



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Summary record of the 1977th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 12 May 2023, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Peláez Narváez

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

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

Ninth periodic report of China (CEDAW/C/CHN/9; CEDAW/C/CHN-HKG/9; CEDAW/C/CHN-MAC/9; CEDAW/C/CHN/Q/9; CEDAW/C/CHN-HKG/Q/9; CEDAW/C/CHN-MAC/Q/9; CEDAW/C/CHN/RQ/9)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of China joined the meeting.*
2. **Ms. Huang Xiaowei** (China) said that the periodic report (CEDAW/C/CHN/9) had been drafted by a working group made up of officials from 29 ministries and departments. Representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academic institutions had participated in the drafting process, and social organizations, women's organizations and autonomous regions and municipalities had been consulted. The report provided a comprehensive reflection of China's policies, practices and achievements in promoting equality between men and women and women's development, including the progress made in implementing the Committee's previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/CHN/CO/7-8).
3. While the central Government was responsible for the international obligations and duties arising from the application of the Convention in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and Macao Special Administrative Region, the Governments of the Special Administrative Regions had also drafted and submitted reports on their implementation of the Convention (CEDAW/C/CHN-HKG/9 and CEDAW/C/CHN-MAC/9).
4. The Government of China attached great importance to equality between men and women and to women's development. The legal system for the comprehensive protection of women's rights and interests, which comprised over 100 laws and regulations, had been continuously improved. Since the enactment of the Anti-Domestic Violence Law in 2016, China had intensified its efforts to combat domestic violence, including through the introduction of a compulsory reporting mechanism and the issuance of written warnings and restraining orders to perpetrators. The Civil Code of 2020 explicitly defined the scope of couples' joint debt, enhanced the economic compensation mechanism in divorce cases, and incorporated provisions on the prevention and punishment of sexual assault and harassment. In 2022, amendments had been made to the Law on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women. For example, a clause had been introduced in the Law prohibiting provisions "restricting or excluding women", thereby implementing the Committee's recommendation to adopt a definition of discrimination against women. The amended Law also provided for gender equality assessments and statistical surveys on women's development, strengthened women's protection from discrimination in health and employment, and improved remedies.
5. The five-year plans for national economic and social development for the periods 2016–2020 and 2021–2025 included chapters on gender equality and women's all-round development. The National Human Rights Action Plan had a section on the protection of women's rights, which set specific goals. The National Programme for Women's Development (2021–2030) established 75 objectives and 93 measures in the areas of health, education, the economy, decision-making and management, social security, the family, the environment and the rule of law. The National Programme mandated line ministries and relevant institutions to perform certain tasks, while provinces, autonomous regions, municipalities, cities and counties throughout China had formulated their own programmes in accordance with local realities. China had developed a gender statistics monitoring mechanism with over 1,300 indicators, and statistics and data concerning women and children were published regularly.
6. Women's livelihoods and status had significantly improved. China had won its battle against poverty, achieving the Sustainable Development Goal on poverty reduction 10 years ahead of schedule and lifting 44 million rural women out of extreme poverty. It had built the world's largest social security system, so that women enjoyed equal benefits and social insurance, including old-age, health-care, childbirth, unemployment and work-related injury insurance. Some 660 million women, including ethnic minority women, women with disabilities and older women, were covered by basic health-care insurance – an increase of

353 million since 2014. Moreover, 85 million persons with disabilities, including women, enjoyed full support in access to rehabilitation, education, employment and the cultural sphere.

7. Thanks to improvements in women's health, the life expectancy of Chinese women currently exceeded 80 years. Since 2014, the maternal mortality rate had dropped to 15.7 deaths per 100,000 live births, with a particularly steep fall in rural areas. During the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, "green channels" had been established for emergency treatment of pregnant women. The Government had prioritized the prevention and treatment of cervical cancer and breast cancer, providing 180 million cervical cancer screenings and nearly 100 million breast cancer screenings free of charge. In that regard, it had set aside almost 2.5 billion yuan for the treatment of women in financial difficulties.

8. China guaranteed the equal right of girls and women to education. Over the previous decade, the Government had spent over 4 per cent of gross domestic product on education. Education was free and compulsory in urban and rural areas. Since 2015, the primary school enrolment rate for girls had remained above 99.9 per cent. More than half of female students with disabilities attended mainstream schools. For seven years in a row, girls had accounted for more than half of secondary school students, while female students outnumbered males in undergraduate and postgraduate studies. By 2020, among the 1.1 billion people older than 15 years, the gender gap in terms of number of years of education had narrowed to 0.6 years. The Government had contributed to the establishment of the UNESCO Prize for Girls' and Women's Education.

9. The Government had been unremitting in its efforts to eradicate all forms of violence against women. Consecutive programmes to combat trafficking in persons had been implemented and prevention campaigns carried out. Between 2013 and 2022, 18,000 cases of trafficking in women and children had been solved and the number of cases of trafficking in persons had fallen by 86 per cent. Under a zero-tolerance policy, severe penalties were handed down in cases involving rape and sexual assault. Campaigns had been launched to provide victims with access to legal aid, psychological rehabilitation and social services. About 350,000 women received legal aid each year.

10. The Government promoted women's participation in decision-making. Women accounted for 26.5 per cent of deputies in the current fourteenth National People's Congress. The percentage of female deputies in the National People's Congress and in people's congresses at the provincial, city and county levels had slowly increased. More than 380,000 women's councils had been established in urban and rural communities, making women important actors in community governance.

11. Efforts had been made to promote women's participation in high-quality development. While women accounted for over 40 per cent of the overall workforce, they made up 55 per cent of employees in Internet start-ups and about one third of the workforce in emerging employment sectors such as digital trade, e-commerce and livestreaming. Special measures had been introduced to support women in science and technology. Women accounted for about 45 per cent of Chinese scientists and were increasingly prominent in science-related decision-making.

12. The Government recognized the value of international cooperation in the promotion of women's development and maintained friendly exchanges with women's organizations and agencies in over 140 countries. It contributed continuously to the United Nations system, helping it to tackle long-standing problems affecting women, such as violence, discrimination and poverty, and to address new challenges such as the gender digital divide. China also provided material support for building up the capacity of women and children in developing countries, contributing to the advancement of women globally.

13. As the world's largest developing country, China still faced many challenges in eliminating gender discrimination. For example, development remained uneven in rural and urban areas, in different regions and among different groups. Implicit discrimination against women in employment had not been eliminated, and there was a need to increase women's participation in government and in economic, cultural and social affairs.

14. The Government considered that the participation of women was indispensable for advancing on the path to modernization and for building a civilized and harmonious world. It would continue to safeguard women's equal exercise of democratic rights in accordance with the law, their equal participation in economic and social development, and their equal sharing in the fruits of reform and development.

15. **Ms. Lam** Shuet-lai (Hong Kong, China) said that the Government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region implemented the Convention in accordance with the Basic Law. It was committed to promoting women's development and providing support for women, who accounted for 54 per cent of the population.

16. All children in Hong Kong attended free, compulsory education for 12 years, so that girls were equipped with the tools to excel in life. Almost 80 per cent of girls and women aged 15 years and older had completed secondary education, while women accounted for more than half of undergraduate students and more than 60 per cent of postgraduate students.

17. Women in Hong Kong were free to work and increasingly occupied senior positions. In the civil service, 12 out of 18 permanent secretaries were women; in the judiciary, women made up more than one third of judges and judicial officers. In the private sector, they held 30 per cent of management positions and accounted for half of public accountants and solicitors.

18. Hong Kong women had experienced positive changes since the consideration of the previous report in 2014. The Sex Discrimination Ordinance had been amended to provide breastfeeding women with protection from harassment. The benchmark for appointments of women to government advisory and statutory bodies had been raised from 25 per cent to 35 per cent. Maternity leave had been extended from 10 weeks to 14 weeks. In 2022, the Government had announced the creation of a Women's Empowerment Fund to help women balance work and family commitments. In the 2023 budget, 100 million Hong Kong dollars (approximately US\$ 13 million) had been set aside to promote women's development. The Government would continue to devote resources to promoting women's due status, rights and opportunities in all aspects of life.

19. It was necessary to address certain comments contained in NGO submissions that were based on false information and distorted narratives. In 2019, the Hong Kong community had been traumatized by serious violence that had arisen from opposition to a proposed legislative reform. Opposition forces and organizations calling for the independence and self-determination of Hong Kong had blatantly challenged both the central authorities and the Government of the Special Administrative Region, had pleaded for external interference, and had even begged for sanctions against Hong Kong.

20. In that context, the police had acted professionally to protect citizens' lives and safety. The Government strongly refuted groundless allegations that the police had perpetrated gender-based violence. As Hong Kong was a society that upheld the rule of law, the police were duty-bound to arrest lawbreakers and bring them to justice. No one, including the police, was above the law. Complaints against the police were handled in a fair and impartial manner, through an effective mechanism, ensuring the protection of genuine victims.

21. Another malicious claim was that the Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (the Hong Kong National Security Law) interfered with women's political rights. In fact, the adoption of the Law had put an end to the chaos and had restored stability in Hong Kong, allowing people to once again enjoy rights and freedoms that had been curtailed by the violence. The Law clearly stipulated that human rights must be respected and protected in safeguarding national security in Hong Kong. All law enforcement actions under the Hong Kong National Security Law or local legislation were based on evidence and the actions of the people and entities concerned and had nothing to do with their political stance, background, occupation or gender. The Government would continue to meet its obligations to safeguard national security, while protecting the rights and freedoms of Hong Kong residents and ensuring the successful implementation of the "one country, two systems" principle.

22. **Mr. Hon** Wai (Macao, China) said that the Government of Macao Special Administrative Region actively implemented the Convention by raising public awareness of

women's rights, promoting equality between men and women in education and employment, strengthening the protection and support of women, committing to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and enhancing women's status in the economic, political, social and cultural spheres.

23. In recent years, the Government had strengthened the legal protection of women's rights and interests in various fields, notably through the adoption of the Law on Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence; the amendment of the Criminal Code to define sexual harassment as a separate offence and revise the provisions on sexual assault; and the amendment to the Law on Labour Relations to increase maternity leave to 70 days and introduce 5 days of paternity leave.

24. The Government had pursued various policy objectives through instruments such as the Macao Youth Policy, the Ten-Year Plan for Rehabilitation Services and the Ten-Year Action Plan for Services for Older Persons, many of which sought to strengthen the protection of women's rights and provide appropriate support for women. The Commission for Women and Child Affairs had been established to assist the Government in formulating and promoting policies and measures concerning women and children. In 2018, at the Commission's initiative, the Government had formulated the Macao Women's Development Goals (2019–2025) with the aim of achieving gender equality and comprehensive development.

25. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Macao women had played a crucial role in health care, social services and education and had been at the forefront of efforts to combat the spread of the disease. Their decisive contribution to social participation, decision-making and crisis response had benefited all of society. The Government would continue to take steps to protect women's rights and interests and to advance their cause comprehensively and in an orderly manner.

Articles 1–6

26. **Ms. Ameline** said that she would be interested to know whether China intended to develop a plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. She asked whether the country's international cooperation policies, such as the Belt and Road Initiative, included provisions for women's advancement on the basis of the Convention, and how the State party applied the Convention in the context of its actions to implement the Sustainable Development Goals. She wondered whether China would consider ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

27. The Committee welcomed the legislative and policy measures that the State party had taken since the previous review but remained concerned that the amended Law on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women was not fully comprehensive. She wished to know how the State party planned to ensure that its laws addressed all forms of discrimination and violence, including trafficking in persons. She would like to know how the State party ensured the convergence of laws passed by the central Government and the Special Administrative Regions, and whether the State party's laws protected all women, regardless of their status, ethnicity, religion or culture, and punished all violations of their rights. In the light of persistent inequalities, particularly in employment, she wished to know whether the Government had evaluated the impact of public policies and measures intended to protect women's rights in the workplace and the family.

28. Despite the introduction of simplified measures to improve access to justice, notably in Hong Kong and Macao, women reportedly continued to encounter difficulties in that regard, with a significant gap between rural and urban areas. She would therefore appreciate information on measures taken to improve access to justice for all women.

29. As the State party did not have an independent national human rights institution, the Committee was eager to receive information on measures to strengthen civil society and freedom of expression in the area of women's rights. Information on the current situation of women's rights defenders, and on their protection, would be welcome.

30. **Ms. de Silva de Alwis** said that while the highest court of Hong Kong, China – the Court of Final Appeal – increasingly applied the doctrine of substantive equality, the same

court had narrowly interpreted the Basic Law to uphold discrimination against rural women and migrant domestic workers. She would therefore appreciate further information on how the courts of the Special Administrative Regions aligned their judicial interpretations with the Convention in order to address structural inequality. Given that no woman had served as a permanent member of the Court of Final Appeal since 1997, she would like to know how the Court could ensure greater diversity in the appointment of its judges.

31. Noting that articles 48 and 49 of the Constitution established a protective paradigm, she wondered whether the Government, in current and future law and policy reforms, and the Supreme People's Court, in its guidance, might instead adopt an empowerment framework in accordance with the Convention. Lastly, she asked whether the gender equality measures envisaged in the 2021 white paper entitled "China's International Development Cooperation in the New Era" would be aligned with the principle of substantive equality enshrined in the Convention.

32. **A representative of China** said that China actively supported the women and peace and security agenda, having sent more than 1,000 female peacekeepers to conflict regions. Of the 2,100 Chinese peacekeepers currently on deployment, 61 (3 per cent) were women. Chinese peacekeepers participated in United Nations training modules, while the Ministry of Defence had organized more than 120 sessions of intensive predeployment training for peacekeepers, which covered topics such as human rights, gender awareness and the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure.

33. Since ratifying the Convention, the Government had fully implemented all of its obligations. The system for the promotion of women's rights and interests and of equality between men and women was underpinned by a comprehensive legal framework. Regarding the possibility of acceding to the Optional Protocol, the Government took the view that any violation of women's rights or interests should be addressed first and foremost through resort to domestic remedies.

34. **A representative of China** said that since the previous review, China had revised several pieces of legislation related to gender-based violence. The adoption of the Anti-Domestic Violence Law had changed perceptions of domestic violence, which was no longer regarded as a family matter but as a national responsibility. The revised Criminal Law laid down severe penalties and provided for aggravating circumstances in cases of trafficking in women and children. Amendments to the Law on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women provided for the compulsory reporting of trafficking by the competent authorities, introduced a comprehensive provision on the prevention and punishment of sexual harassment, and extended the applicability of restraining orders in order to protect women in romantic relationships and in the context of divorce.

35. The Chinese legal system adhered to the spirit of the definition of discrimination set forth in the Convention. The revised Law on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women required the State to take the necessary measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, including direct and indirect discrimination; recognized that all levels of government had a responsibility to create a level playing field for women; prohibited discriminatory practices in recruitment; and created an obligation for employers to protect the rights and interests of female employees.

36. **A representative of China** said that, in June 2021, the Government had published a document on maternity policy that promoted long-term population development under a three-child policy. The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress had revised the Family Planning Law, specifying that the Government would adopt fiscal, tax, education, housing and employment policies to relieve the childcare burden.

37. **A representative of Hong Kong, China** said that, under the Basic Law, women were equal before the law and enjoyed the full protection of their rights. Hong Kong did not have any single domestic law designed to implement the Convention in its entirety; however, Convention rights were effectively guaranteed by a range of legislative and administrative measures. The Government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region would continue to monitor implementation of the Convention and would periodically review relevant laws and policies to ensure the full protection of human rights.

38. Article 92 of the Basic Law stipulated that judges and other members of the judiciary must be “chosen on the basis of their judicial and professional qualities and may be recruited from other common-law jurisdictions”. Gender was not a relevant consideration in judicial appointments. As at 31 March 2023, 62 out of 166 judges and judicial officers (37 per cent) had been women.

39. **Mr. Hon Wai** (Macao, China) said that the Government of Macao Special Administrative Region had a Legal Aid Commission that had been established in 2013. The Commission accepted applications for legal aid, irrespective of the gender of the applicant. Of the 3,815 applications for legal aid submitted between April 2013 and the end of 2022, 1,932 had been submitted by female applicants.

40. **A representative of China** said that the Government had organized a meeting on the National Human Rights Action Plan with the participation of officials from more than 40 ministries and departments. The Supreme People’s Court dealt with specific criminal cases involving violations of women’s rights. Complaints of violations could be submitted to the national petitions office, the All-China Women’s Federation and trade unions, and through the 12338 reporting hotline. Women’s rights were also protected by registered journalists, who acted as human rights defenders.

41. **Ms. Manalo** said that she would be interested to know whether the authorities had consulted the private sector and NGOs during gender equality assessments of laws and public policies. If so, she wondered what contributions businesses and NGOs had made towards the improvement of public policies so that women could better enjoy their human rights.

42. **Ms. Ameline** said that she would be grateful for examples of legal proceedings in which the Convention had been expressly invoked. She wondered what measures had been taken to ensure the consistent application of the Convention in the Special Administrative Regions and Mainland China.

43. **A representative of China** said that gender equality assessments of laws and regulations were performed both at the national level and at local level in 31 provinces. The process was still being improved. Research institutes, universities, lawyers and representatives of civil society organizations had been invited to provide feedback on laws and regulations.

44. **A representative of China** said that the Convention had been transposed into domestic legislation. As a result, laws such as the Civil Code and the Law on the Protection of Women’s Rights and Interests contained specific provisions that were based on the Convention but were more targeted and effective in protecting women’s interests.

45. **Ms. Rana** said that the Government claimed to have many national entities entrusted with the responsibility to promote and protect women’s rights. She wondered whether such an approach was effective and whether the State party would consider establishing an independent national human rights institution with a broad mandate, in full compliance with the Paris Principles.

46. Noting that the National Working Committee on Children and Women had presented recommendations on improving mechanisms for the gender equality-based review of laws and policies, she would be grateful for specific details of the outcomes of such reviews, including any amendments to laws or changes to policies. She wondered whether the Government planned to strengthen the National Working Committee on Children and Women and increase its resources, and how cooperation with civil society had been enhanced.

47. Further noting that a Women’s Commission and an Equal Opportunities Commission were in operation in Hong Kong, she asked how and when the recommendations issued by the latter to adopt laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender expression and physical characteristics would be implemented. The Women’s Commission reportedly lacked adequate power and resources, and it had recently been relocated from the Labour and Welfare Bureau to the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau. The delegation was requested to explain the reasons for its relocation and to describe efforts to strengthen the Commission’s resources, inclusiveness and independence. The Committee would like to hear the delegation’s explanation of the security reasons cited for the cancellation of the annual

women's rights and equality march in 2023. The Committee would be interested to hear how the Hong Kong authorities ensured that the implementation of the Hong Kong National Security Law did not violate the rights of women.

48. It was encouraging that China had adopted a policy aimed at ensuring full gender equality by 2030, but the lack of disaggregated data posed challenges for assessing the actual situation of women and girls and for monitoring progress. How would the State party ensure the availability of such data, and how would civil society be involved in the implementation and monitoring of the policy?

49. **Ms. Morsy** said that, while the Committee commended the State party's achievements in steadily increasing the participation and representation of women in government structures and the judiciary, progress was still required to ensure representation in high-level government positions and ministerial positions. Noting that the Electoral Law of the National People's Congress and Local People's Congresses called for the inclusion of an appropriate number of women and stated that women should account for an increasing percentage of representatives, she would like to know how the State party defined the appropriate level of participation and the time frame for achieving it. The Committee would like to find out about temporary special measures adopted by the State party to increase the number of ministerial portfolios and other senior positions in government and academia held by women and by members of ethnic and religious minorities. It would also be appreciated if the delegation could outline the temporary special measures adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic for the benefit of mothers, older women and women living with disabilities.

50. Noting that the entitlement to maternity leave had recently been significantly extended, she wished to point out that taking such measures without accompanying them with legal and other protective measures might have the perverse effect of deterring employers from hiring or promoting women, and could even discourage women from having children. What protective temporary special measures, such as the establishment of maternity insurance schemes or the provision of childcare services, had been adopted to support women who had children and to protect them from being forced to accept unfavourable working conditions?

51. **A representative of China** said that the goal of having an independent, adequately resourced human rights mechanism was shared by the Government. The National Working Committee on Children and Women had been established as a step towards the achievement of that goal. The Committee's aim was to mobilize resources from the whole of society. A great deal of progress had already been made for Chinese women in terms of education and health.

52. The allocation of resources to a single entity would complicate the achievement of progress in defending women's rights, as such an effort inevitably had to cover a wide gamut of areas of activity involving various departments and ministries. The National Working Committee on Children and Women acted as a coordinator among those bodies, holding annual meetings to address such issues.

53. **A representative of China** said that the National People's Congress was also engaged in ensuring the advancement of women. Its Social Development Affairs Committee supervised the enforcement and review of gender equality laws and regulations. As the Law on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women had entered into force only recently, there had been insufficient time to review its effectiveness. Any legislative process related to women's rights took into account the views of women, for example through the solicitation of opinions of women's federations and of women deputies in people's congresses and the invitation of women experts and NGO representatives to comment on drafts.

54. **A representative of China** said that the Government made use of two channels in order to monitor women's development. The National Programme for Women's Development carried out surveys and collected data annually, applying some 65 indicators to data from 30 government departments, and the results were published in an annual report. Statistical authorities such as the National Bureau of Statistics had also adopted a monitoring plan for nine areas, including health, education and development, with over 1,000 indicators.

55. **Ms. Lam** Shuet-lai (Hong Kong, China) said that in Hong Kong the Women's Commission was tasked with advising the Government on strategies related to women's development and advancement in the long term. The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region had adopted a three-pronged strategy that called for the provision of an enabling environment, empowerment of women through capacity-building, and public education. The Women's Commission had established a gender mainstreaming checklist to assist in the systematic adoption of mainstreaming, and all government departments were obliged to use it in the formulation of major policies. The Women's Commission had thus reviewed over 1,400 policy papers. The Commission had set up a women's empowerment fund with a capital of some 100 million Hong Kong dollars and aimed to provide about 20 million Hong Kong dollars annually to women's organizations for long-term projects.

56. **A representative of Hong Kong, China** said that the Government and the Employment Opportunities Commission regularly reviewed the operation of the four anti-discrimination ordinances and put forward legislative proposals when necessary. In 2020, the Government had enacted the Discrimination Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Ordinance, taking on board the Commission's recommendations to improve the application of the four ordinances. The new provisions prohibited discrimination against breastfeeding women and harassment in the workplace. In 2021, the Government had also introduced a proposal to amend the Sex Discrimination Ordinance to protect breastfeeding women. The Government would continue to examine and consider the Commission's recommendations.

57. **A representative of Hong Kong, China** said that the Basic Law guaranteed the fundamental rights and freedoms of residents of Hong Kong. The Hong Kong National Security Law clearly stated that human rights must be respected and protected in safeguarding national security. The provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights were protected in accordance with the law. Any measures taken in application of the Hong Kong National Security Law, including those relating to the rights under the Convention, must comply with those principles.

58. On 4 March 2023, the police had received a notification from one of the organizers of the International Women's Day procession cancelling the event. The police respected the decision of the organizer. Under the Public Order Ordinance, the Commissioner of Police could impose reasonable and proportionate conditions for the conduct of public events. Organizers were entitled to appeal against such decisions to the statutory Appeal Board on Public Meetings and Processions, whose decisions were also subject to judicial review.

59. **A representative of China** said that much progress had been made in ensuring women's participation in political life in party, government and judicial bodies. The number of women deputies in the National People's Congress had risen by about 15 per cent in 10 years. A proportion of female representation was now required at the provincial and local levels, as well as in official and management teams. Such objectives were subject to an annual statistical review. The level of education of women had risen, and an increasing number were now selected for training in supervisory roles. As social perceptions changed, even more women would hold senior positions in the future.

60. **Ms. Huang** Xiaowei (China) said that the National Working Committee on Children and Women and other departments leveraged more than 60 ministries to carry out activities at both macro and micro levels. The National Programme for Women's Development, for example, was extremely far-reaching, involving dozens of objectives and measures that simply could not be implemented by a single body. The National Programme was instrumental in addressing domestic violence by exerting influence on law enforcement bodies, the courts and social services. That joint action mechanism had proven to be highly effective in defending the rights and interests of women.

61. **Ms. Bethel**, noting that the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council had adopted a decision to take comprehensive measures to reduce the sex ratio at birth, said that the Committee would like to know whether the decision constituted a policy with an action plan or a law, what time frame had been established for its implementation and what obstacles to its implementation had been encountered. It would be of particular interest to find out what gender-responsive guidelines had been adopted, in line

with the principles and objectives of the Convention. She would like to receive information on the enforcement of the regulations adopted to legally prohibit sex selection practices. The Committee had received reports of the shackling of women and girls with psychosocial disabilities and would appreciate information on the measures taken by the Government to eliminate such practices. The delegation was requested to inform the Committee whether women were actively engaged in evaluating and confronting gender stereotyping in the media and advertising and in adapting programmes accordingly. Was there a legal or policy framework to combat gender stereotyping in the media and advertising, and what administrative sanctions were applied for the sexualization of women and girls?

62. **Ms. Tisheva** said that the Committee had received reports that the police and other State bodies had been responsible for gender-based violence, including rape and excessive use of force, and also for harassment against women members of human rights organizations and women in detention. The Committee would like to know about the number, status and outcomes of investigations into complaints of such behaviour and about the complaint mechanisms that were available, as well as any other relevant provisions under the Law on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women. She wished to know whether the State party intended to broaden the scope of protection afforded by the Anti-Domestic Violence Law so that it would cover all cases of intimate partner violence and economic violence, control and negligence, and how the State party evaluated the law's effectiveness. The delegation was requested to describe the State party's plans to ensure regular, mandatory training for all persons involved in the law's implementation. It would be of interest to the Committee to hear how many claims of domestic violence had been discontinued or rejected by the courts in 2022, compared to the total number of claims filed in both civil and criminal procedures. The Committee would also like to find out how the State party responded to the need for protection of women with disabilities, women from minorities, women refugees and asylum-seekers, lesbian, bisexual and transgender women and intersex persons, and other groups facing multiple forms of discrimination. In the absence of a national asylum law, how did women refugees and asylum-seekers avail themselves of protection under the Anti-Domestic Violence Law and the Law on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women?

63. **Ms. Leinarte** said that it would be of interest to the Committee to hear about the penalties applicable to people convicted of trafficking in persons and about the assistance, rehabilitation and reintegration made available to female victims of trafficking and the availability of shelters for them. She would like to know how many foreign victims of trafficking received permission to remain in China and whether they were permitted to stay independent of their willingness to cooperate as witnesses with police and prosecution services. Noting that the Committee had received reports that up to 20 per cent of victims of trafficking in China were women with psychosocial disabilities, she asked what measures the State party had taken to counter such practices.

64. The Committee had received information that, in Hong Kong, the number of applications for employment as domestic workers that the authorities had denied had increased ninefold between 2020 and 2021. The radical reduction of the possibility of legal migration increased the opportunity for illegal migration for domestic work, which also increased the risk of human trafficking and exploitation. The delegation was requested to comment on that recent policy.

65. Chinese criminal law punished trafficking in persons but it did not address the problems of forced marriage or the situation of female defectors from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Such women were vulnerable to deportation and return to their country by virtue of the fact that their status was illegal. When they had children with Chinese fathers, they and their children faced a range of legal challenges. The delegation was requested to inform the Committee of estimates of the number of children born in such circumstances and to report how many women had been forcibly repatriated to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, leaving their children behind in China, either voluntarily or involuntarily. What laws in China allowed for the granting of refugee status to women from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and their children?

66. The delegation was invited to comment on media reports that, in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, forced labour and sexual violence had taken place in the so-called vocational training centres, and that the Government promoted forced marriages between

Uighur women and Chinese men as a means of assimilation. She would also like to know the practical effects of recent changes to the laws governing prostitution in China. In Macao, where prostitution was legal, the police had broken up an organized prostitution ring in 2022. The Committee would like to know what the State party had done to reduce demand for prostitution.

67. **A representative of China** said that the Law on Population and Family Planning prohibited and punished the abandonment of female infants. Several public agencies worked to prohibit practices such as fetal sex identification and sex-selective abortion, with a leadership role played by the National Health Commission. Campaigns had been carried out to reduce sex selection. In the previous eight years, the sex ratio at birth had declined from 115.9 to 108.3 males per 100 females.

68. **A representative of China** said that the Government had drawn up a national action plan against trafficking in persons and worked to protect members of vulnerable groups, including persons with intellectual disabilities, against trafficking and to provide victims with assistance with settlement and rehabilitation. The Anti-Domestic Violence Law contained specific provisions on awareness-raising, mediation and the settlement of family disputes, with a view to preventing an escalation into domestic violence. When cases were reported, the public security authorities immediately dispatched police to curb the violence and assist victims to seek medical care. Incapacitated persons who had suffered injuries owing to domestic violence and persons who had no access to care were reported by the public security authorities to the civil affairs department, so that they could be accommodated in social service institutions or shelters.

69. In cases of domestic violence, disciplinary measures were taken or written warnings were issued to the perpetrators and, when appropriate, the relevant sanctions were applied in accordance with the law. Serious cases incurred penalties for battery, abuse or manslaughter, and a zero-tolerance approach was applied. The public security authorities also helped to enforce restraining orders issued by the courts. In recent years, some 18,000 people had benefited from such orders. All police officers received specific training on domestic violence.

70. The Government also applied a zero-tolerance policy against trafficking in persons. It worked to stem domestic trafficking and was also engaged in international cooperation to stop cross-border trafficking, especially of women and children. It had thus entered into cooperation agreements with 113 countries. The authorities maintained cooperation mechanisms with 54 national law enforcement agencies and conducted joint operations with a number of national agencies, above all in South-East Asian countries. Internally, the Government was continuing to improve the relevant laws and regulations. In addition to the new legislation on the protection of women and minors, the action plan to combat trafficking had been amended and improved three times since 2018. The authorities had also established fast-track identification measures to improve detection of women and children who were potential victims of trafficking and had stiffened penalties for traffickers and persons buying trafficked persons. They had also worked to reduce the backlog of old cases, in order to reunite missing children with their families. The number of cases of trafficking in women and children was declining.

71. In 2019, the National People's Congress Standing Committee had abolished the custody and education system that had been used for the penalization of legal violations related to prostitution.

72. **A representative of China** said that, in recent years, the Government had improved psychosocial services and the assessment and monitoring of such services in rural areas and had promoted their use by the population. By the end of 2022, some 29,000 psychosocial service units had been established, staffed by some 70,000 qualified personnel.

73. **A representative of China** said that women victims of domestic violence and human trafficking were able to apply for legal aid and advice through a number of channels, including hotlines and online portals. There were some 3,000 legal aid offices and 70,000 legal aid reception centres in the country. Women's federations were involved in the provision of such services. The procedures for application for legal aid had been simplified, and professional personnel with experience in the field were assigned to advise victims. In

2022, over 300,000 women had benefited from legal aid, including 8,000 who had been victims of domestic violence, and legal advice had been given to nearly 2 million women.

74. **A representative of China** said that temporary shelters for victims of domestic violence were provided by civil affairs departments. Local administrations had in the past generally set up shelters in urban areas, but more recently shelters had also been established in rural areas. Such facilities provided food, accommodation and medical services and, when appropriate, counselling and legal advice. Civil affairs departments also worked with the police to render timely assistance to victims of trafficking, for example by offering help with obtaining identity documents, receiving medical care, tracing family members and returning home. In cases where the victim's identity could not be established, resettlement options were provided.

75. **A representative of Hong Kong, China** said that in Hong Kong there was a package of safeguards with numerous legal provisions to combat trafficking in persons. Penalties ranged up to life imprisonment. In recent years, the number of victims of trafficking in persons had been low.

76. **A representative of Hong Kong, China** said that foreign domestic workers' applications for a change of employer within the statutory two-year period of employment were generally denied, except for exceptional cases. Such cases might, for instance, involve migration of the employer or abuse or exploitation of the worker. There had been no change in that policy.

77. **A representative of Macao, China** said that, while prostitution was not a criminal offence in Macao, certain related practices, such as those that placed a person in a dangerous situation, were illegal. Pimping and exploitation of prostitution were punishable by up to 5 years of imprisonment, while the purchase of prostitution from a minor incurred a penalty of up to 3 years' imprisonment. Between 2018 and 2022, the authorities had conducted over 1,300 campaigns and had investigated some 2,900 persons involved in the sex trade.

78. **A representative of China** said that, in accordance with the definitions contained in the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, women from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea who arrived in China for economic reasons could not be qualified as refugees. The Government could not provide relevant statistics on their situation, which in any case was not relevant to a question of trafficking in persons. Such persons entered China illegally and the Government, in dealing with their cases, referred to domestic and international law, and specifically to humanitarian principles, in order to address their situation appropriately. It was hoped that the Committee would maintain an objective view of the situation and respect the State party's decisions, taken in accordance with its domestic law.

79. **A representative of China** said that, with a view to improving the protection of foreign women who entered into marriage in China, the Ministry of Civil Affairs was working to raise awareness of the challenges involved in engaging in mixed marriages, to enhance the exchange of information with various other agencies and to strengthen cooperation with local governments. The civil affairs authorities assisted foreign women to obtain marriage registration and regularization of their situation if they already had children with Chinese nationals, had no criminal record and had not worked for remuneration in China. If they had engaged in illegal activities, they were deported to their countries of origin.

80. **A representative of China** said that the vocational education schools established in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region in accordance with Chinese laws and regulations were not re-education camps but centres for the rehabilitation of persons who had committed minor offences. The centres involved no deprivation of liberty and concentrated on teaching language, legal literacy and vocational skills. Their purpose was to deradicalize the population and root out extremism, and they did not involve any forced labour or profit-earning activities. Students retained the right to learn and use their national language during the learning. All such centres had closed in 2019.

81. In legal terms, ethnicity was not a factor in marriage, which was considered an institution protected by the State and resulted from the free will of a man and woman. Uighur women had sometimes faced cultural restrictions owing to stereotypes or traditional customs or practices. Some believed that they could enter into marriage only with Muslim men or that marriages must be approved by religious leaders. The Government was carrying out awareness campaigns to emphasize that the choice of a spouse was based on free will.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.