



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

Distr.: General
20 February 2008

Original: English

**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
Fortieth session

Summary record of the 820th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 22 January 2008, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Šimonović

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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 (*continued*)

Third periodic report of Lebanon
(CEDAW/C/LBN/3, CEDAW/C/LBN/Q/3
and Add.1)

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

2. **Ms. Jamhuri** (Lebanon), introducing the third periodic report of Lebanon, said that despite the dramatic events that had taken place in Lebanon since the presentation of the previous reports, governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) concerned with women's issues had made great efforts to overcome the problems and to disseminate the culture of equality that was supported by provisions of the Lebanese Constitution and by the Convention, to which Lebanon had adhered in 1996.

3. Among new developments since the submission of the report in 2006, violence against women had been recognized as a problem not confined to the private sphere, and was being given public attention. On the occasion of the International Day Against Violence Against Women a renowned Lebanese religious leader had called for the elimination of violence against women, and had also issued a number of fatwas supporting women's rights, in particular regarding men and women as equal partners in marriage and rejecting "honour crimes" as abhorrent under sharia. Initiatives taken by civil society encouraged women to speak openly about their experiences. Governmental action by the Ministry of Social Affairs, in addition to its activities against violence in the family, included the preparation of an act on violence against children and its work with the National Commission for Lebanese Women to propose legislation on domestic violence. Domestic violence programmes had been established throughout the country.

4. With regard to women's participation in decision-making, and political life, there had been women ministers in both the previous and the current administrations. A new electoral law had been drafted, although not yet approved, which provided for 51 parliamentary seats out of 128 to be filled from a proportional list in which 30 per cent of the candidates should be women.

5. In 2006, Lebanon had adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and in 2007 the Council of Ministers had decided to ratify both that Convention and its Optional Protocol. No decision had yet been taken in relation to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, but the Council of Ministers had created a national steering committee to study the situation of immigrant domestic workers, which was currently working on a standard labour contract format for such workers and preparing legislation governing their activities in Lebanon.

6. Following the dramatic consequences of the Israeli war against Lebanon in July and August 2006, the National Commission for Lebanese Women, in cooperation with UNFPA, had launched the project "Women Empowerment: Peaceful Action for Security and Stability" (WEPASS), based on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. A network of local women's committees had been set up which had become the main channel for communication with the local communities and for the planning and implementation of activities. The project's main activities were to provide training to enable women to combat violence, encourage their participation in public life and spread awareness of human rights.

7. Given the need to integrate the gender concept into programme planning in the social, educational, legal and health sectors, the National Commission for Lebanese Women was working to increase awareness of the gender perspective, with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), through a project to establish a comprehensive database on women's issues and a network for communication between State and civil society institutions on follow-up to gender policies. The National Commission had also begun to disseminate information on international law relating to women's issues throughout the country, in particular to journalists and the legal professions.

8. In relation to Lebanon's reservations to the Convention, the report emphasized the lack of official progress in modifying the law on nationality and adopting a unified personal status code. Civil society organizations, however, attached great importance to withdrawing the reservations, especially in relation to article 9.2 of the Convention. In May 2007, the Superior Council of the Arab Women's Organization, of which Lebanon was a founding member, had urged

the adoption of the recommendations of its legal group to withdraw the reservation and amend the law on nationality.

9. As for personal status, the report described aspects of discrimination against women in the various statutes in force and also the progress made in the revision of some laws and the jurisprudence of the religious courts, in particular on matters relating to the interests of children. The new trend in the Lebanese civil courts was to limit the scope of denominational laws and to expand the scope of civil jurisdictions as far as possible. The Lebanese State recognized civil marriage contracted abroad and the civil courts could rule on litigation resulting from such marriages by applying the civil law of the country in which the marriage had been contracted. As Lebanese judges were thus obliged to study many different civil codes, they were joining the call for a unified personal status code.

10. The main challenge facing Lebanon was to return the country's political life to normal. The State would then be able to respond to the questions and concerns raised by civil society and actively implement the Convention. It would be a long process and required not only detailed and precise planning, but also a change of vision and attitude.

Articles 1 to 6

11. **Mr. Flinterman** asked whether the ongoing discussions in legal, academic and judicial circles on nationality and family law would form a basis for the Lebanese Government to reconsider its reservations to articles 9 and 16 of the Convention.

12. Referring to paragraph 52 of the report, he asked for an example of a court decision in which the Convention had been given priority over domestic legislation. Lebanon had signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and he wondered whether that could be a step towards signing the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as the two protocols were quite similar.

13. States parties had obligations under the Convention to all women in their territories; he was therefore interested to know how the Government was implementing its obligations to Palestinian women refugees in Lebanon.

14. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, asked for clarification of the process for implementing the Committee's concluding comments on the previous report. She was particularly interested in parliamentary discussions of the recommendations to include a provision guaranteeing equal rights of women and men and the Convention itself in the Constitution.

15. In 2005, the Parliament had agreed to prepare a national action plan for human rights, which apparently was still in the drafting stage. It would be useful to know the main obstacle to moving forward with its adoption and implementation and whether it included implementation of the Committee's concluding comments in relation to changing discriminatory legislation.

16. **Ms. Patten** said that she was very concerned that no consideration had yet been given to the recommendation to address the Constitution, which contained no provision for the equality of women and men. She wondered what point the discussions had reached and what the impediments were.

17. Article 2 (g) of the Convention required the repeal of all national penal provisions that constituted discrimination, yet the Civil Code had several such provisions, including articles 487 and 488 on adultery, which imposed harsher penalties on women. She wondered what the priorities were for the Committee on the Modernization of Laws in dealing with such discriminatory provisions and whether any discriminatory law had already been amended as a result of that Committee's work.

18. She welcomed the involvement of civil society organizations, as highlighted in the report, but it seemed that the Government was still not aware of its obligations. The Government had to ensure that it was fully aware of its obligations under the Convention, as already mentioned in the concluding comments to the previous report.

19. **Ms. Maiolo** said that in her view, it would be difficult to reach full implementation of article 2 of the Convention until a unified personal status code was adopted. The lack of progress in amending provisions of the Penal Code on honour, or in passing specific laws in such areas as family violence, quotas, and stereotypes could be attributed to article 9 of the Constitution, which confirmed the affiliation of Lebanese to spiritual families and recognized the self-

administration of each of those families and the right to legislate and pass judgement exclusively in matters relating to personal status. She wondered whether the Government really intended to take action on article 9 of the Constitution.

20. **Ms. Gaspard** was concerned at the lack of progress in relation to a unified personal status code. She asked whether Parliament had given any consideration to that issue and how much debate was taking place in society. Many statutes were contrary to the provisions of article 2 of the Convention. The recognition of civil marriage contracted abroad by Lebanese citizens had produced serious social inequality, as only those with the resources to travel abroad could take advantage of that provision. She asked why Government bodies were not considering those issues.

21. **Ms. Shin** said that while she sympathized with the difficult situation resulting from the continued political turmoil, Lebanese women were nonetheless entitled to the exercise of their rights. In its concluding comments on the previous report (CEDAW/C/LBN/CO/2, para. 22), the Committee had recommended that the State party should put in place a strategy, including time-bound targets, for a systematic review and revision of all legislation so as to achieve full compliance with the provisions of the Convention. It would appear that the National Commission had many responsibilities, including efforts to change attitudes, law and practice; she would like to know which national bodies were responsible for implementing the Convention and for ensuring follow-up to the workshop mentioned in paragraph 34.1 of the report.

22. She would welcome information on cooperation between the Government and organizations of civil society on matters relating to the Convention. It was unfortunate that there had been no consultation with NGOs during preparation of the report. Ideally, the Government should circulate the draft report or post it on a website and invite feedback from NGOs; some Governments even provided funding so that NGOs could participate in the drafting process. She suggested that a public forum should be organized in order to disseminate the Committee's concluding comments on the third report and to discuss ways of implementing its recommendations. However, it should be borne in mind that responsibility for implementation of the

Convention lay primarily with the Government and could not be delegated to NGOs.

23. **Ms. Dariam** (Rapporteur) expressed concern at the statement, in the responses to the list of issues, that there could be no progress towards women's equality until the country returned to normal politics; clearly, resistance to women's enjoyment of their rights was becoming entrenched, as seen from the opposition to the establishment of quotas for women's election to public office, and the status quo was being perpetuated. The National Commission should increase its vigilance and try to play a greater role as a force for change.

24. While she welcomed the new institutional arrangements, including the National Action Plan for Education for All (2005-2015), the Parliamentary Committee for the Modernization of Laws and the Parliamentary Committee on Women and Children, it was not clear whether the National Commission was the governmental body responsible for coordinating efforts to achieve gender equality. It would be useful to know what the Commission's role was and whether it was able to influence government policymaking and to set priorities for future action, including with regard to changes in the law and the introduction of penalties for non-compliance.

25. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** said that while she understood the importance of the various religions' personal status laws in the nation-building process, that goal could not be pursued at the expense of women's enjoyment of their rights. Moreover, because nation-building was a time of change, it could open new doors for Lebanese women. She wondered whether the Government planned to take advantage of the current situation to begin a national dialogue on gender equality.

26. The delegation should explain whether Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) was being explicitly linked with articles 4 (1), 7 and 8 of the Convention, which required States parties to take measures to achieve gender equality. She commended the WEPASS initiative and asked whether there were any plans to extend it beyond the areas of the country that had been most affected by the recent war and to use it as a basis for implementation of the Convention and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) in the context of the Government's reconstruction policies.

27. **Ms. Kiwan** (Lebanon) said that the WEPASS initiative highlighted both the Convention and the

resolution and that the National Commission did its best to ensure their implementation. However, WEPASS was essentially a field project and would be implemented only in the war-torn parts of the country.

28. **Ms. Jamhuri** (Lebanon) said that the Committee seemed to have gathered from the previous reports that the National Commission was a government body; in fact, while it was responsible for preparing Lebanon's reports to the Committee, it had been established as an impartial body and endeavoured to keep its distance from both the Government and organizations of civil society. When asked to take a position on an issue or to prepare a report, it tried to take all views into account. Some of the Commission's members, which included representatives of civil society, had been selected on the basis of their professional competencies while others had been chosen because of their past involvement with women's issues.

29. In its concluding comments to the previous report, the Committee had urged the Government to disseminate the Convention widely, in particular to women's and human rights organizations, and to consult with NGOs during the preparation of its next periodic report. The Commission had therefore shared the concluding comments with civil society and, before drafting the third report, had invited input from women's organizations and other relevant bodies such as the bar association and trade unions. It had tried to reflect the opinions of civil society and had sought information from experts, some of whom were among its members. However, because less than a year had passed between submission of the previous report and the current one, there had not been time to circulate the resulting draft for general debate.

30. The Committee's concluding comments on the previous report had also been submitted to the Government and the relevant parliamentary committees and had been disseminated to all relevant bodies with an accompanying memorandum identifying areas in which change was particularly desirable. The Commission had prepared four pieces of draft legislation on matters related to gender equality and had stressed to the Parliamentary Committee for the Modernization of Laws that it was urgent to amend articles of the Penal Code that discriminated against women immediately rather than waiting until the entire Code was reviewed. At present, however, real progress was unlikely because, as a result of the political

situation, Parliament was not playing its normal role in the adoption of legislation.

31. **Ms. Hadib** (Lebanon) said that the Constitution did not discriminate against women; its preamble, adopted in 1990, required the Government to implement the international conventions to which Lebanon was a party and the courts were endeavouring to ensure respect for all those instruments; the Government attached particular importance to implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The ministerial statement of 2005, mentioned in paragraph 31 of the report, made it clear that women were essential and active partners in public life.

32. The Parliamentary Committee for the Modernization of Laws and the Parliamentary Committee on Women and Children had proposed amendments to the Penal Code, particularly with respect to crimes of honour, and were promoting the adoption of a unified personal status code; the National Commission and civil society had been involved in preparation of the draft legislation but since Parliament had been paralysed for the past 18 months, there had been no progress towards its adoption.

33. **Ms. Kiwan** (Lebanon) said that all efforts to pressure the Government to adopt the draft legislation aimed at gender empowerment or to include a specific reference to the Convention in the Constitution had been blocked as a result of the political crisis. The Constitution had, in fact, been reviewed twice since its initial adoption in 1920: in 1943 and 1989. At present, however, national consensus was fragile and pressure from the international community could only be counterproductive. Already, the people's reaction to what was viewed as outside interference had made the nation's religious leaders more powerful and better able to resist calls for the adoption of a unified personal status code. Lebanese society was becoming more conservative on social issues; some years ago, organizations of civil society had proposed draft legislation providing for civil marriage, but that initiative had had to be abandoned. It was necessary both to conduct public awareness-raising activities and to pressure decision-makers to bring about change, but the Commission's efforts in the second of those areas were useless at present.

34. **Ms. Jamhuri** (Lebanon) explained that a two-thirds majority was needed in order to amend the

Constitution. The National Commission thought that it would eventually be possible to achieve adoption of a unified personal status code that would co-exist with those of the different religions; the fact that the judiciary had supported such an initiative suggested that the Lebanese people were not opposed to the idea. In the current political and social climate, however, there was no point in putting forward a proposal that was certain to fail.

35. **Ms. Kiwan** (Lebanon) added that in its 2005 ministerial statement, the Government had undertaken to implement all obligations entered into by Lebanon under the recommendations of the Fourth World Conference on Women; however, no concrete action had followed its issuance although the National Commission had stressed to the Government the importance of its implementation. Once the political situation returned to normal, she thought that the climate would become more conducive to the adoption of new gender equality policies. The Commission had submitted a proposal for the establishment of an inter-ministerial committee, pointing out that 14 per cent of Lebanese families were headed by a woman, and the Ministry of Social Affairs had developed a social action plan that would benefit women.

36. The Ministries of Labour, Justice and Social Affairs were sensitive to women's issues and had made somewhat timid efforts to bring about change. Several national bodies, including the Ministry of Social Affairs, were working with immigrant communities. The Ministry of Labour had conducted a mission to Sri Lanka and the Philippines, the countries of nationality of the largest number of immigrants to Lebanon, in order to improve the working conditions of those immigrants, the great majority of whom were women domestic workers.

37. **Ms. Jamhuri** (Lebanon) stressed that the lack of progress in the months since the Committee's consideration of the previous report did not mean that the National Commission had been inactive.

38. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, asked the delegation to provide more information on the content of the national action plan for human rights and on its relevance to the Convention.

39. **Ms. Jamhuri** (Lebanon) said that the parliamentary commission responsible for drafting the plan had met several times but, as she had explained,

the political climate was not conducive to progress on such matters.

40. **Ms. Neubauer** noted with concern the lack of high-level institutional mechanisms aimed at promoting gender equality and guaranteeing women's human rights. It seemed that the Government, which was responsible for implementation of the Convention, had not established such structures. It would be interesting to know what role the National Commission for Lebanese Women played in maintaining political dialogue among the various international donor agencies.

41. **Ms. Zou Xiaqiao** requested clarification of the exact status of the National Commission for Lebanese Women in relation to the Government.

42. **Ms. Chutikul** requested additional information about the membership and budget of the National Commission for Lebanese Women. It would be useful to know what authority the Commission had and what role it played in coordinating the work of the various ministries. The delegation should provide clarification on the Lebanese Women's Council and the gender focal points in government institutions. Additional information should be provided to support the claim made in the report that Lebanon had made progress in setting up national gender-based databases (paragraph 93). It would be interesting to know whether the Government had established a national plan of action for women's rights.

43. **Ms. Gabr** said that society should be ready to improve women's human rights in spite of political instability. It was her understanding that the third periodic report had been endorsed by the Government; it would be interesting to know how the National Commission for Lebanese Women had been strengthened in order to coordinate the efforts of the various committees and the Executive Branch. She wondered whether training for judges in the Arab countries might be coordinated by the Arab Labour Organization. In addition, she would like to hear about any efforts made to change stereotypes and improve women's image in the media.

44. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** said that the special interim measures referred to in the report (p. 29) did not correspond with the special temporary measures provided for by article 4.1 of the Convention, whose purpose was to accelerate gender equality. Special temporary measures should not be confused with ordinary gender policies. General Recommendation

No. 25 might assist the Government in implementing special temporary measures.

45. **Ms. Coker-Appiah** requested additional information on the measures implemented to change stereotypes in the school curriculum. It would be interesting to know whether those measures had brought about positive results.

46. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, said that it seemed that the Convention was not viewed as a legally binding instrument in Lebanon. In spite of the political instability, it was important for the Government to be prepared to make constitutional changes aimed at strengthening implementation of the Convention.

47. **Ms. Jamhuri** (Lebanon) said that in 1990 Lebanon had affirmed in the preamble to the Constitution that it abided by the covenants of the United Nations and by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. International instruments had precedence over national laws and judges were aware of the constitutional weight of those instruments. Constitutional authorities must ensure the harmonization of national laws with international instruments.

48. **Ms. Kiwan** (Lebanon) said that the National Commission for Lebanese Women had been established outside the ministerial framework in order to address women's issues common to all government bodies, to maintain contact with civil society organizations and to coordinate with international bodies, and in order to avoid overlap between the various ministries. The Commission was an official institution which was entitled to receive funds from the public budget and its members were appointed every three years. In addition to its advisory role, it had the exclusive authority to follow up on all women's issues. There had been some initial opposition to the Commission but the support of the donor community had endowed it with greater credibility and had provided it with assistance in implementing programmes in accordance with international standards. Regrettably, the Commission did not have a fully fledged budget and some of its advisory opinions were not taken into account.

49. **Ms. Baladian** (Lebanon) said that the National Commission for Lebanese Women had limited resources and relied on donations from international bodies. Members of the Commission had other

responsibilities and did not work full-time for the Commission.

50. **Ms. Moufarrej** (Lebanon) said that gender focal points had been appointed within government institutions to ensure due consideration was given to gender issues. However, a number of projects had encountered obstacles as a result of the hierarchical nature of the ministries.

51. **Ms. Jamhuri** (Lebanon) said the National Commission for Lebanese Women prepared the reports to be submitted to the Committee upon the request of the Government. Even though the Ministry of Foreign Affairs approved the reports, the National Commission took the lead in women's issues at the national level.

52. **Ms. Hadib** (Lebanon) said that the Government had implemented a special measure that allowed a woman to sign her children's passport and would incorporate that provision into future legislation.

53. **Ms. Kiwan** (Lebanon) said that the Ministry of Education had organized workshops to examine stereotypes in school textbooks. Some stereotypes had been eliminated and training was being provided to schools and authors of textbooks.

54. **Ms. Chutikul** said that clarification should be provided of the roles of the various government mechanisms responsible for combating trafficking in persons. It would also be interesting to receive additional information on the field study on trafficking in persons in Lebanon, which had been due to be completed in December 2007. Additional information should be provided on the legal study to bring Lebanese legislation in line with the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. In drafting legislation, the Government should take into account the Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking established by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Additional information should be provided on the exact nature of the bilateral agreements on migrant women entered into with other countries.

55. **Mr. Flinterman** noted that, according to the report, the granting of new licenses for the establishment of brothels and *maisons de rendez-vous*

had been suspended while the State prepared a review of existing legal provisions. According to other sources, however, no such licences had been issued for decades, making prostitution effectively illegal in Lebanon. He would be interested to know more about the main elements of that review and the time frame for its completion.

56. Also according to the report, the Directorate General of Public Security controlled the entry and exit of persons to and from Lebanon and detained and deported anyone who violated the law, particularly those relating to public order and public decency. Yet, according to other sources, around 5,000 artist visas were issued each year; many of the women granted such a visa ended up working in the sex industry; and even the State was involved to some extent, owing to the existence of directives that facilitated the sexual exploitation of women. He asked what measures were being taken to stop such practices, which clearly violated article 6 of the Convention.

57. **Ms. Ara Begum** asked how the Government planned to protect the fundamental rights of refugee women in the absence of an effective State policy to protect such women from violence and discrimination.

58. In view of the statement by the Special Rapporteur on the human rights aspects of the victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, that Lebanon had a significant problem of trafficking in persons that affected in particular foreign women recruited as domestic workers and foreign women in the sex industry (E/CN.4/2006/62/Add.3, para. 70), she was curious to know what impact had been made by Decision No. 40/2006 of the Office of the Prime Minister, dated 10 April 2007, establishing a National Facilitation Committee to address the situation of female migrant workers in Lebanon. She also wished to know how many bilateral agreements and memorandums of understanding had been signed with other countries.

59. Lastly, the reporting State should explain what progress had been made with regard to the Ministry of Labour's decree regulating offices that recruited foreign female domestic servants.

60. **Ms. Jamhuri** (Lebanon) said that Lebanon had ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its two Protocols in August 2005. Just a few months later, the Ministry of Justice had drawn up an action plan for their

implementation and established the National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons, which was responsible for conducting the field study on trafficking in persons in Lebanon and the legal study on Lebanon's penal legislation.

61. The results of the field study on trafficking in persons in Lebanon were due out in March 2008. Initial reports suggested, however, that no cases of trafficking in children had been found; that the number of trafficking cases identified (around 300) was much lower than some sources had suggested; and that there was some confusion among the Committee and its staff as to which acts constituted trafficking in persons.

62. The legal study on Lebanon's penal legislation and the legislative measures required to bring Lebanese legislation into line with the provisions of the Convention and its Protocols, meanwhile, had reportedly found that Lebanon's penal legislation punished many acts that were related to trafficking in persons, but did not criminalize trafficking in persons per se. The Committee was studying whether or not the sentences applied to those acts were sufficiently strict. It seemed likely that the Government would need to introduce new legislation making trafficking in persons a crime.

63. While respecting the views of the other sources mentioned, she stressed that both the field study and the legal study had been conducted with assistance from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which had been given access to all relevant files, including those of the Ministry of Justice, the Directorate General of Internal Security Forces and the General Directorate of Public Security. It was important, therefore, to wait for those studies to be finalized before drawing any final conclusions. She was confident that the results — which she would forward to the Committee as soon as they were published — would prove that the figures provided by other sources were a huge exaggeration.

64. The National Facilitation Committee, meanwhile, had been established to address the situation of female migrant workers in Lebanon. It was currently working on a standard employment contract for such workers, which would be subject to Government supervision. It was not yet clear whether the new provisions would be the subject of a specific law or simply included as an amendment to the Labour Code. The fact that migrant female domestic workers were excluded from the

provisions of the Labour Code and covered instead by the Code of Obligations and Contracts was not evidence of discrimination, since Lebanese female domestic workers were subject to the same provisions. All domestic workers suffered from an equal lack of protection.

Articles 7 to 9

65. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** noted that, even though similar numbers of men and women voted in elections, the number of women in decision-making positions was low. The results of the various opinion surveys conducted in recent years clearly indicated that most people supported the nomination of women for parliamentary seats and the adoption of a quota system. Women also seemed keen to stand for election. Yet the Government's proposals had not met those demands, and she asked how the Government planned to overcome that contradiction.

66. **Ms. Neubauer** said that the fact that the draft electoral law allocated a 30-per-cent quota for women candidates competing for 51 of the 128 seats in Parliament would boost the number of women candidates, but not necessarily the number of women being elected. She would be interested to know whether the draft electoral law included any measures to address that.

67. According to the report, 2006 had seen remarkable progress in terms of women reaching decision-making positions. It would be useful to learn whether any mechanisms had been established to collect data on women in decision-making positions and whether any measures had been adopted to increase women's representation in positions of power.

68. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** urged the State party to withdraw its reservation to article 9, paragraph 2, of the Convention. That Lebanon was a Muslim country was not an excuse; many Muslim countries with the same reservation had since withdrawn it.

69. **Ms. Gabr** said that, as an Egyptian, she understood the problems facing Lebanon, particularly in light of the Arab League decision that Palestinian refugees should maintain their Palestinian identity. However, the marriage rate between Lebanese women and Palestinian refugees was lower than the marriage rate between Lebanese women and men of other nationalities. The issue concerned people of all nationalities, therefore, not only Palestinians. While

awaiting adoption of a law by Parliament, Lebanon might wish to consider adopting interim measures to improve the living conditions of children born to a foreign father, in particular, allowing them to go to school or issuing them with temporary identity cards.

70. Lastly, stereotyping in video clips and commercials should be avoided, as it encouraged extremism.

71. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** pointed out that one of the reasons that not very many women were being elected was that very few women were standing for election in the first place, in part because of the conviction among women that it was futile to stand as a candidate and because of the burden of election costs. She would be interested to know whether there were any schemes to help cover the costs incurred by women standing for election.

72. The report provided a great deal of information about Parliament, but very little about the civil service in general, referring merely to the remarkable progress made in 2006. She would appreciate more information in that regard. She was particularly curious to know whether any other measures had been adopted, besides the memorandums issued by the Director General of the Internal Security Forces on the recruitment of male and female specialist officers.

73. Lastly, she would be interested to know the ratio of male to female judges in the civil courts, the legal profession and the Ministry of Justice.

74. **Ms. Jamhuri** (Lebanon) said that those responsible for drafting the report had deliberately omitted statistics already contained in previous reports.

75. **Ms. Kiwan** (Lebanon) said that the draft electoral law had been drawn up by a special consultative committee on the basis of consultations with civil society organizations and public figures, among others. The former had lobbied hard for the inclusion of a quota for women. Other parties had stressed the importance of requiring female candidates to be listed first; of ensuring equal media coverage for male and female candidates; and of contributing towards female candidates' costs, so as to ensure that they were not at a financial disadvantage.

76. The committee responsible for drawing up the draft electoral law, under pressure from all sides, had sought to take account of the concerns of both civil society and the political establishment. In the end, the draft law had

included a quota system for 51 parliamentary seats, the elections for which would be conducted on the basis of a proportional system. The remaining 77 seats would be contested on the basis of a majority system. The draft law had also included a provision aimed at ensuring equal media coverage for male and female candidates. The request that female candidates should be listed first had not, however, been taken into account.

77. Regrettably, the draft law had not been approved by the Cabinet and the whole issue of quotas was being ignored in the current political negotiations. Even though she would have preferred a larger quota that applied to all seats in Parliament, any quota was useful, since quotas ensured that female candidates enrolled in a particular political party, rather than standing as independent candidates. Female candidates included in party lists ran not against other female candidates, but against other political parties composed of both male and female candidates. That approach had been identified as the best one. However, there was clearly still a long way to go.

78. **Ms. Riachi Assaker** (Lebanon), speaking in her capacity as Permanent Representative, said that, when she had entered the foreign service some 25 years earlier, there had been just 10 women in the foreign service and women had accounted for only 5 per cent of diplomats representing the country abroad. Today, there were four times the number of women in the foreign service and women accounted for 37 per cent of diplomats abroad. That constituted huge progress.

79. When she had started her career, a diplomat who had wished to marry another diplomat had had to resign. In other words, it had not been possible for a female diplomat both to start a family with a colleague and continue her career. Neither had it been possible for a Lebanese diplomat to marry a foreign diplomat. Following a long struggle by Lebanon's female diplomats, those provisions had been removed. Currently, there were no restrictions on a diplomat's private life and female diplomats enjoyed the same rights as their male colleagues. Consequently, the number of women entering the foreign service, the number of female diplomats marrying other diplomats and the number of diplomats marrying foreign diplomats had all risen. She hoped that the same progress would be seen in other areas of Government.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.