



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

Distr.: General
31 January 2003

Original: English

**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
Exceptional session

Summary record of the 579th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 13 August 2002, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Abaka

Contents

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
(*continued*)

Fourth periodic report of Barbados

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 this document* to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza.

Any corrections to the record 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 10.10 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (continued)

Fourth periodic report of Barbados
(CEDAW/C/BAR/4)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Blackman, Ms. Clarke and Ms. Russell took places at the Committee table.*

2. **The Chairperson** said that the fourth periodic report of Barbados had not complied with the Committee's guidelines, since it had failed to address the Committee's concluding comments on the second and third periodic reports. However, Barbados was to be commended for the progress it had made since the submission of its last report, especially in the field of reducing maternal mortality rates.

3. **Ms. Blackman** (Barbados) apologized for the inadequacies of her country's fourth periodic report; it had been rewritten but the amended version had not reached the Committee in time to be issued.

4. Prior to ratification of the Convention in 1980, Barbados had possessed institutional mechanisms dealing with women's issues, including a National Commission on the Status of Women, which had been superseded by the Bureau of Women's Affairs. Barbados had been a member of the International Labour Organization (ILO) since 1967 and had made significant progress in the area of legal reform following the signing of relevant ILO Conventions impacting on the status of women.

5. Barbados had consistently supported the outcomes of such major world conferences as the Fourth World Conference on Women. Five of the nine Critical Areas of Concern of the Beijing Platform for Action had been identified as priority areas by Barbados, namely those relating to institutional mechanisms, women's poverty, violence against women, women in decision-making and women's access to health care.

6. The Government had striven to promote gender equality not only through legal reform, but also through policy implementation. Several programmes had focused on vocational skills training and small-

scale income-generating projects. An analysis of the situation of Barbadian women during preparation for the Beijing Conference had pointed to the need to strengthen institutional mechanisms to promote the advancement of women. In 1999, the Bureau of Women's Affairs had been redesignated the Bureau of Gender Affairs under the newly established Ministry of Social Transformation and had been given the tasks of mainstreaming gender in all government policies and programmes, monitoring implementation, and raising awareness in the public and private sectors. A National Advisory Council on Gender Affairs had also been established to advise the Government, and focal points had been created in various departments to serve on an inter-ministerial committee.

7. Non-governmental organizations had taken a more direct interest in gender issues and were now involved in advocacy as well as training. A good consultative relationship existed with the Government.

8. In Barbados — reflecting the situation in the Caribbean region as a whole — women were generally the principal if not sole breadwinners, with some 44 per cent of households headed by women. Given the feminization of poverty in developing countries such as Barbados, any poverty eradication efforts must clearly target women.

9. The Government had introduced several programmes — administered by various agencies — to address the needs of society's most vulnerable. Access to such programmes was based on need, not sex. In addition to social services — welfare grants, assistance for the elderly and disabled and childcare services — a Poverty Eradication Fund provided support for a range of initiatives designed to boost entrepreneurial activities and create more employment for young people and women. Among those initiatives, "Relief 2000" focused on meeting the employment, training, financial and housing needs of social assistance recipients; a "welfare-to-work" programme focused on women; a Social Investment Fund provided loans to disadvantaged persons; and an Urban Enterprise Fund worked to reduce the high levels of urban unemployment.

10. Violence against women, widespread in Barbadian society, had been identified by the Government as a priority area for action. The Domestic Violence (Protection Orders) Act and the Sexual Offences Act 1992 aimed to end domestic violence,

protect victims, change attitudes and overcome police reluctance to intervene. It was recognized that violence against women must be addressed by eradicating gender inequality and providing services for both victims and offenders. It was mainly non-governmental organizations that were responsible for providing such services and conducting awareness-raising activities. The Bureau of Gender Affairs, in collaboration with civil society, had used International Women's Day to focus on issues relating to violence against women.

11. Women's rights to equal participation in decision-making and freedom of assembly were guaranteed by the Constitution. Women were active participants in the political process as supporters, campaigners and voters, but continued to be relatively absent from high-level decision-making. Their reluctance to come forward could be explained by the aggressive nature of platform campaigning, or self-imposed restrictions based on traditional perceptions of gender roles.

12. Four of 28 members of Parliament were female, all of them Cabinet Ministers. Women also accounted for six of the country's 12 senators. One woman in the judiciary served in the High Court and four of 10 magistrates were female. Although the junior level of the public service was dominated by women, representing future potential, only 31 per cent had as yet reached the higher decision-making level.

13. Health care in Barbados was viewed as a fundamental right, and women's access was not limited by cultural, social or economic barriers. The Government had moreover recognized the need to move away from the narrow focus on maternity services and to place greater emphasis on a broader definition of women's reproductive health that recognized the different health profiles of men and women. An adolescent health programme had also been launched, and family clinics offered family planning advice. The Government had also recognized the need to investigate the impact of work and stress on women's health and family life.

14. With respect to HIV/AIDS, the Government had adopted a more aggressive approach to dealing with the devastating effects of the epidemic on social and economic development. The Ministry of Health envisioned a nation where every citizen was aware of the consequences of HIV infection and was equipped to behave responsibly.

15. Heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes and hypertension continued to be the leading causes of death. The prevalence of obesity was also a major risk factor, with 30 per cent of Barbadian women obese and 58 per cent overweight. In an attempt to change the health profile of the population, the Government was focusing on health promotion in the community.

16. Legal reform in the area of women's issues had been extensive. A bill on sexual harassment was currently in preparation and the Family Law Act was being revised to include the maintenance of children. A review of the Domestic Violence Act was also planned.

17. In education, no gender barriers existed and women had equal access to free public education up to university level. Indeed, there were currently more women enrolled at university than men.

18. **Ms. Hazelle** said that, as a citizen of the Caribbean, she recognized the contribution of Barbados to the promotion of women's human rights in that region. She was concerned, however, about the apparent absence of a national plan of action in the area of women's rights and about the limited human and financial resources available. She wondered whether a plan of action existed for the five priority areas identified in the oral presentation and requested details on the number of staff and the budget available to the national machinery. She also enquired about the status of the gender-budgeting programme and asked for clarification regarding the National Advisory Council on Gender Affairs, the Inter-Ministerial Committee and the designated focal points: it was unclear whether they were already in place.

19. Turning to the issue of violence against women, she remarked on the lack of gender- and age-disaggregated data. The reporting State should indicate the age of consent and provide further details on its laws on statutory rape with particular reference to prosecution and penalties. Additional information was also requested about the shelter for battered women set up in 1999: it would be useful to know whether it was partly or fully funded by the Government. Was the Government really willing to turn over its responsibilities for eradicating violence against women to non-governmental organizations? Barbados should provide the Committee with more data about the role of such organizations. It appeared that collaboration between non-governmental organizations and the national machinery in the area of women's rights

occurred only on designated national women's days, and the delegation was urged to introduce permanent regular cooperation between the various bodies dealing with the issue.

20. Lastly, Barbados was commended on the introduction of the law on common law union. However, it would be useful to ascertain the number of cases brought to court in application of that law and how those cases were resolved. Had the new law proved useful in the settlement of post-separation property disputes?

21. **Ms. Ferrer Gómez** noted that one of the five priority areas was the eradication of poverty. The report had not contained much information on that subject, and it would be useful to have further details on the Government's poverty reduction strategy, in particular whether it had a gender perspective. Furthermore, the Committee would be grateful to know how many of the 44.4 per cent of female heads of household belonged to the most disadvantaged sections of society and whether there were specific programmes targeted at them.

22. One of the major problems in Barbados was the persistence of gender-based stereotypes. The seminars for teachers and the Parent Effectiveness Training Programme were steps in the right direction, but it was unclear whether they were still in existence and, if so, how many parents had participated in the latter. With regard to the revision of school textbooks to eliminate gender stereotypes, the reporting State should explain how such revision took place, more specifically whether it took the form of classroom discussions on the appropriateness of such stereotypes. Furthermore, it would be useful to know whether the proposal of the Bureau of Gender Affairs to run programmes to change social and cultural patterns in collaboration with the National Organization of Women during the fiscal year April 2002-March 2003 had been approved and, if so, what was the main focus of those programmes.

23. Very few Barbadian women had been elected to Parliament, which might be attributable to the perceived incompatibility of political and family commitments. Women in Barbados were reluctant to enter political life, but it was extremely important to make them aware of their own potential and to help them realize it. There was a need to raise the awareness of the general public about the contribution that women could make to the running of the country.

24. The reporting State should also indicate whether the Government was planning to amend its legislation on nationality to bring it in line with article 9 of the Convention.

25. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** said that the report and the responses to the list of issues and questions did not give a full enough picture of the situation of women in Barbados or of government policy in that field, but that the delegation's oral presentation had gone some way towards filling the gaps.

26. She wished to know whether the amendments put forward during the 1997 constitutional revision were still pending. With regard to the national machinery, the Committee would appreciate additional information on the role of the Bureau of Gender Affairs, in particular regarding its place in the government hierarchy and the powers it could exercise. Details should be provided about the human and budgetary resources allocated to the Bureau, and it would be useful to know whether it had an executive or advisory function.

27. With reference to articles 3 and 4 of the Convention, the reporting State should indicate which measures had been taken in the field of women's human rights and whether they were temporary special measures. There was inadequate information about female participation in elected bodies.

28. Changes in behavioural patterns were very important when it came to eliminating gender stereotypes. However, the responses to the list of issues and questions stated that the Bureau of Gender Affairs had not undertaken any programmes to change social and cultural patterns but had carried out work only on an ad hoc basis. The reporting State should provide reasons for the lack of sustained government action. It would also be interesting to know whether, in addition to the Parental Effectiveness Training Programme, the Ministry of Education had developed any other campaigns to address the negative attitudes towards women.

29. The Committee would be grateful for additional information on measures and policies implemented to address the problem of prostitution and trafficking in women in Barbados. The tourism industry seemed to be encouraging such activities. It was hoped that, by the time it submitted its next periodic report, Barbados would have implemented more plans and programmes

bearing witness to the Government's political will and its commitment to the Convention.

30. **Ms. Livingstone Raday** said that she would like to know whether, following the enshrinement of women's right to equality in the Constitution, any cases relating to that right or to human rights in general had been brought before the courts. With regard to gender-disaggregated data on employment, the report had implied that women and men received equal wages, and it would be interesting to know whether that information was based on a normative assumption or genuine economic data, since no other country in the world could boast *de facto* equal wages. The reporting State should clarify its unemployment data by supplying the percentage of unemployed women as compared to unemployed men and by indicating whether unemployment rates had increased more rapidly for women than for men. Furthermore, she would like to see vertical and horizontal segregation of information on women's participation in the labour market.

31. Turning to employment legislation, she enquired whether there were laws enabling women to sue if they were discriminated against in the labour market. She also asked whether sexual harassment in the workplace was prohibited and whether it was a serious problem in Barbados. It would be useful to know whether Barbadian law provided for parental leave for both mothers and fathers. Lastly, if any of the foregoing legislation was in place, the Committee would be grateful for information about the remedies it offered and about any cases brought to court.

32. **Ms. Blackman** (Barbados), responding to a question about the national machinery and the national plan of action, recalled that Barbados had set up the National Commission for the Status of Women in 1976. The Bureau of Women's Affairs had originally been created as the secretariat of the National Commission, but had soon become an independent agency responsible for monitoring the gender equality situation, keeping track of the Commission's recommendations in that field, making its own recommendations, raising awareness of women's issues, promoting research and disseminating the results and fostering regional and international cooperation.

33. On account of institutional restructuring, the mid-1990s had seen a slump in activities. Government

social services had been streamlined, the Bureau of Women's Affairs had become part of the Ministry of Social Transformation and the ensuing upheaval had meant that the national machinery in the area of gender equality had not functioned as well as it should have done. Nevertheless, in the run-up to the Beijing Platform for Action momentum had been regained, and in 2000 the Bureau of Women's Affairs had been redesignated the Bureau of Gender Affairs. It was now charged with facilitating gender mainstreaming of national development policies and programmes, advising other government agencies and non-governmental organizations on matters affecting women and men, liaising with regional and international agencies and monitoring and evaluating gender awareness in government policies and plans in all sectors. The focal points mentioned in the delegation's oral presentation had been set up, and were fully operational. In essence, they were individuals from the public sector who acted as the "eyes and ears" of the Bureau of Gender Affairs in order to ensure that gender equality policies were implemented in the workplace.

34. When it had been set up, the Bureau had had six members of staff, and its staffing structure was soon to be strengthened with the appointment of two additional programme officers. It was funded from the budget allocated to the Ministry of Social Transformation and the delegation would provide exact figures at a later date. The Bureau could also apply for additional funding for certain projects from the Poverty Eradication Fund.

35. The National Advisory Council on Gender Affairs was composed of representatives from a cross-section of civil society. It was responsible for monitoring trends in the field of women's issues and advising the Government on policy initiatives.

36. The three-day workshop on integrating gender into the national budget had taken place, but to date no specific plan had been implemented. It was hoped that the concept of gender budgeting could be introduced in the next fiscal year.

37. Obtaining gender-disaggregated data did pose a problem for Barbados, since the 2000 census had been the first to classify information in that fashion. However, the aforementioned focal points were responsible for ensuring that action in the workplace was disaggregated by gender.

38. Under the Family Law Act, unmarried partners who had lived together for five years or more had the same rights and obligations as married couples, including legal recognition of their children. The Act had been challenged in the courts, but without success.

39. Most cases of violence against women were prosecuted under the Offences against the Person Act; information on the number of women victims was not currently available but would be provided at a later date. Sexual relations with a girl under age 16 constituted statutory rape. Classes for perpetrators and victims of domestic violence would be offered as from September 2002 and the Government planned to carry out an awareness campaign through the radio and television stations.

40. The shelter for abused women, which was funded by the Government but operated by a non-governmental organization (NGO), was open to victims of incest, rape, battery and emotional or physical abuse, and to their children, for a maximum of three months. From December 2000 to June 2002, it had provided shelter to 36 women and 34 children; 53 per cent of those women had been employed. The police made 18.5 per cent of referrals to the shelter; women were also referred by the Welfare Department, the Ministry of Social Transformation, hospitals, friends, the Victim Support Service established by the Police Department, lawyers and the crisis hotline.

41. The Government had established a Poverty Eradication Fund in the amount of BDS\$ 30 million; project proposals could be submitted to the Poverty Eradication Committee, which administered the Fund. The Urban Development Commission and the Rural Development Commission, which were funded by the Poverty Alleviation Bureau, also provided grants. In the absence of gender-disaggregated statistics, it was impossible to determine what percentage of grant recipients were women.

42. There were no barriers to women's participation in political life, but most of them preferred less public activities. While the Government urged women to involve themselves in all aspects of society, there were no specific projects to encourage them to run for office. There were only four women members of the House of Assembly; however, more than that number had stood for election.

43. The language of the Constitution was inconsistent; some of its anti-discrimination provisions

included a prohibition of discrimination on grounds of sex while others did not. That discrepancy had been brought to the attention of the authorities and a constitutional amendment would be considered. In any case, chapter III, section 11, of the Constitution guaranteed the fundamental rights and freedoms of all people, whatever their race, place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed or sex. Women were not marginalized in Barbadian society; they could acquire and own property, sue and be sued in the courts and declare their own domicile. The only sustained programme to counter cultural stereotypes was being implemented in cooperation with the National Organization of Women.

44. Officially, there were no substantial activities relating to prostitution in Barbados; unofficially, it was known to exist, but there was little information on the problem and no statistics on the number of male and female prostitutes. The Sexual Offences Act provided enabling legislation that effectively curbed incidents of trafficking in women and girls; women determined to have travelled to Barbados from elsewhere in the Caribbean in order to engage in prostitution were deported and there were programmes designed to steer young people into more positive endeavours.

45. **Ms. Gabr** stressed that the national machinery must be sustainable so that it would not cease to function with the departure of its director, as had occurred in the past; more information on its activities should be included in the next report. The nation was fortunate to have such active NGOs; the Government should work more closely with them.

46. Barbados was a small nation with limited financial resources, but it was nevertheless important to ensure social and economic change and to maintain gender-disaggregated statistics. Tourism was often accompanied by radical social changes, such as a rise in the prevalence of prostitution. It was not merely a question of providing statistics on the number of men and women prostitutes; the Committee also needed to know what programmes the Government planned in order to protect women engaged in that activity. It was essential to provide educational and vocational opportunities, especially for women; she wondered why education had not been included in the Government's list of priorities.

47. **Ms. Kapalata** said that the reports were overly general and somewhat confusing; action had yet to be

taken on several important bills and there was a wide gap between the Government's aspirations and its achievements. She hoped that more sustainable mechanisms capable of surviving transitional periods would be established and that a national plan of action for implementation of the Convention would be developed.

48. **Ms. Kwaku** asked whether the Office of the Ombudsman still existed and, if so, how many cases of violations of women's rights had been brought before it.

49. **Ms. Blackman** (Barbados) said that the programmes to promote entrepreneurship were not gender-specific. Public education was free and textbooks were provided to students in need by the Welfare Department. Education had not been mentioned as one of the Government's priorities because its importance was taken for granted; its budget allocation was second only to that of the health-care sector. The combined current and capital expenditure on education during the reporting period fluctuated between BDS\$ 221.7 million (1995-1996) and BDS\$ 402.3 million (2000-2001). Under a new programme, computers were being used to enhance the learning process.

50. Almost all schools were coeducational. Women teachers outnumbered men and 77 of the 128 public and private schools were headed by women. Scholarships were available to students of both sexes; in some years, the majority had been awarded to female students. In fact, the marginalization of men in the workforce was becoming a problem; 75 per cent of new applicants to the Police Department were women. There had been a general downturn in employment since 1994; men still dominated the workforce although most professional, clerical and sales posts were held by women. More women than men had been hired in 2000, yet women represented 62 per cent of the inactive population.

51. The Office of the Ombudsman was still active but, to her knowledge, no cases of discrimination against women had been brought before it. Lastly, the national machinery did not simply coordinate the activities of other government bodies; it also initiated programmes and projects. Her delegation had focused on those implemented under the Ministry of Social Transformation, but other ministries addressed

women's issues in areas such as health care and employment.

52. **Ms. Corti**, commenting on implementation of article 7 of the Convention, said that practical achievements seemed to have been few. The oral presentation to the Committee had emphasized that women were guaranteed equal participation in political life by the country's Constitution, and that the political parties themselves did not prevent women from playing an active role. Successive reports to the Committee had indicated slow progress in the number of women members of Parliament, from only one at the time of the initial report to four at the time of the latest report. No steps appeared to have been taken to improve women's representation more rapidly. Barbadian women's high level of education contrasted sharply with their low visibility in political life. The oral presentation had mentioned that 75 per cent of applicants for the police force were women, there was one woman High Court justice, and four out of ten magistrates were women. That made the mismatch with the situation in politics all the more striking.

53. The delegation had indicated that no quotas were being used to increase the number of women involved in politics, but quotas were the very method that the Committee recommended in such cases. She asked whether any of the country's many non-governmental organizations were active in that field. The delegation had also voiced the view that women were staying out of politics because of social conditioning and self-imposed restrictions caused by aversion to the aggression often displayed by politicians. Women needed to be represented on the domestic and international political stage, however, so the temporary special measures provided for in article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention seemed to offer a good solution.

54. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** asked for an explanation of the discrepancy between the content of the fourth periodic report and the oral presentation from the delegation regarding the Bureau of Women's Affairs. Even if the Bureau remained without a director, the Government still had an obligation under international law to promote women's issues. That meant that it should allocate appropriate resources, or obtain international assistance, to compile gender-disaggregated data. Without such information, it would have no foundation on which to base decisions.

55. She asked whether the country intended to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention and to accept the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention. She wondered what the status of the Convention was in Barbadian law: whether it was directly applicable, whether it could be invoked in a court of law or whether it simply had persuasive force.

56. The recommendations of the Constitution Review Commission regarding legislative reform in areas such as nationality dated from 1996 and she wondered when they would be translated into action. She requested more information about the removal of discriminatory wording in the country's legislation if not immediately, then in the next periodic report.

57. Article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention appeared to have been misunderstood. Temporary special measures were not programmes for women, but measures to accelerate de facto equality. There was no sign in the country's periodic report of such measures being in use.

58. **Ms. Gaspard** said that there had been no response to questions regarding gender discrimination in the law governing nationality. That was important in order to comply with article 9 of the Convention, and it also had implications for the implementation of article 16 of the Convention. Access to citizenship and the ability to pass on nationality to children were essential components of human and women's rights. She wondered what action was being taken in that regard.

59. **Ms. Saiga**, also commenting on the country's nationality legislation, asked about the ability of a Barbadian mother to pass on citizenship to her children if their father was not a national of the country.

60. **Ms. Achmad**, commenting on the participation of women in political life, expressed her concern at the strong arguments against quotas mentioned in the responses to the questions of the pre-session working group. General Recommendation No. 23 of the Committee provided extensive background information on the issue, and she urged that it should be consulted.

61. **Ms. Blackman** (Barbados), apologizing for the lack of previous information on reform, said that there had been further developments in the legislative situation. The discrepancy in nationality rights between men and women had been addressed by the Constitution (Amendment) Act 2000, which had added new citizenship categories to those already existing.

The Sexual Harassment Bill had passed through Parliament, and was being drafted in final form by the Attorney-General's office, from where it would return to Parliament for adoption.

62. The Committee had correctly observed that there was opposition to quotas for representation of women in political parties. The problem was a cultural one, and progress would therefore be slow. There was no legal impediment to women standing for election to public office, nor did the political parties themselves have any policy against women candidates. However, women needed to acquire confidence that they could fill such positions, and many objected to the kind of rhetoric and personal attacks which were commonplace in political campaigning. The political will to bring about change was there, but women themselves also needed to develop the will to become involved in political life.

63. She regretted the discrepancies between the periodic report presented to the Committee and the oral presentation she had given. A redrafted report had been prepared, but had been ready too late; extra information had therefore been provided orally. The legislative environment had improved, with measures addressing almost all the Committee's recommendations for improving the status of women in legislation. For example, the Employment of Women (Maternity Leave) Act had enshrined maternity leave (but not paternity leave) rights, the Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act had repealed the ban on night work for women and enhanced facilities for them. The Income Tax (Amendment) Act had enabled married women's taxes to be assessed separately, and the Change of Name Act protected the individual's right to choose and change names, while the Domicile Reform Act enabled married women to choose their domicile freely. As her oral presentation had mentioned, a number of laws were being re-examined, including the Family Law Act and its provisions on child maintenance.

64. Official notices of ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention and of acceptance of the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention would be forwarded to the Committee in the near future. The Convention itself had been written into the country's laws.

65. **Ms. Manalo**, referring to the responses to the pre-session working group's questions regarding sexual

roles and stereotyping, asked about the comment that the Bureau for Women's Affairs had not undertaken any sustained programmes to change the social and cultural patterns that perpetuated women's inferior position. As the Bureau came under the control of the Ministry for Social Transformation, as education had been declared a high priority, and as attitudes took time to alter, she urged that integrated, well-planned action should be taken to combat gender stereotyping, using education, the media and public information to promote and protect the rights of women. She hoped that such a programme would appear in the next periodic report.

66. Her understanding of the Sexual Offences Act and its consideration of marital rape was that it made distinctions on the basis of marital status. If a man cohabiting with a woman forced her to have sexual relations with him, that act would be considered rape. However, if committed by a husband, that act would be considered rape only if a decree nisi of divorce had been issued, if a separation order or agreement existed, or if an order against the husband had been made. If her assessment was correct, the Act was a source of discrimination.

67. **The Chairperson**, speaking in her personal capacity, asked whether the marginalization of men that was evident from their underperformance in education compared to women had caused resentment and greater violence against women. While she wished to commend Barbados on its health-care record, she had noted that the prevalence of circulatory diseases and cancer was high, and wished to know whether there had been any research into smoking patterns in women. Tobacco was well known to have a catalytic effect in such diseases. She asked whether Barbados had a national tobacco control body. She requested details of comparative figures for men and women, if not immediately, then in the next periodic report.

68. **Ms. Blackman** (Barbados), referring to the questions from the Committee regarding marital rape, said that the issue was one of a number being reconsidered, because it had been realized that the relevant legislation contained potentially discriminatory language. Referring to the marginalization of men and the increase in violence against women, she said that a correlation had indeed been found. There was an issue of power involved. The umbrella organization representing men had debated the issue and had been given a place on the National Advisory Council on Gender Affairs. Men also

participated in the Welfare Department's forum on violence. Referring to the question on health studies, she said that the Barbados Cancer Society and the National Council for Substance Abuse were both active and both discussed tobacco addiction. She would provide the Committee with figures. Referring to the questions regarding gender stereotypes, she said that the Government had collaborated with the Barbados Workers' Union, the media and the country's schools and teacher-training establishments to conduct poster campaigns and hold public discussions. The impact of those campaigns would be assessed.

69. **Ms. González Martínez** said that, although the efforts of Barbadian civil society to combat violence against women must be applauded, the Government should take the lead in accordance with its obligations under the Convention. It was not merely a question of enacting legislation, but of implementing relevant measures to bring offenders to justice and to raise awareness of the issue in society.

70. **Ms. Goonesekere**, noting that changes had been successfully introduced in the Family Law, said that the Government should surely also revise the Nationality Law, which was even more discriminatory. Given that the Barbadian definition of marital rape did not cover de facto separation, the State party representative should clarify whether women had recourse to any protection orders in such a situation. She should also explain whether a plurality of procedures existed when the Maintenance Law was invoked in divorce or separation proceedings and whether women had access to legal aid.

71. **Ms. Blackman** (Barbados) said that the nationality issue had been addressed by the Amendment Act of 2000. A section of the Family Law Act dealt with the question of child maintenance, which applied also to children born out of wedlock. Although most efforts to combat violence against women were indeed articulated through non-governmental organizations, the Government had organized various awareness-raising initiatives, including training programmes for the police, hospital staff, social and childcare workers. Programmes had been introduced in prisons to re-educate sex offenders and psychiatric counselling was provided to abused women and children. The Bureau of Gender Affairs provided overall coordination.

72. **The Chairperson** thanked the State party representative for responding to the experts' questions and for engaging in constructive dialogue. The Committee had noted the State party's pledge to ratify the Optional Protocol and to approve the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1. It trusted that information relating to any unanswered questions would be included in the next report and that the State party would make a concerted effort to provide more gender disaggregated data in future. It was also to be hoped that the national machinery for implementing the Convention would be allocated adequate human and financial resources and that the Committee's concluding observations would be widely disseminated and their implementation by all stakeholders duly monitored.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.