



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.: General
21 October 2024

Original: English

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Eighty-ninth session

Summary record of the 2102nd meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 16 October 2024, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Bethel (Rapporteur)

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In the absence of Ms. Peláez Narváez, Ms. Bethel (Rapporteur) took the Chair.

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

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

Tenth periodic report of Canada (CEDAW/C/CAN/10; CEDAW/C/CAN/QPR/10)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Canada joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Canada**, introducing her country's tenth periodic report (CEDAW/C/CAN/10), said that, since the creation of the Department for Women and Gender Equality in 2018, the Government of Canada had invested historic levels of funding in advancing equality. Furthermore, under the Canadian Gender Budgeting Act, which had also entered into force in 2018, the Government was required to report on the effect of all new budget measures in terms of gender and diversity. That legislation was complemented by the Gender Results Framework, which identified six key areas where change was most needed. The House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women played a key role in engaging parliamentarians, civil society and experts in that process and had submitted to the Government a number of reports on the critical issues facing women, girls and Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex plus (2SLGBTQI+) persons.
3. Launched in 2022, the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence was the product of close collaboration between the federal, provincial and territorial governments and Indigenous partners. The combined budget allocated by those governments to efforts to address and prevent gender-based violence amounted to more than 1 billion Canadian dollars (Can\$) over four years, starting from the 2022–23 budget cycle. The Department for Women and Gender Equality would publish its first annual report on implementation of the National Action Plan before the end of the year.
4. In addition to the National Action Plan, provinces and territories had implemented their own measures to end gender-based violence. In September 2024, provincial legislation had been passed in Nova Scotia in which intimate partner violence was described as an epidemic, and the provincial government had established a highest-risk domestic violence table. In 2021, the National Assembly of Quebec had passed legislation on the creation of a specialized court for cases concerning sexual and domestic violence, the implementation of which had been included among the aims of the Integrated Government Strategy to Counteract Sexual Violence, Domestic Violence and to Rebuild Trust 2022–2027.
5. In recent years, the Government of Canada had taken comprehensive action to address the systemic inequities created by colonialism, racism, sexism and ableism. In June 2023, it had published a five-year action plan to implement the legislation on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples that had come into effect in 2021. The action plan was made up of 181 measures, including specific measures to address violence against Indigenous women and girls. The final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls had been published in 2019; responding to the report remained a significant and urgent priority for the Government of Canada. As part of its Federal Pathway to Address Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ People, the Government of Canada had adopted the Indigenous Justice Strategy and the Indigenous Shelter and Transitional Housing Initiative. Under the latter, Can\$ 198 million had been invested in the construction of 380 safe spaces for Indigenous women, children and 2SLGBTQI+ persons experiencing and fleeing from violence. Two national gatherings of Indigenous leaders and representatives and federal, provincial and territorial governments on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQI+ persons had also been held. The first Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan had been launched in 2022.
6. As part of its commitment to gender equality for women in all their diversity, the Government of Canada had developed the Gender, Diversity and Inclusion Statistics Hub and had invested Can\$ 170 million in implementation of the Disaggregated Data Action Plan. In September 2024, it had approved a standardized approach to collecting and reporting on data on gender and sex assigned at birth.

7. In 2021, the Government had pledged to invest up to Can\$ 30 billion over five years to build the Canada-wide early learning and childcare system, with the aim of advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. Families of more than 750,000 children were already benefiting from the system, and provinces and territories had announced measures to create over 120,000 new affordable facilities. Eight provinces and territories delivered regulated childcare services for an average of Can\$ 10 per day or less, and the remaining jurisdictions had reduced parents' fees by at least 50 per cent. In 2023, the labour force participation rate of mothers aged 25 to 54 with young children had reached a record 79.7 per cent.

8. The Government of Canada had invested Can\$ 7 billion in the Women Entrepreneurship Strategy, which was aimed at increasing access to financing, networks and expertise for businesses owned by women. All employers were required by law to take measures to prevent and protect against harassment and violence in federally regulated workplaces, and Canada had ratified the International Labour Organization (ILO) Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) in January 2023.

9. Since 2016, Canada had been pursuing a feminist foreign policy built around its implementation of the feminist international assistance policy, the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, and its strategy on trade diversification and inclusive trade. Those initiatives focused on addressing the structural barriers that prevented gender equality, while taking into account the needs of those most affected by multiple forms of discrimination. Thanks to its feminist international assistance policy, Canada continued to rank among the top donors to women's rights organizations and investors in initiatives aimed at ending violence against women and girls and promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights.

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10. **Ms. Hacker** said that she would like to know what measures the Government took to ensure that the significant funds it had invested in promoting gender equality were being used effectively. She would appreciate it if the delegation could describe the impact assessment methodologies and follow-up strategies that it had implemented and share the experiences that it had gained on best and failed practices. For example, she wondered whether the Government had learned any particular lessons from its response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic in relation to protecting women's right to equality in times of crisis.

11. The Committee would be interested to know whether the Government had made any plans to improve the collection of data on women's right to equality in all provinces and territories, including disaggregated data enabling an analysis to be made of how gender intersected with other characteristics such as ethnicity, race, faith, disability, age, immigration status and economic background. It would also welcome further information on the progress made by the State party to establish a robust and transparent human rights accountability framework, in accordance with the recommendations that it had received under the universal periodic review. She wondered what steps the Government was taking to ensure that the new accountability framework was adequately resourced, provided for regular monitoring and involved the participation of all levels of government and engagement with civil society.

12. Lastly, she wished to know what steps the Government was taking or planned to take to change outdated stereotypes and perceptions of masculinity and to encourage men both to pursue careers in the care sector and to take on a greater share of the care burden at home.

13. **A representative of Canada** said that one of the guiding principles of the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence was that eradicating gender-based violence would not be possible without engaging men and boys. Specific activities were being carried out at the federal level and in the provinces and territories with the aim of encouraging men and boys to join the fight to end gender-based violence, including by educating them on how to avoid becoming perpetrators. The "Gender-Based Violence: It's Not Just" campaign was aimed at raising awareness among young people, including men and boys, about the different forms of gender-based violence, including technology-facilitated violence and economic violence.

14. **A representative of Canada** said that data on gender had been collected in a national census for the first time in 2021, and Statistics Canada was already carrying out preparatory work for the following census in 2026. The aim of the Disaggregated Data Action Plan, which had been launched in 2021, was to produce statistics showing the disparities in employment opportunities experienced by targeted groups, including Indigenous peoples, women and persons with disabilities. To that end, Statistics Canada was working on developing linkages between the census and other administrative data, adding new questions on gender, Indigenous identity, ethnicity and geographic location to existing surveys, and enhancing the sample size of key surveys on work and health. It was also committed to improving overall data standards in the country, including by providing funding for not-for-profit partners to strengthen their own disaggregated data collection. As a result of that work, a significant amount of disaggregated data had already been published by the Gender, Diversity and Inclusion Statistics Hub.

15. **A representative of Canada** said that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government had provided some Can\$ 300 million of emergency funding to over 1,400 organizations, including women's shelters, sexual assault centres and other organizations that offered critical support to victims of gender-based violence and intimate partner violence. Furthermore, under the Feminist Response and Recovery Fund, Can\$ 100 million had been invested in projects designed to address systemic barriers for marginalized and underrepresented women. According to Statistics Canada, nearly three quarters of all women had received financial support under at least one of the pandemic relief programmes. The Government had also contributed to international efforts to support women around the world during the pandemic.

16. Each year, to coincide with its presentation of the annual budget, the Government published a statement on the impact that the previous budget had made on progress towards its gender, diversity and inclusion goals. The Gender-based Analysis Plus mechanism was crucial in enabling effective impact assessment. In response to recommendations from a 2022 performance audit by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada, measures had been taken to improve monitoring and reporting and to strengthen the use of disaggregated data in the design, delivery and evaluation of policies. The Government was also working on implementing a series of recommendations made following a review of the Gender, Diversity and Inclusion Statistics Hub. Since 2022, evaluations had been carried out on the progress achieved under the Federal Victims Strategy, the federal Gender-based Violence Strategy and the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking. In each case, both the report and the Government's response had been made publicly available.

17. **A representative of Canada** said that children's day-care services cost between Can\$ 9 and Can\$ 10 per day. Following the introduction of the subsidized day-care system in 1997, the employment rate for women aged between 25 and 54 with children of preschool age had risen by approximately 10 percentage points over five years. In 2023, the employment rate for women had risen to an all-time high of 81.8 per cent.

18. **A representative of Canada** said that the Department of Canadian Heritage was responsible for ensuring that all recommendations made by the human rights treaty bodies or through the universal periodic review were shared with the relevant federal, provincial and territorial stakeholders. More frequent and formalized opportunities for engagement with civil society organizations, Indigenous organizations and experts were being organized to ensure that Canada was meeting its international obligations.

19. The National Recommendations Tracking Database of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was currently being piloted using the recommendations from the universal periodic review as a test. If successful, its use would be expanded to the recommendations of the other human rights treaty bodies. The Department for Women and Gender Equality engaged with stakeholders at all levels to enable a comprehensive approach to promoting women's rights and the rights of the 2SLGBTQI+ community. It issued a publicly available progress report on an annual basis.

20. **Ms. Hacker** said that she would like to know how the Government involved civil society in examining the effectiveness of surveys and applied its input to survey design.

21. **Ms. Akizuki** said that it would be of interest to know how the State party planned to increase the space and staff available for childcare programmes.

22. **A representative of Canada** said that Statistics Canada engaged with civil society when designing new surveys or refining existing ones, to ensure that the right questions were asked and that survey questions were sensitive to the needs of all population groups. The intensity of media coverage varied widely between surveys.

23. **A representative of Canada** said that the Government had invested around Can\$ 30 billion over five years to build a nationwide early learning and childcare system, including an Indigenous early learning and childcare framework, and had committed to annual ongoing investments of Can\$ 9.2 billion. Adopted in March 2024, the Canada Early Learning and Child Care Act increased accountability by setting out new reporting requirements and establishing the National Advisory Council on Early Learning and Child Care. Many provinces and territories were already ahead on the target daily childcare cost of Can\$ 10 per day and plans had been announced to create 115,000 new childcare spaces. Annual meetings were organized to monitor progress.

24. **Ms. Bonifaz Alfonzo** said that she would like to know how coordination was ensured between the Canadian Advisory Council on Gender Equality and the corresponding unit of the Department for Women and Gender Equality. She would welcome further details on the impact of the first national gender equality strategy and on its main short- and long-term objectives. She wondered whether the strategy had been developed from an intersectional perspective and whether the Ministry had sufficient financial resources to deliver on its mandate.

25. **Ms. Mikko** said that she would be grateful if the State party could provide disaggregated data or examples demonstrating the effectiveness of the special measures aimed at promoting gender equality, particularly regarding employment and political participation. She would also welcome updated information on the modernization of the Employment Equity Act and plans to implement the recommendations of the corresponding task force.

26. She wondered how the State party ensured that temporary special measures were inclusive of all groups of women, and what steps had been taken to establish an independent review of those measures. Lastly, she would like to know the extent to which Indigenous people were involved in decision-making on matters affecting them.

27. **A representative of Canada** said that collaboration across all levels of government and with civil society and the private sector was embedded in the country's approach to policymaking. For example, the Department for Women and Gender Equality regularly engaged with civil society organizations and provided them with funding to carry out projects. Reports on the results of those projects contributed to informing policy decisions.

28. Over 30 per cent of government representatives were women and a gender-balanced cabinet had been maintained since 2015, with women holding prominent ministerial positions. Canada currently had its first majority-women Supreme Court, with five female judges and four male judges. Women had represented 47 per cent of all federal judges in 2024, 53 per cent of all diplomatic officers in the Canadian foreign service in 2023, and 47 per cent of heads of mission in 2022.

29. **A representative of Canada** said that the Government had announced its intention to modernize the Employment Equity Act, including by creating two new designated groups under the Act, black people and 2SLGBTQI+ people; by replacing the term "Aboriginal Peoples" with "Indigenous Peoples" and updating the definition to include First Nations, Metis and Inuit; by replacing the term "members of visible minorities" with "racialized people" and updating the corresponding definition; and by aligning the definition of persons with disabilities with the Accessible Canada Act. In 2024, the Government had held consultations with affected communities and organizations representing unions and employers on how best to implement those changes.

30. **A representative of Canada** said that priority-setting was driven by the Government's engagement with partners. For example, the Government used a

distinctions-based approach to engage with Indigenous partners through permanent bilateral mechanisms.

31. **Ms. Hacker** said that she would like to know whether the State party would consider enhancing the mandate of the Department for Women and Gender Equality to include policymaking initiatives related to women's rights and not just promoting Gender-based Analysis Plus. She would be curious to learn what the State party believed could be the main barriers to engagement with civil society, and whether there were plans to develop a national action plan that included short-term measures.

32. **Ms. Mikko** said that she would be grateful for further information on the steps taken to ensure independent reviews of existing measures and initiatives to monitor progress and ensure transparency.

33. **A representative of Canada** said that the Auditor General had reviewed Gender-based Analysis Plus and issued recommendations for improvement. All government departments were required to assess how their policies contributed to meeting the specific objectives set out under the key pillars of the Gender Results Framework.

34. The disconnect between views on civil society engagement might stem from the varying requirements for engaging with stakeholders. It was also common for stakeholders to hope to have more control over decision-making than could be achieved in reality.

35. **A representative of Canada** said that the Department of Canadian Heritage led the overall federal, provincial and territorial engagement processes in relation to the Convention. Meetings were held with civil society and Indigenous organizations prior to the dialogue with the Committee and immediately afterwards so that concluding observations could be discussed. The Committee's recommendations would also be discussed at the level of senior officials and by the Forum of Ministers on Human Rights.

36. **Ms. Hacker** said that it would be of interest to know what approach was taken when non-governmental organizations representing Indigenous communities did not include women in their dialogue with the State party.

37. **A representative of Canada** said that Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada aimed to be as inclusive as possible. For example, it had met with over 100 representatives within the framework of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, including organizations representing Indigenous women in cases where women did not have direct representation in their governance structure. Differences in departments' access to funding had an impact on the number of stakeholders they could reach; however, there were currently multiple sources of funding for working with Indigenous partners.

38. **Ms. Rana** said that she would like to know what programmes were in place to raise men's and boys' awareness of the damage caused by perpetuating gender-based stereotypes; whether the State party had considered introducing mechanisms to hold media companies accountable for reinforcing harmful stereotypes; and how the Government planned to address discrimination against Indigenous peoples and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex people.

39. She would also like to know what consideration had been given to the recommendation contained in the report *Broken Lives, Broken Dreams: The Devastating Effects of Sexual Harassment on Women in the RCMP* that an external independent review should be conducted of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), its culture and its future, with a view to combating misogyny, racism and homophobia within its ranks. She wondered how the Government intended to enhance more meaningful community and civil society engagement in the implementation of the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence, and whether there would be independent oversight, monitoring and evaluation of the plan.

40. She asked whether the State party intended to expand the definitions of domestic violence in the Criminal Code to encompass psychological abuse and coercive control. She would appreciate information on any initiatives to ensure that the perpetrators of sexual violence were identified and prosecuted and that survivors received effective remedies.

Would the State party consider any alternatives to the adversarial legal system, such as restorative justice models, to better address cases of family and sexual violence?

41. She wished to know whether the delegation could shed light on the State party's efforts fully to implement the 2021 National Action Plan on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex and Asexual Plus People and the calls for justice contained therein, in particular Call for Justice 1.7 to establish a national Indigenous and human rights tribunal.

42. She would appreciate some insight into how the Government intended to tackle the continued practice of female genital mutilation. Lastly, she wished to know what measures were being taken to ensure that women and healthcare providers clearly knew what procedure must be followed to obtain free, prior, informed consent to medical treatment.

43. **Ms. Leinarte** said that she wondered whether the delegation could comment on the fact that comprehensive and disaggregated data on all forms of trafficking were not available in every jurisdiction in Canada. She wished to know how the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking responded to challenges such as the police's lack of resources and the grave threats to their safety faced by women and girls working in the extractive industries. She would also like to know how the Government ensured that trafficking survivors received compensation. She would be grateful for a description of the steps taken to protect women prostitutes against violence and to ensure that marginalized women and girls had some means of earning a livelihood other than prostitution.

44. **A representative of Canada** said that sexual stereotypes still existed, although they were prohibited by human rights legislation at the federal, provincial and territorial levels. The Government had therefore implemented a number of initiatives to promote gender equality, for example by making it easier for women to participate in the workforce. The National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence sought to change social norms, attitudes and behaviours through education and awareness-raising. The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission required licensed television and radio broadcasters to abide by the Canadian Association of Broadcasters' Equitable Portrayal Code, which set out rules to prevent the broadcasting of material that would be discriminatory, stereotyping, degrading or capable of stigmatizing certain groups, including on the basis of gender. The Gender Results Framework, introduced in 2018, helped to track key gender equality indicators, such as the proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, the gender wage gap and gender-based violence. The National Action Plan's expected results framework covered a variety of short-, medium-, long-term and ultimate outcomes. Annual reports provided by the provinces and territories formed the basis of a national annual report on progress in achieving those outcomes. The first report would be publicly released in the autumn of 2024. Additionally, in keeping with the National Action Plan, all bilateral funding agreements between the Federal Government and the provinces and territories contained a reference to an evaluation of measures to end gender-based violence.

45. **A representative of Canada** said that RCMP had provided comprehensive responses to the findings and recommendations in a number of reports. Institutional reforms had been carried out, including the establishment of a new independent centre for harassment resolution, which was staffed by civilians outside the chain of command. Work was under way to address systemic barriers and ensure a safe workplace for all employees. The aim of changes in leadership development and training was to take meaningful steps to improve the workplace culture. RCMP was developing an anti-racism strategy that would be launched in fiscal year 2024, and it had also taken steps to enhance application of the Gender-based Analysis Plus process.

46. **A representative of Canada** said that a new Action Plan on Combatting Hate launched just three weeks earlier constituted the first-ever comprehensive federal government approach to confronting hate. Its aim was not only to prevent and address fissures in society but also to foster a sense of connection, safety, belonging and trust. The action plan supported communities experiencing hate, including 2SLGBTQI+ communities and Indigenous peoples, and it complemented Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy 2024–2028. The three pillars of the action plan were: empowering communities to identify and prevent hate; supporting victims and survivors; and building community trust and partnerships and

institutional readiness. The action plan also focused on the importance of enhancing federal, provincial and territorial collaboration.

47. **A representative of Canada** said that the Government was committed to closing any gaps in the Criminal Code in order to combat all forms of gender-based violence and ensure a robust response by the criminal justice system. It supported a private member's bill to criminalize coercive control in intimate partner relationships and facilitate the investigation and prosecution of the new offence. In 2023, amendments to the Criminal Code had reversed the burden of proof in cases concerning intimate partner violence. That meant that persons with previous convictions of intimate partner violence had to offer the court convincing reasons why they should be released on bail.

48. The Government administered several funding programmes to address gender-based violence and promote better access to justice for those affected by it. Funding had also been made available to provinces, territories and non-governmental organizations to support initiatives to assist victims and survivors of sexual assault and intimate partner violence. The Government had announced that it would provide ongoing funding to increase and expand support for families of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQI+ peoples and Indigenous victims and survivors of crime. That support was provided by family information liaison units in each province and territory. Under the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights, victims and survivors of crime were entitled to information, protection and participation and to seek restitution. Furthermore, the Criminal Code contained provisions specifically aimed at supporting victims' participation in the criminal justice system.

49. **A representative of Canada** said that the government of Quebec had set up special courts to hear cases of gender-based and conjugal violence. By August 2024, the staff of centres providing assistance to crime victims had helped some 20,000 victims. Electronic tagging had been introduced to prevent perpetrators of domestic violence, conjugal violence or harassment from approaching their former victims.

50. **A representative of Canada** said that over 20 federal departments and agencies participated in the Federal Pathway to Address Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ People. Progress was being made on 10 out of 29 calls for justice exclusively involving the Federal Government and in 99 out of 186 calls for justice involving federal, provincial and territorial governments. With regard to Call for Justice 1.7, a ministerial special representative had engaged with over 600 people representing 125 national, regional and Indigenous organizations, as well as with governments at federal, provincial and territorial levels. The representative's report had been published in May 2024.

51. **A representative of Canada** said that a core area of action of her Government's feminist international assistance policy was to combat female genital mutilation and cutting. In 2019, the State party had committed itself to investing Can\$ 700 billion annually in promoting sexual and reproductive health rights and combating sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices. The National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence likewise provided for action to deliver high-quality and knowledge-based services to women and girls who had experienced female genital mutilation and cutting. Hospital administrators and health authorities were responsible for ensuring that free, prior and informed consent was given to medical procedures.

52. **A representative of Canada** said that the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking 2019–2024 rested on five pillars, namely empowerment, prevention, protection, prosecution and partnerships. The strategy was funded by an investment of Can\$ 57.2 million spread over five years. Coordination of all the federal departments involved was crucial, given the broad range of responsibilities and expertise that had to be brought to bear. The strategy brought together federal efforts to address the issue under one strategic framework. In order to ensure coordination, panels of officials met on a regular basis and, at a more senior level, issues related to human trafficking were raised at a forum of federal, provincial and territorial justice and public safety officials. There was ongoing investment in running community-based projects, developing guidelines for front-line community workers and delivering the national human trafficking awareness campaign. The Government had started work on a new iteration of the national strategy, which would be informed by the recommendations stemming from an evaluation of the current strategy, a report produced by

the Standing Committee on the Status of Women and targeted consultations with domestic and international stakeholders. Under the national strategy, foreign nationals were protected by inspections of employers, the issuance of temporary residence permits for victims of trafficking, and large-scale administrative investigations to detect and prevent forced labour.

53. **A representative of Canada** said that the Government was committed to studying the complex issues related to protecting sex workers. It was assessing the impact of the existing legislative framework and examining ways of strengthening the criminal law's response to violence and exploitation. Sex workers were supported through services that were appropriate to their diverse needs and through efforts to prevent exploitation and violence. The Government supported projects that helped those who wanted to remain in the sex trade, as well as those who wanted to leave it. Funding was also provided for projects led by those in or formerly in the sex trade that were aimed at preventing and dealing with the gender-based violence and stigma experienced in that setting.

54. **Ms. Leinarte** said that she had not received an answer to her question about financial reparation for survivors of trafficking. She would like to know why the establishment of a survivor-led advisory committee on human trafficking had been shelved or postponed. Since the purchase of sexual services had been criminalized back in 2014, she would appreciate an explanation of why legal texts and government policy still referred to the sex trade.

55. **Ms. Rana** said that she would like to know when the State party would implement Call for Justice 1.8 in order to provide sustainable funding to Indigenous women's organizations. She also wished to know whether the State party would implement a funding framework that targeted those impacted by discrimination and violence. She wondered whether the State party had any plans to recognize femicide as a distinct crime and make gender-based violence a key consideration in sentencing practices.

56. **Ms. Hacker** said that she would like to know how the Government made sure that persons fleeing domestic violence or trafficking in persons were adequately housed. With regard to impact assessments, and specifically in respect of the prevention of stereotyping in broadcasting, it would be useful to know what measures the relevant authority had put in place and to what effect; how many journalists and channel owners had been trained on gender stereotyping; and whether there had been a decline in the incidence of stereotyping. Similarly, had there been any research into the impact of the electronic bracelets mentioned earlier?

57. **Ms. de Silva de Alwis** said that she would be interested to know how the State party addressed the spread of cyberviolence in educational establishments.

58. **A representative of Canada** said that the Canadian approach to sex work followed the Nordic model, which was aimed at promoting the rights of women and girls by reducing demand for sexual services. The underlying premise was that the sex trade was a gendered practice that had a disproportionately negative impact on women, particularly Indigenous women and girls, and on marginalized individuals. At the same time, those involved should themselves be protected from criminalization. A distinction needed to be made between those individuals who entered the sex trade by choice and those who did not and were exploited.

59. **A representative of Canada** said that, under the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence, funding was provided to over a hundred Indigenous groups. In addition, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada funded Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQI+ organizations through a special support programme. To date, 28 organizations had been funded through 48 projects.

60. **A representative of Canada** said that, while there was no agreed definition of femicide at either the national or the international levels, in Canada it was understood to refer to the killing, primarily by men, of women and gender-diverse individuals because of their gender. That conduct was already comprehensively captured by the homicide provisions of the Criminal Code, which also provided that sentences handed down for gender-based violence must be proportionate to the gravity of the offence and the degree of responsibility of the offender, taking into account aggravating factors such as evidence that the offence was motivated by prejudice or by hate based on sex, gender identity or gender expression, or where the offender was found to have abused an intimate partner, a family member or a

member of the victim's family. Such considerations could also affect the offender's eligibility for parole. Statistics showed that, between 2009 and 2021, persons convicted of gender-related homicide had received longer sentences on average than those convicted of other forms of homicide.

61. Figures from Statistics Canada showed 1,125 gender-related homicides of women and girls between 2011 and 2021; in 66 per cent of cases the perpetrator had been an intimate partner, in 28 per cent a family member, in 5 per cent a friend or acquaintance, and in 1 per cent a stranger. While the rate of gender-related homicide had generally declined since 2001, there had been a 14 per cent increase between 2020 and 2021. Between 2011 and 2021, 21 per cent of victims had been Indigenous, even though Indigenous women and girls made up only 5 per cent of the female population.

62. **A representative of Canada** said that, in Nova Scotia, persons in receipt of income assistance who were fleeing abusive situations were entitled to a higher rate of that benefit, in recognition of the challenges involved in leaving a violent situation. Financial assistance might be provided for relocation outside the province, in situations of confirmed family violence. The government of Nova Scotia helped fund nine transition houses. A wide range of support was available, such as access to free shelter, basic necessities, emergency funding, crisis lines and counselling. For survivors of gender-based violence, the government of Nova Scotia had recently announced a new housing benefit, jointly funded by the province and the Government of Canada, which provided eligible applicants with financial assistance for housing for up to two years.

63. **A representative of Canada** said that many of the initiatives described, such as the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence, were still relatively new, which meant that there was limited scope for comprehensive impact assessment as yet. However, the various policy frameworks included mechanisms to track impact, not least to meet the expectations of parliamentarians, civil society and the general public. Reports on developments would certainly be made public.

Articles 7–9

64. **Ms. Stott Despoja** said that, while she commended the State party's strong representation of women in diplomacy and foreign affairs and welcomed the fact that the current Governor General was the first Indigenous woman and first Indigenous person to hold that office, the low rate of representation of women, particularly women facing intersecting barriers, in politics and management and on company boards remained a concern. She would like to know how the progress of organizations in implementing the 50–30 Challenge had been measured, what the current figures were, and whether there were any mandatory reporting mechanisms for large organizations and the private sector.

65. Given that, according to Statistics Canada, in 2020 women had accounted for only just over one fifth of board positions and that, according to the Canadian Women's Foundation, women of colour held only just over 6 per cent of those board and management positions that were held by women, she would be interested to know what steps the State party was taking to increase the representation of women of colour in all areas of public life in Canada. Had women had to give up positions as a consequence of Quebec's Act Respecting the Laicity of the State?

66. In the context of the impact of hate speech and online harassment on women's representation in political life, she would welcome an update on progress towards the adoption of Bill C-63, on online harms, and on any other measures taken to address hate speech and harassment, particularly that targeting women and girls. She would like to know whether the State party would consider including a clause in that bill obliging social media platforms to remove content inciting violence or hatred against women and girls, including hate speech that intersected with gender identity, faith and race.

67. **Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia** said that the Committee commended the extensive action taken by the State party to implement the recommendations contained in the report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The Committee had requested information, to be submitted as an annex to the State party's tenth periodic report, detailing the steps taken and planned in implementation of those recommendations.

In the absence of a response, the Committee wished to ask several questions. It would like to know: when the additional reports in accordance with article 9 (1) of the Optional Protocol to the Convention would be submitted by the State party; whether the 2021 budget allocation of Can\$ 2.2 billion had helped in addressing the root causes of the violence experienced by Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQI+ people and in better protecting Indigenous women; what concrete actions or reparations had been effected through the National Action Plan on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and in line with commitments to address the root causes of violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls; and whether the State party had instituted a mechanism for keeping records of disappeared or murdered people, especially women and girls, as part of an overall strategy to address disappearances among Indigenous people.

68. With regard to reforms aimed at addressing the citizenship challenges and harms suffered by First Nations, Indigenous and other marginalized groups of women, she would welcome information on how the resources allocated for implementation of Bill S-3, an Act to amend the Indian Act in response to the Superior Court of Quebec decision in *Descheneaux c. Canada (Procureur général)*, had been put to effective use to ensure that women and their descendants were aware of the new entitlements. What provision had been made for special measures for vulnerable groups of women and women whose registration had been rejected before the law had been amended? She would like to receive comprehensive statistics, disaggregated by sex, region and linguistic profile, showing how many Indigenous women had benefited from the legal reforms, and what percentage of the initial projections they represented.

69. Given the inequities that continued to affect registration, including the second-generation cut-off and the two parents rule, it would be useful to know what measures were available or planned to eliminate discrimination against women who wished to transfer their Indigenous status. Did applicants have assistance and legal and paralegal support in navigating the registration process?

70. She would appreciate an explanation of how the Secure Certificate of Indian Status smartphone app for filing applications under the supplemental Act effectively addressed the registration issues of the Indigenous community, how accessible the process was for Indigenous women, and whether they had the digital skills to use the app. She would be interested to know how long the registration procedure took on average.

71. She would appreciate clarification of an apparent contradiction in the State party's report, which stated at one point that initial reparations to the Indigenous people had been undertaken and at another that such measures were not being considered. She would like to know what plans existed for the provision of reparations in the future, over what time frame and under what conditions.

72. Lastly, she would be interested to know how unregistered Indigenous women and girls could access programmes and benefits related to early learning and affordable, accessible and culturally relevant childcare.

73. **A representative of Canada** said that, in respect of women's representation on company boards, the federal Government had jurisdiction only over certain sectors. Legislative amendments had recently been made to require regulated financial institutions, such as banks and insurance companies, to disclose information on diversity among directors and in senior management. Under the Canada Business Corporations Act, federally regulated corporations were required to disclose statistics on the representation of women and members of other equity-deserving groups. The Government had recently launched a website where it would publish information on participation and barriers to representation, in order to promote greater disclosure and visibility.

74. **A representative of Canada** said that the Online Harms Bill, C-63, had been introduced in February 2024. The Government had identified it as a priority and it had reached the second reading. Under the bill, social media were required to reduce the risk of exposure to harmful online content, including by making intimate content published without consent inaccessible within 24 hours. The possibility of expanding such obligations could certainly be considered.

75. The bill would amend the Canadian Human Rights Act to establish as a discriminatory practice the communication of hate speech through the Internet or other media, where such hate speech was likely to foment the vilification of an individual or group on the basis of a prohibited ground of discrimination. Individuals would have the right to bring complaints and seek remedies before the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

76. **A representative of Canada** said that a reply to the Committee's request for follow-up information on the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls was currently being drafted. The plan was to submit it by December 2024.

77. A report on the effective use of the Can\$ 2.2 billion would be published on a website currently being developed in cooperation with the Government's partners. Those partners would also publish their own progress reports. Support in that process was being provided by the National Family Survivor Circle.

78. Following a collaborative process on the second generation cut-off, launched by Indigenous Services Canada in November 2023, an Indigenous advisory mechanism had been set up to ensure that Indigenous perspectives were considered in the design and outcomes of the consultations. The mechanism included representatives from 17 national and regional women's Indigenous organizations. In addition, information sessions had been held to support the affected Indigenous and First Nations peoples and ensure that they were regularly engaged.

79. **Ms. Stott Despoja** said that, while she appreciated the complexities of a federal system, she would be glad to hear of any specific mechanisms or policies to encourage greater participation by women in Parliament and elsewhere, possibly even through the introduction of proportional representation. She was grateful to the delegation for its willingness to consider some of her suggestions on hate speech legislation; given that the bill was a priority, she wondered whether the delegation could be more specific about a date of adoption.

80. **Ms. Hacker** said that she wished to better understand what initiatives were being taken to increase the representation of Indigenous women, women of colour and other marginalized groups in political leadership at the municipal, provincial and federal levels. She would be interested to know more about the situation of Indigenous women who did not live on reserves, and particularly about funding and services, whether directly delivered to individuals or provided through non-governmental organizations.

Articles 10–14

81. **Ms. de Silva de Alwis** said that the State party had acknowledged the changing nature of the women and peace and security agenda, in response to emerging threats and new technologies, and had expressed a concern that lethal autonomous weapons systems might not be consistent with the principles underpinning that agenda. She would welcome the delegation's further comment on that subject.

82. Referring to the Committee's draft general recommendation No 40. on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems, and noting that, according to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) report on the global gender gap in innovation and creativity, Canada lagged behind the world average, she would like to know what measures the State party would take to secure gender parity in the design, development and deployment of new artificial intelligence technologies.

83. She would be interested to hear the delegation's views on how Indigenous women's contributions to science, research and innovation could be integrated into academic curricula and how Indigenous epistemology could be incorporated into data governance and data sovereignty. In the context of the WIPO Treaty on Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge, which referred to traditional cultural expressions and genetic resources as part of Indigenous traditional knowledge, she wondered how Canada might contribute to the evolution of international and domestic law in that respect.

84. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms prohibited discrimination on the grounds of mental or physical disability. In the light of the landmark decision handed down in the case of *Moore v. British Columbia (Education)*, finding that special education was not a dispensable luxury for those with severe learning disabilities, she wished to know how the

State party intended to rectify the financial difficulties that were hampering school districts' efforts to provide special education facilities.

85. Given the widening education gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the State party, she would welcome information on the percentage of Indigenous women in universities and on the faculty of academic institutions; on how Indigenous women were supported in their academic research; and on how many Indigenous women were working in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

86. In the wake of the revelations concerning the Indian residential school system, she would be interested to know how educational institutions in the State party could become centres for teaching truth and for healing and reconciliation. Two of the calls to action listed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada called for the revision of textbooks and the strengthening of learning through the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives, cultures, histories and contemporary realities. She would like to hear how the State party might advance those revisions and support the commemoration of former Indian residential school students and their families.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.