



Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women

Distr
GENERAL

CEDAW/C/SR 143
2 March 1989

ORIGINAL ENGLISH

UN TIRADV

MAR 30 1989

UN/SA COLLECTION

COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Eighth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 143rd MEETING

Held at the Vienna International Centre, Vienna,
on Tuesday, 28 February 1989, at 9 30 a m

Chairperson Ms EVATT

CONTENTS

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

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work (continued)

This record is subject to correction

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of distribution of this document to the Head, Translation Service, room D0749

Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session

The meeting was called to order at 9 45 a m

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

Initial report of Belgium (CEDAW/C/5/Add 53)

1 At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms Monballyu (Belgium) took a place at the Committee table

2 Ms 'MONBALLYU (Belgium), introducing her country's initial report (CEDAW/C/5/Add 53), said that Belgium had ratified the Convention in 1985, following its earlier approval by the French-speaking, Flemish-speaking and German-speaking communities. Furthermore, Belgium had endorsed the Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women drawn up in Nairobi in 1985. It was thus committed to ensuring equal political, economic, social, cultural, civil and other rights for women and men and to repealing all laws, regulations, customs or practices that discriminated directly or indirectly against women - all that at a time of economic and budgetary stringency, when there was no guarantee of full employment. The report considered how far equality before the law existed in fact. There had been a large measure of equality before ratification of the Convention, since Belgium's legislative system gave international law precedence over domestic law.

3 The principle of equality of all Belgians before the law was embodied in articles 6 and 6 bis of the Constitution, and was set forth in the conventions adopted within the United Nations system which Belgium had ratified, as well as in the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the instruments of the European Economic Community. Following recommendations by the United Nations, Belgium had set up a number of advisory commissions to deal with equality of opportunity and rights between men and women, such as the Commission on Women's Work, the Dutch-speaking Commission on Equality of Opportunity for Boys and Girls, and the Emancipation Council, which had recently advised on such matters as legal measures for protection against sexual harassment at work, work for women, equality for self-employed men and women, subsidies for emancipation projects, equalizing pensionable age for men and women, equality of opportunity for boys and girls in education.

4 The Secretariat of State for Social Emancipation had been set up in 1985 and in 1988 the Secretary of State for Social Emancipation had become a deputy to the Prime Minister. The Secretariat had been responsible for studies on such subjects as incest, prostitution, women subjected to physical and sexual violence, night work for women and a guide to positive action. It had sought to promote a more favourable climate for women's employment and had taken a number of initiatives, mainly in the fields of education and positive action. Since girls still tended to opt for studies in fields with poor employment prospects, the Secretary of State, in co-operation with the Ministers for National Education, had initiated a series of measures beginning with two campaigns designed to encourage girls to choose their studies with more thought and with an eye to the employment market. Emphasis had been placed on the wide scope offered by education and on the choice of areas not traditionally feminine but offering good openings. A competition had been organized for school journals on the theme of equality for men and women in the world of work. A campaign was being prepared for 18-year olds, bearing in mind that the choice of studies was not a single decision but a process of progressive choices.

/

(Ms Monballyu)

5 In order to promote true equality of opportunity for men and women on the employment market and to eliminate de facto inequalities, the Secretary of State had placed great emphasis on a policy of positive action, an idea which had first appeared in the law on economic reorientation of 4 August 1978. It had achieved political status following the appointment of a Secretary of State for Social Emancipation, and in respect of the private sector had been the subject of a Royal Decree dated 4 July 1987. Positive action was now included in collective labour agreements and a support group was to be set up under the Ministry of Employment and Labour. Measures relating to positive action in the public sector had recently been approved by the Government. Positive action was compulsory in that sector but voluntary in the private sector.

6 On the basis of a pilot project carried out in 1986 in the telegraph and telephone service, a practical guide for positive action had been prepared and issued in April 1988 to all enterprises employing more than 100 workers. Following the formation of a new Government in May 1988 the Secretary of State for Social Emancipation had concluded agreements with some 20 large, medium and small enterprises in different sectors, together employing more than 50,000 people, under which the enterprise undertook to carry out an equal opportunities plan in accordance with the methods set forth in the guide and the Secretary of State undertook to make an expert on the subject available to the enterprise free of charge.

7 With regard to measures for ensuring equality of rights in public and political life, Belgian women enjoyed the same political rights as men and in the same conditions. Voting was compulsory and while the right to vote posed no problem, equality presupposed membership of a political party. Women were already poorly represented in politics at all levels, and the same was true for the trade unions. At the time of the local elections in October 1988, the Secretary of State had organized a campaign to make the population aware of the importance of women in local politics.

8 As far as equality of cultural, economic and social rights was concerned, article 17 of the Constitution provided for free public education and the School Covenant of 1959 provided for access to private education on the same conditions as to public education. Despite free access to education, there was inequality in practice, since girls were not adequately represented in the higher technical field. The number of girls at higher school and at university level was nevertheless increasing.

9 The right to work and the right to equal pay and equal treatment for men and women were guaranteed through international instruments which Belgium had signed and ratified. That did not mean that women were proportionally represented at all work levels. For a number of reasons, in both the public and the private sector, there were more women in the lower than in the administrative posts, although a slow but steady improvement could be seen. In the employment sector, private as well as public, positive action had been adopted or was in process of preparation.

10 Equality of rights in unemployment had been the subject of a communication from the Commission of the European Economic Communities dated 2 June 1986, which had drawn attention to indirect discrimination against women. The Belgian Government had amended the discriminatory provisions by Royal Decree of 8 August 1986. Although the new provisions also had been criticised, the

(Ms Monballyu)

Government considered that they guaranteed a quasi lump sum payment to unemployed persons and that the term "head of household" which had been criticised, was used merely as a means of ensuring a reasonable income for the person running the home, whether man or woman

11 With regard to the family allowance system, which gave priority in payment to the father, the Belgian authorities considered that the provisions in question were merely a means of applying legislation which did not in itself discriminate against the mother or the child, since the amount of family allowances was decided by the child's position in the family or its particular condition, whether handicapped or an orphan, and did not vary according to the father's or mother's income. The right to family allowance was open to the person who brought up the children at his or her cost, whether father, mother or anyone else legally responsible for the child

12 The report drew attention to problems encountered by spouses working with their husbands on farms, who had no professional status. In December 1986 the Council of the European Economic Communities had adopted a directive on application of the principle of equality of treatment for self-employed men and women, including those engaged in farming, and on maternity protection. That directive was to be put into effect in the member States by 30 June 1989. The Belgian Government was preparing the necessary measures to that end.

13 Regarding taxation, the Law of 7 December 1988 contained measures to promote the employment of women, under which, in families where both spouses earned an income, tax was imposed on each one separately, and 80 per cent of payment for the care of children below the age of three could be deducted from their joint net income.

14 The report did not refer to migrant women because they were not mentioned in any article of the Convention, but she was mentioning the subject because there was a considerable number of migrant women in Belgium. A High Commissioner for Immigrants, Ms Paula d'Hondt, had recently been appointed. As far as she was aware, there was no discrimination between women of Belgian origin and women of foreign origin. Provided the laws and regulations concerning entry, residence and employment were observed, the latter had the same economic and social rights as Belgian women. There were, of course, other differences, due to differences of background, and the competent authorities in the French-speaking community, the Flemish-speaking community and the European Economic Community, with the support of non-governmental organizations, were providing pre-vocational training and literacy and other courses. There were also associations which dealt specifically with medical and health problems and particularly with family planning, as well as others which dealt with the problems and care of young girls, for example where they had family difficulties or were school drop-outs.

15 Combating violence against women and children was one of the priorities set by the Secretary of State for Social Emancipation and measures taken included scientific research, awareness campaigns and co-ordination of the various bodies concerned with victims. The aim was to ascertain facts, to break the taboo against discussing the problem, to prevent, detect and help victims, and to organize all the bodies concerned with the problem. Various forms of action had been taken, including the preparation of a guide which was now a basic document for the training of the police and the gendarmerie.

(Ms Monballyu)

16 In addition, a bill amending certain existing provisions concerning the crime of rape was currently being considered. Its main purposes were to provide a definition of rape, to recognize absence of consent as a decisive criterion, to require a heavier penalty if rape was accompanied by torture or sequestration or if it resulted in death, and to guarantee increased protection of the victim's anonymity.

17 With regard to abortion, five proposals were at present under discussion in the Senate Commission on Justice and Public Health, all designed to eliminate the repression of abortion in certain circumstances and under specific conditions.

18 She believed that the report and her introduction of it would show that Belgium was genuinely concerned to realize the objectives of the Convention. The establishment of the Secretariat of State for Social Emancipation in order to maintain the momentum of action for the emancipation of women was evidence of that concern. However, there was a long way to go before equality was fully achieved and her Government would welcome the comments and views of the members of the Committee.

19 Ms AKAMATSU congratulated the representative of Belgium on her country's very comprehensive initial report. She noted that Belgium had entered a reservation to article 7 of the Convention regarding the exercise of "royal powers". Were such powers purely ceremonial? What was the difference between "royal ordinances" and other Belgian laws, and did the monarch exert any influence over such ordinances?

20 She had been impressed by the number of mechanisms established to advance women's status, notably the Secretariat of State for Social Emancipation. She would like to know how many staff the Secretariat had, what was its budget, and how it was organized.

21 Ms OESER congratulated the Government of Belgium on the many measures it had introduced to improve the status of women following ratification of the Convention, but she regretted that the report did not give enough information to enable the reader to evaluate the results achieved. For example, the report indicated that Belgium had found the Forward-Looking Strategies adopted at Nairobi a useful instrument for putting the principles of equality into practice. She would be glad to learn how that instrument had been used to implement specific articles of the Convention, whether the Secretariat of State for Social Emancipation was the only body with decision-making powers on equality issues, and what decisions it had taken so far. She would also appreciate more information on the extent of the royal powers in regard to matters affecting equality between the sexes.

22 Ms FENGER-MOLLER was pleased to note how much had been done in Belgium to establish women's equality in law. However, equality in practice was often difficult to achieve. How far had the so-called "royal ordinances" been successful in promoting equality? Was the existence of a large number of different bodies with responsibility for promoting equality an advantage or a disadvantage, and what steps were taken to avoid duplication of work?

23 After stating that there were too few women participating in Belgian political life, the report suggested that the introduction of the quota system would encourage more women to enter politics. It was held in many countries that the appointment of women purely on gender grounds was not desirable, and she wondered

(Ms Fenger-Moller)

if there had been any debate on the matter in Belgium. What steps were being taken to increase the number of women on decision-making bodies? Finally, when did the Belgian representative think that her country would be in a position to withdraw its reservations?

24 Ms SCHÖPP-SCHILLING regretted the lack of statistics in Belgium's report, notably on the unemployed in general and unemployed women in particular. She wished to know if any cases of indirect discrimination were currently before the courts in Belgium, and what was the policy of the Secretariat of State on that issue.

25 Ms LAIYOU-ANTONIOU commended the work done in Belgium to promote equality for women, and particularly the efforts made to increase public awareness of the issue.

26 She would be interested to know whether Belgium intended to withdraw its reservations on article 15, paragraphs 2 and 3, of the Convention in respect of the administration of matrimonial property. In Greece, legislation had been introduced in 1983 abolishing the dowry system and permitting women to recover their dowries and administer their own property and she saw no reason why such measures could not be introduced in other countries.

27 She asked whether adultery was an offence punishable under the Penal Code and also whether it was intended to discontinue the practice of considering adultery a ground for divorce. Divorces on such grounds often involved indirect discrimination, in that it was more difficult for wives to prove adultery committed by husbands.

28 She urged the Belgian authorities to take prompt action to abolish prostitution, and particularly the open advertising of the services of prostitutes, which was not only an offence to Belgian women, but also ran counter to the Government's efforts to advance women's status.

29 She would like to know how effective the women's movement in Belgium was, and which were its most important organizations. Were they independent, or did they tend to be identified with specific political parties? She noted that a proposal for the legalization of abortion had been rejected in 1986. What action were the women's organizations taking on the abortion question, and what was the attitude of the Secretariat of State for Social Emancipation on that question?

Article 2

30 Ms BUSTELO del REAL noted that discriminatory job offers were prohibited by law in Belgium. Was there also legislation prohibiting discrimination in other areas, for example the use of women as sex objects in advertising, or advertising directed at children?

31 Ms GUAN Mingqian noted the indication in the report that there were over 10 different bodies in Belgium with responsibility for women's issues. Were all those bodies non-governmental, operating in a purely advisory capacity? What was done to avoid duplication between them, and what was their relationship with the Secretariat of State for Social Emancipation?

32 Ms FENGER-MÖLLER asked what had been the impact of the rulings of the Cour de Cassation and the Conseil d'Etat that Belgium's Constitution prohibited discrimination based on sex. The report stated that under legislation introduced in 1974, if one parent considered that a decision taken by the other was at variance with the interests of the child, he or she was entitled to bring the matter before the Juvenile Court. Were such cases often brought, and what would normally be the outcome? She would have appreciated some statistics on women's earnings compared to those of men under the heading "Equality of Remuneration". Was the Commission on the Employment of Women competent to take action to implement the Equal Pay Act, or other equality legislation in force under a European Community directive? It was stated on page 10 of the report that the Commission's activities had resulted in "important amendments to Belgian legislation". What were those amendments? What were the "powers of decision" of the Ministerial Commission on the Status of Women referred to on page 13 of the report, and what was the impact of the decisions it had taken?

33 Although the report stated that the Secretariat of State aimed to promote women's integration at all levels, no concrete action appeared to have been taken to achieve that aim. Were there any plans for such action? Lastly, were any steps to be taken to promote equality of treatment between men and women with regard to working conditions, access to employment and vocational training?

34 Ms LAIOU-ANTONIOU asked how often Belgium's courts had sought the advice of the Commission on the Promotion of Equality in the Civil Service and in what way women civil servants benefitted from the Commission's work. How did the Secretariat of State for Social Emancipation function where women's issues were concerned? Did it have a special women's division, what was its budget, and how many staff did it have?

35 She noted that the Ministerial Commission on the Status of Women was presided over by the Prime Minister. How many times had the Prime Minister in fact presided over the Commission since its establishment? In the proposed draft law relating to rape, was any provision contemplated whereby a case of rape would automatically be brought before the courts, provided there was sufficient evidence? Was rape between spouses considered a crime?

36 Ms FORDE commended the Government of Belgium for having submitted its report within a reasonable period after ratification. The report had not been very easy to read, however, and she would have preferred the material to have been arranged in relation to the various articles of the Convention. The order of precedence of the different mechanisms to guarantee equality was not clear while on the one hand the principle of equality was enshrined in the Constitution, on the other hand in the Belgian legal system international law was held to prevail over national law, while there were three different commissions to promote equality for each of the three different language communities in Belgium. Did all Belgian women enjoy the same legal status where equality was concerned, or were women in certain language communities more advanced than others?

37 Ms SCHÖPP-SCHILLING asked whether it was the normal practice in Belgium to set up advisory commissions on a wide range of issues, or whether such commissions had been set up only to deal with the issue of women's status.

Article 3

38 Ms GUAN Mingqian asked for more information on the effectiveness of the series of measures introduced to modify social and cultural patterns in regard to women's issues

Article 4

39 Ms GUAN Mingqian said that she would welcome more information on the large number of women's associations in Belgium how were they organized, what were their chief areas of interest, and how did they ensure co-ordination?

40 Ms SCHÖPP-SCHILLING said that, since positive action was now obligatory in the public sector, she would like to know what plans there were for such action, what priorities had been set and whether any sanctions were contemplated in cases where the goals fixed were not attained Who paid for the experts appointed under the agreements concluded between the Government and private enterprises, what training would such experts receive, and what would be their precise role?

41 On page 29 of the report information was given on quotas established for women's membership of the various political parties, but the parties were identified only by abbreviations She thought that the use of abbreviations should be avoided in reports

42 Ms LAIOU-ANTONIOU referred to the report's statement on page 26 that there was still no legal instrument for determining the actions to be carried out to accelerate equality She could not see how the absence of such an instrument could prove an obstacle since the matter was covered, from the legislative standpoint, by article 4 of the Convention

Article 5

43 Ms ALFONSIN DE FASAN asked whether it was common in Belgium for working fathers to claim as pensionable periods during which they had responsibility for the care of their children Could such benefits be claimed only in the absence of the mother, and were child-care facilities available where both parents were working?

44 Ms FENGER-MÖLLER asked whether the Royal Ordinance to facilitate positive measures for accelerating de facto equality (section 5 1) was now in force, and in which fields How did the women's organizations co-operate with the various Government Commissions? Did the statement in the report that women's organizations must bring pressure to bear on their respective parties (section 5 2 1 2 3) mean that there were different women's organizations for the various political parties? In Denmark, the women's organizations were politically neutral, but gave advice to women voters during election campaigns The women's organizations in Belgium did not seem as powerful as was suggested in the report (section 5 2 1 2 2), since there were still too few women elected to public office, how could the number be increased?

45 Ms BERNARD asked whether rape was presently an offence under Belgian law

46 Ms SCHOPP-SCHILLING asked what influence was exercised by the Catholic Church on education, and whether it was insisting on retaining single-sex schools Was there a women's movement in the Catholic Church seeking to alter the respective

(Ms Schopp-Schilling)

roles of men and women, or did Catholicism pose a barrier to Government efforts to improve the status of women? What role did the churches play where the law on abortion was concerned? She wondered whether the delay in enacting the draft law on rape was connected with the proposed redefinition of rape, and whether there was any public resistance to changing the law

47 The CHAIRPERSON, speaking as a member of the Committee, asked whether there was any research in Belgium into the causes of violence between men and women, whether anything was being done to alter male attitudes towards violence against women, and whether the refuges for women victims of violence were financed from Government funds

Article 6

48 Ms AKAMATSU said that the report referred, on page 26, to plans of the Secretariat of State for Social Emancipation to examine the problems raised by prostitution, with a view to formulating appropriate measures. What measures, if any, had been formulated?

49 Ms CORTI noted that Belgium, which had ratified the 1949 United Nations Convention on Prostitution, was described in the report as an "abolitionist" country, where procurement was a criminal offence. In such countries, however, attitudes to prostitution were slipping backwards since the emergence of AIDS, prostitutes were being accused of helping the epidemic to spread. She asked how the Government and public in Belgium now stood on prostitution, and what "appropriate measures" were planned to bring it to an end.

Article 7

50 Ms AKAMATSU referred to the statement on page 43 of the report that the Government authorities had decided to promote the employment of women in the Civil Service by means of positive measures. She asked what measures had in fact been taken and what results had been achieved.

51 Ms SCHÖPP-SCHILLING asked whether any efforts were being made to increase the representation of women in occupations from which they had formerly been barred, such as the armed forces, the police, the civil defence services and the railways.

Article 10

52 Ms GUAN Mingqian asked whether there was any illiteracy in Belgium.

53 Ms SCHÖPP-SCHILLING said she had been interested to note that there were still single-sex schools in Belgium. Did such schools have the same curriculum for boys and girls, and was the abolition of such schools a topic of debate? The women's movement had recently taken the view that girls aged between 12 and 15 were best educated in all-girl schools, where it was easier for them to study science and mathematics without competition from boys. What was the Belgian Government's attitude on that question?

54 Ms SAJOGYO, referring to the table on page 43 of the report which showed the distribution as between men and women of permanent posts in the civil service, said that the educational breakdown of the population would give a clearer idea of the

(Ms Sajogyo)

relative participation of women in traditional and non-traditional occupations. The figures in the table might be related to educational factors. She asked what steps had been taken to eliminate sex stereotyping, especially by revising school curricula and textbooks, and whether there were any official studies of the question.

55 Ms FENGER-MÖLLER agreed with Ms Schopp-Schilling that single-sex education appeared to favour equal attainment by girls in subjects such as physics and mathematics, because in mixed classes boys tended to dominate. The report stated (page 48) that "it would appear essential to take measures of positive discrimination in favour of girls in order to encourage them to choose certain courses of study". Were girls in Belgium encouraged to choose traditionally feminine careers and did young women who entered non-traditional occupations have better or worse employment prospects? In Denmark, it had been found that women in such occupations always suffered the highest unemployment.

56 Ms LAIOU-ANTONIOU asked whether stereotyped portrayals of masculine and feminine roles had actually been eliminated from school textbooks. The report mentioned (page 21) information days for teachers in pre-school establishments, to promote awareness of equality of opportunity. Were such seminars held at other levels of education?

57 Ms PILATAXI DE ARENAS referred to the reservations entered by Belgium upon its ratification of the Convention. That the throne could only be inherited by a male appeared to be a matter of custom, but she wondered how female members of Belgium's royal family felt about such discrimination. What kinds of school did members of that family attend? She asked whether French and Flemish school curricula were the same, and what changes had been made in them following the 1983 Royal Ordinance and the 1985 EEC Council resolution on equality of opportunity in education. How had publishers reacted to Government initiatives to eliminate sex stereotyping in textbooks?

Article 11

58 Ms AKAMATSU regretted the absence, in the report, of statistical data concerning the employment and unemployment patterns of men and women. Such information would make it easier to follow the descriptive portions of the report.

59 Ms BUSTELO del REAL said that she, too, would welcome more statistical data, especially figures showing the number of women in part-time employment, how many part-time women workers were also mothers, and how many young women worked part-time. Did the Government intend to introduce legislation against sexual harassment at work and to remove the disparity in the retirement ages of men and women? According to the report (page 57) certain posts remained outside the application of EEC Directive 76/207 on equality of treatment between men and women. She would like to know what had been the outcome of the two-year experiment for bringing prison wardens within its scope.

60 Ms SCHÖPP-SCHILLING said that the report indicated that, statistically, women's remuneration remained considerably below that of men. Studies made in her own country had shown that lower pay for women was partly due to discrimination. Had any studies been made in Belgium of the factors responsible for women's lower pay, and what remedies were proposed?

61 Ms OESER noted that conservative attitudes in Belgium were still causing difficulties for women wishing to engage both in paid work and political activities. A further problem, surely, was the lack of child-care facilities. What was known of the factors preventing women from playing a full part in the labour market and in politics? According to article 216 of Belgium's Civil Code, mentioned on page 38 of the report, either spouse could apply to a court to prevent the other from exercising a profession considered injurious to family life. She asked for details of any such cases, and joined also in the request for further data on employment patterns.

62 Ms SAJOGYO asked whether there were any programmes in Belgium to ensure minimum participation by women in each sector of employment.

63 Ms LAIOU-ANTONIOU asked whether Belgium was presently bound by the ILO Convention on night work, and whether it intended to apply those rules in future. She asked how unemployment figures for women compared with those for men, and what opportunities existed for women in the armed forces.

64 The CHAIRPERSON, speaking as a member of the Committee, asked whether any gender-neutral criteria had been established for jobs where women predominated, with a view to achieving equality of remuneration.

Article 12

65 Ms BUSTELO del REAL asked for more information about the legal regulation of abortion. Were there any figures for clandestine abortions and abortions performed abroad on Belgian women?

66 Ms GUAN Mingqian asked whether women were punished if they had an abortion. Were there many unlawful abortions in Belgium, and what was the attitude of the women's movement on the question of abortion? She also wished to know whether mechanical contraceptives were available to all who wanted them in Belgium.

67 Ms SCHÖPP-SCHILLING said that it was not clear whether abortion was permitted under certain circumstances and, if it was, under which circumstances.

68 Ms CORTI noted from the report (page 69) that in Belgium the law did not provide for social security reimbursement of the cost of chemical or mechanical contraceptives. The report indicated also that abortion was forbidden. She asked what was the attitude of the Secretariat of State for Social Emancipation towards the two related questions. There was evidently a movement in favour of legalizing abortion in Belgium, how could clandestine abortions be prevented? What details were available of the practice of in vitro fertilization in Belgium? The report referred to paid maternity leave, was full pay granted during maternity leave?

69 Ms WALLA-TCHANGAI said that Belgium was to be congratulated for its efforts to improve the status of women. She referred to the risks involved in the new techniques for promoting fertility, including the possibility of sperm being contaminated. Were any steps being taken in Belgium to protect women who had contracted a serious infection from that source?

Article 14

70 Ms SCHÖPP-SCHILLING referred to the problems encountered by spouses of farmers, were any steps being taken to remedy the situation?

71 Ms LAIOU-ANTONIOU asked whether any legislation was in prospect to improve the situation of rural women who received no income for their work

Article 16

72 Ms AKAMATSU pointed out that discrimination still existed in Belgium with regard to the choice of family name. She asked what progress had been made with the proposed reforming legislation

73 Ms GUAN Mingqian asked what was the minimum age of marriage for males and for females, and whether a divorce could be sought on grounds other than infidelity. According to the report, concubinage was no longer an offence, did that mean that polygamy was now practised in Belgium? What was the attitude of the women's movement towards that modification of the Criminal Code?

74 Ms LAIOU-ANTONIOU asked if there were any plans to abolish discrimination in the naming of children. Concerning the choice of occupation, she noted that whereas according to article 216, paragraph 1, of the Belgian Civil Code, "Each of the spouses is entitled to engage in a profession without the consent of the other", the latter spouse might apply to the Court of First Instance to prohibit the exercise of a profession "calculated to cause grave harm to his moral or material interests or those of the minor children". She had doubts about that provision, given the prevailing conservative mentality. The provision was in any event unclear, and she would welcome an explanation of it

75 Ms ALFONSIN DE FASAN said that she was concerned at the persistence of the conservative mentality mentioned in the report, since it meant that women were still marginalized. She considered that the Government, women's organizations and even religious bodies in Belgium should support child-care services, possibly on a voluntary basis, as a practical step towards promoting equality

76 Ms BERNARD inquired whether adultery was a criminal offence in Belgium

77 Ms EVATT asked whether minority migrant groups had problems with the application of the marriage and family laws

78 Ms UKEJE noted that the paternity leave entitlement had been extended to 12 months and asked to what extent fathers took it up. She asked what the rights of children born out of wedlock were, given that abortion had been abolished, illegitimacy was stigmatized and concubinage permitted

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK (continued) (CEDAW/C/L 6)

79 Mr MATHIASON (Assistant Director, Division for the Advancement of Women), introducing the preliminary results of examination of the financial implications of the proposal contained in the report of Working Group I to the Committee (CEDAW/C/L 6), said that, on the basis of a pre-session meeting attended by five members and lasting three days, the additional cost would be approximately US\$12,000 for travel costs, subsistence allowance, secretariat support and conference services. As the proposals for the 1990-1991 regular budget were in the process of being finalized, it was too late to look for any money from that source. That left the secretariat with three alternatives: firstly, to find the necessary money through savings, secondly, to request the money from the contingency fund, proposals for which would be submitted to the General Assembly towards the end of its forty-fourth session, or, if another Committee activity

(Mr Mathiason)

could not be eliminated, then the proposed meeting would normally be deferred until the next budget exercise

80 Ms BERNARD pointed out that no travel expenses would be involved, as the members in question would be travelling in any case to attend the Committee session

The meeting rose at 12 20 p m