



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Summary record of the 2017th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 20 October 2023, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Peláez Narváez

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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)

Tenth periodic report of Uruguay (CEDAW/C/URY/10; CEDAW/C/URY/QPR/10)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Uruguay joined the meeting.*
2. **Mr. Albertoni** (Uruguay), introducing the tenth periodic report of Uruguay (CEDAW/C/URY/10), said that his Government's commitment to working with international human rights mechanisms attested to his country's rich tradition of protecting those rights. The implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee and other treaty bodies had bolstered efforts to eliminate discrimination.
3. **A representative of Uruguay** said that numerous pieces of legislation that enhanced women's rights had been adopted during the reporting period, including legislation addressing gender-based violence, sexual harassment and the decriminalization of abortion. Cognizant of the need to implement those legislative provisions in practice, the Government had identified four strategic areas for action: improving the prevention of, and response to, gender-based violence; promoting women's economic empowerment; promoting women's political participation; and ensuring that gender-based policies were rolled out across the country.
4. Inter-agency efforts to that end were coordinated through the National Gender Council, in which 30 State and civil society bodies participated and under which several specialized units had been established, some with their own budget. The staff of those units had all received training on gender policy. Other measures adopted to benefit women included improvements to the budget and the implementation of tools to combat gender-based violence, the creation of a unit dedicated to women's economic empowerment and a commission tasked with proposing steps towards that aim, and the establishment of a capacity-building programme for women political leaders.
5. Despite that progress, challenges remained. For instance, the status of the gender machinery needed to be enhanced so as to afford it greater independence. Moreover, there was a lack of political consensus on affirmative measures to ensure parity in elected positions, despite research suggesting that the public wished to elect more women and the recent election of a woman to the position of Vice-President. Additionally, greater financial resources were required to implement the law on gender-based violence. There was growing demand for measures to tackle all forms of violence against women, indicating that such conduct was no longer tolerated and that citizens were increasingly aware of the State's existing responses.
6. **Ms. Fernández Bonelli** (National Human Rights Institution and Office of the Ombudsperson), in a pre-recorded video statement, said that the National Human Rights Institution had a number of concerns regarding various aspects of women's rights in Uruguay. For example, Act No. 19.580 on gender-based violence against women was not being fully implemented, owing to general resistance and a lack of resources and coordination, even though robust measures were needed to ensure the early detection of cases as well as specialized care and access to justice for victims. The involvement of the education and health systems in early detection should be enhanced by strengthening comprehensive sex education, incorporating a gender perspective into all areas of school curricula and boosting the network of public and private health-care providers, *inter alia*. Additionally, specialized care for women and girls who suffered violence was lacking, particularly outside departmental capitals and for vulnerable groups, and service quality had fallen owing to a weakening of gender mainstreaming policies within the Uruguayan Institute for Children and Adolescents.
7. Access to justice was hindered by the insufficient financial resources available for establishing new prosecutors' offices and courts, recruiting expert staff for the victim and witness support and protection unit and providing free legal assistance to victims. Those shortcomings were exacerbated by structural problems affecting the functioning of the justice system and the provision of training that made revictimization more likely. The gender

perspective needed to be mainstreamed throughout the justice system, notably by enhancing the role of the specialized gender units, and a system that would facilitate an inter-agency response to all forms of violence was required. There were also persistent shortcomings in efforts to address gender-based violence at work, obstetric violence, violence on grounds of sexual orientation or identity and institutional gender-based violence.

8. Quotas intended to increase women's political participation had not been implemented in full, and securing parliamentary agreement to accept parity as a means of ensuring equality and strengthening democracy remained a significant challenge. The draft legislation on parity currently before parliament should therefore be adopted as soon as possible. To help to ensure women's economic empowerment, a national care system was needed, as well as an extension of labour protections that included improvements to maternity, paternity and parental leave allowances.

9. Measures to reverse the worsening living conditions of women deprived of liberty, caused by legislative changes that had seen increased numbers of women imprisoned for drug crimes, were urgently required. Specific policies for women prisoners that took a gender-based approach should also be introduced without delay. The overcrowding, prolonged isolation and lack of comprehensive psychological care for women prisoners with mental health problems constituted cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. In one particular detention facility, which housed around 70 per cent of the prison population, women prisoners' personal integrity could not be guaranteed. Lastly, gender institutions required strengthening at all levels in order to equip them to implement strong and effective policies and measures to promote equality.

Articles 1–6

10. **Ms. González Ferrer** said that she wished to know what measures had been adopted to guarantee access to justice for women victims of violence, particularly outside the capital. She would like to know how much State funding was allocated to the implementation of legislation against violence and what progress had been made in the establishment of specialized domestic violence courts throughout the country. Information on what was being done to increase trust in State institutions and encourage women to report violence would be appreciated, as well as details of how the protocol on good practices in protection proceedings was being applied and what gaps, if any, had been identified in its implementation. It would also be useful to hear how many times the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations had been invoked by the courts.

11. The Committee would be interested to learn what reparations and compensation had been granted to the 28 women who had lodged complaints of sexual violence and torture by military officials during the period of dictatorship, whether all of the prosecution requests filed in those cases had been granted, what the status of the proceedings was and whether the State party was fulfilling its due diligence obligations in that regard. She would also like to know what response had been made to the *amparo* applications submitted to the Special Reparations Commission by transgender persons born before 1975 who had suffered violence, deprivation of liberty and other rights violations at the hands of State actors, and what progress had been made towards implementing a plan on women and peace and security.

12. **A representative of Uruguay** said that the Supreme Court of Justice had ordered the creation, based on need, of two specialized domestic violence courts in the city of San Carlo and another two in Salto, with two more scheduled to open in Rivera in late 2023. Women throughout the country could receive advice, support and guidance in how to report violence anonymously via a telephone hotline, and the budgets of teams that provided psychosocial and legal support to victims at centres across the country had been increased by 50 per cent. There were plans to construct a main centre for the provision of assistance to women victims of violence, whereas previously those services had been decentralized. The monitoring of men required to wear electronic ankle bracelets had been enhanced to prevent femicides. Campaigns to raise awareness of the support available to victims of domestic violence had reached all areas of the country.

13. **A representative of Uruguay** said that specialized domestic violence courts would be established in Montevideo in 2024. In the absence of specialized courts, rural and justice-of-the-peace courts were competent to hear urgent domestic and gender-based violence cases. The Convention had been invoked in a number of cases before the Supreme Court of Justice and in family courts and labour courts. A guide to the protocol on good practices in protection proceedings had been drawn up, along with a guide on eliminating harmful gender stereotypes. The proceedings against the individuals accused of torture and sexual violence during the dictatorship were at different stages: some were in the preliminary investigation phase, while others had reached trial or sentencing. A plea hearing for 13 of the accused was planned for December 2023. The Office of the Special Prosecutor for Crimes against Humanity was involved in the handling of those cases.

14. **A representative of Uruguay** said that the gender-based violence response system provided legal counsel and social support. Women who accessed services, including women victims of trafficking, were provided with information on reporting procedures but were never pressured into filing a report: services were provided regardless of whether they wished to formally report an incident. That approach was followed by all departments involved in supporting women and children.

15. A special commission for reparations, comprised of representatives of various bodies including the Ministry of Education and Culture, had been established in 2010. Reparations were made in accordance with the law on reparations and included symbolic and commemorative reparations as well as financial compensation in the form of pensions. The data available showed that, between 2010 and 2023, financial compensation had been paid to over 200 families in respect of serious harm, and also in 10 cases of the kidnap of a child for more than 30 days, symbolic reparations had been made to more than 180 persons and 46 commemorative plaques had been installed across the country. More than 500 women were in receipt of pensions paid as a form of reparation. Former political prisoners, including women prisoners, were remembered on 14 March. On 15 June 2023, the State had held a public ceremony to issue an apology in response to the case of *Maidanik et al. v. Uruguay*.

16. **A representative of Uruguay** said that significant progress had been made towards compliance with United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Uruguay was a leader in Latin America in terms of the participation of women in military peacekeeping deployments and there were three female aides-de-camp among the staff of the President and Vice-President. An interministerial working group had been established in December 2020 to draft a national action plan for the women and peace and security agenda, and the adopted plan covered the period 2022–2024. A study on opportunities for women in peacekeeping conducted in 2021 had given rise to a plan for removing barriers to their participation, which had been implemented with funding from the Elsie Initiative Fund for Uniformed Women in Peace Operations. As at 2023, 47 activities were being implemented for the women and peace and security agenda.

17. **A representative of Uruguay** said that, in Montevideo, there were eight prosecutors specialized in cases of domestic and gender-based violence and two more would be added in 2024. Those specialist prosecutors would work with the new courts specialized in gender-based violence. The number of expert professionals working in the victim and witness support and protection unit within the Attorney General's Office would be increased from 30 to 40 in order to provide a physical presence in cities across the country.

18. **A representative of Uruguay** said that the response to and prevention of violence were priority issues for the police force. The courts that specialized in gender-based violence had been provided with the largest possible budget and the court system had been restructured. The caseload of criminal courts in the interior of the country had been reduced and cases of gender-based violence were now the most common matter that came before them.

19. **A representative of Uruguay** said that training on the filing of complaints of domestic and gender-based violence and on gender issues and discrimination was being provided to justice officials. The National Directorate for Gender Policies had issued a list of resources that included the 56 police commissioners specialized in gender-based violence. Other channels that could receive complaints included the Attorney General's Office,

telephone hotlines – including one dedicated to complaints of trafficking in persons and exploitation – and a special online complaints system that the authorities were currently working to improve, since victims were not always able to attend police stations to file complaints. Training was being encouraged for all officials, regardless of their position, in order to ensure good interpersonal relations and respect for citizens in the exercise of their duties.

20. **Ms. González Ferrer** said that she would welcome more details about the distribution of the budget available for the implementation of Act No. 19.580 on gender-based violence against women.

21. **A representative of Uruguay** said that the first step was to ensure that the institutional system worked properly. Act No. 19.580 served as a guide for budget planning in that its different chapters laid the bases for public policy, while the 2022–2024 National Plan on Combating Gender-based Violence against Women set forth the main policy objectives. The National Institute for Women coordinated with the relevant agencies in major areas of work like housing and education. While each institution had its own public policy guidelines and, in most cases, budget allocations, human resources were sometimes shared and were not always allocated directly from the budget. More than 90 per cent of the Institute's budget was used to address violence and related issues but it was not possible to provide exact figures.

22. Training on gender-based violence had been provided to judges who sat in ordinary courts since, until specialized courts were available, cases on gender-based violence could be heard before ordinary courts. Claims for reparations for transgender persons were being processed under the standardized procedure that had been introduced when the law on transgender persons had entered into force. The data available for 2019 and 2020 suggested that a significant percentage of the projected 1,000 eligible persons had already had their claim processed.

23. **Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia** said that, while she commended the State party's efforts to implement the Convention, the application of article 3 appeared static. She wished to know more about the political will to upgrade the National Institute of Women to cabinet level, the main services it provided, how its work was decentralized to serve women in different regions and in the private sector, and the human, technical and financial resources available to it. She would also appreciate information about the results achieved by the sector-specific structures and about plans for achieving gender equality in the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as information on the status of the National Gender Council, the annual targets and performance indicators set for it, the mechanisms in place to hold Ministers to account, the results achieved in priority sectors and the operational challenges to the Council's work.

24. With regard to the 2030 National Gender Equality Strategy, she would like to know: what strategies were in place to ensure effective coordination of its implementation, secure accountability from stakeholders and bridge gender gaps; how the state machinery addressed the impact of emerging issues such as digital technology and climate change on women; what provisions were contained in the National Budget Act to advance gender-responsive budgeting and procurement; how those provisions were implemented and monitored; what percentage of the national budget was allocated to the National Institute for Women and whether it had adequate resources to deliver on gender equality in line with global standards; and what budget was allocated to work on gender in key sectors, with a breakdown of the percentages allocated to gender mainstreaming and to standalone work. She would also like to know: whether the National Human Rights Institution and the Office of the Ombudsman possessed sufficient resources to address gender equality; how effectively civil society organizations, academia and activists engaged with the various State institutions focused on gender and the extent to which they received funding, including information on beneficiaries; whether there was an institutional platform to facilitate engagement with statutory bodies for Afro-Uruguayan women, and if so, how effective it was; and what steps were being taken to generate gender-disaggregated data that could inform policy and legislative reform.

25. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that she welcomed the efforts made to strengthen national frameworks for equality and non-discrimination and the temporary special measures that had

led to the election of the first female Vice-President. She wished to know what temporary special measures had been adopted by public bodies to tackle the effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on vulnerable groups of women and why the draft bill on parity had been met with resistance. She also wished to know what percentage of women had been elected following the use of gender quotas in the 2019 elections, whether measures had been taken – as recommended by the Committee in its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/URY/CO/8-9) – to tackle the low representation of women in the Supreme Court and the foreign service and to amend electoral law and provide support for women electoral candidates, and whether consideration had been given to the introduction of temporary special measures to help younger women to enter politics.

26. She would like to know what steps would be taken to boost the number of women of African descent occupying positions in public bodies, in addition to the policy of setting aside 8 per cent of posts for persons of African descent. Details of the efforts being made to ensure that women were able to progress in academia and of any temporary special measures being implemented to address girls' school dropout rate would be welcome. Given that the quotas established for the employment of persons of African descent and persons with disabilities in the civil service had not been reached, she wished to know how those quotas were monitored and what measures were in place to encourage the employment of other vulnerable groups.

27. **A representative of Uruguay** said that the National Institute for Women had been founded in 1987, alongside the restoration of democracy, and had grown from an office with one official to a prestigious internationally reputed institute that had initiated at least a dozen laws. Over the previous three years, the Institute had become an implementing unit, which meant that it was thenceforth allocated a ring-fenced budget. A proposal to convert the Institute into a ministry was under consideration. The Institute's staff comprised almost 50 officials and approximately 370 expert professionals and consultants who worked on short-term contracts across the country to provide services linked to gender-based violence, including staffing 24-hour support centres in the interior of the country. In most of the country's departments, the Institute had gender focal points responsible for overseeing the response to gender-based violence and the decentralized implementation of policies. The National Gender Council held meetings with other authorities once or twice each year to take stock of policy implementation and consider strategy, and the gender focal points met periodically to discuss specific proposals.

28. The Institute for Women also worked with the Uruguayan Chamber of Information Technologies and the Central Bank to offer training in financial literacy and was working with a major e-trade business to offer women free training on e-trading. Digital inclusion for rural women was another focus, working in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and the National Institute of Employment and Vocational Training.

29. **A representative of Uruguay** said that the Ministry of Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries had prepared a national gender plan for 2020-2024 together with the national agencies for milk, meat, fishing and seeds. The plan had been drawn up following nationwide public consultations with employees from subsectors of agriculture and small-scale fisheries. Eighty-three public policy measures had been established, with a specific institution in charge of each and a follow-up commission including civil society representatives meeting twice a month to oversee their implementation. Some of the measures provided for financial and digital literacy training nationwide, one example being the "Trained to Transform" (Formadas para transformar) programme designed to improve connectivity for rural women. Financial literacy training was provided in a digital format, and the Ministry hoped to reach 3,000 women through the programme in 2024.

30. **A representative of Uruguay** said that the National Institute for Women had established specific measures to improve the digital inclusion of women, including actions targeting sex workers and domestic workers who wished to change career. During the COVID-19 pandemic, through the Ceibal Plan for basic educational connectivity for online learning, the Institute had been able to ensure that children and teachers could take part in classes remotely without the need for extensive infrastructure, Uruguay already having a high digital inclusion rate. Efforts were now focused on improving the tools needed to train

vulnerable groups, particularly women from the interior of the country and women of African descent.

31. Technology was also being used to combat violence, and the Institute, together with the Ministry of the Interior, was examining the possibility of adopting e-reporting and georeferencing tools. An agreement with the United Nations Development Programme had led to the development of a tracker that would measure violence-related activity directed at a sample of 200 women, including politicians, artists and social activists. Violence prevention campaigns had been conducted, including on the theme of online-based violence, which particularly affected young women.

32. To promote gender-based budgeting, Act No. 19.846 made the organization of workshops on incorporating gender equality objectives in strategic planning mandatory for all public sector bodies. The Act also required all bodies represented on the National Gender Council to establish gender equality budget lines to which they could impute both operational and investment costs. However, gender-labelling budget items was sometimes problematic in that it could be too specific, ignoring the cross-cutting aspects of certain activities.

33. **A representative of Uruguay** said that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had established a specialized gender unit in compliance with Act No. 19.580 in 2021. The unit's role was to provide advice on matters such as gender and planning, human resources, preventing sexual harassment and bullying, and awareness-raising. Training programmes had been organized and best practices identified, leading, *inter alia*, to the adoption of a new protocol for responding to sexual harassment and bullying in the workplace and the establishment of breastfeeding rooms and assistance services for pregnant staff in Uruguayan consulates and embassies around the world. The recruitment examinations for positions within the foreign service were gender neutral and around 44 per cent of the 334 civil servants working outside Uruguay were women. In senior management positions, 48 per cent of posts were held by women.

34. **A representative of Uruguay** said that 26 per cent of prison officers in Uruguay were women. Within the uniformed police force, the figure was 24 per cent. There had been two women police generals since 2018 and other women held operational command roles throughout the country. Efforts to increase the proportion of women within the police force continued, and meetings, seminars and workshops were conducted regularly with the aim of empowering in-service women officers.

35. **A representative of Uruguay** said that three of the five Supreme Court judges were women and that over 70 per cent of posts within the judiciary were held by women.

36. **A representative of Uruguay** said that USD 50,000 had been earmarked for the implementation of Act No. 19.846. The Quality with Gender Equity Model had recently been updated for the first time in 14 years to include the private sector. The National Institute for Women's Directorate for Uruguayan Women of African Descent had been incorporated into the Ministry of Social Development three years previously, thereby gaining access to a larger budget. In 2022, the Directorate had organized the fifteenth edition of the Amanda Rorra Award, which recognized work to increase the visibility of women of African descent in Uruguay and, in that year, had attracted a record field of competitors.

37. **A representative of Uruguay** said that, within the Ministry of Education and Culture, the 2021-2025 policy for enhancing inclusivity in education from childhood to university was focused mainly on the award of scholarships at all educational levels. The target of awarding 8 per cent of scholarships to persons of African descent was being met and, in some cases, exceeded, as was the 2 per cent target for scholarships awarded to transgender persons. Some scholarships were targeted at postgraduate level students. It was unclear why only 37 per cent of leadership positions in universities were held by women even though some posts were focused on gender-related research. The gender unit of the Directorate of Science and Technology was exploring ways to improve the gender balance and had offered prizes to encourage women to enter the historically male-dominated field of science.

38. **A representative of Uruguay** said that a capacity-building programme had been established to strengthen leadership skills among women politicians that was currently training its second and third cohorts. The programme entailed 60 hours of training in matters

such as negotiation, finance, communications and electoral issues. By November 2023, 180 leaders would have been trained through that cross-party initiative. Special selection criteria had been established to increase the involvement of younger women, transgender women and women of African descent. Other smaller-scale measures to support women had included the adoption of a law on the promotion of employment, enacted a few years previously, under which subsidies were made available to private sector companies that hired persons aged under 25 or over 45 years old, with the value of the subsidies being doubled for women recruited from those age groups.

39. With regard to temporary special measures, during the COVID-19 pandemic the Government had set aside a significant sum of USD 1 billion to fund assistance for those in need. That amount had been used to ensure health-care coverage and universal vaccination, with almost 100 per cent coverage being achieved, to double the value of child and family benefits and to cover the distribution of food baskets to families without an income. A bonus for families with young children, for which over 80 per cent of the beneficiaries were women, had also been introduced. The Ministry of Social Development was practically the only ministry that had remained open throughout the pandemic. Its centres had remained operational, providing help to women who had been victims of gender-based violence as well as food assistance. Judicial protection measures for women and girls had also continued without interruption.

40. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that she would appreciate more details about the participation of women in political and public life. In particular, she would like to know whether temporary special measures, such as measures promoting gender parity, had been used to increase the participation of women. If they had, could the State party explain why only 26 per cent of the members of the lower chamber of parliament were women? It would also be useful to know the cause of the resistance to the parity bill and how it could be overcome. To the best of her knowledge, the target of 8 per cent set for the participation of Afro-Caribbean women in public life had not been achieved. She wondered how measures might be strengthened in order to ensure that it was. She also urged the State party to use robust temporary special measures to increase the representation of women in the upper echelons of academia.

41. **Ms. Egobhamien-Msheila** said that she would appreciate data on gender-related budgeting within each of the ministries, the services that their staff were providing and what they were doing to close the gender gap. She would also welcome information on gender representation within sectors essential for the country's development such as the historically male-dominated industries of transport and mining.

42. **Ms. González Ferrer** asked how many women were included among the cohort that made up the quota established for the participation of persons of African descent in political and public life.

43. **Ms. Peláez Narváez**, noting that it was important to have data regarding women within specific population groups, said that information about women with disabilities would be appreciated. Information regarding budgets could be provided subsequently in writing.

44. **A representative of Uruguay** said that all State institutions were working to enhance gender inclusion but achieving greater equality required a cultural shift that would take time. Although Act No. 19.846 and Act No. 19.580 helped to ensure that there was no regression in the implementation of public policies on gender, it was essential that the population in general fully understood the benefits of gender parity for the country, the economy and the community. In universities, the Government had no means to enforce parity, for example, in the number of professorships awarded, and it faced similar problems with regard to trade unions, businesses and the private sector as a whole. However, it was working to promote tools that would raise awareness of the benefits of parity, not only within parliament but in all branches of government. Since 2009, the Quality with Gender Equity Model had been introduced in 33 public institutions and over 1,000 civil servants had received gender equality training.

45. **A representative of Uruguay** said that the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Mining had set up a specialized gender unit several years previously. Within the Ministry, the Directorate for Small and Medium-Sized Businesses, together with the National Telecommunications Directorate, was providing training courses on e-trade and the digital

economy. That initiative, which was supported by the National Institute of Employment and Vocational Training, focused specifically on women-led businesses and those located in the interior of the country. Overall, 60 per cent of company leaders who had taken the courses were women and 75 per cent of the companies participating had been based in the interior of Uruguay. The Ministry had adopted specific gender equality indicators, such as the participation of women in businesses that responded to tender invitations in sectors including, for example, technical support, electronics and robotics, that it monitored as part of efforts to promote gender equality in public procurement activities.

46. **Ms. de Silva de Alwis** said that she would like to know whether police officers and public prosecutors had received training in the standardized protocols for investigating cases of missing persons adopted in June 2020 and whether there was a statute of limitations for unsolved missing persons cases. It would be helpful to understand how the lingering culture of impunity, particularly in relation to the extrajudicial executions and forced disappearances of Diana Maidanik, Silvia Reyes and Laura Raggio, impacted current cases of missing women and girls. She wondered how the voices of women who had been disappeared and extrajudicially executed during the dictatorship and the memorials dedicated to them might be used for healing and transitional justice purposes.

47. Given the interrelatedness of violence and gender stereotypes, it would be useful to know whether men's responsiveness to the redistribution of care work had been studied in relation to the Care Act. She would be grateful if the delegation could explain the persistent gender stereotypes found in the media and how the authorities planned to promote women in editor-in-chief roles and train media professionals to ensure gender-sensitive reporting. She also wished to hear how women journalists and human rights defenders would be guaranteed equal protection under the law in the face of increasing threats of violence and civil lawsuits against them. She wondered how technologically assisted gender-based violence targeting women in the public sphere specifically but also women generally, particularly doxing and deepfakes, was being addressed.

48. While the authorities' efforts to keep pregnant girls in school were commendable, it would be helpful to know how access to health care and gynaecologic treatment was guaranteed in such circumstances. Information on access to justice, including legal aid, for girl victims of sexual abuse would be appreciated, as well as information on the novel law providing for psychiatric treatment to be made available for the orphaned children of victims of femicide. Details of the law that extended access to public defence services to women who acted in self-defence against abusive spouses would also be welcome, as would the delegation's comments on the worrying level of prison overcrowding and the notable increase in custodial violence.

49. The Uruguayan authorities had been much criticized for the low rate of convictions secured in cases of trafficking in persons. She wished to understand how the Act on preventing and combating trafficking in persons had been enforced during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in the light of new forms of trafficking and exploitation targeting transgender adults and children, and what victim services and shelters were available to lesbian, bisexual and transgender women, intersex persons and women with other intersectional identities. Additionally, she wished to know more about the process of investigating, prosecuting and convicting traffickers, the witness protection laws in place and the training provided to law enforcement officials, labour inspectors, coastguard officials, judges and social workers, including an indication as to whether they were trained specifically to identify victims of sex and labour trafficking. Lastly, she wished to hear how the authorities planned to address ingrained gender stereotypes and the normalization of sexual exploitation within rural areas and small towns, which often affected women from migrant backgrounds.

50. **A representative of Uruguay** said that the term "disappeared" was used to refer to persons who had been abducted or held captive during the 1973-1985 military dictatorship. After having been suspended for 15 years, reparation and search processes had now resumed and the current Government was taking a proactive approach to the issue. The term "missing" was used to refer to young girls who had disappeared temporarily, and more recently, often in cases suspected to involve trafficking in persons. The National Institute for Women and the Uruguayan Institute for Children and Adolescents offered psychosocial and legal support

to women affected by such crimes and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security was authorized to conduct inspections of establishments where trafficking in persons was suspected.

51. **A representative of Uruguay** said that, in June 2023, the Government of Uruguay had publicly recognized its responsibility to make reparations in the case of Diana Maidanik. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance was processing the compensation payments and organizing meetings with the victims' representatives.

52. **A representative of Uruguay** said that around 20 investigations into suspected cases of trafficking in persons had been conducted each year in the period 2020-2022 and that 22 had been conducted in the year to October 2023. Such cases often involved numerous potential victims. Since being amended in 2017, the Code of Criminal Procedure had contained a requirement to preserve the anonymity of witnesses. That provision was also applied to victims and had been used in cases related to trafficking in persons.

53. **A representative of Uruguay** said that there had been five convictions for trafficking in persons in 2021 and two in 2019.

54. **Ms. Ribeiro** (Uruguay) said that 14 per cent of girls aged between 15 and 19 years old and 1 per cent of girls under 15 years old experienced early pregnancy, although recent years had seen a marked decrease, from 135 cases in 2010 to 33 cases in 2021. The school curriculum included information on pregnancy and shared responsibility, which was taught to all students, and scholarships were available to help young mothers to continue their studies.

55. The Government had provided for reparations to be made for both men and women through Act No. 18.026. Following a women-led initiative, 14 March of each year would be recognized as a day for commemorating the experiences of past political prisoners. A number of women's memoirs describing their experiences had been published in recent years.

56. **A representative of Uruguay** said that 15,245 persons, including 1,132 women, were currently deprived of their liberty in the country. The majority of both women and men prisoners were held in the capital. The authorities acknowledged that one of the detention facilities in the capital, which was currently accommodating 709 women prisoners and had previously been a psychiatric hospital, was not fit for purpose. There were plans to build a new unit that would take gender and diversity considerations into consideration, would help to address overcrowding and would have food, laundry and maintenance services. It would have the capacity to accommodate 846 prisoners, including 750 women and 30 transgender persons. Construction was expected to start in July 2024. Acts of violence among women deprived of liberty were uncommon and recent occurrences of violence had been immediately quelled by officials. To protect victims and prevent further incidents, some inmates had been transferred to other units and psychiatric support measures had been put in place.

57. **A representative of Uruguay** said that the Ministry of Social Development ran shelters offering 24-hour care for women facing an imminent threat to their life. Transgender persons could use those shelters, but there were no shelters specifically designed for them. Shelter for women and children who had witnessed or suffered violence was also available through the Uruguayan Institute for Children and Adolescents.

58. In 2023, a project had been launched whereby violence against women on social media, and particularly on the platform X, would be monitored. The results of the initiative would be available in November 2023 and would be used to inform policymaking.

59. **A representative of Uruguay** said that the Ministry of the Interior had taken steps to improve the investigation of cases of trafficking in persons and related crimes, which particularly affected women of African descent and women migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, notably by providing training to civil servants and police officers. A special police investigation unit had been established for cases of trafficking in persons that had links with the International Criminal Police Organization while a new cybercrime unit established in 2023 would strengthen the anti-trafficking response through its continuous monitoring activities and the early identification of possible cases. Training on gender-based violence on social media had been provided to civil servants.

60. **A representative of Uruguay** said that Act 19.580 had introduced amendments to the Criminal Code, establishing punishments for any individual who used the Internet, a computer system or any means of communication or data transmission technology to contact a minor and exert influence over him or her for the purpose of committing a criminal offence of a sexual nature or an act with sexual connotations, obtaining pornographic material or forcing him or her to do anything against his or her will.

Articles 7–9

61. **Ms. Manalo** said that legislation was needed to improve the particularly low levels of women's participation in senior and decision-making roles within the executive branch, local government, the judiciary, trade unions, chambers of commerce and public and private companies. While parity bills had been drafted and discussed, none had prospered. She therefore wished to understand what measures the authorities would take to achieve gender parity in all political spheres. She would particularly appreciate an update on the status of the 2020 parity bill and details of any efforts on the part of political parties to ensure women's participation in political activities and their inclusion in candidate lists. She also wished to know whether there had been any investigations into cases of violence in the political sphere, including sexual advances, access to public positions being blocked for pregnant women or women with children, mockery or rejection of proposals made by women and denigration of women within political parties.

62. She would also like an update on progress made in promoting women's political participation under the National Women's Institute's strategic work programme for the period 2020–2025, particularly progress achieved under the training programme for women politicians launched in 2020. Updated information on the percentage of women working at the international level as diplomats, including as ambassadors and consuls general, and on the measures taken to increase women's representation in that field, would likewise be appreciated. Given the significant gap between the number of men and the number of women holding senior government, ministerial or politically appointed roles, the concentration of women managers in fields historically considered as feminine, and the more restricted access to management positions for women generally, even though women's educational attainment was higher, on average, than men's, she wondered what actions were being taken in the public and private labour market to facilitate access to management positions for women.

63. In the light of reports of a weakened national mechanism for reporting and following up on recommendations and a lack of dialogue with civil society, details of any dialogue with women's organizations that currently existed would be welcome.

64. **Ms. de Silva de Alwis** said that it would be useful to hear about efforts to settle refugees from the Middle East, and especially Syria, as a lack of employment opportunities and economic resources appeared to hinder their assimilation. She would be grateful for clarification regarding access to Uruguayan nationality for migrants and as to why passports displayed the birth country of citizens. She was also curious to know whether Act 19.682 on stateless persons had proved effective in ensuring protection for stateless women in Uruguay.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.