



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination  
against Women**  
Twenty-ninth session

**Summary record of the 614th meeting**

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 3 July 2003, at 10 a.m.

*Chairperson:* Ms. Acar ..... (Turkey)

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Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women  
(*continued*)

*Combined third and fourth periodic report and fifth periodic report of France*

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

*(continued)*

*Combined third and fourth periodic report and fifth periodic report of France*  
(CEDAW/C/FRA/3, CEDAW/C/FRA/3-4/Corr.1, CEDAW/C/FRA/5 and CEDAW/PSWG/2003/II/CRP.2/Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of France took places at the Committee table.*

2. **The Chairperson** said that Ms. Gaspard, a member of the Committee who was from France, would not participate in the consideration of the reports in accordance with the Committee's decision 18/III, which precluded the participation of a member who was a national of the reporting State in any aspect of the consideration of that State's report.

3. **Ms. Ameline** (France) said that her Government attached great importance to compliance with national, European and international law, as could be seen from the new policies and measures it had adopted.

4. She headed the Ministry for Parity and Equality in the Workplace, a division of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Labour and Solidarity. Her Ministry included a Department of Women's Rights and Equality and a network of regional delegations. She personally chaired three advisory bodies which dealt with equality in the workplace, sex education, birth control and family education and violence against women. She was also delegated by the Prime Minister to chair the Monitoring Commission on Gender Parity, created in 1995 by the President, which provided advisory assistance in realizing the goal of parity in all areas, including politics. She also worked regularly with the parliamentary women's rights delegations of the Chamber of Deputies and of the Senate.

5. France was engaged in combating all forms of direct and indirect discrimination affecting women. Her Government's anti-exclusion legislation had made considerable changes in the Labour Code, increasing the effectiveness of labour inspectors, trade union organizations and anti-discrimination groups, and

altering the burden of proof in favour of the employed person or applicant, regardless of the reason for discrimination. It had also introduced the concept of indirect discrimination into French law. Membership in the European Union had contributed greatly to strengthening women's rights. Gender discrimination had been specifically dealt with by European Union Council Directive 97/80/EC of 15 December 1997 on the burden of proof in cases of discrimination based on sex. The 23 September 2002 guideline broadens the scope of equal treatment of men and women in respect of job access, on-the-job training and working conditions.

6. Much attention had been given in recent years to parity in decision-making, particularly in politics. The constitutional amendment adopted by the Congress on 28 June 1999 incorporated the principle of equal access for women and men to elected office, and the implementing legislation had been enacted on 6 June 2000. As a result, France had become the first country officially to adopt electoral parity, with each sex making up 50 per cent of the candidates appearing on electoral lists. The goal of parity had been achieved in practical terms in the municipal elections of March 2001, with women making up 47.5 per cent of local councillors in communes with more than 3,500 inhabitants, although only 6.6 per cent of the mayors of those communes were women. In the partial 2001 senatorial elections, some 20 per cent of the candidates elected were women, as against 6 per cent previously. In the legislative elections of 2002, however, only 71 women, or 12.3 per cent, had been elected. A study was under way to find ways to persuade political parties to take positive action to remedy that situation.

7. The March 2003 legislation concerning the election of regional councillors and members of the European Parliament, as well as public campaign funds for political parties, required that male and female candidates should alternate on electoral lists for European elections and for regional elections where lists were divided by department. At the European elections in 1999, before any electoral parity legislation had come into effect, 40.2 per cent of successful candidates were women.

8. Gender parity was also pursued actively by all ministries. A steering committee for equal access by women and men to senior civil service positions in public administration, in its first report in March 2002, had presented proposals aimed at improving awareness

of inequality, reorganizing working hours, and measures to improve gender balance in recruitment and career development. Under the present administration, women had been appointed to a number of positions traditionally held by men, including the presidency of the Paris public transport authority (RATP), the head of the agency responsible for energy and the environment, and the Director for Sport in the corresponding Ministry.

9. In 2003, her Government would submit to Parliament a report relating to measures aiming at equitable representation of the sexes on electoral lists, taking into account the gender balance in the electorate itself.

10. Gender stereotypes and degrading images of women were a matter for constant concern. The Advertising Standards Office (BVP), had produced new recommendations on the image of the human person, based on the principle that advertising must avoid degrading images and abusive exploitation of the human person and must not treat people, particularly women, as commodities. Although French legislation penalized incitement to discrimination, hatred or violence on grounds of origin, ethnic group, nationality, race or religion, there was no provision relating to incitement to sexist discrimination. She had therefore begun discussions with the relevant ministries and with the media on ways to prevent incitement to discrimination on grounds of gender or sexual orientation.

11. In 2002, France had ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. Internal security legislation enacted in March 2003 had created a new offence, namely trafficking in humans, punishable by seven years' imprisonment and a fine of 150,000 euros. In connection with sexual exploitation, it provided for temporary residence and work permits to be delivered to foreigners lodging official complaints or giving testimony against pimps who had exploited them. If the pimps were convicted, the victim was eligible for a full residence permit.

12. French law was among the most harsh in Europe in terms of penalizing those who exploited persons engaging in prostitution. Penalties were particularly severe if a minor was involved, particularly if the child was under 15. Upon taking up her current position, she

had established an inter-ministerial programme to combat sexual exploitation of and trafficking in persons. The programme dealt with prevention, suppression and social reintegration. In the second half of 2003, her Ministry planned to launch an information and awareness campaign on the dignity and integrity of the human person and respect for others.

13. Equal access to education and professional degrees was vital to enable women to play a full part in society. Her Government's activities in the field of education were guided by the Beijing Platform for Action. Priority areas included the promotion of gender awareness in the educational system, measures to encourage girls to continue their studies and to engage in training which would give them a broad range of career choices, and improved access for women to professional occupations in which they were underrepresented, such as science and technology. An inter-ministerial agreement adopted in February 2000 provided for Government action to improve academic and career guidance for young people of both sexes and to provide the necessary training to prepare them for practical employment opportunities, strengthen existing mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality and promote education based on mutual respect between men and women. Pilot projects to promote diversity in career choices for women were being conducted in the academic regions, Rouen and Caen, and an inter-agency framework agreement had been signed in 2003, valid for a period of five years, to ensure the advancement of women in the scientific field.

14. Job inequality persisted despite the real progress that had been achieved. Women made up 45.9 per cent of the workforce in France, but they were underrepresented in the most high-level positions and they predominated in short-term contractual jobs. The number of unemployed women was proportionally higher than that of men, although it was rising more slowly because men were more sharply affected by long-term unemployment. Measures had been taken to improve equality in the workplace and the participation of women in employment policy. By law, gender equality must be taken into account in annual negotiations on salaries and working conditions, and financial incentives were available to reward initiatives designed to achieve gender equality in employment. She had taken measures to encourage dialogue between employers and workers, imploring both sides to take

the initiative in achieving equality in the workplace. Three priority action areas had been identified for 2003: monitoring of negotiations between workers and employers on equality in the workplace; social dialogue on the reform of the pension system and the creation of an independent authority to combat discrimination, particularly gender discrimination and qualitative steps by employers within corporations warranting the award of an “equality label”.

15. Positive actions to combat unemployment included a countrywide mobilization of public servants aimed at reducing the number of women in long-term unemployment by one percentage point; abolishing the ban on night work by women, bringing French law into line with European and international law; and improving working conditions for all those on night shifts, regardless of gender. French law now recognized new forms of violence in the workplace, and a law enacted in May 2001 had extended the range of categories protected by the law to applicants for employment, internships or in-house training. Psychological harassment was also considered a serious offence.

16. Only 30 per cent of those establishing new enterprises in France were women, and her Government was taking cross-cutting actions to remedy that situation, including the creation of a special fund to ease credit access for women entrepreneurs and a partnership with the Agency for Business Creation (APCE) to encourage women to initiate enterprises.

17. France strongly condemned all forms of violence, particularly those which denied the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. Her Government was determined to combat violations of women’s fundamental rights, to punish those guilty of such violations and to assist the victims. A national survey on violence against women conducted in 2000 had shown that such violence cut across all social strata and age groups, that almost 10 per cent of women had been subjected to verbal, psychological, physical or sexual abuse by a spouse or ex-spouse over the previous 12 months and that 0.3 per cent of women had been the victims of rape or attempted rape over the same period. It had also shown that 17 per cent of women had complained of psychological harassment in the workplace, 8.5 per cent had suffered verbal abuse, 2.2 per cent sexual harassment and 0.6 per cent physical attacks, all of the

above in the workplace; and that women were the main victims of sexist insults and sexual harassment in public places. A three-year plan of action had been set up in response to those unacceptable facts.

18. Changes had been introduced in criminal legislation in order to deal more effectively with violence against women. The seriousness of violence between couples had been recognized by law since 1994: violence committed by a spouse or common-law partner now constituted a serious offence punishable by three years’ imprisonment and a fine of 6,860 euros, even in cases where the injuries sustained by the victim did not prevent him or her from working. The Penal Code defined a range of offences involving violence, and penalties were heavier where such offences were committed by a spouse or common-law partner. The penalties for rape had been significantly increased under a 1994 amendment to the Penal Code: they now provided for imprisonment for up to 15 years, or 20, if there were aggravating circumstances. Life imprisonment could be imposed in cases where the rape was accompanied by acts of torture or barbarism. Rape between spouses could also now be penalized, and measures had been introduced to ensure that the victim was protected from the offender, both before and after sentencing.

19. In the case of divorce proceedings, judges could take temporary measures, for example, to authorize each party to live separately. At the request of one of the parties the judge could take emergency measures such as giving the plaintiff authorization to reside separately with the children. The Civil Code empowered judges to take any necessary emergency measures where one of the spouses had seriously neglected his or her duties and endangered the welfare of the family whether or not a divorce was involved. Recent legislation had strengthened victims’ rights in terms of information and assistance. A draft law to be submitted in the near future to the Council of Ministers would make possible the eviction of a violent spouse from the family home. She had also submitted to the Council of Ministers a series of measures to combat all forms of violence against women, particularly in the areas of sexist discrimination, violence against immigrant girls and women and violence in the work place.

20. In accordance with the Beijing Platform for Action, her Government’s health policies observed a gender perspective and emphasized the goal of equality

between men and women. In the area of reproductive health, her Government was working to develop an active policy to prevent unwanted pregnancies. French law now provided for the dissemination of information on sexuality in primary and secondary schools and in all special education facilities. Contraceptives could be prescribed and dispensed to minors, where necessary, without the consent of their parents or legal guardians. The law also made it possible for pharmacies to dispense emergency contraceptive drugs free of charge to minors. Policies now in force also gave priority to sex education and information on contraception and abortion for young adults attending school and for immigrant girls.

21. The law on abortion had been revised in order to bring it into line with women's real needs. Abortions could now be carried out up to 12 weeks into the pregnancy, as compared with the previous maximum of 10 weeks. Measures had also been taken to make information on reproduction more readily available to women, and the specific needs of minors were now taken into account.

22. Her Government was taking steps to eliminate all discrimination and ensure that women enjoyed the right to take part in recreational activities, sports, and all aspects of cultural life. In the interest of rural women, a law enacted in 1999 had created a new status for the spouses of farmers, improving their pension rights. The Ministry of Agriculture was developing a programme to promote awareness of gender equality in rural areas through training schemes and the dissemination of information on women's rights.

23. Legislation had recently been introduced intended to promote a more equal division of family responsibility between men and women by recognizing the concept of co-parenting in the Civil Code and allowing for joint custody in the event of parental separation. Thus France had taken all appropriate measures to ensure equal rights and responsibilities for both parents. Accordingly, she was pleased to announce that it would remove its reservations to article 5, paragraph b, and article 16, paragraph 1 (d) of the Convention.

24. The harmonization of family and professional life was at the heart of the issue of equality. It was therefore appropriate to ensure shared responsibility for providing care for young children and the elderly among the State, the local communities, business and

the family, and within the family, between men and women. The 2002 social security financing Act offered 11 days of paternity leave to members of the civil service and independent workers on the birth or adoption of a child. Her Ministry was working on ways to encourage enterprises to help their workers to bring both aspects of their lives into harmony. France had also begun a process of reorganization of its social services.

25. In order to bridge the gap between de jure and de facto equality, the country faced two major challenges: the first was to enable people in difficult circumstances to enjoying the products of civil society; the second was to establish a modern democracy where women enjoyed absolute parity with men. As a step towards attaining the first goal, the Government was seeking to integrate immigrant girls into society, combat violence against women and prevent trafficking and sexual exploitation of women. The second obstacle, namely, projected lack of skilled workers, particularly in technological fields, would have to be overcome by promoting women's involvement. However, equal participation in decision-making at all levels remained the most difficult challenge to full equality. The National Equality Charter and the PARITÉ network and Internet site were its two most recent initiatives. Her Ministry sought to mitigate the challenge by promoting equality between men and women.

26. **The Chairperson** said she welcomed the efforts of the French Government to broaden the perception of discrimination and to acknowledge the concept of indirect discrimination. She would, however, like to see more sensitivity to the reality of discrimination in the lives of women, especially migrant and refugee women, and to the impact of multiple discrimination.

27. Many countries had been encouraged by the example of France as a secular State with formal and legal equality, and its feminist movement had long been a trendsetter. Although it was disappointing that France still found itself unable to lift all its reservations to the Convention, it was to be congratulated for its ratification of the Optional Protocol.

#### *Articles 1 to 6*

28. **Ms. Gabr** said that she would like to hear more about the vision for the future as far as special treatment was concerned. She could also see a need for

greater social dialogue on such topics as negative gender stereotypes, violence against women and integrating migrant and refugee women into society while respecting their culture. A unified national mechanism or institution might be necessary.

29. **Mr. Flinterman** asked if the Convention was directly applicable in French law; if so, he would like to see examples of judicial decisions that applied it. He would also like to know if the civil law in the Overseas Territories was autonomous, what instruments the Government could use to encourage them to comply with the Convention and how incompatible laws in those territories could be changed. Noting conflicting reports regarding the Inter-Ministerial Committee, he would like to know if it still existed, and if so, its relationship to the National Equality Council. Finally, more information on the recent changes in the laws on prostitution would be welcome.

30. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** said that she agreed that the harmonization of work and family life was at the heart of equality, and that the French Government should be congratulated on making it a priority. She would like to know if there were any new developments with regard to the Offices on work and family life which the Government planned to set up.

31. With regard to the image of women in the media, she would like to know if the group of experts mentioned on page 10 of the report was the same as the group of experts on women in the media and advertising. She also requested clarification about the concept of gender budgeting as it was understood in France.

32. Immigrant women were particularly vulnerable to violence, and she wondered if any specific actions had been taken to protect them.

33. **Ms. Achmad** said that the equality mechanisms described were extensive, comprehensive and specific, but she would like to know more about how progress was monitored and the extent to which non-governmental organizations were involved.

34. **Ms. Gonzalez** said that the measures to strengthen the penalties for the clients of prostitutes were commendable, but she had found no reference to the results of those measures in the report. She would also like to know the approximate numbers of prostitutes and of minors who were victims of trafficking, how many had been freed, how many

foreign nationals in that situation had been allowed to remain in France and how many had been returned home.

35. **Ms. Morvai** said that the positive measures to assist immigrant women in leaving polygamous relationships mentioned in the report entailed a major responsibility to the women and children affected, and she wondered if a full strategy had been developed to deal with the legal consequences and the potential risk of violence against those women.

36. With regard to prostitution, she welcomed the recognition of the close relationship between prostitution and trafficking and the sexist, oppressive and violent nature of the institution of prostitution. She wondered if criminalizing the clients of minor prostitutes was a first step by the Government towards criminalizing all clients.

37. **Ms. Kapalata** asked if international treaties took precedence over domestic law in the French legal system, or if it was the courts which decided on their applicability.

38. **Ms. Ameline** (France) said that France's method of combating discrimination against women was to equality a thread running through its entire society — in economic, social, intellectual, cultural and political life. A legislative framework to combat discrimination was in place, but all sections of society should be involved in its implementation. A conference of employers and employees regarding that issue was scheduled for 2003, and substantial progress was expected. The planned establishment of a National Equality Council would take the debate on equality beyond the government to society itself. As a forum for all the prime movers in society, the Council was the best way to create a culture and consciousness of equality.

39. With regard to the legal position of the Convention, it should be noted that the French constitution gave all international treaties primacy over domestic law. However, the ability to invoke a treaty which had been ratified directly in a court of law was a matter of debate: the Council of State had been called upon to rule in other cases. An international treaty could either be deemed to govern relations between States only, or could be deemed to govern individuals.

40. With regard to prostitution, no distinction was drawn between active and passive soliciting. The

recent domestic security law had focused on victims of international trafficking. Its success was hard to gauge, as it had been in force for only three months, but trafficking appeared to have declined. Prostitution rings endangered human dignity, so residence permits were being granted to those who wished to escape and testify against them. The granting of residence permits was coupled with social assistance.

41. Equality in day-to-day life was particularly important: equal opportunities for women meant little if family and employment made competing demands on their time. Tax credits had been introduced to encourage companies to provide childcare facilities. Companies were increasingly providing those and other services to help their employees reconcile their family and working lives in the interests of greater productivity.

42. A group of experts had been given responsibility for producing a platform of action to deal with gender stereotyping in the media, but it was recognized that such a platform might not be binding enough; a code of professional ethics should be developed.

43. Proper gender budgeting was needed if the State was to set an example with regard to equality. She had written to every ministry to reaffirm that equality policy should become a reality at central and local level and all relevant ministries should receive adequate resources for its implementation.

44. The Government's policies aimed at helping immigrant women called for establishing shelters for women in distress and involvement in NGO activities. With Government funding, a guide on respecting the dignity of the individual had been published and a university for the women of neighbourhoods with a high immigrant population had been established. Those issues arose in the context of the wider debate in French society over secularism and citizenship. The central concern was to ensure that women were treated as full citizens.

45. Polygamy was an issue indicating that the pursuit of equality should not neglect any aspect of women's lives. Individuals granted long-term residence permits were given the option of signing an agreement, the *contrat d'accueil et d'intégration*, which set out their rights and obligations. It referred to gender equality, joint parental responsibility and equal access to education and it emphasized that forced marriage and polygamy were illegal in France. Immigrants were

provided not just with language training but also with training in civic matters.

46. The greatest weapon in the battle against prostitution was education, especially as some victims were so young. In future, clients would be liable to prosecution for exploiting not only minors, but any vulnerable individual.

47. The evaluation of measures to promote equality was essential. The tools it required were in place, with the necessary mechanisms often incorporated in the legislation setting up programmes. The Government, for its part, had established a monitoring centre for parity between men and women, and professional bodies also played a role in assessing the success of equality measures. NGOs were heavily involved in that process, especially through the Internet-based network linking NGOs, employers and employees and economic partners. However, statistics must be improved if evaluation was to be soundly based.

48. The Inter-Ministerial Committee on Women's Rights and Equality still existed, but its role had been reduced, the trend being to use more flexible avenues of consultation such as bilateral relations between ministries and employers and employees.

49. **Ms. Gresy** (France) said that despite a large body of legislation to promote equality between men and women, 80 per cent of household tasks were still performed by women. The most recent Conference on the Family, held in April 2003, had put forward proposals to address that unequal division of labour in the home. The Government was playing its part by simplifying the structure of family childcare and education allowances and increasing the capacity of childcare facilities, which was currently too small to meet the demand. Companies were given a tax credit to apply to part of their expenditure on childcare and parental leave for employees had been instituted.

50. The issue of stereotypical images of women in the media was caught between two constitutional principles in France: the principle of creative freedom and the principle of respect for human dignity. Where advertising was concerned, the Government was trying to strike a balance between self-discipline and legislation. As an example, the advertising industry was stepping up its own efforts to eliminate portrayals of violence against women. However, Internet activity remained largely unregulated, and would have to be dealt with.

51. With regard to gender budgeting, the practice of establishing a “yellow budget paper” covering resources for promoting women’s rights and equality had continued, but when ministries had been asked to supply details of the cost not only of measures which were targeted specifically at women but also of measures which affected women indirectly, they had simply provided statistics because they had been unable to make cost estimates. Another resource-related problem was that expenditure on promoting women’s rights and equality must be viewed across the country as a whole and include expenditure at local as well as central level. Ministries had been obliged to alter their presentation of budgets to divide them not according to budget chapter and heading, but according to objective, in order to make them clearer to the lay person.

52. The Government was trying to mainstream gender equality, pursuing the goals of placing women in positions of responsibility, ensuring professional equality, ensuring respect for women’s dignity and balancing professional and family life. It intended to set targets for each field of activity and select a limited number of indicators by which to judge success.

53. **Mr. Guardiola** (France), clarifying the legal status of the Convention in France’s Overseas Departments and Overseas Territories, which had been at the root of the reservations to the Convention, said that French law specified that international treaties and conventions applied in the overseas departments and overseas territories unless the treaties or conventions themselves specified otherwise. However, the overseas territories (principally French Polynesia, New Caledonia and the Wallis and Futuna Islands) enjoyed legislative autonomy (described as the principle of *spécialité législative*), which meant that they could enact local laws (*lois du pays*). In practice, that meant that civil and social legislation sometimes differed from that of metropolitan France. The Government had examined the legislation of the overseas territories for conflict with the Convention and had found none. For that reason, it had approved the lifting of the existing reservations.

54. There was no precedent testing the individual’s ability to invoke the provisions of the Convention directly before a court in the overseas departments and overseas territories, as no such case had yet arisen. If such a case were to arise, the judge would have to rule first on its admissibility. There were two possible

outcomes. The first was that the Convention could be considered to apply only to relations between States. The second was that it could be considered to be invoked directly by individuals (as had occurred in previous instances relating to the Convention on the Rights of the Child). France’s ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention would certainly make the second of the two outcomes the most likely.

55. **Ms. Shin** asked for clarification of the situation regarding France’s reservations to the Convention. She had understood that it was considering lifting the reservations to articles 5 (b) and 16.1 (d), but wondered what its intentions were regarding the reservation to article 16.1 (g).

56. She wished to know what efforts the Government had made to publicize the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention and what recourse to the Optional Protocol was actually available, particularly to minorities.

57. With regard to violence against women, she commended the Government on the national survey it had conducted in 2000, with its large sample of 7,000 women. However, she questioned the wisdom of targeting only women. Men should also be included, since the aim was to alter men’s attitudes. Although the penalties for violence against women were severe, they did not always have good results. Other measures to change men’s and boys’ attitudes, values, beliefs and customs were needed. She also asked if the national survey had included immigrant women, and whether the Government had considered performing such surveys regularly, for example every five years, in the future.

58. She asked if the Government had considered the serious problem facing immigrant women applying for residence permits. The one-year waiting period sharply reduced the likelihood that they would report violence by their husbands for fear of being refused a permit.

59. **Ms. Popescu Sandru** asked whether the Government planned to conduct a study of the ways in which the mass media, especially television, perpetuated stereotypical images of women and to adopt measures for regulating the Internet. It was not clear whether the programme for the elimination of sexism from textbooks and educational materials had been implemented. Girls were often subject to both direct and indirect discrimination in the schools; she wondered whether there were courses designed to



promote respect for human dignity. While welcoming the withdrawal of some of France's reservations to the Convention in the area of family law, she expressed surprise that they had been maintained for such a long time. Lastly, she was concerned at the absence of a specific legal prohibition of gender-based discrimination.

60. **Mr. Melander** said he was pleased that the delegation's members considered the provisions of the Convention to be self-executing — which was not always the case, even in Western Europe — and that he hoped the French judges would also take that view. However, since local remedies had to be exhausted before the Optional Protocol could be invoked, victims must be aware of their rights under the Convention so that they could invoke it in the national courts. He asked what the Government was doing to educate judges and the general public in that regard.

61. Women who testified against those responsible for their trafficking could be granted a residence permit if the accused was found guilty. However, he feared that if the victim was unwilling to testify or if the trafficker had a good lawyer and the victim a bad one, the guilty party might be acquitted and the victim expelled from France. It would be useful to know how soon such women would be deported and whether there were any measures to ensure that they were not re-trafficked to another country.

62. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** said that the new Domestic Security Act penalized prostitutes, who were in fact victims, rather than their pimps. In particular, its provision that foreign women trafficked into prostitution had no protection unless they made a formal complaint and testified against the traffickers was tantamount to blackmail. She feared that many prostitutes from her own country, Algeria, would be doubly victimized by expulsion if they refused to testify. The Act, which had been adopted too quickly, was inconsistent with the French Penal Code and with the Convention and should be ignored or, preferably, repealed. She asked whether any cases involving articles 18 and 29 of the Act had been brought before the courts and, if so, what the outcome had been.

63. **Ms. Šimonović** noted that Act No. 99-585 of 12 July 1999 had created parliamentary delegations on women's rights and equality between men and women; she therefore wondered whether the fifth report had been discussed and adopted by Parliament. She also

asked who would be responsible for follow-up to the Committee's concluding comments, whether the delegation was satisfied with the national reporting mechanisms and on what basis it had given its assurance that the next report would be submitted on time. She welcomed the Government's commitment to achieving gender parity in elected posts; it would be useful to know whether the measures aimed at achieving that goal were viewed as temporary (albeit long-term) or permanent in nature. She also wondered whether the mixed employment contracts mentioned in the combined third and fourth report were still in use and what results they had produced.

64. **Ms. Saiga** said that since the Monitoring Commission on Gender Parity was funded under the budget of the Ministry of Social Affairs, she wondered whether the Ministry of State for Women's Rights and Vocational Training was a separate ministry or a division of the Ministry of Social Affairs and which body was responsible for coordinating the Government's policies affecting women's affairs. Furthermore, the fifth report stated that the report of the working group established in March 2001 contained recommendations for changing current laws and practices that marketed offensive images of women in advertising. She wondered what action had been taken on those recommendations and whether the Government planned to expand their scope to include offensive images of women on television.

65. **Ms. Ferrer Gómez** stressed the role of education in combating discrimination and stereotypes and the need to prevent the media and the advertising industry from portraying women as dependent or as sex objects. She asked what had been done to implement the recommendations contained in the Advertising Standards Office report entitled "The Image of the Human Being", whether the report had led to increased awareness of the problem of negative stereotypes of women and, if not, what more could be done in that area. She wondered whether any penalties for offences against human dignity had been imposed and whether awareness-raising campaigns targeting journalists, especially women journalists, had been launched.

66. She requested additional information on the Government's efforts to combat social tolerance of violence against women, including through the involvement of men. It was not clear who would be running the human dignity information and awareness campaign to be launched in the second half of 2003 or

what the campaign would entail. She hoped that it would address the problems of immigrant women, who were the victims of discrimination, and would include measures for the preservation of their culture, languages and traditions. The delegation should provide any available statistics on racially motivated crimes against women.

67. **Ms. Achmad** said that the delegation had not yet replied to her earlier question on non-governmental organizations (NGOs); it was essential for the Government to maintain a dialogue with and ensure the systematic involvement of those organizations, for they worked directly with women.

68. **Ms. Gnacadja** said she was disturbed by the delegation's statement that women in the overseas departments and territories faced gender discrimination only within the family. Such discrimination was a serious matter since it violated women's physical and moral integrity; she had been informed of cases where polygamy was accepted, women were married at age 15 and a man could repudiate his wife under certain conditions. She asked the delegation to comment on those reports.

69. Act No. 2000-493 on equal access of men and women to electoral mandates and elective posts had proved ineffective and had been wilfully misinterpreted. She wondered what could be done to strengthen its implementation; perhaps the Government should refuse to register the candidates of political parties whose slates had not achieved gender parity. Lastly, attacks on girls were frequent in the schools, particularly in immigrant communities, and were often motivated by religious beliefs. The police, who were ill-trained and overworked, provided little protection. She asked what was being done to address that problem.

70. **Ms. Ameline** (France) said that although France intended to withdraw its reservation to article 16, paragraph 1 (g), of the Convention, Act No. 2002-304 on the choice of a family name would affect only children born after 1 January 2005. The Convention was not sufficiently known in France. A conference on the Optional Protocol to the Convention had been held, but further awareness-raising efforts were needed and would be among the responsibilities of the parity network which her Ministry hoped to establish.

71. Domestic violence carried severe penalties, but efforts had also been made to address its causes. It was

essential for the schools to promote the elimination of such violence and for co-education to mean not merely coexistence, but also mutual respect and equality. Family and community awareness programmes were also needed. Immigrant women, who were especially vulnerable, had been included in the national survey on violence against women, which would be repeated in 2005 and would include both men and women.

72. In recent television shows and documentaries, women had played characters with important posts in the justice system rather than merely serving as the male hero's "sidekick". Since the nation's children were adept in the use of computers, the Government was working to give all women access to the Internet and train them in its use so that they would not be excluded from their role as educators within the family.

73. Efforts were being made to change the image of women in history books and school curricula and to encourage girls to enter non-traditional fields. Special programmes were aimed at keeping immigrant girls in school and helping them find employment.

74. The Government took the position that young prostitutes deserved a second chance. The Domestic Security Act was designed to put an end to their victimization and bring to justice the members of criminal networks; it appeared to be highly successful, although it was too soon to be certain. The Government had launched an information campaign aimed at preventing young women from falling into the hands of those who would exploit them. The Domestic Security Act gave prostitutes who wished to help prosecute their traffickers an opportunity for rehabilitation and allocated funds for that purpose.

75. Parliament had not been consulted in the preparation of the report, but the parliamentary delegations on women's rights and equality between men and women were very interested in that process. The impact of current national policies and legislation on matters affecting women would be evaluated in preparation for the next periodic report of France.

*The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.*