



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

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

### Summary record of the 2037th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 2 February 2024, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia (Vice-Chair)

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*In the absence of Ms. Peláez Narváez, Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia (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)**

*Sixth periodic report of Turkmenistan (CEDAW/C/TKM/6; CEDAW/C/TKM/Q/6; CEDAW/C/TKM/RQ/6)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Turkmenistan joined the meeting.*
2. **Ms. Bashimova** (Turkmenistan), introducing her country's sixth periodic report, said that a complete digital population and housing census had been conducted in line with international standards in December 2022. A significant number of the census officers and supervisors had been women. The census had shown that the population of Turkmenistan stood at just over 7 million people, with women representing 50.04 per cent of the population. A little over half of the population lived in rural areas, and 57 per cent were of working age.
3. Turkmenistan had signed and ratified a number of United Nations instruments for the protection of women's interests and gender equality, and had been consistent in its efforts to implement the Convention and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. It had also signed a number of international treaties, including the International Labour Organization (ILO) Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144), and the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled.
4. Gender equality was a key area of all national programmes for socioeconomic development, which were interlinked with the Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment. In 2023, the country had undergone its second voluntary national review regarding its implementation of the Goals.
5. Following the 2023 elections, women represented 26 per cent of deputies in the parliament, and the speaker of the parliament was a woman for the third time. Women accounted for 28.8 per cent of the representative bodies in the provinces and 29.6 per cent in the districts, and 28 per cent in local government bodies. In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26.4 per cent of the staff were women, 21.5 per cent of whom held the rank of diplomat, and there was one female deputy minister. Concerning foreign diplomatic representation, women made up 9.7 per cent of diplomats, and two female diplomats had been granted the highest State award of Hero of Turkmenistan. Women were also present in the Cabinet of Ministers and in the most senior positions at universities and media outlets. Currently, 22.4 per cent of entrepreneurs were women.
6. The Government had developed a National Plan of Action for Gender Equality for the period 2021–2025 which included seven strategic areas. To strengthen the mechanisms protecting human rights, new pieces of legislation had been introduced and amendments had been made to existing legislation, including the Family, Labour, Social and Criminal Codes. In 2020, a survey on women's health and family status in Turkmenistan had been carried out in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which covered key topics related to gender-based violence. Subsequently, a road map of measures to be implemented had been developed, based on the recommendations from the study.
7. Regarding the rights of refugees and stateless persons, over 30,000 people had been granted citizenship and around 6,000 had received residence permits in the last 10 years. Over the previous four years, women had represented 55 per cent of individuals who had been granted citizenship and 80 per cent of individuals who had received residence permits.
8. Awareness-raising campaigns were regularly conducted to combat harmful gender-based stereotypes that led to discrimination against women, and the Women's Union of Turkmenistan worked with members of parliament to implement measures to promote gender equality. The Government supported non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that protected women's rights. Modules on gender were included in the training courses for middle managers at the Public Service Academy attached to the Office of the President, and

the Supreme Court of Turkmenistan had an information centre which held seminars for judges to improve public servants' awareness of human rights and gender equality.

9. Women and girls were able to study any subject, including scientific and technical subjects. For the 2023/24 academic year, girls represented 45.4 per cent of students in higher-level vocational education establishments and 65.7 per cent in secondary-level vocational education establishments. Girls also made up 33 per cent of students studying abroad. About 5,000 young people with disabilities were in education across 17 special schools.

10. Maternal and reproductive health was a priority for the Government. In 2021, it had adopted the national strategy entitled "Healthy Mother – Healthy Child – Healthy Future". Since 2015, the country had seen maternal mortality decrease threefold. The quality of family planning services was regularly assessed and risk groups had been identified. In the period 2015–2022, the adolescent pregnancy rate had fallen.

11. The number of women who were economically active had increased from 45.8 per cent in 2019 to over 48 per cent. At large- and middle-sized enterprises, the percentage of female employees had also risen, from 41 per cent to 44 per cent. The percentage of women in leadership positions stood at 22.4 per cent. The Labour Code guaranteed additional benefits to employed women with young children and children with disabilities. The State also guaranteed the right of persons with disabilities to vocational education, employment support and self-employment. A Turkmen speech synthesizer for persons with visual impairments had recently been rolled out. Following the 2022 census, statistics on persons with disabilities aged 5 and above were available. Each year, pensions and benefits, including for disabilities, were increased by the Government.

12. The Government aimed to create conditions for equal access to medical care, education, technical training, employment and housing for both urban and rural residents. Among women working in rural areas, 20 per cent were working in companies, 22 per cent were tenant farmers and 8.6 per cent were self-employed. In addition, 13.5 per cent had received a vocational education, a third of whom had a higher or postgraduate vocational education.

#### *Articles 1–6*

13. **Mr. Safarov** said that the Committee was concerned that, as of December 2020, only 20 per cent of indicators needed to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals from a gender perspective were available, with gaps in key areas. He wondered whether the State party would consider adopting a specific law addressing all forms of gender-based violence against women, including domestic and sexual violence.

14. He would be grateful if the delegation could comment on reports that women and girls were informally forced to adhere to dress codes and moral standards that were discriminatory and prevented them from enjoying their rights, such as the public promotion of the yashmak, or face veil worn by some married women in the presence of their husband's relatives, as well as on the obstacles faced by female drivers who wished to obtain or renew a driving licence. He wondered what amendments had been made to legislation to better protect women from discrimination in the public and private spheres. He would also appreciate information on the status of customary law in relation to civil law, on the impact its status had on the effective implementation of the Convention and on the State party's decision not to incorporate the Convention directly into its legal framework.

15. He would like to know how many women's NGOs were registered in the country. Further details of the budget earmarked for NGOs and the procedure for allocating grants would be welcome. The absence of NGOs from the State party in the meeting appeared to confirm their limited access to grants and restricted participation in resolving issues on a national and international level.

16. It would be of interest to the Committee to hear what measures the State party had adopted to increase the visibility of the Convention and the Optional Protocol, how many court rulings had referred to the Convention and article 143 of the State party's Criminal Code, and what specific steps had been taken by authorities at all levels to ensure that women

and girls who were victims of gender-based violence had continuous access to information on available assistance, including free legal aid. He wondered whether the State party intended to develop mechanisms for collecting and analysing gender-disaggregated statistics at the national level, and whether any reforms in that regard had been planned. He would like to establish when the State party planned to reform its justice and prison systems and increase the number of female staff working in its detention services. Lastly, he wished to know what was preventing the State party from fully implementing the Convention.

17. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that discrimination in all its forms was prohibited in Turkmenistan. The parliament was holding meetings with experts and studying international practice to inform its decision on drafting a specific law on discrimination against women. All reports of violence against women, such as forced marriage, were carefully reviewed. The Criminal Code included a list of dangerous acts and offences for which perpetrators would be punished, including abuse of minors. In January 2023, national legislation had been amended to include an article addressing forced abortion and to prohibit abuse of real or artificial dependence on others. Legislation was being analysed with a view to adopting a gender-sensitive approach.

18. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that, regarding gender-disaggregated data on violence and discrimination, a study had been conducted by the State Statistics Committee as part of a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which was available on State Statistics Committee website. The Government was currently conducting the seventh round of the Survey, to which a module on violence against women had been added.

19. **Ms. Bashimova** (Turkmenistan) said that there was no concept of a dress code for women, but rather of tradition. Women were not forced to wear the national costume, and only wore it voluntarily.

20. **A representative of Turkmenistan** added that women were fond of traditional clothing. It was for every woman to choose whether or not to wear it, and lately there had been an increasing interest in the national dress.

21. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that an automated system for both the theory and practical driving test had been introduced throughout the country. The introduction of new technologies had reduced contact with police officers and facilitated the removal of the human factor from testing, which meant that the traffic police could in no way influence the result of an exam, including based on gender. Over 9,000 licences had been granted in 2023.

22. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that a National Action Plan for Human Rights had existed since 2015, a primary theme of which was implementation of legislation. The third plan to combat trafficking in persons was being developed. Each of the national plans contained objectives to improve national legislation, and the implementation of all international obligations which the Government had undertaken.

23. The Government worked very closely with the parliament when drafting bills, including through working groups. Members included NGOs that were mandated to work on women's rights.

24. **Mr. Safarov** said that he would like to know whether there were plans to translate the Convention into Turkmen. Regarding the article on gender-based discrimination in the Criminal Code, he would appreciate information on how many cases had been brought before the courts that invoked the Convention or the Optional Protocol thereto, and how much training had been carried out on the Convention.

25. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that the conventions to which Turkmenistan had acceded had been translated into the national language and incorporated in a compendium posted on the websites of the Institute for State, Law and Democracy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and distributed to libraries. The Institute regularly issued publications on issues related to gender equality and national legislation, which covered relevant international and national laws. It organized training courses in collaboration with UNFPA, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and embassies accredited in Turkmenistan. Information on seminars held for judges had been provided in the periodic report.

26. Actions to raise awareness about gender issues among law enforcement officers in all of the country's provinces would soon be carried out, in conjunction with OSCE. The Institute had established a comparative law centre in cooperation with the German Agency for International Cooperation, which also provided training for the judiciary on the implementation of international human rights standards.

27. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that women detainees in prisons were each allocated 5 m<sup>2</sup> of living space, in accordance with the Penalties Enforcement Code. Pregnant women who were provided with all the necessary facilities during birth and the postpartum period. Feeding standards for newborns were respected and buildings were provided for women to share with their children under 3 years old.

28. Closed-circuit television monitoring was in place in prisons with female inmates and supervision was mainly conducted by female staff. Male personnel had no direct contact with detainees. Comprehensive medical services were also provided to all women in detention, including surgery.

29. **The Chair** said that she had noted that the delegation would send written responses to the Committee regarding articles 1 and 2.

30. **Ms. Bethel** said that the Committee commended the State party for its National Plan of Action for Gender Equality for the period 2021–2025. She regretted that the State party had not established a specialized ministry or department dedicated to the advancement of women's human rights, non-discrimination and gender equality.

31. She asked if the State party had developed a cross-sectoral national gender policy for the implementation of the Plan. She would also like to know what the priority areas of the Plan were and whether there were time-bound measures, indicators, targets and an adequate monitoring framework.

32. She would be interested to know what the main findings were on the latest review of the Plan and the extent to which it was aligned with the Convention and the Sustainable Development Goals. What targets and priorities had been assessed and achieved during that review?

33. She wondered how well the Plan had been implemented in rural areas and whether it was accompanied by public awareness-raising campaigns among women, especially vulnerable women, including women with disabilities and rural women. How was the media being engaged to promote those strategies?

34. She would like to know whether an interministerial committee had been established under the Plan to deliver its mandate. Information on the number of qualified staff appointed to implement the Plan would be useful. She wondered whether there was adequate capacity and training to see the State party's priorities through. What coordination mechanisms would be used to implement the Plan?

35. Given that the State party's Interdepartmental Commission on Compliance with the International Obligations Undertaken by Turkmenistan in the Field of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law had established a working group on international humanitarian law, she wondered if the State party would consider drafting a national action plan on women and peace and security.

36. She asked whether the Office of the Ombudsman was competent to examine matters related to violations of women's human rights, gender equality and non-discrimination. How was the gender perspective mainstreamed in the work of the Office?

37. She also asked how the institutional capacity of the Office was being strengthened as well as what financial, human and technical resources it disposed of to carry out its mandate and address human rights violations, including in cases involving women.

38. **Mr. Safarov** said that it would be useful to have more information on the temporary special measures, particularly their incorporation in the regulatory system or mechanisms. He asked whether the State party planned to amend the Electoral Code to implement the temporary special measures, such as minimum quotas for women in elected and appointed bodies, to achieve gender equality. He would also be interested to know what types of

activities the State party had adopted to achieve better understanding and acceptance of the temporary special measures in the context of the Convention. He asked what type of measures had been undertaken to mitigate the negative effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on women and girls. Were there any statistics on positive discrimination initiatives?

39. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that the Women's Union of Turkmenistan carried out annual events such as the Woman of the Year competition, which helped promote a positive image of contemporary women leaders. A similar contest was also held for students in higher education to improve public awareness of gender equality.

40. The Union held meetings for women, girls and representatives of local authorities throughout the country on creating favourable family conditions for raising children and gender equality. It published articles on gender equality in its magazine. There were regular television programmes on gender equality and family health.

41. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that, although no quotas existed for members of elected decision-making bodies, women played an important role within State bodies in various fields. They also conducted entrepreneurial activities and were highly active in political affairs. The Constitution, national laws and regulations and the international treaties to which Turkmenistan was a party were the legal basis for temporary special measures.

42. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that the Interdepartmental Commission on Compliance with the International Obligations Undertaken by Turkmenistan in the Field of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law had been set up in August 2020. The Commission coordinated the implementation of the national action plans, including the National Plan of Action for Gender Equality. It also oversaw a number of working groups, including on international humanitarian law, on combating trafficking in persons and on domestic violence, which made recommendations to the Commission.

43. Evaluations were carried out on legislation from the parliament, including in rural areas, where working groups met the governor and social representatives responsible for implementing the plans.

44. **Ms. Bethel** said that she would like to know what the priority areas of the national action plan were and whether the State party could provide specific information on success stories in some of those areas. She would also like to know if the Ombudsman had mainstreamed a gender perspective and was competent to mediate in cases of violations of women's rights.

45. **Mr. Safarov** said that he would like to know if any statistics were available on temporary special measures.

46. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that, according to the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey carried out in 2019, 72 per cent of women and girls aged 15 to 49 felt safe when they walked in their neighbourhood at night. Indicators from 2019 Global Terrorism Index showed that Turkmenistan was ranked 138th worldwide and was one of the safest countries in the world.

47. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that the jobs, salaries and pension benefits of women who had been unable to enter Turkmenistan during the COVID-19 pandemic had been protected.

48. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that action to combat domestic violence, which included a road map and efforts to eradicate stereotypes, was monitored. The responsibilities of the Ombudsman included communicating with government ministries and agencies on gender policies and preparing an annual report for the parliament that included a summary of his or her work on the rights of women and girls.

49. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that the Interdepartmental Commission on Compliance with the International Obligations Undertaken by Turkmenistan in the Field of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law was exploring ways of implementing Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security.

50. The appointment of women as deputy governors was not a formal procedure, although it represented a good opportunity for women. Many other high-level posts were held by women.

51. **The Chair** said that she would like to know whether the State party would draw up a national action plan on women and peace and security.

52. **Ms. Bashimova** (Turkmenistan) said that work was under way to examine the potential impact on society of specific legislation on discrimination against women. Legislation on women's issues and gender equality already existed.

53. **Ms. Rana** said that she wished to know what specific steps had been taken to prevent domestic and other forms of violence against women and girls, including harmful stereotypes. It would also be interesting to hear what concrete action, particularly in the areas of domestic violence legislation and support systems, had been taken as part of the road map for implementing the recommendations made following a 2022 survey into the health and status of women in Turkmenistan. She also wished to know whether the State party would consider drafting a specific law criminalizing domestic violence, whether consultation on such legislation was taking place and how the Social Services Act would be amended to provide support and security to victims. It would be useful to hear how the State party planned to address the stigmatization of women victims of gender-based violence; whether judges, prosecutors and police officers were required to attend capacity-building programmes on gender-sensitive investigations and interrogations, particularly in rural areas; and whether there were plans to expand access to support services, shelters and psychosocial counselling for victims of gender-based violence.

54. She would welcome information on awareness-raising efforts intended to change the harmful attitudes and persistent stereotypes that could cause women in the State party to feel compelled to adhere to dress codes and beauty standards, as well as on complaints mechanisms that allowed women to challenge those attitudes and stereotypes safely and confidentially. How were women informed about such mechanisms?

55. **Ms. Tisheva** said that it would be important to receive information on the National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons for the period 2023–2026. She wished to hear details of the specific measures and timeline for eliminating State-imposed forced labour during the annual cotton harvest, to bring the persons responsible to justice and to compensate and rehabilitate the victims. She also wished to know when article 8 of the Labour Code, which allowed for civilians to be mobilized in public works, including the cotton harvest, would be amended and whether those amendments would be reflected in the National Action Plan. The Committee would welcome information on measures to enforce the Trafficking in Persons Act in relation to the national referral mechanism and government-funded protection and rehabilitation services for victims.

56. The Committee would also like to receive data from 2022 and 2023 on shelters for victims of trafficking and to know how many women and girl victims had been rehabilitated and integrated into the community during that period. It also wished to know what prevention and protection measures for women, particularly vulnerable women, and children were contained in the National Action Plan. Information on measures to encourage women to report labour exploitation and violence against them and to organize so as to defend their rights would be welcome. Lastly, she wished to know when legal provisions criminalizing and penalizing women who turned to prostitution would be repealed and how the State party combated exploitation and violence against those women, including by State officials.

57. **Ms. Bashimova** (Turkmenistan) said that, far from being compelled to do so, the women of Turkmenistan wore national dress with pride.

58. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that standard emergency procedures for the police, first responders and medical professionals had been developed, tested and disseminated under the road map on domestic violence, and the parliament was working to adopt the legislation required to implement them. The inter-agency response to domestic violence required improvement: although several ministries had their own mechanisms, they each worked separately. Work was also required to establish a legal framework that would permit the adoption of specific legislation on social services. NGOs, funded by international

organizations, worked with women victims of violence and operated hotlines in two locations. Journalists received training on gender issues, and films on the topic were broadcasted on television and shown during seminars in rural areas. There were programmes to improve women's legal and civic knowledge.

59. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that the Social Services Act defined the role of social workers, with a particular focus on the needs of women in rural areas, and required social workers to have knowledge relating to violence and trafficking in persons. Although social services were currently limited to psychosocial support, two higher education institutions had recently introduced specialized social work courses that included training on the needs of victims of violence. Nevertheless, improvements to the Act were required, and the necessary amendments had been drafted. The Government had engaged actively with the investigation undertaken by ILO into forced labour during the cotton harvest and had also conducted its own investigation.

60. **Ms. Rana** said that she would like to know whether there was a gender code of conduct for the media and how the media were monitored to discourage gender stereotypes, particularly online. With regard to national dress, a population's pride in its culture should not result in violations of women's rights.

61. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that although there had been no criminal cases of trafficking in persons between 2020 and January 2024, there had been investigations, and measures had been implemented under the relevant legislation. Training sessions on combating trafficking had been held in Turkmenistan and abroad, there were information campaigns on preventing the crime, and a network of associations identified and assisted victims across the country, in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration. Several hotlines provided assistance in the area of illegal migration and trafficking, including one that advised persons planning to leave Turkmenistan on reducing their risk of falling victim to trafficking.

62. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that victims of trafficking in persons received free legal assistance and State support. Amendments to the Criminal Code set out aggravating circumstances in the crime of trafficking in persons, such as when a victim was pregnant.

#### *Articles 7–9*

63. **Ms. Mikko** said that it would be interesting to hear when the State party planned to draw up and implement a strategy to promote gender parity in public life and to raise public awareness in that regard and whether it would organize campaigns to promote the positive portrayal of women in the media as active participants in public and political life. It would also be useful to know why no woman had yet chaired a parliamentary committee, what leadership programmes were planned to increase women's representation in the foreign service and how many officers of the police and defence forces were women.

64. **Ms. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen** said that she wished to know whether the State party was prepared to amend its definition of a stateless person to bring it into line with article 1 of the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. Another question was whether the State party had any plans to waive the requirements for the acquisition of Turkmen citizenship which were impossible for refugees to fulfil. It would be helpful to know how asylum-seekers and refugees could obtain access to legal advice and documentation to prevent refoulement. She would like to know whether the State party would allow the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and human rights mechanisms to visit detention centres and border regions to assist asylum-seekers and refugees. Would the delegation explain how the State party intended to improve data collection on the number of stateless persons, asylum-seekers and refugees living in Turkmenistan. The Committee would appreciate information on measures to remove obstacles to marriage between Turkmen citizens and foreigners and on measures to ensure registration of the birth of all children born in Turkmenistan, irrespective of the parents' legal status. Lastly, she wished to know how the State party was addressing the difficulties faced by Turkmen expatriates in obtaining passports.

65. **Ms. Bashimova** (Turkmenistan) said that the Chairs of the parliamentary committees responsible for young people and education and science were women. In the absence of a parliamentary committee on the rights of women, the committee responsible for human rights dealt with gender equality. Women played an active part in public life as they had always done. They had always worked alongside men as advisers. There were many inter-ethnic marriages in Turkmenistan.

66. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that women had the right to vote and could be elected to hold office in State bodies and local authorities. They had equal rights to work as civil servants in keeping with their abilities and qualifications.

67. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that the Government was prepared to give ICRC access to border areas. The country did not have any refugee reception centres. Expatriates had to return to Turkmenistan to renew their passports, as embassies and consulates were not equipped for that service. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the validity of some 25,000 passports had been automatically extended for two years.

68. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that women were well represented in the law enforcement agencies. Young women could train at the Military Academy and the Police Academy. Although she was unable to say exactly how many women worked in the law enforcement agencies, there was no obstacle to women becoming police officers. They even served in operational units.

69. **Ms. Bashimova** (Turkmenistan) said that no statistics were kept on the number of women in the diplomatic service. They could participate in public life through the Women's Union or by joining round tables. They could be activists. There was a group that discussed human rights issues raised by draft laws with the parliament. They could obtain advice through the hotline run by the Women's Union. Women maintained a high profile in Turkmenistan.

70. **Ms. Mikko** said that she looked forward to the day when, instead of men having women advisers, women would have men advisers.

71. **Mr. Safarov** said that he wished to know the precise number of women ambassadors and women judges.

72. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that the fact that only one ambassador was a woman did not mean that women were poorly represented in the diplomatic service as a whole, or that there were any restrictions on their employment in the service. The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and several advisers were women. The number of ambassadors and consuls general would probably increase in coming years, as it was staffing policy to promote more women.

73. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that the delegation would provide written information on the number of judges.

74. **Ms. Tisheva**, speaking on behalf of Ms. Xia, said that she wished to know how students and their families had adjusted to the new school curriculum. The Committee wished to receive statistics on the dropout rate of schoolgirls in secondary education during the transition to 12-years compulsory schooling. It also wished to know whether the State party had taken measures to guarantee that girls in rural areas, girls from poor families and girls with disabilities had access to compulsory education. She would like to hear about measures to increase the number of women in higher education. What proportion of women had attended higher education since 2018? It would be helpful to have an idea of the proportion of women teachers in higher education and of the courses they taught. She would like to know what policies there were to support married female teachers. She further wished to know whether the State party had taken steps to eliminate gender stereotypes in textbooks, curricula and teaching methods. She wondered if gender stereotyping had also been eliminated in teacher training programmes. She wished to learn whether reproductive health had been included as a subject in the life skills curriculum and, if so, how effective it was and whether it had helped to improve women's reproductive health and reduce the adolescent birth rate. The Committee would like to hear what specific measures had been taken to encourage girls to study science, engineering, technology and maths and whether female graduates in those disciplines enjoyed equal job opportunities and working conditions.

Information on the 2018–2020 programme to enhance employment opportunities for young specialist graduates would be appreciated. It would be helpful to know what measures had been taken to boost the employment of female specialists and what the employment rates of male and female graduates were.

75. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that girls had full access to education. The whole education system was geared towards ensuring gender equality. Since 2008, general education schools had included health and gender issues in the curriculum. Schoolchildren were taken to visit factories, workshops and science parks in an effort to interest girls in non-traditional occupations. Courses were run to improve teaching methods to reject gender stereotypes. Seminars for teachers on gender issues were held with the assistance of UNICEF. Teaching materials on gender equality were available in Turkmen and Russian.

76. Special attention was paid to the education of children with disabilities. Special events and activities were organized to cater for children who had impaired mobility, sight or hearing. Children with disabilities were integrated in the general education system where a differentiated educational approach was applied to them. If they were unable to go to ordinary schools, they could attend one of 17 special schools which were equipped with assistance technology.

77. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said 51 per cent of pupils in the general education system were boys and 49 per cent were girls. Men accounted for 32 to 33 per cent and women for 67 to 68 per cent of teachers. In 2024, an extra 9,000 children were expected to complete their secondary education. The percentage of girls in upper secondary education had reached 60 per cent, while the percentage of boys was falling. The number of male teachers in those schools had dropped to 43 per cent. In the 2023/24 academic year boys made up 56 per cent and girls 44 per cent of students in higher education. Men accounted for 52 to 53 per cent of the teaching staff in higher education.

78. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection was trying to improve the situation of young professionals by adapting training to the needs of the labour market. Currently workers in the building industry were in great demand. Those were occupations which tended to attract boys rather than girls. One incentive to encourage young professionals to find employment was a 50 per cent reduction of their income tax for the first two years of their working life.

79. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that schools followed the general education curriculum even in the remotest corners of the country. There were therefore no barriers to transitioning from primary to upper secondary education. Girls and young women had every opportunity to study technological and scientific subjects. Young women had won some of the competitions for young scientists that were held by the Magtymguly Youth Organization. The number of young women studying subjects that would qualify them for jobs in the oil and gas sector and in technology was rising. She would provide exact figures in writing.

*The meeting rose at noon.*