



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Summary record of the 2109th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 21 October 2024, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Peláez Narváez

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

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

Fifth periodic report of Benin (continued) (CEDAW/C/BEN/5;
CEDAW/C/BEN/Q/5; CEDAW/C/BEN/RQ/5)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Benin joined the meeting.*
2. **The Chair** invited the delegation of Benin to continue replying to Committee members' questions.

Articles 7–9

3. **A representative of Benin**, replying to questions raised in the previous meeting (CEDAW/C/SR.2108), said that Act No. 2020-34 of 6 January 2021, establishing special provisions for streamlining and digitizing civil registration, established the process for Beninese and foreign nationals to register births and gain access to identity and other documents. The civil registry had been decentralized and there were now offices in every town hall, thus facilitating the timely registration of births and issuance of birth certificates. Efforts were being made to reduce and, ultimately, eliminate the fee for the issuance of birth certificates, which currently cost around 1,000 CFA francs (CFAF). All registered persons, including stateless persons and refugees, were entitled to a national identity number certificate, which among other things allowed them to request a copy of their birth certificate at any civil registry office and enabled the Government to provide them with appropriate services.

4. The laws on statelessness and on the protection of refugees had been updated, in accordance with the relevant international conventions, which had enabled the integration of the differing systems into a single national identification platform. Mechanisms were therefore in place to take account of stateless persons and to enable asylum-seeking persons to apply for refugee status.

5. **A representative of Benin**, providing an overview of the civil registration procedure, said that, while efforts had been made to encourage birth registrations, the bottleneck seemed to lie not at the initial stage of registering a birth, but rather at the second stage, when parents were required to return to the civil registry office to finalize the process and obtain the birth certificate. Mothers could now register a birth without the father being present. The deadline for birth registration was 30 days and the maximum time frame for issuance of a birth certificate was around two weeks. Now that there were civil registry branches at the community level, civil registry officials were able to carry out home visits and follow up with new parents on an individual basis to ensure that registration procedures were completed. Act No. 2020-34 also provided for a measure of last resort to enable a birth certificate to be obtained after the deadline had passed.

6. **Ms. Leinarte** said that she would be grateful to hear from the delegation about the situation of inhabitants of a number of villages on the borders between the State party, the Niger and Nigeria who were reportedly stateless. While she noted that a bill on the matter was pending adoption, she wondered how the status of those and other stateless persons was being addressed in the meantime.

7. **A representative of Benin** said that, if he had understood correctly, when the border had been redrawn, some villages had been located on the Beninese side, and others on the side of the Niger, thus leaving the nationality of the inhabitants in question. The previously described registration system took account of those persons. They were not stateless; they were in the process of regularizing their status and recovering their Beninese nationality on the basis of the *jus soli* principle.

Articles 10–14

8. **Ms. Bonifaz Alfonzo** said that she would like to know what specific measures the Government was taking to close the persistent gender gap in education; increase public expenditure on education to guarantee women's and girls' access to and completion of

mandatory education; improve literacy rates among all women and girls; and address girls' low completion rates and high dropout rates in secondary education. She wished to underscore that having a system for birth registration that was free of charge, mandatory, user-friendly and accessible was vital to ensuring that girls could access education.

9. She wondered what action had been taken to ensure that all schools had uninterrupted access to basic services, such as electricity and drinking water, and what steps had been taken to prevent early pregnancy, including through the provision of comprehensive and age-appropriate sexuality education for adolescent girls and boys, and to prevent, combat and eliminate the sexual harassment of girls in schools.

10. **A representative of Benin** said that various measures had been taken to encourage girls to stay in school, such as the provision of free education, free school meals and scholarships. In rural areas, girls could attend residential agricultural schools as boarders. The introduction, in 2021, of a law providing for more severe penalties for sexual harassment and prohibiting romantic relationships between students and teachers at all levels of education had also had an effect, since sexual harassment often caused girls to drop out of school and sometimes even led to unwanted pregnancies. Awareness-raising campaigns had been carried out in schools and universities to inform girls of those protections. The courts had handed down a number of convictions, imposing penalties of up to 5 years' imprisonment on teachers found to have sexually harassed or pursued romantic relationships with girl students.

11. **A representative of Benin** said that other efforts to keep girls in education included the distribution, at the start of every school year, of school kits to girls in rural areas. The kits contained backpacks equipped with solar panels, thereby enabling girls to have access to electricity so that they could study. Other measures included improving access to a reliable electricity supply in homes and schools and expanding access to the Internet. In addition to waiving girls' school fees, the authorities also provided the most vulnerable girls with a monthly allowance to prevent them from having to drop out of school.

12. **A representative of Benin** said that, in addition to the prohibition of sexual harassment and the infrastructure upgrades and financial and other forms of support already described, incentives were in place to ensure that girls resumed their studies after school holidays; school textbooks were provided free of charge; and classes were run to equip girls with the skills and training they needed to pursue a future occupation. Awareness-raising was also conducted to promote gender equality, highlight positive role models and sensitize local community leaders about the opportunities available to girls beyond the family sphere.

13. Over the past few years, concerted efforts had been made to extend and improve the school infrastructure, for example by building classrooms and single-sex latrines for girls and boys. Sexual education, including on menstruation, was provided to increase girls' knowledge of behaviours and risks and their awareness of certain dangers that they might face. There were plans to conduct outreach to encourage more community-based sexual education programmes.

14. Action was taken to diversify the range of short- and longer-term technical and vocational training courses for girls, with a view to facilitating their entry to the labour market. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Microfinance was also endeavouring to empower out-of-school girls and women by providing them with support and training so that they could obtain diplomas in traditionally male-dominated trades, such as in masonry, mechanics and welding.

15. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that she wished to stress the importance of encouraging women and girls to pursue non-traditional subjects and careers, including by teaching them about ancestral role models, such as the Agojie Amazons, who had taken on traditionally male roles as hunters. She wondered how efforts to document the history of those women were contributing to the empowerment, leadership and education of women and girls. She would also appreciate it if the delegation could provide information on the proactive measures taken to encourage pregnant girls who had dropped out of education to resume their studies, and on the extent to which appropriate sanitary facilities were available in schools.

16. **A representative of Benin** said that a study on women's traditional leadership roles was due to be carried out in 2025 as part of collaboration between the Office of the Vice-President and the National Institute for Women. The unveiling of a statue of an Amazon warrior in Cotonou had inspired efforts to gain a deeper understanding of the relevant history and to leverage it as a means of encouraging girls to stay in school.

17. Measures were in place to keep pregnant girls in school for as long as possible and to return after giving birth. If they did drop out of school, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Microfinance provided various types of support, especially to girls in situations of difficulty, to facilitate the resumption of their studies. Improvements to sanitary facilities were being made as a national priority and with the support of civil society, to ensure that girls did not have to miss school during menstruation.

18. **A representative of Benin** said that the Government had recently adopted a national programme to accelerate girls' education and promote their well-being, with an estimated budget of CFAF 94 billion, aimed at strengthening the measures already under way and building synergies to meet the Government's commitments on girls' education. The programme contained four components, namely: supporting girls who were out of education; keeping girls from vulnerable households in school; developing girls' life skills and knowledge of sexual and reproductive health; and facilitating their transition from school to employment and economic empowerment.

19. **Mr. Safarov**, speaking on behalf of Ms. Haidar, said that he wished to know what specific measures the Government was taking to close the persistent gender pay gap and promote pay transparency; what the projected impact was of plans and programmes intended to reduce occupational segregation; and what the Government planned to do to support flexible working arrangements, provide childcare facilities and improve access to technology and the reliability of electricity supply in order to increase women's participation in the labour workforce.

20. He wondered what the Government was doing to extend social protection to women working in the informal sector or as domestic workers and how it supported women's transition from work in the informal sector to the formal labour market. He would like to know what progress had been made to combat the reportedly exploitative working conditions faced by children employed under the practice of *vidomegon*, by which they were placed with wealthier families to work in exchange for food and housing, and what specific measures had been taken, and the outcomes that had been achieved, in enforcing laws prohibiting sexual harassment and in ensuring victims' effective access to justice. The delegation might also provide information on its efforts to ensure that women with disabilities and women refugees and asylum-seekers had equal employment opportunities and to establish a comprehensive data collection system on women's employment, including in the private and informal sectors, and also including their unpaid care work.

21. **A representative of Benin** said that concerted efforts were made to define indicators, collect information and leverage statistical data to inform policymaking and gain a better overview of the impacts of policies that had been implemented. There were no restrictions in law or in practice on women's access to employment. A range of labour-related measures had been taken, such as the establishment of an organization on gender equality in employment. Mechanisms were in place to facilitate and remove any barriers to women's employment. Complaints with regard to women's right to equal pay, for example, could be filed with the relevant administrative body or labour inspectorate. They could even be submitted to the courts with a view to imposing penalties for violations of that right.

22. Regarding access to employment for women from vulnerable groups, such as women with disabilities, the relevant ministry or sectoral body could take measures to ensure that the necessary support and equipment were provided or adjustments made to enable such women to perform their tasks. Business leaders could face penalties for refusing such persons access to employment.

23. A number of measures had been taken to facilitate women's transition from the informal sector to formal employment. The Insurance for the Strengthening of Human Capital project, for example, included a focus on support and positive measures to facilitate women's access not only to employment and training, but also to health and social protection,

taking into account their specific contexts and needs. Similarly, efforts to increase women's participation in the digital and information and communications technology (ICT) domains and to promote their economic empowerment included a digital upskilling programme, in which 30 per cent of places were reserved for women. Other efforts included the provision of support for digital start-ups, with special attention paid to women-led start-ups; awareness-raising carried out in the framework of International Girls in ICT Day; and various programmes supported by technical and financial partners, such as the United Nations Population Fund #Tech4Youth initiative, which sought to encourage women and girls to pursue careers and training as developers. Other partnerships involved a "Women in Tech" community, which organized events on women's digital entrepreneurship. The Amazone du Digital (Digital Amazon) programme provided women with entrepreneurship and leadership skills training.

24. **Ms. González Ferrer** said that she wished to know the extent to which free healthcare coverage was provided to women, in particular those from vulnerable groups, such as women migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers, internally displaced women, women with disabilities, those living in extreme poverty and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women. She wondered what specific measures had been taken to ensure sufficient access to healthcare centres and services for women and girls living in rural areas; whether hospitals were physically accessible to women with disabilities and whether medical staff had received training in sign language; what accountability measures were being taken to strengthen the provision of healthcare services and guarantee the competence of medical staff; and how the Government intended to ensure that lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women were included in health programmes.

25. She would be interested to know what was being done to reduce the costs associated with the medical certificates needed by women victims of violence, which were reportedly a significant barrier to access to justice. In the light of the high maternal mortality rate, she would like to know how the Government intended to strengthen measures to prevent avoidable maternal and infant deaths and ensure the accountability of maternal and neonatal healthcare providers. She would be curious to know what action had been taken to protect women from sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS; what had been done to ensure that lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women were included in a national strategic plan to eliminate HIV/AIDS, malaria and other priority diseases and infections for the period 2020–2024; and whether data were collected on that vulnerable group's access to health. It would be useful to learn the extent to which contraceptives were available free of charge to women, including those living in rural areas, women migrants, sex workers, women with disabilities and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women. The delegation might also provide information on the action taken to protect women, in particular pregnant women, women with disabilities and women living in extreme poverty, from death caused by malaria; the measures implemented at the community level to eliminate once and for all the harmful practice of female genital mutilation; and the efforts made to combat religious and cultural stereotypes and the stigma that served as barriers to women's effective access to sexual and reproductive health services.

26. **A representative of Benin** said that various steps had been taken to strengthen healthcare in Benin. The geographical coverage of maternity care had improved, so that around 85 per cent of women now lived within five kilometres of a maternity ward; a major recruitment campaign had been carried out, providing for an additional 500 midwives, maternity nurses and gynaecologists; medical equipment, such as scanners, had been provided to all major towns; and the provision of subsidized and free of charge services, which included the performance of caesarean sections, had been strengthened. Audits of maternal and neonatal deaths were routinely carried out in order to make any necessary adjustments to treatment protocols.

27. A number of legislative measures had been taken, including the issuance of Decree No. 2023-151 of 19 April 2023 establishing the conditions for voluntary termination of pregnancy. Technical partners, such as the United Nations Population Fund, supported a family planning programme offering free of charge access to contraceptives. Less than a quarter of married women or women in relationships and under a fifth of single women reportedly used contraceptives.

28. The immunization of girls and women between the ages of 15 and 49, in particular those who were pregnant or who had recently given birth, was a priority in immunization programmes, such as for the tetanus toxoid vaccination. Some 95 per cent of pregnant women and girls were screened for HIV/AIDS; those who were found to be HIV-positive received antiretroviral drugs to prevent mother-to-child transmission, which was now at very low levels. Efforts to reduce neonatal, infant and child mortality had also proved effective.

29. **A representative of Benin** said that, in cases of violence against women, the issuance of a medical certificate was free of charge when requested as part of a criminal investigation, and steps had been taken to expedite such requests. Women could also opt to pay for a medical certificate without going down the judicial route.

30. Measures had been taken to combat new trends in the practice of female genital mutilation, which was increasingly being performed on younger girls and was difficult to trace unless they were reported by rural healthcare workers. Act No. 2021-12 of 20 December 2021, amending and supplementing Act No. 2003-04 of 3 March 2003 on sexual and reproductive health, expanded the circumstances in which a voluntary termination of pregnancy could be sought. That measure had been adopted with a view to reducing the maternal mortality rate, especially among young girls, who when pregnant often resorted to clandestine abortions. An information campaign on the applicable law, designed and organized by girls themselves, was being carried out with the support of government structures.

31. **A representative of Benin** said that healthcare was provided to all, without discrimination, and that vulnerable groups such as LGBTQIA persons were not excluded. It was not considered necessary to establish specific protections in that regard, since there had been no trends to suggest that anyone had been prevented from gaining access to healthcare on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Legal provisions were in place to prosecute and punish persons committing any acts that harmed other people. All persons, irrespective of their sexual orientation or other characteristics, benefited from adequate legal and judicial protection.

32. In addition to those already described, a number of measures had been taken to improve women's access to healthcare generally and to bring healthcare services closer to communities. They included the renovation of health facilities nationwide, the deployment of thousands of healthcare workers at the community level and the acquisition of some 200 ambulances, bringing the total number to 450. Steps had also been taken to improve the skills, qualifications and specializations of healthcare workers.

33. Initiatives to prevent and treat malaria included the introduction of the malaria vaccine in the country's expanded programme on immunization and the provision of intermittent presumptive treatment for pregnant women. Information campaigns were carried out ahead of periods when malaria was most prevalent. Free malaria treatment was provided to pregnant women and to children under 5 years of age, and long-lasting insecticide-treated mosquito nets were distributed free of charge. To cover those and other health-related measures, the State budget for primary healthcare had significantly increased.

34. **Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia** said that she wished to know to what extent the State party's various legal reforms and initiatives had contributed to improving women's economic empowerment and reducing feminized poverty. It would be of interest to learn what specific measures were in place to prevent gender bias and stereotypes from limiting women's economic opportunities and how the Government was increasing women's digital literacy and tackling barriers to women's equal access to digital tools in order to bridge the digital gender gap. She wondered how the traditional savings practice, known as *tontine*, was leveraged to alleviate women's poverty in rural areas and whether a gender perspective had been incorporated into the environmental and social impact assessment framework and criteria in order to encourage gender-responsive foreign direct investment. Statistical data on the size, location and types of credit loans, guarantees and public procurement contracts awarded to women over the past three years would be appreciated.

35. She would like to know how transparency and equity were assured in terms of access to aid or to agricultural and mutual credit union loans for women's cooperatives and associations and how information on those arrangements was disseminated to women in rural

areas. It would be useful to learn how women's awareness of their equal access to land rights had been raised and whether women's land ownership had increased since the previous review of a State party report. Could the delegation provide sex-disaggregated data in that regard?

36. She would also welcome information, including sex-disaggregated data, on the extent to which women, including women from vulnerable groups, such as informal-sector workers, widows, women with disabilities, older women and rural women, were beneficiaries of social protection, including pensions, healthcare, training and microfinance. Lastly, she would be curious to know how the State party encouraged the participation of women, including vulnerable women, in sports, how it promoted business investments in women's sport and how it empowered local councils to develop sports facilities and organize sports activities.

37. **A representative of Benin** said that there were various initiatives to help women launch income-generating activities. For example, in 2020, the innovative Alafia microcredit scheme had been introduced with the objective of promoting the financial inclusion of women and other vulnerable groups. Under the scheme, women could currently access to up to CFAF 100,000 in funding, which was distributed via digital payment services, thereby also facilitating their use of digital tools. Another example was a social protection programme aimed at improving the standard and availability of facilities providing social services and benefits to women, with a view to empowering and supporting the productive capacity of households. Regarding land rights, legislative reforms had eased women's access to rural land and to land ownership, thereby encouraging their participation in the agricultural sector.

38. **A representative of Benin** said that the Persons and Family Code and the Code on Private and State-owned Land enshrined women's right of access to land. The Codes established that women and men had an equal right to obtain access to land by inheritance. Under the Persons and Family Code, if a deceased spouse had children, the surviving spouse was entitled to inherit a quarter of the estate.

39. The Code on Private and State-owned Land provided for women's right to participate in land management bodies at the communal and village levels. When there was a dispute over access to land, the presence of women on such bodies allowed them to defend women's interests. Attitudes that held that women should not access or inherit land had disappeared, as had the requirement for women to have a male witness if they wished to buy a plot of land. Women who formed agricultural cooperatives gained access to financial assistance with which to carry out their projects.

40. **A representative of Benin** said that the Government had established the Guarantee Fund for the Empowerment of Women, which facilitated access to financing for women entrepreneurs and farmers. Women's enhanced access to credit and markets had enabled many of them to increase their incomes, which had consequently had a positive impact on their families and communities.

41. Training and awareness-raising activities had boosted women's confidence in their entrepreneurial abilities and enabled them to play more active roles in their communities. Women's increased participation in a number of economic sectors had contributed to the diversification of the Beninese economy and had increased its resilience to economic shocks.

42. Women were now becoming involved in income-generating activities, such as market gardening, that they would not necessarily have considered in the past. Plans were in place to promote women's entry into poultry farming and to thus reduce the country's dependence on imports. The additional income generated by women had improved their children's access to education and healthcare and had therefore had a positive impact on the development of future generations.

43. **Ms. González Ferrer** said that she wished to know what was being done to improve the maternal mortality rate in rural areas.

44. **Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia** asked whether women entrepreneurs were equipped with online payment devices and whether a land registry had been established. She wondered what proportion of land was owned by women and what proportion of the credit allocated in Benin had been granted to women. In particular, it would be interesting to know what the credit

allocated from the Guarantee Fund for the Empowerment of Women represented as a proportion of the overall amount of credit extended in the country.

45. **The Chair** said that, in view of the lack of time, the answers to the follow-up questions should be provided in writing.

46. **Ms. Akia** said that she wished to know what the State party was doing to increase the incomes of women farmers and to enable them to make the transition from subsistence farming to market-oriented farming. She wondered what measures were being taken to support women involved in the blue economy.

47. The Committee would welcome disaggregated data on the number of women prisoners in Benin, including information on the offences that they had committed. It would also appreciate information on the situation of women prisoners and their conditions of detention. It would be useful to know what proportion of women prisoners were aware of the legal procedures for challenging the lawfulness of their detention and what proportion had access to lawyers and family visits.

48. She would like to know how the State party incorporated gender-responsive climate financing into its national budget in order to build climate resilience, create social and economic infrastructure and address the specific needs of all women, especially rural women, women living in slums, women with disabilities, refugees, and asylum-seeking and migrant women.

49. It would be interesting to hear about any steps taken to increase access to reliable electricity and clean energy for all women, including rural women, women in slums, women with disabilities, women living in poverty and older women. How many women, including women with disabilities, older women and rural women, were participating meaningfully in decision-making mechanisms relating to climate change and disaster risk management?

50. **A representative of Benin** said that healthcare in women's prisons had improved significantly. Women prisoners now had access to general consultations and specialized examinations. In March 2024, for example, over 90 per cent of women prisoners had been screened for breast cancer.

51. Prisoners received two meals per day, and the nutritional quality of the meals was monitored by the National Nutrition Agency. Incarcerated mothers were able to live with their children for a certain time or could opt to have them placed in a centre or with a family.

52. Under the National Electrification Plan, a regulatory framework for off-grid electrification had been established for the benefit of disadvantaged groups. The framework provided for the development of small-scale photovoltaic networks and domestic solar kits that were distributed to households, particularly in rural areas. Five developers had established 35 small-scale solar plants that powered 3,500 households in rural areas. Using a system of results-based financing, households had been given access to domestic solar kits with which to power their homes.

53. The Ministry of Energy, Water and Mines had taken measures to develop women's skills in the energy sector. The Ministry had drawn up a document setting out gender quotas for the sector in 2024, which would make it possible to set targets for women's participation in the workforce. With regard to women's participation in decisions relating to climate change, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance was taking measures to ensure that all government agencies established gender-sensitive policies to tackle problems caused by climate change. Women were given training in the use of online payment mechanisms, and women who had digital payment devices received money directly from the relevant government agencies.

Articles 15 and 16

54. **Ms. González Ferrer** said that she wished to know what was being done to strengthen the implementation of the Convention and the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol) by government departments, law enforcement bodies and the justice system in order to ensure that they dealt effectively with family law cases. She wondered what measures were taken to enforce the minimum age for marriage, which was 18 years, in

all parts of the country and for all types of unions, including traditional and religious marriages. The Committee would welcome information on any steps taken to penalize parents or guardians who allowed early marriages to take place. It would be interesting to hear about any action taken to eliminate polygamy. Had any studies been conducted of polygamy's negative consequences for women?

55. She was curious to find out whether judges were made aware of the difficulties that women faced if they wished to get divorced, which included high costs and the possibility of being socially stigmatized, and whether measures were taken to ensure women's right to obtain custody of children on an equal footing with men following a divorce.

56. It would be useful to know what steps had been taken to prevent, investigate and punish the forced marriage of women who were lesbian, bisexual, transgender or intersex and to raise awareness of the harmful effects of so-called corrective rape or conversion therapy within families. Were any plans in place to legally recognize same-sex marriages and partnerships?

57. **A representative of Benin** said that the measures taken to combat child marriage included the development of the National Child Protection Policy, which set out the broad guidelines for actions to protect and promote children's rights. In line with the Policy, a national child protection committee had been set up to promote the implementation of child protection measures at the local, departmental and national levels. The Government had also set up village and school watch committees in each village to issue alerts about child marriage and to raise awareness of the problem. The Government frequently engaged with the departmental authorities in its efforts to combat child marriage. Steps were taken to involve religious leaders and opinion influencers in campaigns to raise awareness of the offence, especially in areas where it was more prevalent.

58. The Government had developed and implemented a minimum package of child protection measures and guidelines to promote dialogue between parents and children. Scholarships were awarded to girls undertaking specialized, technical or vocational training. In order to prevent child marriage, access to primary education had been improved, especially for girls. The Government, with technical and financial support from the United Nations Children's Fund, had launched a social safety net project to keep children in school.

59. **A representative of Benin** said that legal clinics in the country's regions staged mock trials involving all the stakeholders in the chain of care for victims of gender-based violence. To spread awareness of the problem, members of the public were invited to watch the mock trials. Religious and traditional leaders were increasingly involved in discussions about ways to curb harmful traditional practices.

60. The National Institute for Women had recently carried out a study of widowhood and the practice of levirate marriage. Religious and traditional leaders had participated in gathering data for the study and in the validation phase. The study had resulted in the development of a number of recommendations that the Government intended to implement. The document setting out the standard operating procedures for preventing gender-based violence and supporting its victims had been revised and updated to ensure that it covered the services offered by the National Institute for Women.

61. Women and girls in universities and schools were increasingly vocal in their condemnation of gender-based violence and ever more willing to file complaints if they were subjected to it. Parents contacted the National Institute for Women to file complaints on behalf of their daughters. Court rulings issued against teachers who had committed acts of sexual harassment in schools would deter other teachers from engaging in such acts.

62. Polygamy was legally prohibited. A man might establish informal unions with more than one woman, but he could not legally marry more than one. No studies of polygamy had been carried out. Efforts were made to protect the rights of women in informal unions by ensuring that they were able to file complaints with community-based bodies or the courts. The Maputo Protocol and the Convention had been incorporated into national law and took precedence over it in certain cases.

63. Although the laws governing marriage and divorce were very clear, it would be necessary to expedite court proceedings to ensure the protection of women's rights in a timely

manner. Efforts would be made to bring cultural and traditional practices into alignment with the laws in force. In so doing, the Government would engage with communities to avoid creating social conflict.

64. The Government was determined to implement all of the State party's international commitments, in particular to enforce provisions on the rights of women and girls and to transpose the Convention into domestic law. It would seek the public's buy-in to carry out proposed changes and transformations to bring about social change so as to uphold the rights of women, and it welcomed any recommendations the Committee could make to assist it in that endeavour.

65. **The Chair** said that she wished to thank the delegation for the constructive dialogue with the Committee.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.