



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
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Summary record of the 761st meeting (Chamber B)

Held at Headquarters, New York, on 18 January 2007, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Gaspard

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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 (continued)

Sixth periodic report of Nicaragua
(CEDAW/C/NIC/6; CEDAW/C/NIC/Q/6
and Add.1)

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

2. **Ms. Brenes Peña** (Nicaragua), introducing the sixth periodic report of Nicaragua, described the obstacles that women in her country continued to face in the areas of education, employment and migration, among others. The Political Constitution of Nicaragua provided for absolute equality between men and women and also stipulated the State's obligation to eliminate de facto obstacles to equality between Nicaraguans and to their participation in all spheres of life. Law No. 212, establishing the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman, provided for the appointment of a Special Procurator for Women, who had been appointed in 2000. The new Penal Code, adopted in December 2001 by the National Assembly, contained legal rules prohibiting discrimination and making all discriminatory acts offences.

3. In spite of the great progress made during the period covered by the report, one of the main obstacles to the fuller implementation of the Convention's provisions was the existence of discriminatory practices which had a negative effect on the fulfilment of the principles, objectives and targets established in the legal, institutional and policy framework relating to gender equity and equality in the country. It had been difficult to increase awareness and acceptance of the importance of promoting and protecting women's rights in building a State based on the rule of law, and of the importance of women's participation as full partners in and beneficiaries of the social and economic development of the country; that had likewise clearly limited progress in implementing the provisions of the Convention. The domestic legal framework must be further harmonized with the international treaties ratified by Nicaragua for the promotion and protection of women's rights.

4. The fact that the Nicaraguan Institute for Women was part of the executive branch, together with its insufficient budget, limited its capacity to have an

impact on the institutions and other Government authorities in order to reach a position where it could ensure the adoption of a gender equity approach within the Government.

5. To address the challenges identified in the report, the current Government of National Reconciliation and Unity, which had recently been elected to serve from 2007 to 2012, was giving priority to the strengthening of the Nicaraguan Institute for Women, bringing it directly under the Presidency of the Republic. The Institute, for its part, was implementing an organizational strategy that would involve the active participation of women at all levels of society, including the municipal level. The Institute would have a board of trustees made up of representatives of the 155 municipalities of the country. The board would also include representatives of the other branches of Government and of all the women's organizations in the country. One of the first steps taken by the new Administration was the launching of the "Zero Hunger" programme. The Institute would be responsible for introducing gender mainstreaming in that programme, which would begin in 20 municipalities and would eventually be projected to the entire country.

Articles 1 to 6

6. **Ms. Šimonović** asked what were the main obstacles preventing Nicaragua from ratifying the Optional Protocol. Noting that some laws remained on the books that were not compatible with the Convention, she stressed the importance of developing a national mechanism for ensuring that national legislation was in line with the Convention and with the concluding comments of the Committee.

7. **Ms. Begum** said she hoped that the newly elected Government would work to eliminate the obstacles to the advancement of women and to ensure that the draft law on equal rights and opportunities and the family code would be adopted soon. She would like to know what steps had been taken to implement temporary special measures under article 4, paragraph 1, and general recommendation No. 25. Noting that the Nicaraguan Institute for Women was still very dependent on international financing, she asked for information on the total amount of funding allocated by the Government for gender mainstreaming. She would be interested to hear what percentage of the Institute's budget was provided from internal sources.

The proposed amendments to the Penal Code referred only to physical and sexual protection but failed to safeguard personal integrity. The law should also take into account the physical, emotional, social and moral well-being of the individual. Some religious groups promoted a strictly biological interpretation of gender which denied any sociocultural construction of the concept. She would like to hear the Nicaraguan representative's views on that issue.

8. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** asked why the terms "equality" and "equity" were used interchangeably in the report. The two words had very different meanings. Equality was an objective concept, while equity was a much more flexible and subjective term. The emphasis of the Convention was on the need to achieve equality. Nicaragua should implement temporary special measures, particularly in view of the fact that the number of women elected to office in the recent elections had declined from 22 to 18.

9. Neither the report nor the State party's responses provided much information on efforts made to implement article 5, on the modification of social and cultural patterns. Nicaragua needed to do more than it had so far to raise public awareness regarding the issue.

10. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, asked what procedure had been followed in preparing the report. She would like to know if the draft had been submitted to the parliament, what government ministries had been involved in the drafting process, and whether women had been consulted. She would welcome more information on the standing of the Nicaraguan Institute for Women within the government hierarchy and on its ties with the interministerial commission on equality. She would also appreciate information on the current situation with regard to funding for the Institute, and what plans the new Administration had in that regard.

11. **Ms. Zou Xiaojiao** asked what kind of activities the Nicaraguan Institute for Women was carrying out to monitor the implementation of the Convention. She would like to know how many people were on the staff of the Institute, what actions the Institute had taken to implement the programmes and plans which it had helped to formulate, and what were the main challenges the Institute was facing.

12. She would appreciate clarification on the relationship between the National Assembly, the

Committee on Women, Children, Youth and the Family, and the Special Procurator for Women. She would also welcome information on the working relationship between the Nicaraguan Institute for Women and the non-governmental organizations concerned with women's issues, as well as on cooperation among NGOs. She hoped that the new Administration would take steps to strengthen the national mechanisms responsible for promoting the status of women.

13. **Ms. Chutikul** asked to what extent the strategy goals mentioned in paragraph 45 of the report had been achieved. She would also like to know whether the Strategic Plan would undergo changes under the new Administration. She would appreciate clarification on how much of the budget of the Nicaraguan Institute for Women was provided by the Government, compared with the amount provided by international assistance.

14. Given the variety of governmental bodies that had been created to deal with issues relating to women and families, she would like to know to what extent the Institute was coordinating its work with those institutions, as well as with NGOs. If the Institute had found it necessary to review or shift its focus, in what way had it done so? She would welcome information on the Institute's work at the provincial or local level. She would also be interested in hearing how the board of trustees of the Institute would be able to function with such a large membership.

15. **Ms. Aguirre** (Nicaragua) said that the Nicaraguan Institute for Women had worked very hard to secure more adequate funding. As stated in paragraph 46 of the report, its budget had increased slightly in 2001 and 2002, to 0.04 per cent of the total State budget; however, it still depended heavily on external cooperation. It had a staff of 23 people, of whom 7 were specialists and 16 were in support positions.

16. With regard to the Institute's work at the local level, she said that so far it only had an office in León. Its dependence on external cooperation in that area had seriously hampered its efforts to extend its activities to the municipalities. Its strategic plan for 2002-2006 had provided for the modernization of its management practices so as to enable it to have a greater impact on public policies aimed at promoting the advancement of women. A number of mechanisms had been established, including the National Commission on Violence against Women, Children and Young Persons,

the Inter-institutional Commission for Women and Rural Development, and the National Advisory Council on Women. It had succeeded in ensuring that the national development plan would reflect the urgent need for a national gender equity programme. It had also helped raise awareness of the importance of the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

17. During the reporting period, the Nicaraguan Institute for Women had given priority to establishing the difference between equality and equity. It was understood that equity was a flexible and subjective concept, while equality was objective. The Institute was working towards the goal of achieving equity. It was concerned about the need to promote the modification of social and cultural patterns, but much remained to be done in that regard, especially through education.

18. Regarding the drafting of the sixth periodic report, she said that the Institute had tried to focus on the work of the four branches of government and the civil society organizations concerned with women's issues. Every effort had been made to ensure that all the parties concerned, including in the rural sector, would feel that they had been involved in the process.

19. As to the standing of the Institute, it was part of the Ministry of the Family. The new Administration planned to transfer it to the Office of the President of the Republic, where it had originally been established. In order to monitor compliance with the Convention, the Institute was developing guidelines for measuring progress and identifying areas in which further efforts were needed.

20. Turning to the question of the relationship between the Special Procurator for Women, the Nicaraguan Institute for Women and the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman, she said that they all worked to promote the application of international legal instruments that had been signed and ratified by Nicaragua, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention of Belém do Pará and the Beijing Platform for Action.

21. Replying to a question on the status of the draft law on equal rights and opportunities, she said that the bill was still pending in the National Assembly. The Nicaraguan Institute for Women had decided to move ahead with the formulation of a national programme on gender equity without waiting for the law to be

adopted. The family code that had been pending for over 11 years was still undergoing revision. She hoped that the newly elected legislature would understand the importance of the proposed legislation.

22. Much remained to be done in order to ensure the full application of the constitutional provisions intended to safeguard women's rights. Women still had difficulty gaining access to the judicial system. The awareness-raising campaign targeting men had been highly successful. Other governmental and non-governmental agencies and institutions had also conducted training programmes that had helped change social and cultural patterns.

23. **Ms. Brenes Peña** (Nicaragua), replying to the question on implementation of the goals set forth in paragraph 45 of the report, said that a number of actions relating to goal (a) had been carried out since the period covered by the sixth report. The National Programme for Gender Equity had been created to promote gender mainstreaming in all State policies, particularly the National Development Plan. Goal (b) had been only partially achieved, with the incorporation of mainstreaming in the governance section of the national development plan. Goal (c) had not yet been fully achieved; however, an inter-institutional commission on women and rural development had been set up which had worked to introduce gender mainstreaming in the rural development programme known as PRORURAL.

24. The National Plan of Action for the Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence, referred to in goal (d), was being implemented. A national commission for the prevention of violence against women had been set up which included representatives of the Red de Mujeres contra la Violencia (Women against Violence Network) and other civil society organizations. The National Plan of Action was being updated to focus on gender-based violence in general, not just domestic and sexual violence.

25. The system of gender-focused indicators (SIEG), referred to under goal (e), had been developed by the Nicaraguan Institute for Women and the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses following guidelines established at international women's conferences and in international legal instruments that had been ratified by Nicaragua. The SIEG system included 108 indicators on economic issues, health, education and gender violence. There were only three

indicators on gender violence. All the State institutions had participated in developing the indicators. The SIEG system was currently being reviewed to focus, in particular, on poverty and on mainstreaming the issue of gender-based violence in economic, health and educational programmes.

26. Replying to the question on the work of the Nicaraguan Institute for Women at the municipal level, she explained that it was limited to the region of León. Under the new Administration, the individual city or town councils would appoint a person to deal with gender issues. The municipalities would be represented on the board of trustees of the Institute, as would the other branches of government and various civil society organizations, including the Red de Mujeres contra la Violencia.

27. **Ms. Šimonović** asked for information on the report Nicaragua had prepared on the implementation of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará) for the period 2000-2005. She would welcome information on measures that had been taken to combat violence against women and indicators relating to that issue. The information provided so far by the State party was not sufficient, as the data were not broken down by sex and ethnicity, and there were no specific data on violence against women in general.

28. **Ms. Begum** said that the campaign to enhance the father figure was commendable. She would be interested in hearing about the impact and effectiveness of the women's police stations and the National Plan of Action for the Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence. She would like to know how many cases had been referred to the police stations, and how many police stations had been established in urban and in rural areas.

29. She would appreciate information on the work of the National Coalition against Trafficking in Persons, in particular, its strategy for detection of trafficking cases, rescue of victims and prosecution of perpetrators. The requirement that victims should lodge a complaint before criminal prosecution could begin was a serious flaw in the penal procedure which would only help the perpetrators escape justice.

30. **Ms. Maiolo** asked for up-to-date information on the application of the Penal Code in cases of trafficking in persons for purposes of prostitution, particularly in

situations where the perpetrator was the husband of the victim. She would also appreciate data on the migration of women who were victims of sexual tourism and what measures were being taken to address that problem.

31. **Ms. Aguirre** (Nicaragua) said that Nicaragua had submitted a report on the implementation of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women during the period 2000-2005 to the Follow-Up Mechanism to the Convention of Belém do Pará established by the Inter-American Commission of Women. Legislation had been enacted to further enhance the protection provided by the Constitution. The women's movement throughout the country had helped provide follow-up to women who were victims and survivors of domestic violence. The National Commission on Violence against Women had coordinated the implementation of the National Plan of Action for the Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence, which had recently been updated to focus on gender-based violence in general, and which now included the concept of femicide. The different branches of government were all coordinating their work in that regard.

32. The women's police stations worked mainly in urban areas. In other regions, they cooperated with departmental councils, the Red de Mujeres contra la Violencia and the National Police. During the reporting period, 16 women's police stations had been established; their services had since been expanded, inter alia, to provide referrals to the health system.

33. Much remained to be done in order to ensure that women would have access to justice, particularly in the rural areas and on the Caribbean coast. The issue of female victims having to face their aggressors in mediation procedures was also a sensitive one, as evidenced by a case in which the perpetrator had attacked the police during mediation.

34. The Government recognized the need to improve the awareness campaigns, particularly concerning trafficking in persons, since most of the victims were girls. The National Coalition against Trafficking in Persons was working in partnership with the State and civil society, as well as with international cooperation agencies, in order to strengthen its intervention.

35. **Ms. Brenes Peña** (Nicaragua) said that the report, in paragraphs 213 and 214, provided data on the number of complaints that had been filed at women's

police stations. Although they had not yet been incorporated into the system of gender-focused indicators, those data would be included in the revised statistics. She did not have disaggregated data on urban and rural cases, but expected to be able to provide that information at a later date. She could report, however, that the number of complaints had been increasing, as the improved system enabled the authorities to keep a record of the performance and impact of the women's police stations.

36. **Ms. Chutikul**, referring to paragraph 52 of the report, asked why violence against women was regarded merely as a public health problem. She was confused by the references to a number of different plans in paragraphs 51 and 72. The reply to question 14, in the responses to the list of issues and questions with regard to the consideration of periodic reports mentioned yet another plan of action. She would like to know what role the Nicaraguan Institute for Women played in all those plans, and what was being done to ensure adequate coordination and avoid overlapping.

37. She would appreciate more information on the focus and the implementation of the five priority components for combating trafficking mentioned in the reply to question 14. Referring to paragraph 48 of the report, she asked whether the women in the National Police had made a difference, especially in handling cases of trafficking and violence against women. She would like to know what training the women police received and whether their contribution was a valuable addition to the work of the police force. She would also welcome an update on the information reported in paragraphs 68 to 71, concerning the need to revise articles 202 and 203 of the Penal Code.

38. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, noted that, in its response to question 14, the State party had recognized that it did not have an effective prosecution strategy for the offence of trafficking in persons. She would like to know what was being done to improve that situation.

39. **Ms. Aguirre** (Nicaragua), explaining why violence against women was considered a public health issue, said that the policy in that regard provided a reassurance to women that the health ramifications of the problem were not being ignored by the Government. Violence against women was a public health problem that went beyond the private sphere and had to be dealt with by the State.

40. Turning to the question of trafficking, she said that Nicaragua had a policy to combat the commercial sexual exploitation of children and young persons, as described in paragraph 53 of the report. Nicaragua had laws and programmes designed to deal with the problem, but much remained to be done to ensure their full implementation. The efforts of the new Administration in that regard would be reflected in the next periodic report.

41. The new Penal Code contained a number of provisions concerning sexual and reproductive rights that were still highly controversial in Nicaragua. The seventh periodic report would include more up-to-date information on the current status of the amendments to the Penal Code.

42. The National Coalition against Trafficking in Persons was coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior. Major issues which needed attention had been identified, particularly the problem of migration, which often involved trafficking activities.

43. Concerning the question of whether spousal rape was defined as an offence, she said that the Nicaraguan Institute for Women and the National Commission on Violence against Women, Children and Young Persons were reviewing that and related concepts with a view to ensuring that appropriate action would be taken.

44. **Ms. Brenes Peña** (Nicaragua), on the question of coordination, said that the bodies whose work the Nicaraguan Institute for Women was responsible for coordinating were the Commission for Women and Rural Development, the National Commission on Violence against Women, Children and Young Persons, and the National Consultative Council on Women. In the case of the first two bodies, the Institute also provided input for the preparation of consensus proposals on major issues, such as trafficking, which were then submitted to the Consultative Council. The Council was comprised of high-ranking officials in decision-making positions and was therefore empowered to decide on the proposals submitted to it. It had begun its work only recently and needed to be further strengthened.

45. Once established, the board of trustees of the Nicaraguan Institute for Women would provide guidance to ensure the effective implementation of the different plans of action. Every effort would be made to ensure complementarity between plans and

programmes. That was a challenge, given the scarcity of the resources available to the Institute.

46. **Ms. Aguirre** (Nicaragua) read out the text of article 203 of the Penal Code, which defined trafficking in persons and established the applicable penalties.

Articles 7 and 8

47. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani**, noting the description of the Nicaraguan Institute for Women in paragraph 42 of the report, pointed out that it was not truly independent because it lacked adequate funding. She understood that Nicaragua had gone through a very difficult economic situation, because of a high level of indebtedness.

48. With regard to article 7 of the Convention, on equality in political and public life, she said that the results of parliamentary elections in recent years were not encouraging. The Nicaraguan Institute for Women needed to use all its influence to ensure that leaders drafted legislation providing for quotas and the elimination of subsidies to political parties that did not fulfil the quota of women in elective office. The Institute must convey to the authorities the clear message that the Convention prevailed over national laws. Although Nicaragua had ratified the Convention with no reservations, it seemed that there was a lack of political will to impose the conditions which were set forth in the Convention. Nicaragua was not the only country with political parties and religious forces that tried to hinder progress. The authorities should understand that the Committee demanded the full implementation of article 7 in record time; to that end, temporary special measures under article 4, paragraph 1, should be adopted.

49. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** pointed out that there were some contradictions between the statistics on the participation of women in elective bodies published in the report, on the one hand, and those published by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, on the other. Between 2002 and 2006, the number of women in the National Assembly had declined, despite the fact that the two main political parties had a quota system. She would like to know the reasons for that situation. Attention should also be paid to the question of how many women were serving in appointive government posts, not only in the central administration, but also in the departmental and municipal governments.

50. There were no data on racial minorities in decision-making bodies; that detail should also be included in the system of indicators. In countries with a high level of mixed races, it was important to ensure that the statistics did not mask the exclusion of minorities.

51. She would welcome information on the unionization of women. She had seen information published by the international trade union movement which showed that Nicaraguan women were facing some difficulties in that regard, especially those working in the *maquila* and textile industries.

52. **Ms. Gumedé Shelton** asked for information on direct measures being taken by the Government to ensure the participation of women at the international level. The measures mentioned in the report were indirect, not direct measures. Although the Organic Law of the Foreign Service had no particular provision that discriminated against women, it failed to positively articulate how measures would be put in place to ensure that women were selected for service at the international level.

53. She would like information on how many international posts there were at present and how many were generally available to Nicaragua, as well as what type of posts were involved. She would like to know how many international posts were earmarked for women and which of them were currently filled by women. The posts listed in paragraph 90 of the report all related to international women's bodies. She would be more interested in posts that did not relate to women's bodies.

54. Finally, she would welcome information on the number of appointments of women to international posts since the period covered by the sixth report. Such appointments were not affected by the same considerations as those that determined the outcome of elections; rather, they had to do with subjective decisions within the department concerned. Financing was not an issue, because if Nicaragua was entitled to fill a given number of international posts, those posts would be filled.

55. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, said that she shared the concerns expressed by her colleagues. Many countries were currently implementing special measures requiring parties to nominate women candidates, and the positive results of those laws could already be seen. Although she

realized that some women were reluctant to go along with those measures, feeling that they would be chosen only because they were women, not because they were competent, she wished to point out that there were many incompetent men in politics. She would encourage the women of Nicaragua to press for the implementation of article 4 of the Convention.

56. Statistics were needed on the presence of women in elective bodies at both the national and the international levels. She noted with satisfaction that the municipalities would have one elective post to deal with equality issues. She would like to see statistics on the representation of women in the diplomatic service.

57. **Ms. Aguirre** (Nicaragua) said that her delegation would try to obtain information from the various governmental offices and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding appointments to the Foreign Service. Currently there were no specific mechanisms in place to guarantee the appointment of women to international posts. With regard to their appointment to decision-making posts, she said that in 2005, Nicaragua had female ambassadors to France, El Salvador and Peru. In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, women served as consular directors for the Americas, Asia and Europe, and as directors of eight specific departments or offices. No data disaggregated by sex were available for the reporting period; however, the unit responsible for follow-up to international commitments had set up mechanisms to guarantee the presence of women at the international level.

58. Turning to the national scene, she said that the two main political parties, the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN) and the Partido Liberal Constitucionalista (PLC), had established quotas for the participation of women: 40 per cent and 30 per cent, respectively. The number of women elected to office had indeed declined in recent years, not only at the national level, but also at the local level. Much more needed to be done to encourage women to participate in public life, to empower them and to make them realize how important it was for them to participate in the design of public policies.

59. The Nicaraguan Institute for Women was working on the design of programmes for empowering women leaders and encouraging them to participate actively in public life. The new Administration had set aside 50 per cent of the executive posts in State institutions for women; however, women were usually appointed to

“soft” institutions in the social sector rather than to those in the “tough” financial and economic sectors.

60. Replying to the question on unionization of women, she said that she did not have any information on the matter but trusted that it would be made available in the next report. There was a women’s organization, called *Movimiento María Elena Cuadra*, that worked closely with female employees in the *maquila* industries, raising awareness regarding their rights and promoting policies to ensure fair treatment for them. The new Administration would be working on those issues.

61. **Ms. Brenes Peña** (Nicaragua), after noting that her delegation shared the Committee’s concern regarding the need for better statistics, said that the relevant authorities would be working to develop data on women’s participation not only at the national level but also at the local level. The Nicaraguan Institute for Women and a number of civil society organizations had carried out programmes designed to encourage women leaders to participate more actively in municipal elections. When women were proposed as candidates, however, they often rejected the nomination, arguing that they did not feel ready to face the challenge. Those attitudes needed to be changed. Quotas were certainly important, but it was also necessary to educate and empower women so as to enable them to overcome their fears and their reluctance to play a more active role in public life.

62. **The Chairperson** invited members to ask follow-up questions on the articles discussed.

63. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** said she realized that women were often reluctant to stand for election because they were afraid or felt ill-prepared. The Nicaraguan Institute for Women had the duty to prepare them. Quotas and other measures opened up more opportunities for women, but they needed to be educated and prepared to assume elective posts. In her estimation, three quarters of the men who stood for election were probably less well-suited than the potential women candidates. She urged the Government to seek assistance from experts and specialized organizations that could help develop programmes that would train women for leadership. That work needed to be done with both men and women.

64. **Ms. Šimonović**, referring to paragraph 214 of the report, said that although the statistics showed that

40.4 per cent of battery cases occurred in the home, it was not clear what percentage of the victims of domestic violence were women. Reliable statistical data were needed so as to develop indicators on violence against women and establish connections for specific acts of violence. She would be interested to know if data were collected on the number of women who were murdered each year in connection with different forms of domestic violence and whether indicators had been developed in that direction.

65. **Ms. Brenes Peña** (Nicaragua) said that the information on women who had been murdered was obtained from police records, but the data had not been cross-referenced with cases of domestic violence. The police records still needed to be improved, because when information from local police stations was consolidated at the central level, many details were lost. The same was true of health records. She thanked Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani for her recommendations, which would be considered carefully. The next periodic report should reflect action taken on the issues she had raised.

Articles 10 to 14

66. **Ms. Zou Xiaoqiao** said that with the information provided in the report, it was difficult to evaluate the progress of girls and women in regard to education. She hoped that the next report would provide data that would make it possible to draw conclusions on specific matters. She would like to see data disaggregated by rural and urban areas. The national education plan (2001-2015) outlined in paragraph 97 of the report was commendable, but the key was implementation. She would like to know how many women had been able to rid themselves of illiteracy since 2001 as a result of the plan. She would be interested in hearing what the Government was doing to remedy the situation with regard to low enrolment and primary-school completion rates. Also, she would like to know what measures were being taken to guarantee the right of girls and boys to free education up to sixth grade. Was there a phased timetable for attaining those objectives? She would also appreciate information on the Government's plans regarding sex-education, mental-health and physical-education programmes in the schools.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.