



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

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## Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Eighty-eighth session

### Summary record of the 2071st meeting\*

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 21 May 2024, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Peláez Narváez

## Contents

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

*Sixth periodic report of Kuwait*

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\* No summary records were issued for the 2069th and 2070th meetings.

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

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

*Sixth periodic report of Kuwait (CEDAW/C/KWT/6; CEDAW/C/KWT/Q/6; CEDAW/C/KWT/RQ/6)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Kuwait joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Kuwait**, introducing the sixth periodic report of Kuwait (CEDAW/C/KWT/6), said that his delegation looked forward to engaging in a constructive dialogue with the Committee, whose previous observations and recommendations had been of great benefit to his country. The current dialogue was being held just days after the celebration of Kuwaiti Women’s Day, on 16 May, which commemorated the day that Kuwaiti women had gained the right to vote and to stand for national office. Kuwaiti women represented 58 per cent of the national workforce – 48 per cent of workers in the private sector and 60 per cent in the public sector – and played an important role in the economic development and advancement of the country.
3. Kuwait had acceded to the Convention in 1994, in line with the firm belief that women’s rights should be equal to men’s, all forms of injustice and discrimination against women should be eliminated and the role of women in society should be promoted. In accordance with article 70 of the Constitution, which stated that a treaty had the force of law after it was signed, ratified and published in the Official Gazette, the Convention was now part of national law and all State authorities, including the judiciary, were obliged to comply with its provisions.
4. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic had proved a highly challenging time for Kuwait and had hindered the implementation of many of the Committee’s previous recommendations. Among its response measures, the Government had provided vaccinations to all residents of Kuwait without discrimination, and women had been a main priority throughout the pandemic. The sixth periodic report had been drafted during that time, despite the challenges faced, following virtual consultations with the national human rights institution and civil society organizations.
5. The promotion of women’s rights was of great importance in Kuwait and was enforced through the Constitution and national legislation, which had been informed by the teachings of sharia and long-standing Arab values. Kuwait was continuously endeavouring to develop a legislative system that was consistent with the latest international developments to promote the rights of women.
6. He wished to outline some developments in his country, particularly relating to cooperation with international organizations. Eager to strengthen its relationship with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Government had welcomed the request by the High Commissioner to visit Kuwait in December 2024. Kuwait had benefited from the observations and recommendations of a number of special procedure mandate holders, including the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, who had conducted a study visit to Kuwait in May 2023 and would return on an official visit in November 2024.
7. A number of Kuwaiti women held high-ranking positions in international organizations, including Ms. Rola Dashti, Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), Ms. Rehab Boresli, member of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and Ms. Nabeela Almulla, member of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters. His Government had established a national committee to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security with the aim of promoting women’s empowerment. In addition, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had sponsored a regional conference on Arab women, peace and security in collaboration with the Kuwaiti Union for Women’s Associations, which had addressed the challenges currently facing women in the Arab region, including the situation in Gaza, and had been attended by representatives of international and civil society organizations.

8. As part of its voluntary pledges taken as a member of the Human Rights Council, the Government had held a meeting in January 2024 to discuss the Council's recommendations, including in relation to the empowerment of women and the provision of support for children, older persons and persons with disabilities. Civil society organizations had participated in the meeting, expressing views and giving recommendations. The Government continued to cooperate closely with such organizations, most recently on a forthcoming report on follow-up to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, to be issued in June. In fulfilment of the pledge made by Kuwait to the Human Rights Council to enhance cooperation with international organizations, his Government had organized a training workshop in collaboration with the OHCHR Regional Office of the Middle East and North Africa in May 2024 to discuss previous recommendations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. In 2024, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Deputy Secretary-General had made official visits to Kuwait, during which they had held discussions with leading Kuwaiti women.

9. At the national level, the Government had incorporated Sustainable Development Goal 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls into Kuwait Vision 2035 in the form of three specific objectives: combating discrimination and violence against women; creating an empowering environment for women entrepreneurship; and encouraging the appointment of women in leadership positions. A budget of \$2.5 million had been allocated for activities dedicated to the achievement of those objectives. In addition, a committee on women and business had been established, which included representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, Kuwait University and a number of civil society organizations, whose aim was to eliminate all obstacles for women in the business sector and to foster their empowerment. The committee's achievements included improving the country's classification in relevant international indices and bringing about Ministerial Decision No. 177 (2021) prohibiting discrimination in civil sector hiring and sexual harassment in the workplace.

10. As part of Government efforts to empower women in the private sector, the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development had launched a national initiative in which a number of chief executive officers of the country's major companies had participated. Representation of women in leadership positions in the banking sector stood at 26 per cent and, in the Central Bank of Kuwait, had reached 50 per cent. Women made up 35 per cent of the total workforce in the banking sector in Kuwait. As a result of the Government's efforts to empower women at the economic, social and political levels, the number of women in high-level positions in the country had doubled over the previous 10 years. Representation of women in key areas such as the diplomatic corps, the police, the judiciary and the oil sector had increased. Successive governments had included a high number of women among its ranks, a number of women had been elected as members of the National Assembly and, for the first time, four women had been appointed as members of the Municipal Council and a woman had been appointed Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defence. The proportion of women in leadership and supervisory roles at the Ministry of Defence stood at 47 per cent. In addition, representation of women on the boards of a number of private companies and public institutions had increased and women served in important roles in media, scientific research and other vital organizations. Seven Kuwaiti women had featured in a 2023 *Forbes* list of the most powerful and influential women in the Middle East.

11. The Ministry of Information was preparing programmes to raise awareness about the empowerment of women as part of efforts to end all forms of discrimination against women, including discriminatory stereotypes. In recent years, there had been marked improvement in the representation of women in leadership positions in the oil sector, which was the cornerstone of the country's economy. That had been in part thanks to the establishment of a diversity and inclusion council for the sector. Women held 12 per cent of leadership roles, including in engineering, research and marketing, and 18 per cent of board positions in the industry.

12. The Government attached great importance to empowering women to participate and excel in sport. Kuwait had a proud history of accomplishment in sport. One such achievement was the qualification of two Kuwaiti women as international referees for handball, which

was unprecedented in the Arab region. Kuwaiti women competing in the 2021 Islamic Solidarity Games had ranked highly. It was important to note that the Government dedicated efforts to encouraging the participation of persons with disabilities in sport.

13. *A video showing some of the accomplishments of Kuwaiti women was shown.*

*Articles 1–6*

14. **Ms. Haidar** said that the Committee welcomed the positive developments in the State party but noted that significant challenges to the achievement of gender parity remained.

15. She was concerned that the recent dissolution of the National Assembly on 10 May, just one month after the elections – marking the second dissolution of parliament in 2024 and the fourth since 2022 – would lead to political instability and hinder crucial reforms, including those aimed at improving the status of women. On the other hand, the current situation might present an opportunity to make necessary amendments to the Constitution and other legislation regarding gender equality.

16. The Kuwaiti Constitution stated that all people were equal in human dignity and therefore had equal public rights and obligations before the law, without distinction as to gender, origin, language or religion. That did not constitute a comprehensive definition of discrimination that included both direct and indirect discrimination, as required by article 1 of the Convention. She would be interested to learn whether the State party intended to amend its Constitution to include such a definition.

17. In the light of the delegation’s statement that treaties became part of the national law in the State party once they were promulgated, she would like to know whether the Convention had been invoked in the courts. She would appreciate further information about measures taken by the State party to raise awareness about the Convention and about the progress of the committee set up to review all legislation related to women. Had any legal reforms been initiated as a result of its work?

18. Regarding access to justice, the Committee noted that article 166 of the Constitution guaranteed the right to take part in court proceedings and article 163 guaranteed judicial independence. It would be helpful to hear about the free legal assistance services available for women in the State party.

19. The State party maintained its reservations to articles 9 (2), 16 (1) (f) and 29 (1) owing to conflicts with the Nationality Act and sharia. However, of the 57 States members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, 32 had ratified the Convention without reservations to articles 1 to 16. In view of the diverse interpretations of sharia, she wondered whether the State party might reconsider withdrawing its reservations to the Convention, or narrowing their scope. She also wondered whether the State party might reconsider ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

20. **A representative of Kuwait** said that the repeated dissolutions of parliament had been in keeping with the Constitution. Furthermore, the fact that the National Assembly was not sitting had not affected the process of national reform. New legislative proposals continued to be issued in the name of the Emir and would be reviewed by the National Assembly when it was next convened. Similarly, the decision of the Emir to suspend certain provisions of the Constitution had not had an adverse effect on the enjoyment of fundamental freedoms or rights in Kuwait. That measure had been designed to break the political impasse and promote reform and development in the country. The Emir had also recently issued a royal decree providing for the formation of a committee of experts tasked with reviewing the Constitution to address any shortcomings and preserve the unity and stability of the country. It had been established that the experts must conclude their work within six months, after which their proposals would be submitted to the Emir upon approval by the Council of Ministers. If adopted, the proposed constitutional changes would then be submitted either to a public referendum or to the parliament.

21. **A representative of Kuwait** said that her Government had exercised its sovereign right to issue reservations to the Convention. Those reservations remained in force, but they did not prevent Kuwait from proceeding with legislative reform, taking into account international treaties.

22. **A representative of Kuwait** said that the electoral law had been amended in 2023 to ensure that women enjoyed the right to stand for office and to vote on an equal basis with men. Constitutional Court ruling No. 56 of 2008 had recognized the right of women to travel by repealing article 15 of the Passports Act, No. 11 of 1962, under which a married woman had previously been able to obtain a separate passport only with her husband's consent.

23. **Ms. Akizuki** said that, although States parties were entitled to issue reservations to the Convention, it was established under article 28 (2) that all reservations must be compatible with the object and purpose of the Convention. Since the Committee considered article 16 to be a key provision of the Convention, she urged the State party to consider withdrawing its reservation to that article.

24. **Ms. Haidar** said that she hoped that the recently announced process of constitutional review would lead to positive reform. The review process certainly appeared to present a golden opportunity for the State party to introduce changes designed to strengthen the protection of women's rights. With that in mind, she wished to know whether any plans had been made to incorporate a comprehensive definition of direct and indirect discrimination into the Constitution.

25. With respect to its reservations to the Convention, it might be interesting for the State party to consider the cases of Egypt and Morocco. Those Governments had also made reservations at the time of ratification but, after aligning their legislation more closely with the Convention, they had been able to amend and ultimately withdraw their reservations. Concerning reservations and, more generally, areas of concern to the Committee such as the nationality law of Kuwait, it was important that the State party did not let social and cultural considerations stand in the way of its efforts to realize women's rights.

26. **A representative of Kuwait** said that the principles of equality and non-discrimination were established in the Constitution, thereby prohibiting all forms of direct and indirect discrimination, whether on the basis of gender or any other personal characteristic. Under Act No. 109 of 2014, all persons in Kuwait had the right to lodge an appeal before the Constitutional Court if a law or regulation violated some part of the Constitution, including the principles of equality and non-discrimination. With regard to the reservation to article 16 (1) (f) of the Convention, the interests of the child were always taken into account as a matter of priority in any decision regarding his or her guardianship.

27. **Ms. Morsy** said that she would welcome further information on the third development plan under the Kuwait Vision 2035 initiative for the period 2020–2025, including the role of women and women's groups in its adoption and implementation and consultations held with them in that regard, its provisions relating to gender equality and its impact on advancing women's human rights. She wished to know whether the State party had envisaged introducing a national action plan for the empowerment of women. It would also be useful to know whether it intended to establish a comprehensive strategy to strengthen gender equality and challenge stereotypes about women in accordance with Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, including by taking measures to achieve gender equality in the labour market in collaboration with the relevant authorities. She would like to know what steps had been taken to implement gender-responsive budgeting, including by providing government officials with training on that concept. The Committee would welcome further information on the steps taken to ensure the compliance of the national human rights institution with the Paris Principles and on the terms of reference of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs in relation to women's empowerment and gender equality. Clarification as to whether the State party planned to replace the Council with an independent, permanent committee on women's rights would also be of particular interest.

28. **Ms. Ameline** said that, since only 18 per cent of senior positions in the public sector were occupied by women, she would like to know whether the State party would consider adopting temporary special measures to address the underrepresentation of women in political and public life and what role the Supreme Council for Family Affairs was playing in reinforcing the political will to increase women's representation. She also wished to know what measures were planned to increase women's representation in other areas, particularly the financial and new technology sectors. In general, it would be important to place the goal of achieving equal gender representation at the heart of the constitutional and legislative

review process. She urged the Government to take advantage of that opportunity by establishing, in both the Constitution and legislation, a proactive strategy on gender representation, including the adoption of temporary special measures.

29. **A representative of Kuwait** said that the Supreme Council for Family Affairs was the national body responsible for overseeing all matters related to women. It ensured coordination between relevant State ministries and was responsible for formulating the implementing regulations for the laws on the rights of the child and on protection against domestic violence. The Supreme Council was currently carrying out research into possible measures to strengthen protection for victims of domestic violence, including through the use of shelters and protection centres. In that regard, it had issued guidelines on the provision of free services for victims by different State authorities. It was also tasked with developing regional and international cooperation on women's rights. For example, it had launched a project to improve the position of women in Kuwait in partnership with ESCWA.

30. **A representative of Kuwait** said that the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development had carried out a project to accelerate national implementation of Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme, Kuwait University and other partners from the private sector. Under the project, measures had been taken to enhance women's participation in political and public life, including through the organization of 27 training programmes on women's empowerment. Over US\$ 2 million had been invested in the project between 2017 and 2021, and the Government was preparing to launch a follow-up project under which it would receive an additional US\$ 3 million. As a result of the efforts undertaken, the implementation rate of Goal 5 currently stood at 53.8 per cent and Kuwait had climbed 10 places to 120th in the 2023 edition of the Global Gender Gap Index of the World Economic Forum.

31. **A representative of Kuwait** said that the national human rights institution was a fully independent body that carried out the functions conferred on it in Act No. 67 of 2015 without any interference.

32. **A representative of Kuwait** said that women were entitled to stand for office and many female politicians had held ministerial roles. There were two women ministers in the current Government and, out of a total of 14 female candidates, one woman had been elected to the National Assembly in the recent elections.

33. **Ms. Ameline** said that it was hard to imagine the State party progressing from one solitary female member of parliament to equal gender representation in public life without amending its electoral law. Proactive measures to that effect were needed to boost women's participation in public life and, thereby, send out a more positive image of the country to the rest of the world.

34. **Ms. de Silva de Alwis** said that a close inspection of Act No. 16 (2020) on protection from domestic violence revealed a number of shortcomings. It did not provide protection from violence perpetrated by former intimate partners or for women in relationships outside of marriage; women were required to present two male witnesses in order to report an act of domestic violence; and the legislation did not set out penalties for domestic violence as a standalone crime. She wished to know whether the State party intended to address those shortcomings and, if so, what time frame had been set for the necessary amendments. It would also be useful to know whether there were any plans to adopt a law on sexual harassment.

35. In recent years, a number of Arab States had passed progressive legislation to bring their domestic laws into line with the provisions of the Convention. For example, Saudi Arabia had raised the minimum age of marriage to 18 years and Egypt had criminalized female genital mutilation. Lebanon, Jordan and Tunisia, had abolished legislation allowing rapists to escape punishment by marrying their victims, and Lebanon and Jordan had abolished legislation providing for less serious penalties for so-called honour killings. She would therefore be interested to know whether the State party would consider following those examples by amending its legislation on harmful practices.

36. It was still claimed in certain quarters of the State party that feminist values concerning the emancipation of women ran counter to traditional family values. She would like to know what measures the State party intended to take to combat such stereotypes. It

would also be useful to know what steps would be taken to uphold the right of women human rights defenders to peaceful assembly.

37. **Ms. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen** said that she would be interested to know what measures the State party had taken to ensure that trafficking cases were prosecuted under Act No. 91 (2013) on human trafficking and migrant smuggling and not under other legislation providing for less severe penalties. It would also be useful to know whether the subject of trafficking was included in the national curriculum for lawyers. She wished to know what implementation period had been set for the national strategy to prevent human trafficking and migrant smuggling and why prosecution had not been established as one of the strategy's core components. It would be helpful to hear whether the activities undertaken under the strategy included the collection of data on investigations, prosecutions and convictions, and on the identification and sheltering of victims and the deportation of perpetrators. She would like to know whether implementation of the strategy had been evaluated and, if so, what results had been achieved. If not, she wondered how effective the strategy was deemed to have been, particularly in view of the recent decline in identified trafficking cases and prosecutions.

38. She would like to know whether the State party had a mandatory training programme to help police and immigrations officials identify indicators of trafficking in persons and whether data was available that could illustrate the effects of the national referral mechanism in terms of both successful prosecutions and the identification of trafficking victims. She wished to know what steps had been taken to prevent online transactions taking place in which human traffickers bought and sold workers. It would be interesting to know whether there were any plans to reform the *kafalah*, or sponsorship system. If not, she wondered how the State party planned to protect migrant domestic workers from abuse by the visa sponsors who required such workers to pay for visas without providing the necessary protections. She wished to know how many domestic workers who had sought refuge in the country's shelter for female migrants had been identified as victims of trafficking. Lastly, she wondered how the State party ensured that victims of sex trafficking were identified when anti-prostitution raids were carried out and whether the protection of those potential victims were covered by the national referral mechanism.

39. **A representative of Kuwait** said that the Ministry of Justice was using the legal instruments at its disposal to review child marriage legislation. Many challenges stood in the way of legislative changes. Some laws, especially those relating to the family, were based on religious beliefs and cultural values deeply rooted in society. Any amendments would require extensive research, consideration of the views of religious leaders, discussions with the relevant authorities and consultation with citizens of both sexes on the potential implications for family and marriage relations and benefits for children, women and men.

40. The practice of female genital mutilation did not exist in Kuwait and was prohibited, along with violations of bodily integrity, in the national legislation, including Act No. 21 (2015) on the Rights of the Child and Act No. 70 (2020) concerning the practice of medical and associated professions, patients' rights and health facilities.

41. **A representative of Kuwait** said that the article 182 of the Criminal Code on the marriage of a kidnapper with his victim did not relate to perpetrators of rape but rather the offence of kidnapping with intent to rape. However, if rape had been committed, the perpetrator would be held accountable and subjected to the relevant penalty.

42. There was a distinction in Kuwaiti law between premeditated murder and murder committed as a crime of passion. While perpetrators of the former were handed the harshest possible sentence, article 153 of the Criminal Code, which did not refer to honour killings *per se*, provided for mitigating circumstances in the case of murders committed as a crime of passion, for example if the perpetrator surprised someone in *flagrante delicto* in a case of adultery. It was probable, subject to support from the relevant authorities, that the legislation in question would be amended in the future.

43. **A representative of Kuwait** said that the Supreme Council for Family Affairs had set up a hotline for complaints of domestic violence. Statistics were collected on the number of complaints received by the police and civil society organizations concerned. The Council also received requests for family legal advice. Any victim who lodged a complaint or

requested family legal advice was entitled to free legal aid, which was provided, for example, through the three shelters run by the Council. Any person who put another person under pressure to retract a complaint of domestic violence was liable to punishment; such behaviour, and other obstacles to the reporting of cases, could be reported to civil society organizations or authorities acting under the Ministry of the Interior. A campaign supported by civil society organizations to raise awareness of domestic violence was being run in educational establishments and communicated to the public at large. It explained how cases of domestic violence could be recognized, reported and addressed. Female police officers had been trained to be points of contact in such cases.

44. **A representative of Kuwait** said that Act No. 91 (2013) on human trafficking and migrant smuggling had been fully implemented. Between 2020 and 2023, 113 complaints of trafficking in persons had been lodged with the Office of the Public Prosecutor. Of those, 18 were now awaiting trial before the courts and 22 had been ruled on by the courts. In total, 114 persons including nationals of Kuwait and foreign nationals had been charged. A specialized unit had been set up in the Office of the Public Prosecutor to deal with cases of trafficking in persons.

45. A committee to combat trafficking in persons had been set up under the Ministry of Justice to spearhead the country's new strategy in that area, which was to run from 2023 until 2028. The strategy focused on prevention, protection and criminal prosecution of perpetrators. The protection aspect prioritized providing support and assistance to victims of trafficking and streamlining the reporting of complaints by reducing the accompanying bureaucracy. Victims could call a dedicated hotline or contact the public prosecutor's office or relevant ministry. Complaints could be made confidentially, and attempts were being made to increase the number of reporting channels through the use of new technologies. A guide on filing complaints was currently being drafted to further streamline the process.

46. Awareness-raising activities were carried out to help victims lodging complaints of trafficking to avoid falling victim to other crimes. Victims of trafficking were also provided with compensation. Awareness-raising training workshops were held for persons in contact with victims of trafficking, for example workers in social welfare centres, to help them interact more effectively. Law enforcement officials and public prosecutors had also received specialized training to help them identify and eradicate human trafficking. Meanwhile, all civil servants in the relevant ministries had been trained in the application of the country's legislation combating trafficking in persons. Civil servants and officials responsible for tackling trafficking in persons attended courses organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. The Supreme Council of the Judiciary held training and awareness-raising workshops on human trafficking on an annual basis; attendance was mandatory for anyone working in the judicial field. Further compulsory workshops aimed particularly at judges had been attended by some 150 persons.

47. The Governments of Kuwait and Bahrain were finalizing a joint strategy aimed at tackling trafficking in persons. Kuwaiti representatives had recently visited Bahrain to exchange expertise and experience and coordinate efforts in that area.

48. **A representative of Kuwait** said that 28 staff members of the Public Workforce Authority were responsible for investigating reports of trafficking in persons and cases of abuse, including physical abuse, of workers of all nationalities. They ensured that all employees were paid the correct salary and provided with appropriate health care and health insurance. Employers against whom complaints were substantiated were prohibited from recruiting for six months and investigated further by the Ministry of Justice.

49. The shelter for abused workers had provided refuge to 33 persons trafficked for labour purposes in 2023. Victims of such trafficking had their employment contract suspended and could choose between receiving support in finding a credible replacement employer or assistance in returning to their country of origin. Ministerial Decision No. 22 (2022) related specifically to domestic workers and covered the issue of abuse. If an employer was found to have abused a domestic worker, the employment contract would be cancelled and a new employer found for the worker. The abuse could be in the form of sexual harassment or any other violation of the worker's honour or modesty, and cases could be referred to the courts under articles 198 and 199 of the Criminal Code.

50. **A representative of Kuwait** said that, with respect to the *kafalah* system, the granting of visas was subject to ongoing review. Act No. 17 (1959) and Ministerial Decision No. 957 (2019) set out the conditions for residence of foreign nationals in Kuwait. Foreign nationals, excluding the nationals of certain States granted exemptions by ministerial decision, were authorized to enter or exit the country only via official points of entry or departure and required permission to do so from the relevant government ministry.

51. **Ms. de Silva de Alwis** said that she would like to encourage the State party to consider revising the legal provision that allowed for mitigating circumstances in cases where crimes of passion were committed. She was also hopeful that comparative jurisprudence might be used to help the State party bring its legislation into closer alignment with the Convention. The inadequate number of shelters for victims of domestic violence in Kuwait, and the fact that the shelters that were established lacked legal services for gender-based violence, was a matter of concern.

52. She wished to know how the State party proposed to address the issue of online violence, including that facilitated by artificial intelligence, whether it would consider outlawing the practice of chastisement of spouses and whether, pending an increase in the minimum age of marriage, it would provide formal education to girls married as minors, who were reported to be automatically removed from mainstream schools.

53. **Ms. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen** said that she wished to know how many cases of trafficking in persons had led to convictions. She would also like to know whether the national strategy on trafficking in persons, which had just been renewed, had been evaluated and, if so, what the results had been. She wondered whether the training of the judiciary on trafficking in persons had changed their views on the prosecution of victims of trafficking in cases where they had violated the law. Lastly, she wished to know whether any migrant domestic workers who sought refuge at the shelter provided for them were identified as victims of trafficking in persons.

54. **Ms. Haidar** said that she would like to encourage the State party to reconsider its definition of rape to make consent the determining criterion, rather than force. She urged the State party to consider prohibiting the physical punishment of children given the current understanding of its impact on their later development. It would be interesting to know whether the shelter for migrant domestic workers was accessible to workers seeking to escape from employment situations in which their rights had been violated, as well as to victims of trafficking.

55. **A representative of Kuwait** said that Kuwait had sufficient places in shelters to provide victims of domestic violence with refuge and cater for their educational and health-care needs. Due consideration would be given to the Committee's recommendation to review the definition of rape.

56. **A representative of Kuwait** said that support, including three daily meals and legal, medical, psychosocial, transport and counselling services, was provided free of charge in partnership with civil society organizations and State institutions at shelters for victims of domestic violence and any persons accompanying them. Student victims were helped to overcome any obstacles to pursuing their studies.

57. **A representative of Kuwait** said that the Office of the Public Prosecutor represented the country's citizens, enforced the Criminal Code, prosecuted offenders and enforced judgments. The Office was responsible for investigating and prosecuting cases and deciding whether or not to refer them to the court. Cases submitted to the court were left to the court's discretion. It would then question the accused, providing an interpreter free of charge if necessary.

58. **A representative of Kuwait** said that the national strategy on trafficking in persons was in a preliminary assessment phase, and the results were not yet available. The fight against trafficking in persons represented a major part of the country's human rights work and involved all of the relevant authorities. It included victim identification and protection, prosecution, voluntary return and reintegration.

59. The Criminal Code criminalized acts of prostitution in articles 180, 200, 201, 202, 203 and 204, including forcing a person into prostitution and pandering.

60. **A representative of Kuwait** said that Law No. 8 of 2016 regulating electronic media prohibited the publication or reposting of online content showing violence against women or children. Awareness-raising campaigns on combating violence had been conducted in public areas, and a Kuwaiti television programme provided guidance on combating online violence to families. The Ministry of the Interior, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, received and reviewed anonymous complaints of online images of violence. The Ministry of Information made every effort to protect the image of women from exploitation, to ensure their privacy and to prevent bias and violence against women on the Internet and in films and television series, in accordance with the electronic media law. Steps had been taken to ensure that women were presented in a positive light and that their viewpoints were respected on radio and television. The Ministry of Information had 16 programmes presented and produced by women, which showed interviews with women to emphasize the role of the family and to combat domestic violence.

*Articles 7–9*

61. **Ms. Ameline** said that she wondered how comprehensive strategies to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5 and those established in Kuwait Vision 2035 would be implemented, whether a systematic approach was taken to ensuring that women participated in decision-making and were nominated for leadership positions and whether the State party worked with women's organizations to remove systematic barriers to women's political participation, including by providing financial support to female electoral candidates or civil society organizations working to support those candidates. She wished to know how many Kuwaiti ambassadors were female and why the percentage of female Kuwaiti representatives to international organizations was so low. It would be helpful to learn how the State party worked at the international level to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and how the State party planned to increase the presence of women in its work on the international stage, including work on climate change. She wondered how the State party planned to work with religious leaders to remove cultural restrictions affecting women.

62. **Mr. Safarov** said that he wished to know whether the State party planned to amend national legislation to enable women to pass on their citizenship to their children and foreign spouses, as men were able to do. He wondered what measures were in place to improve the situation of Bidoon persons, who were classified as illegal residents, including by facilitating their acquisition of Kuwaiti citizenship through naturalization and improving their legal protections and access to services, and whether the State party was considering ratifying the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

63. **A representative of Kuwait** said that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs participated in most conferences and meetings regarding women and peace and security, including the relevant meetings of the Security Council. Kuwait had spoken at the high-level International Conference on Women, Peace and Security in Abu Dhabi in September 2022 and at the International Conference on Women in Islam: "Status and Empowerment", in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. It also participated in networks of focal points for women and peace and security, in line with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Consultations with stakeholders, including civil society organizations, were ongoing, with a view to incorporating their expertise in the work of the interministerial committee for women and peace and security, established in December 2023 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Kuwait had held workshops with ESCWA since 2021 and was represented in a peace mediation network of the League of Arab States.

64. **A representative of Kuwait** said that there were 141 women at all levels of diplomatic positions, compared to 517 men. The Assistant Foreign Minister of Legal Affairs and the Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs were female, there were three female Kuwaiti ambassadors, including the ambassadors to the United States of America and Canada, and women held other diplomatic positions in the permanent missions of Kuwait to international organizations. Women had worked in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs since 1962, but their numbers had doubled following 2019 amendments to the law on the diplomatic and consular corps; the latest cohort of diplomats to join the Ministry had included 10 women and 10 men.

65. **A representative of Kuwait** said that procedures for acquiring or retaining nationality were identical for men and women. The Kuwaiti Nationality Act provided that Kuwaiti nationality was transferred to children from their fathers, but legislators had considered cases of divorce, and article 5 of the law provided that children born to Kuwaiti mothers and foreign fathers could retain Kuwaiti nationality until the age of majority in certain cases. Legislators had considered that foreign spouses should retain their original nationality and, consequently, there was no need for Kuwaiti nationality to be conferred on them. Some 3,722 women had passed on their Kuwaiti citizenship to their children.

66. **A representative of Kuwait** said that, on 16 May each year, public and private institutions commemorated the granting of women's political rights in 2005. Women accounted for 48 per cent of those working in the private sector and 60 per cent of those in the public sector. They occupied 38 per cent of managerial positions in the Public Workforce Authority and 40 per cent in the Ministry of Information and accounted for 28 per cent of board members, 30 per cent of organization leaders and 30 per cent of business owners; 15 women held the status of judicial official. She had been the first female spokesperson for the Ministry of Information. Women accounted for 71 per cent of members of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature and held leadership positions in the Kuwait News Agency. More than half of all eligible voters in the 2024 National Assembly elections had been women. A Kuwaiti woman had recently been named Arab Cybersecurity Woman of the Year.

67. **A representative of Kuwait** said that, in the Ministry of Justice, 406 women held managerial positions and the number of women at the administrative level had increased since 2017. Some 28 women had been appointed as prosecutors, 107 women held positions in the judiciary and 419 women served as experts in the Ministry of Justice. In the 2024 elections, one woman had been elected to the National Assembly. The Minister of Public Works and the Minister of Social Affairs and Women and Children's Affairs were both women.

68. Under decree No. 115 of 2020, women could join the judiciary; both men and women had to work for a minimum of five years in the Office of the Public Prosecution before being nominated to the judiciary. Women accounted for 15 out of 408 judges and 92 out of 526 prosecutors; more women would be appointed as judges in the 2024/25 judicial year. Women were present at all levels of the judiciary on an equal footing with men, and female Kuwaiti judges had participated in international forums, such as the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law.

69. **Mr. Safarov** said that the Government might consider amending legislation on nationality; it had not been amended since 1959, despite many changes in the country during that time, and the Kuwaiti Constitution, which had primacy over other domestic legislation, granted equal citizenship rights for men and women.

#### *Articles 10–14*

70. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that she was interested to know why twice as many women as men were in tertiary education, which employment and education pathways were taken by men and which university disciplines were studied by men and women. She wondered whether persons with disabilities, minorities, non-Kuwaitis and migrant and domestic workers seeking employment enjoyed the right to education. She would be interested in hearing more about the situation of Bidoon women, whose children saw their education affected owing to reduced freedom of movement, and Bidoon teachers, whose contract renewals were often unsigned or rejected.

71. She wondered what the rationale was for the establishment of fully gender-segregated schools, how the State party ensured that girls in segregated schools had access to all subjects, including technical and vocational subjects, and whether tertiary education ensured women's access to all aspects of education, including networking and critical thinking. She wished to know whether the State party would consider making the Convention central to the school curriculum and what conclusions had been drawn from any audit of school textbooks. She wondered what subjects were studied by children in night schools, what their completion rate was and whether the State party planned to streamline that school system. She was interested

to learn whether the State party planned to introduce temporary special measures to increase the number of women in higher education or vocational training and in leadership positions in the petrochemical industry.

72. **Ms. Akizuki** said that she wished to know whether the provisions of ministerial decision No. 177 (2021) prohibiting gender discrimination in the workplace explicitly prohibited discrimination in hiring, training and promotions and what mechanisms were in place to effectively implement and monitor the decree. She wondered whether the State party planned to shorten the list of occupations for which the employment of women was prohibited under the Private Sector Labour Code, Act No. 6 (2010), to introduce paid paternity leave for fathers and to increase paid maternity leave from 10 to 14 weeks, in line with International Labour Organization (ILO) standards. She also wondered how the State party ensured that maternity leave legislation was applicable to workers who lacked social protection, such as women who were self-employed or worked in the informal economy. She would like to know what steps had been taken to ensure that women received equal pay for work of equal value and whether the State party planned to ratify the ILO Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100).

73. She wondered whether the procedure for reporting sexual harassment outlined in ministerial decision No. 177 (2021) specifically covered offences committed by supervisors, colleagues and clients and what measures were in place to ensure that women were not penalized for reporting sexual harassment in the workplace. She wished to know what measures had been taken to raise awareness among women migrant workers of their rights under the Act No. 68 (2015) on domestic workers; whether the State party intended to reform that law to provide comprehensive protection for migrant domestic workers, including by providing them the right to change jobs without needing permission from their employer, reducing their legal daily working hours, expanding the wage protection system and providing for damages in the case of non-payment of wages; how the State party ensured that migrant domestic workers facing abuse by their employers were not penalized for escaping and could seek assistance without fear of imprisonment or deportation; how many complaints had been received by the Office of the Public Prosecutor from women migrant workers and how perpetrators of abuse were held accountable; and whether the State party intended to ratify the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189). Data on the number of women migrant workers charged with capital crimes, sentenced to death and executed, disaggregated by nationality and offence, would also be appreciated.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*