



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

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

**Summary record of the 2012th meeting**

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 17 October 2023, 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*)

*Ninth periodic report of France (continued)* ([CEDAW/C/FRA/9](#);  
[CEDAW/C/FRA/Q/9](#); [CEDAW/C/FRA/RQ/9](#))

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of France joined the meeting.*
2. **The Chair** invited the members of the Committee to continue with their follow-up questions to the delegation.
3. **Ms. Leinarte**, noting that, notwithstanding the 2016 Act on strengthening action to combat the prostitution system and support prostitutes, there was a growing number of underage girls involved in prostitution, said that she would like to know what the delegation thought might be the root causes of the phenomenon and how the State party intended to deal with it, in particular during the forthcoming Olympic Games, to be held in Paris.
4. She understood that French sex workers had submitted a legal case complaining of discrimination before the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. She would like to know the current status of the case.
5. **A representative of France** said that the number of minors who were victims of all forms of trafficking had doubled between 2016 and 2021, rising to 500, while the number who were victims of pimping had almost doubled, to stand at around 300 in 2021. Civil society organizations estimated the number of prostitutes who were minors at between 7,000 and 10,000. A special office had been created within the Central Office for the Repression of Human Trafficking for the Purposes of Sexual Exploitation to attempt through social media to track such activities, and the Office had been granted 80 additional posts focusing specifically on situations involving minors. A special interdisciplinary training plan was to be rolled out under a road map to combat the prostitution system and trafficking, with priority given to training local child protection officers. The child protection services and the Ministry of Justice had jointly financed a safe shelter for child victims of trafficking and the various ministries concerned were working with civil society to set up shelters for them.
6. **Ms. Couillard** (France) said that the Government did not believe in legalizing a system of prostitution; it placed priority on the protection of women who were victims of such systems. It would stick to its abolitionist position.
7. **A representative of France** said that a commission to combat prostitution, pimping and human trafficking had been set up in Mayotte in March 2021. Its brief was to draft and implement strategic guidelines to coordinate all action in support of victims. In July 2023 an interministerial committee for the overseas territories had discussed drafting a bill for the department of Mayotte, defining a strategy for children, to be administered by the State Secretariat for Children, and providing for an on-site study visit to look into means of funding social assistance for children and mothers and for child protection.
8. **Ms. Stott Despoja** said that she would like to know how many companies had appointed a focal point to combat harassment and sexism in the workplace. She would like to know whether a budget had been allocated for implementation of the 2021–2023 framework agreement to promote women’s entrepreneurship and if so, what sums were involved. She would also appreciate information on the numbers of women participating in programmes under that framework and on the outcomes achieved to date.
9. Noting that, in a recent report on the State party’s feminist foreign policy, the High Council for Gender Equality had made 18 recommendations on strategy for the future, she asked whether there were plans to implement those recommendations.
10. Notwithstanding the gender parity laws for political parties, a 2017 study had found that in the Parliament women had taken the floor only 4 per cent of the time, and in 2022 the overwhelming majority of ministerial portfolios were held by men. She would like to know what plans the State party had to increase women’s visibility and decision-making power in politics, with particular reference to women from groups that were traditionally underrepresented.

11. Her impression was that enforcement of the parity laws had been substandard. The fines that were imposed were very small. She would appreciate hearing the delegation's assessment of the laws' effectiveness. Given that women accounted for only around 20 per cent of local mayors and that women were severely underrepresented in municipalities with fewer than 1,000 inhabitants, where parity rules did not apply, she wondered whether the State party intended to extend quota laws to cover mayoral elections.

12. Lastly, she asked what mechanisms the State party had introduced to combat sexist violence in politics. The 2023 report of the High Council for Gender Equality on sexism in France had included recommendations calling for such measures.

13. **A representative of France** said that the framework agreement on support for women entrepreneurs had first been put in place in 2012 by Bpifrance, the public investment bank, and had since been extended to two more banks. The third framework agreement, for 2021 to 2023, was currently being evaluated, and a fourth was being prepared for 2024 to 2026. The agreement applied at the regional level and aimed to increase the financing available to women wishing to launch or purchase a company. It provided for various measures to improve women's access to public and private financing, notably through the interministerial gender equality plan known as the "Plan Toutes et Tous Égaux" (Women and men all equal), and also by actively countering gender-based stereotyping that caused investors and institutions to doubt the ability of women to set up and run businesses. In addition, in line with the Act of 24 December 2021 aimed at accelerating economic and professional equality, known as the Rixain Act, a quota of 40 per cent had been set for female membership on the investment committees of Bpifrance in order to ensure more representative decision-making. Across all support and funding networks underwritten by Bpifrance, the State and local authorities, the number of women receiving support had increased by 17 per cent since 2019, to reach over 67,600, or 45 per cent of the total number of beneficiaries.

14. **Ms. Couillard** (France) said that, considering that women had only had the right to vote in France for 80 years, the country had made enormous progress in ensuring parity in public life. The first quota system for party lists had been introduced in 2000 and had been extended in 2013 to apply to municipalities of over 1,000 inhabitants. Women now accounted for over 42 per cent of municipal councillors, over 48 per cent of the members of regional councils and 50 per cent of departmental councillors.

15. Admittedly, only around one fifth to one quarter of mayors were women. The rate varied among municipalities of different sizes. The mayor was effectively the head of a party list, and it was not easy to insist that the head of a list had to be female.

16. In parliamentary elections there was now a requirement of gender parity on the party lists, and a significant amount of funding was withheld from parties that failed to comply. The penalties were possibly still too low, since some parties simply agreed to pay them. Strict parity was also designed to ensure that parties did not simply place women at the head of lists in unwinnable constituencies. France had had a woman Prime Minister since 2022, and the composition of all its Governments since 2012 had demonstrated gender parity.

17. **Ms. Mikko** said that she wished to draw attention to the Belgian system, whereby parties were required to list men and women in strict alternation, and lists were cut off once alternation could not be maintained.

18. **Ms. Xia** said that she wished to commend the State party on its implementation of the 2023–2027 Gender Equality Plan and on the Hypatia Project to promote girls' and women's access to education in the field of digital technology, which was intended to support 10,000 young women in overcoming obstacles to learning in that field. She would like to know whether the Government intended to provide employment support for those women after graduation and whether it had conducted an evaluation of the Project. Did it plan to continue the project?

19. Referring to the plan to combat violence against children and the "No to Harassment" programme, she asked whether the perpetrators of bullying and harassment were effectively punished. Did the State party have statistics on the assistance provided to girls who had suffered from violence at school?

20. She had learned about the implementation of the 2017–2030 national sexual health strategy, she would be interested to hear about any measures planned by the Sex Education Working Group for the future.

21. **Mr. Safarov** said that several of the recommendations made by the Committee in its previous concluding observations had not yet been implemented by the State party, notably the recommendations addressing limited access to the labour market by migrant, refugee, asylum-seeking and Roma women, as well as women belonging to other minority groups and women with disabilities; the situation of women in part-time and low-paid jobs; and a call for the ratification of the International Labour Organization Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189).

22. He would like to know what measures the State party planned to adopt to prevent discrimination in the labour market against migrant women, women belonging to national and religious minorities, women with disabilities, African women and women of African descent. He asked whether Muslim women were required to observe a dress code in the workplace.

23. He would appreciate receiving information on legislation on sexual harassment in the workplace and its implementation, as well as statistics on girls and children participating in the informal labour market. Noting that only 600 men had availed themselves of paternity leave in 2022, he asked whether there was a problem with the implementation of that entitlement and how beneficiaries were paid.

24. **Ms. Couillard** (France) said that her Government was anxious to ensure that women found their place in the occupations of the future, for example in the ecological transition sector, but also in the digital sector, where it was women's jobs that were most at risk of being replaced by artificial intelligence. Given that there were likely to be 400,000 jobs in such sectors, the "Tech pour toutes" (Tech for all women and girls) project, designed to help prepare 10,000 women for such occupations, would hardly cover the needs. However, internships were also available to enable younger women to train in coding and programming, and more were planned.

25. The Government had recently launched an interministerial plan on an unprecedented scale to tackle the problem of harassment and bullying, both at school and beyond the school gates. The aim was 100 per cent prevention, 100 per cent detection and 100 per cent resolution.

26. Inspired by the experience of certain neighbouring countries, France was also planning to institute empathy training classes at every primary school in order to help children learn to share their emotions and to respect others. A pilot project involving one school in each department was to begin in January 2024, and there were plans to roll out the syllabus in all schools in September 2024.

27. At the secondary level, there was already a legal obligation to provide three two-hour sessions on the theme of relationships and sexuality, but implementation of the sessions was uneven. That was in part attributable to the fact that teachers lacked training, but also, depending on the area, to the fact that not all schools were willing to offer such courses and not all parents were keen for their children to attend. In addition, the courses were run by civil society associations, with content that varied from place to place. Accordingly, the Government had decided to fully implement the law by providing training for teachers and setting up a uniform syllabus, to be prepared by the Higher Council on the Curriculum, to ensure that all secondary schoolchildren across the country received training to ensure healthy relationships and sex education.

28. **A representative of France** said that, as part of the Government's efforts to combat bullying in schools, it planned to establish a 10-hour awareness-raising course for students in all schools, and networks of anti-bullying ambassadors at each school. It was also planning to launch a large-scale training programme to ensure that by 2027 all teaching staff in the public education system would be trained in issues relating to bullying and cyberbullying.

29. A network of dedicated staff was being set up to support the anti-bullying policy at all levels of the education system. Where prevention was concerned, steps were being taken to develop empathy classes in schools, on the basis of the Danish model, and to enhance

students' other psychosocial skills. Those measures would be implemented in all schools from the start of the 2024 school year.

30. With regard to the detection and reporting of bullying, a dedicated hotline had been set up to receive complaints from students and parents who might be unable to raise the matter in school. On 9 November 2023, a survey on bullying would be launched for all pupils and a national day to combat bullying would henceforth be held on that date every year.

31. The Government was establishing new disciplinary measures to deal with the most serious cases of bullying. At primary schools, for instance, it would be students who committed acts of bullying, rather than victims, who would be moved to another school. On the digital front, a bill had been developed to regulate online spaces and punish students who perpetrated cyberbullying. When the bill became law it would be possible to ban students from certain social networks.

32. **Ms. Couillard** (France) said that the gender pay gap currently stood at 25 per cent overall and at over 4 per cent for work of equal value. The professional equality index, which was a tool for assessing gender equality within companies, had been established in 2017 to facilitate the task of reducing the gender pay gap. Since the establishment of the index, the gap had fallen from 5.7 per cent to 4.2 per cent. It would now be necessary to implement a proactive policy to support women working in undervalued jobs, to protect women against enforced part-time work and to assist women who gave up work to look after a child. Efforts would be made to provide childcare for women in all parts of the country and to review the method used to calculate the professional equality index. A proactive job creation policy would also be implemented. The Government did not recognize the legitimacy of the Global Gender Gap Index 2023. It was not credible that France should be ranked in fortieth position when a number of countries with authoritarian Governments were ranked above it.

33. **A representative of France** said that the Government promoted access to employment for migrant and refugee women in two ways. Firstly, it equipped women's rights information centres with employment services that provided guidance and support to migrant women who wished to enter employment, undertake vocational training or start a business. Such services would be provided by the vast majority of women's rights information centres by the end of 2023. Secondly, it had established the AGIR programme, under which refugee women received comprehensive, individualized support in their efforts to find housing and employment. Nearly half of French departments currently had one-stop offices offering the programme. Since 2022, the programme had benefited almost 10,000 recipients of international protection.

34. **Mr. Safarov** said that it was still not clear whether any efforts had been made to assess the effectiveness of regulations and legislation in preventing sexual harassment in the workplace. The delegation might also state what proportion of women and girls were working in the informal sector.

35. **Ms. Haidar** said that she wished to know what steps would be taken to mainstream the gender perspective in biomedical research conducted by State and non-State actors and to ensure the sufficient inclusion of women in clinical trials. She wondered whether legislation would be adopted to guarantee the availability of a minimum number of health-care professionals willing to perform abortions both in mainland France and in the overseas territories. It would be interesting to hear about any measures taken to establish and regularly update regional directories of health-care professionals who performed abortions. The State party might indicate whether it intended to create a national directory of abortion services.

36. Noting that women were disproportionately affected by chlordecone, which was found in pesticides used in banana plantations in Guadeloupe and Martinique, she asked whether the State party intended to conduct research into the impact of chlordecone pollution on women's health and to provide redress and compensation to women victims of chlordecone contamination. Give the serious water shortage in Guadeloupe, the Committee would be interested to hear about any measures taken to provide that department with drinking water and to repair its water and sanitation systems. Lastly, she asked what the State party was doing to make health-care services accessible to women with disabilities, to train

health-care staff in their specific needs and to adapt health-care facilities to better address those needs.

37. **Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia** said that she wished to know whether any stimulus initiatives, policy measures or targeted funds were being used to promote women's and girls' participation in the sphere of technology, including artificial intelligence. She would welcome information on the implementation of the "Je choisis la French tech" (I choose French tech) initiative and the Parity Pact, including data on the range of support services provided, the number of beneficiary start-ups established to date and any challenges encountered and prospects for the future.

38. She wondered whether the State party would establish mentorship schemes with mandatory requirements to ensure that large companies provided assistance to women entrepreneurs and whether any corporations were implementing schemes to strengthen and support the expansion of companies that were owned or led by women. The Committee would be grateful to hear about any measures in place to promote gender-responsive procurement processes and to diversify supply schemes so that women could play a significant role in the procurement system.

39. The Committee would be interested to learn about any measures taken to mainstream the gender perspective in policies on culture and sports and whether incentives were awarded to the private sector to encourage it to promote women's participation in sports. It would like to hear about any measures taken to mainstream the gender perspective in the preparations for the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games, which the State party would be hosting.

40. She asked how policies pertaining to day care were implemented within public and private sector institutions, whether employers were subject to any mandatory requirements under those policies and, if so, how their compliance was monitored. She would be grateful for data on the number of private-sector companies that had signed up to day-care policies and the strategies adopted to change sociocultural attitudes towards benefiting from parental leave, which was sometimes seen as effeminate.

41. The State party might explain how the tax-share formula and the tax-capping policy were applied to single parents with dependents and what impact those mechanisms had on single mothers and women living on low incomes, including vulnerable and disadvantaged women living in rural areas and the overseas territories. What gender-responsive social benefits had been established for poor, vulnerable and marginalized women?

42. **A representative of France** said that the Government was implementing the National Strategy to Combat Endometriosis, which included activities that had been allocated €30 million of funding. More information on measures taken to promote women's health, including the conduct of relevant clinical trials, would be provided in writing.

43. **Ms. Couillard** (France) said that some women were required to travel long distances to access abortion services, particularly if they lived in rural areas or the overseas territories. The Government had retained a conscience clause in the legislation on abortion to prevent health-care professionals from being required to perform abortions if they did not wish to do so. Efforts were made to increase the number of professionals offering abortion services, including in rural areas. In that connection, the annual cap on the number of new medical students had been lifted. A register containing details of all medical facilities that performed abortions would be established. The Government had invested tens of millions of euros to repair and improve the water mains system in Guadeloupe, which had degraded pipes and a high level of wastage. Efforts were being made to restore acceptable levels of service as soon as possible.

44. **A representative of France** said that the interministerial equality plan known as the "Plan Toutes et Tous Égaux" addressed the goal of diversifying career opportunities for women in the digital sector, the industrial sector and other areas. With regard to vocational training, efforts would be made to promote equal access to all training courses under that plan. Measures were being taken to mainstream the gender perspective in the Council for Occupational Development, to strengthen women's digital skills, including those of women jobseekers and to improve employment service officials' ability to identify training gaps and opportunities for women. Following the adoption in 2018 of a law guaranteeing freedom of

choice in employment, training centres for apprentices had been given a number of new missions, including two relating to equality and the fight against discrimination.

45. **A representative of France** said that both maternal and neonatal mortality rates were significantly higher in the overseas territories than in mainland France. Life expectancy was lower in the overseas territories and the prevalence of chronic conditions such as diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular disease was higher. Teenage pregnancy and abortion rates were also significantly higher in the overseas territories. In order to address those problems, women's health care in the overseas territories had been prioritized in several ministerial plans, including the road map for the first 1,000 days of a child's life, the interministerial equality plan and the Solidarity Pact.

46. Women were entitled to an early prenatal consultation and to an early postnatal consultation to help detect post-partum depression. A national survey on prenatal care conducted in 2021 had shown that levels of prenatal care were improving as a result of the measures taken, which included a scheme to provide accommodation to pregnant women who lived more than 45 minutes away from a maternity hospital and a number of specific regional schemes.

47. **A representative of France** said that the fight against the effects of chlordecone pollution in the overseas territories represented a major environmental, agricultural, economic and social health challenge for the Government. Since 2018, when the President had made a statement acknowledging the State's share of responsibility for the problem, a wide range of measures had been put in place to deal with the consequences of chlordecone contamination. Firstly, epidemiological studies on the effects of chlordecone on women and children had been carried out and measures had been taken to reduce blood chlordecone levels among the members of the communities concerned. In Guadeloupe, pregnant women had received specialized care for the effects of chlordecone; in Martinique a campaign had been carried out to screen workers for the effects of contamination. In 2021 and 2022, 250 health-care professionals had been trained to deal with chlordecone-related problems.

48. **A representative of France** said that the Minister for Sport and the Olympic and Paralympic Games was implementing a number of measures to improve access to sport for women and girls. The range of sports made available to girls in middle school was being expanded, a plan for the development of new sports facilities, including inclusive school playgrounds, would be implemented and a greater number of international women's sporting events would be broadcast on the national media. Steps would also be taken to improve the maternal care provided to elite sportswomen.

49. **Ms. Couillard** (France) said that measures had been taken to increase the length of paid maternity leave, including for self-employed women, and to grant the right to maternity leave to women farmers. Men were now entitled to take 28 days of paternity leave, which enabled them to participate more in domestic tasks and to be more present during and after the birth of their children.

50. **A representative of France** said that it was mandatory for fathers to take the first 7 days of the 28-days of paternity leave allocated to them. They could also opt to postpone the start of their paternity leave so that they could take it at the most appropriate time. The reforms made to paternity leave had greatly increased the proportion of fathers who claimed such leave and the length of time that they spent off work. The Government now faced the considerable challenge of improving the availability and conditions of parental leave. Only the previous day, the Prime Minister had proposed that parental leave should be better compensated to make it easier for parents to take it as and when they chose. A consultation process on parental leave would be conducted with family associations and other stakeholders over the coming months.

51. **Ms. Haidar** said that she would welcome further information on the outcome of any research conducted into the effects of chlordecone on women and girls and any steps taken to provide compensation to women affected by chlordecone contamination.

52. **Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia** said that it was still not clear what social benefits were available to vulnerable and marginalized women and whether they benefited from the tax-share formula and the tax-capping policy. She wondered how the family quotient system

provided for by the Tax Code affected interpersonal relations within marriage and whether any studies had been taken to assess its effects, particularly on married women in vulnerable situations.

53. **The Chair** said that she wished to know whether the forced sterilization of women with disabilities would be prohibited and whether victims of that procedure would receive compensation.

54. **Ms. Couillard** said that forced sterilization was a criminal offence under the Criminal Code. Legislation governing the practice was strictly enforced.

55. **A representative of France** said that tubal or vas deferens ligation for contraceptive purposes was governed by Act No. 2001-588 of 4 July 2001 on voluntary termination of pregnancy and contraception. It was strictly regulated and prohibited for minors under the Public Health Code; it could be applied to adults placed under guardianship due to mental impairment only when other contraceptive methods were unusable. For persons under guardianship, such interventions were subject to a decision by the guardianship judge, which was taken by the judge after hearing the person concerned and the person's legal representative. However, it could be difficult to ensure the free and informed consent of persons with disabilities, particularly in cases involving mental disability. If they were able to express their wishes, their informed consent had to be sought and taken into account after they had received information adapted to their level of understanding. Their refusal or revocation of consent could not be overridden. As part of the 2023–2027 interministerial gender equality plan, work was under way to raise awareness among health-care professionals of the need to obtain informed consent from women with disabilities for contraceptive procedures.

56. **A representative of France** said that some of the examples of State support for single-parent families included a system of progressive taxation that took family composition into account, thus increasing the weighting attributed to children in single-parent families and the corresponding tax allowance entitlements, and a substantial increase in the minimum benefit payment received by single parents with no other income. The latter entitlement started from the beginning of pregnancy and continued during the child's early years.

57. **Ms. de Silva de Alwis**, noting that the State party had brought charges against the alleged abductor of the Syrian human rights defender Razan Zaitouneh, said that she would like to know whether efforts had been made to support any other women human rights defenders and journalists, especially those working in the face of ongoing crisis and conflict.

58. She wished to know how Act No. 2017-399 of 27 March 2017 on the duty of care of parent companies and contracting companies was applied in the mining, mineral and extractive industries in rural France and the overseas territories and what impact its application in those industries had on the human rights of women.

59. She wondered whether the universalism which was enshrined in the Constitution and informed the prohibition covering the collection of ethnic and religious statistics had an impact on the collection of data relating to underrepresented women. Perhaps the concept of universalism could be reinterpreted so that their situation could be better addressed. Information about any measures taken to advance female leadership in agriculture, including in rural overseas territories, would be welcome.

60. It would be interesting to know how the 2023 pension reform, the aims of which included redistributing funds in women's favour, would impact rural women. She hoped that the State party would develop an impact assessment on the application of its social security financing legislation, which had been extended in 2019 to cover female farmers and self-employed women, and would provide the Committee with further information on that subject.

61. She would appreciate information about any special measures taken to facilitate the participation of women with disabilities in the economy and wondered how the Labour Code, which prohibited sexist behaviour affecting the dignity of an employee or creating a humiliating work environment, was applied in practice to women with disabilities and migrant women. The Committee would like to know whether the State party would consider

conducting a scientific study into the consequences that nuclear testing had had on women in French Polynesia and the impact in terms of birth defects and resulting disabilities.

62. **Ms. Hacker** said that she would like to know whether the State party recognized child marriage, forced marriage and polygamy when such unions were concluded in other countries; how that recognition or lack thereof affected the girls and women involved; and whether social workers and police officers were trained to deal with cases involving such marriages. She wondered whether statistical data were collected and analysed on criminal charges relating to such marriages. The Committee would like to find out how the State party supported the Association Voix de femmes non-governmental organization and the women and girls who called its SOS Mariage forcé hotline for victims of forced marriage; how many calls the hotline received each year; whether the education system was involved in tracing cases of child marriage; and whether there was also a hotline for reporting cases of polygamy. It would be helpful to know what services were provided to immigrant women who were victims of customary child marriage, forced marriage or polygamy concluded in their countries of origin or in third countries. She would appreciate it if the delegation could provide any data supporting the State party's claim that raising awareness about women's rights and the plan to combat female genital mutilation had had a positive effect, reflected in statistics showing decreases in the numbers of forced and early marriages. She wondered whether female asylum-seekers were adversely affected by the State party's prohibition of polygamy. For example, how were the cases of second and subsequent wives seeking refuge in France processed?

63. She wished to know whether mediation was approved within the judicial system in cases of domestic violence. If so, what training on domestic violence was provided to mediators and judges, and how were the rights of victims protected in the mediation process? It would be useful to find out whether any investigations had been conducted into the possibility that family court and mediation procedures might contribute to the fact that so many female-headed single-parent households lived below the poverty line. Lastly, she would like to know whether the past division of labour between parents was taken into consideration in disputes over custody and child support. If that was the case, were child support orders issued promptly and enforced, and what happened when fathers failed to comply with such orders?

64. **A representative of France** said that the promotion of human rights defenders was a priority for the Government, which, together with the Government of Germany, awarded the annual Franco-German Prize for Human Rights and the Rule of Law to human rights defenders. It also awarded the annual Simone Veil Prize of the French Republic to women around the world who were committed to improving the status of women and girls. In addition, the first year of the recently launched Marianne Initiative for Human Rights Defenders had been dedicated to women working in the same field.

65. **A representative of France** said that the collection and processing in administrative files of sensitive data, including references to people's ethnic and racial origin, were indeed prohibited. However, that rule was subject to exceptions made in the interest of scientific or historical research or for statistical purposes, and the collection of objective data was permitted. That allowed a great deal of information about peoples' origins to be collected, including for example the place of birth of persons residing in France and of their parents. The resulting data could then be used to identify as immigrants persons born abroad, which in turn helped the Government to closely monitor the different situations experienced by immigrants and non-immigrants, for example in the labour market. The National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) had issued numerous works on the subject, including a study published in 2023 on immigrants and descendants of immigrants and a statistical survey on personal trajectories and origins, which took into account the subjective assessments of respondents while avoiding ethnic and racial references. Testing operations were also used as a means to directly measure discrimination faced by certain groups, such as female immigrants, in the labour or housing markets.

66. While unemployment statistics indicating that 10.9 per cent of women with disabilities were unemployed were alarming, women with disabilities were in a marginally more favourable situation than men with disabilities, whose unemployment rate stood at 13.2 per cent.

67. While there was a significant gap in pension benefits received by men and women, the improvement in the relative situation and participation of women in the labour market over recent decades was having a positive impact on new pensions that were being paid out. The independent Pensions Advisory Council predicted that pension payments for men and women would converge over the coming decades. Action to improve the situation of women in retirement included long-standing provisions, such as the allocation of increased insurance periods and pension insurance for stay-at-home parents, which were designed to make up for gaps in insurance contributions resulting from temporary absences from the labour market, for example when bringing up children. The recent pension reform applied equally to men and women. However, it included measures, such as increases in both the minimum monthly benefit granted to low-income pensioners and the contributory pension minimum, which would be of greater benefit to women, who often had lower pension entitlements.

68. **Ms. Couillard** said that the Government did not have an agricultural policy that applied specifically to the overseas territories. However, it was pursuing a global policy to make farming more attractive, provide more support for the profession and ensure that more women took on responsibility for farms, including as farm managers. Many farmers were reaching retirement age and the number of farms was dropping. The period of maternity leave that could be taken by female farmers had been extended, and the National Federation of Farmers' Unions had set up a working group dedicated to helping the country's 106,000 female farmers and farm managers stay in farming and to encouraging more women to enter the field.

69. **A representative of France** said that polygamy was prohibited in France. Therefore, in accordance with the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, any second and subsequent wives of refugees were not granted protection directly linked to that of the refugee under the principle of family unity. However, the right to asylum was a fundamental right, and additional spouses could file individual asylum applications.

70. **Ms. de Silva de Alwis** said that she wished to know how the State party provided ongoing protection and support to female human rights defenders after they were named by the Marianne Initiative for Human Rights Defenders. The recognition they received on the global stage often gave way to an authoritarian backlash in their home countries.

71. **Ms. Hacker** said that she would be interested to know whether old age left women in France at risk of poverty and how quality care was ensured for older women. France had high life expectancy and on average women lived six years longer than men.

72. **A representative of France** said that the Government had an ambitious policy for older persons and that, given demographic trends, two thirds of its beneficiaries would be women. The number of places in retirement homes had increased. In addition, a policy shift had taken place to accommodate the preference of many older persons, especially women, to continue to live at home into old age. To provide them with services, the policy for older persons looked beyond the sheltered housing stock and delivered support and care services at people's homes in order to help them maintain their autonomy even when they were dependent on assistance. A new fund had been set up within the social security system to help roll out the new policy.

73. **A representative of France** said that, as part of the Marianne Initiative for Human Rights Defenders, the Government had offered refuge in France, material support, ongoing guidance, training and networking assistance to human rights defenders in Afghanistan who were under threat owing to their work. Three Afghan winners of the Initiative had already benefited from the programme.

74. **Mr. Bonnafont** (France) said that the Marianne Initiative for Human Rights Defenders provided female human rights defenders with training and tools enabling them to be more effective in their work. The defenders' consent to be associated with the award was fundamental and was based on their assessment that they would be better protected with it than without. If on the other hand a woman decided that the visibility it would offer might expose her to greater danger, her choice of discretion was respected. The country's embassies were responsible for providing ongoing follow-up to recipients of the award who, if under threat, could be granted visas enabling them to seek protection more easily in France.

*The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.*