



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
Forty-fifth session

Summary record of the 907th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 20 January 2010, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Gabr

later: Ms. Halperin-Kaddari

later: Ms. Gabr

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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

*Fourth periodic report of Uzbekistan
(CEDAW/C/UZB/4, CEDAW/C/UZB/Q/4,
CEDAW/C/UZB/Q/4/Add.1)*

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

2. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan), introducing the fourth periodic report, said that 22 State agencies and more than 14 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had taken part in its preparation. The Government of Uzbekistan worked in close partnership with NGOs on the implementation of the Convention and the National Plan of Action to implement the Committee's recommendations. As a result, the fourth periodic report contained statistical data on, inter alia, women's participation in public and political life, demographics, health care and education.

3. In the current context of financial and economic crisis, State policy was directed towards preventing a drop in the standard of living of all Uzbek citizens, including women. Significant progress had been achieved on education, gender equality, health care and other issues that had a direct bearing on women's well-being. The Government had taken measures to implement all provisions of the Convention, with a focus on five priority areas.

4. The first of those areas was legislation: in the previous three years, in response to the Committee's recommendations on women's employment, health care and education in particular, Uzbekistan had passed over 10 laws and had amended existing legislation to protect the rights of women, mothers and children. Important Government programmes had been implemented as part of the Year of Social Protection, the Year of Youth, the Year of Family Development and Welfare and the Year of the Harmoniously Developed Generation. A bill on guarantees of equal rights and opportunities for women and men had been drafted that included a provision prohibiting discrimination against women. The Ministry of Justice had conducted a comparative analysis between domestic legislation and international law on gender equality, while NGOs had performed a gender assessment of labour and family legislation. A concept paper had been prepared for a

national strategy on gender equality in law, economics, social protection, employment and civil society.

5. The second priority was strengthening governmental and non-governmental institutions involved in protecting women's rights. The Government had adopted a set of measures to provide funding and increase staffing and resources for the Office of the Ombudsman and the National Centre for Human Rights. The activities of human rights institutions were in full compliance with the Paris Principles. All three branches of Government monitored the protection of women's and children's rights through the Institute for Monitoring Prevailing Legislation, the Centre for Monitoring the Implementation of Legal and Regulatory Acts under the Ministry of Justice, and the Supreme Court. The Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Justice and Office of the Procurator-General had special human rights units whose duties regarding the implementation of Uzbek law, the Convention and other international instruments included the protection of women's rights.

6. Parliament had passed legislation on NGOs and had established a fund to support them. Currently, over 200 women's NGOs were involved in the protection of women's rights in Uzbekistan. Civic organizations defended women's interests, fostered their role in public life, improved morality and spirituality in the family and educated the younger generation. The number of women elected as chairpersons of such organizations had risen from 10 per cent in 2006 to 12 per cent in 2008.

7. Public information and awareness-raising was the third priority area. In marking the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention, the fifteenth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the twentieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, all State agencies, public institutions, media and educational institutions had been involved in raising public awareness of universal ideals and values and the principles of human rights as well as women's and children's rights and providing professional development for teachers, doctors, social workers, journalists, judges, lawyers and health-care workers. As part of the International Year of Human Rights Learning in 2008, teaching methods had been markedly improved in order to reach different groups, particularly women, young people and children. A collection of over 120 basic human rights documents

had been published in Uzbek, and with the assistance of international organizations, the International Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, together with other educational materials, had been published in the Uzbek, Russian and Karakalpak languages. The Committee's recommendations had also been translated into Uzbek. Annotations to the Act on the Rights of the Child had been published to inform the public of its provisions.

8. Over 20 legal journals on human rights matters were in publication. The media devoted much attention to the laws on human rights and the protection of women's interests, and a number of women's magazines and newspapers were very popular. Polls showed that, between 2005 and 2008, the rate at which women's organizations responded to requests for support had increased fivefold, demonstrating a significant improvement in their effectiveness.

9. The fourth area of priority was Parliament. To follow up on the Committee's comments on Uzbekistan's combined second and third periodic report, Parliament had passed a Trafficking in Persons Act that designated the State agencies responsible for combating trafficking in women. In addition, it had established national and local commissions with members drawn from State bodies, law enforcement agencies, human rights institutions and NGOs. Article 135 of the Criminal Code had been renamed "Trafficking in persons"; over 1,200 criminal cases had been filed in 2009 alone, involving over 4,600 victims of human trafficking, 14 per cent of whom were women. A presidential decree in 2008 had resulted in a wide array of preventive and educational measures to update the response by law enforcement to trafficking in women and girls, while special centres were being established to assist and protect trafficking victims. The Supreme Court had passed a resolution on judicial practice in human trafficking cases that fully implemented the Trafficking Protocol (also known as the Palermo Protocol) supplementing the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

10. Discussions were currently under way on the need to adopt a framework law to prevent violence against women and proposals were being made to amend existing laws to introduce differential penalties for such violence. Special structures were being created to provide assistance to women victims of

violence, and all schools had psychologists who would help prevent domestic violence against women and girls.

11. The last area of priority was Uzbekistan's international obligations. The Government engaged in active and constructive dialogue with the treaty bodies and specialized agencies concerned with the main human rights treaties. In the previous two years, Parliament had ratified seven international human rights treaties, including the Trafficking Protocol. A body headed by the Ministry of Justice was monitoring the implementation of six national plans of action based on treaty bodies' recommendations, including those of the Human Rights Council.

12. The previous two years had seen some major developments in Uzbekistan: for the first time ever, a woman had been nominated as a presidential candidate and a woman had been appointed Speaker of the lower chamber of Parliament. During local and national elections held in late 2009, the 30 per cent quota for female candidates had been met.

13. Naturally, there had been some difficulties in implementing the Convention. Like many other States, Uzbekistan was dealing with the adverse economic, social and political effects of the global recession. Moreover, the transition to a democratic system of government required greater legal literacy among citizens and a shift in mentality to adapt to the new civic society. The serious ecological situation around the Aral Sea was affecting food and water safety in that region. Geopolitically, Uzbekistan's location in Central Asia raised challenges for its peace and stability owing to the situation in Afghanistan, including drug production and trafficking. Terrorism and religious extremism created instability and substantial State resources were directed towards combating those threats.

14. Further effective implementation of women's rights in Uzbekistan would require the strengthening of legal mechanisms and procedures and their practical implementation; joint efforts by State agencies and civic institutions; and greater knowledge among citizens of the laws governing women's rights. Uzbekistan would implement its obligations under the Convention and would support all United Nations initiatives aimed at protecting the interests of women.

Articles 1 to 6

15. **Mr. Flinterman** enquired as to the exact status of the Convention in the domestic legal order of Uzbekistan. He wondered whether its provisions could be invoked before the courts and whether the judiciary could give those provisions primacy over conflicting national legislation. He wished to know what obstacles had prevented the adoption of the draft law on equal rights and opportunities for men and women. Did the draft law contain a definition of discrimination based on article 1 of the Convention and did it refer to the many forms of discrimination to which women could be subjected? He would also welcome further information about the sanctions it included and the remedies available to women's organizations that wished to claim their right to equal treatment under the law.

16. He asked what measures the Government had taken to protect women refugees from discrimination and gender-based violence and to grant them residence permits as appropriate. He would like to know when Uzbekistan might accede to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

17. **Mr. Bruun** sought clarification on how article 44 of the Constitution, which declared all citizens equal before the law without distinction as to sex, was implemented. He wondered, in particular, whether the Constitutional Court dealt with such cases and whether the Convention had ever been invoked to guarantee the prohibition of discrimination by reason of sex. In addition, he requested further information on restrictions to the freedom of association and freedom of speech that had been reported by another source of information.

18. With respect to the education of lawyers, he wished to know how the Government ensured that lawyers received information and instruction on the Convention, how it ensured the independence of the judiciary and how it promoted the number of female judges.

19. **Ms. Jaising** asked whether a statutory mandate existed that gave international instruments precedence over domestic law, or whether that was left entirely to interpretation by the courts. She wondered whether steps had been taken to repeal laws that were discriminatory or that conflicted with guarantees in international law on non-discrimination. She wished to

know, further, whether any special measures had been taken that did not pertain to pregnancy and motherhood, for example on the political participation of women in elected bodies or quotas to advance women's employment. Noting that only 20 per cent of households were headed by women, she asked if the definition of "head of household" included women only if they were divorced, widowed or unmarried.

20. **Ms. Šimonović** wondered whether the periodic report had been adopted by the Government before submission, whether the Committee's new concluding observations would be discussed by the Government or relevant institutions, and whether a plan of action would be produced for their implementation. The involvement of Parliament in the process should be clarified.

21. With respect to the status of the Convention in the Uzbek legal system, she enquired whether that system was dualistic or monistic. She also wondered whether the Committee could expect the law on equal rights and opportunities for men and women to be adopted in the following months.

22. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said that Uzbekistan had a monist legal system, meaning that it directly recognized the standards of international law. If the standards of the Convention were inconsistent with the Family Code or the Criminal Code, then the Convention would apply. When a draft law was prepared, an expert analysis was carried out to examine its consistency with Uzbekistan's international obligations, including under the treaties and conventions it had ratified. Next, a mandatory gender analysis was conducted. Lastly, the implementation of the law was monitored. There had recently been cases of references being made to international conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. For example, the most recent Supreme Court decision on trafficking in persons had referred directly to international conventions.

23. The law on gender equality had not been adopted owing to the heavy workload of Parliament, which had adopted some 300 laws in the previous five years. Apart from the recommendation on the draft law, all of the Committee's other recommendations had been implemented. A great deal of work had been done on the draft law, based on the experience of over 100 countries, and feedback had been sought from

NGOs. The draft law would be on the programme of work of the newly elected Parliament; he hoped that it would have been adopted by the next time Uzbekistan reported to the Committee.

24. The number of refugees in Uzbekistan actually was small; most Afghan refugees had returned home. The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had been closed because it had completed its three tasks: assisting in the return of Tajik refugees from Afghanistan through Uzbekistan, returning Afghan refugees to their homes and providing humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. Uzbekistan was considering accession to the 1951 Convention, the 1967 Protocol and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in consultation with all State bodies.

25. With respect to the allegations of breaches of the right of association and freedom of speech and assembly, what the sources making such allegations were reporting was contrary to fact. Such sources should in future provide more accurate information, including names, places and dates, so that he could give specific replies.

26. The training of jurists was a priority: special continuing education courses were provided in all law enforcement agencies, procurators' offices and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Jurists were informed of the provisions of the Convention and the Committee's concluding observations. Women made up over 20 per cent of the judiciary, which showed that efforts were being made to increase their numbers.

27. With respect to the preparation of Uzbekistan's periodic report and follow-up of the concluding observations, once those observations had been received, the ministries and agencies responsible for implementing them had been notified and they had also been provided to the media. A National Plan of Action to implement the Committee's recommendations had then been prepared with the participation of State bodies, the media, NGOs and representatives of civil society. The implementation was monitored by an inter-agency working group headed by the Ministry of Justice.

28. The periodic report had been prepared with the participation of State bodies and NGOs and was compiled by the National Human Rights Centre. The draft had been sent for feedback from the participating

bodies and had been examined by the inter-agency working group. The report had then been approved by a special parliamentary committee and forwarded to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which had submitted it to the Committee.

29. Concerning the electoral process in Uzbekistan, all four parties that had contested the last elections had met the 30 per cent quota for women candidates established by law. As a result, the number of women in Parliament had increased from 17 to 22 per cent.

30. **Ms. Zou Xiaojiao** asked about the composition of the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan, where its members were drawn from, who nominated them and how it conducted its work. She wondered what forms of assistance and guidance the national Women's Committee provided to its local counterparts. From the description provided, it appeared that the Women's Committee was a national mechanism for improving the status of women, given that it was chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister. In that case one of its major mandates would be to monitor the status of urban and rural women, including refugees, and to propose solutions for their problems. She therefore wished to have specific examples of proposals made by the Women's Committee. Perhaps the Women's Committee could promote the adoption of the law on gender equality.

31. **Ms. Neubauer** said that the requirements for the effective functioning of institutional mechanisms for gender equality did not appear to have been fully met. Responsibility for initiating, coordinating, implementing and monitoring policies for the elimination of discrimination against women and the promotion of gender equality was delegated mainly to the Women's Committee, but a non-governmental organization could not act as a substitute for the Government, which should play the primordial role in ensuring the full implementation of gender equality in specific substantive areas or for specific groups of women. She requested information on the internal structures within ministries and departments to pursue the policies required for full implementation of the Convention, whether ministries had gender focal points, whether there was an inter-ministerial structure to coordinate gender mainstreaming in all policies and programmes and whether the draft law on gender equality envisaged the systematic adoption of a coherent national plan of action for the promotion of gender equality.

32. **The Chairperson**, speaking in her capacity as an expert, noting that Uzbekistan had ratified the Convention without reservation, urged the Government to ratify the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1.

33. The mandate of the Uzbek Women's Committee should be broadened so that it could propose policies, a national strategy and plans of action. It should also have a role in monitoring laws that discriminated against women and proposing amendments or laws. Furthermore, the Women's Committee should have a robust independent budget that would enable it to play its role effectively.

34. It would be useful for the Committee to hear about the conditions for the registration and operation of NGOs for women's activities and for their closure or suspension, as well as whether foreign funding was permitted.

35. **Ms. Neubauer**, noting that special measures were mainly used to protect pregnant women, maternity and parenthood and that quotas had been applied only to lists of candidates to the Legislative Chamber of Parliament, asked whether the Government had any plans to utilize temporary special measures to accelerate the achievement of gender equality in areas where women were disadvantaged and underrepresented. She wished to know, further, whether the draft law on gender equality provided a legal basis for temporary special measures that could be applied in national policies aimed at producing de facto gender equality.

36. *Ms. Halperin-Kaddari, Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.*

37. **Ms. Jaising** asked whether the Government was considering introducing special measures to break the pattern according to which women were mainly responsible for child-rearing while men were the principal breadwinners. Such measures could bring more women into the labour market, perhaps through a system of quotas for women in employment, particularly in public service.

38. *Ms. Gabr, Chairperson, resumed the Chair.*

39. **Ms. Patten** said that violence against women was a human rights issue that required a specific law. In 2006, the Committee had made a recommendation to that effect and had commented on the lack of data on the incidence of violence against women. She wondered what had prevented the implementation of

that recommendation and whether there was opposition within the Government to the adoption of a specific law. In addition, with respect to the National Plan of Action for the implementation of the Committee's recommendations, she would welcome information on target dates, funding and resources for prevention and awareness-raising programmes as well as details of the specific measures being taken to tackle stereotypes and attitudes that led to violence against women. She wished to know how the Government was ensuring that the criminal justice system was non-discriminatory and gender sensitive so that women were encouraged to lodge complaints. It would also be useful to know what steps had been taken to ensure that the knowledge base for data collection was adequate and whether technical assistance was being sought in that regard.

40. **Ms. Hayashi** said that, according to a number of sources, women detainees in Uzbekistan were being held in inhumane conditions with bad nutrition, overcrowding and lack of heating or ventilation, all of which could have an adverse effect on women's health and especially their reproductive health. They had also reported that a number of women journalists and human rights or women's rights activists had been detained in harsh conditions, held in solitary confinement and subjected to sleep deprivation and other forms of ill-treatment. She sought the delegation's view on the incidents in which women had allegedly been arrested, detained and sentenced for exercising their right of free speech. Equality between women and men could not be achieved without fundamental rights such as the right of association and free speech. If such cases were occurring, did the Government attempt to investigate and prosecute them in order to tackle impunity? She also wondered whether the State party was prepared to allow access to international organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross to monitor the status of women prisoners.

41. **The Chairperson**, speaking in her capacity as an expert, wished to know why, while literacy levels for women were high in Uzbekistan, the quality of their education seemed to have declined — some women were receiving traditional forms of education that did not meet the requirements of the new labour market. She had also read that the mass media portrayed a traditional image of women; the Government should cooperate with civil society to change the stereotypes of women, since they were directly or indirectly linked

to such issues as domestic violence, marriageable age, gender equality and sexual harassment in the workplace.

42. **Ms. Coker-Appiah** said that the societal norms and values of Uzbekistan were based on the ideology of patriarchy, which placed men in positions of authority and made women subservient to them with the family as the main forum for that ideology. It was therefore regrettable that the Government, on the basis of article 63 of the Constitution which made the family the nucleus of society, refused to intervene in the private life of the family or in family relations, since that precluded a State response to women's concerns about violations against them. Under the Convention, however, the Government had an obligation to condemn discrimination in all its forms, whether it took place in private or in public. She requested specific examples of measures taken by the Government to implement the Committee's recommendations on addressing patriarchal attitudes and cultural stereotypes regarding the roles of men and women, as well as information on the impact of such measures.

43. **Ms. Šimonović** asked whether the Government intended to proceed with a comprehensive national action plan on violence against women. She sought further detail on the planned amendments to the Family Code and on the contents of the proposed framework law on the prevention of violence against women. Further information would be appreciated on the women's shelters and the NGOs that provided services at those shelters. While good general data was being collected on violence against women, she wondered whether there were any details on the numbers of women murdered by their husbands or ex-husbands. If such data was unavailable, she wondered whether the Government would envisage collecting it in future.

44. **Ms. Rasekh** wished to know what awareness-raising and protective measures the Government had taken to reduce such traditional practices as early marriage, forced marriage and bride kidnapping, which violated the rights of women and girls.

45. With respect to trafficking, it would be useful to know what specific measures were in place to protect and assist trafficking victims. The report provided little information on the prosecution of perpetrators and traffickers.

46. **Ms. Chutikul** requested further clarification on the difference between the new law on combating human trafficking and article 135 of the Criminal Code and asked whether article 135 contained a definition of trafficking based on the Palermo Protocol. The statistics that had been provided on trafficking in persons required further explanation. In particular, she wondered how "traffickers" and "victims" were defined, and what penalties had resulted from the prosecution of perpetrators. She wondered why the activities of firms or individuals involved in sexual exploitation had merely been banned, with no other legal action taken against them. Did the new law on human trafficking or article 135 stipulate that recruitment was a criminal activity?

47. It would be useful for the Committee to have a description of the rehabilitation centres for victims of trafficking, including how many victims were in residence and how long they remained at the centres. She wondered whether these centres were different from those that dealt with violence against women and asked, in addition, what sort of programme was offered to victims, whether residence in the centres was mandatory or voluntary, what successes had been achieved with the centres and what difficulties had arisen.

48. With respect to cross-border trafficking, she wished to know what bilateral, regional or subregional relationships were planned or in place to combat trafficking abroad. She also requested details on the basis for the return of Uzbek citizens from some 10 foreign countries in 2008 and how the return and follow-up programme had been conducted.

49. **Ms. Marufova** (Uzbekistan) said that the Women's Committee, which had been established in 1991, was Uzbekistan's largest non-governmental organization with representation across the country. Its main tasks were to stimulate women's participation, enhance their legal literacy, strengthen the family, protect mothers and children, provide social protection to vulnerable families, women, disabled persons, children, single and elderly persons and support women entrepreneurs. It was also responsible for coordination at the State level and in civil society to ensure the enjoyment of women's rights and gender equality. It was authorized to set up working groups to develop and implement national plans and programmes on women's rights and could influence Government structures with regard to gender equality. The Women's Committee had

its own elected bodies — a 69-member plenary and an 11-member bureau — as well as units throughout the country, each with its own elected bodies, with 6,500 members representing all different enterprises and organizations. At its meetings, the Women's Committee considered the implementation of presidential decrees and government decisions, prevailing legislation, the Committee's recommendations, the Millennium Development Goals and the Beijing Platform for Action. Every quarter, it analysed the status of women in terms of social activity, representation in organizations, employment and the protection of mothers and children. There was broad participation at its meetings by representatives of civil society and NGOs, heads of departments and ministries and members of Parliament and political parties.

50. With respect to stereotypes, attitudes in society were changing regarding responsibility for child-rearing and women's work in the home. Men and women shared equally in ensuring the family's prosperity. The number of businesswomen had grown to over 5 million, and women were initiating and actively participating in family businesses. According to the latest data, one in five entrepreneurs was a woman. Three quarters of working women were employed in the non-State sector. In 2008, the Ministry of Women, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and the Institute for the Study of Civil Society had produced a concept paper on women's movements that devoted special attention to expanding targeted protection; improving the legal knowledge of the population, women and girls in particular; giving men and women equal opportunities in education, cultural activities and science; increasing women's contribution to economic development; and strengthening men's and women's reproductive rights and health.

51. In conjunction with other NGOs, the Women's Committee carried out awareness-raising activities among women and girls, men and boys and spiritual leaders and organizations to eradicate stereotypes about women's roles and domestic responsibilities. A competition had been held to motivate journalists to promote knowledge of the Convention and to eradicate stereotypes in society and the media. The Women's Committee was cooperating with civil society organizations to educate members of law enforcement agencies about the roles and responsibilities of men and women. Together with the United Nations

Development Programme (UNDP), it had developed films and broadcasts on the image of modern women and the principle of equality.

52. A total of 69 special centres for the social adaptation of women had been set up in all regions to help eliminate all forms of violence against women and provide assistance to thousands of women. There were also crisis centres, hotlines, health centres and psychosocial centres throughout the country. In addition to its quarterly report on the subject, the Women's Committee had developed recommendations to improve legislation to combat violence against women and had established a working group to develop a law on preventing domestic violence. Two thousand disadvantaged families had been identified and had received special assistance through training and social services.

53. The Women's Committee carried out annual educational events for the protection of women's rights and had organized hundreds of training courses and seminars. As part of the UNDP project, training courses on the prevention and elimination of violence against women had been conducted for officials of the procurator's office, lawyers and inspectors. A film festival had been held to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Human Rights Day. Together with the Ministry of Justice, the Women's Committee had held a round table for representatives of State and non-State agencies on the elimination of violence against women. Films that promoted harmonious relations among family members, respect and gender equality had been broadcast and newspapers had published quizzes on Uzbekistan's laws for the protection of women's rights.

54. **Mr. Kanyazov** (Uzbekistan) said that under Uzbek law, NGOs were corporations and, like any legal entity, were subject to State registration to ensure transparency concerning their activities and protection both for the organizations and their workers. The number of NGOs had increased from 3,800 in 2000 to over 4,300 currently. In 2009, 186 applications for registration had been rejected; depending on the reasons, the group could re-apply. Uzbekistan currently had some 45 international NGOs from various countries. Funding could come from members' donations, dues or other assistance, business activity consistent with the statutes, or other sources not prohibited by law.

55. The age of marriage in Uzbekistan was set at 18 for men and 17 for women. A bill had been drafted that provided for the same age — 18 years — for men and women, which would allow them to finish their general secondary education. With respect to bride abduction, he noted that the Criminal Code contained a penalty for kidnapping, and that forced marriage was prohibited by law. In modern Uzbekistan, the practice of bride kidnapping was infrequent and occurred only in a few regions as a symbolic practice by mutual consent, with the marriage subsequently registered officially. The Criminal Code did not contain a special provision on the kidnapping of young women, but a person could be prosecuted for such an act under the general provisions.

56. **Ms. Narbaeva** (Uzbekistan) said that the Women's Committee was chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, who could give instructions on behalf of the Government and could coordinate the work on women's issues. Under the leadership of the Prime Minister in the Cabinet of Ministers, a special commission had been established to implement national programmes of action to improve the status of women. It took decisions on every ministry and agency and issued recommendations to NGOs. With financial support from the Government, the Women's Committee had 18 staff members at its central office and 460 staff members in the regions. The Government had programmes to improve the status of women in three areas: women's health, especially for women of childbearing age; employment for women whose personal circumstances did not allow them to work outside the home; and women's participation in social and political activities. Because of the last programme, women made up 22 per cent of Parliament, a woman had been a presidential candidate for the first time, the Speaker of the Legislative Chamber was a woman, the human rights Ombudsman was a woman, two women had been appointed ambassadors, one minister and three vice-ministers were women, and a major NGO, the Federation of Trade Unions, was headed by a woman. Forty-six per cent of all people employed in Uzbekistan were women. To counteract stereotypes, the Government had approved a concept paper on improving the image of women that had resulted in increased activities by women in all spheres. A job creation programme was under way that created some 500,000 jobs each year, 40 per cent of which were filled by women. Special work from home was organized for women who could not work outside the

home. They received labour contracts with a monthly wage and had access to allowances for working women and an old-age pension.

57. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** asked for the exact definition of rape in the Criminal Code and clarification on whether marital rape had been prohibited, as requested by the Committee in its concluding observations on Uzbekistan's combined second and third periodic report.

58. **Ms. Rasekh** said that it appeared there had been efforts, but no specific measures, to prevent forced marriages and early marriages, including bride abductions. It seemed that the young men involved in bride abductions were not aware that it was a crime. In some cases, the police had not become involved because they considered the practice an issue to be resolved by the family, and thus had left the women trapped in forced marriages. She asked what the Government was planning to do to eliminate such situations. She also enquired what legal measures existed to protect women from sexual harassment in the workplace.

59. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said that the Criminal Code prohibited marital rape, which was considered an aggravated offence. Similarly, forced marriage was prohibited by law. Legislative measures also protected women from sexual solicitation.

60. With respect to trafficking in persons and violence against women, Parliament had ratified two important documents on trafficking, including the Palermo Protocol. The law on combating trafficking in persons, which encompassed both national and international measures, fully complied with the Protocol and guided the work of Government and civil society organizations on trafficking. A national programme of action had been adopted by presidential decree, and a special inter-agency public commission had been established to monitor efforts to combat human trafficking. It included members of Parliament and representatives from the office of the Ombudsman, NGOs and law enforcement agencies. Awareness-raising activities were conducted by both State and civil society entities. Uzbekistan engaged in bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Some trafficked women had been returned from Thailand, for example. With the establishment of rehabilitation centres for trafficking victims, the Government hoped to take a comprehensive approach.

61. On the role of the Women's Committee as a national mechanism for women's equality, he said that Uzbekistan did not juxtapose governmental and non-governmental structures. All three branches of Government were, of course, responsible for implementing the Convention, but the Women's Committee coordinated the activities of NGOs.

62. Uzbekistan was proud to be a traditional Islamic society in which 90 per cent of the population was Muslim. Tradition did not undermine the rights of women; the two were not mutually exclusive. Uzbekistan was a secular State with Islamic traditions that were respected and cherished by all. National traditions should not, however, be seen as conflicting with international standards of human rights. Great attention was paid to the role of the media in overcoming patriarchal stereotypes and attitudes towards women. It was not harmful, however, for the Government to promote family values: under the Constitution, the family was the nucleus of society because without the family, there would be no society. He agreed, however, that the family should not violate women's rights. Men and women should be equal in the family and the State would protect women and their individual rights within the family.

63. Regarding the conditions of women detainees, a parliamentary committee had studied the issue and had conducted a monitoring exercise on the article of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights regarding separating adults and adolescents in detention. Measures were being taken to liberalize Uzbek legislation and to improve the conditions of women in detention. The Government had moved women's prisons, so that conditions now met international standards.

64. In 2001, Uzbekistan had become the first country in the Commonwealth of Independent States to allow visits by the International Committee of the Red Cross, which had conducted over 130 visits since then. The management of Uzbek prisons was therefore transparent. Members of the diplomatic corps, the European Parliament, the international media, NGOs, indeed even the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, would also be allowed such visits.

65. **Ms. Chutikul** wished to know how many traffickers had been prosecuted since 2007 and their sentences. She would also like to have examples of

bilateral or multilateral agreements on human trafficking.

Articles 7 to 9

66. **Ms. Murillo de la Vega** said that the best channels through which to raise awareness about political participation were parliaments, governments and presidents, because they conveyed a clear message to the entire nation. Having more women in the Senate Chamber would provide a great lesson for the public. She urged the delegation to do its utmost to ensure that the law on gender equality was adopted at the next session of Parliament.

67. With respect to the 30 per cent quota for women on electoral lists, she asked what posts were covered by the quota. She also wished to know whether the Women's Committee reported to the President, the Cabinet of Ministers or a particular ministry. While she understood that 22 per cent of members of Parliament were women, she wondered what the percentages were on committees and in municipal, district and regional elected bodies. Lastly, she requested information on how the municipalities worked with local government bodies to promote women's participation.

68. **Ms. Coker-Appiah** said that it was regrettable that, four years after the Committee had recommended a review of Uzbekistan's criteria on foreign funding for NGOs, no change had been made. Moreover, new legislation had been introduced that criminalized the staff of NGOs that had not been registered by the Ministry of Justice. The issue of restrictive laws had been a matter of concern to other United Nations bodies as well, including the Commission on Human Rights, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the General Assembly and the universal periodic review mechanism of the Human Rights Council. Freedom of association was a fundamental right enjoyed by the citizens of States that subscribed to the international human rights treaties. The Government should urgently review the laws on NGOs so as to enable individuals and groups to exercise that right.

69. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said that the State and Government were indeed responsible for determining the strategic directions and policy on protection of the rights of women. Parliament had determined the basic direction of a national programme for the enhancement of legal literacy and public awareness, and the

President had confirmed the National Plan of Action to combat trafficking in persons. State bodies and civil society attached particular importance to the draft law on gender equality, which had been refined as a result of the Committee's recommendations. As a non-governmental organization, the Women's Committee reported to its plenary, not to the State or Government.

70. The distribution of portfolios in the new Parliament was currently under way. The percentage of women elected to municipal bodies had increased, but exact statistics were lacking owing to the recent date of the elections.

71. With respect to NGOs, a law on guarantees for the activities of NGOs had been adopted, bearing in mind modern practice in other States and United Nations requirements. Under that law, the State provided subsidies and grants and awarded social service contracts. A special parliamentary committee distributed State funds to civil society organizations. In the previous year, 20 women's NGOs had received funding out of a total of 70. Two types of registration of NGOs was possible: by authorization, or departmental registration. Uzbekistan had decided to use the authorization procedure to permit the activities of NGOs that had registered with the Ministry of Justice.

72. **Ms. Zou Xiaojiao** asked whether Uzbekistan had a Government body that was in charge of all women's issues. What institution provided for the improvement of the status of women in Uzbekistan?

73. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani**, noting the progress achieved in increasing the number of women in Parliament, urged the Uzbek Government to increase the number of female Senate members from the current 15. If political parties were subsidized by the State, it might be advisable to give higher subsidies to parties with larger numbers of women, thereby increasing representation by women. It was also important to have a high level of regional representation, since that was where men and women began their apprenticeship in electoral politics and learned to be good members of Parliament later.

74. She also requested figures on the numbers of women in the diplomatic corps. Uzbekistan should be well represented by women internationally, which would provide good publicity and would benefit men and women alike.

75. **Ms. Murillo de la Vega** asked whether the Women's Committee was entirely outside the purview of Parliament and whether it reported to any particular Government body or ministry.

76. **Ms. Neubauer** wished to know if the Government had any policies on women who experienced discrimination as a result of belonging to sexual minorities, such as lesbians, bisexual women or transgender persons. The Committee had heard that they often faced various forms of violence, including rape and forced marriage.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.