



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
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Summary record of the 876th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 28 January 2009, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: 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 (*continued*)

Combined second and third periodic report of Cameroon (CEDAW/C/CMR/3, CEDAW/C/CMR/Q/3, CEDAW/C/CMR/Q/3/Add.1)

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

2. **Ms. Adebada** (Cameroon) read out a statement on behalf of the Minister for the Promotion of Women and the Family. Cameroon had ratified the Convention without reservation and one of the main elements of the Government's socio-economic development strategy was the promotion of equality and equity between the sexes. Development required both economic growth and the development of a democratic and inclusive society where men and women would have the same opportunities to contribute to growth and to realizing their own goals. The combined second and third periodic report (CEDAW/C/CMR/3) had been prepared in a participatory process in which representatives of ministries, civil society organizations and development partners had participated.

3. The draft law on the prohibition of violence and discrimination against women and the draft Code of Persons and the Family had been completed, and took into account sexual, physical, psychological and economic violence against women. The Government was also considering the issue of equality between men and women in family matters, as part of its concern to find a definitive solution to all problems relating to the exercise of women's civil and political rights. Laws which contained discriminatory provisions were in the process of being revised and the Government's strategy against practices and customs unfavourable to women included awareness-raising, advocacy and training measures. Studies had been undertaken to obtain sex-disaggregated data and the gender approach was being mainstreamed with all sectoral and social partners.

4. Temporary measures to accelerate the achievement of de facto equality between men and women included support for girls in the form of education grants; political training and logistical support for women involved in politics; literacy

campaigns for women; and training for women in information and communication technologies.

5. The Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Family was engaged in diverse and fruitful cooperation with other ministries and civil society organizations in areas that included capacity-building for women's organizations, efforts to counter violence against women, strengthening of women's economic position, follow-up work with the gender focal points in other ministries and bodies and policy development.

6. The Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Family was the institutional mechanism which designed measures to ensure the full development of women and followed up on their implementation. It worked in close collaboration with all government structures, civil society organizations and development partners and provided services in all parts of the country through centres for the advancement of women, its specialized technical units.

7. The Government took the provisions of the Convention seriously and saw a close connection between development objectives and action to address women's issues. A long road lay ahead but Cameroon's political will was clear and irreversible and no sector or issue would be neglected. The Committee could support Cameroon's efforts by helping it to identify new ways of reaching its objectives.

Articles 1 to 6

8. **Mr. Flinterman** noted the important steps taken by Cameroon towards implementing the Convention in the domestic legal system and asked what action had been taken under article 13 of the Optional Protocol to publicize the Convention, the Optional Protocol to the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations, and to familiarize women and women's organizations with the individual complaint mechanism provided by the Optional Protocol. As a complaint could be brought only after exhaustion of all domestic remedies, it was very important that the provisions of the Convention could be invoked in domestic courts. He understood that the Convention was part of the Constitution, which contained provisions for the protection of women that could be referred to in the courts. However, he wished to know whether the Convention's provisions could be directly invoked and if so, whether that had ever been done. The 1993 Supreme Court decision given as an example

in the report had been taken prior to the Convention's entry into force in Cameroon. He wondered whether there were regular training courses for the judiciary to explain the provisions of the Convention as interpreted by the Committee over the past 25 years.

9. He asked whether the Government intended to incorporate some basic elements of the Convention, such as the definition of discrimination and the principle of equality, into the Constitution. He also wondered whether a time frame had been set for repealing the many discriminatory laws that still existed in Cameroon, in accordance with the State party's obligations under article 2 of the Convention.

10. The National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms provided an important non-judicial mechanism for dispute settlement. He asked for more information on the types of complaints submitted by women and wished to know whether the National Commission made use of the provisions of the Convention. He wondered to what extent the Government had managed to ensure that the National Commission was truly independent so that it would qualify as a national institute of human rights in accordance with the Paris Principles.

11. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, asked for more information about the mandate of the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Family and also its goals, financial resources, strategy and programme. She also asked how temporary special measures were evaluated and suggested that their implementation required further efforts and discussion. The institutional mechanism should have a clearly defined programme and activities and measures such as quotas were required.

12. **Ms. Coker-Appiah** said that while traditional cultural practices were certainly a hindrance to efforts to improve the status of women in all areas, tradition should not be used as a pretext for inaction. Culture was dynamic and the Government could change some of those practices if it had the political will to do so. Senegal, in the West African subregion, had made progress in combating female genital mutilation (FGM) by involving Muslim clerics in the advocacy effort to explain its harmful effects. Cameroon could call on its own traditional leaders and work with them to eradicate some of the harmful practices. She also asked whether there was a time frame for adoption of the draft law on violence against women.

13. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, said she hoped that harmful traditional practices such as breast ironing would be tackled by the Government without delay. She was aware that the First Lady of Cameroon had been active in that area and hoped that the Government's political will would be translated into activities to improve the situation of women.

14. **Ms. Rasekh** noted that Cameroon's ratification of the Optional Protocol, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its optional protocols demonstrated the State party's political will and desire to improve the situation of women's human rights. Reports from a variety of sources indicated that violence against women and trafficking remained problems in Cameroon. The draft law against violence against women was still only a draft and did not contain provisions for the prosecution of violators of women's rights, although Cameroon was a country of destination and transit for trafficking, including trafficking for the purpose of prostitution. She asked for more details of Cameroon's strategy for the elimination of violence against women and asked why it was taking so long to adopt the draft law, when violence and trafficking were causing suffering to women every day.

15. **Ms. Chutikul** asked whether Cameroon had ratified International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labour. If that was the case, she was interested to know whether Cameroon had defined the worst forms of child labour as required under article 3 (d) of that Convention.

16. She wondered how many women had benefited so far from the programmes for women who wished to leave prostitution, how successful the programmes had been and how the law against prostitution dealt with children. She was also interested to know whether the law referred to the exploitation of prostitution.

17. Cameroon had passed a law against trafficking in 2005, and it would be useful to know whether the definition of trafficking used in that law complied with the definition in the Palermo Protocol, which Cameroon had ratified in 2007. It would also be useful to hear more about trafficking, including details of any existing plan of action, particularly to counter trafficking in women.

18. Information should be provided on protective measures for victims, including the provision of

accommodation; health, psychosocial and vocational programmes; and assistance for reintegration. It would also be interesting to hear of any prevention programmes and training efforts. She wondered what role was played by the police and whether there was a special police unit for women and children that dealt with trafficking and abuse cases and whether there was training in child- and gender-sensitive procedures.

19. As Cameroon was a transit, source and destination country for trafficking, she asked whether there was cooperation with the other countries involved and whether Cameroon received any international assistance to combat trafficking.

20. **Ms. Adebada** (Cameroon) said that a training programme to familiarize the judiciary with the Convention had been implemented with help from the United Nations Development Fund for Women. Seminars on the Convention and the Optional Protocol had been held in the three regions of Cameroon, mainly for magistrates, lawyers and other legal officials. The next step would be to work with women's organizations.

21. Any woman who considered herself to have been the victim of discrimination could apply to the civil courts and invoke the provisions of the Convention, as it was an integral part of the Constitution. The Penal Code's provisions on physical violence did not distinguish between the sexes. The draft law on the prevention of violence and discrimination against women contained more extensive provisions, but when the draft had been completed, the Government had decided not to adopt it but instead to incorporate its provisions into a revised version of the Penal Code. The Ministry of Justice, with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), had recruited an expert to work on updating the Penal Code and on drafting a new Civil Code and Civil and Commercial Procedural Code, in both English and French. All discriminatory provisions would be amended and the provisions of all international and regional treaties ratified by Cameroon, including the Convention, would be incorporated into the codes.

22. The rules of procedure of the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms made it clear that that Government representative who participated in its deliberations did so in an advisory capacity only and that the Paris Principles were therefore respected. Statistics were not yet available, as

the National Commission had only been established in 2005. Victims of discrimination tended to apply first to the Ministry of Justice, which would subsequently refer them to the National Commission and efforts were being made to increase people's awareness of the Commission so that they would realize that they could apply to it directly.

23. **Ms. Tchatchoua** (Cameroon) said that the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Family was responsible for designing and implementing measures to ensure respect for women's rights, eliminate discrimination and strengthen the guarantees of equality in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres. It was also responsible for implementing national family policy.

24. With regard to future programmes and projects, the Ministry would focus its action on three strategic objectives. The first was to promote women and the gender approach in all sectors of national life and in that connection two subprogrammes were planned: a programme for the social promotion of women and a programme for their economic promotion. The social subprogramme included measures for gender mainstreaming, protection and promotion of women's rights, promotion of the health of women and girls and prevention of gender violence and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM). The economic subprogramme included projects for capacity-building, support for women entrepreneurs and the promotion of rural women.

25. The second objective was to contribute to the development and strengthening of the family as a social institution. There were subprogrammes for the protection and promotion of the family, with projects for family assistance, prenuptial and matrimonial education, and an HIV/AIDS programme. The third objective was institutional capacity-building and the relevant actions included projects for Ministry personnel and governance programmes.

26. The Ministry also had a subprogramme on violence against women which included preventive actions such as the organization of law clinics to help women to know their rights and exercise them. Efforts were also made to raise public awareness of the causes and consequences of violence and there was a telephone help line and counselling service which provided follow-up for victims of violence. The

Ministry also planned to establish shelters for victims of violence.

27. **Ms. Adebada** (Cameroon), in response to a question about quotas, said that Cameroon preferred the pro-gender approach. Development had to take into account the capacities of all individuals and every available position should be offered to the person best suited to take it. Efforts were being made to identify women capable of taking on particular functions by instituting gender focal points in a number of target departments. Several ministries and organizations, including the Ministry of Justice and the National Social Security Fund, had been selected and their focal points reported to the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Family. It was not yet possible to apply quotas as it was important to find women who were capable of taking on the tasks of particular posts.

28. Customary practices were not codified and were not the same in all parts of the country. The Government intended to review those practices to consider whether any of them were contrary to public order. If the president of a customary tribunal was not a magistrate, all decisions were monitored by an appeal court which could revoke any decision based on a custom that was contrary to written law, including the provisions of the Convention. The Minister for the Promotion of Women and the Family had done a lot of awareness-raising in relation to traditional practices unfavourable to women, such as FGM and breast ironing.

29. **Ms. Tchatchoua** (Cameroon) said that every opportunity, including women's meetings and commemorative days, was taken to raise women's awareness of harmful traditional practices. In the context of the recent celebration of the day of rural women, the Minister for the Promotion of Women and the Family had spent over a week meeting the leaders of the cutters who performed female genital mutilation. There had been a symbolic laying aside of knives and the Government was providing support in the form of alternative economic activities.

30. With regard to breast ironing, she noted that it was not actually an iron that was used. A study of all aspects of the issue was to be conducted and awareness-raising efforts were already taking place in relation to the health aspects.

31. **Ms. Adebada** (Cameroon) added that the purpose of breast ironing was not to exercise violence against

women but to impede girls' physical development in order to protect them against sexual violence. Mothers believed that if their daughters still looked like children they would not attract men's attention. Efforts were being made to explain that there were other ways of combating the violence.

32. A widow was obliged to observe a period of widowhood for six months before marrying again so that if she was pregnant the child's paternity would not be disputed. According to another customary practice, a widow was obliged to marry her late husband's heir, usually his brother. Such customs were no longer recognized and were only followed if the woman wished to do so. If the brother's family tried to force the widow to agree to the marriage, she could apply to the courts.

33. **Mr. Nkou** (Cameroon) said that the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms was entirely independent of the Government, although the Government financed its activities. Cameroon had a very rich and diverse range of civil society organizations, and the National Commission was just one of many institutions working to protect and promote human rights.

34. With regard to FGM, it was Government policy to provide an education to all children, and Cameroon had some of the highest rates of school enrolment and literacy in Africa. As a result of their education, children could understand and reject FGM. There were few occurrences in Cameroon compared to other countries.

35. **Ms. Adebada** (Cameroon) said that the ILO Convention on the worst forms of child labour had been ratified but no domestic law had yet been passed to address its provision on defining the worst forms of child labour. An extensive process of legislative reform was currently under way and additional areas were gradually being addressed as the resources became available. With financial support from UNDP, Cameroon was currently drafting a new Penal Code, Civil Code, and Civil and Commercial Procedural Code and it would take time and resources to complete that process. According to the Constitution, the provisions of all ratified international conventions took precedence over national law and the Convention was an integral part of Cameroonian legislation.

36. Prostitution and its exploitation were criminalized under the Penal Code but they were often

not reported. Sometimes the police took action and arrested prostitutes, but prosecutions were difficult as it was often hard to prove that a crime had been committed. It was important to continue to raise public awareness and encourage individuals to report prostitution and to agree to be witnesses. There were specific provisions in the Penal Code with severe penalties for those responsible for the prostitution of minors, particularly those aged under 16 years. All sexual offences against women were penalized. In 2005, Cameroon had passed a law against trafficking in women and children and a special police unit investigated such crimes. Once again, the difficulty was that somebody had to report them.

37. **Mr. Nkou** (Cameroon) said that the First Lady of Cameroon had been made a Goodwill Ambassador by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization because of her extensive work with women and children. She had set up a foundation that provided basic education and health services, a specialized clinic for mothers and children, and a research and study centre on HIV/AIDS.

38. **Ms. Ameline** appreciated the Government's efforts to introduce the gender approach in a structural manner and to place the issue of equality at the centre of development. She asked whether there were clear legal provisions indicating the precedence of international law over customary practices, or whether the issue was dealt with on a case-by-case basis. With regard to the efforts to achieve parity, she commented that progress seemed to be slow because cultural attitudes prevented women from taking political power. She also wondered whether Cameroon would take advantage of the revision of the Penal Code to increase the penalties for violence against women.

39. **Ms. Pimentel** asked for information on the main contents of the draft law on the prevention of violence against women, its timeframe and the process for its approval and she wondered whether it would receive sufficient support in the legislature. She also asked who was responsible for the training in women's rights provided for the staff of the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Family and whether similar courses were held for police officers, legal officials and staff from other ministries. Human rights, equality, non-discrimination and the prevention of violence against women had to be integrated throughout the political system of Cameroon.

40. **Ms. Neubauer** said she understood that Cameroon's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper focused on the advancement of women in four primary areas, one of which was the strengthening of institutional structures and mechanisms. She asked what progress had been made in setting up focal points within the ministries and how many ministries were involved. As the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Family worked in close cooperation with all other governmental departments, she asked whether there was a mechanism for coordinating and monitoring projects, programmes and activities. It would also be interesting to know whether there were also focal points for the 10 provinces and 58 departments and whether there was a parliamentary body responsible for addressing women's human rights, gender equality and discrimination against women.

41. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** suggested that it was time to suppress customary law entirely. As Cameroon had ratified the Convention 15 years previously, it should by now have brought all of its laws into harmony with the Convention. She commended the provisions for refugee women contained in the 2005 Refugee Act and asked whether the decree on application of that law had been adopted and implemented.

42. **Ms. Coker-Appiah** asked for clarification of the response to violence against women, as it seemed that work on the draft bill on the prevention of violence against women had been suspended. It would also be interesting to hear what was being done about raising men's awareness of women's rights, rather than focusing only on women. Some of the practices unfavourable to women were beneficial to men, who therefore had a stake in maintaining them. Lastly, she wondered whether the budget of the national machinery was sufficient for it to carry out its work. She was also interested in receiving information about its human resources.

43. **Mr. Flinterman** said he understood that the Convention was an integral part of the Constitution but wondered which of those texts would prevail in the case of a conflict and whether all international agreements to which Cameroon was a party were incorporated into the Constitution or whether all constitutional provisions had to be interpreted in line with international obligations. It would be interesting to hear how clear that was to parliamentarians, government officials, judges, lawyers and the general

public. For example, the Constitution provided for the principle of equality, but not for the prohibition of discrimination. Yet the principle of equality should always be interpreted in line with the complementary principle of prohibition of discrimination as contained in the Convention, which prohibited both direct and indirect discrimination in the public and private spheres.

44. **Ms. Šimonović** said that the Committee's concluding comments on Cameroon's previous report had included a recommendation that the State party should urgently undertake a comprehensive reform of legislation in order to promote equality and human rights for women. Yet eight years later there were still many discriminatory laws, despite the amendment of the Constitution, ratification of the Optional Protocol and the fact that the Convention was in theory directly applicable. A rapist received no penalty for his crime if he married the victim, provisions on adultery were discriminatory and a widow was required to wait for 180 days before remarrying. The husband had the right to choose the family's place of residence and also had the right to object to his wife's employment. Cameroon was in the process of reviewing its legislation, but a clear mechanism was needed for the harmonization of all laws with the Constitution and the Convention, with a clear time frame for the elimination of discriminatory provisions. She asked for more information on such a time frame and mechanism at the governmental level.

45. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** asked whether marital rape was currently considered a crime, and if not, whether it would be so considered in the new Penal Code. It seemed unlikely in view of the report's frank acknowledgement that women were regarded as the property of their husbands. The report also referred to a preference for male children and she wondered whether that led to female infanticide.

46. She would appreciate receiving information on the Government's efforts to eliminate FGM and breast ironing. It would also be useful to hear of any accompanying measures with studies to evaluate their impact and whether the incidence of such phenomena had decreased. She asked why the free telephone help line was only available during the daytime.

47. **Ms. Hayashi** said that it would be interesting to hear whether the State party was conducting gender-sensitive training for professionals working with women victims of violence, as the report referred to a

very low number of rape cases, 25 for the period 2006-2008. Without gender-sensitive procedures and training for law enforcement officers, it was impossible to combat the impunity of the perpetrators.

48. **Ms. Rasekh** said that the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in its concluding observations in 1999, had expressed its concern at widespread sexual harassment in the workplace. The State party had been urged to introduce specific legislation and policies to prohibit violence and harassment in the workplace. In the absence of legislation on the prevention of violence against women, she wished to know what mechanisms or code of conduct existed, and what steps had been taken by the Government to stop such harassment.

49. Poverty was the main impediment to women reporting harassment, because they feared losing their jobs. She asked whether there was a set code of conduct at the workplace including penalties for the perpetrators and a confidential complaint mechanism for women.

50. **Mr. Nkou** (Cameroon) said that once an international instrument had been signed and ratified, it had precedence over domestic law. In relation to the exploitation of women, he noted that Cameroon had one of the highest school enrolment rates in Africa. Through education, young women and girls were increasingly aware of their rights, and so were men. Women might not be able to defend themselves physically, but they had legal means of defence.

51. The proposal to eliminate the customary courts was premature, as Cameroon's legal system was still fragile, owing to the lack of financial resources, and customary courts provided a well-functioning and necessary supplement. Customary courts were aware of traditions and did not condemn people to death but tried to understand them and bring about reconciliation. If individuals were not satisfied they could go to the modern courts, but the customary courts still played an important role and could even impose a term of imprisonment. If there was no prison in a village, then the inhabitants would not speak to the convicted person for the duration of the sentence. Indeed, the customary courts would have to be retained until sufficient other courts were available.

52. The Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Family did not have sufficient resources. Cameroon was a developing country and did whatever was

possible to provide all ministerial departments with acceptable levels of funding. In a developing country, all areas had priority, but Cameroon was willing to make resources available for women and the family and had increased the Ministry's budget on a regular basis since its establishment. Some international assistance had been provided.

53. In response to a question about infanticide, he said that in Cameroon the birth of a girl was celebrated and welcomed as a blessing from God and daughters were appreciated for their sensitivity and obedience. In the past, there had been a preference to have a boy who would continue the family line, but that was no longer the case.

54. **Ms. Adebada** (Cameroon) clarified that international conventions ratified by Cameroon were part of the Constitution and that any provision of Cameroonian law that contradicted a provision of such a convention would be revoked. In another connection, she emphasized that the Government was not rejecting parity and that the Beijing principles had been adopted. However, the Government's pro-gender policy was a necessity at present as further preparations were needed before parity could be applied.

55. In response to a question about the gender focal points, she said that an effort had been made to target certain ministries on an experimental basis. Gender focal points had been designated in the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Secondary Education, the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization, the Ministry of Higher Education, and some public organizations and enterprises, including the National Social Security Fund, the National Hydrocarbons Corporation and the Special Council Fund for Mutual Assistance. At present the focal points reported to the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Family. The process was still at an experimental stage and not all of the focal points had reported yet. It was important to understand the role of the focal point in a Ministry. The results would not be immediate, but they would lead to a situation where it would be possible to consider introducing parity.

56. An expert had recently been recruited to prepare the three new legal codes and to incorporate the provisions of the draft bill against violence against women, which had been ready since 2000, into the new Penal Code. The expert had one year to complete the drafts and they would then go through a validation

process involving all of the ministries. The Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Family would ensure that all the provisions in the draft bill had been incorporated. The Penal Code imposed penalties both for prostitution and its exploitation.

57. The Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Family recruited experts to train individuals from the Ministry or from women's organizations in preventing violence against women. The training was offered to police officers, legal officials, senior police and gendarmerie officers, magistrates and lawyers on an ongoing basis. When resources were available, the Human Rights Department in the Ministry of Justice organized practical seminars on inculcating a culture of human rights in the administration and in the police, gendarmerie, penitentiary and other services.

58. **Ms. Obama Mekoulou** (Cameroon), referring to the issue of gender equality in the National Assembly, said that women were represented in all parliamentary bodies.

59. **Ms. Epoh Adyang** (Cameroon) said that rape was a crime. As in all cases of violence, someone had to report it and the victim would have to make a statement in court. Efforts were being made to increase women's awareness of the remedies available to them.

60. **Ms. Adebada** (Cameroon) said that the Penal Code defined rape as sexual intercourse without consent. No distinction was made with regard to the identity of the rapist and a woman could therefore go to court to accuse her husband of rape, but she would have to have proof.

61. There was no legal basis for a Cameroonian woman to be considered as the property of her husband. The 1981 ordinance on the organization of civil status gave the husband the right to object to his wife working. However, according to the Treaty of the Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa, a woman did not require her husband's authorization to be a vendor. In view of the precedence of international or regional law, the issue had already been resolved. Work on the new Code of Persons and the Family was well advanced and it would also cover those issues. A woman could now travel without her husband's authorization and a woman who was a civil servant received her own separate housing allowance, even if she lived with her husband and he was a civil servant too. With gradual changes of this kind, women were acquiring greater freedom.

62. **Ms. Tchatchoua** (Cameroon), speaking with regard to mainstreaming the gender approach, said that all government departments had been instructed to designate focal points. Thirty of them had already responded and two departments had gone as far as to set up a gender committee. Development partners had supported two training courses for capacity-building for the focal points. The objective was that all ministerial strategies should mainstream the gender perspective.

63. The centres for the advancement of women also offered training courses for women. The Ministry provided services in all regions and departments, through its centres for the advancement of women and centres for appropriate technology, but additional funding and human resources were needed. The telephone help line was an ongoing experiment and the aim was to have it operating on a 24-hour basis.

64. **Ms. Adebada** (Cameroon) said that the Penal Code included penalties for infanticide. Although families used to hope to have a boy who could continue the family line, such a preference did not result in infanticide.

Articles 6 to 9

65. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** asked whether Cameroon was still going through the structural adjustment process and making payments to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as had been mentioned in the previous report. That fact would have an impact on the budget available for implementation of the Convention.

66. When Cameroon had submitted its initial report, the Committee had made a recommendation in relation to articles 7 and 8 of the Convention in view of the low level of women's representation in the National Assembly and the diplomatic corps, and in posts to which officials were appointed by the Government. She appreciated the fact that the combined second and third periodic report included clear statistical tables showing women's representation in executive positions, as election candidates and among polling-station staff, although the figures were not very high. Surely it would be easy to find suitable women candidates for local or parliamentary elections in Cameroon. The Committee was attaching increasing importance to parliaments in its work with member States because all work to implement the Convention had to be worked

out in parliament. The State party should make more efforts to establish quotas in Cameroon in order to make women more visible and to nominate women as heads of school establishments and universities. The National Assembly should discuss all aspects of implementation of the Convention.

67. **Mr. Flinterman** noted that no information had been provided on the nationality code, although there had been a reference to a pending bill on the Code of Persons and the Family. He asked whether the new Code of Persons and the Family would fully comply with the requirements of article 9 relating to the transfer of nationality to children. The Committee had received information from other sources that the current nationality law did not fully comply with article 9 in substance or in implementation.

68. **Mr. Nkou** (Cameroon) said that Cameroon had gone to IMF for assistance at a time of global economic crisis. It had eventually managed to extricate itself from the structural adjustment process and did not wish to return to it. Cameroon was very careful with its modest resources and wished to avoid sacrificing its sovereignty.

69. With regard to the gender approach and quotas, there was a number of reasons why Cameroon had not achieved parity, despite the strong political will that existed. In the diplomatic service, the requirement to work abroad was often problematic for a married woman, as assignments abroad were for a seven-year period. It could cause family problems if her husband did not agree to accompany her. Women therefore preferred to avoid the situation and there were few women working in the embassies and consulates. Nevertheless, although women had not achieved parity in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they did account for a large proportion of directors, deputy directors and heads of services.

70. Statistics on women in politics were not available. However, the main political parties had given instructions for at least one woman to be included in each municipal executive, which consisted of an elected mayor, a deputy mayor, and the second, third and fourth deputies. So there were at least 250 women representatives at the local level. Cameroon had at least 300 political parties, but only four or five were represented in the National Assembly. The smaller parties did not often place women in visible positions and did not impose the same condition

on the municipal executive. Cameroon was still a young democracy, and the situation would improve with time.

71. **Ms. Adebada** (Cameroon) said that the nationality law dated from 1968. If a Cameroonian national married a foreigner, the children automatically acquired the nationality of a Cameroonian father, but not of a Cameroonian mother. Children ran the risk of not having the nationality of either parent if they did not acquire it at birth. The Ministry of Justice was currently reviewing the legislation and the new draft code of nationality would cover all those issues, including the problems of women who had to choose their nationality at the time of marriage. The initial intention had been to amend a few provisions, but so many amendments were needed that a new text was being prepared.

72. **Ms. Šimonović** said that it was clear that Cameroon was addressing the issue of FGM. Nevertheless, in 2008 the concluding observations of the Committee against Torture had referred to the lack of legislation in that area and she wondered if there were plans for such action.

73. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** suggested that legislation be introduced to encourage political parties to submit lists of candidates in such a way that made it possible for women to be elected. If subsidies were provided only for parties that followed that practice, the results would be immediate.

74. **Mr. Nkou** (Cameroon) said that Cameroon would take Ms. Zerdani's suggestion into account.

75. **Ms. Adebada** (Cameroon) said that campaigns against FGM were carried out by the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Family. Although there was no specific provision prohibiting FGM in the Penal Code, it could be prosecuted under articles 275-281 which penalized all forms of bodily harm. The new draft Penal Code included provisions on violence against women and would refer specifically to the prohibition of FGM.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.