



**Convention on the Elimination
of all Forms of Discrimination
Against Women**

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Seventh session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 116th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 24 February 1988, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. BERNARD

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE
CONVENTION (continued)

Initial report of Jamaica (CEDAW/C/5/Add.38)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Miss Sinclair (Jamaica) took a place at the Committee table.
2. Miss SINCLAIR (Jamaica), introducing her country's initial report, said that, despite various positive changes, women in Jamaica remained at a disadvantage in relation to men. Forty per cent of women aged between 15 and 19 had already given birth to one or two children; many had not completed their education and were therefore ill-prepared to pursue careers or take control of their own lives. It was conservatively estimated that one third of heads of household were women, who therefore required a source of income.
3. The serious consideration of the status of women necessitated by Jamaica's ratification of the Convention had provided an opportunity for the Government, and the general public, to recognize the important role played by women in society. Traditional stereotypes were being redefined. Attention had been drawn to the historically documented involvement of women in public life in Africa, from where the majority of Jamaica's population originated.
4. Statistics revealed that women constituted 46 per cent of Jamaica's labour force, with 75 per cent of them working in the service sector and an estimated 58 per cent occupying professional, technical, administrative, executive and managerial positions. Although separation between male and female roles persisted in the division of labour and power, women were now making inroads into non-traditional technical areas.
5. The fundamental rights and freedoms provided under Jamaica's Constitution were complemented by a number of other laws which protected women from discrimination. Those included the Employment (Equal Pay for Men and Women) Act, the National Minimum Wage Order, the Maternity Leave Act, the Offences against the Person Act, the Sex Disqualification Act and the Births and Death Act, as well as the Passport Regulations. A study had identified several areas of incompatibility between Jamaica's legal provisions and those of the Convention, including nationality and citizenship law, divorce and parental rights. The study's conclusions had been submitted to the Office of Legal Reform for further action, and it was also hoped that legislation would be enacted to permit withdrawal of Jamaica's reservation to article 9.2 of the Convention.
6. The Bureau of Women's Affairs was the major Government mechanism for promoting the status of women. It functioned as a communications and resource centre and maintained relations with local agencies and regional and international organizations. It was assisted by the National Advisory Council on Women, which comprised senior civil servants and representatives of non-governmental

(Miss Sinclair, Jamaica)

organizations. The Council had established various sub-committees and worked in close co-operation with the Bureau of Women's Affairs.

7. The need to redress imbalances and overcome prejudices and entrenched attitudes, either through the enactment of new legislation or through the amendment of existing laws, required continued attention to the relevant provisions of the Convention. In that connection, the Bureau of Women's Affairs had initiated the development of a National Policy on Women and a National Plan of Action, which had demonstrated the determination of Jamaica, as the first English-speaking Caribbean country to develop a policy on women, to invest directly in its future. The Policy had been formulated on the basis of a dialogue which had lasted some 18 months, including inputs from non-governmental organizations and women from very diverse backgrounds. Discussions had covered a very broad range of social, political, economic, spiritual and cultural concerns and had led to the formulation of a policy focused on four main themes: the social situation of women, the Government's responsibility to correct the historic lack of recognition of their role, the design and planning of public policies in relation to women, and the situation of women in planning. The design and planning of public policies embodied the principles that all Government policies must fully recognize the equal partnership of men and women; that economic and social development policies must provide equal access to resources for both women and men; that special consideration must be given in policy planning to women's multiple responsibilities both inside and outside the home, including consideration of the high proportion of women who supported families on their own; and that special measures must be developed to correct the historic and current disadvantages faced by women.

8. The purpose of the National Plan of Action was to promote and facilitate implementation of the National Policy. While the Plan stated the responsibilities of the various Ministries and Government agencies and set target dates for the implementation of various projects, the involvement of non-governmental organizations would also be critical.

9. The adoption of the National Policy was only one element of a process designed to translate the Convention's principles into reality. In view of the importance of educating both women and men to fulfil their interrelated roles in the development process, the Government was seeking to support initiatives emanating from the people themselves and to provide them with the assistance necessary to allow the process to develop. Continued action on the Government's part could be ensured only if non-governmental organizations and women themselves monitored progress and kept alive public interest in promoting the National Policy.

10. Ms. FORDE said she felt that, despite its acute economic problems, Jamaica had sufficient personnel and expertise to provide the Committee with a fair assessment of the situation of women in that country. Unfortunately, the many general statements contained in the report had not been accompanied by sufficient detail and she suggested that, in future, greater attention should be paid to providing more comprehensive information. She had, however, been impressed by the text of the National Policy on Women, which had been distributed to members of the Committee.

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11. Ms. PILATAXI DE ARENAS noted that the situation as described in the introduction by the representative of Jamaica appeared to be considerably more encouraging than the situation described in the report itself. She hoped that Jamaica would withdraw its reservation to the Convention, and requested further details on the situation of urban women.

12. Ms. GUAN Minqian noted the efforts made by the Government, despite its economic difficulties, to bring Jamaica's laws into line with the Convention. She looked forward to the withdrawal of Jamaica's reservation to article 9. She had been impressed by the progress made by Jamaican women in political life and the extent to which the mass media appeared to have succeeded in disseminating the concept of equality between men and women. She was somewhat concerned, however, at the high percentage of women between 15 and 19 years who had already given birth to one or two children, a situation which inevitably deprived them of various educational opportunities. She requested information on Jamaica's illiteracy rate, Government action to combat illiteracy, and the legality or otherwise of abortion, as well as details of the marriage system.

13. Ms. TALLAWY said that while the National Policy on Women was encouraging, Jamaica's initial report did not do justice to the country's women. It did not provide sufficient statistics and information for people who had no direct knowledge of Jamaica. She herself was well aware that Jamaica played a major role in seminars and research relating to the status of women, at both the regional and the international levels, and that a number of Jamaican women had figured prominently in international activities on behalf of women.

14. The report had concentrated on the work of the Bureau of Women's Affairs instead of providing information on the activities of all Government agencies. She wished to see further information on the achievements made as a result of Government policy, and the amount of progress made since ratification of the Convention. There were insufficient statistics and the report's treatment of legal questions focused heavily on family rights and made no reference to the role of women in politics or decision-making. She would be grateful for an explanation of the statement concerning the position of the Convention vis-à-vis the courts, contained in part I of the report (p. 6).

15. Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU expressed dissatisfaction at the lack of information in the report, but welcomed the evidence it gave of a political will to formulate a comprehensive policy for promoting equality between the sexes. It was significant that the Bureau of Women's Affairs had been established as a central co-ordinating body, and the National Plan of Action outlined by the representative of Jamaica was encouraging. Women in Jamaica were clearly facing tremendous difficulties in low-paid auxiliary jobs, where they were frequently abused and had no guaranteed working rights. She hoped that the National Plan would give impetus to the provision of skilled training to women and, above all, young girls, who currently seemed to be disoriented, lacking in values, and having children too early in life.

16. She asked how large a budget the Bureau of Women's Affairs had, and whether other Ministries were also planning to fund the National Policy on Women, since it affected the entire social structure.

(Ms. Laiou-Antoniou)

17. The most welcome feature of the report was its freshness and spirit of enthusiasm, and a certain militancy about achieving equality for women. It was an especially good idea to make use of cultural events, such as the presentation of plays in schools, to promote equality.

18. Ms. SINEGIORGIS observed that the situation of women in Jamaica seemed to be better than in some other countries, since they participated in all levels of development and were active in most economic and public sectors. It was a pity that that fact had not been highlighted in the report. The Government of Jamaica was to be commended for its political will, however, especially for its National Policy on Women.

19. The report referred to certain private women's groups (p. 5): to what extent did the Government work with such non-governmental organizations?

20. Ms. SOUMARE said that what emerged from the report was the Government's firm intention to promote the advancement of women, as evidenced by the governmental machinery set up, the National Plan of Action, and the presence of women in the legislative and administrative branches of the Government. It was not clear from the report, however, whether women themselves were actively involved in the struggle for their own equality, an involvement which was essential to the full implementation of the Convention. More details about any specific action by women would be useful.

21. Ms. OESER said that she would like some clarification regarding Jamaica's reservation to article 9.2 of the Convention: did the reservation reflect an inherited legal situation which perpetuated inequality, or was the Jamaican Government using the reservation as a means to regulate population growth.

22. The report stated (p. 6) that except for any provision reflecting customary international law, the Convention could not be invoked before and directly enforced by the Courts. What kind of customary international law was intended, did it include international law relating to women, and had any cases actually been brought before the courts or other authorities?

23. Ms. VELIZ DE VILLALVILLA observed that the report did not give a proper picture of women's struggle for equality in Jamaica or internationally. More details should have been provided regarding the Bureau of Women's Affairs, which faced an uphill task because the quality of life of the population in general, and hence of Jamaican women and children in particular, had deteriorated.

24. She would like more details concerning the Penal Code, especially as to whether abortion was an offence. The report stated specifically that the Code was not discriminatory (p. 8). She wondered what recommendations for action had been made by the National Preparatory Committee dealing with education, health, employment and public relations (p. 4), and to what extent the Bureau of Women's Affairs had been able to contribute its ideas. It would be interesting to know whether the Government was planning to enact legislation prohibiting sensationalist reporting of divorce cases in the press, a regular occurrence that had been denounced frequently by women's groups in the country.

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(Ms. Veliz de Villalvilla)

25. She asked whether women employed in enterprises working in the industrial free zone were protected by existing minimum wage laws and maternity laws, and whether the Bureau had looked into conditions of work in such enterprises, given the fact that the majority of their employees were women and there had been reports of exploitation. She also wished to know what was the minimum wage in Jamaica.

26. Ms. EVATT said that the report did not do justice either to the Government's spirited and conscientious efforts to implement the Convention, expose the problems faced by women and change the laws accordingly, or to the role that women themselves had played. In preparing future reports, Jamaica must study the reporting guidelines.

27. One of the most striking features of the situation in Jamaica was the fact that women became mothers at a very early age, a situation which perpetuated their exclusive role as mothers and trapped them into doing largely unpaid work. Jamaican family law had yet to recognize such unpaid work as a contribution to the family, and the law did not encourage men to share in the work of raising a family. A change of attitude was clearly needed.

28. Ms. SALEMA said that the report was disappointing. It had told her little about the real situation of women in Jamaica and the legal instruments used to promote their advancement. She would like more information about the country's governmental structure, which was different from that of European countries.

29. Reference had been made to several areas of incompatibility between Jamaica's legal provisions and those of the Convention (p. 3); she wondered whether there were any plans to remedy that situation. Regarding the right to apply to the Supreme Court for redress of discrimination under section 25 of the Constitution (p. 2), she asked who could make such applications, whether discrimination against women constituted grounds and how many cases had actually been brought to the Supreme Court. She also wished to know whether the public had a favourable opinion of the Bureau of Women's Affairs.

30. She would like more information on the Family Court: as described in the report (p. 5), it seemed to deal only with the family problems of women and not those of husbands and fathers. The report also stated that Jamaica was a matriarchal society, a fact that was not frequently acknowledged. What were the implications of that statement? Were women more highly regarded and, if so, did that regard extend only to women as mothers or also to women in political and professional life?

Article 2

31. Ms. WADSTEIN asked whether the Government had any intention of amending Section 4 of the Interpretation Act which stipulated that words of the masculine gender included the female as well (p. 6), since such usage implied that the male was the norm and made the woman invisible.

32. Ms. SALEMA requested further information on cases of violation of women's rights brought before the Ombudsman (p. 7). She also asked whether free legal aid was available to women wishing to have recourse to the courts or the authorities in cases of discrimination and whether breaching the laws proscribing discrimination was a criminal offence under the Penal Code. Although the report stated that Jamaican penal laws did not discriminate against women (p. 8), it did acknowledge (p. 3) that adultery laws discriminated against women and she wondered whether there were any plans to amend those laws.

Article 4

33. Ms. WADSTEIN asked precisely what temporary special measures had been taken under article 4. She also asked how often women were exempted from jury duty and on what grounds. Also, what was meant by the "sensibilities of women" (p. 9) that justified a difference in approach between men and women, and did women or men decide what those sensibilities were?

34. Ms. SINEGIORGIS, noting that certain laws maintained a difference in approach between men and women (p. 9), asked for further details of such laws. Jamaica was to be commended for the passage of the Maternity Leave Act and for its amendment of the National Insurance Act to extend protection to domestic helpers. To her knowledge, Jamaica was the only country to have done the latter.

35. Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU asked whether only domestic helpers contributed to the maternity benefit scheme or whether their employers were also obliged to contribute.

Article 5

36. Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU asked whether the Government had any plans to enact legislation against television advertising that offended the dignity of women.

37. Ms. MONTENEGRO DE FLETCHER said that she would like more details of the impact which the action taken by the Government in the 1970s to change sex stereotypes had had on the general public. It would be interesting to know whether any changes had been observed in the attitude of men towards women in the home, in the workplace and in political life. Since most of the population lived in rural areas, had the message reached them?

38. Had the measures taken by the Government and the Bureau of Women's Affairs included any provision in school curricula for programmes on family life and the role of women?

39. Ms. FORDE asked whether any information was readily available on domestic and sexual violence against women and on legal provisions to protect women from such violence.

40. Ms. WADSTEIN wanted to know how effective the measures taken to eliminate stereotyped images of men's and women's roles had been. The use of drama for that purpose sounded very interesting, and she was curious to know what the reaction of audiences, both male and female, had been.

(Ms. Wadstein)

41. She wished to know more about men's involvement in efforts to achieve women's equality and how men were affected by those efforts. Specific figures with regard to paid and unpaid work by men and women and the amount of time devoted by men and women to family responsibilities would also be useful. Finally, she wished to know whether sexual harassment was an issue in Jamaica.

42. Ms. EVATT said that the programmes to implement article 5 in Jamaica were commendable for addressing women's role both inside and outside the home, but suggested that attention should also be paid to men's role in the home. In that connection, it would be helpful to know whether the programmes cited in the context of article 5 made any attempt to change men's perception of their role and whether any support was provided in the mass media for men's role in the home.

43. The CHAIRPERSON said she wished to know the incidence of rape in Jamaica and the percentage of reported cases which reached the courts.

Article 6

44. Ms. GONZALEZ MARTINEZ said it was clear from the report that Jamaican women were duly protected from prostitution or exploitation under the law. However, the report implied that prostitution was an activity that should be dealt with only as a phenomenon to be punished, which led her to wonder whether the problem was ever approached from an educational perspective. For example, were there any projects that endeavoured to equip women for alternative ways of life.

45. She was somewhat surprised at the provisions of the Offences against the Person Act which dealt with the prostitution of minors. Persons, both male and female, convicted of exploiting women were given prison sentences of no more than 12 months, with male recidivists liable to whipping. However, the fact that those penalties applied to cases involving the exploitation of girls or women under the age of 21 who were not prostitutes or "known to be of immoral character" seemed to imply that the procurement of women who were already prostitutes was not an offence. The law also provided a two-year prison term for offences involving prostitutes under the age of 14. In her view, anyone exploiting girls that young deserved to be flogged for life; in fact, even girls as old as 18 who had been exploited as prostitutes from an early age could hardly be considered adult women. Consequently, she wished to know whether there actually were prostitutes under the age of 14 in Jamaica and, if so, how 12 months' imprisonment could possibly be considered adequate punishment for such a heinous form of exploitation.

46. Ms. WADSTEIN asked the meaning of the phrase "a woman of estate" in the section of the report dealing with article 6.

47. Ms. VELIZ DE VILLALVILLA noted that the Offences against the Person Act dated from 1864, in other words, the colonial period. She wondered whether it had been updated or modernized at any point since Jamaica had become independent, as it had clearly been overtaken by international law. She asked how rape was dealt with under Jamaican law and whether violence against women was a problem in Jamaican society. If so, she wished to know what measures were being taken to combat that

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problem. Information regarding the legality of pornography in Jamaica and the effect of drugs on Jamaican society, particularly young people, would also be welcome.

48. Ms. SINEGIORGIS requested clarification of the phrase "appropriately penalized" on page 11 of the report.

49. Ms. GONZALEZ MARTINEZ said it would be useful for the Committee to have more information about the support given to Jamaican women who wished to play an active part in national political life. She suggested that, rather than merely citing the number of women involved in politics, the representative of Jamaica might describe the extent to which Jamaican women were given guidance and training that would equip them for political careers. Information might also be provided about the number of women who had been candidates, as opposed to the number of those actually elected, in recent elections, and about the groups that supported them.

50. The CHAIRPERSON asked what percentage of Jamaican women held top administrative and managerial positions, and how many women were judges, mayors or served on village councils.

Article 8

51. Ms. GONZALEZ MARTINEZ, recalling her previous question, said that it was important to know, in addition to the actual number of women holding ambassadorial and consular posts, how many Jamaican women aspired to such posts and how their aspirations were being encouraged. Did opportunities exist for women to study subjects that would lead to careers in the foreign service? She had noticed that the Jamaican delegations to many international conferences had included several women, although not at the most senior level. What was the policy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Jamaican foreign service vis-à-vis women?

Article 10

52. Ms. PILATAXI DE ARENAS requested statistics on the literacy rate, the drop-out rate and the comparative percentages of male and female students at all levels of national education. Teenage pregnancy posed serious problems for the Jamaican educational system; she therefore wished to know whether sex education was part of the school curriculum. In particular, were courses offered which acknowledged the true importance of parenthood, including the need for both parents to share responsibilities?

53. Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU also emphasized the importance of sex education in school curricula. She wished to know at what levels, if any, such education was compulsory. The report noted that government and church-affiliated counselling centres, which offered guidance in dealing with physical and psychological problems (p. 16), were largely limited to urban areas. As the need for such centres was perhaps greater in rural areas, she wondered whether the Government intended to establish any centres there.

54. Ms. OESER agreed that the problem of teenage pregnancy and the high drop-out rate for schoolgirls posed serious problems for Jamaica. It would thus be useful to know what success the Women Centres established by the Bureau of Women's Affairs had had in dealing with those problems and how close those problems were to being eradicated. She inquired whether education was free at all levels in Jamaica.

55. Ms. VELIZ DE VILLALVILLA asked what supplemental educational programmes had been devised to achieve functional literacy. She also sought more information about the educational programmes developed by the Bureau of Women's Affairs. Generally speaking, more statistical information regarding women's participation at all levels of education would be useful.

56. Ms. EVATT said that insufficient data had been submitted to support the report's contention that female students were guaranteed equal access to education under the law. She wondered whether a sex bias was apparent in students' choices of academic and vocational training programmes and asked how such bias might be avoided. The Women Centres were a valuable initiative, yet insufficient data had been provided about the need for the Centres' programmes or the number of women who benefited from them. She wished to know the extent to which fathers were encouraged to assume parental responsibility, as well as the extent to which the "Youth to Youth" project (p. 16) sought to involve young males.

Article 11

57. Ms. PILATAXI DE ARENAS noted that not all Jamaican women who participated in the labour force held paying jobs. Unfortunately, the report provided little coverage of the situation of rural working women.

58. The fact that the payment of benefits during sickness or other incapacity to work was determined by individual employers (pp. 18-19) appeared to constitute a violation of workers' rights. The fact that no official policy existed to protect pregnant women from harm at their place of work was equally distressing. She asked whether the Government was considering any draft legislation to change that situation and the degree to which Jamaican women accepted the status quo.

59. Ms. OESER noted that the Maternity Leave Act protected female workers who had been employed for at least 50 weeks by the same employer (p. 9). She wished to know how long labour contracts generally lasted in Jamaica, particularly in view of the fact that Jamaican women had a very high unemployment rate. It would be useful to know how many women actually benefited from that law, which did not provide coverage for domestic workers.

60. Ms. WADSTEIN said it was clear that women faced a great deal of discrimination in the labour market. She wondered whether there were any plans to require private employers to hire workers irrespective of their sex, and whether sanctions could be applied to employers who refused to hire women. She wished to know whether there were any plans to modify the Printing Trade Order (p. 18) under which men could earn a larger salary than women. In her view, the reference to heavy work reflected traditional male and female stereotypes. She wondered whether any surveys had been conducted to prove that men really did "heavier" work than women

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and whether the notion of "heavy work" had been satisfactorily defined. Moreover, she was not certain, having read the information supplied under article 2 (b) of the Convention, whether the notion of equal pay for work of equal value was properly covered by the Employment (Equal Pay for Men and Women) Act. In particular, she would like clarification of the meaning of the phrase "comparable work".

61. The Employment Act referred to special, preferential treatment for women upon retirement and marriage. She wondered how those provisions were to be interpreted: what treatment was intended, and why was it granted? Did men and women retire at the same age in Jamaica? If not, why not?

62. She would like to know whether all jobs were open to women and, if not, what reasons were offered for the restrictions. She wondered whether she was correct in her impression that there was no official policy at all on legislation protecting workers. Finally, in reference to the legislative provision banning victimization, she asked whether any cases had been brought and how effective the provision had proved to be.

63. Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU queried the statement that Jamaican workers were expected to make regular contributions to a national insurance scheme which ensured that, on retirement, they were guaranteed a regular pension (p. 18). Was contribution to the scheme mandatory? Were workers the only ones to contribute or did the State also provide support? If the decision to pay benefits during sickness, invalidity or other incapacity to work was left to individual employers, what happened when employers neglected their obligations? Lastly, she could see no reference to any protection for pregnant women in the workplace. She wondered whether Jamaica had signed ILO Convention No. 103, which dealt with that issue.

64. Ms. AKAMATSU asked whether the Government of Jamaica had taken appropriate measures, in conformity with article 11.2 of the Convention, to prevent discrimination against women on grounds of pregnancy, maternity leave or marital status.

Article 12

65. Ms. VELIZ DE VILLALVILLA asked for statistics on the current fertility, infant mortality and maternal mortality rates in Jamaica. She also asked for details of the country's primary health care system.

66. Ms. EVATT asked whether abortion services were available to minors without restriction or whether parental consent was necessary; in the latter case, was the need for parental consent an obstacle to abortion? She also wondered whether the Government intended to make reducing the birth rate in Jamaica a priority.

67. Ms. GONZALEZ MARTINEZ, noting that the National Family Planning Board bore particular responsibility for "family planning activities including tubal ligations" (p. 20), remarked that a man could beget far more children than a woman could. She wondered whether any of the Board's activities focused on men's contribution to the birth rate or on vasectomy.

Article 13

68. Ms. EVATT said that, according to information received from the International Labour Office, Jamaican women had received assistance from the Women's Bureau in starting their own businesses. She wondered how many women had received such assistance and in what amount. Given the number of households, particularly in rural areas, which were headed by women who needed access to housing, finance and agricultural extension services, she wondered whether there was any provision to guarantee women equal access to such services.

69. The CHAIRPERSON asked whether the many women involved in trading in Jamaica were able to obtain bank loans, credit and mortgages.

Article 14

70. Ms. SAYOGYO asked how many women were employed on the land in relation to the proportion of land held by women in Jamaica's matriarchal society. Given the impact of technology on the demand for farm labour, she also wondered whether new technology was displacing more women than men from the land.

71. Ms. WADSTEIN asked whether land was generally owned by the State, by private landowners or by co-operatives, whether the land reforms of the 1970s had been carried out in full, and to what effect. In the light of the statement that urban and rural women were entitled to the same social security programmes, did women generally receive the same social security and other benefits as men?

72. Ms. CORTI asked whether, as part of the large-scale migration to the towns and abroad, women too were migrating from the countryside or tended to remain on the land. Were any steps being taken to reduce the need for rural women to engage in heavy manual labour, and did women in the agricultural sector enjoy the same social security and pension benefits as men? Since the majority of women workers in Jamaica seemed to be employed on the land, she thought it regrettable that the report said so little about them.

Article 15

73. Ms. WADSTEIN asked whether, since the report had been drafted, there had been any change in the presumption under Jamaican law that a married woman's domicile was the same as her husband (p. 22).

Article 16

74. Ms. FORDE asked for details of any plans to revise the distribution of property between the spouses upon the dissolution of a marriage or the death of one of the partners. She asked what rights a woman in a cohabiting union had to the property of the partnership, and whether such a woman was entitled to any form of maintenance either during the partnership or after its breakdown.

75. Ms. MONTENEGRO DE FLETCHER said that it would have been useful to have statistics on marriages, cohabiting unions, the number of children supported by

(Ms. Montenegro de Fletcher)

single mothers and the number of teenage mothers in Jamaica. She asked whether non-governmental organizations representing Jamaican women played any part in the legislative process. She would also like to know whether children supported by single mothers were entitled to seek the legal establishment of their paternity.

76. Ms. VELIZ DE VILLALVILLA asked for clarification of the distinction drawn under Jamaican law, in the event of the marriage of a minor, between children born in and out of wedlock (p. 23).

77. Ms. EVATT said the Committee needed more information on the rights and obligations of the partners in and the children of de facto or cohabiting unions. She felt it was high time that Jamaican law recognize women's contribution as parents and homemakers to a marriage or union, especially when de facto unions were such a commonplace feature of Jamaican society.

78. She wondered whether sexual abuse of children, in particular by their mother's current partner, was a problem in Jamaica.

79. The CHAIRPERSON remarked that she had not had an opportunity to study the Divorce Act. She wondered, therefore, what grounds for divorce were recognized under Jamaican law, and, in particular, whether the irretrievable breakdown of marriage was considered adequate grounds for divorce. She knew that most Jamaican women took their husband's name upon marriage, but wondered whether they were required to do so and what name the children of the union would bear.

80. From personal experience, she knew that the Jamaican report had not done full justice to the situation in the country. She hoped that the replies to the Committee's questions would make that abundantly clear.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.