



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Fifty-first session

Summary record of the 1033rd meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 23 February 2012, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson:Ms. Pimentel *later:Ms. Rasekh (Vice-Chairperson)* *later:Ms. Pimentel (Chairperson)*

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Fifth periodic report of Jordan

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*)

Fifth periodic report of Jordan (CEDAW/C/JOR/5; CEDAW/C/JOR/Q/5 and Add.1)

At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Jordan took places at the Committee table.

Ms. Sukayri (Jordan), introducing her country's fifth periodic report, said that it had been prepared by the Jordanian National Commission for Women, together with the many stakeholders concerned – governmental, non-governmental and civil society organizations alike. A number of workshops had been held throughout Jordan to discuss the draft report, and the full text of the report had been posted on the Commission's website at various stages in the drafting process. The report had been submitted to all the relevant authorities for comment, including both houses of parliament.

There had been several important legislative developments in recent years, such as amendments to the Constitution made in 2011 which had stepped up the protection of women's and family rights and of human rights in general. Those amendments had also included the establishment of a constitutional court and an independent commission to oversee elections. The principle of the separation of powers had also been strengthened. In addition, the duration of compulsory, free education had been extended.

Under the Interim Personal Status Act of 2010, women had the right to contract marriage on an equal footing with men. The Act also upheld their financial independence and inheritance rights. For example, women retained the right to inherit property even if the surviving family members included a grandfather, and they were allowed to sell their share of an inheritance if they so wished. It also granted them the right to divorce under certain conditions. Furthermore, in the event of divorce or separation, women henceforth would be able to have custody of their children up to the age of 15 and would have the possibility of raising them until they reached 18 years of age. Alimony payments were not reduced if a girl remained with her mother. Under sharia law, a woman was entitled to keep her finances and property separate from her husband's, and women could dispose of property on their own. No law on property or inheritance, including the Constitution and Personal Status Act, contained any discriminatory provisions.

The Labour Code and amendments thereto protected women and guaranteed equality between men and women in the workplace. Employers were required to provide maternity leave for a period of 10 weeks. The length of maternity leave must not be less than six weeks, and women could not return to work before that period had elapsed. Women were also given leave without pay to care for their children or accompany their spouses. The law required employers with a specified number of working mothers with children under 4 years of age to provide them with adequate day-care facilities. The Interim Social Security Act was wider in scope than the previous law and covered agricultural and domestic workers and persons working in family businesses. The law also provided for maternity and unemployment benefits. In addition, under the new Act, widows were entitled to receive the pension of their deceased husband in addition to their own.

A number of amendments had also been introduced into the Nationality Act of 1954 to bring it into line with international law, reduce statelessness and avoid cases of dual nationality. Women had the right to change or maintain their nationality if they married a foreigner; it was no longer withdrawn automatically, as used to be the case. In the event of divorce, women could apply to reinstate their nationality if they had renounced it. The children of Jordanian women married to foreign nationals — to whom the Government was considering the possibility of granting Jordanian nationality — enjoyed the same rights to education, health and residence as Jordanian children.

The Government had also enacted the Domestic Violence Protection Act in 2008, cooperated with NGOs in providing legal,

psychological and other forms of assistance to victims of violence, and established shelters for battered women.

Women's participation in public life had increased considerably. The number of women holding seats in parliament had risen following the last elections to levels above the quotas that had been set. The pending elections bill was expected to lead to further increases in the minimum number of seats allocated to women in parliament. There had also been an increase in the number of women in the judiciary, and a Jordanian woman judge had been appointed to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. A bill on municipalities put forward in 2011 was aimed at raising the quota for women in municipal councils from 20 to 25 per cent. The participation of women in political parties had also increased considerably since 2005, as shown by statistics set out in the report. A new bill on political parties would provide that at least 10 per cent of founding members of a political party should be women. Women were increasingly represented in trade unions, and the proportion of women in the diplomatic corps was also steadily growing.

The National Commission for Women had built up an extensive statistical database and had submitted its first periodic report in 2011, which pointed to an increase in women's participation in all facets of life. The Commission would be submitting a report every two years. A translation of the first report into English was currently being prepared and would be transmitted to the Committee.

The Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences had visited Jordan in November 2011. At that time, she had expressed her appreciation for the cooperation of the Government of Jordan and welcomed the steps taken to promote equality between men and women and to eliminate discrimination. Those achievements notwithstanding, the Government was fully aware of the challenges facing the country. The delegation looked forward to hearing the comments and recommendations of the Committee.

Articles 1 to 6

Ms. Popescu, congratulating the State party on the advances made in ensuring equality of all citizens before the law, said that she regretted that no specific provision prohibited discrimination on the grounds of sex. She welcomed the fact that the State party had withdrawn its reservation to article 15, paragraph 4, of the Convention and wondered whether it planned to withdraw its remaining two reservations. Neither of those reservations was compatible with the purposes and principles of the Convention, as they referred to core articles. She would also appreciate information on any progress made towards the adoption of the Optional Protocol. She wished to know whether decisions taken by the National Centre for Human Rights concerning complaints of rights violations were legally binding and whether provision had been made for the award of financial compensation to complainants. Clarification was also needed on the Centre's relationship with other complaints mechanisms such as the Ombudsman, the Complaints Management Unit, and the Human Rights and Family Directorate within the Ministry of Labour.

Ms. Šimonović asked for clarification of the Convention's status in the Jordanian legal system. Was the Convention directly applicable in Jordan? Had it been cited in any major cases? Turning to article 2 of the Convention, she said that, while the Committee had on more than one occasion urged the State party to amend its Constitution to incorporate the principle of gender equality, that had yet to be done. She asked what the main obstacles to integrating such a provision into the Constitution were. Recalling that the Committee had also recommended that the State party enact a comprehensive gender equality law, she asked whether, if the State party did not intend to do so, it planned to enact any other legislation that would explicitly set forth the principle of equality between women and men.

Ms. Ameline said that in recent years the State party had shown a strong commitment to implementation of the Convention. She especially commended the State party for establishing forums for dialogue so that the Jordanian people could be closely involved in the implementation process. Indeed, reforms could succeed only if they involved all stakeholders. She asked whether the various ministries coordinated their work, whether the gender-sensitive budget strategy for 2011 had been rolled out as planned and whether the priorities expressed in the opening statement were reflected in that budget.

She enquired whether there were quantitative indicators in place to evaluate the effectiveness of recent legislative changes. Would new legislation be submitted to the task force responsible for reviewing laws containing provisions that were discriminatory against women? She understood that the Royal Committee on Constitutional Amendments had very few female members, yet it was important for women to be at the heart of the reform process. She would appreciate information about the legal training regarding the Convention that was provided to judges and magistrates who presided over the sharia courts.

It seemed that there had been a step backward with the expiration of the interim law that had allowed women to travel freely and acquire passports. She asked what the State party planned to do in that regard and whether it was taking steps to ensure sustained progress in achieving equality under the law.

Quotas were a mechanism for accelerating change, and she would like to know how the State party was planning to address imbalances at the national level. Additional information about the decentralization and political reform effort would be welcome.

The meeting was suspended at 11 a.m. and resumed at 11. 10 a.m.

Mr. Hyassat (Jordan) read out article 6 of the Constitution, which stated that Jordanians were equal before the law and that there should be no discrimination between them regarding their rights and duties on grounds of race, language or religion. The Royal Committee on Constitutional Amendments had not suggested adding a reference to gender. The matter had also been discussed in the parliament, where some representatives had felt that such a reference was not needed. There was, however, no conflict between the Constitution and the Convention, since the Constitution did not mandate discrimination on the basis of gender. On the contrary, it mandated respect for Jordan's treaty obligations, and that principle had been reaffirmed by the courts.

His Government's position was that the reservation entered by Jordan to article 9, paragraph 2, of the Convention regarding children's nationality was permissible under article 29 of the Convention and under international treaty law and was valid and

compatible with the object and purpose of the Convention. It was specific, precise and limited; did not constitute a general reservation; and did not have a serious impact on the fulfilment of obligations under the remaining provisions. While his Government fully respected the Committee's view, Jordan's position remained unchanged. The reservation had been made for political reasons mainly related to the occupation by Israel of the Palestinian territories and could not be withdrawn. His country's general policy regarding reservations was not inflexible, and it had in the past withdrawn some reservations to various treaties, including the Convention.

To date, Jordan had signed only one complaints-related optional protocol to a human rights instrument, namely the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The issue of accession to such optional protocols had been addressed by an inter-agency committee which had concluded that, before Jordan could accede to such protocols, it needed to strengthen complaints-related mechanisms such as the Office of the Ombudsman, as individual complainants were obliged to exhaust national remedies before invoking them. A time frame for revisiting the matter had not yet been decided upon.

Ms. Haddadin (Jordan) said that the Convention had served as the basis for some court decisions, including one case in which a girl had applied for authorization to change her name, and various legislative provisions had been brought into line with the Convention. Under article 24 of the Civil Code, the Convention's provisions prevailed over national law in cases where the two conflicted, and the precedence of international treaties and conventions over domestic law had been reaffirmed by several court of cassation decisions.

During the 2010 legislative elections, the various ministries had coordinated their efforts to support women candidates. Throughout the electoral process, the National Commission for Women had monitored the application of relevant legislation and had mounted an awareness-raising campaign to encourage women to participate in the elections and to urge the public to support their involvement. Earlier on, the Commission for Women had issued a brochure about the Convention for members of the legal profession, for whom several training courses had also been held. The National Strategy for Women was reviewed and updated regularly.

In response to an earlier question about the expiration of an interim law, she would like to explain to the Committee that, under the Constitution, it was possible to promulgate temporary legislation when the parliament was not in session. If the parliament later decided to maintain laws thus promulgated, they could be applied only if they did not conflict with international conventions to which Jordan was a party.

Mr. Al Tawalbah (Jordan) said that reservations made by Jordan to international conventions fell into two categories: temporary reservations and those regarding provisions that contradicted the basic principles of sharia law. Authoritative advisory opinions had been issued in Jordan which stated that some provisions of article 16 ran counter to sharia law. A solution in legal and religious terms was being sought. The Personal Status Act reflected a consensus among Government institutions, civil society and eminent persons. Efforts had been made to protect the human rights of mothers in respect of custody of their children. The Act gave mothers preference in decisions on custody and included new provisions to protect women's right to travel with their minor children. Under a law promulgated in 2010, the custodianship of children's assets could be exercised separately by either parent, or jointly. In the majority of cases the mother was appointed custodian. If someone other than the mother was appointed, the mother had the right to file a suit if she feared that the interests of her minor child were not being protected.

In collaboration with civil society organizations, training had been offered to judges, legal experts and anyone else who wanted to learn about the legislation and its implementation. Courses specifically for judges had also been held. A judicial institution was being established to provide ongoing training to ensure optimal access to justice and legal services. There were plans to monitor all court decisions involving the Personal Status Act. Legislation was under consideration that would create a court of higher instance that could rectify any errors that might be made by sharia courts of first instance. Brochures and other documentation were being prepared for members of the judiciary to clarify aspects of the law and aid in its implementation.

Ms. Khader (Jordan) said that a new bill was under consideration that would, if adopted, repeal the provision of the Interim Passports Act under which husbands must give their consent in order for a passport to be issued to their wives. The National Commission for Women had set up a joint committee of NGOs that had proposed amendments to, *inter alia*, article 6 of the Constitution, many of which were likely to be included in the revised Constitution. Prevailing political conditions were not, however, conducive to the uptake of all the proposed amendments. The National Dialogue Committee included six female members who had played a part in increasing the required number of parliamentary seats for women in the new Elections Act, and the National Commission had requested the appointment of women to the independent electoral commission. Under the new Elections Act, women were to hold 25 per cent of the seats in municipal councils. Women made up 29 per cent of the membership of political parties. In certain fields, such as medicine, nursing and dentistry, women made up more than 50 per cent of the members of trade unions and professional associations, while in other fields the figure ranged from 10 to 22 per cent.

A joint committee had been established by the lower house of parliament and the National Commission to promote the practice of consulting with women's organizations on policy and legislative matters. There were plans to introduce a gender-sensitive budgeting component in the budget preparation process of various ministries, especially those with a large number of female employees, and it was hoped that all future Government budgets would incorporate a gender perspective. Other related activities had been carried out in cooperation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, including seminars and workshops on the ratification of the Optional Protocol, but much remained to be done in terms of gaining public support for such a move.

Ms. Rasekh (Vice-Chairperson) took the Chair.

Ms. Zou Xiaoqiao asked for additional information on the operations and composition of the National Commission for Women. She said that she would also like to know if there were similar mechanisms or women's councils in the governorates and how secure their staffing tables and funding were.

Ms. Neubauer, referring to general recommendation No. 28, asked for comment on the fact that the new provision that raised the upper age limit at which a child could be placed in its mother's custody did not apply equally to Muslim and non-Muslim women. She

wondered how that practice complied with article 6 of the Constitution, which guaranteed equality before the law to all Jordanians and prohibited discrimination on grounds of race, language or religion.

Ms. Popescu asked about the status of the various complaints mechanisms, such as the National Centre for Human Rights and the Office of the Ombudsman. She also wanted to know whether their decisions were legally binding and if they could award compensation.

Ms. Gabr said that she looked forward to receiving the English translation of the report of the National Commission for Women referred to in the introductory statement. In reference to Ms. Khader's comment that the use of the masculine form of the term "Jordanian" in article 6 of the Constitution covered both genders, she asked if there were any concrete cases where a judge had applied that article to a woman. It was necessary for those who were responsible for applying the law to have written interpretations to which to refer. Noting that only one judge had received training with regard to the Convention, she urged the State party to provide greater training opportunities.

Ms. Šimonović requested further details on the applicability of the Convention in the domestic legal system. It would be useful to know which specific article of the Convention had been invoked in the previously mentioned case concerning a girl's name change.

The Chairperson asked whether a conflict with sharia law was the main reason for not withdrawing the reservation to article 9, paragraph 2. If not, additional explanations would be appreciated. She would urge the State party to consider the example of other Islamic countries that had ratified the Convention without entering a reservation.

Ms. Khader (Jordan) said that the National Commission for Women comprised ministers, members of civil society and experts. It liaised with the Government and with a number of specialized bodies such as the Committee for Coordination with Civil Society Institutions, which included women's associations and had regional offices in each governorate. The National Commission itself had six governorate offices, and it was hoped that resources would be allocated for the establishment of a further six. Government funds were being increased but were as yet insufficient, so the Commission received supplementary funding from other sources, such as the European Union. The Commission had concluded memorandums of understanding with 82 civil society organizations, as well as political parties and trade unions. Individuals could file complaints with the National Centre for Human Rights in writing or via the helpline. The Centre provided counselling and referral services, with some lawyers willing to provide their services on a pro bono basis. It did not provide compensation and its decisions were not binding. Individuals referred to the courts were eligible for free legal counsel.

Turning to the use of the masculine form of "Jordanian" in article 6 of the Constitution, she said that training in interpreting the provision was being given. The statistics provided on training for the judiciary came from the Ministry of Justice and therefore did not fully reflect the situation, as NGOs were also offering courses. There was a recognized need for training concerning the Convention, and steps were being taken to include it in the curricula of the Judicial Institute and law schools. The reservation to article 9, paragraph 2, was unrelated to sharia law but was instead connected with immigration to Jordan.

Mr. Al Tawalbah (Jordan) said that he wished to reiterate that the law favoured mothers in custody decisions, especially of young children, irrespective of the mother's religion. There was no discrimination because the law considered the best interest of the child and gave that precedence over the rights of either parent. Moreover, the age limit for placing a child in its mother's custody had been lower in Christian courts, and the new law had rectified the imbalance by raising the limit to 7 years of age. In practice, the law was not interpreted in isolation, and women were often granted custody regardless of their religion or the child's age.

The Judicial Council and civil society worked closely together. Training on the Convention had been provided to many judges on several occasions, but more was needed. The country's perceived stability and the greater freedoms available in Jordan attracted significant numbers of immigrants, which was why there were no plans to lift the reservation to article 9, paragraph 2.

Mr. Hyassat (Jordan) said that article 33 of the Constitution regulated the applicability of international instruments within Jordan's legal system. All agreements and treaties that had financial implications or dealt with human rights had to be adopted by the parliament and published in the *official gazette* as a domestic law before they could be implemented. Unlike other Islamic countries, Jordan had not entered a blanket reservation to all articles that ran counter to sharia law, and it was striving to circumscribe its reservations so that they did not impair its implementation of other provisions.

Ms. Pimentel (Chairperson) resumed the Chair.

Ms. Šimonović asked what the State party was doing to follow up on the recommendations made by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and on the Committee's previous concluding observations relating to amendments to the Criminal Code, in particular articles 98 and 99. She wished to know what measures were being taken to prevent femicide and "honour killings" and to provide shelters for women victims. She welcomed the adoption of the Domestic Violence Protection Act, but wondered exactly how preventive measures were being implemented.

Ms. Gabr said that communities in the Middle East often had a paternalistic attitude towards women and viewed them as inferior. That attitude had absolutely nothing to do with Islam or the sharia, but was instead rooted in the culture and history of the region. The existence of such attitudes called for resolute efforts to counter them by, first and foremost, Governments, but also by national human rights bodies. Political will was required, as the Convention could not be implemented without broad community support, and such support could not be built from the top down. She hoped that the national plan of action would support such a vision and help to eliminate harmful stereotypes in Jordanian society by, for example, providing for a comprehensive review of school curricula and enlisting the support of the media and religious leaders.

Some people in Jordan had argued that the country could eliminate its unemployment problem by banning women from the world of work. Clearly, economic difficulties must not be solved at the expense of women.

Jordanian civil society and NGOs played an important role not only in defending women's rights, but also in development efforts in general. She hoped that they would receive more support from the State in the future.

Ms. Jahan said that Jordan had ratified a number of international instruments relating to human trafficking and sexual exploitation, including the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (the Palermo Protocol). Although it was well known that Jordan was both a destination and transit country, the report gave no specific data on the extent or gravity of the problem. Many women and girls were in vulnerable situations owing to their status in Jordan as migrants, domestic servants or refugees. It was therefore surprising that the State party had asserted in its report that human trafficking was not a problem in the country and that the corresponding law had thus been named the Human Trafficking Prevention Act, with the emphasis on preventing rather than addressing the problem. She hoped that the State party's efforts would focus not only on prevention, but also on protection and the prosecution and punishment of traffickers in cooperation with stakeholders both in Jordan and in other origin and destination countries.

Noting that the Human Trafficking Prevention Act had been adopted the year before Jordan had acceded to the Palermo Protocol, she asked whether the Government had amended the Act to bring its definitions into line with the Protocol. The Act called for the establishment of a national committee to draw up a strategy for the prevention of trafficking. The Committee would like to know whether the strategy was in keeping with the Palermo Protocol as well. It would also be of interest to find out who sat on the national committee, whether it was sufficiently staffed and funded, if it had a complaints mechanism and whether it maintained a hotline.

Enforcement of the laws against human trafficking was reportedly very lax, and victim protection was inadequate. Some victims were apparently treated as offenders for acts that they had committed as a direct result of their being trafficked. Trafficking often went undetected, and even when cases were discovered, there were not enough interpreters, trained labour inspectors and immigration officials to deal with them. Law enforcement officials were not sensitive to the plight of trafficking victims, and perpetrators were not severely punished. The delegation should give further details about the protection afforded to victims of trafficking and the remedies available to them. The Committee had received reports according to which victims who lacked residence permits were unable to take action against their traffickers. Was the Government making arrangements to work with NGOs or international organizations to address shortfalls in capacity?

The meeting was suspended at 12.25 p.m. and resumed at 12.35 p.m.

Mr. Sukayri (Jordan) said that the report issued by the National Commission for Women had been issued in Arabic and that, as soon as the English translation was ready, the delegation would provide it to the Committee.

Mr. Hyassat (Jordan), responding to the question put by Ms. Šimonović about articles of the Criminal Code that could be invoked in the event of "honour killings", said that articles 97 and 98 related to mitigating circumstances and that such provisions were common throughout the world. The Criminal Code had recently been amended to make those articles inapplicable to so-called "honour crimes". Since 2010, when that change had been made, no defendant had been permitted to invoke mitigating circumstances in such a case. In any event, a guilty verdict, even if mitigating circumstances were found to be admissible, would carry a sentence of at least 10 years in prison.

The Special Rapporteur had accepted the open invitation that Jordan had issued to all special procedures mandate holders of the Human Rights Council. Her report was being finalized and would be submitted to the Human Rights Council in mid-2012, and the Jordanian Government was eagerly awaiting it. Once the report was issued, the Government would address the Special Rapporteur's recommendations and would not fail to keep the Committee informed on that score.

Ms. Khader (Jordan) said that practical measures had been taken to protect women victims of violence regardless of whether or not they were Jordanian. The Domestic Violence Protection Act provided for such measures, as did a law adopted in 2004, which was when Government-run shelters had first been established. Since then, some civil society organizations had set up shelters as well, and initiatives had been taken to protect the rights of women when, for example, they were under arrest.

Two more shelters would be established in the near future for women in the north and south of the country. An NGO known as the Shama'a (Candle) Network against Violence against Women worked actively for the protection of women at risk.

There was a specific programme to combat violence against female migrant workers. A committee to deal with the problems faced by women migrants had been established as early as 1994 with the aim of defending their interests and ensuring access to the justice system. Specific courts had been established to deal with the problems encountered by women migrants, and special units had been set up in the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Social Development to work with civil society organizations to protect the rights of domestic workers, most of whom came from the Philippines, Sri Lanka or Indonesia. Specific rules and laws had been designed to ensure that they would have access to health care and to banking and other services, including legal advice and interpretation, when required. Due to resource constraints, full coverage of such services had not yet been achieved. Nonetheless, thanks to an increasing awareness of such problems, a Sri Lankan domestic worker, for example, had recently won a case and been awarded compensation of US\$ 30,000 for injuries sustained while working.

A lack of awareness of the laws against human trafficking was a serious problem, and training courses needed to be organized for law enforcement officials and judges. Between 2009 and 2011, the annual number of trafficking cases brought to trial had risen from 15 to 36. That did not reflect a worsening of the problem, but rather a trend towards broader awareness of it among lawyers and others thanks to the joint efforts of law enforcement agencies and civil society organizations such as trade unions and lawyers' groups. The Jordanian National Commission for Women also wanted to take part in that effort, but its participation would require the amendment of the statutes and regulations of the bodies in question. The National Commission had, however, been able to participate, together with women lawyers' groups, in awareness-raising campaigns related to the Palermo Protocol.

Under Jordanian law, victims who testified against perpetrators of human trafficking were exempt from certain penalties and were

eligible for the witness protection programme. Penalties in the form of fines of as much as US\$ 30,000 and 3 years of imprisonment had been imposed for trafficking. Under the Criminal Code, forced prostitution was a distinct offence. However, the law on trafficking also addressed that problem, and there were a number of organizations that assisted victims of forced prostitution to return to a normal life and reclaim their rights. The Department of Palestinian Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs worked to safeguard the rights of refugee women, including the right of return. Specialized organizations were providing rehabilitation, information and advisory services to Iraqi women, and new programmes had been launched by various Jordanian agencies to address the needs of Syrian refugees. A hotline had been set up for all women in need. Undocumented aliens generally were repatriated without the application of any penalties and often received support from NGOs upon departure.

School curricula had been revised in the past 10 years to eliminate stereotypes and establish appropriate standards. Textbooks now referred to international human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention, and provided examples of women in various professions. The curricula also had been revised to cover the concept of gender mainstreaming, and extracurricular activities concerning human rights issues had been introduced in schools. A women's organization had held events for thousands of schoolchildren in isolated areas in the south of the country to promote an understanding of how to fight discrimination against women.

Mr. Tawalbah (Jordan) said that the role of religious leaders was of the utmost importance in strengthening the role of women as integrated stakeholders in society. The Personal Status Act ensured equal rights for men and women in marriage and established that forced marriages were legally invalid. The idea that women were inferior was unacceptable under sharia law. Specific programmes were in place to address discriminatory cultural and social attitudes towards women and to encourage women to assert their rights. Reports in the media demonstrated the importance of overcoming cultural and social obstacles to women's enjoyment of their rights. Such changes would not take place overnight, however, as cultural norms were deeply rooted in society and could only be countered through sustained efforts.

Ms. Ameline said that it would be of interest to the Committee to learn how the Jordanian Government was dealing with the recent influx of Syrian refugees.

Ms. Jahan said that the Committee had been informed that, in the absence of a clear-cut definition of the term "trafficking", it was very difficult for victims to press their case in court. How would the Government address that issue? The Committee would also like to know whether Jordan was cooperating with other States in the region on the issue of trafficking.

Mr. Sukayri (Jordan) said that, according to the immigration authorities, between 2,500 and 3,000 Syrians, mostly men, had fled to Jordan. Jordan was aware of its duty to care for refugees. If their numbers increased further, it was to be hoped that the Jordanian authorities would be able to count on international support from other Governments and from NGOs.

Ms. Khader (Jordan) said that her country had been one of the first in the region to ratify the Palermo Protocol and to establish a committee and a strategy for its implementation, and it was now setting up shelters. Jordan had thus set an example in the region. A number of regional conferences had been held, in particular with the Gulf countries, to develop training activities and awareness-raising campaigns. The Jordanian National Commission for Women worked in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to raise awareness of trafficking issues, not only among Jordanians but also among specialists from other Arab countries. The European Union and the United States of America had also provided assistance in that regard. Jordan had entered into cooperation agreements for the provision of legal assistance in cases concerning human trafficking and other offences.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.