



Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women

Distr.
GENERAL

CEDAW/C/SR.212
25 January 1993

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Twelfth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 212th MEETING

Held at the Vienna International Centre, Vienna,
on Wednesday, 20 January 1993, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. CORTI

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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)

Initial report of Iraq (CEDAW/C/5/Add.66/Rev.1)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mrs. Al-Azawi (Iraq) took a place at the Committee table.
2. Mrs. AL-AZAWI (Iraq), introducing her Government's initial report, said that the information it contained related to the period between Iraq's accession to the Convention and the end of 1989. The second periodic report would cover subsequent years. The report had been prepared in accordance with the Committee's guidelines. The political leadership in Iraq had already been committed to the principle of equality between men and women prior to accession to the Convention. Following the 1968 Revolution, comprehensive legislation guaranteeing respect for women's rights had been promulgated. The central role in promoting women's rights was played by the General Federation of Iraqi Women. It proposed laws and amendments to existing laws to protect women's rights, participated in deliberations concerning legislation affecting women and families, and studied and commented on draft legislation proposed by the competent authorities. Women could turn to the Federation for advice or guidance with regard to their legal rights, and there were counselling centres in all branches of the Federation.
3. The Federation had been instrumental in raising awareness of women's issues through the publication of a handbook which gave details of all resolutions, laws and regulations relating to women. Another handbook had been published in cooperation with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). Rural women benefited from constant awareness campaigns to promote their rights in the social, health, cultural and professional fields.
4. With regard to machinery for implementing the Convention, the Federation had proposed that a national committee be established to follow up implementation and highlight legislation which needed to be brought into line with the Convention. It would be presided over by the Chairman of the Human Rights Department of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and would include representatives of the Ministry of Justice, the Federation and the Human Rights Counselling Committee. In its attempt to encourage implementation of the Convention, the Federation had submitted a number of proposals for promulgating, abrogating or amending certain legislation. The Fourteenth General Conference of the Federation, held from 12 to 16 December 1992, had decided that its major goal for the 1993-1995 period would be to follow up the implementation of the Convention and raise awareness of it.
5. The reservations entered by Iraq in relation to certain paragraphs of the Convention were due to its desire to implement it in a precise manner and in a way that did not contradict the provisions of the Islamic shariah. The shariah guaranteed equality between men and women and had helped improve the situation of women. There were major obstacles and difficulties preventing optimum implementation of the Convention, and such problems could not be resolved overnight. Economic, social and cultural backwardness in developing countries, an unjust world economic order and prevailing traditions and

customs, compounded by society's attitude to women, were among the difficulties facing Iraq. Emancipation of women required the emancipation of society as a whole. During the period following the submission of the report, serious challenges had arisen for women in Iraq which had unfortunately affected the implementation of the Convention. The most serious challenge was the unjustified economic blockade on Iraq which had been in place since 1990. Women suffered particularly from the consequences of the blockade. Iraq had responded to all Security Council resolutions so that there was no pretext for maintaining the blockade. Iraq had made every effort to cooperate with international organizations to put an end to a situation which was threatening the people of Iraq with famine. There was a severe shortage in food and medical supplies which could escalate and lead to full-scale famine throughout the country. Between 1990 and 1992, the child mortality rate had increased, and the incidence of certain diseases affecting children had risen dramatically. The prices of basic foodstuffs had also risen. The price of powdered milk had increased by 3,000 per cent between 1990 and the end of 1992, as had prices for flour, meat and eggs. That meant great hardship for Iraqi families and gave rise to conditions under which women were unable to seek implementation of the provisions of the Convention. The difficulties were compounded by the fact that Iraq was being attacked by the United States of America, which was violating its sovereignty, preventing cultural and economic development, infringing basic human rights and hampering Iraq's efforts to improve the situation of women.

6. The CHAIRPERSON congratulated the representative of Iraq on her introductory statement. The report had emphasized the important role played by the General Federation of Iraqi Women; the Committee was very interested in the work done by women's groups and the success they had in encouraging implementation of the Convention. The reservations to which reference had been made were regrettable and it was the Committee's firm hope that they would be withdrawn. As the report showed, the shariah, like the Convention itself, guaranteed equality between men and women. However, the power of men often prevailed in spite of the shariah.

General observations

7. She invited general observations on the report.

8. Ms. ABAKA congratulated the Government of Iraq on the report and said that she appreciated the efforts Iraq had made to eliminate discrimination against women. The Constitution provided that "Citizens are equal before the law without distinction on grounds of sex, race, language, social origin or religion" (CEDAW/C/5/Add.66/Rev.1, p. 4, sect. B). However, women still faced difficulties due to discriminatory customs and practices. The political will to end such discrimination was in evidence, but it was important that the Government should respect the principle of gender equality regardless of religious practices. Iraq should be encouraged to withdraw the reservations it had entered, in particular to article 2 (f) and (g), article 9, paragraphs 1 and 2, and article 16.

9. In developing countries women faced an overwhelming workload, and the Committee would be well advised, when making its recommendations, to recognize the serious mental suffering of women in developing countries due to economic hardships. One of the major causes of such economic hardship was the existing international economic order, based on inequality and injustice.

10. Ms. FORDE welcomed both the report submitted by Iraq and the presence of the representative of Iraq, particularly in view of the tremendous difficulties Iraq was facing at the current time. The reservations entered into by Iraq related to fundamental provisions of the Convention, which was regrettable, and full consideration should be given to their withdrawal. Nevertheless, the overall picture of the situation of women in Iraq, as described in the report and in the oral presentation, was to be commended.
11. Ms. AOUIJ said that women's development in any given country was a benchmark against which it was possible to measure the degree of progress made by the country, the maturity of its leaders and its level of democracy. In Iraq, reforms had been implemented which were aimed at freeing women and allowing them to play an active role in society and to make decisions not only for themselves but also for their families. In 1980, women had been granted the right to vote and to stand for elections, which was an important step forward in a region where many women were not so fortunate. The Government of Iraq believed in equality and had acted upon that belief, as reflected by national legislation. Women in Iraq were active at all levels of society and in all sectors. They had access to the key sector influencing development - education. However, the absence of women holding important posts in the Government showed that progress still needed to be made in the political area. The General Federation of Iraqi Women had an important task ahead of it but was in the fortunate position of having already established the machinery needed to deal with problems faced by women. It was regrettable, however, that it was the only women's organization in Iraq. Women in Iraq had to cope with the challenges that arose from the state of war in which Iraq had lived for 10 years. Women and children were in the front line in terms of the effects and consequences of conflict, which was why women favoured dialogue and peace.
12. Ms. ILIC said that the interest of the Government of Iraq in improving the status of women was well known, and the vigour with which Iraqi women worked to advance their cause was admirable. The reference made to the increase in the price of powdered milk between 1990 and the end of 1992 was alarming, because the bones and teeth of young children in Iraq could be adversely affected for life.
13. Ms. AKAMATSU praised the role of the General Federation of Iraqi Women in promoting women's rights in Iraq and said that the report demonstrated the political will of the Government of Iraq to end discrimination against women. She regretted the negative effect on the status of women in Iraq of 10 years of war, which had created many widows; since it appeared that, under the Personal Statute Law, marriage to more than one wife could take place without a judge's permission if the would-be wife was a widow (see document CEDAW/C/5/Add.66/Rev.1, p. 34), polygamy had presumably become more common in the past 10 years, and less a matter for criticism. The reservations entered by the Government of Iraq to paragraphs (f) and (g) of article 2 of the Convention were fundamental since those paragraphs represented the basic obligations of States parties, and she had serious doubts about the compatibility between such reservations and the purpose of the Convention. She asked whether the Government of Iraq had entered reservations with regard to women's rights contained in other human rights conventions.
14. Ms. BRAVO NUÑEZ DE RAMSEY praised what she described as a thorough report, and said that the presence before the Committee of the representative of the General Federation of Iraqi Women demonstrated the commitment of the

Government of Iraq to improving the status of women. The difficulties experienced by Iraq in the past 10 years went some way to explaining why it appeared from the report that the Government of Iraq had given greater priority to making women revolutionary citizens than to improving their well-being and enabling them to achieve equality with men. The interests of women and children in the family had been of secondary importance in Iraq for more than 20 years, and it was high time that the situation improved. Iraqi women were reaching higher levels in society, but the results were not encouraging, and there would be little improvement until there was a change in outdated habits and thinking. The report stated that the General Federation of Iraqi Women had been established by law in 1972, and by 1988 had boasted a membership of 56.3 per cent of all adult women in Iraq. She wondered how such a high percentage was possible, and whether adult women in Iraq were obliged to join the Federation. She also asked how the Federation's officers were elected.

15. Ms. CARTWRIGHT said that the report had been carefully prepared, and was honest and direct. However, she shared the concern expressed by other members of the Committee with regard to the consequences for women and children of the long and tragic conflict in which Iraq had been involved. She could not understand why the Government of Iraq had entered reservations with regard to implementation of paragraphs (f) and (g) of article 2 of the Convention when its own Constitution guaranteed equality for women. The reservations went to the heart of the Convention, and she asked whether the Government of Iraq had any plans to withdraw them. She also asked whether the laws governing the status of women in Iraq were the same for all women, irrespective of race or religion.

16. Ms. GARCIA-PRINZ said that the reservations regarding paragraphs (f) and (g) of article 2 were in flagrant contradiction with the provisions of the Iraqi Constitution regarding women's rights. Maintaining those reservations effectively invalidated the implementation of almost all the articles of the Convention, depriving Iraqi women of the full guarantees provided in the Convention and hindering legislative changes. Any existing rules and regulations whose abolition would result from legislation implementing paragraphs (f) and (g) of article 2 were clearly discriminatory towards women. She found the attitude of the Government of Iraq in that regard incomprehensible. Restrictions placed under the shariah on where a spouse lived were in contravention of the provisions of the Convention. The situation of women in Iraq left much to be desired, and the Government of that country should help them to play a greater role in society by eliminating legislative contradictions.

17. As the General Federation of Iraqi Women was a non-governmental organization, she wondered how it had become involved in determining public policies on women. In spite of the committed involvement of Iraqi women in the revolutionary process and in social reconstruction, participation in political parties was minimal. The report stated that women's participation in the public service was proportionate to their level of education (CEDAW/C/5/Add.66/Rev.1, p. 12), but it was not clear how many of the women in university-level education went on to take up high-level roles in the administrative structure. It was clear from the report that women played a very small role in the political and administrative life of the Iraqi State, especially at the higher salary levels. Efforts needed to be made at the legislative and educational levels so that the economic and social status of women could be improved.

18. Ms. UKEJE said that the report clearly outlined the relevant statutory and constitutional principles, and complied generally with the Committee's guidelines. The Government of Iraq should withdraw the reservations entered with regard to paragraphs (f) and (g) of article 2, particularly as guarantees under the Iraqi Constitution exceeded those in the Convention.

19. Ms. LIN Shangzhen said that the Government of Iraq paid great attention to improving the status of women, and Iraq was among the most advanced countries in the region in that regard. The General Federation of Iraqi Women had been a powerful agent in enhancing the status of women. However, she had been distressed to learn of the plight of Iraqi women as a consequence of war, and especially of the harm done to the health and welfare of the nation as a whole, which would still be evident in years to come.

20. Ms. TALLAWY agreed that the situation of women in Iraq was one of the best in the Arab world, and from her first-hand experience of that country she was able to confirm that there was a genuine political will in Iraq to improve the situation regarding the status and rights of women. She did not agree with the interpretation of the shariah which lay behind the reservations entered by the Government of Iraq with regard to implementation of paragraphs (f) and (g) of article 2, which lay at the heart of the Convention. The Government of Egypt had also entered reservations concerning article 2. The reservations that had been entered presented an image that was far from representative of what was taking place either in Iraq or in Egypt in terms of the rights women enjoyed, and also gave a false impression and a false interpretation of Islam. The Government of Iraq should be encouraged to review its reservations; she herself was trying to encourage the Government of Egypt to do likewise.

Article 2

21. Ms. MÄKINEN said she was very concerned at the reservations entered by the Government of Iraq concerning essential articles of the Convention. They hindered dialogue between the Committee and the Government of Iraq. She asked whether there was any timetable for the reservations to be withdrawn. She would be grateful for a copy of the handbook which the General Federation of Iraqi Women had distributed to all its branches to help raise women's awareness of their rights.

22. Ms. GARCIA-PRINZ said that there seemed to be a clear contradiction between the Iraqi Government's reservations to article 2 and the provisions of the Iraqi Constitution. The reservation could mean that the Government could not take action to eliminate provisions which hindered equality between men and women.

23. Ms. NICOLAEVA said that the extensive information provided in the report enabled the members of the Committee to draw their own conclusions and to make proposals. The report showed that, despite the difficult conditions resulting from the military and economic blockade of the country, the Government was aware of the importance of achieving equal rights for women and was making an effort to ensure such equality. The General Federation of Iraqi Women played an important social role by encouraging women to participate actively in society.

24. It was stated, on page 9 of the report, that all Iraqi legislation guaranteed legal protection for all citizens without distinction, and that

women had the right to initiate legal proceedings in order to claim their rights. She asked whether any such cases had in fact been brought and, if so, how many, and what decision had been handed down by the courts. She shared the concern that had been expressed about the Iraqi Government's reservations to article 2, but believed that the Government of Iraq appreciated that concern.

25. Ms. UKEJE urged the Iraqi Government to re-examine the legal and practical effect of its reservations to article 2. If, as she believed, they were contrary to the country's Constitution, it should make arrangements to withdraw them.

Article 3

26. Ms. GARCIA-PRINZ asked for an explanation of the statistics in tables 1 and 2. The figure given for the percentage of female staff in 1986 and after, 68.5 per cent, seemed to be at odds with the figures given for female workers in table 18.

Article 4

27. Ms. GARCIA-PRINZ said that the information provided in regard to article 4 of the Convention seemed an expression of the Government's intentions; the actual measures taken were not described. Stress was laid throughout the report on changing mentalities rather than administering "legislative shocks". She would like to know what measures had actually been adopted to accelerate the elimination of discrimination.

Article 5

28. Ms. MÄKINEN asked whether there were any other non-governmental women's organizations in Iraq beside the General Federation of Iraqi Women and, if so, what their main aims were in regard to improving the status of women. She also asked how persons were elected to office in the General Federation of Iraqi Women.

29. Ms. BRAVO NUÑEZ DE RAMSEY said that commendable steps had been taken towards modifying social and cultural patterns of the conduct as well as towards eradicating illiteracy. At the same time, the subjection of women, under the law as it stood, was regrettable. Women owed obedience to their husbands and any disobedience had negative effects in law, thus clearly diminishing their equal status. Furthermore, there was discrimination under the law even among women. For example, in the State sector working mothers were entitled to six months' maternity leave on full pay and six months on half pay, whereas in the private sector they were entitled only to 72 days' leave on full pay (see document CEDAW/C/5/Add.66/Rev.1, pp. 21-22).

30. Ms. CARTWRIGHT asked about the incidence of violence against women in Iraq and whether any special legal and practical measures were taken to protect women who suffered from violence, whether in private or public life. She asked whether the General Federation of Iraqi Women played an active role in discouraging violence against women and helping the Government to provide protection for them.

31. Ms. GARCIA-PRINZ noted the observation on page 10 of the report that a favourable climate had developed for the modification of the traditional roles of men and women in the eyes of society, and that both men and women had come

to consider themselves partners in everything other than their respective biological functions. She asked what the views of the Iraqi Government were regarding the biological roles of women and men.

Article 6

32. Ms. BUSTELO GARCIA DEL REAL shared the concern expressed by previous speakers about the Government's reservations to the Convention, and trusted that the process of women's emancipation would lead to their rapid withdrawal. Article 6 of the Convention provided that States parties should take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women. In addition to information regarding the legislative measures adopted, it was important to know what their effect had been, whether the legislation was actively enforced, and whether prostitution had been eliminated. Prostitution was a universal phenomenon and women engaged in prostitution frequently had greater difficulty than others in exercising their rights and protecting themselves against violence. It was important for the Committee to have information on the real state of affairs in the country. She would also like a further explanation of the arrangements for rehabilitation referred to on page 11 of the report. She hoped that further details would be provided in Iraq's next report.

Article 7

33. Ms. FORDE said that, in connection with the right to vote and to be eligible for election, the report stated that each Iraqi citizen, man or woman, had the right to vote and to be eligible for election, if he or she fulfilled the conditions stipulated in the Law of 1980 on the National Assembly. She would like to know what those conditions were. She also asked for further clarification regarding the reference to the Legislative Assembly of the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan. She asked whether women in the Autonomous Region were governed by the general law of the land, or whether the Region was a special area governed by legislation enacted by its own Legislative Assembly. It was her impression that the general law of the land prevailed. Reference was also made in the report to the small percentage of women who joined political parties in Iraq. She asked whether women were generally not interested in joining such parties, or whether they were not encouraged to do so. The number of female jurists registered with the Iraqi Jurists' Association (see page 14) seemed fairly low. She asked whether women were discouraged from entering the legal profession.

34. Ms. AOUIJ noted that voting age was not specified in the report and asked what it was and whether it was the same for men and women. She also asked how many women were currently serving in the National Assembly and whether they had a real effect on the decisions adopted and the texts of the legislation enacted. She asked what legislative committees were chosen by women and whether the party in power had a women's quota of candidates. There was a reference on page 10 to "legislative shocks", with an implication that equality could not be brought about by legislation. In her view, progressive law could give the necessary impetus to the evolution of mentalities. Law was needed to provide a point of departure although, for reform to be successful, society must respond. She believed that "legislative shocks" were necessary for social progress.

35. Ms. MAKINEN said that, according to the report, 10.8 per cent of the members of the National Assembly had been women in 1988. However, very few

women had been members of the political parties in 1983. She asked whether the parties had their own women's organizations or any programmes to encourage their participation. She also asked whether, under the electoral system, votes were cast for a list of candidates prepared by the political parties, or whether there were opportunities to vote for individuals, either male or female.

36. Ms. BUSTELO GARCIA DEL REAL noted the minimal presence of women in public administration and government. Table 2 of the report gave the percentage of female staff occupying government posts by educational level, but she found it was not clear whether women were adequately represented. It was important to know whether there was equal opportunity to attain the various levels of responsibility.

37. Ms. KHAN said it was clear from the report that the General Federation of Iraqi Women played a very significant role in shaping the lives of women in Iraq, especially in securing their rights in the social, political, economic and legal fields. Developing countries had a great deal to learn from the part played by such an organization. According to the report (page 5), the Federation worked towards abolishing existing statutes, customary laws, regulations, usages or practices that discriminated against women. She wondered whether the discriminatory practices referred to included discrimination within the family, in terms of unequal inheritance or similar disadvantages, as prescribed in the shariah. She noted that various efforts had been made to prepare an alternative code of law for introduction in Muslim countries. In her own country, Bangladesh, some 40 non-governmental organizations had participated in organizing workshops and seminars in that connection, the results of which had been presented to the CEDAW secretariat. She asked whether the General Federation of Iraqi Women had ever examined existing shariah from that point of view, and whether it was aware of the modifications that had been suggested. The General Federation was, of course, a Government-sponsored organization, and experience indicated that such organizations often served as government mouthpieces rather than voicing the feelings of ordinary women. She asked whether there were other non-governmental organizations in Iraq and whether women were free to join them, or whether the General Federation was the only such organization and served basically as a mouthpiece for the Government.

38. Ms. GARCIA-PRINZ said that she too would like to know the conditions for eligibility for election referred to on page 11 of the report, and also what proportion of women electors had actually voted in the years mentioned. She asked what the process was for selecting Assembly candidates, given the minimal participation of women in the political parties. She would like to know the reason for that low participation and whether there had been any developments since 1983. Regarding table 2, the Committee needed to know the actual proportion of women in public administration and political decision-making bodies. She would like to know the possible cause of the low percentage of women in the Iraqi Bar Association and the Iraqi Jurists' Association. She also wondered why, given the enormous will to serve demonstrated by women enrolled in the Iraqi Army, only certain ranks were open to them.

39. Ms. GURDULICH DE CORREA was also concerned about the small number of women active in the political parties. She would welcome more information on women's political participation and clarification of the figures in table 2 for female staff occupying government posts.

The meeting was suspended at 12.05 p.m. and resumed at 12.25 p.m.

Article 9

40. Ms. AKAMATSU suggested that the Iraqi Government should revise the provisions of the Iraqi Nationality Act No. 43, of 1961, which were in breach of the Convention, as the Japanese Government had done in 1984 prior to ratifying the Convention, in order that it might withdraw its reservations on article 9.

41. Ms. KHAN asked whether, in the event of an Iraqi woman marrying a foreigner, the husband could acquire Iraqi nationality upon approval by the Minister of the Interior as in the case of foreign wives of Iraqi men, and whether the children of such a marriage were entitled to Iraqi nationality through the mother.

42. Ms. CARTWRIGHT endorsed the suggestion by Ms. Akamatsu that the Iraqi Government should reconsider its reservation to article 9 with a view to its withdrawal as soon as possible.

43. Ms. AQUIJ agreed with Ms. Akamatsu and Ms. Cartwright. The Tunisian Government had also entered a similar reservation on signing and acceding to the Convention but had recently introduced legislation to eliminate discrimination between men and women in matters of nationality. The concept of nationality had not existed in Islamic law until the establishment of national boundaries in the mid-nineteenth century. The law on nationality was a fundamental law but did not have to be discriminatory, and some progress had been made in a number of Muslim countries. Tunisia had made great efforts to implement article 9 of the Convention but in other countries the old law still prevailed whereby the husband was the sole head of the household and family. Having chosen to be part of the modern world, Iraq should make the effort to find a modern solution to the problem through legislation, and withdraw its reservation to article 9.

Article 10

44. Ms. FORDE, addressing the subject of secondary schools, asked what was considered to be the appropriate age for female students to quit schools, particularly in the rural areas, to marry or work within the rural family. Furthermore, bearing in mind the reasons given for women dropping out of school at various levels, she wondered whether young girls were encouraged to remain in school and whether their parents and teachers were encouraged to keep them there. The programme for the eradication of illiteracy appeared to be excellent, and she wondered what the status of the programme was at the present time.

45. Ms. QUEDRAOGO said that the impact on women's careers and lives of their dropping out of secondary school was extremely serious. Girls and women, particularly in the developing countries, found themselves at the bottom of the ladder in administrative or other careers and their advancement was seriously jeopardized in the absence of proper measures or legal provisions to correct the situation.

Article 11

46. Ms. AKAMATSU said that her impression of Iraqi legislation in respect of women workers was that it was concerned more with protecting women than with ensuring equality of opportunity. The Workmen's Pension and Social Security Law No. 39 of 1971 which granted women the right to request retirement at the age of 55, five years earlier than men, was not discriminatory unless it was compulsory, but that kind of protection sometimes resulted in discriminatory action, as had been seen in Japan.

47. With regard to child-care facilities for women workers, table 19 showed that the number of nurseries and the number of children therein had fallen between 1986 and 1988. The figures provided on the demographic situation of women in Iraq indicated that the proportion of women of the total population had declined from 49.6 per cent in 1970 to 48.6 per cent in 1988, and she wondered what explanation there might be for that situation.

48. Ms. BRAVO NUÑEZ DE RAMSEY noted that the massive entry of women into the workforce in recent years was due to the special conditions created by Iraq's eight-year war with Iran and to subsequent warfare, when women had replaced men joining the army, and had taken on work previously thought to be outside their scope and interest. The contribution of Iraqi women to the nation had clearly been extremely valuable and amply demonstrated their abilities, a matter which the Iraqi legislature should bear in mind when planning long-overdue reforms.

49. Ms. BUSTELO GARCIA DEL REAL endorsed the views expressed by Ms. Akamatsu, particularly in the light of paragraph 3 of article 11 of the Convention. On the question of Iraqi legislation, article 81 of the Labour Law No. 715 of 27 July 1987 provided that women could not be employed to perform hard work or work harmful to health. What precisely was the meaning of that provision? What kind of work was prohibited and was it really justified for health reasons? Was it not de facto discrimination, like protective legislation in other countries?

Article 12

50. Ms. FORDE noted that the Law of Public Health No. 98 of 8 August 1981 appeared to be aimed at equality of men and women in health care, but the provisions cited related only to maternity care and motherhood. Was the health of women dealt with generally elsewhere, particularly bearing in mind paragraph 1 of article 12?

51. Ms. QUEDRAOGO said that the report appeared to lack information on young girls. She wondered in particular whether there were any cases of abortion among young girls in Iraq, if so how many and what measures were taken in such matters. She also wondered whether there was any law on family planning and whether there were any integrated programmes which provided information and family planning services.

52. Ms. AYKOR asked whether, under the heading "Mother and child-care centres", the reference to their playing a preventive role for mothers and children could be interpreted as meaning that they provided family planning services and, if so, whether they had proper family planning programmes and sufficient and easily accessible contraceptive devices? She also asked for data regarding the maternal mortality rate.

53. Turkey had taken in a large number of refugee women and children from Iraq in recent years and had found them to be in urgent need of health care, which the Turkish authorities had provided. Most of those women and children eventually returned to their own country and she wondered whether they were then given the same rights to health care as men.

54. Turning to table 21, she asked whether the large numbers of women who had undergone major surgery during 1988 included any abortion cases and whether abortion was considered to be major or minor surgery. Furthermore, she wondered whether the female medical practitioners referred to in tables 20 to 23 were employed in government hospitals or in the private sector.

Article 14

55. Ms. ILIC asked what steps were being taken in Iraq to ease the situation of rural women who had to care for their families and produce food for market. She also wondered whether such women were literate and well informed about such matters as loans, whether banks discriminated against them and whether they had difficulties in repaying bank loans. What precisely was meant by the assertion that the application of "such laws and regulations" (apparently meaning Agricultural Reform Law No. 117 of 1970, Cooperatives Law No. 43 of 1979 and the regulations of the Agricultural Bank) still left something to be desired (page 29)? Could women, for example, conclude contracts with cooperatives in their own name? How many households were run by single women?

56. Ms. QUEDRAOGO asked whether less educated, rural or illiterate women could obtain bank loans, given that access to credit by women was of vital importance to their social and economic advancement.

Article 15

57. Ms. QUEDRAOGO asked for more details about the low percentage of women who exercised the right to possess agricultural land. What were the causes for such low figures? Did resistance to change play any part, and had any re-educational programme been set up?

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.