



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

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

Summary record of the 749th meeting (Chamber A)

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 16 August 2006, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Simonović (Rapporteur)

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*In the absence of Ms. Manalo (Chairperson),
Ms. Simonović (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)**

*Fourth periodic report of Chile
(CECAW/C/CHI/4; CEDAW/C/CHI/Q/4 and
Add.1)*

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

2. **Ms. Alborno Pollman** (Chile) said that the advancement of women throughout the world reflected profound cultural changes and progress towards the ideals of freedom, justice and equal respect for all. Chile had entered the twenty-first century fully recognizing the increasing role of women in public life, culminating in the recent election of the Republic's first female President, who received over 53 per cent of the votes, and the appointment of a parity Cabinet. The integration of women into the political, corporate, academic and labour market arenas represented consensus on the establishment of an inclusive and democratic social model. That step represented the fruit of the labour and perseverance of many women in the past to secure each of the rights that the women of Chile currently enjoyed.

3. The establishment of the National Office for Women's Affairs (SERNAM), a public service body headed by a director of ministerial rank, was one example of progress for women in Chile. SERNAM was implementing the second Equal Opportunity Plan for Men and Women to consolidate gender policies in public institutions. The assessment of the first Equal Opportunity Plan, covering the years 2000 to 2005, had been distributed to the members of the Committee to inform them about the scope of SERNAM's work, the progress it had achieved, and the challenges it faced.

4. Gender mainstreaming was one of the most important strategies for the advancement of women. Since 2000, Chile had adopted a number of effective measures for the implementation of that process in various fields, including the creation of a Council of Ministers on Equal Opportunity for the formulation of cross-sectoral policies on gender equality. In addition,

a management improvement programme (PMG) had been designed for the incorporation of a gender perspective into the activities of public services in order to improve the quality and relevance of their policies. Chile's approach had contributed significantly to heightening national and international awareness of gender issues.

5. In the area of education, she was pleased to inform the Committee that the educational system in Chile provided 100 per cent coverage at the basic level and 90 per cent at the intermediate level. The core curriculum had recently been developed to incorporate a gender perspective, along with efforts to impart an understanding of the concepts involved in teacher training colleges and universities. The President of Chile had taken a special interest in creating an advisory body to develop policies on infant education, which would also afford young mothers an opportunity to study or work while their children attended school. Various other strategies had been adopted on sensitization, improved access to information technology, and the introduction of indicators to establish the pattern of registration and curriculum of girls and women.

6. Despite progress in many areas, gender stereotyping in educational choices continued to mean that women were relegated to low-paid, low-status jobs. Moreover, pregnancy and motherhood, at an increasingly early age, remained the major cause of dropout among poor women. Earlier focus on sex education had evolved into the implementation, since 2005, of a national and intersectoral plan on sexuality and gender. The Ministry of Education had drastically increased its budget in 2006, to place special emphasis on the prevention of teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS infection and sexual abuse of children.

7. Legislative reform in the health sector had established the Universal Access with Explicit Guarantees (AUGE) scheme to provide free comprehensive health care, with special attention to women's health issues. Moreover, the Ministry of Health had compiled a rich body of gender-disaggregated data on diseases, health risks and nutrition. Another aspect of improvement in health-care delivery was the guarantee of free antiretroviral therapy to women living with AIDS and their newborn infants. Nevertheless, the feminization of HIV/AIDS called for a broadening of preventive measures,

including the dissemination of information within the school system.

8. Although women had increased their participation in the labour market in 2006, they still comprised only 38 per cent of the workforce. The subject of discrimination against women in the workplace had been included in public awareness activities, and the elimination of its causes had been highlighted as a requirement for Chile to encourage the contribution of women to the economy and to make advances towards development. To that end, a number of provisions on discrimination, the protection of women's rights and equal remuneration had been incorporated into the labour code. The President of the Republic had promulgated the Code on Good Labour Practices and Non-Discrimination in the Public Sector with a view to ensuring equal opportunities and equal treatment as between men and women employed by the State. To encourage practices favourable to the exercise of women's rights in the private sector the Government had established partnerships with Chilean business, which had led to the preparation of a guide to good labour practices, based on the Code referred to earlier.

9. In order to promote and encourage the integration of women in the labour market, various policies had been formulated according to poverty level, geographical location (urban or rural) and dependence/independence (whether or not an employee). With respect to the most vulnerable working women, priority continued to be given to improving the situation of seasonal farm workers, by introducing legislative amendments designed to establish greater control over employment conditions and reinforce occupational health and safety. Legislation had also been amended to protect mothers and extend paternal rights, within the framework of shared responsibility and increased equality in the roles of parents.

10. The formulation and implementation of gender policies remained the biggest challenge faced by the Government, which was anxious to produce measurement tools for use in monitoring compliance with norms on equal pay and employment equity. In order to meet that challenge, it was necessary to strengthen capacity-building among the social actors, especially in the trade unions, by institutionalizing social dialogue and involving women in leadership in both private and public sectors.

11. To combat social inequality in general, the President was determined to develop an effective and efficient social security system.

12. The modernization of the justice system was one of the main commitments of democratic Governments. In Chile, the Government had responded through programmes such as Access to Justice, which offered protection and care for victims of violence, and by forming specialized units for the investigation of sexual and domestic violence in all regions. Family law had been gradually harmonized with the principles of international law, and especially with the provisions of the Convention.

13. Modernization had also allowed the authorities to plan and set up the necessary judicial processes in order to obtain greater protection and sanctions for violent acts than had previously been possible. Under the new Domestic Violence Act, in effect since October 2005, the State assumed responsibility for the security and safety of persons in their family relationships. The State had further strengthened its response to violence against women through the adoption of timely protection measures and wider police powers. Habitual abuse had been criminalized, and specific commitments had been established in public policies on education, public safety and media participation.

14. With regard to political participation, one of the first moves by the President had been the appointment of a Cabinet and officials based on the concept of gender parity. It was particularly noteworthy that women had been assigned portfolios that had previously been regarded as within the male domain, such as defence, foreign affairs and head of the supreme court. However, deeply entrenched elements, such as the culture of political parties and the "binominal" electoral system, continued to stand in the way of women. The outstanding challenge was to integrate women more fully into the highest spheres of influence, create new opportunities for women and provide leadership training.

Articles 1 to 6

15. **Ms. Morvai** asked whether the Government had carried out the analysis of the effects of Chile's integration into globalization processes on Chilean women, as it had intended. Furthermore, she asked whether gender-disaggregated data had been compiled to measure and monitor the specific impact of

international commercial and liberalization policies. She was also interested in knowing about cooperation between the national machinery and NGOs. As far as the status of the Convention was concerned, she asked whether the Convention had been invoked directly in the courts of Chile or whether any relevant jurisprudence had been developed. Noting the high percentage of women seeking recourse in legal aid schemes for the protection of their rights, she wondered whether lawyers, judges and law enforcement officers were trained in the content and issues related to the Convention and in that context asked the delegation to provide an update on the status of the debate concerning ratification of the Optional Protocol. She referred to the concerns raised in Chile about legal abortion and implications relating to such practice under the Optional Protocol, and asked for more information on the main obstacles to the ratification process.

16. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** commended Chile on its innovative treatment of the articles of the Convention by arranging them in clusters. She said, however, that articles 1 to 5 and article 24 were considered “framework articles” and that they related to the other, substantive articles, namely articles 6 to 16. The practice of grouping only paragraph 1 of article 4 with articles 7 and 8 might limit recognition of the potential for the application of article 4. It was clear from the report that temporary special measures had been adopted by Chile in various contexts, therefore her intention in raising the issue was to prompt further reflection in the development of discussions with the Committee.

17. Observing that the core report was outdated, she suggested that, since all the human rights treaty bodies had adopted new reporting guidelines, Chile might consider preparing the next report according to those new guidelines. Urging the Government to accelerate the process of legislative reform she asked what mechanisms could be devised to ensure that priority was given to the timely amendment of discriminatory legislation.

18. The provisions under the Filiation Act, Law 19,585 concerning paternal authority, were inconsistent with article 16 of the Convention. She asked the delegation to explain whether the Convention was directly applicable in Chilean courts and could therefore prevail over domestic laws that were clearly incompatible with it.

19. The misinformation on the Optional Protocol presented by the country’s highest ecclesiastical authority before the Senate was deeply disturbing. She wished it to be put on record that the Committee could not, through the Convention or the Optional Protocol, impose anything on any State. It was the goal of the Committee to conduct constructive dialogue and to formulate recommendations based on the provisions of the Convention and the Optional Protocol. The Committee had never imposed abortion on any State in the past, nor would it do so in the future. She therefore encouraged the Government of Chile to launch its own media campaign to correct the misinformation that was being circulated by opponents of the Optional Protocol. The Committee concerned itself with the human rights of women and addressed issues such as the high rates of maternal mortality due to illegal abortions and the insufficient availability of family planning methods.

20. She asked the delegation to clarify the distinction in its usage of the terms “equality” and “equity”, noting that the Committee preferred the concept designated by the term “equality”.

21. **Ms. Zou** expressed interest in the activities of the national machinery and the efforts of SERNAM in promoting gender mainstreaming and equality in the adoption of public policy. She requested further information on the status and evolution of SERNAM and the resources available to it since its establishment. She asked about the main achievements and challenges arising from the evaluation of the implementation of the Equal Opportunity Plan 2000-2010, and whether there were specific examples of benefits derived by men and women under the Plan.

22. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, asked whether international treaties were equivalent to Chilean law and, in the event of a conflict of laws, which law prevailed. She wondered how the Government ensured compatibility between domestic law and the Convention. Stressing the importance of ratifying the Optional Protocol, she asked whether Chile had formulated a plan for completing the process of ratification.

23. **Ms. Albornoz Pollman** (Chile), in response to the question on the impact of globalization, said that the Government had adopted follow-up mechanisms for policies to ensure gender mainstreaming in State agencies particularly through the incorporation of gender issues into the key instruments of public

management. Within the main framework of those instruments, gender-specific disaggregation and analysis provided meaningful and relevant data that SERNAM could use in policy formulation. Non-governmental organizations and social organizations formed part of the diverse network to which SERNAM had recourse in its work. They actively participated in the design and reform of public policies. During the term of the current Administration special emphasis had been placed on strengthening links and building partnerships with civil society.

24. **Mr. Rendon** (Chile) said that section 5 (2) of the Constitution which laid down the regime with respect to international instruments signed and ratified by Chile, subjected State organs to the rule of international law. Since there were very few instances of case law on the relationship between rights provided by domestic and international law, it was difficult to reach a conclusion on the matter. The legal system also provided for constitutional recourse for the protection of equality, but such recourse had not been sought in gender discrimination issues. It had mainly been invoked with respect to guarantees relating to economic issues. The previous Administration had introduced a bill to enable judicial claims to be made with respect to discrimination based on gender. The bill was currently before the Senate and a positive outcome was expected.

25. Regarding equality, he said that since complaints about discrimination were few and usually dealt with in very specific cases, international instruments had rarely been resorted to. There was therefore little jurisprudence in that area.

26. With reference to the rule on custody and its possible conflict with article 16, he clarified that the rule provided equal responsibility to both men and women and allowed flexibility for men and women to freely decide on custody matters. In the absence of a decision under that rule, the courts assigned custody to women. The failure of men to comply with their paternal responsibilities had led women to insist on rules to strengthen enforcement.

27. **Ms. Esquivel** (Chile) said that SERNAM was headed by a woman of ministerial rank and provided advice to the President. It dealt with the inter-ministerial coordination of policies, and its resources were expected to increase in 2006 by 30 per cent. The influence of the President had provided impetus to

strengthen policies and commitments. Major emphasis had been placed on incorporating a gender perspective into substantive State functions. The main challenge it faced was to raise awareness on the political importance of developing the full potential of women.

28. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** mentioned the submission, with the support of male members of parliament, of a draft bill by female parliamentarians in 1997 and in 2003. The bill would lead to the establishment of quotas to encourage the participation of women in public life and to achieve a more equitable representation of women in positions of leadership. She asked about the current status of the bill. Were there plans to adopt affirmative action laws with respect to the public administration, and to what extent did SERNAM include temporary special measures in its plans to accelerate the realization of substantive equality?

29. **Ms. Tan** referred to the comprehensive care centres established in 2001 for the victims of domestic violence, including women and children. She noted, however, that in the written response to question 7, the Government had stated that following a review of the guidelines for intervention by the centres, a decision had been taken to provide care for women only. She wished to know how child victims would be provided for, in the light of that decision. She also asked which agency was responsible for providing protective or precautionary measures for persons at imminent risk of abuse, to what extent they were enforced, and which department was responsible for such enforcement. In addition, she asked how long protection orders were valid, whether it was possible to extend the period of validity, and what procedure was followed in the case of persons who violated a protection order.

30. **Ms. Coker-Appiah** asked whether the Government had evaluated the National Programme for the Prevention of Family Violence since its establishment in 1992, and if so, what results it had achieved. She drew attention to paragraph 317 of the fourth periodic report, which mentioned that Congress had been considering a bill to create family courts, and enquired whether those courts had actually been established.

31. It could be assumed that violence against women was not taken seriously since it appeared that penalties were imposed only in the case of moderate or severe injury. She asked the delegation whether the Government was considering the adoption of specific

legislation on gender-based violence. Taking into account the high incidence of mental health disorders that were symptomatic of physical or sexual violence, and the extensive care offered to victims of sexual assault, she asked what steps had been taken to tackle all forms of violence, and not just sexual violence.

32. **Ms. Simms** said that the Latin American and Caribbean region welcomed the election of the President of Chile, who had made a number of progressive decisions based on her personal commitment to the advancement of women. The Committee was interested in knowing how the women who had attained positions of leadership in Chile would contribute to the realization of the President's vision for overcoming the legacy of discrimination from the past. How would the Government ensure the timely completion of substantive legislative reform, notwithstanding the tactics of influential men who might seek to delay such progress. She was particularly concerned that legal reforms should be sustainable and should survive beyond the current administration. It was a matter of urgency for the head of the national machinery on women's issues to set those goals as a priority and to establish a timetable for their achievement, particularly in relation to article 4. She wondered if temporary special measures had been contemplated to ensure equal representation in the electoral system at the highest levels of decision-making in both the public and private spheres.

33. Violence was often linked to a lack of equality, and she noted that Chile had made important steps in updating legislation in that regard, as in the adoption of the Domestic Violence Act and the attention paid to the issue of habitual abuse. In that regard, she asked whether the Family Court took the "battered woman syndrome" into account as grounds for acquitting women who murdered their abusive husbands, or whether there were statistics available on the incidence of femicide.

34. **Ms. Albornoz Pollman** (Chile) said that in 2003 a bill providing for quotas to increase the participation of women in decision-making roles had been introduced, but that it had failed mainly because of its incompatibility with the "binominal" electoral system in Chile. She had participated in the work of a commission that drafted a constitutional amendment to institute transitory quota provisions to encourage greater participation of women in government. Furthermore, in order to ensure the implementation of the President's policies on parity, good labour practices for equal opportunity between men and women had

been introduced under a mandatory compliance instrument. Technical and political follow-up had begun with the Ministry of the Economy and SERNAM. In concert with the public sector an action plan on implementation was expected within two months, with a time frame for including the majority of private and public companies under the good labour practices by 2007.

35. **Mr. Rendon** (Chile), in response to the question on political participation of women in public life, said that the Government had proposed constitutional reform to create laws on participation, which would provide for increased financing for female candidates to stand for election. Under presidential instructions, all public services had appointed women at higher levels of responsibility than had previously been the case. Affirmative action measures had also been adopted in areas in which women were underrepresented. The public sector had an obligation to create plans and to devise diagnostic tools to facilitate the assessment of gender parity in the leadership structure.

36. With respect to violence against women, he said that sanctions were imposed for additional forms of violence that were not covered by existing legislation. The new law on domestic violence governed both physical and psychological violence and included sanctions for habitual abuse. Family courts handled the offence of mistreatment, whereas habitual abuse, even without physical injury, was classified as a crime.

37. The Government was committed to its obligation to guarantee the safety and integrity of persons within the family and sought to strengthen public agencies in their role of protecting and counselling victims of violence and abuse, broaden the powers of law enforcement entities, modify legislation on sexual violence, and facilitate the process for women to report abuse and bring charges against their aggressors.

38. On the subject of data collection, he said that, while most agencies had statistical systems with a detailed breakdown of claims, perhaps those systems were not sufficiently integrated. Women who had been victims of habitual abuse were in most cases absolved from the charge of murder of their aggressors.

39. **Ms. Solis Martínez** (Chile) said that measures to prevent sexual abuse of children had been incorporated into criminal legislation within the general national framework, headed by the Ministry of Education, since 2005. Campaigns had been launched in conjunction with the Ministry of Justice to provide information on

various facets of behaviour and attitude that might prevent sexual abuse or permit its detection, and to equip young persons with skills designed to avoid situations that might put them at risk. Measures dealing with violence among young couples were targeted at schoolchildren from 14 years of age onwards.

40. **Ms. Esquivel** (Chile) said that the concern expressed by Ms. Simms on the need to ensure that measures to empower and grant equality to women were sustainable and substantive was deeply shared by the President. The Government hoped that continued work, aimed at fostering the advancement of women, adopting legislation that recognized equality and enforcing policies on parity, would render progress irreversible.

41. **Ms. Albornoz Pollman** (Chile) said that the statistics on femicide showed that 46 women had been murdered in 2005.

42. **Ms. Morvai** said that she wished to follow up on the conflict between the principle of paternal authority (*patria potestad*) and article 16 and asked the delegation to make further comments on that apparent inconsistency. Since the fourth periodic report contained only limited information on the steps being taken to prevent trafficking in women and exploitation of women for prostitution, additional information on the policies and strategies adopted in that regard would be welcome. Furthermore, she wished to know whether prostitution was regarded as a phenomenon that needed to be regulated.

43. **Ms. Simms** wondered how Chile had been ranked in recent studies on trafficking and asked for further information on legislation or special programmes adopted for the prevention of trafficking in women and girls.

44. **Ms. Saiga** asked the delegation to comment on the draft bill that had again been submitted in 2003 concerning quotas to secure the equitable representation of women and men in the Congress. Since, at the time of submission of the fourth periodic report, the bill was undergoing a first hearing in the Chamber of Deputies, she asked the delegation to inform the Committee about the current status of the bill.

45. **Ms. Esquivel** (Chile) explained that, under the Filiation Act, which amended the Civil Code and other related legislation, the concept of *patria potestad* referred to the right of fathers to administer the assets of a child in the context of marriage. In the case of

separation or of dissolution of a marriage, custody was normally granted to the mother, in which case she would have full rights under *patria potestad*.

46. In the event of a contradiction between the Convention and domestic law, Chile had an obligation to harmonize its domestic legislation with the provisions of the Convention. That obligation stemmed from a progressive evolution of jurisprudence at the level of the Supreme and Appeal Courts with regard to important human rights treaties. Although there was no case law calling specifically for the enforcement of the Convention, a person seeking recourse under the Convention had every right to invoke its provisions in Chilean courts.

47. **Ms. Recabarren** (Chile) said that there was currently a bill before the Congress granting the possibility of joint exercise of *patria potestad*. The draft law had the full support of the Government and, when adopted, would serve to fulfil requirements under the Convention.

48. With regard to trafficking in persons, she said that a number of activities had been undertaken since 2002 to determine the extent of the problem in Chile. Those activities included a series of meetings with civil society, cross-border consultations, and seminars. In April 2006, an inter-ministerial commission on trafficking had been established, with the objective of formulating policies to curb trafficking. Although the Penal Code of Chile contained scant reference to trafficking with the intent to engage in prostitution, a further law had been drafted for the specific purpose of classifying trafficking as a crime. To that end, the Government had entrusted various bodies, including the Office of the Prosecutor and national women's groups with the task of further improving legislation on all aspects of trafficking, so as ultimately to achieve full compliance with the Palermo Protocol on the prevention, suppression and punishment of trafficking in persons.

49. **Ms. Albornoz Pollman** (Chile) informed the Committee that the establishment of a law on quotas for the participation of women in public life was a matter of high priority for the President, whereas the modification of the "binominal" electoral system was an indispensable requirement.

50. **Ms. Tan** asked the delegation to clarify whether the police was responsible for issuing emergency protection measures for victims of domestic violence. She also wished to know what types of protective measures were issued, whether they included exclusion

orders, and what proof victims needed to provide in order to qualify for protection.

51. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, noted that Chile had not ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and asked whether the Government had any plans to proceed with the ratification of that Protocol. Furthermore, she asked the delegation to clarify whether the draft law to make trafficking in persons an offence punishable by law also governed trafficking organized for the purpose of prostitution, or whether trafficking for other purposes would be classified separately.

52. **Ms. Recabarren** (Chile) explained that both the Protocol to which the Chairperson had referred and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air had been ratified in 2005. As to the draft law on criminalizing trafficking in persons, it went beyond prostitution and covered trafficking in persons to be exploited for work and other purposes.

53. **Mr. Rendon** (Chile) said that the bill on the exercise of *patria potestad*, which had received initial unanimous approval, provided for joint administration of assets while a couple lived together. In the event of separation, the judge would grant *patria potestad* to the parent who had custody of the child.

54. In cases of domestic violence, protection measures fell within the competence of the judiciary, although the police had powers to act without legal orders when it was a flagrant violation, criminal or otherwise. Technically those powers did not constitute protective measures, but in practice they provided a degree of protection. Furthermore, while the judge was free to choose the appropriate measures, protection was imperative when there was a presumption of risk, a record of criminal tendency, or intimidation. The court could also renew protective orders as accessory measures for periods ranging between six months and one year, renewable at the request of the victim if the situation persisted, and records were maintained of such violence and the aggressors involved.

Articles 7 to 9

55. **Ms. Gaspard** welcomed the fact that political developments in Chile had banished a number of preconceptions and prejudices about the role of women in public life. Unfortunately, though, women's participation in public life remained at a low level. Contributory factors included the manner in which polls were conducted and the resistance of political

parties to the dismantling of a "binominal" electoral system that was inherently skewed against women. In order to improve the situation, the electoral system must be replaced and temporary special measures must be established at the local and national levels. In addition, since the funding of political campaigns was also a factor, the Government might consider setting a limit on election campaign budgets, accompanied by strict monitoring of election spending by the highest courts.

56. To remedy the scarcity of female senators, it might be constructive to establish temporary special measures and a policy of parity in the appointment of senators. With respect to article 8 of the Convention, she wondered whether increased access to the relevant training might not increase the number of women in the diplomatic service of Chile.

57. **Ms. Simms** asked whether the President had exercised her prerogative to replace any of the male ambassadors with women.

58. **Ms. Saiga** asked about the status of the draft bill on quotas to increase the representation of women in public life.

59. **Ms. Alborno Pollman** (Chile) endorsed the views expressed by Ms. Gaspard on prejudices and preconceptions about the role of women in political life. The draft bill on quotas had met with considerable resistance from male-dominated spheres of influence, but the firm will of the President and her Administration to carry out such changes had led to the continued development of a number of strategies and mechanisms, not the least of which was sensitization. In addition to embarking on awareness-raising campaigns with a view to reforming the "binominal" electoral system, the Government was firm in its desire not only to provide incentives to attract and facilitate the participation of women in political life but also to impose penalties on political parties that failed to present enough women as candidates. SERNAM had recently conducted an intensive campaign among political actors in Chile to explain the reform agenda that was envisaged and the need for affirmative action. Despite mixed reactions, SERNAM would not be dissuaded from its mission to support the President in the pursuit of objectives to improve the standing of women in positions of influence.

60. **Mr. Reinoso Varas** (Chile) stressed that the establishment of minimum quotas for women in political life and the principle of parity of candidacies were of much concern to the current Government.

Accordingly, the necessary draft laws had been introduced in Congress, although they had not yet been discussed. The achievement of the desired objectives depended to a large extent on whether or not deficient electoral lists were rejected.

61. **Mr. Rendon** (Chile) explained that the “binominal” electoral system was a legacy inherited from a period of dictatorship in Chile’s past. The system was unfair both in terms of the way power was weighted and in terms of its disservice to women, who were put at a tremendous disadvantage. The electoral system at the local government level was even more complex. The Government had therefore decided to grant economic incentives to candidates on electoral lists that complied with the requirements on parity and to reject electoral lists that were deficient.

62. **Ms. Sapag** (Chile), in response to the Committee’s interest in efforts to increase the number of women in the Foreign Service, said that the decree law regulating the Foreign Service did not contain provisions specifically in favour of women. Women comprised fewer than 10 per cent of the staff in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Personnel achieving the rank of ambassador were largely career diplomats, and currently only two women were serving at the highest level in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and were eligible for appointment as envoys. The President could also appoint as envoys prominent women serving outside the Ministry, either in public service or in the private sector. Efforts to encourage women to sit the Foreign Service examinations to become career diplomats had been successful, and the proportion of women applicants had increased from 10 to 50 per cent.

63. **Ms. Alborno Pollman** (Chile) said that, given the supportive spirit of the ministries involved, the process of ratifying the Optional Protocol was expected to advance smoothly towards completion. She further clarified that there were 38 members of the Senate, and that during the most recent elections, in December 2005, 36 men and 2 women had been elected.

Articles 10 to 14

64. **Ms. Morvai**, referring to the difficult conditions facing seasonal workers, asked how many women formed part of the seasonal farm workforce, and what strategies, additional to the ones outlined in the report, had been envisaged to improve their conditions of employment. With reference to the occupational insecurity of women who worked without firm labour

contracts, she asked how the Government planned to provide more stability to such women, especially with regard to the provision of social security benefits.

65. **Ms. Zou** welcomed the Ministry of Education’s intervention strategy designed to retain pregnant students and facilitate the continued education of young mothers and commended Chile’s achievements in the field of education. She urged the Government to provide more information in future periodic reports on the fields chosen by boys and girls. She quoted paragraph 34 of the report, which stated that men and women with equal numbers of years of schooling had unequal employment opportunities, and expressed interest in learning whether Chile had undertaken research to determine the extent to which girls focused in the traditional subjects. If they were conforming to entrenched gender stereotypes, she asked how that trend could be reversed.

66. **Ms. Gaspard** suggested that the next report should contain additional gender-disaggregated data, particularly with respect to the distribution of boys and girls at various levels of schooling. She asked whether the plan to keep young mothers in school had been implemented in order to avoid dropouts, expulsions and rejections, which were all factors that undermined their potential for professional advancement. She had the impression that the Government’s efforts in the field of sex education lacked dynamism, and she wondered whether those efforts could not be intensified, given the discouraging statistics on sexual and reproductive health.

67. **Ms. Simms** commented on the unequal employment opportunities for women, in spite of their improved educational achievements. It would be worthwhile to investigate why the best-educated students did not get the best jobs. She expressed concern about the rate of teenage pregnancy and especially about young girls who were forced into sexual relations. Men who engaged in relations with girls below the legal age of consent should be appropriately brought to justice. She wondered whether the incidence of teenage pregnancy differed between rural and urban areas.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.