



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

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## Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Ninetieth session

### Summary record of the 2122nd meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 5 February 2025, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Haidar

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*Seventh periodic report of Nepal*

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

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

*Seventh periodic report of Nepal (CEDAW/C/NPL/7; CEDAW/C/NPL/Q/7; CEDAW/C/NPL/RQ/7)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Nepal joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Nepal**, introducing his country's seventh periodic report (CEDAW/C/NPL/7), said that his Government would continue to address challenges on the journey towards full gender equality through targeted policies and programmes and collaboration with international partners, civil society and women's rights organizations. Substantial progress had been made in developing robust legal and policy frameworks to support women's and girls' empowerment. However, difficulties in ensuring their effective implementation and impact on the ground remained. The recommendations issued by the Committee following the consideration of the sixth periodic report of Nepal (CEDAW/C/NPL/CO/6) had therefore been incorporated into national policies and legislation to accelerate progress towards gender equality.
3. Gender equality, social inclusion and access to justice were central themes of domestic policymaking. Since the promulgation of the Constitution of Nepal, the federal parliament had enacted 16 laws on fundamental rights, including women's rights, and laws relating to citizenship, civil matters and access to justice had been improved. Institutional reform and the strengthening of national mechanisms remained priorities, and gender-related issues were systematically addressed at all levels of the Government. Most judicial committees, which operated in all municipalities and addressed gender concerns, were chaired by women. Key appointments had been made to a range of constitutional bodies, including the National Women Commission and commissions focusing on ethnic and religious minorities.
4. The importance of gender-sensitive policies had been recognized in the Sixteenth Periodic Plan of Nepal, and gender equality and women's empowerment were fundamental pillars of the country's development agenda. The Plan took a systematic and comprehensive approach to addressing disparities and challenges faced by women and marginalized communities and sought to mainstream gender across all sectors by integrating gender perspectives into the planning, implementation and monitoring of all policies and programmes.
5. Steps had been taken to enact comprehensive legislation on gender-based violence that was aligned with international human rights standards. The Government was increasingly focusing on engaging men and boys in efforts to tackle negative gender norms and discriminatory social attitudes and to eliminate unequal power relations between women and men. The Citizenship Amendment Bill had been submitted to the parliament to address challenges faced by individuals whose mothers had died young or with whom they were no longer in contact. The Bill also contained provisions granting citizenship to an individual on the basis of the mother's heritage when the father's identity was unknown.
6. In 2020, Nepal had ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Legislation adopted in 2024 to amend a number of domestic laws had broadened the definition of trafficking in persons to include the victimization of foreigners and immigrants and to criminalize people smuggling, and an amendment to the Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act, 2007 to ensure its alignment with the Protocol was currently being considered by the Legislative Committee of the Council of Ministers.
7. Nepal had been the second country in Asia to recognize same-sex marriage. All local registration authorities had been instructed to enter same-sex marriages on a separate register. Other processes were currently under way to provide for the issuance of marriage documentation and identity cards for sexual and gender minorities. The Nepal Law Commission was conducting a comprehensive study of laws discriminating against the rights of those minorities, with a view to initiating the necessary legal reforms.

8. Notable progress had been made in increasing women's political representation and participation. Women held 34 per cent of seats in the federal parliament, 29 per cent of civil service positions, 12 per cent of posts in the police, 10 per cent of positions in the armed police forces and 5 per cent in the army. The Government had recently appointed the country's first female chief secretary and first female registrar of the Supreme Court. Significant investment had been channelled into women's education and economic empowerment, as well as policies aimed at closing gender gaps in school enrolment and expanding women's participation in the workforce.

9. Women, Children and Senior Citizens Service Centres, of which there were 232 across the country, were dedicated units within the national police that had been established *inter alia* to investigate gender-based violence. Victims of gender-based violence received free physical and mental healthcare services and protective measures. Ninety-four government health institutions functioned as one-stop crisis management centres, alongside 21 service centres serving as transit homes and 276 additional support centres. The Government had established a national rehabilitation centre for victims of gender-based violence and a provincial rehabilitation centre, and four more centres were under construction in different provinces. There were 10 rehabilitation centres for victims of trafficking in persons. More than 50 community-based safe shelters operated in collaboration with provincial governments, civil society organizations and other stakeholders. Over 6,000 community-based networks were actively engaged in the fight against gender-based violence.

10. Women and girls in Nepal had been particularly affected by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, owing to its impact on home-based entrepreneurship, caregiving and nursing jobs and informal work, which were areas where women were disproportionately represented. Women's economic participation had therefore declined, especially in the informal sector, and constraints on social protections had intensified financial vulnerabilities and widened the gender pay gap. Measures taken to minimize the pandemic's impact on women and marginalized groups had included the provision of dedicated quarantine spaces for pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, the establishment of isolation centres and the creation of financial support initiatives and relief packages. A five-year recovery and accelerated learning plan had been launched to mitigate the pandemic's impact on education.

11. In the light of the effects of climate change and natural disasters on gender inequality, disaster preparedness had been strengthened specifically to support and protect women, especially in vulnerable communities. Gender considerations would continue to be integrated into national climate policies to build long-term resilience.

12. The Government was dedicated to ensuring justice for victims of past human rights violations. The 2024 amendment to the Enforced Disappearances Enquiry, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act, 2014 reflected its strong commitment to international standards and Supreme Court directives on transitional justice. The amendment made explicit reference to rights violations such as rape and sexual violence. A special court had been designated to adjudicate on relevant cases, and a dedicated investigations unit for sexual violence cases had been established.

13. To achieve gender equality and women's empowerment, the Government planned to expand access to quality education for girls, particularly in rural areas; enhance women's economic independence by addressing skills development, financial inclusion and property rights; strengthen healthcare services, including maternal health and gender-based violence support systems; develop gender-sensitive infrastructure, ensuring safer public spaces and better facilities for women; and promote women's leadership and representation in governance and decision-making. The Government was working closely with civil society and development partners to effectively implement all gender-related policies and programmes and ensure accountability and inclusivity.

14. **A representative of the National Human Rights Commission, Nepal**, said that despite constitutional guarantees, critical gaps remained in the domestic legal framework. There was no comprehensive legal definition of discrimination, and provisions on direct, indirect and intersectional forms of discrimination affecting women were lacking. While some proactive measures existed, their implementation was inconsistent. The Government's

failure to fulfil its commitment to strengthen the National Women Commission by establishing provincial offices and granting it legal binding authority had left marginalized communities without direct access to services and protection mechanisms. The National Women Commission must be decentralized and strengthened in order to promote access to justice for women.

15. Harmful practices such as child marriage, the payment of dowries, discrimination against widows, caste-based discrimination and discrimination against LGBTIQ+ persons persisted despite efforts to prohibit them. Challenges remained in terms of the formulation of comprehensive strategies, the provision of sufficient funding for activities and the full implementation of laws across the country. Although steps had been taken to create programmes offering financial assistance to marginalized groups, critical gaps remained in the provision of support to women from communities facing intersecting and multiple forms of discrimination. The implementation of the Single Women Protection Fund had been hindered by the absence of necessary amendments to operational policies, and the rights of widows had thus been weakened. Efforts to align laws with the Trafficking in Persons Protocol had been delayed.

16. Women faced significant barriers in terms of employment and migration. Most women in the informal sector and care work lacked adequate social security protections, including access to basic human rights. Migrant women workers were particularly vulnerable and experienced exploitation in destination countries as a result of inadequate pre-departure training and restrictive government policies. Women in rural areas, *Madhesi* and Muslim women and women with disabilities faced significant challenges in accessing reproductive health services, and a deeply entrenched preference for sons continued to drive sex selection practices. The Government had not yet implemented a Supreme Court decision ordering the establishment of forensic laboratories in every province.

17. Challenges remained in combating discrimination in the areas of citizenship, workplace violence, cybercrime and fraud in foreign employment. Women were disproportionately affected by indoor air pollution from cooking in locations lacking ventilation, especially in rural areas. Recommendations formulated by the National Human Rights Commission and National Women Commission, including recommendations on ensuring justice in cases of sexual violence and rape, had not been fully implemented. Delays in providing for compensation and legal redress prolonged the suffering of survivors and undermined trust in the justice system. Comprehensive legislation, with robust mechanisms, should be enacted to protect women and address systemic gender-based violence, thereby translating constitutional commitments into reality and promoting a society free from discrimination against women.

#### *Articles 1–6*

18. **Ms. Akizuki** said that she would like to hear about measures taken by the State party to adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation containing a definition of discrimination against women; references to direct and indirect discrimination and multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination in the public and private spheres; and guarantees of effective remedies for victims. She also wished to know how the State party addressed intersectional and compounded discrimination against women, including women with disabilities, Indigenous women, Dalit women, single women, women from religious minorities, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women, *Madhesi* women, older women and women in humanitarian crises.

19. She would appreciate information on measures taken to repeal all remaining constitutional and legal provisions that discriminated against women and girls, and information on monitoring mechanisms in place to ensure the effective implementation of laws. She would also welcome information on the status and contents of the Special Opportunity Bill, and she wished to know whether civil society organizations working in the field of women's rights were participating in the Bill's drafting.

20. It would be interesting to hear about measures taken to raise awareness among women of their rights and the legal remedies available to address violations of the Convention. It

would also be helpful to learn how the State party disseminated information on the legal framework and mechanisms facilitating access to justice and legal aid schemes.

21. **A representative of Nepal** said that a concept paper was currently being prepared for the drafting of an integrated Gender-Based Violence Act. In the interim, the existing Constitution provided a strong framework to protect all citizens from discrimination and ensure the safety and empowerment of socially marginalized groups, including through affirmative action.

22. Steps were being taken to identify provisions that discriminated against LGBTIQ+ people in existing legislation, which would soon be amended through legal reforms. Laws such as the Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act, the Domestic Violence (Offence and Punishment) Act, the Caste-Based Discrimination and Untouchability (Offence and Punishment) Act and the Sexual Harassment at Workplace (Prevention) Act, in addition to the National Civil Code (Act) and the Penal Code, ensured that there was no room for discrimination. Provincial consultations on a Special Opportunity Bill had been conducted, and the drafting of the law was in progress.

23. The Constitution mandated seven human rights bodies to monitor and investigate cases of human rights violations. The Government was committed to implementing their recommendations and collaborated with civil society organizations to ensure the inclusiveness of legal reform. A bill to make public participation in lawmaking mandatory would soon be enacted and would enhance the effectiveness and transparency of future legal reforms.

24. The Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs had implemented the Enhancing Access to Justice through Institutional Reform Project, which had reached over 25,000 people in 2024, including over 14,000 women and 40 LGBTIQ+ individuals. The Ministry had talked to those individuals about access to justice and their constitutional and legal rights in relation to human rights violations.

25. Furthermore, Nepal had a legal aid system with paid lawyers offering free legal services at various levels. In the 2022/23 fiscal year, over 41,000 people had received legal aid. A draft bill to decentralize the legal aid system had been prepared for consideration by a thematic committee. Each of the country's 77 districts had a District Legal Aid Committee. Although only 58 districts had an active legal aid lawyer, recruitment was under way to fill the vacant positions. Some provinces had proactively appointed their own legal aid lawyers to ensure access to justice in local communities.

26. The Ministry was engaging law students in clinical legal education programmes to raise the public's awareness of their legal rights. In 2024, over 200 young lawyers had reached more than 5,000 individuals, including some 2,700 women. Moreover, the Nepal Bar Association had established a pro bono lawyer roster, under which 79 individuals, including 50 women, had received free legal support in the previous year.

27. **Ms. Akizuki** said that she would like to know whether the State party recognized the collective rights of Indigenous women and girls, in addition to their individual rights.

28. **A representative of Nepal** said that there was no special law specifically addressing the rights of Indigenous women. However, their rights were ensured through provisions in existing laws.

29. **Ms. González Ferrer** said that she would be grateful for further information on the status of the monitoring mechanism of the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens and on the steps that would be taken to obtain sufficient human and financial resources to implement the National Gender Equality Policy and organize regular and effective monitoring.

30. She wondered how the State party intended to establish provincial offices under the National Women Commission to handle women's complaints of violations of their rights; whether the Commission's decisions were binding following its independent investigation of complaints; and what measures were in place to address the recommendations of the Subcommittee on Accreditation and strengthen the National Human Rights Commission so

that it could effectively and independently fulfil its mandate, in full compliance with the Paris Principles.

31. **Mr. Safarov** said that he would be interested to learn more about the State party's plans to implement temporary special measures to ensure that women held leadership and managerial posts. He also wished to know how the State party intended to improve the representation of Dalit and Muslim women in government positions, including in civil service and management roles, and implement the quota system more effectively. He would welcome further information on the incorporation of the principle of gender equality into the Election Code of Conduct and on the steps taken to combat gender-based discrimination, particularly in political settings.

32. **A representative of Nepal** said that the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens had prioritized financial resource planning for the implementation of the National Gender Equality Policy and a corresponding monitoring mechanism. At the district level, focal points had been assigned to each District Coordination Committee to coordinate and monitor local programmes. The Ministry had also developed an integrated social management information system to collect data on various aspects of women's rights.

33. Article 54 of the Constitution had established a committee within the parliament to monitor and evaluate the State's progress in advancing the constitutional right to equality and women's rights. Following the 2017 federal elections, 16 parliamentary committees had been formed to oversee and monitor the Government's work. Furthermore, the Office of the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers had a division dedicated to overall monitoring. Its scope included monitoring the implementation of international treaty body recommendations and of temporary special measures.

34. **A representative of Nepal** said that articles 38 and 42 of the Constitution guaranteed affirmative action for women, promoting their inclusion in State structures and leadership positions. One significant achievement was the institutionalization of gender-balanced leadership at the highest levels of governance. The Constitution mandated that, to ensure diversity in leadership, the President and Vice-President must be of different genders or communities. Similarly, either the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives must be a woman.

35. Following the most recent elections, 33.1 per cent of parliamentarians at the federal level were women, as were 37 per cent in provincial legislatures and 41 per cent in legislative bodies at the local level. There had been a significant increase in the number of women holding the position of Deputy Mayor or Vice-Chair since it had been made a requirement that, in local elections, if a political party nominated both a Mayor and a Deputy Mayor, or a Chair and a Vice-Chair, one of them must be a woman.

36. **A representative of Nepal** said that the Government acknowledged the need to strengthen all human rights commissions and the importance of having an office of the National Women Commission present in all provinces, not just at the federal level.

37. **Ms. González Ferrer** said that she would be grateful if the delegation could explain how the small proportion of the allocated budget that was received by the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens was distributed and how the budget shortfall was handled.

38. **A representative of Nepal** said that her country had seven provincial governments and 753 local governments. The budget for activities related to women's issues was distributed at the provincial and local levels rather than being concentrated solely at the federal level. As a result, the budget available at the federal level for the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens and the National Women Commission could appear to be low, as the resources were spread across the provincial and local levels of government.

39. **A representative of Nepal** said that one example of a measure taken to address the intersectional discrimination faced by women from minority groups was that the Civil Service Bill, which was before the parliament, included proposals for proportions of seats reserved for women and, within that broader category, further reservations for women from minority groups such as Indigenous Peoples and Dalits. In addition, temporary measures in respect of minorities had already, in practice, started to be incorporated into the Provincial

Civil Service Act. Furthermore, two recently drafted bills, respectively on the Nepal police and the armed police force, both also incorporated temporary measures pertaining to intersectional discrimination.

40. **Ms. de Silva de Alwis** said that, despite the State party's adoption, in 2022, of the second national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) on women and peace and security, there was still a problem of impunity for conflict-related sexual violence in Nepal. Sentence-reduction provisions included in the amendment to the Enforced Disappearances Enquiry, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act, adopted in August 2024, amounted to a disguised amnesty for a category of offences that included rape and serious sexual violence. While the Committee welcomed the amendment's many positive elements, she was eager to know whether the State party would go further, by fully complying with the spirit of the women and peace and security agenda. She also wished to know whether the State party had, as called for by the Human Rights Committee in its consideration of the case of *Purna Maya v. Nepal* ([CCPR/C/119/D/2245/2013](#)), abolished the 35-day statute of limitation for filing complaints of rape. In addition, she wondered whether the State party was providing survivors of conflict-related sexual violence with reparations in line with the Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law.

41. She applauded the State party for being the first State in Asia to constitutionally safeguard the fundamental rights of sexual and gender minorities. In the Domestic Violence Offence and Punishment Act, the definition of domestic violence as a form of torture was similarly forward-looking. She wondered, however, whether the State party would consider expanding the categories of gender-based violence that the Act incorporated. In a similar vein, she wished to know whether the State party would include, in its various climate change policies, recognition that climate disasters were leading to an increase in violence against women. Given that one of the most common categories of violence against women and girls in Nepal was technology-facilitated gender-based violence, she would like to know how the State party intended to align its domestic law with the United Nations Convention against Cybercrime.

42. Concerning harmful practices, details of any steps that the State party was taking to counter the menstrual taboo known as *Chhaupadi* and the related issue of period poverty would be useful. She would be interested to learn how the education and engagement of men and boys could be mobilized against *Chhaupadi*. She also hoped that the delegation could shed light on how it might modernize the practice of *Kumari* to prevent the alienation of girls during a critical stage of their development.

43. **Ms. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen** said that she would appreciate further details regarding the harmonization of the Human Trafficking and Transportation Control Act with the Trafficking in Persons Protocol, in particular the timeline for bringing it into line. She would like to know whether the State party would remove the provision of the Act allowing the judiciary to fine victims who failed to appear in court. The Committee would like to find out whether the State party planned to change the definitions used in article 15 of the Act, in which trafficking was conflated with sex work. She was curious about the steps taken to implement the 2013 directive of the Supreme Court that stated that cases pertaining to trafficking in persons should be fast-tracked. The Committee would be grateful for details of the approaches to prosecution, protection and prevention included in the draft policy and action plan on trafficking in persons prepared by the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens in 2024, as well as information on any victim compensation measures that would be incorporated into it. It would be of interest to learn why the standard operating procedures for victim identification and referral services had not yet been finalized and when they would be completed.

44. She would like to know whether the State party planned to lift the ban on women under 24 years of age seeking foreign employment, in particular domestic work. She would appreciate information on how the needs of woman migrant workers were addressed in the bilateral labour agreements that the Government had concluded with potential destination States; how the State party planned to prevent the stigmatization, upon their return to Nepal, of women who had become victims of trafficking while abroad; and whether the Government

provided or was planning to provide pre-departure training for migrant women on their labour rights and the gender-specific challenges that they would face.

45. In view of the conflation of trafficking with sex work, she wondered how and when the State party would formulate comprehensive policy and legislative frameworks, with an associated monitoring mechanism, to ensure that women sex workers were legally protected from economic exploitation and prosecution. She wished to know how the State party planned to investigate, prosecute and punish law enforcement officers for the harassment and extortion of sex workers and ensure that victims were provided with gender-sensitive protection and support. Would the federal, provincial and local governments set up programmes to assist sex workers in finding employment in other fields of work?

46. **A representative of Nepal** said that, from 2018 to 2023, her Government had conducted numerous awareness-raising campaigns in the western part of the country, the part of the country where the *Chhaupadi* tradition was followed. Nevertheless, the Government realized that far greater efforts were needed in order to eradicate that harmful practice.

47. **A representative of Nepal** said that, being from the west of the country, she had personally experienced *Chhaupadi*. The eradication of such harmful practices was an intensive, time-consuming process, but progress had been made, in particular the development of guidelines on *Chhaupadi*, issued in 2007. A concept of dignified menstruation had been drafted.

48. With regard to the Trafficking in Persons Protocol, the Government had amended the relevant domestic law, broadening the definition of trafficking to encompass foreigners and criminalizing people smuggling, and a further alignment of national laws with the Protocol was currently under consideration. The national anti-trafficking policy had recently been harmonized with the Protocol and the Government was reviewing the implementation of the old national anti-trafficking action plan, which had expired in 2022, and was in the process of finalizing a new version. Both the policy and the action plan were focused on such matters as prevention through education and awareness, the identification of victims and their reintegration into communities, and the training of law enforcement and judicial officials on the handling of trafficking cases. Since trafficking was a multidimensional issue, numerous ministries needed to be consulted on the standard operating procedure for victim identification; the consultation process was ongoing.

49. **A representative of Nepal** said that the amendment of the Transitional Justice Act had provided scope for an examination of the issue of sexual violence, which would be properly addressed. The Act, as amended, provided for the establishment of a special court and for the observance of a victim-centred approach. The drafting of the amendment had entailed the regular consultation of victims, international partners and other stakeholders. The statute of limitation for filing complaints of rape was now three months, not 35 days, counted from the date on which the victim became aware of the offence. When victims were deprived of their liberty in any way, the period was counted from the date of release.

50. The content of the second national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) on women and peace and security had been incorporated into the activities of the federal, provincial and local governments. It was possible, therefore, that no further versions of the plan would be needed.

51. While prostitution was criminalized in Nepal, it was police policy to target customers, not the sex workers themselves. Disciplinary action was taken against officers who did not comply with the policy.

52. **Ms. de Silva de Alwis** said that, while she applauded the State party's abolition of the 35-day statute of limitation for the filing of complaints of rape, it was important to underscore that no such limitations should apply to crimes against humanity. In addition, she would be grateful for a response from the delegation to her observation that harmful practices, such as *Chhaupadi*, were linked to a wider cultural devaluation of the girl child across all South Asian countries, another expression of which was the very high rate of child marriage, for example in Nepal.

53. **Ms. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen** said that it was unclear to her why the State party had taken so long after the expiry of the old national anti-trafficking action plan to issue a new

version. She also wished to know how the rights of sex workers were protected if, as the evidence clearly showed, they were being prosecuted as traffickers.

54. **A representative of Nepal** said that the Government was strongly committed to ensuring the protection of the fundamental human rights of all, including sex workers. The Supreme Court had previously ordered the Government to ensure the protection of sex workers' rights. Moreover, State institutions were working with civil society organizations to conduct awareness-raising campaigns to combat the sexual exploitation of sex workers and to monitor activity related to trafficking in persons in border areas.

55. Her Government was assessing how the country's legal system would need to be adjusted, in line with the United Nations Convention against Cybercrime. In addition, it would consider how to incorporate addressing technology-facilitated gender-based violence into the reform of the Domestic Violence Offence and Punishment Act, which was currently under way.

56. **A representative of Nepal** said that, with the aim of ending child marriage by 2030, all levels of government were working with civil society organizations, entities of the United Nations system and other development partners to implement the national strategy on ending child marriage. Initiatives included campaigns to encourage parents to educate their daughters, community-based awareness programmes and the conditional payment to over 40,000 girls, by the government of Karnali Province, of 500 rupees per month until they reached 20 years of age. To qualify for such payments, they must not have a child, marry or leave higher education during that time.

*Articles 7–9*

57. **Ms. Akizuki** said that she would like to know what measures were being taken to remove the obstacles that prevented women, particularly those from diverse backgrounds and minority groups, from accessing decision-making roles in the Government. It would be useful to know whether any specific targets had been set for women's representation in the diplomatic service. She would also be interested to know whether the Government was taking any measures to promote political literacy and engagement among women and girls and to encourage them to participate autonomously in democratic processes.

58. The Committee would welcome up-to-date statistical information illustrating women's representation in management and decision-making positions in both the public and private sectors. It would be helpful to know whether any specific measures were foreseen or being taken to increase those numbers. She also wished to know what measures were being taken to uphold women's rights to freedom of opinion, expression, association and assembly and to protect women against online hate speech.

59. **Ms. Reddock** said that she wished to know whether the Government intended to repeal the discriminatory provisions in article 11 of the Constitution in order to ensure that Nepalese women enjoyed the same rights as men to transfer citizenship to their children and their spouses. The delegation might also like to clarify whether Nepalese lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women and gender-diverse persons could transfer citizenship to their children and their spouses. If not, the Committee would be interested to know what measures were being taken to extend equal citizenship rights to them.

60. She would like to know what steps the Government took to uphold the rights of children without birth registration documents to health, education, employment and social welfare services. In that regard, it would be interesting to know whether the Government had made any plans to ensure universal birth registration for all children in the country and whether it intended to ratify the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

61. **A representative of Nepal** said that the Government had introduced various temporary special measures and legislative amendments to accelerate the achievement of gender equality and increase women's participation in all areas of public life. The political participation of women at the local level was on the rise. Roughly 30 per cent of civil servants were women, including a growing number of teachers and judges.

62. **A representative of Nepal** said that women currently accounted for 25.5 per cent of the diplomatic service, but only 5 of the country's 33 ambassadors were women. In July 2024, the Government had issued a directive stipulating that any delegation representing Nepal at an international meeting or negotiations must include at least one woman. That policy was aimed at ensuring greater gender representation and women's participation in global decision-making processes, and the Government hoped that it would pave the way for more equitable opportunities for women in diplomacy and international affairs, ultimately fostering a more diverse and representative approach in the country's foreign engagements.

63. The Constitution guaranteed that no citizen would be denied the right to obtain citizenship. Under article 12, women enjoyed the right to confer their citizenship to their children on an equal basis with men. The Nepal Citizenship Act had been amended in 2023 to allow children of parents who had obtained Nepalese citizenship by birth before September 2015 to obtain citizenship by descent. Under that amendment, a child born in Nepal to a Nepalese mother with an unidentified father could also acquire citizenship by descent.

64. In January 2025, the Government had submitted a new proposal to amend the Nepal Citizenship Act. One of the aims of the bill was to address the challenges faced by individuals whose fathers had citizenship by birth but whose mothers had passed away or could not be contacted. The bill also included a provision that would grant citizenship to a child born to a Nepalese mother outside Nepal if the father could not be identified.

65. With respect to birth registration, mothers had the right to register the birth of their children if the father could not be identified. Children whose births were registered in such circumstances took their mother's family name.

66. **Ms. Akizuki** asked whether the Government was taking any steps to engage private actors in its efforts to eliminate discrimination and increase women's representation in decision-making systems.

67. **Ms. Reddock** said that certain groups in Nepal reportedly encountered difficulties in accessing citizenship certificates, including sex workers, Tibetan long-term migrants and Bhutanese refugees. She would be interested to know whether any special provisions for members of those groups had been included in the bill proposing amendments to the Nepal Citizenship Act. It would also be useful to know if that bill addressed the situation of Nepalese women married to refugees.

68. **A representative of Nepal** said that the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens worked in cooperation with civil society organizations, religious leaders and other development partners to devise programmes to raise awareness in the private sector of the importance of gender equality and women's participation in decision-making.

#### *Articles 10–14*

69. **Ms. Pia-Comella** said that the Committee would like to know what measures had been taken to strengthen the institutional capacities of local governments to deliver education services, including by disseminating relevant legislation and national plans in local languages. The Committee would also welcome further information on the steps taken to ensure access to education for all children, regardless of their caste or citizenship status, including measures supporting the development of an environment conducive to choice, with a view to ensuring that girls from all ethnic and religious groups had access to education. She wished to know what measures had been put in place to encourage pregnant and married girls to continue their education and what steps were taken to increase the enrolment and retention rates of disadvantaged women and girls, such as women and girls with disabilities. It would be interesting to find out whether the State party had taken any steps towards acceding to the Convention against Discrimination in Education.

70. **A representative of Nepal** said that, according to the Constitution, every citizen had the right to free primary and secondary education, and that citizens with disabilities and economically disadvantaged citizens had the right to free higher education. Furthermore, every community had the right to education in its mother tongue and, for that purpose, to open and operate schools and educational institutions. As part of efforts to uphold those rights, implementation of the Fifteenth Periodic Plan had included a campaign aimed at

enrolling all out-of-school children in education. Unfortunately, the activities undertaken under that campaign had been hampered by natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes.

71. Under the national policy of non-discrimination in education, all children enjoyed access to education in Nepal, regardless of their citizenship status. Children without Nepalese citizenship faced difficulties in obtaining scholarships and other benefits, but those issues would hopefully be addressed by the proposed amendment to the Nepal Citizenship Act.

72. The Constitution stipulated that the responsibility to provide primary and secondary education services in line with the national education policy lay with local governments. The Government was committed to ensuring that all children had access to inclusive, equitable and quality education and to promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. It had set the target of achieving, by 2030, a primary education enrolment rate of 100 per cent for girls and boys and an enrolment ratio of girls to boys in secondary education of 100 per cent.

73. The Act Relating to Compulsory and Free Education established that local governments were obliged to provide textbooks, school infrastructure, logistical support and free lunches for the youngest pupils. To help them fulfil those obligations, local governments received a level of funding from the Government and provincial governments based on the number of children attending school in their area. Education spending accounted for 11 per cent of the State budget, the highest allocation for any single area of services, and 70 per cent of that spending was channelled directly to local governments. From the fiscal year 2018/19 to the fiscal year 2024/25, the education budget had increased by 66 per cent, from 85.3 billion Nepalese rupees (Nr) to Nr 141.3 billion.

74. Local governments were also responsible for collecting disaggregated data relating to education. However, since Nepal did not yet have a robust, integrated data system, it was difficult to establish accurate figures on dropout rates and their causes. It was nonetheless possible that some cases of early school leaving were related to child marriage. According to demographic health surveys, the average age of marriage among Nepalese women and girls had risen from 17.9 years to 18.3 years between 2016 and 2021. The Government was aware that early marriages continued to take place, and it had taken various measures to address the problem. The Act Relating to Compulsory and Free Education set out the obligation of schools to readmit any pupils who had previously left school without completing their education. Furthermore, to reinforce the national policy of education for all, the Act also stipulated that any persons who had not completed their basic education by April 2028 would not be eligible for employment in certain sectors and would not be allowed to set up their own business. That assertive action had forced parents to send their children to school. Various programmes and initiatives had also been implemented to raise awareness among girls of the problems that arose from child marriage and early school leaving.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*