



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Summary record of the 1913th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 12 October 2022, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Peláez Narváez

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Ms. Peláez Narváez, Vice-Chair, 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)

Seventh periodic report of Armenia (CEDAW/C/ARM/7; CEDAW/C/ARM/Q/7; CEDAW/C/ARM/RQ/7)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Armenia joined the meeting.*
2. **The Chair**, welcoming the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the meeting, explained that the other members of the delegation would be participating via video link.
3. **Ms. Stepanyan** (Armenia), introducing her country's seventh periodic report ([CEDAW/C/ARM/7](#)), said that preparation of the report had coincided with the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and, in its final stages, with a pre-planned, large-scale military offensive launched by Azerbaijan against the people of Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2020. The war of aggression had been waged with the use of cluster munitions, explosive weapons and white phosphorous munitions. The targeting of hospitals and indiscriminate strikes against civilian infrastructure and the civilian population had claimed civilian lives and constituted a flagrant violation of international human rights and international humanitarian law. As a result of Azerbaijani hostilities, over 91,000 persons had been forcibly displaced, 88 per cent of them women and children.
4. In September 2022, Azerbaijan had launched an unprovoked, large-scale military attack on the sovereign territory of Armenia. The forces of Azerbaijan had shelled the densely populated cities of Armenia, killing 207, including 4 civilians. The attack had also damaged civilian infrastructure, for instance cutting off water and energy supplies, thereby triggering a humanitarian crisis; at least 7,600 people had been displaced, the majority of them women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities. Several captured Armenian service personnel had been killed or tortured, including several women who had been mutilated or subjected to sexual and gender-based violence. Shocking videos of barbaric torture and extrajudicial killings of Armenian prisoners of war were widely disseminated over social networks by the Azerbaijani side.
5. Although the COVID-19 pandemic and war unleashed by Azerbaijan had made the period since 2020 difficult for Armenia, her Government had made great progress with overcoming the gender imbalance in areas of public life and eliminating all forms of discrimination against women, including the 2019–2023 strategy and plan of action for the implementation of gender equality policies. The measures set out within the framework of that strategy were evaluated and published annually. In addition, the second National Action Plan for the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security had recently been developed and Armenia had been a main sponsor of General Assembly resolution 76/269 on the International Day of Women in Diplomacy, which would be celebrated on 24 June every year. Since 2020, within the framework of gender-sensitive budgeting, there had been a significant increase in State funding for measures aimed at tackling issues affecting women, such as participation in public life and prevention of gender-based violence and discrimination.
6. A unified reproductive health system had been established; in addition, standards and guidelines based on the nature and severity of diseases had been set out and could be accessed via a mobile application. The provision of obstetric and neonatal care services had been developed. Financial allocations to maternal and reproductive health care had increased, from 6.7 billion drams in 2017 to 7.9 billion drams in 2022. During pregnancy and childbirth and the post-partum period, women enjoyed free medical care, regardless of their social status and residence; hospital gynaecological care, including abortion, was free of charge for disadvantaged and vulnerable women throughout the country.
7. The Electoral Code had been amended to establish a quota of 30 per cent female candidates in elections to the National Assembly. Thanks to quotas introduced under legislative reforms, 9 per cent of ministers, 25 per cent of deputy ministers and 27 per cent

of the judiciary were women. Women's participation in local government had also been increased.

8. Women and girls accounted for 37 per cent of the information and communications technology sector; Armenia ranked fourth in the world for that indicator. The country's membership of the Action Coalition on Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality demonstrated its commitment to women's active involvement in the field. In urban and rural areas, a comprehensive network of technology laboratories and centres had been established, in which women and girls actively participated.

9. Lastly, Armenia had been elected as a member of the Commission on the Status of Women for the period from 2019 to 2023 and had chaired the sixty-fourth and sixty-fifth sessions. As a member of the Commission, Armenia had reaffirmed its commitment to supporting global efforts towards gender equality.

10. A representative of Armenia said that the draft law on ensuring legal equality defined the concept of discrimination in all its forms and provided for mechanisms for ensuring equality before the law. The draft law was in line with the principles set out in the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, among other instruments, and covered all prohibited grounds of discrimination prescribed in article 1 of Protocol No. 12 to the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. While the draft had been submitted to the Government in December 2019, following extensive public consultation with all relevant stakeholders, including the country's human rights and civil society organizations, additional reforms had been deemed necessary as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the aggression by Azerbaijan against the people of Artsakh, or Nagorno Karabakh; since it had also needed to seek expert opinions from the Council of Europe on provisions in respect of hate speech, the Government had decided to extend the drafting process. The draft law on ensuring legal equality was being finalized and the Government aimed to enact it in the course of 2023.

11. The new Criminal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure and Penalties Enforcement Code had entered into force on 1 July 2022. The revised Criminal Code included a more precise definition of discrimination, based solely on differential treatment that infringed another person's rights or freedoms, no longer requiring the concepts of damage to rights or legitimate interests to be proved. The revised Code also criminalized forced marriage and forced pregnancy by means of violence or the threat of violence, blackmail or financial abuse, along with the performance of an abortion or sterilization without the person's prior, informed consent. In addition, the revised Code criminalized the grooming of minors under 16 years of age. Furthermore, the provisions of the Code concerning trafficking in persons and prostitution had been amended to include forcing a person to perform illegal acts and taking cells, biological material or bodily fluid from her or him.

12. In respect of domestic violence, the new Criminal Code included a new definition of "close relative", which now encompassed relationships such as grandparent, stepbrother or stepsister and legal guardian as well as spouse, parent and child. The revised Code stated that, where an offence included elements of domestic violence, perpetrators could not be released from criminal responsibility on the ground of reconciliation with the victim. Law enforcement officers, judges, prosecutors and investigators underwent training that included courses on preventing violence against women and domestic violence.

13. Lastly, of the 39 judges appointed in 2021, 19 had been women. Of the 39 persons appointed as judges in 2022, 10 had been women.

14. **A representative of the Office of the Human Rights Defender of Armenia**, drawing attention to the alternative report submitted to the Committee by her Office, said that she had recently established a Council on Women's Rights to advance the women's agenda within the framework of her mandate. However, the Azerbaijani aggression against Armenia in September 2022 had disproportionately affected thousands of Armenian women and girls, including those with disabilities. The war crimes committed by Azerbaijani military forces against female personnel, who had been targeted for their gender and ethnicity, had been perpetrated with particular cruelty. The video footage and other images of killed Armenian women that had been posted on social media had demonstrated particular gender hatred.

15. The Office of the Human Rights Defender strongly recommended the enactment of clear anti-discrimination legislation, which was lacking, and the establishment of a body for the promotion of equality. As national legislation was not consistent with international standards on violence against women, and Armenia had yet to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), her Office also recommended that the Government should criminalize all acts of gender-based violence, including stalking, and enhance procedural safeguards for victims. In addition, it recommended that the Government should systematically publish comprehensive statistics on domestic violence cases, ensure access, including for women with disabilities, to shelters and State-funded services throughout the country and provide tailored training to first responders to domestic violence and standard operating procedures for law enforcement and judicial personnel.

16. The disproportionate targeting and persecution of human rights defenders working on women's rights in Armenia and the sexual harassment of female public figures online remained a matter of concern.

17. With a view to combating sex-selective abortions, the Office recommended that harmful stereotypes about women and girls should be subject to penalties that dissuaded the media from perpetuating them.

18. Women remained underrepresented in decision-making positions, with the exception of the parliament, where they made up more than 33 per cent of members owing to the steadily increasing gender quota. Since women headed just 1 of the 12 government departments, 1 of 11 of the country's regional administrative divisions (*marzer*) and 8 of the 502 municipal communities (*hamaynkner*), and no women headed a security or law enforcement body, the Office recommended concrete measures to promote women's political and economic participation along with gender-sensitive budgeting and improved quotas for law enforcement bodies. In addition, it recommended that the Government should introduce labour legislation on workplace sexual harassment, improve women's access to health care and combat discrimination in respect of such access and provide displaced women and girls with targeted State support, including mental health care.

Articles 1–6

19. **Ms. Nadaraia** said that she welcomed the State party's continued commitment to its international obligations, as illustrated by the signature of new instruments in the middle of a highly complex political, economic and security situation aggravated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

20. Recalling the non-discrimination provisions contained in article 29 and the legal equality guarantees set forth in article 30 of the Constitution, she asked when the State party expected to adopt the draft law on ensuring legal equality, which had been pending for years.

21. The Committee greatly appreciated the State party's efforts in promoting the women and peace and security agenda through the adoption of successive national action plans on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). She wondered how the Government intended to implement the second National Action Plan adopted in 2022 and ensure women's leadership, including in terms of political participation and women's role in peace negotiations.

22. She asked whether gender-sensitive indicators had been incorporated into the Strategy for Judicial and Legal Reforms, 2019–2023. If so, she would be grateful if the delegation could elaborate on the nature and prospective use of those indicators.

23. It would be helpful to learn about steps taken to implement the recommendation by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) for the Office of the Human Rights Defender to strengthen the implementation of its anti-discrimination mandate, in particular regarding lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons' rights and women's rights.

24. Information was also needed on specific measures taken to institutionalize gender-sensitive human rights education. The delegation might wish to provide statistical data on the training of judges, prosecutors and law enforcement officers and describe the way in which progress was monitored to assess the impact of public funds allocated for such purposes.

Information on the nature and extent of support provided to women by the Office of the Human Rights Defender would also be appreciated.

25. The Committee would be grateful for information on the progress made in the establishment of a fact-finding commission to explore past human rights violations in Armenia since 1991. Did the mandate of the commission include a review of such violations from a gender perspective?

26. **A representative of Armenia**, recalling the content and drafting process of the bill on ensuring legal equality, as described in paragraphs 15 and 16 of the State party report ([CEDAW/C/ARM/7](#)) and paragraphs 1 to 3 of the replies to the list of issues ([CEDAW/C/ARM/RQ/7](#)), said that the Council of Europe expert opinion on hate speech laws, gaps in domestic legislation and recommendations on ways to address those gaps would serve as a benchmark for the hate speech provisions in the new Criminal Code. The amended bill was currently being reviewed to identify any additional need for revision, including with regard to the new hate speech components. Following a final round of discussions and public consultations, the bill would be submitted for government approval. Adoption was expected within the coming 12 months.

27. **A representative of Armenia** said that the new Criminal Code provided a more precise definition of discrimination and set forth a non-exhaustive list of protected characteristics. It also contained provisions on hate speech and incitement to hatred, details of which were set out in paragraph 71 of the replies to the list of issues.

28. Information and statistics on in-person and online training courses on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence for investigators, prosecutors and judges conducted in 2020 were provided in annex II of the replies to the list of issues. The training courses had also comprised elements relating to the definition and specifics of investigation of violence against children. Furthermore, investigators had been offered a course on case law of the European Court of Human Rights. The same courses had been offered again in subsequent years. In 2020, the Academy of Justice had also provided training on equality and discrimination and international human rights law. Courses for judges and candidates offered in 2021 had covered equality and discrimination, case law of the European Court of Human Rights, constitutional law and constitutional justice in the Republic of Armenia, and gender-based violence.

29. **A representative of Armenia** said that temporary special measures had been adopted to increase women's representation in political decision-making, including the introduction of a 30 per cent quota in local elections and a 30 per cent quota for women in the parliament. Following the most recent elections, 34 per cent of seats in the parliament were held by women. In 2022, the first-ever woman governor and woman prosecutor general had been elected. A series of measures had been taken to remedy the unequal representation of women in top civil service positions and in law enforcement. Several positions in the recently established Patrol Service were reserved for women; a number of women had already joined the Service.

30. **A representative of Armenia** said that, like its predecessor, the new Strategy for Judicial and Legal Reforms for the period 2022–2026 envisaged the establishment of a fact-finding commission. Progress in that regard had been delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the outbreak of war in Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020. The new Strategy had been adopted in July 2022 and draft legislation on the establishment of a fact-finding commission would now be developed. It had been decided to explore options for establishing the commission within existing structures, possibly within the Office of the Human Rights Defender, rather than creating a new institution. As with other reforms, the Government would work closely with the Council of Europe and civil society organizations. The draft law was expected to be finalized by June 2023 with a view to the commission's establishment by the end of that year.

31. The current Strategy for Judicial and Legal Reforms, 2022–2026, provided for access to free legal aid. Amendments on the Law on Advocacy were also envisaged to regulate the provision of pro bono legal services. Persons who did not meet the requirements for free legal aid and lacked the financial means to hire a lawyer could seek assistance through voluntary pro bono legal services. The Strategy was implemented according to the set timeline. The

Council of Europe had carried out a gender assessment of the Strategy and indicators for annual evaluation were in place.

32. **Ms. Ameline**, commending the State party for its strong commitment to democracy and the principle of the universality of human rights, said that the consolidation of the country's legislative and institutional framework was of critical importance. It would be useful to hear about any specific measures aimed at enhancing gender mainstreaming in the parliament, including in terms of budgeting, parliamentary structures, governance and legislative procedures.

33. It appeared that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were not systematically involved in legislative reform processes, and she wondered what policies were in place to ensure the effective participation of NGOs throughout the country. It would be helpful to obtain information on the way in which the legal protection afforded to human rights defenders was implemented in practice.

34. In the absence of a ministry responsible for equality, existing institutions must be strengthened and better coordinated. Further information on the mandate and resources allocated to the State party's institutions in charge of gender equality and on coordination and cooperation between the Office of the Human Rights Defender and the Legal Equality Council would be appreciated. It would also be useful to find out whether the regional offices of the Human Rights Defender were provided with sufficient resources to ensure their proper functioning.

35. In the light of the recent reforms aimed at decentralization, she wondered how government services were coordinated at the regional level. She would also be curious to learn more about the way in which gender equality policies and legislation were implemented and coordinated at the local level.

36. It would be interesting to have an account of steps taken to make gender equality a priority objective of the State party's cooperation with the European Union and to ensure equal representation of women in the coordination, implementation and governance of relevant plans and programmes.

37. She wondered to what extent the State party expected to integrate the Committee's recommendations emerging from the current dialogue in its gender policy and actions. While the Government's strong political commitment to gender equality was laudable, practical implementation required financial resources and comprehensive data collection, among other things. The State party should harness the entire array of technological, financial, administrative and educational tools at its disposal to achieve de facto gender equality on the ground.

38. **Ms. Manalo**, commending the State party for the temporary special measures adopted to enhance women's representation in political life, asked whether there were any plans to use such measures in the areas of education and private sector employment and for specific groups of women such as rural women.

39. **A representative of Armenia** said that the first National Action Plan on the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) adopted in February 2019 had been designed on the basis of inclusive consultations with NGOs, civil society and women affected by war, among others. The successor document adopted in June 2022 contained new provisions on cooperation and a new approach to monitoring the effectiveness of the measures taken. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had included a gender dimension in foreign policy to build and enhance cooperation with other actors, States and international organizations in that area. The National Action Plan was part and parcel of the country's human rights policy and provided a framework for a coherent approach to gender policymaking. It created synergies between stakeholders and provided effective protection from the impact of violent conflicts.

40. The international community had been shocked by the footage circulated on social media showing the mutilated corpses of female service personnel. Sex crimes had been committed against those women while they were either alive or had been killed. The Human Rights Defender documented all cases of violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. It should be stressed that Security Council resolution 1325 (2000)

emphasized the responsibility of all States to put an end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes including those relating to sexual and other violence against women and girls.

41. Owing to the violation of the sovereignty of Armenia, the Government had expanded its protection of displaced persons in the border regions and created psychosocial support mechanisms to ensure the mental and physical well-being of affected populations, particularly women and children. Despite the difficult circumstances, the Government would continue its cooperation with international mechanisms and ensure respect and implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), including by ensuring women's participation in negotiations.

42. **Ms. Stepanyan** (Armenia) said that the Council on Women's Issues established in 2019 was a key platform for dialogue between parliamentarians, government representatives and civil society.

43. **A representative of the Office of the Human Rights Defender of Armenia** said that the Council on Women's Rights provided a forum for her Office to consult with members of civil society representing various communities and regions and for civil society organizations, human rights activists and other actors to work collectively to promote women's rights and the rights of other groups, including persons with disabilities. The Office was fully funded by the State, and its budget had been increased by at least 10 per cent in each of the three previous fiscal years. It was present in four of the country's 11 regions and would open a fifth regional office in 2023.

44. **A representative of Armenia** said that an education development strategy that would cover the period until 2030 was before the National Assembly. One of the strategic priorities under the strategy – which, once adopted, would be the only sectoral strategy to have the status of a law – was to build a better connection between the labour market and educational institutions and increase the employability of graduates. Long- and short-term dual education programmes, which were one of the main tools for bringing the private sector and the educational system together, had been in place since 2017, and the Government was drafting a bill on vocational education. A pilot project had been launched for joint public-private management of educational institutions, and a regional college was currently under such joint management. Women accounted for around half of students in vocational education programmes and more than half of students in higher education. Professional orientation was provided to secondary school students to enable them to choose career paths traditionally considered to be for men.

45. **A representative of Armenia** said that for several years the Ministry of Economy had been running programmes to boost entrepreneurship in rural regions, including one that had been launched during the COVID-19 pandemic.

46. **Ms. Manalo** said that she wished to know what steps the State party had taken to protect human rights defenders from attacks and hate speech.

47. **A representative of Armenia** said that one measure taken to eliminate discrimination and hate speech against human rights defenders had been the inclusion of specific provisions criminalizing those practices in the Criminal Code.

48. **Ms. Tisheva** said that she wished to find out what measures the State party was taking, under its administrative, civil and criminal laws, to counter gender stereotyping and hate speech; what bodies were responsible for the implementation of those measures; how efforts to monitor and prevent gender stereotyping would be incorporated into its gender equality strategies; whether it would adopt a comprehensive policy, encompassing all sectors of society, to eliminate gender stereotyping and hate speech; and when hate speech based on sex, gender or intersectional grounds for discrimination against women would be criminalized. She wished to know what specific steps were being taken to counter the myths and propaganda spread by the "anti-gender" movement, whose claims that gender equality laws would undermine the traditional family jeopardized legislative efforts to combat violence against women.

49. It would be helpful to know when the State party planned to make domestic violence a separate criminal offence under the Criminal Code, introduce penalties for non-compliance

with protection orders and criminalize stalking and other forms of gender-based violence. She would also like to find out how many shelters had been established and support services introduced under the law on the prevention of violence within the family, protection of victims of violence within the family and restoration of peace in the family; how many of those shelters were located outside Yerevan; and what mechanisms existed to ensure that they had sufficient financial, human and technical resources. It was important for those shelters to provide specialized care for women with disabilities and members of other vulnerable groups.

50. She wished to know whether the State party planned to include a consent-based definition of sexual violence in the Criminal Code, explicitly criminalize marital rape and adopt a gender-sensitive methodology for the investigation and prosecution of sexual violence offences. She would appreciate an update on the State party's progress towards ratification of the Istanbul Convention.

51. **Ms. Gabr** said that she wished to know how effective the various mechanisms implemented by the State party to handle cases of trafficking in persons – which included various handbooks, action plans and a special police unit – were in practice; how many judgments had been handed down in such cases; why there were long delays in obtaining judgments; why perpetrators remained free pending judgment; and whether the State party had considered setting up separate courts for cases of trafficking in persons or prioritizing such cases before regular courts. She would appreciate further information on the mechanism in place to coordinate efforts to counter trafficking in persons, including its mandate, composition and funding, and on the national action plan on the issue. She wished to find out what accounted for the reported lengthy delays in processing cases of trafficking in persons, what protections were provided to victims and witnesses, whether the State party had conducted any studies on the root causes of trafficking in persons or any awareness-raising campaigns among groups whose members were at high risk of being trafficked, and how effective the State party's Victim Identification Commission was. It would be helpful to know how many shelters were in place for victims, whether there were separate shelters for women and children and for men, whether the non-governmental organizations that helped run the shelters received training and were supervised, and what role would the Council on Women's Rights play in combating trafficking. She wished to know whether the State party planned to suspend the administrative fines imposed on women in prostitution and what it was doing to provide job opportunities to women wishing to leave prostitution and to discourage demand for prostitution.

52. **A representative of Armenia** said that the Ministry of Justice had run television announcements, produced videos and posters, posted information on social media and engaged in other efforts to raise awareness of stereotypes and present a vision of traditional family values that was based on love and respect. Following the country's signing of the Istanbul Convention, the Minister of Justice had organized discussions with stakeholders to explain why the Government was working towards its ratification. The Ministry had begun reviewing domestic laws related to domestic violence and violence against women and proposing amendments that would bring the laws into line with the Convention. Awareness-raising activities were also held, including the "Silence Is Violence" campaign run in 2021, during which videos, banners and other informational materials had been prepared and a website launched to inform the public about domestic violence and violence against women. In the summer of 2022, a government delegation had undertaken a study tour in Georgia to learn about the steps that that country had taken both before and after its ratification of the Convention. The Government remained committed to ratifying the Convention.

53. **Ms. Stepanyan** (Armenia) said that the support centres for victims of domestic violence operated throughout the country and provided assistance to some 1,500 persons each year. The Government invited tenders and awarded grants to NGOs to provide services at those centres. The two domestic violence shelters in place provided assistance to between 130 and 150 women and children every year. Victims of domestic violence could stay at the shelters free of charge for up to 12 months and also received psychological, legal and other forms of support. Victims were also eligible for cash assistance. The Government provided financial support to meet victims' basic minimum needs from the start and cover or partially cover the costs of certain types of treatment. The budget allocated to domestic violence

programmes, including those that supported employment opportunities and economic empowerment, would be doubled in 2023. There had also been a number of inter-agency efforts to prevent domestic violence by disseminating information through multiple channels, including the media.

54. **A representative of Armenia** said that a consent-based approach to sexual violence offences was reflected in the new Criminal Code. The Code criminalized acts of a sexual nature that were committed against or in disregard of the will of the victim; hence, without the victim's consent. Furthermore, criminal liability arose under certain provisions if an act of a sexual nature was committed without reasonable belief of the victim's consent.

55. **Ms. Stepanyan** (Armenia) said that the country's sixth National Action Plan on the Fight against Trafficking in Persons and Exploitation was currently in place. The plan was being monitored and the results being used to the prepare the seventh plan, which would be adopted in 2022. The plan aimed to take a comprehensive approach to the fight against trafficking, consolidate efforts and provide capacity-building for specialists in order to prevent cases and identify victims and to improve support and protection mechanisms more effectively. The Council on the Fight against Trafficking in Persons and Exploitation was headed by the Deputy Prime Minister and included representatives of agencies and of civil society. It submitted annual reports to the National Assembly. It had already met once in 2022 and would meet again that year. The Victim Identification Committee met regularly. There was one State-funded shelter, and NGOs participated in its operation. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs provided a variety of training programmes on trafficking in persons.

56. **A representative of Armenia** said that harsher penalties applied to the crime of trafficking when the victim was unable to resist, control his or her actions or understand what was being done to him or her owing to a physical or mental condition. The Academy of Justice provided training on trafficking in persons to law enforcement officials. To reduce delays in criminal proceedings, time limits had been set for all procedural actions under the new Code of Criminal Procedure. In addition, reserve judges were appointed in cases that were expected to be especially difficult or lengthy. The reserve judge would follow the proceedings and thus be able to replace the judge hearing the case if needed.

57. In 2021, 16 criminal cases had concerned the exploitation of persons who had been trafficked and in 2020, 10 such cases had been initiated, 7 of which had related to the labour exploitation of those persons. In 2021, nine cases had pertained to their sexual exploitation against just one in 2020. In 2021, two of the criminal cases related to sexual exploitation had been referred to the courts and two had been joined in one investigation. There had been an acquittal in one case and another had been stayed in accordance with the Code of Criminal Procedure. Four cases were currently under way. Eight people had been charged with sexual exploitation. One perpetrator had been sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment under article 132 of the Criminal Code. One of the victims had been a minor. One person who had been charged with labour exploitation had been sentenced to 7 years' imprisonment under article 132 of the Criminal Code. 14 persons, including 5 minors, had been identified as victims of labour exploitation. In the first half of 2022, a criminal case involving sexual exploitation in the United Arab Emirates, which had been suspended in 2007, had been resumed because the suspect had been apprehended. Another criminal case of labour exploitation concerned a woman who had been trafficked and who had then been working as a waitress. In a further case, which had ended in acquittal, the woman had been engaged in sex work. In another case, the suspect had been banned from leaving the country as a preventive measure. In the first half of 2022, a criminal case which had been suspended in 2013 had been resumed because the accused had been apprehended and ordered not leave her place of residence. Another case from 2012 concerning labour exploitation in the United Arab Emirates, where the victim had been working as a cleaner, had finally been heard in 2022. In the same year, a case involving forced begging had been referred to court.

58. **Ms. Tisheva** said that she wished to know whether non-compliance with a protection order issued by a court was deemed a criminal offence. She wondered whether sex and gender were specifically mentioned as motives in the provisions criminalizing hate speech.

59. **Ms. Gabr** said that she would like to know whether the awareness-raising campaign had covered hotlines, studies of the root causes of the trafficking and exploitation of prostitutes and the protection of victims and witnesses. She would also appreciate a description of government measures to discourage demand for prostitution.

60. **Ms. Manalo** said that she, too, was interested in learning what activities under the National Action Plan were aimed at addressing the root causes of trafficking in persons, particularly women and girls who were then exploited as prostitutes. The Committee would be grateful for disaggregated data on any investigations into trafficking that had been initiated during the reporting period. It would be helpful to know what proportion of trained professionals were assigned to work on trafficking cases.

61. **A representative of Armenia** said that one provision of the current Code of Administrative Offences dealt with prostitution, but in the new Code it would no longer be regarded as an offence. Gender as a motive of hate speech was mentioned in the Criminal Code. The Ministry of Justice was currently working with the National Assembly to address gaps in the new Criminal Code and Code of Administrative Offences, such as a lack of any reference to gender as a motive of hate speech in the latter, and to bring them into line with international standards by the first half of 2023.

62. **Ms. Stepanyan** (Armenia) said that replies to all requests for statistics would be supplied in writing. In 2021, unified social services had been established throughout the country to provide a primary response to families' special needs.

Articles 7–9

63. **Ms. Manalo** said that she wished to know how the State party intended to achieve the 30 per cent quota of women's representation in the parliament. What steps was it taking to increase women's participation in decision-making in the municipal communities? She would appreciate a description of any programmes that existed to encourage women to join the diplomatic service or to apply for positions in international organizations.

64. **Ms. Gabr** said that she would like to know how the birth of children of internally displaced persons was registered. What was the legal status of the 90,000 persons, many of them women and children, who had arrived in Armenia from Nagorno Karabakh? Given that there were gaps in legislation governing the acquisition and loss of Armenian citizenship, she wondered what measures were taken to prevent statelessness.

65. **A representative of Armenia** said that, in June 2022, a gender quota had been introduced under the new Electoral Code. As of 25 September, there would be female leaders in three communities, one which was belonged to an ethnic minority and 21 women would take their places in the Council of Elders of four provinces.

66. **A representative of Armenia** said that priority was given to the needs of women when the requirements of internally displaced persons were assessed. Persons who had arrived in Armenia from Nagorno Karabakh could not be given refugee status as they were regarded as Armenian citizens.

67. **A representative of Armenia** said that men and women had equal rights to Armenian citizenship. The migration and citizenship services would be merged as part of the reorganization of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Any methodological issues would then be reviewed, and an attempt would be made to resolve them. The staff of those services would receive training that alerted them to the sensitive issue of displaced persons' needs.

68. **A representative of Armenia** said that data on women diplomats were constantly changing as they moved from post to post. At the beginning of 2022, 3 heads of department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were women and 13 divisions were headed by women. All in all, 84 members of the diplomatic staff of the Ministry were women, 6 ambassadors and a total of 52 members of embassy staff were women. Promotion was based on merit. There was no discrimination against female diplomats. Admission examinations to the Ministry's diplomatic school were announced in the print and digital media. The first-ever female ambassador had been Armenian. She had been appointed as Ambassador to Japan from 1918 to 1920. Women from various ministries participated in international forums. They were selected in light of their professional capacity without any discrimination whatsoever.

Articles 10–14

69. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that she commended the State party on its educational strategies. She would, however, like to know the timeline for finalizing and implementing the draft procedures for the identification, registration and referral of children who dropped out of compulsory education. How would the gender component be integrated into the draft procedures? The Committee wished to ascertain how many women from minorities received free tuition. How did the State party ensure that performance criteria did not have an adverse effect on women's educational opportunities? She wondered whether women's organizations and gender specialists had been consulted during the review by the Ministry of Education of the subject-related standards in general education, in order to ensure that a gender component was reflected in them. Given that the eight-hour course devoted to sexual and reproductive health, called "Healthy Lifestyle", focused on abstinence, she wished to know whether the State party would consider replacing the course with comprehensive sex education in accordance with the Committee's definition of such education.

70. In the light of the COVID-19 pandemic's disproportionate impact on girls' education, she was curious to learn how the State party was addressing the digital divide, as girls were less likely than boys to have access to digital devices, what it was doing to facilitate teachers' access to technology and how it was tackling the issue of poor connectivity in rural areas. How did it plan to make up for the learning time that had been lost during the pandemic?

71. As far as infrastructure was concerned, the Committee would like to know what steps Armenia intended to take to honour its commitments under the Safe Schools Declaration and whether it had explicitly undertaken to protect schools during conflict. What steps was the State party taking to remedy the disproportionate harm to girls' education as a result of the hostilities to which the head of the delegation had referred? She urged the State party to ensure that a gender component was taken into account when schools were rebuilt.

72. Turning to the subject of inclusive education, she would like to hear what specific measures were in place to encourage girls to take up what had been traditionally seen as men's professions, to revise textbooks to remove gender stereotypes and bias, to improve teaching methods, to include peace education and gender equality education and to assist students with disabilities. In order to assess the accessibility of information for students with disabilities, the collection of disaggregated data should be centralized. Lastly, she wished to know what steps were being taken to make vocational education accessible to girls, women with disabilities and transgender women.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.