



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Summary record of the 1536th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 26 October 2017, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Leinarte

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

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

Seventh periodic report of Paraguay (CEDAW/C/PRY/7; CEDAW/C/PRY/Q/7 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Paraguay took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Ms. Baiardi** (Paraguay), introducing her country's seventh periodic report, said that the drafting of the report and the replies to the list of issues, as well as preparations for the meeting, had involved representatives of the three branches of the Government and civil society and the national system for monitoring compliance with international recommendations.
3. Her Government had recently adopted a number of laws to protect and promote women's rights, which were detailed in the report. Training and capacity-building for judicial workers were a priority of her Government. The Judicial Secretariat for Gender Issues promoted the application in courts of international treaties concerning women, and the Justice and Gender Monitoring Centre continued collecting data, disaggregated by gender, on the work of the judicial branch and published legal decisions with a gender component. The Human Rights Directorate and the Department of Gender Equity had recently been established, and a programme on the application of international human rights instruments by the Public Defence Service was being implemented. Under a programme overseen by the Ministry of Justice, justice centres were being opened around the country to bring basic services, including legal advice, to the population. Some 90 per cent of users of the centres were women and children.
4. The gathering of concrete information and data was crucial for uncovering and correcting problems and misconceptions. Recent studies had examined topics such as gender gaps, political participation and family violence, and a study was being conducted on factors contributing to violence against women, including attitudes, stereotypes and traditional practices.
5. Paraguay had one of its region's lowest rates of political participation by women, and the Ministry of Women's Affairs was working with civil society, regional networks and international organizations to draw public and political attention to the need to increase women's involvement in the public sphere. Projects to strengthen women's skills and qualifications to that end were also aimed at women and girls in indigenous communities. Progress had been made, in the past decade, in increasing women's participation in the country's foreign affairs, whether as diplomats or as members of international bodies.
6. Her Government was pursuing its efforts to eradicate violence against women. Implementation and monitoring of the National Plan to Combat Violence against Women for the period 2015-2020 were supported by an inter-institutional committee set up for that purpose. Domestic violence remained a pervasive problem; the results of a study examining the social cost of violence inflicted on women by their partners would be released shortly. Anti-violence measures in the educational sphere included the establishment of a network of educators to combat violence against girls. As for trafficking of women and girls, her Government's numerous efforts to combat the phenomenon were detailed in the report.
7. Various measures were being taken to improve women's situation in the labour market. They included efforts to open non-traditional occupations to women and help single mothers find suitable employment. Her Government's efforts to combat child labour included a recent national campaign against the practice and the Paraguay Okakuaa project to reduce the worst forms of child labour in certain parts of the country.
8. The National Plan for Sexual and Reproductive Health for the period 2014-2018 included an emphasis on safe motherhood, and particularly on new mothers and their babies. Some categories of women, such as rural women, women with disabilities and women deprived of their liberty, faced special challenges. Implementation of Act No. 5446/15 on Public Policies regarding Rural Women had begun in 2016. In addition to existing

legislation on behalf of persons with disabilities, a national action plan for the period 2015-2030 had been developed to coordinate inter-institutional action at the national and local levels. On the basis of a national plan focusing on women deprived of their liberty, approved in 2015, steps had been taken to improve their situation.

Articles 1 to 6

9. **Ms. Schulz**, said that the Committee was concerned at the slow pace at which some legislation was being adopted. The State party had accepted the recommendations made during the universal periodic reviews of 2011 and 2016 concerning the adoption of legislation in areas such as discrimination and legal parity. The Committee would like to know the timetable for adopting the legislation that was in the pipeline. Furthermore, it wished to know how the State party ensured that the adoption of legislation was accompanied by the allocation of the financial and human resources needed for its implementation.

10. She asked to what extent gender equality, as defined in national laws and regulations and in Sustainable Development Goal 5, were included in the “Paraguay 2030” national development plan. What progress had been made in implementing the recommendations made in the 2016 universal periodic review, and accepted by Paraguay, with regard to the establishment of a national human rights institution?

11. Despite the increasing violence against female human rights defenders, very few such cases seemed to be investigated. The Committee was also concerned that the State could use criminal or administrative penalties to silence dissenting voices, including those of lawyers representing human rights defenders, as in the case of Julia Cabello Alonso. If lawyers could not safely defend their clients, then the possibility of democratic dialogue in Paraguay might be under threat.

12. She would be grateful for information on the status of the bill on freedom of expression, protection of journalists, members of the press and human rights defenders. Did the bill provide for the establishment of a mechanism for their protection in line with the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, taking into account the specific situation of women?

13. Despite the various steps taken to facilitate access to justice in Paraguay, the system remained plagued by corruption and other impediments. Women had more trouble accessing justice than did men, as the system was inherently biased against them. There seemed to be little familiarity with or understanding of the Convention among women or judicial workers. She wondered how the State party intended to improve the situation.

14. **Ms. Baiardi** (Paraguay) said that certain laws were indeed being passed with great difficulty. For example, draft legislation on discrimination had been rejected in 2014 and was due to be reconsidered by various congressional committees. A bill on gender parity had been in development for years and would soon be taken up by Congress.

15. Under Act No. 5407/15 on Domestic Work, the minimum wage for domestic work had increased from 40 to 60 per cent of the minimum wage, and a bill was being prepared that would raise the figure to 100 per cent. All domestic workers had access to health care and retirement benefits, and the minimum age for such work had been raised to 18.

16. **Ms. Pucheta de Correa** (Paraguay) said that, regarding the case against the lawyer mentioned by Ms. Schulz, the Supreme Court of Justice had a responsibility to act when a complaint was made. For that reason, an investigation had been conducted and, on the advice of the Office of the Superintendent General of Justice, the lawyer had been given a warning, which did not appear on her professional record.

17. A number of mechanisms were in place to tackle corruption in the judicial system, including the Office of the Superintendent General of Justice and an office that could receive anonymous complaints. There were systems, too, to ensure that the courts launched administrative proceedings or convened impeachment panels to assess, investigate and, ultimately, dismiss corrupt judges. Moves to address nepotism in the civil service included the competitive exams, which were shortly to be introduced for all posts. Lastly, a bill to

increase the budget of the Supreme Court of Justice had been submitted. Once enacted, it would pave the way for greater independence of the judiciary by enabling it to administer its own financial resources.

18. **Mr. Martínez** (Paraguay) said that, with support from the European Union, the Ministry of Justice had piloted a project in 2014 to provide assistance to persons facing hardship. Data were gathered under the project for the purpose of developing a State policy on access to justice. The data revealed that, over the past three years, women had been the main beneficiaries of the project and had sought legal support on such issues as custody rights, food assistance and domestic violence. Information campaigns and outreach had been conducted, in particular in remote and disadvantaged areas, to ensure that women were aware of the available services under the project.

19. **Ms. García** (Paraguay) said that the “Paraguay 2030” national development plan provided a framework that integrated gender equality as a cross-cutting issue and had certain specific objectives, including reducing extreme poverty, increasing women’s political and economic empowerment and combating gender-based violence against women. The Ministry of Women’s Affairs was working directly with the Technical Planning Secretariat and the Ministry of Finance in order to establish gender-sensitive budgets. It had also conducted training on gender-sensitive budgeting and had provided technical assistance to departmental and municipal governments to help them set up and allocate appropriate funding to gender mechanisms.

20. Data collection was, admittedly, a major challenge. An analysis undertaken by the Directorate General of Statistics, Surveys and Censuses had found that there was currently little in the way of data relating specifically to Sustainable Development Goal No. 5, on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, although efforts were being increased in that regard. For example, a time-use survey had just been completed and, once analysed, would help shape policies.

21. Inter-agency round tables had been held, in particular at the departmental and municipal levels, on various gender-related topics such as gender-based violence, human trafficking and health care. Women’s associations and networks also had an influence on departmental and municipal policies and a coordinating office had been set up under the Ministry of Women’s Affairs to harmonize policies at the different levels of government. Gender units had been created in government ministries and in the judicial and legislative branches to help mainstream gender in all policy areas.

22. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** said that, although a law regulating domestic work had been adopted in 2015 with a view to improving working conditions, it had not gone far enough in ensuring that domestic workers were paid the minimum wage. She understood that there was a bill to amend the law in that regard and would be interested to know its status and how it had been received by domestic workers themselves.

23. **Ms. Baiardi** (Paraguay) said that the bill to amend the law on domestic work was currently before Congress. Over the years, domestic workers had become very active and had gained much support from civil society and from the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, which fully backed their demand to be paid the full minimum wage. Their efforts had been key to bringing about the recent proposed legislative changes.

24. **Ms. Pucheta de Correa** (Paraguay) said that her Government attached great importance to transparency of the judiciary, as demonstrated by an investigation into the accounts of a public official following a complaint by a member of the public. In that case, the Supreme Court plenary had issued a decision stating that all citizens should have the right of access to information and that a department should be set up to handle information requests. More importantly, the decision had paved the way for a law to be adopted on transparency and access to information.

25. **Ms. Morel de Acevedo** (Paraguay) said that, regarding access to justice, around 75 per cent of the services offered by the Public Defence Service in civil, labour and family matters were provided free of charge. As for criminal matters, of the 14,000 cases being dealt with by public defenders, 3,000 involved women, while several hundred women

prisoners were also being represented by public defenders. As such, it was clear that women had access to free legal assistance if they needed it.

26. **Ms. Bethel** said that she wished to commend the State party on its establishment of a number of mechanisms to enhance equality between women and men, prevent discrimination and eradicate gender-based violence. In particular, the Committee was pleased that the Women's Secretariat of the Office of the President had been elevated to the status of a ministry. That said, the Committee did have major concerns with regard to the new Ministry of Women's Affairs and its powers. She wished to know to what extent national plans for the advancement of women were being implemented in coordination with other ministries, what proportion of the national budget had been allocated to the Ministry and what action was being taken to ensure that the Ministry was represented in all areas of the country. Similarly, she wondered how the Ministry planned to address gaps in women's services and policies, strengthen institutional services for women and disseminate information on services and programmes, particularly in rural areas. She would also welcome information on the status of the Third National Plan on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women for the period 2008-2017.

27. She was alarmed that the Ministry of Education had issued resolution No. 29664, on 5 October 2017, prohibiting the use of materials on gender theory and ideology in schools, and would be interested to know what the response of the Ministry of Women's Affairs had been to that dangerous turn of events and how it intended to use its influence to overturn that decision. She wished to know how the Ministry proposed to resist the rising influence of fundamentalist religious groups, which were increasingly having a say over government policy, especially regarding sex education in schools, and were an obstacle to further progress on women's human rights and equality. In that connection, she was concerned at reports suggesting that, while three churches had participated in the consultation process for the Second National Plan on Combating Violence against Women for the period 2015-2020, civil society had hardly been involved.

28. **Ms. Verges**, turning to the issue of temporary special measures, said she was concerned that the minimum 20 per cent quota for women on electoral lists had remained unchanged for 20 years despite the fact that women's representation had failed to increase. She wondered what the impact the temporary special measures aimed at women-headed households under the Agrarian Act had had and what measures had been put in place for women with disabilities under the National Plan of Action on the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities. She asked what temporary special measures were envisaged by the State party to ensure equality in areas in which women were underrepresented. Lastly, she wished to know whether the bill on political parity would be enacted in good time for the upcoming 2018 elections.

29. **Ms. Baiardi** (Paraguay) said that the proportion of the national budget allocated to the Ministry of Women's Affairs was just 0.3 per cent, which was why it was a challenge for the Ministry to achieve all of its goals. Although there were no current plans to expand the Ministry's presence beyond the four departments in which it had an office, it was coordinating with local governments to empower them to take on some of the responsibilities of those offices. There were, however, plans to ensure that the "Women's City" (Ciudad Mujer) project, offering women access to free sexual and reproductive health services, employment assistance and protection against violence, which was due to open its first centre in the country's Central Department, was rolled out across the country. In that connection, efforts to raise awareness and improve services for rural women were conducted through the Ministry's four referral centres and through coordination with local authorities and women's networks.

30. It was true that the 20 per cent gender quota had not had the hoped-for results: women were still underrepresented in the legislature. That was why there was such momentum behind the bill on political parity. Realistically, however, it was unlikely to be in force in time for the 2018 elections; instead, it was hoped that it would have an impact on the 2020 municipal elections. In that connection, the Ministry was working in conjunction with international organizations, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), and with political parties to build the capacities of potential women

candidates and raise awareness among women voters, in particular of their elected candidates' obligations to promote gender equality.

31. **Ms. García** (Paraguay) said that, within the framework of the National Plan of Action on the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the National Commission on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities had been created not only to monitor the implementation of the Plan but also to develop indicators and objectives, taking into account the obstacles and multiple forms of discrimination that women with disabilities faced. Regarding the Agrarian Act, as a result of preferential treatment given to women-headed households, women accounted for some 37 per cent of the land titles currently being processed.

32. **Ms. Baiardi** (Paraguay) said that, during a meeting with the Minister for Education and Culture, she had expressed concern over the potential impact of resolution No. 29664. The Minister had assured her that the resolution was only a temporary measure and would not jeopardize the progress made in the area of girls' rights. She had been heartened to learn that a representative of the Ministry of Women's Affairs would sit on the committee responsible for evaluating learning materials. The Ministry was considering hiring an independent expert to assist it in safeguarding the recent advances made in the area of girls' rights against fundamentalist religious groups wishing to undermine them. The Government had organized a round-table discussion with religious leaders, civil society representatives, academics and press representatives for the purpose of garnering support for the implementation of the National Plan to Combat Violence against Women for the period 2015-2020, which had yielded positive results.

33. **Mr. Cárdenas Molinas** (Paraguay) said that the Secretariat for Social Action paid special attention to impoverished and vulnerable women and girls in its efforts to achieve the main objectives of the National Development Plan, namely the reduction and eradication of poverty and the promotion of inclusive economic growth. In Paraguay, an estimated 30 per cent of the population lived in poverty and an estimated 6 per cent in conditions of extreme poverty. The Tekoporã programme, which targeted disadvantaged population groups, was the country's most extensive social development programme. The programme currently covered more than 90 per cent of the country's indigenous population with women accounting for around 80 per cent of the programme's total beneficiaries. The Tekoporã programme was complemented by the income generation programme Tenonderã, which provided its beneficiaries with the capital and technical assistance necessary to become economically independent. The main objective of the Tekoha programme was to bring informal settlements up to standard and to guarantee its beneficiaries access to decent housing. Each of the programmes included a gender perspective.

34. **Ms. Bethel** said that, to her mind, resolution No. 29664 posed a threat to the very existence of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and its mandate and should be condemned outright and repealed. Furthermore, she failed to understand how such a resolution could constitute only a temporary measure. The fact that fundamentalist religious groups wielded significant influence over sex education in Paraguay was great cause for concern. The proportion of the national budget allocated to the Ministry of Women's Affairs was alarmingly low. The State party should devote more efforts to combating corruption, particularly tax evasion, in order to generate additional public revenue to fund social development programmes for women.

35. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** said that the insufficiency of the budgetary resources allocated to women's affairs was a recurring problem in Latin America. While the establishment of the Ministry of Women's Affairs was a positive development, without a budget that was commensurate with the importance of its mandate, it would be unable to conduct its activities effectively.

36. **Ms. Verges** said that coordinating activities to promote and protect women's rights between different government ministries and institutions was a challenge for many countries. All entities with responsibility for women's rights issues should be involved in determining the scope and content of programmes for women and had a duty to ensure that due attention was paid to women living in rural areas. She would appreciate information on any temporary special measures adopted by the State party to accelerate de facto equality between men and women in the public and private sector in the short or medium term.

37. **Ms. Schulz** said that she failed to understand the purpose of and logic behind resolution No. 29664 prohibiting the use of materials on gender theory and ideology in schools. The institution of the family was the foundation of society and should be protected, though not at the expense of gender equality and the realization of the rights of women and girls. She would be interested to know how the State party planned to pursue such objectives if teachers were prohibited from sharing evidence-based knowledge on gender with their students.

38. **Ms. Baiardi** (Paraguay) said that adoption of the resolution and its potential ramifications were indeed cause for concern, as was the dissemination of misinformation on gender at the national and regional levels, particularly on social media. While she agreed that the resolution should be repealed, the Ministry of Women's Affairs alone did not have the power to do so. In the interim, it would continue its dialogue with the Ministry of Education and Culture on that subject. Although the adoption of resolution No. 29664 could be considered a setback, the network of gender mechanisms in the executive, judicial and legislative branches continued to function. It was hoped that the Ministry of Women's Affairs, through its membership of the committee responsible for evaluating learning materials, would be able to ensure that learning materials broaching gender theory, gender equality and gender mainstreaming remained very much a part of the national curriculum.

39. **Mr. Cárdenas Molinas** (Paraguay) said that, following the adoption of Act No. 5282/14 on free access to public information and government transparency, a number of programmes run by the Secretariat for Social Action and other government ministries had been overhauled in response to complaints lodged by members of the public, resulting in significant revenue gains for the State.

40. **Mr. Thomas** (Paraguay) said that statistical data collected by the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security showed that, over the previous five years, the gender wage gap had varied between 10 and 24 per cent in favour of male employees. The Ministry was working to strengthen its inspection and monitoring services in an effort to remedy that discrepancy.

41. **Ms. Manalo** asked whether extremist bloggers who disseminated fake news were active in Paraguay and, if so, whether the State party had taken any steps to investigate and halt their activities.

42. **Ms. Baiardi** (Paraguay) said that, although she had yet to be presented with conclusive evidence of the existence of extremist bloggers who disseminated fake news, she understood there to be at least one fundamentalist religious group opposed to gender equality whose members sometimes used fake social media profiles to disseminate their views and to breed fear about the implications of greater gender equality. As yet, the Government had not taken any steps to investigate or curb their activities.

43. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** said that the Committee remained concerned at the persistence of sexist stereotypes in Paraguayan society and at the lack of progress achieved by the State party in eradicating them. It would be useful to hear more about the prevalence of sexist stereotyping in the media and about the impact of the global backlash against gender equality and the advancement of women's rights led by fundamentalist groups. She asked what measures the State party had taken to safeguard the political and practical gains made in the field of women's rights over the years, whether resolution No. 29664 would also affect other State entities producing or making use of information on gender and how the State party intended to respond to the challenges that the application of that resolution would inevitably pose. She also wished to know whether the State party had considered resurrecting the defunct Communication and Gender Observatory given the potential of such a body to influence the way women were portrayed in the media. It was also her understanding that, in Paraguay, women of African descent were often subject to multiple forms of discrimination. It would be helpful if the delegation could describe the situation of those women in the State party in view of the lack of information available.

44. **Ms. Acar** said there was a risk that the current national political discourse around women's rights could hamper the effective application of the legislative, institutional and policy measures taken by the State party to prevent and combat gender-based violence. The Committee continued to be concerned about the inadequacy of the State party's statistical

data on gender-based violence. Such data should be disaggregated by sex, form of violence, age, the victims' relationship to the perpetrator, the victims' sexual orientation and whether the victims had ever engaged in prostitution. It would also be helpful to know the outcome of any investigations launched in response to complaints of gender-based violence and of any legal proceedings instituted in that connection. She asked whether the Gender Observatory of the Supreme Court was in possession of such data and, if so, when they might be made publicly available. Likewise, it would be useful to receive a copy of the results of the survey on gender-based domestic violence conducted in 2013.

45. The Committee had received information to the effect that the underreporting of instances of gender-based violence was still a major problem in Paraguay and that there was a tendency for victims to withdraw their complaint. In her view, such a tendency pointed to lack of trust in the police and was the result of the pressures of living in a patriarchal society. She asked what measures the State party had taken to encourage victims of gender-based violence to come forward and lodge a complaint and whether gender-based violence was subject to prosecution as a matter of course regardless of whether a complaint was filed or withdrawn.

46. She had been alarmed to learn that around 20 per cent of women who had experienced sexual violence in Paraguay were under 15 years of age. Noting that forced pregnancy, including as a result of incest, was a severe form of discrimination against women, she asked what the State party was doing to raise public awareness of that fact and to support women and girls who fell pregnant as a result of sexual abuse. She would also like to hear more about the steps taken to halt the practice of unpaid domestic child labour, known as *criadazgo*. The Committee had also received reports that the unlawful killing of transsexual women and female prostitutes was a common occurrence in Paraguay and was seldom investigated. She asked how many cases involving the unlawful killing of such women had been recorded to date, how many of those cases had been investigated, what the outcome of those investigations had been and what penalties had been imposed on the perpetrators.

47. **Ms. Baiardi** (Paraguay) said that the results of the survey on gender-based domestic violence conducted in 2013 had been published in 2014 and showed that only 10 per cent of acts of psychological violence and 30 per cent of acts of physical violence were reported, confirming that the underreporting of gender-based domestic violence remained a significant challenge. Around 80 per cent of complaints were filed with the police, while only around 2 per cent with the Ministry of Women's Affairs. Although a follow-up survey had not been conducted in the intervening period, the unit of the Ministry responsible for providing victims of gender-based domestic violence with legal advice and counselling had indicated that there had been an increase in the number of complaints and requests for assistance received. If the requisite funding could be secured, a follow-up survey would be conducted in 2019.

48. Although the crime of femicide had only been specifically established six months previously, statistical data collected thus far showed that one act of femicide was being committed every eight days in 2017, compared to one act every 15 days in 2014. Furthermore, to date, 26 acts of attempted femicide had been recorded in 2017.

49. It was not only the number of incidents of violence that was increasing but also the variety of forms such violence took. In order to document the real situation, Paraguay was commissioning studies of various kinds. One such study had indicated that violence against women perpetrated by a partner or ex-partner was costing the country \$1.5 billion, or 5.1 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), a figure fully in line with that given in the Copenhagen Consensus for the percentage of global GDP lost through violence against women.

50. An earlier study had shown that violence against women in the workplace cost companies \$700 million, representing 2.1 per cent of GDP. It was as a result of that study that the "Safe Enterprise" label had been created.

51. It had taken a full 10 years for Act No. 5777/16 on comprehensive measures to protect women from all forms of violence to be passed into law. Its importance lay not so much in the punishment of the perpetrator as in the protection it provided for the women

victim and her dependents. Among other things, it stipulated that there must be one women's shelter in every department, as compared with the two shelters that currently covered the whole country. The Act also placed greater responsibility on officials to listen to and support women victims of violence and established administrative penalties for officials who failed to act appropriately on complaints. Following strenuous lobbying, a provision had been included prohibiting officials from recommending conciliation in cases of violence against women. The promoters of the Act had had to resort to asking women survivors of violence to lobby members of Congress to help them understand the magnitude of the problem.

52. **Ms. Pucheta de Correa** (Paraguay) said that, notwithstanding the work of the Judicial Secretariat for Gender Issues in compiling figures on court cases, the chief problem with data collection was that there were no objective records. The Public Prosecution Service kept its own records and there was no central database that would provide the true number of cases reported and completed, or the sentences handed down. It would be irresponsible to give the Committee such figures because they would not reflect reality. Once figures were available for the offences established under Act No. 5777/16, such as femicide, which had only been defined as an offence in December 2016, they would be transmitted to the Committee. First, however, a single central database of all cases had to be created.

53. **Mr. González Borgne** (Paraguay) said that one of the characteristics of the cycle of violence against children was that it was often precisely in the first line of protection, namely the family, that the violence took place. The concept of positive nurturing referred to in Act No. 5659/16 promoting good treatment, positive nurturing and protection of children and adolescents against physical punishment or any type of violence as a method of correction or discipline implied action to inform and teach about issues such as whether a caress or touch was well intentioned or not. The Act would provide a legal framework for breaking the cycle of violence in the family. Meanwhile, the National Commission for Prevention and Comprehensive Care for Child and Adolescent Victims of Violence in Paraguay had managed to obtain an amendment to the law raising the minimum sentence for child abuse by one year.

54. In terms of prevention, the nationwide "Real Friend" campaign had aimed at raising awareness of all types of violence against children, providing information on how to make a complaint and encouraging citizens to report all types of abuse. That campaign had led to a sharp increase in the number of calls to the telephone helpline; in 2016 there had been 22,000 calls, 30 per cent of which had related to abuse of girls. As to victim support, a highly complex area, procedures had been drawn up for specific administrative, judicial and health-related action, in order to avoid duplication of efforts and prevent revictimization.

55. Unpaid domestic child labour, or *criadazgo*, was already defined by executive decree as one of the worst forms of child labour and the Ministry of Labour was preparing a bill to make it a criminal offence. Many such cases in Paraguay had been classified as trafficking offences and a number of convictions handed down.

56. **Ms. Bethel** said that she would appreciate clarification of whether the Comprehensive Act to Combat Trafficking in Persons was fully consistent with international provisions on human trafficking. Her understanding was that, under the Act, the use of force, fraud and coercion were aggravating factors rather than elements of the crime. She would also like to know what challenges and problems the State party was facing in implementing the Act and developing the corresponding regulations. According to alternative sources, neither the National Investment Fund nor the National Information System, established to facilitate implementation, were operational; she wondered what challenges the State party faced in implementing the National Policy to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking.

57. Alternative sources also indicated that the Government's efforts to protect victims of trafficking were uneven and that the Government lacked standard formal procedures for the proactive identification of victims among vulnerable populations. She would appreciate information on the development of formal procedures for the identification of victims, the establishment of formal referral mechanisms to ensure that victims could access services,

increased access to services and shelter for victims of sex and labour trafficking through increased funding and partnerships with NGOs and the use of specialist law enforcement officers and service providers to screen potential victims engaged in crimes to ensure they were not penalized for unlawful acts committed as a result of being subjected to trafficking.

58. She would like to know what challenges were associated with increasing training for government officials and what guidelines were in place to identify and respond to trafficking cases. She also wondered what challenges the State party faced in improving data collection on human trafficking and stepping up efforts to investigate cases of forced labour and identify victims. She would also appreciate receiving some statistics on convictions and sentences handed down under the Act.

59. In light of reports of institutional violence and arbitrary action against various sex workers, and of difficulties faced by sex workers in accessing justice, she would like to know whether the State had addressed the root cause of prostitution, including poverty, in order to eliminate women's and girls' vulnerability to sexual exploitation and trafficking. What were the State party's plans for extending health and social services to women in prostitution and what measures were in place to improve economic empowerment for women who wished to leave prostitution for other forms of employment?

60. **Ms. Ibarra Maidana** (Paraguay) said that the National Information System was still in search of funds to enable it to operate. The Public Prosecution Service had recorded 77 cases of trafficking in the past year; proceedings had been taken in 39 cases and 39 persons had been convicted. There had been cases of trafficking in indigenous women, and particularly girls, in remote and border areas. In one case, two girls had disappeared and one had been found later in domestic work and the other in sexual slavery in Argentina.

61. **Ms. Ledesma** (Paraguay) said that the national police had a specialist department for dealing with trafficking in persons. Police training courses covered trafficking legislation and conventions. In addition to investigation and the bringing of perpetrators to justice — work carried out by qualified technical staff in cooperation with the Ministry of Women and the Public Prosecution Service — the main concern of the police was the custody of victims in order to ensure that they did not lose touch with their family environment and to prevent revictimization.

62. **Ms. Acar** asked whether the delegation could provide a time frame for the establishment of a single database. She enquired what mechanisms were in place to ensure that cases of gender-based violence were duly transferred by the police to the courts. She would also appreciate information on any investigations that had been carried out into the femicide of transgender women and any judgments that might have been handed down. In her view, *criadazgo* appeared to be more than a matter of trafficking and to have deeper cultural and social roots. She understood that it was now a criminal offence and she would like to know whether any cases had been recorded.

63. **Ms. Baiardi** (Paraguay) said that Act No. 5777/16 would enter into force at the end of the year, thereby making it possible to establish a unified database.

64. **Mr. Cárdenas Molinas** (Paraguay) said that the population of African descent in Paraguay accounted for 0.3 per cent of the total population. There were four main groups, of which two continued to actively promote their culture. Like all Paraguayans, the population of African descent had full access to all social programmes.

65. **Ms. Marecos** (Paraguay) said that, under the law, family violence and femicide were prosecuted as a matter of course. Under the Criminal Code, family violence was a publicly prosecutable offence, which meant that the Public Prosecution Service must proceed with an investigation even where the victim withdrew her complaint. Procedures for inter-agency coordination had been established in order to provide immediate protection for victims and to prosecute and punish offenders.

66. **Mr. Lobos Centurión** (Paraguay) said that *criadazgo* had clear social origins that related particularly to situations of extreme poverty, which was why the State had put in place social programmes aimed at children in street situations, among others. A bill was being prepared to make it a criminal offence. Some cases of *criadazgo* had been found to have characteristic features of trafficking; in 2016, 48 such cases had been reported.

67. **Ms. Pucheta de Correa** (Paraguay) said that the maximum basic penalty for trafficking was 8 years and with aggravating circumstances could rise to 20 years. Trafficking was an extremely complex offence, often involving organized crime in other countries. It was the Ministry of Women's Affairs that was required to direct the work, yet it did not have the budget even for its own functions.

68. **Ms. Baiardi** (Paraguay) said that there was, as yet, no body specifically responsible for dealing with organized crime and, until one was created, the Ministry of Women's Affairs that was the responsible agency. Any such body would have to have a budget commensurate with the challenge. In reply to the question about support for women who wished to leave prostitution, she said that there was no service in place exclusively for such women.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.