



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

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 122nd MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 29 February 1988, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. BERNARD

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

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

Initial report of Senegal (CEDAW/C/5/Add.42 and Amend.1)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Ndiaye (Senegal) took a place at the Committee table.

2. Ms. NDIAYE (Senegal), summarizing the background information on the status of women provided at the beginning of Senegal's supplementary report (CEDAW/C/5/Add.42/Amend.1) updating the initial report of 1986 (CEDAW/C/5/Add.42), and reviewing Senegal's general political and economic situation and its national goals for improving health conditions in the country, cited Senegal's Chief of State as having declared in 1987 that all de jure discriminatory barriers against women in Senegal had now been removed.

3. She reviewed the legislation guaranteeing women's equality, which had been outlined in the initial report (pp. 3-4) and in the discussion of the various articles of the Convention in the supplementary report. She added that Law No. 61-34 also guaranteed the right to vocational training and to equal employment opportunities and conditions, and that the far-reaching reform of the school system in 1981 had created a truly national and democratic educational system benefiting the population as a whole. Although polygamy was legal under the Family Code, the options available militated in favour of monogamy. The Code allowed a husband to oppose his wife's choice of a profession if it jeopardized the interests of the family, but his opposition could be overridden by the courts if it was demonstrated to be unjustified. Under the Penal Code, men and women were equal before the law, and rape was punishable by 5 to 10 years' imprisonment.

4. In connection with the political and administrative activities of women outlined in the initial report (p. 4), she explained that a rural community in Senegal consisted of a number of villages grouped around a principal village. The deliberative organ of each rural community was a rural council of some 12 to 31 members, two thirds of whom were elected by the inhabitants of the villages and one third of whom were appointed by agricultural co-operatives. Each council elected a president from among its members. Elected officials were given the necessary political and administrative training to apply any legislative reforms, carry out development planning and land management, determine the rural community's budget and supervise projects.

5. A number of other administrative measures had been taken to enable women to participate fully in development. At the time of Senegal's independence, leadership centres for rural women had been set up to train women auxiliary workers in villages who would be aware of development issues and thus able to bring about the necessary changes of attitude. Subsequently, various government departments dealing with women's affairs had been established, and finally, in 1983, the

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Directorate for the Status of Women had been incorporated into the new Ministry of Social Development.

6. The role of the Directorate for the Status of Women was to advance women's participation in economic, social and cultural development. It was involved in research, policy-making, information, community development, education and training, assistance, guidance and, in general, the co-ordination of all programmes and activities relating to women.

7. Within the Directorate, the Home Economics Division was responsible for home economics programmes; it also supervised the National Training Centre for Rural Extension Workers and the Women's Technical Education Training School, which had trained 602 instructors who were now working all over the country, some of them training girls who had been unable to attend secondary school.

8. The Directorate's Programmes and Projects Division was responsible for making the public aware of women's place in the family and in society, studying ways of improving women's living conditions, encouraging the establishment of groups promoting the status of women and giving the groups technical guidance, devising projects to further the integration of women in national development, monitoring all projects dealing with women, and creating conditions for the participation of women in community development activities, particularly by setting up child-care centres and promoting functional literacy. The Division had 422 staff members throughout the country and provided guidance to 3,300 groups.

9. The Division of Female Labour, in addition to the responsibilities indicated in the initial report (p. 5), aimed generally to create a professional awareness among working women. It was currently setting up day-care centres and information units in all enterprises that employed a substantial number of women, and would shortly be establishing information centres for women in all the regional capitals.

10. The Administrative and Financial Bureau managed the Directorate's human, financial and material resources.

11. Other measures taken by the Government included the establishment of a National Women's Committee and the observance, since 1980, of a National Woman's Fortnight each March, the purpose of which was to make the public aware of the need to integrate women fully in the country's development, arouse national support for the advancement of women, combat the manifold obstacles to women's participation in development, contribute to family welfare efforts by providing information and education on responsible parenthood, and transform Senegalese women into citizens aware of their responsibilities, rights and duties. The National Women's Committee, comprising representatives of ministerial departments, political parties, women's associations and other interested persons, had consultative status with the Ministry of Social Development and chose the topics for National Woman's Fortnight and made recommendations for relevant follow-up action.

12. In the economic sphere, the Government had established within the National Planning Commission a Sub-Commission on the Integration of Women in Development,

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whose function it was to review sectoral programmes to ensure that they did not neglect women's concerns. Such reviews had resulted in the allocation of \$666 million to projects for women under the sixth Economic and Social Development Plan. Moreover, the National Plan of Action for Women formulated in 1982 made provision for women's concerns, from rural communities to the national level. It focused principally on education and training, health and nutrition, employment and income-generating activities, and legal aspects, and \$60 million had been allocated to it under Senegal's seventh Economic and Social Development Plan. The National Plan of Action for Women was aimed primarily at rural women, who were assigned top priority in the Government's activities on behalf of women.

13. In 1975, an assessment of rural extension activities for women had found them inappropriate to the needs of rural women. In the light of that assessment, extension workers had been instructed to set up women's groups based on an economic activity which could generate sufficient revenue to fund the social sectors to which women attached priority. Appropriate technologies had also been devised to alleviate the burden of women's work.

14. After years of trial, error and policy adjustment, over 3,000 groups promoting the status of women, with a total membership of 485,000, were now in operation. Local, district, departmental and regional federations had been set up throughout the country, and in October 1987 the National Federation of Groups Promoting the Status of Women had held its first congress. The National Federation was a vast communications and co-operation network that encouraged women to participate more effectively in national development by enhancing their socio-economic status.

15. In alleviating the burden of women's work, appropriate technologies for traditional commodity processing (see initial report, p. 5) had been introduced, women had been trained to use them, and local mechanics and rural artisans had been trained to maintain, repair and produce them.

16. There had also been notable successes in water supply: the number of well drills had tripled since 1981 and motorized drills were being operated by village committees; 900 hydraulic and modern wells, 120 of them equipped with pumps, had been constructed, as well as tens of thousands of traditional wells. A still more ambitious water-supply policy was being implemented with assistance from other countries and international and non-governmental organizations, the goal being to ensure 25 litres of water per day per rural inhabitant for the next 10 years, to increase the number of water points in order to slow down the exodus of rural and border populations while promoting agricultural and livestock production, and to gradually provide villages with a permanent water supply and water pumping facilities.

17. Of Senegal's current population of 6,900,000 inhabitants, 80 per cent lived in rural areas. As indicated in the initial report (p. 5), 70 per cent of the rural population were women, who played a major role in certain sectors of the rural economy. In order to revitalize the rural economy, a new agricultural policy had been designed, the main goals of which were to give rural men and women greater responsibility, provide them with factors of production which they themselves

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managed and maintained, and achieve food self-sufficiency by promoting the production, marketing, processing and distribution of cereals. That would make semi-finished cereal products available to all consumers and also reduce the burden of traditional processing normally assumed by women. Dams built jointly by the countries of the subregion would also help achieve the goal of food self-sufficiency. Provision had been made for women to have access to irrigated plots, and hundreds of hectares of land had already been set aside for them by local associations and rural councils in the Senegal River valley.

18. Women had also played a decisive role in combating desertification, by preserving local woods, building fuel-economic homes and using fuel substitutes for wood and charcoal.

19. The annual budget of the Ministry of Social Development was \$702 million, approximately \$1,800,000 of which went to the Directorate for the Status of Women and \$1,900,000 of which served as a common organizational budget for all Directorates. The Ministry also had an Action Fund for Women of \$233,000 a year, for the funding of small projects. Considerable funding for women's activities was also provided by international and non-governmental organizations. Moreover, the National Federation of Groups Promoting the Status of Women was planning to set up a credit and guarantee fund, financed by contributions from individual member groups.

20. The Federation of Women's Associations of Senegal (FAFS), founded in 1977 and comprising professional associations and service clubs, was also actively defending the interests of women and funding various agricultural, fishing and social projects run by groups promoting the status of women.

21. The Convention and other texts relating to the advancement of women were being publicized through radio and television broadcasts by the Association of Women Lawyers. The Training Schools attached to the Ministry of Social Development were also publicizing the provisions of the Convention in their training programmes, and the Division of Female Labour was currently developing a number of information cards on the Convention, for dissemination to training establishments and ministerial departments.

22. The current climate in Senegal, among authorities in all fields and among women themselves, was favourable to the implementation of the Convention. Nevertheless, tremendous obstacles to the advancement of women remained: drought, desertification, illiteracy (86 per cent among women as against 60 per cent among men), maternal mortality (6 per 1,000), infant mortality (153 per 1,000), lack of sanitation, absence of reliable statistics, and the scarcity of natural and financial resources. The Government was doing all it could for the advancement of women and hoped that it would continue to be supported in that task by assistance from other countries, and from international and non-governmental organizations.

23. Ms. EVATT said that, although the two reports provided information about legal and administrative structures in Senegal, it was only from the oral introduction by the representative of Senegal that the Committee had been able to obtain a clear

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picture of women's situation in that country. She drew attention in that connection to the Committee's guidelines for periodic reports.

24. As 70 per cent of the rural population of Senegal was female, it would be useful to know more about the lives of rural women and the obstacles to equality they encountered. She was particularly interested in the Inter-African Committee set up to inquire into traditional practices with injurious effects on maternal and child health, and wished to learn more about those practices. On a more general level, she wanted to know how much power and influence Senegalese women enjoyed with regard to policy-making and the distribution of resources.

25. The concept of "woman as the complement to man" did not inspire confidence in the attitudes which apparently prevailed among Senegalese men. It was nevertheless to be hoped that the infrastructure which had been set up - particularly the rural councils - would help women advance further when the country's economic conditions were more favourable.

26. Ms. PILATAXI DE ARENAS urged that the next periodic report of Senegal should be submitted well in advance so that Committee members could give it the consideration it deserved.

27. While the report illustrated the importance of the Convention in Senegal, she was nevertheless concerned that women might not be enjoying full equality in that country. She cited passages from a work by a prominent Senegalese woman writer, which described the adverse consequences for women of polygamy. Under that system, women were treated as objects and accorded inferior status; frequently they were sold while young by their parents. She wondered whether any effort was being made to combat that situation, in general and, in particular, to reshape the attitudes of children, especially boys.

28. Ms. SINEGIORGIS said that Senegalese women were to be commended for their long-standing fight against discrimination and their participation in the struggle for national independence. The establishment of a national women's movement in Senegal, despite the many problems facing the country, was also a welcome development. However, she wished to know why the Ministry for the Status of Women had been renamed the Ministry of Social Development. It would also be useful to know how the work of the numerous organizations that assisted that Ministry was co-ordinated.

29. Senegal was to be commended for having hosted the seminar which had led to the establishment of the Inter-African Committee on traditional practices whose impact on the health of mothers and children was of importance to all women. She sought information regarding measures taken by the Senegalese Government to prevent the perpetration of such practices and any resistance encountered to those measures. Finally, she asked how Senegalese women viewed the institution of polygamy.

30. Ms. GUAN Mingqian said that the traditional concept of women in Senegal was quite similar to the concept that had prevailed in China prior to its liberation, a fact which enabled her to appreciate the efforts that had been required to overcome

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such deep-rooted beliefs and practices. Given that background, Senegalese women were to be congratulated on the progress they had made.

31. Like Ms. Sinegiorgis, she sought more detailed information about the women's movement in Senegal. She also believed that statistics, particularly with regard to employment, would be helpful, although she did not expect a developing country to furnish highly sophisticated data. She also wished to know the extent to which Senegalese women were involved in the country's political life: for example, it would be useful to know the percentage of women occupying high-level government posts and also leadership positions in grass-roots organizations.

32. Ms. SAYOGYO said she would like to know more about Law No. 72-25, which extended to women agricultural workers the same status as men: did that mean that their status had previously been lower than that of men? It would be interesting to know how the law worked in practice.

33. Ms. SOUMARE noted that, in addition to common historic and cultural backgrounds and living conditions, the women of Senegal and Mali shared an enthusiasm for women's advancement. She welcomed the efforts of the Senegalese Government described in the report, which were indicative of a genuine political will to promote the cause of women.

34. Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU said that the Senegalese Government was to be congratulated for having ratified the Convention and having established the Directorate for the Status of Women. Given the establishment of that special machinery, however, it was surprising that the initial report of Senegal (CEDAW/C/5/Add.42) was only a few pages long and that the updated version (CEDAW/C/5/Add.42/Amend.1) contained no statistical information. Perhaps Senegal had not been informed of the Committee's guidelines for reports. Although Senegal was a developing country, it was clearly capable of submitting satisfactory reports to United Nations bodies, as previous periodic reports to the Human Rights Committee, for example, attested.

35. The two reports before the Committee seemed to imply that the issue of women's equality was not taken seriously by those who had drafted them, who were surely men, since they had found evidence of equality everywhere in a country where polygamy still existed! In the future responsibility for the preparation of reports should be confined to the Directorate which, as the oral presentation by the representative of Senegal had demonstrated, clearly understood the real situation of Senegalese women.

36. She was particularly annoyed by the statement on page 38 of the updated report that "Senegal ... was not mistaken in taking the concept of 'woman as the essential complement to man' as the basis of its women's policy". If that was still the Government's official policy, it ran counter to the provisions of the Convention.

37. The sections of the reports dealing with specific articles of the Convention were marked by a tendency to describe women's work role in terms of their role in the family. For example, the provision of the Social Security Code regarding

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maternity leave described benefits accorded to women in terms of their husbands' employment status, a somewhat dangerous situation.

38. She wished to know why the Senegalese Family Code was considered to be "revolutionary" if, according to the report, it stipulated that the father was head of the family. She also sought clarification of an apparent discrepancy between the two reports: while the report specified that the Labour Code affirmed the principle of equal pay for work of equal value (p. 3), the amended version referred to equal pay for equal work (p. 22).

39. Ms. TALLAWY noted that the reports had concentrated on legislative provisions rather than providing a description of the actual situation of women in Senegal. However, the introduction of the report by the representative of Senegal had provided much valuable information on that subject.

40. In view of the fact that rural women comprised a significant proportion of the total population, she wished to know what the Directorate for the Status of Women was doing to inform them of their rights.

41. She drew attention to the seventh paragraph of the updated report (CEDAW/C/5/Add.42/Amend.1), which contained erroneous information with regard to Islam. Such factual errors presented the Committee with a serious problem in considering reports of States parties. When the Committee asked for clarification in such cases, it found itself placed in a very awkward situation. It must be emphasized that the Committee sought clarification of an ostensibly religious issue simply because inaccurate information had been provided in the first place.

42. Ms. UKEJE observed that the lucid and detailed presentation by the representative of Senegal was tantamount to another report on the status of women in that country. She endorsed the comments of previous speakers regarding traditional practices, including female circumcision. The fact that certain customs had prevailed over time should not prevent the dismantling of traditions which discriminated against women.

43. Ms. GONZALEZ MARTINEZ said it was unfortunate that the very valuable additional information in document CEDAW/C/5/Add.42/Amend.1 had not been made available in all the working languages; some members of the Committee could not easily assimilate material presented in English and French.

44. She wondered whether the Government had any specific programmes to increase women's involvement in political activities, and whether there were any social or educational programmes designed to root out sexual and family stereotypes from Senegalese society.

45. The report indicated that, to reduce the female student drop-out rate, the authorities had established an entire system to replace traditional studies by apprenticeship training in such activities as sewing, knitting and cooking. Did that mean that girls obliged to leave school had no option but to remain in such

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traditionally female occupations, or was there any other programme under which school leavers could continue their studies?

46. Ms. MONTENEGRO DE FLETCHER asked whether the work done by the women who made up 70 per cent of the rural population was included in national labour productivity statistics. She also asked what was the most common form of conjugal relationship in Senegal: monogamy or polygamy, formal or non-formal union, and what status was held by the children of each type of union.

47. Ms. VELIZ DE VILLALVILLA commented that the reports submitted by the Senegalese Government did not provide enough information on articles 5, 7, 8 or 16 of the Convention. She hoped that future reports would remedy that deficiency. She welcomed the information on the establishment of the Inter-African Committee on traditional practices; what had that Committee so far achieved and on what areas had it concentrated?

48. The representative of Senegal said that the incidence of polygamy was declining: she wished to know whether the trend towards monogamy also held true of the younger generation. On the subject of social obstacles to women's equality, she asked what action the authorities were taking to change social conditions, particularly for younger women. She also asked what was the specific rate of illiteracy among women and what plans the Ministry of Social Development had to reduce it.

Article 2

49. Ms. EVATT asked what steps were being taken to identify and modify customs and practices in Senegal which constituted discrimination against women. In particular, she wondered whether such customs and practices as polygamy, repudiation of wives, dowries and "bought brides", female circumcision, early marriage and early pregnancy, and the generally patriarchal attitude reflected in the report, were consistent with the various laws and other legislation cited in the report. If customary practice allowed girls to be married at the age of 13, she wondered how it was possible to speak of their giving consent to the marriage.

50. Ms. GUAN Minqian asked for an account of the facts in the case cited in the report in which the legislator had ruled that "in the event of a conflict of customs in matters ... involving marriage or divorce, ... it was to be the woman's customary law that would prevail".

51. Ms. WADSTEIN asked whether a woman who believed she had been the victim of discrimination could take action in the courts; what sanctions could be applied if discrimination was demonstrated; whether the representative of the Senegalese Government could provide any specific case histories; and whether Senegalese women were aware of their rights in that regard. She also asked whether women had access to legal aid and, if so, to what extent the aid provided was free.

Article 3

52. Ms. SALEMA, noting that article 3 of the Senegalese Constitution forbade political parties to identify themselves with a particular sex, asked whether a party that identified itself with women's rights or concerns or sought to eradicate discrimination against women might be held to be acting illegally or in violation of public order under articles 812 and 814 of the Code of Civil and Commercial Obligations.

Article 4

53. Ms. EVATT asked whether any temporary special measures had been taken in Senegal to increase women's participation in the political process, to overcome sex segregation in the work force or to increase women's levels of literacy and education.

54. Ms. GUAN Mingqian asked why it had been decided to rename the Ministry for the Status of Women the Ministry of Social Development; whether there had been any associated change in the Ministry's mandate; and what the effect of the change had been on efforts to combat discrimination against women.

Article 5

55. Ms. EVATT asked whether Senegal had witnessed any change in the roles played by men and women in the upbringing of their children, and whether there were any programmes to encourage men to shoulder a greater share of domestic responsibilities.

56. Ms. GUAN Mingqian asked what was meant in the report by "Islamicized Wolof custom", "Islamicized Serer custom", "Christianized Diola custom" and the like.

57. Ms. MONTENEGRO DE FLETCHER asked for more information on the seminar on traditional practices which had given rise to the Inter-African Committee. She also asked for more details of the information campaigns organized by the Government to promote the integration of women into society, and how they had affected the status of rural women in particular.

58. Ms. WADSTEIN said that religious institutions appeared to exercise considerable influence over life in Senegal, but she wondered precisely in what regard and to what extent.

59. Administratively, men seemed to hold primary responsibility for their children; how far did they actually share in the day-to-day care? Lastly, she wondered whether rural and urban women or women in different social strata were accorded significantly different status.

60. Ms. FORDE asked for information on violence against women: was the battering of women traditionally accepted in Senegal; was the incidence of rape high; and were there adequate laws to deal with rape and violence against women? Were there any governmental or non-governmental institutions that assisted the victims of violence and sexual abuse?

61. The CHAIRPERSON asked whether it was still the custom that women involved in violent altercations with their husbands were not to defend themselves, and whether it was an offence for a man to beat a woman.

Article 7

62. Ms. EVATT asked how women's demands and needs for policy changes were translated into action, and what relationship existed between women's organizations and the administrative machinery responsible for the implementation of the Convention.

63. Ms. GUAN Mingqian drew attention to the assertion in document CEDAW/C/5/Add.42/Amend.1 that "in today's Senegal no public office or function is taboo for women", and asked how much equality women enjoyed in actual fact. She would like figures on the number of women serving in Parliament, in political parties, in the civil service and elsewhere.

64. Ms. SALEMA said that it would be useful to know whether illiterate women could vote and hold office. The "specific statutes" referred to in the third paragraph on page 15 of the updated report should be clarified. She wished to know what discriminatory provisions regarding the right to work and to seek employment might be contained in those statutes. It would be interesting to know whether women had access to military careers.

Article 9

65. Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU asked whether nationality could be acquired by an alien man who married a Senegalese woman.

Article 10

66. Ms. EVATT asked whether positive steps had been taken or were envisaged concerning women's access to education, including sex education, and to information on family planning and contraception.

Article 11

67. Ms. AKAMATSU said that she welcomed the steps taken by the Ministry of Social Development to promote the advancement of women in employment. It would be useful to know what tangible results had been achieved in that field.

68. The basis for the figures contained in table 1 of the initial report should be clarified. The total participation of women could not be derived by adding the percentages for all employment categories. The types of work included under "others" should also be clarified. She wondered why the percentage of women in public works (table 2) was so low.

69. Ms. NOVIKOVA said that the representative of Senegal should provide further information on the categories "Independent workers" and "Domestic help" contained in table 1. Those responsible for preparing the table might have confused paid work outside the home with unpaid work within the home. More information was needed on the steps taken to ensure the principles of equality and equity in the agricultural, stock-raising and fisheries sectors.

70. Ms. WADSTEIN said that additional information concerning the economic situation in Senegal would make it easier to understand the situation of Senegalese women. She wished to know in which sectors women were employed, what steps were being taken to give them access to other sectors and what training was being provided so as to upgrade their professional skills. She had the impression that some professions were closed to women. If that was the case, Senegal should explain the grounds on which such discrimination was based. It would be interesting to learn what role was played by trade unions in encouraging women to participate in the labour force, what health and safety protection was provided to women under the Labour Code and why nightwork was authorized only for men. She wondered what the standard working hours were, how men's and women's salaries compared and how the principle of equal pay for work of equal value was implemented.

Article 12

71. Ms. EVATT asked to what extent early marriage and pregnancy were responsible for the high infant mortality rate. She wished to know how many Senegalese couples took part in family planning and contraception programmes. Statistics should be provided on the average age of Senegalese women at the time of their first pregnancy and the number of women under 16 years of age who had given birth.

72. Ms. SOUMARE said that more information should be provided on Senegal's birth and family planning policies.

Article 13

73. Ms. PILATAXI DE ARENAS requested further information on the 12 agricultural projects specifically designed for women (p. 5 of initial report). It would be useful to know what advantages such projects offered for the advancement of women's equality with men, what benefits women could gain from the use of agricultural machinery, and what impact it had on the rate of unemployment. As to the fisheries sector, she wondered why promotional efforts were almost exclusively in the hands of women. Further information should also be provided concerning the extent of social security coverage for women in agriculture, stock-raising and fisheries.

74. Ms. SAYOGYO requested clarification concerning land reform and the number of women representatives on rural councils.

75. Ms. WADSTEIN said that rural development programmes were a boon for women in particular and for the rural population as a whole. Information should be provided on land ownership and the distribution of land between men, women and families. It would be useful to know whether women who worked the land were also landowners.

76. Ms. SINEGIORGIS said that additional information should be provided concerning women's groups in rural areas, including their operating and co-ordinating mechanisms. She wondered how the country's rural development policy affected rural women.

Article 14

77. Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU asked whether pension plans, medical care and maternity benefits had been provided for rural women. In addition, she wished to know the spheres of activity in which women were concentrated, the percentage of women employed in family businesses, the number of female entrepreneurs and the number of women employed in the businesses of other families.

Article 15

78. Ms. FORDE asked whether, when they married, women entered into a settlement in order to specify the arrangements for the administration of their property. Otherwise, who administered the property? The representative of Senegal should also clarify how the property was distributed upon dissolution of the marriage or in the event of the death of either spouse. Had provision been made for cases where the parties were not married, and were such provisions acceptable to women? She wished to know whether prison sentences for abandonment of the family were imposed frequently, who cared for the family in such cases, whether social services assisted such families, and whether women's organizations considered imprisonment to be a valid way of dealing with matrimonial offences.

79. The CHAIRPERSON said that it would be useful to know under what circumstances the wife's property was entrusted to the husband, in view of the fact that provision had also been made for her to administer her own property separately.

Article 16

80. Ms. EVATT asked whether women's organizations had asked the Government to change the father's legal position as head of family. It would be useful to know whether a woman could be employed outside the home without her husband's consent. The difference in the legal age for marriage for men and women should be explained. She wondered how many girls under 16 years of age got married, what steps were being taken to prevent them from doing so, and whether young girls were in a position to give their consent. Such marriages might be responsible for health problems and high rates of maternal and child mortality. Although repudiation of the wife was unlawful, it would be interesting to know what occurred in practice.

81. Ms. FORDE said that Senegal should clarify how the courts settled cases involving the breach of engagement contracts. It would be useful to know whether there were traditional reasons for maintaining the legal effect of the contract and whether women were in favour of such a practice. She wished to know whether articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution referred only to married partners because common law marriage was non-existent or rare. If co-habitation existed, it would

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be useful to know what legal provision had been made concerning such unions and children born of them.

82. The CHAIRPERSON said that custom, tradition and religion had played a large part in determining the status of women in Senegal. She hoped that, in future, the balance of such factors would lead to equality for all Senegalese women.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.