



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

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

Summary record of the 985th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 15 July 2011, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Pimentel

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

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

Combined sixth and seventh periodic report of Ethiopia (CEDAW/C/ETH/6-7; CEDAW/C/ETH/Q/6-7 and Add.1) (continued)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the members of the delegation of Ethiopia took places at the Committee table.*

Articles 7 to 9

2. **Ms. Murillo de la Vega** observed that the percentages of women elected to the federal parliament and the state councils remained quite low, yet the information provided by the State party indicated that in some cases the proportions of women and men standing as candidates for election were virtually equal. She would like to hear the delegation's views on why, given women's clear willingness to run for public office, more of them were not being elected. She wondered what action the Government was taking to encourage greater participation by women in public life, for example through media announcements, and whether it had implemented any special measures to ensure the safety of female candidates. She would like data on the numbers of Ethiopian women working in the civil service, particularly in decision-making positions, and would be interested in knowing, whether, in addition to the training that the Government was providing for women civil servants, it had considered conducting campaigns to raise awareness among men of the important role that women could play in the public sphere.

3. She shared the concerns raised during the previous meeting about the impact of the Charities and Societies Proclamation, especially on the activities of civil society and non-governmental organizations working in areas relating to justice and human rights. Such organizations had played a key role in advancing the rights of women in Ethiopia, and she would like to know whether any consideration was being given to allowing them to continue to pursue their activities.

4. **Ms. Bareiro-Bobadilla** said that she, too, was concerned about the limitations placed on the activities of civil society organizations, which in Ethiopia and around the world had played a crucial role in championing women's rights. She would like to know

what the Government was doing to support and strengthen such organizations and thus to empower women. She also wondered what was being done to encourage women to pursue careers in the judiciary, in diplomacy and in public administration — not just at the ministerial level but also at local levels. Additionally, she would welcome information on steps being taken to promote greater involvement of women in decision-making within political parties and would like to hear the delegation's views on the potential for achieving parity in the representation of men and women in the federal parliament.

5. She noted that the Women's Affairs Standing Committee of the House of People's Representatives was responsible for reviewing draft laws and proclamations in order to ensure that they effectively protected women's rights. That being the case, she wondered why the penalty for female circumcision established under the Criminal Code enacted in 2005 was only three months' imprisonment or a fine. Such a light penalty was unlikely to have much impact in deterring the practice. It was important for the Standing Committee to ensure that laws would truly have the intended effect and would work in favour of women's equality.

6. **Ms. Patten** asked whether children born in Ethiopia of foreign parents could acquire Ethiopian nationality.

Articles 10 to 14

7. **Ms. Bailey** enquired what was being done to boost school enrolment among girls in rural areas, especially in the pastoralist areas of the Afar and Somali Regional States, where the proportion of girls enrolled in primary school was as low as 30 per cent, while the national average was around 80 per cent. She would like to know whether the State party expected to achieve the Millennium Development Goal target for primary education in those areas. The periodic report indicated that the percentage of girls completing grade 8 was about half the percentage that completed grade 5, which meant that more than half of girls who enrolled at the primary level were not completing their schooling. Early marriage and pregnancy were among the factors contributing to low female school enrolment and completion, and she wondered whether the Government had a policy on school re-entry for young women after pregnancy and what the Government was doing to encourage parents to send and keep their

daughters in school. She would also welcome information about adult literacy programmes in rural areas and about any efforts by the Government to expand vocational and technical training opportunities for girls and women in order to better prepare them to enter the labour market.

8. Information received by the Committee highlighted the need for girl-friendly schools, including girls-only toilets, which suggested that sexual harassment and sexual abuse of girls in schools might be a problem. Was that the case, and, if so, what was the Government doing to address the issue?

9. **Ms. Zou Xiaqiao**, noting that the statistics on literacy in rural areas contained in the State party's periodic report were from 2004, requested updated information on literacy rates and on the impact of activities undertaken to eliminate illiteracy among adult women. She also wished to know whether the State party had any policies aimed at helping girls to remain in or return to school and whether any special vocational or technical training was available to female students who had left and then returned to school. Lastly, she was curious to know whether the Education Sector Development Programmes and the affirmative action measures described in the periodic report had yielded the expected results and, if not, what measures were envisaged to achieve those results in the future.

10. **Ms. Patten** said that the Committee had received information indicating that sexual harassment of Ethiopian women in the workplace was widespread. The State party had indicated in its responses to the Committee's list of issues and questions (CEDAW/C/ETH/Q/6-7/Add.1) that it might introduce provisions in the Labour Proclamation to address that issue after conducting research to identify the magnitude and nature of the problem, and she wondered whether such research had been undertaken, what the findings had been and whether the Government was planning to introduce any provisions on the matter in the Labour Proclamation and the Federal Civil Servants Proclamation. She would also like to know whether the Government envisaged increasing the penalty for employers who unlawfully terminated women's employment on the basis of gender, marital status, family responsibility, pregnancy or potential pregnancy. Noting that the Government maintained a list of jobs from which women were banned because they were considered too arduous or harmful to their health, she pointed out that new

technical and scientific developments might reduce the risks associated with some activities; she asked how often the list was reviewed to ensure that it was not discriminatory towards women.

11. She had not seen any information in the report on the situation of women working in the informal sector and would like to know what policies were in place to protect their rights. She would also appreciate information on what was being done to reduce the disparities between women and men in employment rates and wages, whether temporary special measures such as quotas were being considered in order to increase employment among women and whether Ethiopia's labour laws incorporated the principle of equal pay for work of equal value.

12. **Mr. Bruun**, noting that Ethiopia had ratified the International Labour Organization Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (Convention No. 182), said that the Committee had received alarming reports dating from around 2005, according to which numerous girls were employed as domestic workers and the majority suffered sexual harassment and abuse at the hands of the sons of their employers. He would welcome current information on the situation of girls employed in domestic and other work and would also like to know how the Government monitored the prevalence of child labour. He was curious to know whether the Charities and Societies Proclamation applied to trade unions. If so, he wished to point out that Ethiopia had also ratified the conventions on freedom of association and protection of the right to organize (Convention No. 187) and on the right to organize and collective bargaining (Convention No. 98), under which trade unions could not be prohibited from receiving foreign financial support, provided it was used for lawful purposes.

13. **Ms. Ameline** said that, having recently visited the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, she had been able to see first hand the devastating harm caused by obstetric fistula, a condition that affected large numbers of young girls in Ethiopia, many of whom had become pregnant as a result of rape. In addition to the physical repercussions they suffered, such girls were often shunned by their families and communities. She wished to know whether measures had been taken to ensure the continued availability of treatment and support services for victims and whether any awareness-raising activities had been carried out with a

view to reducing the social stigma associated with the disorder. She also wondered whether current sanctions for rape and forced marriage were sufficient to reduce the occurrence of obstetric fistula.

14. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** observed that, despite the State party's adoption of some commendable health-related measures, health conditions among Ethiopian women remained alarming. Maternal mortality was very high and HIV/AIDS affected many more women than men. The report identified several factors that limited women's access to health services, including cultural attitudes and lack of financial resources, and listed several actions taken to increase the availability of health care; however, the information was mainly of a descriptive nature and provided little hard data that would enable the Committee to assess the effectiveness of those measures. She would like to know the coverage of primary health-care facilities in Ethiopia, whether enough health-care workers had been trained to staff them and whether those workers had been adequately trained, and what the impact of the actions taken had been in terms of improving women's health status. She was also interested in hearing what had been done to change cultural attitudes towards care-seeking and to educate the public about women's lifelong health-care needs.

15. In addition, she wished to know whether the Governments' efforts to discourage early marriage had increased the average age of first pregnancy and what the Government was doing to promote and facilitate family planning among married couples. The core document submitted by the State party indicated that only about 14 per cent of married women used contraceptives. Were contraceptives easily accessible? Did the Ministry of Health work with the Ministry of Education and with the media in order to raise awareness of the causes of maternal death and the health risks associated with early marriage and pregnancy?

16. **The Chair**, speaking in her capacity as an expert, sought current data on the number of reported cases of malaria, disaggregated by sex, and on malaria treatment coverage, particularly among women. She would also welcome information on malaria prevention and treatment activities in Ethiopia.

17. Although the State party had taken action to increase access to health care for women, its periodic

report indicated that still almost 60 per cent of pregnant women never sought any type of antenatal care. She would like detailed information on actions taken to address that situation, such as allocation of resources to improve women's health status and specific measures, including legislative and public policy measures, to facilitate women's access to health services, and on the impact of those measures.

18. **Ms. Hayashi**, noting that the State party had encouraged the establishment of women's credit associations and savings unions in order to enhance their economic status, enquired how many such associations and unions had been formed and how much money had been made available to women through them. She would appreciate further information on the Government's initiatives to enhance women's financial and income-generating capacity. Specifically, what capacities were women gaining through those initiatives and had they yielded any visible results? She also wished to know whether non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders were involved in the Government's financial assistance activities for women. She had listened carefully to the delegation's explanations regarding the Charities and Societies Proclamation, but wished to stress that freedom of association and assembly was a core value of democracy, without which a country could not fully enjoy economic development. Moreover, in many countries, foreign non-governmental organizations were major employers of the local population. She would therefore suggest that the State party should reconsider the restrictions on funding of non-governmental organizations from the standpoint of their potential for impairment of women's economic rights.

19. **Ms. Zou Xiaoqiao** observed that the information on poverty among rural women in the periodic report dated from 2005 and requested updated information. She would like to hear what the Government was doing to eliminate poverty among rural women and what results its actions had produced. The report mentioned a plan for accelerated and sustained development to end poverty, and she wondered whether the targets of that plan had been met. She encouraged the Government to enhance its capacity for the collection and analysis of such data so that it could better assess progress and plan future poverty reduction initiatives. Lastly, she would like to know what steps the

Government was taking to enhance the availability of health services for women in rural areas.

20. **Ms. Jahan** welcomed the information provided in the introductory statement by the head of the delegation regarding Government programmes to assist rural women and promote rural development. However, there remained serious disparities between men and women in access to services and resources, including land and agricultural credit. The Committee had been informed that in some regional states a woman could only gain access to land through marriage and lost it upon divorce or the death of her husband; it had also been told that women in pastoralist areas were denied ownership of livestock or their rights in that regard were very limited. She would like to know what strategies and targeted interventions were under way to reduce the disparities between men and women in rural areas and between rural and urban women. In particular, she wished to know what action was being taken to increase access to safe drinking water within the immediate vicinity of rural households. Information received from Government sources indicated that 69 per cent of the Ethiopian population had access to safe drinking water, but according to other sources the proportion was only 25 per cent. She would appreciate clarification of which figure was correct.

21. The Committee was aware that Ethiopia and other countries in Africa were leasing large amounts of agricultural land to foreign companies, which then exported the bulk of their production. She wondered whether any studies or evaluations had been conducted to identify possible negative impacts of that situation on the local population, especially women, in terms of displacement, loss of employment opportunities, further feminization of poverty and food insecurity, and what provisions were in place for resettlement and economic rehabilitation of displaced persons.

22. **Ms. Zenebu** (Ethiopia) said that her Government was carrying out advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns, especially at the grass-roots level, to educate women about their rights. Education was a key component of the Government's efforts to promote and protect the rights of women and of its overall economic and social development initiatives. It had launched an adult functional literacy programme that targeted women in particular and had deployed more than 34,000 health extension workers, who, in addition to health services, were providing education aimed at combating harmful traditional practices and

discouraging early marriage and pregnancy. The women's development armies that she had mentioned during the previous meeting were also working to combat harmful traditional practices as well as to promote income-generating activities. They were also conducting household visits, during which they encouraged pregnant women to get antenatal and post-natal care and verified school attendance by children in the household.

23. As a result of various preventive and corrective measures, the prevalence of female genital mutilation had dropped from 74 per cent in 1997 to 37.7 per cent in 1999. The prevalence of marriage by abduction had decreased from 23.3 per cent in 1997 to 12.7 per cent in 2009-2010, while the prevalence of early marriage had declined from 33.1 per cent to 21.4 per cent during the same period. One component of Ethiopia's Growth and Transformation Plan was aimed at eliminating female genital mutilation, marriage by abduction and early marriage, and other harmful traditional practices.

24. As to special measures to ensure equal opportunities for women in the labour market, the legal framework governing employment, Labour Proclamation No. 377/2003, enacted in line with article 41 of the Constitution, prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex, nationality, religion, political views or any other factor and guaranteed equal opportunity for women and men. Ethiopia had ratified several International Labour Organization instruments, including the Convention concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value (Convention No. 100), which, pursuant to article 9 of the Ethiopian Constitution, had become an integral part of domestic law. Accordingly, the Labour Proclamation stipulated that women and men were to receive equal pay for equal work. The Federal Civil Servants Proclamation No. 515/2006 stipulated that in the recruitment, promotion and deployment of employees, preference was to be given to female candidates, provided they possessed the requisite qualifications. In addition, there were federal directives that provided for affirmative measures and protected the equal opportunities of women in the employment market. The Labour Inspection Service within the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs monitored employers' compliance with the Labour Proclamation, and the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions also monitored compliance with workers' rights.

25. Owing mainly to women's relatively low levels of education, female workers were concentrated in clerical and other semi-professional occupations. Efforts were under way to increase the numbers of women completing higher education. Women made up 64.2 per cent of the total workforce of 28 million. In the informal sector, out of a total of 1.4 million workers, 51 per cent were women. The principle of equal pay for equal work did not apply in the informal sector as wages were dependent on the market. The Government was working to enhance the bargaining capacity of women in the informal market, as was the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions.

26. Under the Federal Civil Servants Proclamation, No. 515/2006, sexual violence in the workplace was an offence entailing rigorous penalties, and the Criminal Code also penalized sexual harassment under its articles 625 and 846. The Labour Proclamation was currently being amended to include articles aimed at protecting women workers from sexual harassment and abuse in the workplace, and the Government was willing to consider increasing the penalty for such offences, and for dismissal on the basis of gender, marital status, family responsibility and pregnancy, after conducting research to identify the nature and magnitude of those problems.

27. With regard to social protection, the Government had recently put in place a social security scheme for private-sector employees and established a new agency to oversee it. Hence, women employed in both the private and the public sectors now had access to pensions and to social protection in general. Ethiopia currently had a patchwork of social protection schemes, many of them community- and family-based, but was in the process of establishing a comprehensive national social protection system.

28. Concerning child labour, the Government had incorporated the provisions of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention into domestic law and had a plan of action for implementing it. In collaboration with development partners and non-governmental organizations it was carrying out several programmes aimed at protecting child workers. The Addis Ababa city administration had conducted a wide range of interventions for street children, which had provided skill training programmes and jobs for some and enabled others to be reunited with their families and to attend school. That initiative would be replicated in other regional states.

29. **Mr. Zenebe** (Ethiopia), responding to questions raised during the 984th meeting concerning allegations of rape committed by members of the Ethiopian Armed Forces in the Ogaden region, reiterated that the Government had thoroughly investigated all claims of impropriety and had found that the Armed Forces had never been involved in any form of rape in the Ogaden region or elsewhere within the country or outside the country as members of international peacekeeping forces. On the contrary, Ethiopian peacekeepers in Burundi, Liberia, Rwanda and other areas had garnered praise for their professionalism, discipline and efficiency. He wished to set the record straight once and for all: allegations of rape committed by the Ethiopian defence forces in the Ogaden region were completely unfounded.

30. As he had said earlier, acts of sexual violence had been committed in other parts of the country, though not by members of the Armed Forces. Legal action had been taken against the alleged perpetrators in all such cases. From 2007 to 2010, a total of 3,119 individuals accused of crimes of sexual violence had been prosecuted and 2,111 had been sentenced.

31. Concerning the leasing of rural lands to foreigners and its impact on the local population, especially women, the lands in question were mainly in malarious lowland areas that were largely unpopulated. If any population had been displaced as a result of the leasing arrangement, their Constitutional rights had been strictly protected. As a proportion of Ethiopia's total arable land, the amount leased to foreigners was minimal. The Government's aim in leasing the land had been to contribute to the country's economic development, reduce poverty and enhance the food security of its people.

32. Children born to foreigners in Ethiopia could acquire Ethiopian nationality only if one of their parents was Ethiopian. Otherwise, Ethiopian nationality could normally only be acquired by naturalization. However, children abandoned in Ethiopia could be granted Ethiopian citizenship in order to avoid their becoming stateless. Regarding the Optional Protocol to the Convention, his Government was committed to ratifying it in due course.

33. The Charities and Societies Proclamation had not hindered Ethiopian citizens from enjoying their rights to association and assembly. Citizens were free to form associations and to exercise their political, economic and

social rights in accordance with the Constitution. It was only foreign organizations that were prohibited from engaging in political activities or exercising influence through “invisible hands” — i.e., resources — in areas which under the Ethiopian Constitution were reserved for citizens. The law also sought to prevent dependence on foreign resources and to clarify the procedure by which local non-governmental organizations could raise funds, ensuring transparency and accountability. Organizations that received more than 10 per cent of their funding from non-Ethiopian sources were free to carry out economic, social and humanitarian activities and were also allowed to engage in some political activities under specific bilateral agreements with the Government. The provisions of the law represented a policy decision by the Government. He was not trying to convince the Committee; he was simply presenting the facts.

34. **Mr. Fassikaw** (Ethiopia) added, also in response to a question raised during the 984th meeting, that the assets of the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association had been frozen in part because it had been found that all its funds had come from foreign sources and in part because of the nature of its activities. However, 10 per cent of its assets had been returned, and the Association was also receiving support from the Ethiopian Government through the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission.

35. The punishment for female genital mutilation was not limited to 3 months’ imprisonment. The Criminal Code provided for imprisonment for as much as 10 years for some forms of female circumcision, notably infibulation. Abduction, including abduction of a woman for purposes of marriage, was criminalized under articles 586 to 589 of the Criminal Code and was punishable by up to 10 years’ imprisonment.

36. **Mr. Desalegn**, replying to a question asked during the previous meeting about the difference between religious and customary courts, said that, although Ethiopia’s Constitution permitted the establishment of customary courts, in fact there were no such courts. If customary courts were to be established, their jurisdiction, like that of the sharia courts, would be limited to matters relating to marriage, personal or family law, and they would not be allowed to apply religious or customary law in a manner that violated the Constitution, which was the supreme law of the land, or any of the international conventions to which Ethiopia was a party, which

automatically became part of domestic law. Their decisions could be appealed to and overturned by the Cassation Division of the Federal Supreme Court and by the House of Federations, which was the ultimate interpreter of the Constitution. His Government viewed customary and religious courts as an additional way of ensuring that the rights of women and children were respected. For example, Amhara Regional State had tried to incorporate customary rules into the State machinery in its social courts so as to apply the wisdom of elders in protecting and promoting the rights of women and children.

37. Within the federal and regional judicial systems, an effort was under way to make courts more victim-friendly, for example by allowing crime victims to testify via closed-circuit television from a separate room. The new victim-friendly arrangements had been well received by the public and had brought an increase in conviction rates.

38. **Ms. Mekdes** (Ethiopia) said that the Ministry of Education was taking numerous steps to address educational gaps between pastoral areas and other parts of the country, including an incentives scheme in pastoral areas, whereby sheep, goats and packed oil were offered to parents who sent their daughters to school regularly. There was also a school feeding programme in the Afar and Somali Regional States and a girls’ scholarship programme and boarding schools for indigenous girls. Mobile schools had been set up to expand educational opportunities for both girls and boys, and alternative basic education programmes that took account of local realities had been established. As additional incentives, families that sent their children to school were given priority in food security and income generation programmes, and girls and boys in pastoralist areas received school uniforms and educational materials free of charge. As a result of those initiatives, school enrolment rates had risen by an average of 5.7 per cent, with the greatest growth occurring in the pastoralist regions. In Somali Regional State the increase had been 28.3 per cent; in Afar, 23.3 per cent; and in Gambella, 10.9 per cent. Gross enrolment rates among girls at primary level (grades 1 to 8) in Somali Regional State had risen from 39.5 per cent in 2005-2006 to 57.3 per cent in 2009-2010. As to whether the Millennium Development Goal target for primary education would be achieved in those regions by 2015, the Government was working towards that

objective, which had been incorporated explicitly in its Growth and Transformation Plan.

39. In order to increase enrolment and reduce dropout rates among girls, the Government was striving to make schools girl-friendly by creating a school environment that was safe and attractive for female students. To that end, it had launched a general education quality improvement programme in 2006, and about 80 per cent of primary schools and 60 per cent of secondary schools had developed school improvement plans. Ensuring separate toilets for girls was a special target under the programme. In addition, in collaboration with the Forum for African Women Educationalists and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Ministry of Education was implementing gender-responsive pedagogy.

40. To address sexual harassment and other gender-related issues in schools, reduce dropout rates and increase the involvement of communities in attracting girl students to school, girls advisory committees had been established at the federal level and at the grass-roots level within individual schools. The Ministry was also working with the media and with parent-teacher associations to address gender stereotypes in education and raise community awareness of the importance of girls' education. As a result of those efforts, the gender parity index for grades 1 to 4 had risen from 0.87 in 2004-2005 to 0.93 in 2009-2010; for grades 5 to 8, it had increased from 0.69 to 0.97, and for grades 9 and 10, from 0.57 to 0.80, over the same period. With regard to adult literacy programmes, the national adult education strategy gave special attention to promoting literacy among adult women. The Growth and Transformation Plan aimed to achieve 95 per cent adult literacy by 2014-2015. Young women who wished to continue their education after pregnancy were free to do so.

41. **Ms. Meseret** (Ethiopia) said that maternal mortality in Ethiopia had declined from 673 to 470 per 100,000 live births between 2005 and 2010; the proportion of births attended by skilled health workers had increased from 12 per cent to 18.4 per cent; antenatal care coverage, from 50 per cent to 71 per cent; post-natal care coverage, from 15 per cent to 36 per cent; and use of long-lasting insecticidal nets by pregnant women, from 2 per cent to 49 per cent. The contraceptive prevalence rate had risen from 25 per cent to 40 per cent, and contraceptives, including emergency contraception, had been made available at

all levels. The number of health facilities offering HIV counselling and testing had increased from 801 to 1,184; the number providing services for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, from 93 to 1,352; and the number providing antiretroviral therapy, from 168 to 550. Hospital deaths attributed to abortion had decreased from 32 per cent to 6 per cent from 2005 to 2010.

42. To accomplish that progress, the Government had employed various strategies, including a 20-year national health development plan comprising four phases, the first three of which had already been implemented. It also had a strategy for prevention and control of HIV and an adolescent and youth reproductive health strategy. The Government also had several initiatives aimed at filling the gap in access to health services at the community level, including a health extension programme under which some 34,000 female health workers had been deployed. They were focusing mainly on maternal and child health, including health promotion and disease prevention, social mobilization and community-based health education aimed at promoting family planning and skilled care during childbirth and discouraging early marriage and other harmful practices. Media campaigns were also being carried out to advocate family planning and institutional delivery.

43. As a result of a health facilities expansion programme carried out between 2005 and 2010, the number of health posts at the grass-roots level had grown from 2,899 to over 14,000, while the number of health centres had increased from 668 to 2,689 and the number of hospitals from 126 to 195. The Government had also launched a programme to train health workers to provide antenatal and obstetric care at the local level, and about 70 per cent of the 5,400 individuals originally enrolled in the programme had completed the training and been deployed.

44. To prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV, her Government was emphasizing primary prevention and promotion of safe and responsible behaviour, in particular the "ABC" approach (abstinence, being faithful, and condom use). Condoms were provided free of charge, and in 2010 alone some 128 million had been distributed. HIV testing was being made widely available for women, and family planning services were being expanded with a view to preventing unintended pregnancies among HIV-infected women. The availability of antiretroviral therapy was also

being expanded, and safe infant-feeding practices for HIV-positive mothers were being promoted.

45. Ethiopia currently had 854,018 cases of malaria. To prevent and reduce the incidence of the disease, the Government was applying environmental management techniques and promoting the use of insecticide-treated nets, together with use of the drug Quartum. In 2010, 12 million doses of the latter and 35.2 million insecticide-treated nets had been procured and distributed.

46. **Ms. Zenebu** (Ethiopia) said that the level of drinking water coverage at the national level was 65 per cent. In urban areas, 91.5 per cent of the population now had access to potable water. In the coming five years, the Government aimed to achieve 100 per cent coverage in urban areas and 98 per cent in rural areas.

47. With regard to women's participation in decision-making at the regional level, in Tigray Regional State, for example, the proportion of women elected to the regional council had increased from 18 per cent to around 48 per cent since 1995, while in Amhara it had risen from 5 per cent to 31 per cent and in Somali from 0 per cent to 69 per cent. As to protection for female political candidates, Ethiopia's election laws provided for legal action to be taken against any person who interfered with a political candidate. The Government recognized the crucial role that women played in the development and strengthening of democracy and was working to ensure a conducive legal framework and an environment in which women could participate in the electoral process without fear of intimidation or harassment.

48. Concerning the leasing of land to foreign investors, the Government believed that its positive effects on economic development far surpassed any negative impact it might have had. More than 100,000 new jobs had been created as a result of the land lease programme, 90 per cent of which had gone to women. The Government had provided compensation for any citizens who had been negatively affected.

49. **Ms. Šimonović** enquired whether the Ministry of Women's Affairs had collaborated with the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association in the past and requested information on the Association's current status. The Committee had received information that indicated that the organization had been very instrumental in advancing women's rights in Ethiopia, and she would

like to know under what circumstances it would be allowed to continue that work. Information made available to the Committee also indicated that more than 90 per cent of the non-governmental organizations working in Ethiopia received more than 10 per cent of their funding from outside sources. That being the case, she was curious to know how many organizations remained eligible to work in Ethiopia under the Charities and Societies Proclamation and which organizations had been consulted in the preparation of the State party's periodic report. She would also like clarification of the situation of international non-governmental organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Were they eligible to register and work in Ethiopia under the law?

50. **Ms. Patten** said that there appeared to be some contradiction in the State party's position vis-à-vis foreign entities. On the one hand, the Government viewed the lease of land to foreign firms as an opportunity and appeared unconcerned about their interference in domestic affairs, while on the other it had barred non-governmental organizations that received foreign funding from operating in Ethiopia because it wanted to discourage dependence on foreigners. She also saw a contradiction in the delegation's replies to the Committee's questions regarding the lease of land to foreigners. The Committee had been told that the land in question was unpopulated, so no one had been displaced, but then it had been reported that compensation had been paid to those negatively affected. She would like clarification and, if possible, data on the number of people removed from their land and the amount of compensation paid. In addition, she would welcome additional information on the situation of women employed in the informal sector and on any steps being taken to bring them into the formal sector and provide them with social protection.

51. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** asked whether political parties in Ethiopia received any subsidy from the Government as an incentive for putting forward female candidates who stood a good chance of being elected.

52. **The Chair**, speaking in her capacity as an expert, said that it was gratifying to hear that the State party was aware of the challenges posed by the coexistence of customary and religious law alongside statutory law, particularly the challenges relating to women's rights as established under the Convention. The Committee's 28 general recommendations on interpretation and

contextualization of the provisions of the Convention could provide useful guidance in that regard.

53. **Mr. Zenebe** (Ethiopia) said that, as he had explained earlier, the lands leased to foreigners were largely unpopulated, but if any populations had been displaced, the proper legal procedures had been followed, and they had received compensation and assistance in resettling elsewhere.

54. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch could not be registered in Ethiopia under the Charities and Societies Proclamation because their work had to do with human rights and political issues. As to the number of non-governmental and civil society organizations operating in Ethiopia, within one year of the law's enactment, more than 500 new organizations had been registered and many of those that had existed previously had opted to continue under the terms of the proclamation and had re-registered. The law had created a conducive environment for such organizations to operate on the basis of transparency, accountability and clear guidelines for fund-raising, which accounted for the significant increase in the number of new organizations.

55. **Mr. Fassikaw** (Ethiopia) added that no organization that had been registered before the enactment of the Charities and Societies Proclamation had been unable to re-register under the new law. All organizations that had applied for registration under the law were registered and operating in Ethiopia. With regard to the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association, it had received extensive support from the Charities and Societies Agency, which was responsible for overseeing the activities of non-governmental and civil society organizations. For example, it had been granted six fund-raising permits in the previous six months. In addition, it had entered into a bilateral agreement with the Government, enabling it to work on human rights issues in collaboration with the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and various other Ethiopian institutions. The Charities and Societies Agency maintained a close supportive relationship with all registered organizations.

56. With regard to subsidies for political parties, Ethiopia's election code provided for the payment of a grant to political parties that fielded female candidates.

57. **Ms. Zenebu** (Ethiopia) said that in the course of preparing its periodic report the Government had consulted more than a hundred non-governmental

organizations, civil society organizations and international organizations, including the African Child Policy Forum, the Ethiopian Women with Disabilities National Association, the Network of Ethiopian Women's Associations, the Ethiopian Human Rights Council, the Ethiopian Bar Association, and the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association. Her Ministry had a good relationship with the latter organization and with many of the other non-governmental organizations that had sprung up since the enactment of the Charities and Societies Proclamation and that were working to promote and protect the rights of women and narrow the social, economic and political gaps between women and men.

58. On behalf of her delegation she wished to express her satisfaction with the enriching and educational dialogue carried out with the Committee. The delegation members had done their best to answer the Committee's questions frankly and honestly, and she was confident that the Committee's concluding observations and its recommendations would reflect the spirit of cooperation and encouragement that had prevailed. Her Government remained committed to fulfilling its obligations under the Convention and enabling the women of Ethiopia to enjoy their rights fully.

59. **The Chair** thanked the representatives of the State party for a constructive dialogue which had provided further insight into the situation of women in Ethiopia. The Committee commended the State party for its efforts thus far and encouraged it to take all necessary measures to address the various concerns expressed by Committee members, which would be formally communicated to the Government of Ethiopia in due course.

The meeting rose at 5:30 p.m.