. She would appreciate some information about the impact of the Girls Education South Sudan Programme in providing financial support for girls. Had it had helped girls to remain in school? Had it influenced admission policy to enable girls to resume their education after dropping out? The Committee wished to know whether comprehensive, responsible sex education was given in order to break down barriers to education such as pregnancy and childbearing at a very early age and whether the General Education Act established the right of pregnant girls and young mothers to attend school. She asked whether the State party was contemplating the introduction of an accelerated learning programme that included distance learning using education on the air, online modules, recorded lessons and the provision of radio handsets for disadvantaged communities. She would appreciate details of any measures to provide cash transfers for girls.

69. **Ms. Kenyi** (South Sudan) said that the above-mentioned programme, which had been implemented throughout the country, had indeed produced some positive effects. The first

had been that it enabled girls to remain in school by helping them to buy essential school materials. It had improved girls' scholastic performance to the extent that they now sat more examinations and obtained better results than boys. It helped make it possible for pregnant girls and young mothers to resume their education. Comprehensive sex education had not yet been included in the curriculum, but the subject was already taught in some schools. The Government's comprehensive action plan to counter the military occupation of schools had been extended until August 2022. Two committees had been established under that plan. The technical committee, which comprised representatives from all the main line ministries, was touring the country to conduct awareness-raising among the regular armed forces. No data was yet available on the number of schools that had been occupied or evacuated.

70. **Ms. Eluzai** (South Sudan) said that the Ministry of General Education and Instruction and the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare had mounted a joint campaign against early and unintended pregnancy.

71. **Ms. Majok** (South Sudan) said that, although general education was free, penury acted as a barrier to girls' schooling, because deprived families preferred to send boys to school. General education was compulsory but there was a lack of mechanisms to ensure that all families were sending their children to school. The 2019 budget had exempted sanitary pads from tax to facilitate girls' attendance of school during their periods.

72. **Ms. Manalo** said that she would be interested to learn whether there was setting or streaming in the education system. Were girls and boys equally represented in the various tracks? She wondered whether girls were encouraged to pursue what were traditionally regarded as male studies and whether textbooks contained gender stereotyping by showing pictures of women as secretaries rather than managers. If so, she wished to know what measures existed to address such stereotyping. Was career and vocational guidance available to advise girls about the full range of vocational opportunities? She was curious to know whether girls required special encouragement to take up those opportunities and whether they encountered any obstacles in that respect. She would like to know what was being done to overcome those obstacles.

73. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that an impact assessment of the girls' education programme was needed. The Committee also wished to know how many pregnant girls had been able to return to school. She asked whether any special temporary measures were envisaged to close the 20 per cent literacy gap between girls and boys.

74. **Ms. Haidar** asked whether there had been any increase in the 8.5 per cent budgetary appropriation for the whole sector of education.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.