



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

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

Summary record of the 805th meeting (Chamber B)

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 2 August 2007, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Dairiam (Rapporteur)

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In the absence of Ms. Šimonović, Ms. Dairiam, Rapporteur, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

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

Sixth periodic report of New Zealand (CEDAW/C/NZL/6; CEDAW/C/NZL/Q/6 and Add.1)

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

2. **Ms. Dalziel** (New Zealand), introducing the sixth periodic report of New Zealand (CEDAW/C/NZL/6), said that there had been many positive developments since 2003, including the review and subsequent strengthening of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the adoption of measures such as the Working for Families package, which was aimed at increasing women's employment rate. That package included increases to the accommodation supplement, the introduction of tax credits and greater access to quality childcare. Following the submission of the sixth periodic report, New Zealand's only remaining reservation on women in the Armed Forces had been withdrawn. That reservation had permitted discrimination against women with respect to serving in combat roles. The withdrawal of that reservation meant that New Zealand domestic legislation was in full compliance with the Convention.

3. The monitoring of the Action Plan for New Zealand Women was the principal accountability mechanism for improving outcomes for women. The first review of the action plan had taken place in 2007. The review had concluded that progress had been made in the vast majority of areas, including increases in women's participation in paid employment and increases in women's earnings in real terms. There had been increases in women's participation in tertiary education and in particular significant increases in Maori women's participation in tertiary education. The review also highlighted some areas that required government attention, including increasing the participation rates in the modern apprenticeship scheme, improving girls' and women's sexual health and improving the participation of women with disabilities.

4. Following those recommendations, the Government had started to work in those three areas. The Ministry of Women's Affairs was working with the Tertiary Education Commission to eliminate de facto discriminatory provisions and was working on a project to encourage more young women to consider male-dominated trades. The Government was also addressing the high rate of unplanned pregnancies and the steady rise in the number of sexually transmitted infections among young people. It was in the process of assessing whether all students had access to high quality comprehensive sexual education. Her Government was proud of its leading role in developing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and was reviewing domestic legislation to enable New Zealand to ratify the Convention as soon as possible. Through government schemes women with disabilities had been given greater access to employment programmes which enhanced their employment prospects.

5. Unemployment had been rapidly falling and women's participation in the labour market had been increasing. Women's labour market participation stood at a record 61.8 per cent but was still below the male participation rate of 75.7 per cent. The pay gap had decreased from 17 per cent in 1997 to 12 per cent in 2007. Although New Zealand midwives had broken through the pay equity barrier, it had been more difficult for other women to do the same because there was no structural mechanism for delivering pay equity in the private sector. However, the Government was leading by example through pay and employment equity reviews conducted within the public service and the public health and education sectors. Maori women were more likely to be in full-time employment, and since 1991 Maori women's self-employment had increased by 167 per cent. Although Maori women still earned less than men and other groups of women, the pay gaps were decreasing.

6. In order to allow New Zealanders to comfortably combine employment with family life, the Government had introduced the Choices for Living, Caring and Working plan of action in 2006. Under that plan, the Government had extended the coverage of paid parental leave to self-employed women and had extended the leave period from 12 to 14 weeks. It had improved the accessibility, quality and affordability of child care and had taken measures to improve the work-life balance for women and men.

7. The Government had taken major steps to eliminate family violence and had established the Task Force for Action on Violence within Families. The membership of the Task Force included decision makers from government and non-government sectors, the judiciary, the police, the Chief Families Commissioner and the Children's Commissioner. The Task Force had published its first report in 2006 and had stressed the need for urgent action. It had acknowledged that the predominant pattern of partner violence was one of male violence directed at a female partner. The Task Force had begun its work by establishing Family Violence Coordinator positions, screening women in public hospitals and launching a nationwide campaign aimed at reducing society's tolerance of violence. The Task Force had also worked on improving access to justice for victims of domestic violence and was in the process of reviewing the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act of 1995.

8. A Ministerial Group and a Task Force for Action on Sexual Violence had been established in order to reduce the incidence and impact of sexual violence. The Government was concerned by the low level of reporting of sexual crimes and was carrying out research into the number of reported cases of sexual violence that resulted in conviction. It was trying to reduce barriers to making complaints and was investigating how victims could best be supported through the criminal justice system.

9. Her delegation wished to assure the Committee that New Zealand laws fully complied with the Convention. Since New Zealand did not have a fully entrenched constitution, treaty obligations were generally implemented through a number of statutes rather than through one piece of legislation. With regard to women's leadership in New Zealand, women's participation rates in Parliament had benefited from the shift to proportional representation in 1996, and women made up about a quarter of Parliament. Currently, the Prime Minister, the Chief Justice and the Speaker of the House of Representatives were women, and women accounted for 42 per cent of the membership of statutory boards. In contrast, only 7 per cent of the directors of New Zealand's top 100 listed companies were women, and the Government was working with the private sector to increase women's participation in that area. Her Government recognized that there was a difference between equality before the law and equality in

practice and was fully committed to achieving gender equality in practice. It was also committed to addressing the discrimination that affected Maori and Pacific women and girls, as well as women and girls who were migrants or refugees, who had disabilities or who experienced disadvantage on the basis of age, rural location or sexual orientation.

Articles 1 to 6

10. **Ms. Šimonović**, referring to the incorporation of the Convention into domestic legislation, said that the reporting State should clarify whether the principle of equality had been included in the Bill of Rights Act and other laws. It would also be interesting to know whether the Human Rights Act included a prohibition of indirect discrimination, including discrimination in family life, and whether New Zealand laws allowed for the adoption of special measures. She asked whether the Action Plan for New Zealand Women referred to the Convention and requested additional information on the remedies available to women at the national level before they took their complaint to the Committee.

11. **Mr. Flinterman** said that it would be interesting to know which of the Convention's provisions had been addressed in the Bill of Rights Act, whether the Human Rights Act included a definition of discrimination against women, and whether the enactment of specific gender legislation had been envisaged in order to give the Convention greater visibility. The reporting State should clarify whether the New Zealand Human Rights Commission had been established in accordance with the Paris Principles, provide additional information on the inclusion and mainstreaming of gender issues in the activities of the Human Rights Commission and on the normative basis of the New Zealand Action Plan for Women, and state whether an action plan for human rights had been envisaged and whether such a plan would address women's human rights.

12. **Ms. Zou Xiaoqiao**, referring to the Opportunity for All New Zealanders social strategy, said that it would be interesting to learn more about the specific goals of that strategy in the various sectors and for different social groups of women, the role played by the Ministry of Women's Affairs in implementing that strategy, the role of local agencies, and the staffing levels and budget of the Ministry of Women's Affairs. She would also welcome additional information on the

agency or agencies responsible for comprehensively monitoring the situation of women, for establishing new strategies and policies and for monitoring compliance with the Convention.

13. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari**, referring to the fact that the Government preferred to address issues of inequality through the legal and policy framework rather than through the adoption of temporary special measures, said it seemed that the Government's understanding of special measures might not correspond with the Committee's interpretation. The Committee's view was that temporary measures referred to proactive measures, affirmative action and quota plans targeted at vulnerable women. There seemed to be a clear need for such measures to increase women's participation in management positions in the private sector.

14. **Ms. Dalziel** (New Zealand) said that the principle of equality between women and men was reflected in the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990. The importance of that piece of legislation as a check-and-balance mechanism for assessing the content of proposed legislation should not be underestimated. All legislation in New Zealand was vetted against the Bill of Rights Act to ensure that it contained no provisions that were inconsistent with it. The anti-discrimination provisions included in the Bill of Rights Act had been reinforced by the Human Rights Act, which had been adopted in 1993, but was by no means the first anti-discrimination legislation in New Zealand, having been preceded by the Race Relations Act 1971 and the Human Rights Commission Act 1977.

15. The Human Rights Act explicitly identified sex as one of the prohibited grounds for discrimination. Subsequent to the Act's passage, provisions had been added making it illegal to discriminate against a woman for reasons related to pregnancy and childbirth, and it had been proposed to extend those anti-discriminatory provisions to cover breastfeeding in public. The Act thus also addressed gender-related aspects of sex-based discrimination against women. Marital and family status were also prohibited grounds for discrimination.

16. New Zealand did have an effective mechanism for ensuring that both direct and indirect discrimination were prohibited, as had been illustrated by a recent, widely publicized court case involving a fish-processing company in New Zealand which had

divided the work in its processing plant along gender lines, employing only women to perform certain jobs and only men to perform others. The case had been heard by the Human Rights Review Tribunal and had eventually gone all the way to the High Court of New Zealand, which had ruled that the company's practice constituted discrimination and was prohibited by New Zealand law.

17. The foregoing case also illustrated the way in which discrimination complaints were handled in New Zealand. Such complaints could be brought first to the Human Rights Commission, which had a disputes resolution service that sought to resolve conflicts in a non-adversarial manner. If that failed, the complainant could take her case to the Human Rights Review Tribunal, whose rulings could then be appealed in one of the higher courts.

18. It was true that the New Zealand Action Plan for Human Rights did not incorporate actions specifically directed towards women, because those actions were included in the Action Plan for New Zealand Women. She wished to emphasize the importance of the latter document, which focused on actions that the Government could take to address structural inequality. It had been developed through a participatory process, in which women all over the country had been interviewed to find out what was standing in the way of their achieving real equality. As for the Plan's normative basis, one of the fundamental reasons for its existence was to ensure that New Zealand fulfilled its obligations under the Convention.

19. On the question of whether the Government would consider adopting a gender equality act, her view was that the Bill of Rights Act was an extremely effective mechanism for screening laws to ensure that no legislation being considered by Parliament was at odds with the country's international obligations, and she would not want to weaken or detract from that mechanism in any way. As for the status of the New Zealand Human Rights Commission vis-à-vis the Paris Principles, she would investigate and provide that information at a later time.

20. Responding to Mr. Flinterman's question, she said that the Human Rights Commission was very concerned about gender issues. In 2003 it had appointed an Equal Employment Opportunities Commissioner, who had played a key role in highlighting and drawing the attention of both the

Commission and the public to gender-related issues. For example, she had been responsible for undertaking a survey of women's levels of participation in all spheres of life in New Zealand. It had been that study that had cast a spotlight on the appallingly small proportion of women in management and leadership positions in the private sector.

21. The Opportunity for All New Zealanders strategy was designed to ensure that the different ministries and departments of the Government all worked together, pooling their resources, rather than working in isolation from one another. She believed that it was intended to be a long-term strategy, but would provide more specific information about the timeframe for implementation at a later time.

22. The Ministry of Women's Affairs was the smallest ministry in the Government in terms of its staff, which numbered 35, and its budget, which amounted to \$NZ 4.2 million. However, it managed to accomplish a great deal with its limited resources. The Ministry played a pivotal role in mainstreaming gender throughout the Government by means, *inter alia*, of a steering group chaired by its Chief Executive, which served as a vehicle for ensuring that gender analysis was undertaken and women's issues were addressed in the work of all Government agencies.

23. Finally, with respect to temporary special measures, she acknowledged that the creation of the Pay and Employment Equity Unit within the Department of Labour was not a temporary special measure of the type envisaged under article 4 of the Convention. New Zealand law did provide for the application of such temporary special measures, and they were indeed used, but only when they were deemed to be the most effective means of achieving a goal. Regarding the Pay and Employment Equity Unit, its task would be to identify gender-based pay and employment inequities in the public sector. By addressing those inequities, the Government hoped to lead by example, inducing the private sector to do likewise.

24. **Ms. Šimonović** enquired whether the delegation could provide information on the number of New Zealand women murdered by their intimate partners each year. She would also like to hear the delegation's views on why the number of protection orders issued by New Zealand authorities had declined in recent years, since normally the implementation of stronger

measures to curb violence against women resulted in an increase in the use of such orders. In addition, she would like information on how the Government was addressing violence among specific groups, such as the Maori community, and whether it had introduced any measures for the rehabilitation of perpetrators.

25. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez**, noting that much of the information on efforts to modify discriminatory stereotypes and cultural practices dated back to 2002 or 2003, asked if the delegation could provide more recent information, especially with respect to how the Committee's 2002 recommendations in that regard had been acted upon.

26. She would also like additional information on what the Government had done to improve the collection of data on violence against women, which had been another of the Committee's recommendations. She was interested in learning whether New Zealand had adopted a comprehensive multi-causal approach to violence against women and also whether it had devised strategies to address multiple forms of discrimination against women who were elderly or disabled or members of a particular ethnic group. In addition, she would like information on the situation with respect to violence against children and on any differences in the way that violence was perpetrated against girls and against boys. Regarding the task forces on violence mentioned in the delegation's opening statement, she wondered whether they included personnel from subnational levels of government.

27. **Ms. Tavares da Silva**, echoing the previous speaker's comment concerning the lack of information on actions to eliminate gender-based stereotypes and change discriminatory attitudes, enquired what action the Government was taking to promote cultural change with regard to the roles of women and men and foster positive images of women, especially in Maori, Pacific Island and other vulnerable communities. In particular, she would like to know whether any media campaigns or school programmes were being conducted for that purpose and how men were being involved in promoting gender equality.

28. Referring to article 6 of the Convention, she noted that the responses to the Committee's list of issues and questions indicated that there had been no reported cases of human trafficking in New Zealand, yet the report said that migrants were working illegally

as prostitutes and pointed up the need to prosecute those involved in their trafficking. Information received from New Zealand NGOs also expressed concern about the exploitation of foreign women who were being trapped into prostitution. She wondered if that was not a disguised form of trafficking which the Government needed to acknowledge and address.

29. Lastly, she would like to know whether there had been any preliminary assessment of the impact of the Prostitution Reform Act, particularly in the light of information received from NGOs to the effect that since the Act was passed the recruitment of workers for the sex industry had become more sophisticated, with women coming from Europe as well as from parts of Asia to work in the so-called escort business, some of them unwillingly. Was that not evidence of trafficking?

30. **Ms. Dalziel** (New Zealand) said that she would supply the Committee with copies of the report of the Task Force for Action on Violence within Families. Until recently, New Zealand had not compiled statistics on family violence, but the police had recently reviewed their case files in order to provide more precise data about the number of cases and their specific nature. According to that data, which, she cautioned, might not be one hundred per cent accurate, 54 women had been murdered by their male partners between 2000 and 2004, whereas, during that same period, only 3 men had been murdered by their female partners: the gender pattern of family violence was therefore evident. A particularly shocking statistic had emerged from the 2004 New Zealand National Survey of Crime Victims: it appeared that, over a lifetime, one in four women fell victim to domestic violence perpetrated by their male partner. In addition, twice as many Maori women as European women were subjected to such violence. It was important to point out that, while the findings of one researcher, who had suggested that men and women were equally affected by family violence, had received a great deal of publicity in New Zealand, those findings had not included data on whether or not the victims of violence had felt threatened.

31. The Government was currently reviewing the question of protection orders and a report dealing with women's experiences with such orders was being prepared. That report would be submitted to the Cabinet and would inform the efforts undertaken by the Ministry of Justice to strengthen the Domestic Violence Act. While she did not want to prejudge the

findings of the report, anecdotal evidence suggested that the decline in the number of protection orders was due to women's lack of access to appropriate legal support and the number of ex parte cases. One of the issues to be discussed in connection with the report was the possibility of empowering the police to issue protection orders. She had had the opportunity to observe that procedure in Australia, and believed that it would also be effective in New Zealand.

32. In response to the observation that the New Zealand delegation consisted only of women, she said that that had not been a deliberate choice; in fact, 14 per cent of the staff of the Ministry of Women's Affairs were men. On the issue of trafficking, the report was not inconsistent: the Government did not take the view that trafficking was not taking place in New Zealand but, as yet, there had been no reported cases. Stringent anti-trafficking legislation had been introduced: the penalty for perpetrators now consisted of a term of imprisonment of up to 20 years and/or a fine of up to \$NZ 500,000. In addition, the Action Plan for New Zealand Women set out a series of measures to combat trafficking, and the Government had participated actively in the Bali Process on People Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons. Lastly, in response to the questions posed by Ms. Tavares da Silva, she said that a preliminary review of the steps taken had revealed that, in Christchurch, the number of street workers had declined significantly following the introduction of the Act.

33. **Mr. Flinterman**, noting that the Bill of Rights Act prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex, pointed out that the purpose of the Convention was to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women by, inter alia, addressing its root causes. It was for that reason that the Committee had consistently highlighted the need to incorporate a precise definition of discrimination against women into domestic legislation. The State party should therefore indicate whether such a definition existed and, if not, whether it would be possible to amend the Bill of Rights Act and/or the Human Rights Act to include one. Although Appendix 1 to the Action Plan for New Zealand Women mentioned the Convention, it did not refer explicitly to women's human rights. He wondered about the extent to which the Plan had been inspired by the desire to strengthen the protection of women's human rights afforded by the domestic legal order.

34. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** asked for further clarification of the State party's understanding of the fundamental aims and purposes of the Convention. With regard to gender implications statements, she enquired as to the specific circumstances in which such statements were submitted. It would also be useful to know how those statements were followed up. Lastly, she would be grateful for more detailed statistics on convictions for assault.

35. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** said that the State party should give a fuller explanation of its understanding of the concept of indirect discrimination, since the example cited by Ms. Dalziel seemed to be a case of direct, rather than indirect, discrimination.

36. **Ms. Šimonović**, while acknowledging the difficulties faced by countries with dualist legal systems, enquired whether the State party had developed a specific legal basis for the introduction of temporary special measures. She urged the Government to follow up that issue at the national level. Lastly, returning to the question of violence against women, she asked whether there were sufficient shelters in New Zealand and whether the Government provided funding to the NGOs that ran them.

37. **Ms. Dalziel** (New Zealand) reiterated that the Human Rights Act prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex. In addition, in response to a number of court rulings and to make it clear that women were susceptible to specific types of gender-based discrimination, the Act also prohibited discriminatory treatment in matters relating to childbirth and pregnancy. The Act therefore protected women's human rights in a comprehensive manner and provided for redress in cases of violations. The Government was not planning to amend its provisions, but she had taken due note of the Committee's comments. Turning to the Bill of Rights Act, she said that, while it occupied a privileged place in the domestic legal order, legislation that did not comply with its provisions would not necessarily be struck down by Parliament.

38. Gender implications statements were included in Cabinet papers to show that a gender perspective had been taken into account when formulating the policy concerned. If the Ministry of Women's Affairs disagreed with the gender implications statement, it was entitled to submit a dissenting opinion to Cabinet.

39. In response to the remarks made by Ms. Tavares da Silva, she said that the court case she had cited involved indirect discrimination, not because women had been paid less than men for the same work, but rather because they had been assigned to specific tasks for which the rates of pay were lower. The student loan scheme was a better example of indirect discrimination, because the repayment burden was much greater for women than for men. Accordingly, as of 1 April 2006, the Government had abolished interest on all student loans. That measure would be particularly beneficial for women, who would no longer have to bear the burden of increasing debt if they stopped working to have children.

40. She acknowledged that statistics on violent crime were still inadequate, particularly since they did not give an indication of perpetrators' motivations. Future statistics would be much more comprehensive. There had already been significant improvements in family violence reporting methods, and the police had been made aware of the fact that violence in the home had an effect on all those concerned, not just the victims and the perpetrators. The Government did offer financial support to NGO-run shelters, but more remained to be done. To that end, an additional \$NZ 20 million would be allocated to the NGO sector. An awareness-raising campaign on family violence would shortly be launched and, in view of the additional burden the campaign would place on NGOs, the Government would be cooperating closely with them in order to meet any additional needs expeditiously.

41. Lastly, she said that the Action Plan for Women was an ongoing concern and was designed to promote and protect women's rights as human rights. It continued to be the subject of workshops whose recommendations provided a basis for updating and improving the Ministry's work, particularly in furthering the aims of the Convention. It would be replaced in 2009 by a new Action Plan that would certainly take due account of the Committee's recommendations.

Articles 7 to 9

42. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** said that while, as was noted in the report (CEDAW/C/NZL/6, para. 92), New Zealand women continued to participate strongly in public and political life, they were still underrepresented, particularly in management and leadership positions in the private sector. She regretted

that the information provided by the State party concerning the impact of measures to increase women's participation in political life did not give any details about Maori women. It was important for those women to have a say in matters of concern to them, particularly at the local level. In view of the statement in the responses to the list of issues (CEDAW/C/NZL/Q/6/Add.1, p. 17) that political parties were independent of the State and held accountable by the electorate in respect of the diversity of candidates, she wondered what would happen if political parties did not comply with the State's obligations to ensure the equality of women and the representation of minority groups. What further action was planned by the Government to counter any tendency towards a static situation and accelerate progress? Temporary special measures might be considered in that connection, particularly since, at the current rate, it would take many years before gender parity was achieved in Parliament. She requested fuller information about the concrete measures taken and the results achieved in the private sector to accelerate women's participation in decision-making.

43. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** said that New Zealand's potential for advancing the cause of women should place it in the vanguard of the movement among countries worldwide. It should not let up in its efforts to that end but, on the contrary, step them up, particularly in order to raise the level of women's representation in Parliament, commendable though it already was. She expressed concern about Maori women who, as the first inhabitants of the country, were no less deserving of the State party's support than the developing countries that benefited from its development assistance. What was the proportion of Maori women in elected office, at both national and local levels, and in ministries? Local representation was the key to their advancement. She urged the State party to take into account the Committee's general recommendation 23, on women in political and public life, and general recommendation 25, on temporary special measures. It had been established that if women did not enjoy a minimum representation of 30 per cent, they could not contribute effectively to advancing their rights: the State party should set itself a goal of 50 per cent and adopt quotas to that effect. She recalled that the Convention required States parties to "pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women", in particular through the practical realization of the

principle of the equality of men and women. Financial support for political parties that did not comply with quota requirements could be withdrawn or reduced.

44. **Ms. Dalziel** (New Zealand) said that one of the major obstacles to continuing progress in the advancement of women in her country was the perception that New Zealand had already gone as far as it could in that respect, particularly since only recently the four highest positions in the land had been held by women. Indeed, the view that women were running the country had triggered a backlash, with the result that efforts that seemed to favour women were not always supported by the population. There did appear to be a worrying decline in the representation of women in local government and hence in the number of women progressing to central government positions, but it would be meaningless to seek to impose party quotas in local elections. Candidates for local elective office did not run on behalf of parties but as independents, even when they joined together on a cluster basis. No such mechanism was feasible at the level of Parliament either, in view of the number and independence of the political parties. What was needed was to educate women voters to take into account the principle of equal representation when voting, particularly at the local government level.

45. Maoris accounted for 15 per cent of the total population; 17 per cent of the members of Parliament were Maoris and included six Maori women; one Maori woman was a member of Cabinet and another was a co-leader of a party; 10 per cent of women judges were Maoris. Those figures, which still needed to be improved, were indeed of the utmost importance, since political and public life in New Zealand should be a faithful reflection of the society, with suitable representation of the indigenous population.

46. On the question of concrete measures to improve women's participation in private sector governance, she looked forward to the Committee's recommendations, which her Government would certainly take into consideration. The best means of action was offered by shareholders, who always wanted the best return on their investment and should to that end be encouraged to improve the membership of their boards of management through better representation of women. A number of initiatives, involving the use of databases of qualified women, had accordingly been undertaken by the Ministry of Women's Affairs

Nominations Service, which met regularly with private sector bodies for that purpose.

47. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** referred to a report of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, of which New Zealand was a member, according to which Parliament had not been involved in the preparation of the State party's sixth periodic report and had not had any role in monitoring the Government's responses to the Committee's concluding comments, even though the existing accountability network allowed parliamentarians, through the select committee process, to oversee and contribute to implementation of the Convention. She urged the delegation to remind Parliament of its duties in that regard, particularly since that would also afford a means of publicizing the Convention.

48. **Ms. Dalziel** (New Zealand) said that Parliament had not been involved in the preparation of any of New Zealand's periodic reports, since international treaties were signed by the Government and came under its responsibility. Parliament did, however, have an important role in the ratification process, through its Foreign Affairs and Trade Committee, and continued to exercise important supervisory functions. Because of the recent legislative change required for New Zealand to withdraw its reservation regarding women in combat, the proposal had in fact been referred to that Committee and publicity had thereby been given to the Convention. She herself had been photographed with military women serving in combat roles and had taken the opportunity to congratulate the defence forces on their proactive role in meeting the State party's obligations. She therefore appreciated the suggestion that the reporting process should be used to draw attention to the Convention and would certainly take it into account.

49. **Ms. Šimonović** wondered whether election laws might not serve as a mechanism for improving women's participation in local political life, through the introduction of quotas and conditions for financial support.

50. **Ms. Dalziel** (New Zealand) reiterated that, at the local government level, candidates for election ran on an independent, non-party basis. The only means that might be contemplated would be to reserve seats for women on local councils, but that would not be acceptable to the population, which would be sure to rise up in protest. More effectively, the Equal Employment Opportunities Commissioner had

organized a number of seminars throughout the country to encourage women to stand for office in local government.

Articles 10 to 14

51. **Ms. Coker-Appiah** commended the State party for the measures it had taken in education, which was said to be free at the primary and secondary levels. According to NGO sources, however, in some schools parents were required to pay fees by way of donations. The School Trustees Association, in 2005, and the New Zealand Council for Educational Research, in 2006, had confirmed that State funding was insufficient and that schools had to seek additional financing. Moreover, the Human Rights Commission had received complaints from parents who could not afford to pay for school materials or whose children were denied access to free education. Education was a right that should be ensured for all without discrimination, and particularly for girls. The imposition of additional levies by schools was unfair to low-income families. Was the Government aware of the situation and might it increase its financial support for schools so as to obviate the need for outside funding and ensure that education was available on a truly equal basis?

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.