

DRC (Zaire)

16th session

344. At its 317th meeting, on 16 January 1997, the Committee, on the recommendation of its Bureau, considered an oral report presented on an exceptional basis by the representative of Zaire (see CEDAW/C/SR.317).

345. The Committee had originally scheduled to take the initial report of Zaire at its sixteenth session. However, as a result of a breakdown in communication between New York and Kinshasa, the Government did not inform the Secretariat that it was ready to present its report. As a result, the initial report of Zaire was not included in the Committee's agenda.

346. However, as the representative of Zaire arrived in New York expecting to present the State party's initial report, the Committee instead agreed that the representative of Zaire would make an oral report on an exceptional basis on the situation of women in Zaire. The Committee agreed on the understanding that the regular report of Zaire would be rescheduled for consideration by the Committee at a future date.

347. The representative stated that eastern Zaire was in a state of rebellion, and as many as 600,000 Zairians, predominantly women and children, were displaced within the country. At the same time, Zaire was host to a significant number of refugees from Rwanda and Burundi. Many persons, including women and children, both Zairians and refugees, had fallen victim to violence, including murder, rape and other abuses.

Comments of the Committee

348. The Committee reiterated that the oral report had been heard on an exceptional basis and as a matter of courtesy for the delegation of Zaire and that the regular report would be rescheduled. It expressed its particular concern for the situation of Zairian women in those areas where conflict had occurred and where refugee populations were high.

349. The Committee regretted that the oral report by the State party had not sufficiently reflected the close link that existed between discrimination against women, gender-based violence and violation of the rights and fundamental freedoms of women, particularly in the light of the current situation in the country.

350. The Committee was of the view that effective and immediate measures needed to be taken to protect the physical and moral integrity of refugee and displaced women and of all women victims of armed conflict.

351. The Committee encouraged the State party, when presenting its initial and subsequent reports, to provide information on the consequences of armed conflict within Zaire for the lives of Zairian women, as well as for the lives of refugee women from countries neighbouring Zaire.