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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Sixty-first session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 36th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 6 April 2005, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. WIBISONO (Indonesia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

INCIDENT AT THE COMMISSION'S 33rd MEETING (continued)

1. Mr. LA Yifan (China), speaking on a point of order, said that the preliminary paper that the secretariat had presented to the Commission indicated clearly that the item that had been brought into the meeting room at the 33rd meeting had been a special electric shock instrument. He wished to thank the secretariat for having clarified the matter. His delegation hoped that the secretariat would compile a comprehensive investigation report as quickly as possible, to be distributed to the plenary and to the secretariat of the Committee on NGOs. The Chinese delegation would also raise the issue with the secretariat of the Committee on NGOs in New York.

INTEGRATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE:

(a) VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

(agenda item 12) (continued) (E/CN.4/2005/63 and 68, E/CN.4/2005/69-E/CN.6/2005/6, E/CN.4/2005/70-E/CN.6/2005/7, E/CN.4/2005/71 and Add.1, 72 and Corr.1 and Add.1-5 and 133; E/CN.4/2005/NGO/12, 17, 28, 49-50, 72, 88, 91, 116, 118, 125, 141, 146, 187,197, 205, 224, 228, 245, 250, 268, 273, 285, 318 and 336).

2. Ms. BAQUERIZO GUZMÁN (Ecuador) said that in recent years Ecuador had enacted laws and introduced reforms to guarantee women's rights under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and other relevant international instruments. Affirmative action was provided for under, inter alia, the Violence against Women, Children and the Family Act, the Employment Protection Act and the Act amending the Free Maternity Care Act. Acting on recommendations by the CEDAW monitoring Committee, Ecuador had established the independent National Women's Council (CONAMU) attached to the Office of the President, whose task was to coordinate gender policies.

3. To combat violence against women, the State, in addition to applying the relevant legislation, had supported awareness campaigns and established women's police stations, which had the backing of the judicial system, the national police force and NGOs.

4. To ensure equality, gender mainstreaming in decision-making in both the public and private sectors was essential. Ecuador therefore welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to promote mainstreaming throughout the United Nations system. Men should also be involved in the process, inter alia through awareness-raising. Male leaders and decision-makers should be convinced that both sexes and society as a whole stood to benefit from equality of rights and opportunities.

5. Ecuador's large foreign debt was a major obstacle to the Government's efforts to eradicate poverty and ensure full enjoyment of human rights, especially for vulnerable groups, including women. Poverty reduction strategies were designed to assist in making women

independent by providing income-generating opportunities, training, social protection, and organizational skills. As a result, the rates of participation of women in decision-making bodies had increased.

6. CONAMU was implementing the National Equality of Opportunity Plan based on the recommendations contained in the Beijing Platform for Action. The Committee on Women, Children and the Family and other committees in the National Congress coordinated their approach to social issues and consulted various civil society actors.

7. The National Human Rights Plan adopted in 1998 was based on 16 operational plans involving 540 social organizations throughout the country. The operational plan pertaining to women's rights was implemented jointly by State and civil society institutions in consultation with some 50 NGOs, committees, women's professional organizations and representatives of all branches of the Ecuadorian women's movement.

8. Mr. AYALOGU (Nigeria) said that violence against women should not be tolerated for any reason. The international community had made considerable progress in promoting women's rights over recent years, but much still remained to be done to eradicate all discrimination against women. The first step would be to eliminate physical violence against women. There were many emerging trends in violations of women's rights, such as deliberately targeting women in times of conflict and subjecting them to rape, beatings, torture and murder. Exploitation and unequal pay were violations of women's dignity. Traditional cultural practices had also left many women disadvantaged. Enslavement into prostitution was a problem across the world, and trafficking in persons was now a greater industry than trafficking in drugs. Prostitution was not only degrading, but also exposed victims to physical and psychological dangers. The international community must take swift action to ensure the incorporation of women's rights into all other rights issues. The activities of the various human rights mechanisms must be followed up by Governments and international organizations at all levels.

9. The Nigerian Government had introduced policies aimed specifically at the enhancement of the status of women and their full integration into society. They were well represented in all aspects of governance and administration and were also appointed to positions of responsibility in the Government and legislature. Women could take part in the national electoral process without discrimination and could stand for election to any office in the country. Policies had also been adopted to address issues such as girl child domestic labour and trafficking in women for prostitution. Harmful traditional cultural practices, such as female genital mutilation, had been outlawed. The Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation and the National Agency for Prohibition of Traffic in Persons had been established to combat all abuse of and trafficking in women. The recommendations of the Beijing Declaration were being implemented by the Government and civil society, and Nigeria would remain committed to the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women.

10. Ms. SALDAÑA PÉREZ (Mexico), speaking on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC), said that over 50 per cent of the world's women were being denied full enjoyment of rights that were essential for their development and well-being. The full and active involvement of women, on an equal footing with men, in the formulation of national and international policies and strategies with a gender perspective would greatly assist in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

11. Legislative reform in the countries of her region had created both opportunities and challenges for women. Experience and practical data had demonstrated that the promotion of gender equality was conducive to growth and development. Priority should be given in that regard to poverty eradication and empowerment of women in a democratic context. Discrimination had limited women's awareness of their civil and political rights as individuals with independent legal personality. The main objectives were therefore to ensure full exercise of their rights as citizens and economic empowerment.
12. Proactive policies were needed to create job opportunities and to ensure equality of remuneration and working conditions. GRULAC reaffirmed the value of unremunerated domestic work and its pledge to protect and support women working in the informal sector, and to implement policies conducive to the reconciliation of family life with paid employment. The right of women to own land and other property and to have access to credit and capital was a prerequisite for the full enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights.
13. She stressed the importance of promoting the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, especially HIV/AIDS, and to ensure access without discrimination to health-care education and services.
14. States should guarantee access to education for all women and implement educational policies designed to promote respect for human rights, especially the rights of women. They should also promote gender mainstreaming in all policies and take action to address new technological challenges, difficulties in the world economy and threats to democracy in order to prevent backsliding in global gender equality policies.
15. GRULAC reiterated its support for the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and welcomed the implementation of its Strategic Plan for 2004-2007, especially the promotion of research and enhancement of capacities in emerging areas that had a special impact on gender equality. The Group further welcomed the urgent appeal to States to include gender equality in their policy agenda.
16. GRULAC welcomed the results of the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which would serve as a frame of reference for the countries of the region.
17. GRULAC supported the work of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences and reiterated its pledge to adopt integrated measures to prevent, investigate and punish all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence, sexual abuse, incest, the sexual exploitation and trafficking of women and children, forced prostitution, female genital mutilation and violence in situations of armed conflict.
18. The Group took note of the report of the United Nations Development Fund for Women on the elimination of violence against women and of the 17 initiatives aimed at preventing gender violence during and after armed conflicts. It agreed that the Fund's grants should be used to support legislation and policies in all regions designed to address the many different kinds of violence with which women were confronted.

19. Turning to the report of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children (E/CN.4/2005/71), she said that GRULAC noted with concern that most victims were trafficked for commercial sexual and labour exploitation. The Group undertook to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur through constructive dialogue aimed at identifying appropriate mechanisms for eradicating all forms of trafficking.
20. GRULAC urged all States that had not already done so to ratify the CEDAW Convention.
21. Mr. STANIULIS (Observer for Lithuania), speaking also on behalf of the Baltic and Nordic countries: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Norway and Sweden, said that trafficking in human beings had become an integral aspect of discussions on women's rights, and was an issue of particular concern to the Baltic and Nordic countries. His delegation welcomed the appointment of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and called on all States to cooperate with her.
22. Measures to prevent trafficking, such as the empowerment of women, poverty reduction and public awareness-raising, were particularly important, and had proved useful in the Baltic States. Victims of trafficking must be recognized, since they were often treated as criminals, and provided with assistance, such as legal aid, shelter, psychological rehabilitation, and help in returning to their native countries and achieving social integration. Without due assistance, victims' cooperation with law enforcement bodies and courts could be problematic and sometimes prevented the prosecution of criminals. Legislation must be developed in order to ensure the full investigation of crimes committed against trafficking victims and the prosecution of perpetrators. The criminal networks behind trafficking in persons must be penalized, and particular attention must be paid to reducing the demand for the services of trafficked persons.
23. Trafficking issues could only be addressed through coordinated action within States and among the international community. Groups of traffickers formed networks across State borders and adapted rapidly to changing conditions. Joint action must therefore be undertaken in investigation and prosecution, and in providing assistance to victims. Several international human rights instruments were relevant to combating trafficking in persons, and States that had not done so should consider acceding to them. Domestic legislation must be brought into line with international provisions, in order to further their implementation.
24. Regional cooperation mechanisms provided additional possibilities for combating trafficking: the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) was an important forum for exchanging experience and best practices, and had been involved in the organization of an international conference in Helsinki, which had emphasized the importance of improving methods of identifying trafficking victims, and the need for social inclusion, victim protection, increased gender equality and the elimination of prejudice. The Nordic Baltic Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings had published its first report. The Task Force aimed to strengthen regional measures to combat trafficking, and to facilitate coordination between NGOs and other agencies. It had recently initiated a pilot project for the safe return and reintegration of trafficking victims. Eliminating trafficking and improving the situation of victims would be more effectively addressed with the active engagement of NGOs. The fight against trafficking

required action by all States, whether they were States of origin, transit or destination. The Baltic and Nordic countries were committed to sharing their experiences in order to assist in uniting efforts to combat trafficking in persons.

25. Ms. ARHIRE (Romania) said there was a growing consensus that women's rights and gender analysis should be considered in the planning and practice of all political initiatives. Women must be acknowledged as making a valuable contribution to their societies, since they brought an added value to decision-making processes and to the implementation of policies all over the world. Policies and decisions must not categorize women as vulnerable individuals, or identify them primarily as likely victims. Women's participation in the advancement of their societies must include the true dimension of their capacity to contribute to the decision-making process and to be equal partners with men. Systems of values did not need to be changed, but rather gender perspectives should be analysed in each social and political system, and incorporated into all policies.

26. The Romanian Government was making efforts to empower women and overcome prejudice and marginalization. Romanian women had participated in the fight against terror, and in post-conflict resolution in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, acted as peacekeepers in Africa and served as members of Parliament in Romania. They were guaranteed their civil and political rights, and were protected from discrimination. The adoption of the 2000 National Plan of Action for Equal Opportunities had provided a comprehensive framework for all government agencies to promote economic and social rights for women and to encourage women's participation in decision-making processes.

27. Those efforts notwithstanding, some Romanian women had fallen victim to abuse and ill-treatment. Romania was currently confronted with the challenges posed by human trafficking. The Law on combating and preventing trafficking in human beings had been adopted in 2001 and the national action plan, which had been adopted subsequently, ensured that law enforcement was in place, and that government institutions addressed the root causes of trafficking: poverty, inequality, discrimination and lack of access to information, and ensured the protection of victims. The international community must ensure that nothing prevented women from enjoying fully their human rights. The Commission must mobilize the relevant mechanisms to ensure that violations of women's rights were not tolerated under any circumstances.

28. Ms. TOURE (Burkina Faso) said that the existence of international legal instruments had not brought an end to violations of women's rights. Women in Burkina Faso contributed to development, despite their low income, and were very active in the agriculture and informal sectors. Sociocultural obstacles still existed, however, which were not conducive to the full promotion of their rights, in spite of the numerous legal instruments for promotion and protection that the Government had adopted. Violence against women was a day-to-day reality, which had a negative psychological, economic and social impact on women, children, families and society as a whole.

29. Her Government was committed to drafting and implementing the policies necessary for change, which would allow better protection for women and would take into account their social, economic and political roles. The Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Ministry for the Promotion of Human Rights issued policies and action plans for the promotion of women and

human rights, based on human rights education. Burkina Faso had also issued a law against female genital mutilation. Education for girls had been made a national priority, and the number of girls receiving basic education had increased considerably. Although the promotion of women's fundamental rights was an important element in development, the global development process revealed and strengthened inequalities between men and women. True development could not occur in a context of sexual inequality.

30. Mr. VASSYLENKO (Ukraine) said that problems related to improving the status of women and eliminating distinction, exclusion and restriction on grounds of sex remained an ongoing concern of the international community. Women continued to have unequal access to resources and opportunities, and continued to be victims of abuse, poverty and discrimination. Ukraine's MDG targets included achieving sexual equality in primary, secondary and higher education, increasing the proportion of economically active women and increasing the percentage of women in executive positions. The new Ukrainian Government was headed by a female Prime Minister.

31. The Government paid close attention to the economic advancement of women, as a means of promoting gender equality, and measures were being taken to improve women's awareness of their rights. Institutional mechanisms for gender equality worked in partnership with NGOs to promote gender awareness, eliminate trafficking in women, eradicate domestic and gender-based violence, encourage media promotion of gender issues, and ensure gender mainstreaming in education at all levels.

32. Although progress had been made, problems still existed in Ukraine, such as trafficking in women, discrimination against women in the labour market and underrepresentation of women in decision-making. The challenge for the Ukrainian Government was to bridge the gap between promise and performance, and to ensure the advancement of women, the protection of their rights and the establishment of genuine gender equality. The international community must recognize the correlation between poverty and gender inequality and must take measures to enhance cooperation and provide the necessary resources in order that all States could fulfil their international obligations.

33. Ms. ROMAN MALDONADO (Dominican Republic) said that the Act amending the Dominican Criminal Code adopted in 1997 guaranteed women the rights set forth in the international instruments to which her country was a party. Reforms to benefit women and children had also been introduced in the areas of health, security and land reclamation. As part of the process launched at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, the Government had designed a triangular strategy involving agencies, the State and civil society to improve women's lives and their status in society. The four major components of the national platform for action were: empowerment of women; poverty eradication; education, culture and the media; and health and violence.

34. In January 2005, a social policy based on inclusion, social justice and equity had been launched. Women with low incomes accounted for 60 per cent of the beneficiaries of the programme's primary health care, nutrition and educational initiatives on behalf of 200,000 households.

35. Three electoral laws guaranteed women's participation in public life. The first had reserved 25 per cent of congressional and municipal offices for women; the second had increased the quota to 33 per cent; and the third provided for the rotation of certain municipality candidacies between men and women.

36. The Dominican authorities recognized domestic violence as a violation of human rights and an obstacle to human development with major economic, social and psychological consequences. To address the problem, they had adopted a National Model to Prevent and Address Domestic Violence and National Health Care Norms for Women Victims of Domestic Violence, and had organized local networks to adopt an integrated approach to domestic violence.

37. Under the National Gender Equity Plan adopted in 1999, policies and actions were implemented jointly by the public and private sectors under the guidance of the Secretariat of State for Women.

38. In its Strategic Plan for 2004-2007, INSTRAW, which was based in the Dominican Republic, assigned priority to research and capacity-building relating to emerging issues with a special impact on gender equality, including a review of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action; the preparation of training materials on women and HIV/AIDS and on women, water and conflicts; and a three-year project to integrate a gender perspective into local government and to involve women in local government bodies.

39. Mr. AL-MALKI (Qatar) said that the empowerment of women and the promotion of their role in society was a priority for the Government of Qatar. Qatari women had made remarkable achievements in all spheres, supported by new legislation, the creation of institutional mechanisms for women's affairs and an increase in spending on women's health, education and culture programmes. Qatar was committed to combating trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and a government strategy had been drafted in that regard. A committee had been formed to supervise the implementation of the strategy, and to review existing legislation.

40. Her Government was keen to protect Qatari society from all forms of violence, particularly violence against women, and the Penal Code provided for punishment for all crimes against women and children. The economic and social transformation of Qatari society, the changing role of women and their increasing participation in public life exposed some women to domestic and social violence. Measures had been taken to establish institutions for the prevention of violence against women, and to provide them with economic and legal support.

41. The development of domestic legislation had included measures to eliminate provisions that discriminated against women in accordance with the principle of equality enshrined in the new Qatari Constitution. The draft personal status law had been published before its issuance, and had been the subject of public discussions and broad media coverage. The Government of Qatar sought to address the problem of violence against women through a comprehensive approach to their empowerment by providing them with good education, creating a suitable working environment and helping them to achieve economic independence. Efforts were made to spread Islamic tolerant values and refine traditional Qatari culture to preclude negative attitudes towards women.

42. Ms. AMERI (United States of America) said that the United States had made considerable efforts to empower women, and to protect women and young girls from all forms of abuse. Trafficking in persons was a particularly serious problem, and it was estimated that 75 per cent of transnational human trafficking was for sexual exploitation. The United States had passed the Trafficking Victims Protection Act to provide victims with medical care, housing and low-cost legal aid and to help form victim services organizations. Under the same law, funding was provided to foreign Governments, international organizations and NGOs to take measures to prevent and deter trafficking. Since 2001, the United States had donated approximately \$295 million to support anti-trafficking efforts in 120 countries.

43. A law had been passed to allow for the prosecution of Americans who travelled abroad to sexually exploit minors, and Operation Predator, a programme to identify, investigate and arrest child sex predators, had led to 4,300 arrests. Efforts to eradicate trafficking in persons must address the market forces that drove trafficking victims to prostitution, since there was an important link between commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking in women and girls. The United States continued to fight against HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, which often spread as a result of sexual exploitation.

44. Her Government was actively involved in funding specific projects to heighten awareness of domestic violence and other forms of violence against women. The right to full participation in political and economic activities, without discrimination, was not realized in many countries. The Government's Millennium Challenge Account had created a \$5 billion development assistance initiative, in which financial aid was granted to countries that ruled justly, invested in their people and encouraged economic freedom. The United States was active in assisting women in post-conflict situations, and was building 17 women's resource centres in Afghanistan, which would help to meet women's education and health needs, and to give them skills for work and political training. The United States-Afghan Women's Council promoted private-public partnerships between American and Afghan institutions to empower women to play an important role in rebuilding the economy.

45. The people of Iraq had recently participated in democratic elections, and two United States programmes had assisted in ensuring the significant turnout of female voters. The Iraqi Women's Democracy Initiative had supported programmes to provide women with education and training in leadership, political skills, the media and entrepreneurship.

46. In Iran, the Civil and Penal Codes discriminated against women. Over the past 20 years, Iranian women had struggled to regain lost freedoms. Women's rights were human rights, and life in all countries would improve if women were given the opportunity to contribute fully to society.

47. Mr. SINGH PURI (India) said that the Indian Constitution, adopted in 1950, had broken new ground in terms of its focus on the emancipation of women and the removal of all forms of discrimination against them. Concerted efforts and a comprehensive policy framework had led to significant advances in the socio-economic indicators for women over the past five decades, including a considerable increase in life expectancy, an increase in the mean age at marriage, a decline in the female mortality rate and an increase in the female literacy rate from 30 per cent in 1981 to over 54 per cent in 2001.

48. The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments enacted in 1993 reserved seats for women in institutions at the village and local levels, laying a solid basis for women's participation in decision-making. Empowerment programmes had been implemented to enhance women's self-confidence in the household and the community and to grant them access to resources.

49. The National Commission for Women, established in 1990, monitored constitutional and other laws relating to women and investigated complaints of violations of their rights. It had the powers of a civil court to take evidence and issue summonses.

50. The spread of liberal education and values had led to social reform and had created awareness of the need for increased participation by women in India's educational, social, economic and political life. State policy assigned high priority to care for the girl child in all areas. Under the 86th constitutional amendment, for instance, education for all children aged between 6 and 14 was free and compulsory.

51. Gender justice was promoted by, inter alia, affirmative action programmes, campaigns for equal rights to property, credit facilitation, income-generating opportunities and day-care facilities.

52. A National Policy for Empowerment of Women adopted in 2001 guided the Tenth Plan for 2002-2007. An allocation of over US\$ 3 billion had been made to the Department of Women and Child Development for implementation of the Plan.

53. The judiciary had also played a key role in the advancement of gender justice, including through public interest litigation. The Supreme Court had delivered landmark judgements on matters such as the need for equal property rights for women, particularly in cases of inheritance and sexual harassment in the workplace. In addition, civil society groups had played a key role in raising awareness of women's rights.

54. Ms. SARI SUTIKNO (Indonesia) said that the full realization of women's rights had been thwarted by globalization, poverty and migration.

55. She commended the work of the Commission on the Status of Women in reviewing progress in implementing the Beijing Platform of Action and took note of the report of the Secretary-General on integrating the human rights of women throughout the United Nations system (E/CN.4/2005/68), which could help women to combat the challenges they faced in their daily lives.

56. In Indonesia, Law No. 12 of 2003 on general elections stipulated that at least 30 per cent of candidates contesting national and regional parliamentary elections should be women. Although the results of the 2004 general election had been less than satisfactory, since women accounted for only 12 per cent of the composition of legislative bodies, the Law had increased awareness of the need for gender equality in public life. Moreover, the Government had taken action to promote equality of opportunity for women, in terms of jobs and career development, in government agencies.

57. To empower women economically, microcredit, technological upgrading and skills development schemes had been introduced. Social safety nets were designed to create income-earning opportunities for women and to broaden the range of their economic experience. The participation of women had also been strengthened in the context of the rehabilitation and reconstruction programme in the aftermath of the tsunami.

58. Law No. 23 of 2004 on the elimination of domestic violence enabled victims to report cases directly to the police for prosecution. A draft law on the elimination of trafficking in persons was currently being discussed by Parliament. Civil society organizations were closely involved in the implementation of policies in those areas, in line with the Government's policy of zero tolerance for gender-based violence and harmful practices.

59. The countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) had adopted a Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women in Jakarta on 30 June 2004.

60. Indonesia had revised its Education Law so that boys and girls had the same rights and opportunities to acquire quality education. Compulsory primary education had been introduced for all children regardless of gender; more grants and scholarships had been made available to girl students; and textbooks had been revised to make them more gender-sensitive. Many informal literacy education facilities had been established for women in the 15 to 44 age group.

61. The Government gave high priority to reducing the maternal mortality rate and providing accessible reproductive health care. Public awareness campaigns on gender and health care and on HIV/AIDS had been undertaken.

62. Mr. ENDO (Japan) said that Japan had taken concrete action for the advancement of women in accordance with international human rights instruments, viewing such action as the promotion of "human security", a pillar of the country's foreign policy. Japanese gender equality policies focused on strengthening national machinery, improving legal and administrative measures to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, and international cooperation.

63. In December 2004, Japan had amended its Law for the Prevention of Spousal Violence and the Protection of Victims to strengthen legal remedies against domestic violence. The basic policy for the protection of women against violence had been consolidated and the definition of "violence from partners" had been broadened.

64. The Initiative on Gender and Development reaffirmed Japan's commitment to integrating a gender perspective into every phase of implementation of the country's official development assistance (ODA) in order to support the efforts of developing countries to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women.

65. Japan had adopted a comprehensive Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons in December 2004. Priority was given to the prevention and eradication of trafficking and the protection of victims. Japan was preparing to ratify the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and was strengthening its legal framework, including through a revision of the Criminal Code. Counselling offices and shelter facilities

were being improved, and awareness of human trafficking was being raised through public relations activities. Internationally, close cooperation was needed among countries of origin, transit and destination. To that end, Japan had dispatched ministerial delegations to several countries to draw up action plans.

66. Mr. ZAPATA (Honduras) said that his country had acceded to a number of international instruments, including the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women and the CEDAW Convention.

67. Special mechanisms had been established to improve the institutional response to gender-based violence, including family counselling services and a Women's Section in the Public Prosecutor's Office. Measures in the field of legislation included the adoption of the Domestic Violence Act and the codification of sexual and domestic violence in criminal legislation. Codification of the crimes of sex tourism and incest were currently being debated in Parliament.

68. The National Institute for Women was entrusted with formulating, developing and promoting national women's policy and with the coordination of implementation and follow-up of that policy. Women's participation in development was also actively promoted. Gender policy had been integrated in training curricula for the national police. Also, increased emphasis had been placed on enhancing women's access to sexual and reproductive health.

69. Important measures to tackle gender-based violence included the establishment within the judiciary of a system for data collection and follow-up to cases of domestic violence and the creation of crisis centres and free telephone hotlines to assist the victims. A protocol was currently being formulated to ensure the effective implementation of the Domestic Violence Act; extensive training activities on gender issues had been undertaken at all levels of government.

70. In 2003, his Government had sent a proposal concerning an integrated approach to the prevention of gender-based violence, in particular domestic violence, to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), suggesting its incorporation in OHCHR technical assistance programmes. To date, no response to the petition had been received.

71. Mr. OULD MOHAMED LEMINE (Mauritania) said that, in his country a gender perspective was incorporated in the implementation of all sectoral policies. Several ministries had set up special gender departments. His country was a State party to the main international instruments relative to women's rights and had amended domestic legislation to ensure conformity with international norms. With the adoption of the Personal Status Code in 2001, the minimum age for marriage had been raised to 18. The 2003 Act on the Suppression of Trafficking in Persons prohibited all forms of sexual exploitation.

72. Gender-sensitization programmes had been undertaken to consolidate women's integration in all areas of public life. As a result, women's access to health, education, food and housing had been increased considerably. Women themselves played a crucial role in devising gender-sensitive programmes.

73. In cooperation with United Nations agencies and civil society organizations, the Government had launched awareness campaigns on gender-based violence and the harmful effects of certain traditional practices. Particular emphasis had been placed on rural areas and on training for judicial and medical staff.
74. The existing imbalance of power between men and women was a source of gender-based discrimination and violence. Poverty eradication strategies in Mauritania therefore contained a strong gender element, enhancing women's access to education, training and resources.
75. Mr. BIEVER (Observer for Luxembourg), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the acceding countries (Bulgaria and Romania), the candidate countries (Turkey and Croatia), the stabilization and association process countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro) and, in addition, Iceland, said that the European Union remained deeply committed to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the United Nations Assembly. Gender equality was crucial to the achievement of the MDGs. The European Union had placed the implementation of the CEDAW Convention at the heart of all activities related to the advancement of women and strongly encouraged universal ratification.
76. Achieving de facto gender equality was contingent on States' commitment to developing gender-friendly legislation and ensuring the effective implementation of those provisions. The European Union had developed a set of guiding principles for the legal recognition of gender equality and had adopted a series of indicators concerning women in the economy, women in power and decision-making and sexual harassment of women.
77. Women's full exercise of their sexual and reproductive rights was crucial to their empowerment and a key factor in combating HIV/AIDS. At the European level, the advancement of women was hampered by, inter alia, female unemployment, unequal access to the labour market, lack of access to decision-making, gender-based and domestic violence and gender stereotyping. The European Union had recently declared a common commitment to redoubling its efforts in all those areas.
78. Gender-based violence, including rape or the use of women and girls as sex slaves, was particularly pronounced in situations of armed conflict, and efforts must be made to improve effective monitoring and follow-up of such crimes. Ending impunity for acts of sexual violence, prosecution of the perpetrators and protection for the victims were also crucial. The progress made in the in-depth study of the United Nations Secretary-General on all forms of violence against women was important in that regard; he urged close cooperation between the relevant United Nations agencies, States and Special Rapporteurs to ensure the finalization of the study in 2005.
79. Acts of violence, including female genital mutilation, early or forced marriages and crimes committed in the name of honour, hampered women's full enjoyment of their rights, and it was States' responsibility to prevent such violence and ensure women's effective protection. It was essential to recognize the links between violence against women and HIV/AIDS and, in that connection, the European Union welcomed the report by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women (E/CN.4/2005/72).

80. In Europe, trafficking in persons, especially women and girls, was cause for grave concern and combating trafficking was a European policy priority. The European Union called on all States to ratify the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols and to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children. Measures to counter trafficking in persons included the dismantlement of trafficking networks and assistance to the victims. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court defined rape and other severe forms of violence against women as constituent acts of crimes against humanity and war crimes.

81. It was important to enhance women's role in peace-building, conflict prevention and resolution and post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction, and the European Union supported all initiatives aimed at integrating a gender perspective into United Nations peacekeeping efforts, including Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security.

82. Ms. MTSHALI (South Africa) said that her delegation fully supported the mandates of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women.

83. In spite of the international community's stated commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment, the implementation of those commitments continued to be hampered by women's limited access to productive resources, education and training, health and adequately remunerated employment. The cumulative effects of HIV/AIDS, women's low socio-economic status and the upsurge in sexual violence, armed conflict and trafficking had heightened women's vulnerability.

84. In South Africa, considerable progress had been made towards women's empowerment and gender equality. Women's traditional involvement in political life had informed government policies since 1994, and women currently accounted for 30 per cent of parliamentarians and 40 per cent of Cabinet members. Comprehensive poverty alleviation measures had improved women's access to basic social services, education and business opportunities. South Africa was a State party to CEDAW and gender-friendly legislation had been adopted in a number of areas. At the regional level, the Constitutive Act of the African Union provided a framework for the promotion of women's rights and their participation in the rebuilding of the African continent. All institutions and mechanisms of the African Union had committed themselves to achieving gender parity in all their activities.

85. Violence against women was complex and multifaceted. Access by women and girls to information on sexual and reproductive health, education and decision-making was often limited, and women in situations of armed conflict and women victims of trafficking were extremely vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. South Africa had therefore implemented measures to fight both violence against women and HIV/AIDS, including legislative reform and ongoing gender-sensitivity training for law enforcement officers and magistrates. The Government had set up 40 courts specialized in sexual offences and launched an expanded HIV/AIDS prevention, care, management and treatment plan, as well as awareness campaigns for young people.

86. The Government had ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and was in the process of developing legislation on human trafficking with a focus on prevention and victim support. The effective implementation

of gender equality and women's empowerment required a culture of zero tolerance for violence against women and comprehensive responses to the interlinked issues of poverty, gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS.

87. Mr. KOENIGS (Germany) said that his delegation fully endorsed the statement made by the observer for Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union. In Germany, a comprehensive legal framework provided for the effective implementation of constitutional guarantees related to women's rights. In order to meet new challenges in the area of women's rights, the development of new strategies to enhance gender equality was ongoing. In recognition of the crucial importance of the CEDAW Convention to the elimination of gender-based discrimination worldwide, his delegation called on all States to ratify and implement the Convention and its optional protocol.

88. Trafficking in women and girls seriously violated their basic human rights. In 1997, the German Federal Government had created a working group on trafficking in women to coordinate relevant government activities. Recently enacted anti-trafficking legislation provided for enhanced victim protection, as well as prosecution and more severe punishment for the crime of human trafficking. In addition, the definition of the crime of human trafficking had been expanded to strengthen existing legislation. Germany had provided considerable support to OHCHR and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in their efforts to combat trafficking at the international level and welcomed the recent appointment of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children.

89. Draft legislation on enhanced protection of women from gender-based discrimination was currently before the German Parliament. He assured the Commission of his Government's unwavering support for the worldwide promotion and protection of women's human rights.

90. Ms. RIVAS CUEVAS (Paraguay) said her delegation supported the statement made by the representative of Mexico on behalf of GRULAC. Her country had ratified a number of international instruments relating to women's rights. At the national level, the advancement of women was reflected in institutional capacity-building, the increased availability of gender-disaggregated data, gender-friendly public policy-making and women's increased participation in public life.

91. Significant progress had been made in terms of women's participation in the public sector. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education and Culture and six executive secretariats were headed by women. In 2003, a woman had been elected governor of the Department of Concepción and, for the first time, a woman had been appointed as Supreme Court judge. Women's representation in Parliament and local Government bodies was actively encouraged. A gender perspective had been incorporated at all levels of the education system. Women's increased access to education and health care and the significant reduction in adult illiteracy and infant and maternal mortality rates were among the country's major achievements in recent years.

92. On the occasion of a women's conference on HIV/AIDS in 2004, Paraguayan women leaders had made a joint commitment to combat gender-based violence; protect women's

economic and political rights; support efforts to achieve universal education for women and girls; prevent HIV/AIDS infection among women and girls; and promote access to prevention, care and treatment.

93. The Government was currently formulating a plan for the eradication of poverty and inequality, taking into account the effects of gender power imbalance. A number of public institutions would be involved in the implementation of the plan.

94. The Government had established an inter-institutional bureau to combat trafficking in persons entrusted with formulating public anti-trafficking policies and promoting citizen's participation in such efforts. Victim support and transnational cooperation were key elements of such policies. Practical measures included the harmonization of domestic legislation with international norms on trafficking; the creation of relevant national mechanisms; and the establishment of telephone hotlines and crisis centres for victims of human trafficking.

95. The Government was firmly committed to combating gender-based violence in cooperation with civil society organizations. Support and protection for victims and increased visibility of the problem of gender-based violence were crucial. The elimination of gender-based violence was a fundamental prerequisite for women's individual and social development and for their full participation in all areas of public life.

96. Ms. KHVAN (Russian Federation) said that the importance of coordinating activities on behalf of women undertaken by national authorities and international organizations could not be overemphasized. The High Commissioner for Human Rights, during her visit to the Russian Federation in February 2005, had been able to observe the country's ongoing pursuit of a strategy aimed at implementing women's rights enshrined in basic international instruments. Another example of the country's openness to discussion of all issues, including in the social and humanitarian field, was the visit by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women to the country in December 2004. She had been informed in detail of legislative and practical action taken at the federal and regional levels to combat all forms of violence against women.

97. The CEDAW Convention had entered into force for the Russian Federation on 28 October 2004. The social, administrative and budgetary reforms undertaken in that connection included the establishment of a Government Commission on the Achievement of Equality between Men and Women.

98. In September 2004, a meeting of experts on gender policy in the Russian Federation attended by representatives of the federal and regional executive and legislative branches of government, NGOs and experts had adopted a draft general strategy of the Russian Federation and a draft concept of corporate social responsibility, based on a gender perspective.

99. The complex and global nature of the struggle against trafficking was evidenced by the large number of programmes and projects adopted recently by the United Nations, OSCE and other international and regional organizations. The Russian Federation, a country of origin, transit and destination of victims, was working hard to eradicate trafficking. In April 2004 it had ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto. Prior to ratification, it had adapted the country's domestic legislation to reflect international norms on trafficking, including new articles in the Criminal Code on trafficking

in persons and slave labour and increased penalties for such crimes. A few dozen people had already been charged with exploitation and forced prostitution. The entry into force on 1 February 2005 of the Law on State protection for victims, witnesses and other participants in criminal proceedings would ensure more effective prosecution of perpetrators of trafficking crimes.

100. Mr. CHOI Hyuck (Republic of Korea) said that his delegation supported the recommendations contained in the report on integrating the human rights of women throughout the United Nations system (E/CN.4/2005/68) and welcomed the report of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children (E/CN.4/2005/71). His Government was firmly committed to combating human trafficking and had recently adopted relevant legislation with a particular focus on the protection of victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

101. The report on intersections of violence against women and HIV/AIDS (E/CN.4/2005/72) provided a useful insight into the issue. The 2005 review of the MDGs also had a strong focus on HIV/AIDS; the analysis and recommendations made by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women should be taken into account in that context.

102. His country was deeply concerned over Japan's continuing denial of its responsibility for the gross human rights violations committed by the Japanese military during the Second World War, in particular the forced prostitution of so-called "comfort women". The tremendous pain and suffering inflicted on those women required due acknowledgement. He called on the Japanese authorities to offer a sincere apology and compensation for the victims so as to lay the foundation for reconciliation and forgiveness between the two peoples.

103. Mr. KIMANI (Kenya) said that the human rights of women must form an integral part of all efforts to advance the cause of universal human rights. Sustainable development could only be achieved with women's full participation in the nation-building process.

104. Kenya was a State party to a number of regional and international instruments relating to women's rights and, in the past three years, various measures had been implemented to increase women's participation in the economic and political life of the country. Women's representation in Parliament had doubled between 1999 and 2000, and their representation in local government bodies had increased from 8 to over 13 per cent. Women had also been appointed to key decision-making positions in government. A series of measures had been taken to enhance the legislative and institutional framework for the promotion of women, such as establishment of a Gender Commission.

105. Violence against women nullified women's enjoyment of their human rights and constituted a serious obstacle to development. The Government had therefore launched an awareness campaign on gender-based violence, and special police units had been set up to receive and process women's complaints of violence or rape.

106. Since certain cultural practices, such as female circumcision and early marriage, impaired the enjoyment of women's rights, the Government had taken bold steps to curb them. Moreover, as a result of its deliberate education policy, the level of girls' school enrolment had increased significantly.

107. The new draft Constitution contained a comprehensive bill of rights with detailed provisions on the rights of women, because the authorities of her country were determined to achieve gender equality. The awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Professor Wangari Maathai, the first African woman to be honoured in that way, would serve as an inspiration to all women.

108. Mr. TEKLE (Eritrea) said that promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women were essential to the fight against poverty, illiteracy and disease and they acted as a catalyst for sustainable development. Eritrean society was committed to the full realization of women's equality, and the Government had taken the necessary legal steps to translate that commitment into action. Gender mainstreaming was only the continuation of a noble tradition in which women had participated equally in the noble struggle to defend and develop their country. The Constitution enshrined women's rights and women's central role in society.

109. Since the early days of independence, Eritrean women had been active in politics, the judiciary, the business world and civil society. Their participation in the labour force had risen by about 15 per cent. The gender gap in education had been successfully narrowed, and adult education classes had likewise had a beneficial effect. The introduction of a basic health-care programme for women had helped to lower maternal and infant mortality rates and reduce the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

110. His country had strict legal provisions forbidding violence against women and trafficking in persons. It had acceded to all the conventions and protocols on women's rights and it had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The plight of women and children in conflict situations was of particular concern to his Government on account of his own country's experiences in that respect.

111. Many countries were encountering serious obstacles in their endeavours to promote and protect the rights of women and the girl child. Ratifying conventions and writing laws was not enough; additional financial resources had to be devoted to the creation of an enabling national and international environment. Commitments must be fulfilled and social attitudes must change, because it would be unwise for any nation to deprive itself of the talents of half of its population. The empowerment of women would lead to economic development, social progress and cultural enrichment.

112. Mr. LIU Zhenhua (China) said that, over the previous 30 years, the international community had gained a deeper understanding of how to encourage women's progress and realize gender equality. Closer international cooperation, together with national governments' programmes to eliminate discrimination against women, had had a favourable impact on their lives. Sadly, in many countries, war, violence and disease were still hampering the enjoyment of women's rights and preventing women's participation in development, while globalization and the widening gap between rich and poor were aggravating female poverty. The international community therefore still had a long way to go to attain the objectives set out in the Beijing Platform for Action.

113. In order to realize women's rights, the international community should strive to safeguard world peace, strengthen cooperation and foster common development. Countries should put people first and aim to secure comprehensive, balanced and sustainable development.

To that end, developed countries must assist the developing countries with capacity-building. At the same time, the international community must step up its efforts to combat crimes such as trafficking in women and children, forced prostitution and sexual exploitation.

114. His Government had always attached great importance to women's rights and gender equality. The amended Constitution, adopted in 2004, contained a provision on respect for human rights. The legal framework for the protection of women's rights had been further improved, and a serious attempt was being made to implement the Beijing Platform for Action. In 2005, all countries should try to make greater strides towards the realization of women's rights.

115. Ms. WHELAN (Ireland) endorsed the statement made by the delegation of Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union and said that gender equality was central to the attainment of the MDGs. Her own country had seen major advances in the promotion of gender equality over the previous 10 years. They could be ascribed partly to new legislation and partly to unprecedented economic growth. In addition, government policy ensured that there were fewer constraints on women who wished to work or study.

116. At the public policy level, gender mainstreaming had been incorporated into the National Development Plan and there had been significant developments in the promotion of gender equality in decision-making, the goal being to reduce the barriers experienced by women seeking full participation in Irish society. Funding was provided for political parties which undertook to increase the number of women holding decision-making posts within their parties and to field more female electoral candidates.

117. The Plan for Women's Health set out to maximize health and social gains for women and to create a women-friendly health service. A special Gender Equality Unit had been established to help secure equality between boys and girls in education. As the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women played a vital role in ensuring that women's human rights were closely scrutinized at the international level, her Government looked forward to a dialogue with the Committee when Ireland's periodic report was considered in the summer.

118. Ms. AYVAZYAN (Armenia) said that the enhancement of the institutional framework for addressing women's issues was still a challenge for her country, because existing institutions had insufficient resources and powers for pursuing comprehensive, effective policies on the rights of women. An attempt was therefore being made to plan new institutions or upgrade the competence of existing bodies to enable them to carry out special programmes targeting women's issues, to monitor the performance of the authorities in that respect and to draft legislation. The National Plan of Action envisaged the development of social partnerships between the Government, civil society and NGOs.

119. The formulation of policy on women's issues was viewed as a cross-cutting objective of a number of government strategies, and several new laws had been introduced by way of a response to those issues. Although women were well represented in the social, educational, health, cultural and services sectors, their presence in decision-making bodies ought to be expanded. While further advances had been made in providing equal employment opportunities

during the previous year, the high level of female unemployment was still a dilemma which the Government was trying to address through vocational training and a variety of business-assistance schemes.

120. International interaction and cooperation had been valuable when a wide range of programmes had been devised and implemented, and the Beijing Platform for Action had served as a very useful reference in many respects.

121. Mr. RABGYE (Bhutan) said that all aspects of the heinous crime of trafficking in persons, especially in women and children, must be thoroughly investigated and recommendations must then be formulated as to how best to protect the human rights of victims of trafficking and prevent the trade in human beings. His Government therefore welcomed the report of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children (E/CN.4/2005/71) and that of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women (E/CN.4/2005/72).

122. Fortunately no cases of trafficking in persons had been reported in his country, where the practice was, in fact, prohibited by law. Although the number of reported cases of HIV/AIDS infection was low, the Government had initiated a very vigorous HIV/AIDS awareness campaign. While it was impossible to claim that total gender parity existed in Bhutan, there was no formal gender bias, and traditions favoured women in matters of inheritance. Unmarried pregnant women were protected by law, and the father of the child had to pay all her medical expenses and child support. Men and women could remarry and either partner could file for a divorce. If that happened, the mother would be awarded the custody of any children under 9 years of age.

123. His Government was committed to the adoption of appropriate strategies for creating gender awareness, encouraging girls to stay on at school, improving women's reproductive health and preventing sexual harassment and abuse.

124. Mr. BARROS FIGUEROA (Brazil) endorsed the statement made by the representative of Mexico on behalf of GRULAC and said that, since his Government was committed to pursuing the goals of the Beijing Platform for Action, it had created three new secretariats in order to bolster human rights mechanisms and to mainstream gender and racial perspective. Those measures attested to its commitment to championing human rights and combating the poverty linked to gender and racial inequalities.

125. The national Plan of Action centred on autonomy, equality at work and citizenship, inclusive and non-sexist education, women's health and their sexual and reproductive rights as well as measures to prevent violence against women. Some high-priority aspects of the plan were already being implemented, and his country was also striving to significantly reduce illiteracy among women by 2007.

126. His Government was most determined to tackle the serious problem of domestic and sexual violence against women and it had therefore devised a national policy with that in mind, which entailed, inter alia, the repeal of some outdated provisions of the Penal Code. It was also concerned about the increasing prevalence of trafficking in women and children. In order to stem the trade in human beings, coordinated action was necessary on the part of countries of

origin, transit and destination. His country had already conducted research on the subject and its findings had led to the establishment of a national programme aimed at improving women's and girls' access to education, health and the labour market and at dealing with the criminal aspects of the problem.

127. Ms. OZCERI (Observer for Turkey) endorsed the statement made by the Luxembourg delegation on behalf of the European Union and said that her country had been committed to the emancipation of women and to gender equality since early in the twentieth century. The substantial progress made in that direction had been reinforced by recent legislative reforms. Constitutional amendments made the State responsible for securing equal rights and opportunities for women in every field and gave international conventions on basic rights and freedoms precedence over domestic law. The Civil Code and the Penal Code had been radically modified to offer women greater protection. Laws had been introduced which defined sexual offences as crimes against the individual rather than affronts to public decency. Marital rape and sexual harassment at work had been qualified as crimes.

128. The new Penal Code provided for heavy sentences against perpetrators of honour killings and, even before it had entered into force, some local courts had started to impose those sentences. Her country had also given strong backing to international efforts to eliminate honour killings. Furthermore, her Government cooperated with international mechanisms to combat human trafficking and had made it a criminal offence liable to severe punishment. A centre for the victims of trafficking had been opened in Istanbul.

Statements in exercise of the right of reply

129. Mr. SOBASHIMA (Japan), responding to the statement made by the representative of the Republic of Korea, said that, in 1995, the then Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama had expressed his feelings of deep remorse and had offered a heartfelt apology for the tremendous damage and suffering caused to the people of many countries by Japan as it had advanced along the road to war. The Government of Japan recognized that the issue of the "wartime comfort women" was a grave affront to the honour and dignity of a large number of women and it had expressed its sincere apologies and remorse. The position of the Japanese Government remained unchanged on that subject.

130. The Government of Japan had fulfilled its obligations under international agreements and arrangements concerning the issues of property and claims arising out of the Second World War, including those related to "wartime comfort women". These issues had been legally settled between Japan and the country concerned. Nevertheless, in recognition of its moral responsibility for those issues, even though they had been legally settled, the Government of Japan had cooperated to the fullest possible extent with the Asian Women's Fund.

131. The authorization of Japanese history books rested on the principle of the publication of a diverse range of textbooks employing the creativity and originality of private sector authors and editors, without the Government defining specific historical perspectives or attitudes. The historical perspectives and attitudes found in textbooks should not be identified with the Japanese Government. The criterion applied was whether the book in question was appropriate and in conformity with the regulations on the authorization of textbooks. In that context, it was considered essential that flaws, such as obvious mistakes or a lack of balance, should be

eliminated and corrected in the light of objective academic research and appropriate reference material. Recent textbooks were authorized on the basis of those regulations. In that connection, Japan's acknowledgement of its history was reflected in the Prime Minister's statement of 1995 to which he had referred earlier in his statement.

132. Ms. VADIATI (Observer for the Islamic Republic of Iran) rejected both the essence and the content of the statement made by the representative of the United States regarding the situation of women in the Islamic Republic of Iran and said that those who lived in glasshouses should not throw stones. The political, legal, economic, social and cultural rights of Iranian women had improved remarkably since the Islamic revolution. The realities in the country confuted the statement made by the United States representative.

133. Mr. CHOI Hyuck (Republic of Korea), responding to the statement made by the representative of Japan, said it was disappointing that the Japanese Government clung to the argument that the issue of "comfort women" had been legally settled and that it approved textbooks which omitted or distorted historical facts about the Second World War. In that context, he drew attention to the report of Ms. Coomaraswamy, former Special Rapporteur on violence against women (E/CN.4/1996/53/Add.1), and that of Ms. McDougall, former Special Rapporteur on systematic rape, sexual slavery and slavery during armed conflict (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1998/13). According to those reports, neither the San Francisco Peace Treaty, nor the bilateral treaties were concerned with human rights violations in general or the military use of sexual slavery in particular. In fact, both Special Rapporteurs had recommended that the Japanese Government should accept legal responsibility, pay compensation and punish the perpetrators of such crimes.

134. Given that most of the surviving victims were of an advanced age, as a token of its respect for human dignity, the Japanese Government ought to take action extending beyond the mere statement of moral responsibility. It needed to make amends for its past deeds by implementing the Special Rapporteurs' recommendations with urgency and sincerity during the women's lifetime.

135. The Japanese delegation's argument with regard to history textbooks was a source of grave concern in view of the fact that the Japanese Government provided guidelines, reviewed the content of textbooks and decided if they were fit for publication. He therefore urged Japan to make an effort to rectify the situation.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.