



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

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

Pre-session working group

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**Responses to the list of issues and questions with regard to the
consideration of the sixth periodic report**

Argentina*

* The present report is being issued without formal editing.

General considerations

This document, submitted in response to the list of issues and questions transmitted by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, may also be regarded as an amplification of Argentina's sixth periodic report, for the period 2004-2007, for an effort has been made to include in this document the latest progress made by Argentina in gender matters since 2007.

It is pointed out, however, that the information in this document will be amplified when the Government of Argentina presents the sixth periodic report in the Committee in July 2010.

The Government would accordingly like to put forward some general considerations, while emphasizing its commitment to complying with the recommendations received from the Committee with respect to the international obligations undertaken by Argentina. It is in this spirit that the Government is seeking to ensure that these replies are supplemented by additional information from other official bodies operating in various agencies and at different levels. The delay in obtaining this information is due in most cases to the fact that these bodies are working with instruments adopted only recently. It must be stressed that, although the aim is to secure the comprehensive implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in all its aspects, in recent years Argentina has been concentrating on the following matters, which the Government regards as priorities:

(a) Violence against women in all its forms: one priority, and a step in the right direction, was the adoption of Law 26.485 - the Comprehensive Law on the Prevention, Punishment and Elimination of Violence against Women in their Interpersonal Relations [referred to hereinafter as "the Violence against Women Act"], for it implies a profound change in the approach to violence against women and requires the broad coordination of all the parties involved and the creation of new spaces, tools, indicators and resources for its implementation and operation throughout the country. This has been no easy task, as the National Women's Council is the lead agency for the implementation of the Law (points 5 and 6 of the list of issues and questions);

(b) The impact of the crisis on women: the international financial crisis has confronted the Government with the challenge of maintaining the increasing degree of inclusion with equity and economic development which has been sustained since 2003. It has implemented a series of policies to tackle this challenge, with encouraging direct or indirect outcomes for women, but it has not yet been possible to measure the impact in detail (points 3 and 4);

(c) The incorporation of gender perspectives in all social and economic policies, programmes and projects which have traditionally not been accessible to this integrated approach, and the promotion of legislation to facilitate the attainment, extension and guarantee of women's rights (points 3, 6, 8, 11 and 17);

(d) The continuing efforts to raise awareness, provide training and increase impacts with regard to gender issues and equality of opportunities throughout the country in the spheres of communication and the media by means of campaigns and activities involving providers, officials and society as a whole, in order to eradicate gender stereotypes and discrimination (points 4 and 6).

List of issues and questions with regard to the consideration of Argentina's periodic reports

The pre-session working group examined the sixth periodic report of Argentina (CEDAW/C/ARG/6).

General

1. Please provide detailed information on the process of preparing the sixth periodic report. The information should indicate which Government departments and institutions were involved and the nature and extent of their participation, whether consultations were held with non-governmental organizations and whether the report was adopted by the Government and submitted to the Parliament.

2. The report contains very limited statistical data disaggregated by sex on the situation of women in areas covered by the Convention. Please provide information on the status of data collection and analysis in the country in general, and indicate to what extent such data collection takes place on a sex-disaggregated basis. Please describe how the Government intends to improve the collection of sex-disaggregated data pertaining to the areas of the Convention.

Argentina's sixth periodic report on the application of the Convention which was submitted to the Committee covers the period January 2004 to December 2007; it gives an extensive account of the efforts made, the policies introduced, and principal advances achieved by the Government during that period and explains the difficulties encountered since the crisis of 2001-2002 and the results obtained in the light of those events. Clearly, Argentina is now in a position to reply to the questions by providing new and important information and describing concrete results, although it must be acknowledged that there are some areas which will require further work if better results are to be achieved.

Work is continuing, for example, on the issue of statistics, in the form of concrete initiatives and policies designed to deliver not only sex-disaggregated data, as the pre-session working group suggests in its comments, but also a comprehensive system of gender indicators to provide the necessary inputs for the formulation of more precise and effective public policies. In order to attain this goal, a number of mechanisms have been established in the area of sexual violence, where the priority is to obtain sex statistics and indicators, such as the Observatory on Violence provided for in Law 26.485 (the Violence against Women Act), which was adopted in April 2009 and for which the National Women's Council is the lead agency. The establishment of this Observatory by the Council is in its early stages. (See point 5: National machinery for the advancement of women; UNDP two-year programme ARG/09/16.) It should also be pointed out that the available statistics have been produced by a number of bodies, such as the National Statistics and Census Institute (INDEC), the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Development, and the National Social Policies Coordination Council (CNCPS), using the SIEMPRO and SINTYS systems and the country report on the Millennium Development Goals. There is also the statistics system of the Supreme Court of Justice, which is operated by its Domestic Violence Office and Women's Office (Supreme Court Order No. 13/2009).

As indicated in the accompanying letter, this report addresses certain matters and concerns, as requested by the working group which examined the sixth periodic

report (CEDAW/C/ARG/6), but further information and details will also be provided when the sixth report is presented in the Committee in July.

In the preparation of the sixth periodic report the National Women's Council received extensive contributions from various agencies of the National Government, which provided information directly or indirectly through their membership of the Council's Executive Board. Contributions were also made by the Federal Women's Council, the body representing the provinces in the national machinery for the advancement of women.

The following bodies, agencies and institutions were consulted:

The Executive

- (a) National machinery for the advancement of women:

The National Women's Council (CNM);

The National Social Policies Coordination Council (Office of the President of the Nation);

- (b) International representation of women:

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Religion;

- (c) National Institute against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism (INADI); Ministry of Justice and Human Rights (Decree No. 1086/2005: "Towards a national plan to combat discrimination");

- (d) Observatory on Discrimination; Federal Radio and Television Committee (formerly COMFER); Secretariat for the Media; the National Women's Council; and INADI;

- (e) Gender Policies Council and Gender Observatory; Ministry of Defence;

- (f) Tripartite Commission on Equal Treatment and Opportunities for Men and Women in the Workplace (CTIO); Coordination Office for Gender Equity and Equality of Opportunities of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security;

- (g) Gender offices, programmes or representatives in most of the ministries and secretariats of State;

- (h) Women's offices in all of the country's provinces, working through the National Women's Council.

The Legislature

Women's Bench: Senate of the National Congress and various committees of the Chamber of Deputies of the National Congress.

The Judiciary

Supreme Court of Justice: Domestic Violence Office and Women's Office.

Constitutional, legislative and institutional framework

3. *The report refers to various measures and laws that have been adopted at the federal and local levels in recent years to advance or improve the situation of women. Please provide detailed information on the efforts carried out by the*

Government to achieve the effective implementation of those laws and measures in the whole country, both at the federal and local levels, during the period under review.

4. *The Committee, in its previous concluding comments (see A/59/38, part two, paras. 372-373), recommended that the State party incorporate gender perspectives in all its social and economic policies, programmes and projects so as to ensure that they support the goal of gender equality. It also invited the State to periodically assess such measures and their impact on women. Please provide information on any efforts carried out by the Government to assess the impact on women of its social and economic policies, programmes and projects.*

Since the international financial crisis which broke out in 2008-2009 the Government has been pursuing an active policy to temper such harmful effects of the crisis as might affect the country's economy, for although the most developed countries suffered most harm from the crisis its repercussions were felt throughout the world. This crisis was unprecedented in recent world history, as was acknowledged by all the international agencies, in particular by the International Labour Organization (ILO), which produced figures on the high unemployment rates and calculated that 53 million jobs had been lost world-wide (ILO, *Global Employment Trends 2009: Latin America and the Caribbean*).

The strategy adopted by the Government tackled the global situation by means of high-impact policies, including State intervention to maintain the production, consumption and export processes, which gave priority to social inclusion with production growth. The central focus of the measures carried out departed from the traditional recipes of economic adjustment and cooling of the economy in order to avoid job losses by stimulating consumption and sustaining production. The aim of the public policies carried out was to achieve greater equity in income distribution, giving due consideration to the most vulnerable population groups.

Through its most important policies, programmes and projects the Government has been seeking to continue to consolidate its general human rights policy by promoting a model of social inclusion, equity and equality of opportunities, but it has also been trying to introduce gender perspectives in order to enhance women's status and position in various areas in accordance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

One of the Committee's recommendations was that gender perspectives should be incorporated in social and economic policies, programmes and projects so as to ensure that they support the goal of gender equality. Analysis of the array of policies adopted in these areas of interest shows that they have had different impacts, in some cases innovative with important outcomes, in others embryonic with the development of promising ways of incorporating gender perspectives. This report now describes firstly a set of policies, programmes and laws affecting the economy, incomes and employment in terms of equality of opportunities which have had varying direct and indirect impacts on women, and then Argentina's experience of implementing gender policies in non-traditional areas such as national defence and the communication media.

A. Public policies, programmes, measures, legislation and projects which helped to neutralize the effects of the global crisis and which have a direct or indirect

impact on women in various areas (the economy, incomes, equality of opportunities, employment, and social security)

B. Gender policies in the area of national defence

A. The economy and incomes policy

Social economy

The National Plan for Local Development and the Social Economy “*Manos a la Obra*” (Let’s get to work!) initiated in 2003 a programme which began by supporting social and production projects and went on gradually to create alternative solutions to meet the need to strengthen the economic conditions for authentic and fair social inclusion.

One move was to abandon the concept of the production project treated in isolation and out of context. On the basis of the identification of local production profiles the economic initiatives were integrated with each other, tools were devised to support production, and various strategies were formulated to solve the problems of scale, thus reducing the projects’ costs and improving their overall management. In addition, institutional agreements were reached between provincial and local authorities and civil society organizations to reinforce the sustainability of the production projects.

Another move was to create structures to support the marketing processes which business people have to establish.

The simplified tax regime (*Monotributo Social*) and the National Register of Providers (introduced under Law 25.865) made it possible for providers to issue invoices for their services and products and sales volumes to be increased, for the use of the services of benevolent funds to be incorporated in the social security system, both for members and for their families, and for such services to become suppliers to the State. Sixty per cent of the providers are women.

Since 2009 all taxpayers under the simplified tax regime (*monotributistas*) have received a family allowance for every child aged under 18.

The programme of the National Fund for Microcredit and the Social Economy was created in 2006 in the context of the *Manos a la Obra* National Plan and on the basis of Law 26.117; the board of this programme is made up of representatives of the National Women’s Council and eight other economic and social development ministries and agencies (Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of the Economy, Ministry of Education through the National Institute for Technical Education (INET), National Institute for Agricultural Technology (INTA), National Institute for Cooperatives and the Social Economy (INAES), and National Institute for Indigenous Affairs (INAI).

The Ministry’s Gender Policies Council and the Gender Observatory were created to formulate policies for the advancement of women and their involvement in the cooperative microcredit networks. As a result, 78,000 providers have so far been registered (over 90 per cent of them women), together with more than 5,300 loan assessors (60 per cent of them women). More than 100,00 loans were granted in 2009, with a fund totalling 200 million pesos.

The *Argentina Trabaja* (Argentina is working) programme: Ministry of Social Development - formation of labour cooperatives: this programme was started in

October 2009 as an essential tool of social integration by means of paid work and with the aim of creating 100,000 jobs through labour cooperatives.

A cooperative consists of about 60 workers and is responsible for carrying out public works: sanitation, urban infrastructure, community infrastructure, housing, and improvement of green spaces.

The programme is implemented by the Ministry of Social Development in coordination with the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education and the municipalities. The sole admission requirement is the lack of a family income

It is part of an integrated policy of jobs creation, training, and promotion of cooperative organizations which generate incomes for socially vulnerable families by means of local public works and improve the social conditions in the poorest districts.

The workers are enrolled as social providers and are covered under the simplified tax regime, which guarantees them retirement benefits and a children's allowance. In return for a small monthly contribution they are entitled to use the services of a benevolent fund. Members of the cooperatives receive monthly pay through a personal card issued by the National Bank of Argentina. It is a State requirement that every worker is paid in a transparent manner for the work which he or she has done.

Workers will take training courses in cooperative operations run by the National Institute for Cooperatives and the Social Economy (INAES) and the Ministries of Social Development and Labour.

For greater transparency, the programme will be monitored by the national universities.

Every municipality will submit to the Ministry of Social Development a monthly report on the status of the work. Once a public work has been completed, it will be replaced by another under the same programme.

To date, 22,293 women and 27,544 men have enrolled in the programme.

Income-support measures

Changes have gradually been made to the amount of the adjustable minimum subsistence wage (SMVM). In August 2008 it stood at 1,200 pesos; in August 2009 it was increased to 1,400 pesos; and from January 2010 it amounts to 1,500 pesos. The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security adopted in conjunction with the Ministry of Social Development a series of measures to boost the incomes of the lowest-paid workers and of persons in receipt of monetary social security benefits. In December 2008 they decided to pay an additional amount to workers earning the minimum wage and an additional sum to recipients of non-contributory pensions and beneficiaries under family or head-of-household plans. This payment amounts to 200 pesos for workers on the minimum wage and 150 pesos for beneficiaries under a family or head-of-household plan and recipients of a non-contributory pension.

Social security**Creation of the National Integrated Social Security System (SIPA)**

The creation of this national system by Law 26.428 (approved in November 2008) signalled the take-over by the State of the resources accruing from the personal contributions administered by the Retirement and Pension Funds Administration (AFJS), which are added to the resources of the distribution system to constitute the total resources of the Sustainability Guarantee Fund. The purpose of this Fund is to ensure the protection of the capital to be used for the payment of SIPA benefits. The creation of SIPA had a major impact on the social security situation of women, for 75 per cent of its beneficiaries are women.

The capitalization system is determined during an affiliate's working life; life expectancy is the most important variable in the calculation of pension entitlements. As a result, since women have a longer life expectancy than men and because of the wage differentials between men and women, women's pensions are smaller than men's, so that the wage gap in the labour market during working life is reproduced after retirement. For example, a comparison of the average retirement pensions of men and women who received equal remuneration during their contribution periods (up to age 65 for both sexes) reveals a difference of about 101 pesos (calculated on the basis of the average wage in the economy: 582 pesos according to INDEC-EPH data), the amounts being 808 and 707 pesos respectively.

The high proportion of women among total recipients of social security benefits is due to the 2006 measure bringing into the system all over-65s not receiving benefits and lacking a sufficient record of contributions, the majority of whom are women.

The total coverage of social security benefits increased by 142 per cent from 330,000 recipients in 2003 to 800,000 in April 2009. This large increase was made possible by the removal of the quota restriction on the award of old-age pensions. This entitlement was thus extended to all the country's over-70s lacking social protection.

In addition, field campaigns (over 1,000), agreements with municipalities (over 1,200) and the opening of new service centres to publicize the right to social security pensions boosted people's awareness of and access to this right. The amounts of all social security pensions also increased between 2003 and 2009, by 413 per cent. In particular, benefits for mothers with seven or more children and disability pensions increased their coverage by 240 per cent.

Universal children's allowance programme

This programme, which was established by Decree 1602/09 and incorporated in Law 24.714 (Family allowances schedule), consists of "A non-contributory subsystem of universal children's allowances for social protection, aimed at children and adolescents resident in the Argentine Republic, not in receipt of any other family allowance provided for in the present Law and members of families which are unemployed or employed in the informal economy" (Law 24.714, art. 1, para. 3). Workers in the informal economy who earn more than the SMVM are excluded from this benefit (art. 3).

The universal children's allowance for social protection consists of a monthly non-taxable cash payment made to only one of the parents or to a tutor, guardian or

relative up to the third degree of consanguinity in respect of each dependent child until age 18 or up to any age in respect of children with disabilities, provided in either case that the child is not employed or emancipated or in receipt of one of the benefits provided for in Law 24.714 or in its amendments or supplements. This allowance is paid in respect of each of the family's qualifying children up to a cumulative maximum of the amount payable in respect of five children (art. 14 bis).

In order to qualify for this benefit a child must be at least four years old and the completion of the health checks and compulsory vaccinations schedule must be certified. The compulsory enrolment of children aged between five and 18 years in public education establishments must also be certified (art. 14 ter).

This programme currently covers 3.5 million children and adolescents aged under 18.

Equality of opportunities and employment

The Tripartite Commission on Equality of Treatment and Opportunities for Men and Women in the Workplace (CTIO): this body's basic contribution has been to conduct 10 years' of social dialogue between the State, trade unions and employers which succeeded in putting on the agenda the demand and struggle for equal rights for men and women in matters of employment, with the backing of the highest national authorities. It also facilitated the establishment of the Ministry of Labour's Gender Coordination Office (CGIOT) and its Advisory Office on Workplace Violence (OAVL). The Tripartite Commission is a member of the Federal Labour Council (CFT), which coordinates its work with the provincial employment departments.

The CTIO is carrying out its annual strategic plan, which was formulated in the light of its general objective of promoting equal treatment and opportunities in employment from the gender equity standpoint and using social dialogue as its preferred working method. The monthly plenary meetings, also attended by the National Women's Council, facilitate a collegiate tripartite dialogue.

Attention may be drawn to the celebration of International Women's Day under the banner "Women, work and family in the real economy: new scenarios for social commitment". The objective of this event was to engage a discussion of the problem of the breakdown of the traditional model of the family and the entry of huge numbers of women into the labour market and the real economy and of the specific legal and political needs which must be met when devising possible means of addressing the new social demands. The event was attended by the Minister of Labour, the head of the CTIO and the President of the National Women's Council, as well as by representatives of trade union confederations and employers' organizations. The total attendance exceeded 500.

Where the provinces are concerned, the CTIO holds regional meetings at which it seeks to increase the number of tripartite federal organizations; two provincial CTIO meetings have been held: Northern Region (Jujuy, Catamarca, La Rioja, Tucumán, and Santiago del Estero) and North-Eastern Region (Corrientes, Entre Ríos, Misiones, Formosa, and Chaco).¹

¹ Four regional meetings are planned for the current year: Northern, North-Eastern, Central and Cuyo.

The Tripartite Commission's chief activities include the publication of the series "Equality of opportunities handbooks". In the first four months of the year it published two booklets in this series, with funding from the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security which also covers six supporting publications on this subject. The National Women's Council collaborated on the content and production of the publications.

The following booklets have been produced so far: No. 1 "Gender equity in public policy", published on 28 February 2010; and No. 2 "Protection and anti-discrimination regulations".

Among other CTIO activities, attention is drawn to its contributions to the preparation of draft legislation on the establishment of nurseries in the workplace, the issuance of the May issue of the monthly online bulletin "PLURALES" (No. XXI dated 23 April 2010), the preparation of Nos. 3, 4 and 5 in the "Equality of opportunities" series, and the draft legislation on persons employed in private homes, which is described below.

Employment in Private Homes Bill (repeal of the Domestic Service Statute). Submitted by the President of the Nation to mark International Women's Day, 8 March 2010. Drafted by the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security.

This bill proposes the repeal of the regulations introduced in 1956 by Decree 326 (the Domestic Service Statute). About a million persons (98.5 per cent of them women) are employed in private homes. Some 77 per cent of these persons have only one employer and only 26 per cent are employed on a live-in basis. Fifty-five per cent work more than four hours a week. Ninety per cent are in the black economy, i.e. in a situation of greater vulnerability. The bill's principal aim is to place this sector's workers on the same footing as other workers. The new regulations include maternity leave in accordance with the Labour Contracts Act and job stability, with similar pay and allowances as apply to the workforce in general. In addition, domestic workers are covered by the family allowances system, from which they were formerly excluded.

- The proposed regulations establish a labour relationship for all persons employed in private households, irrespective of the number of hours worked each week. In contrast, the Statute still in force requires a minimum of four hours over a minimum of four days a week for a labour relationship to be established. Persons employed on a live-in basis will have free time of 35 hours in succession in the period Saturday to Monday. They will be entitled to leave for holidays, sickness and accidents. Provision is made for them to be covered against contingencies with sickness and accident insurers. On work days the rest periods include eight hours sleep, two hours at midday, and breaks for breakfast, lunch, snacks and supper. Persons in the 16-18 age group may work in private households provided that the employer guarantees that they will be able to attend school, in other words to continue or complete their compulsory education, which currently includes secondary education. The regulations will also cover persons employed in private households to care for the sick or elderly, unless the provision of this care requires professional qualifications.

Production recovery programme (REPRO)

As pointed out above, the Government has introduced various initiatives, but one of its chief tools for preventing the impact of the external imbalance and the slow-down in activity from hitting the labour market with full force is the production recovery programme. According to the Ministry of Labour, this programme constitutes one of the most important means of preventing mass dismissals and lay-offs.

The programme provides a subsidy for businesses, with the State paying part of the wages of private sector workers: a non-repayable lump sum of 600 pesos per employee, paid directly by the National Social Security Administration (ANSES), to supplement the remuneration of the labour category in question. In order to receive this subsidy an enterprise must prove that it is in a state of crisis and specify what it intends to do to secure its recovery; it must also undertake to maintain its current manning level for 12 months.

The Ministry is responsible for verifying that the enterprise in question has not cut its workforce. Ministry sources report that in 2009 the programme assisted 142,634 employees in 2,750 companies. The level of assistance has fallen in 2010 as a result of the economic recovery which started in late 2009.

In 2010 there were 84,000 workers actively benefiting under the programme in 1,556 companies in such sectors as textiles, engineering, automobile parts, commerce, refrigeration, foodstuffs, tanneries, health, and fisheries. These companies account for 59 per cent of the workers in the programme. A total of 96.6 per cent of the companies assisted under the programme are small or medium-sized, each employing between one and 300 workers.

There is no information about the gender breakdown of the workers benefiting under the programme.

B. National defence and gender policies

The Ministry of Defence has carried through far-reaching legislative and institutional reforms, in the course of which special attention has been given to gender perspectives in the implementation of a comprehensive policy of promoting human rights in the armed forces.

Managers have accorded priority to measures to eradicate patterns of discrimination against women, with three main focuses. First, the incorporation of gender perspectives in the composition and deployment of the Argentine contingents participating in United Nations peacekeeping operations. Second, the implementation of a national plan for nurseries and responsible parenthood with the aim of addressing this need of personnel in the defence sector and thus helping them to perform their professional duties without detriment to their families. Third, where domestic violence is concerned, to continue working together with health bodies and armed forces personnel to establish interdisciplinary support teams to deal with this problem in the hospitals and other health facilities of the armed forces.

On 8 March 2008 the Ministry of Defence entered into a commitment to carry out a “joint work plan to promote a comprehensive policy for the identification, handling and recording of cases of domestic violence” as one of the obligations assumed by Argentina – to address domestic violence as a social problem with human rights implications – on the basis of the specific rules contained in the Inter-

American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the new Violence against Women Act.

In the light of these starting points the work plan sets the following objectives:

1. To establish in each branch of the armed forces an interdisciplinary victim-support team;
2. To increase awareness of and provide training on the subject of domestic violence;
3. To formulate a standard protocol for attending to victims. This was the purpose of Resolution MD No. 50/09 instructing the heads of the three branches of the armed forces to adopt the standard protocol.

B.1. Gender Policy Council of the Ministry of Defence

The Gender Policy Council's main function is to formulate recommendations to eliminate practices and regulations obstructing egalitarian recruitment and career development for men and women. It was to this end that the Ministry of Defence created the Council, by Resolution MD No. 274/07, and subsequently expanded its membership by Resolution MD No. 199/08.

During 2007 and 2008 the Council operated under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour's Gender Coordination Unit. In 2008 it focused on redrafting its work programme in order to intensify the debate begun in 2007 which had helped to determine a series of resolutions which, in addition to removing some of the obstacles to the career development of female members of the armed forces, invested both men and women with greater independence in decisions affecting their domestic and private lives. The Council also invited to its monthly meetings the personnel directors of each of the branches of the armed forces in order to learn about the institutional aspects of the issues under discussion, secure the committed involvement of the high command, and subsequently of the instructors in each of the military training schools, in the discussion of those issues. The dialogue established in the latter case focused on the four main themes of the crosscutting gender agenda: working hours; promotion system; handling of cases of harassment in the workplace and sexual harassment; and gender assessments and analysis of standards of physical requirements and performance.

By Resolution MD No. 150/09 the coordination of the Council was transferred to the National Office for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law, but it continues to report directly to the Minister. For 2009 the Council set the objective of continuing its study of gender policies in the armed forces in order to ensure that, in terms of their formulation and implementation, these policies mean that decisions by either men or women to enrol in the military, and their subsequent career trajectory, do not entail any prejudice to the obligations arising from, or the enjoyment of, their private lives. There is a plan to update the data collected by the Observatory in 2006 on the recruitment of women into the armed forces. It is also envisaged that the Council should monitor and coordinate the activities of the gender offices established in each branch of the armed forces by Resolution MD No. 1160/08.

B.2. National nurseries and responsible parenthood plan

This plan was approved by Resolution MD No. 198/08 in fulfilment of the commitments entered into by the Argentine State under the 1994 constitutional reform. The reform listed in order of importance several international human rights instruments and incorporated them in the country's legal system with constitutional status, in accordance with the provisions of article 75, paragraph 22, of the Constitution.

The national nurseries and responsible parenthood plan was designed to reconcile the responsibilities deriving from the professional and family duties of male and female armed forces personnel, be they military or civilian. A working group was set up for this purpose; it was coordinated by the National Directorate for Human Rights and drew its membership from representatives of the three branches of the armed forces, the Coordination Department and trade union confederations; the aim was to identify the needs of male and female armed forces personnel with a view to making a start on the construction, extension and/or refurbishment of nurseries for children aged between 45 days and three years. Following the conclusion of an agreement on 18 October 2006 between the Ministry of Defence and the Buenos Aires Ministry of Education, a start was made on the re-adaptation of facilities in the district of San Telmo to serve as a nursery for children of employees of the Ministry of Defence and the General Staff of the Army.

B.3. Figures on women's recruitment and posts in the armed forces

There are currently 9,335 women in the armed forces and their training schools, constituting 11.56 per cent of total personnel; 6.55 per cent of these women are officers and 7.52 per cent non-commissioned officers.

The Army has a total of 4,074 women (11.15 of total personnel). Forty-two per cent of the officer corps and 2 per cent of the high command are women. Sixteen per cent of army volunteers are women.

The Navy has a total of 1,799 women (8.5 per cent of total personnel). Fourteen per cent of the officer corps and 2 per cent of the high command are women. Twelve per cent of navy volunteers are women.

The Air Force has a total of 2,562 women (17 per cent of total personnel). Thirty-two per cent of the officer corps and 0.76 per cent of the high command are women. Twenty-eight per cent of air force volunteers are women.

In the period 2000-2006 a total of 252 women were deployed in peacekeeping missions. Fifty-eight per cent of them were health personnel and the remainder were assigned to operational duties.

Sexual violence and harassment statistics

The Army: a total of 15 reports of workplace harassment have been received since April 2009. There were 12 enquiries about the reconciliation of official duties with breastfeeding, pregnancy and physical tests; 37 per cent of them referred to health problems, 25 per cent to childcare facilities, 12 per cent to the procedure for reporting workplace harassment, and 12 per cent to women's work situations in general.

The Navy: there have been two reports of workplace harassment since April 2009 and 12 enquiries about the reconciliation of official duties with

breastfeeding, pregnancy and physical tests. Thirty-seven per cent of these 12 enquiries referred to health issues, 25 per cent to matters connected with childcare facilities, and 12 per cent to women's work situations in general.

The Air Force: 26 enquiries have been received since March 2008: 3.8 per cent of them referred to sexual harassment, 3.8 per cent to bullying or abuse between equals, 3.8 per cent to discrimination, 7 per cent to gender issues (single mothers not allowed to perform guard or service duties), 11 per cent to workplace harassment, 19 per cent to work situations, 23 per cent to abuse of authority, and 27 per cent to domestic violence.

Comprehensive statistics on the situation of women in the armed forces are available in the report on the integration of women in the armed forces published in 2010 (www.mindef.gov.ar).

National machinery for the advancement of women

5. *In its previous concluding comments (see A/59/38, part two, paras. 370-371), the Committee expressed concern that the National Women's Council had a limited role in the governmental structure and recommended that the State party strengthen the existing national machinery for the advancement of women. Please provide information on the National Women's Council and its present role in the governmental structure, including information on its interaction with other State mechanisms in terms of planning public policies. Kindly provide detailed information on the Council's human and financial resources at all levels and how the Government evaluates whether its budget is commensurate with the policies it is supposed to carry out. Please include information on any efforts carried out to promote better coordination between the National Women's Council and the provincial and municipal offices for the advancement of women.*

The National Women's Council is a member of the National Social Policies Coordination Council (CNCPS) of the Office of the President in its capacity as a participatory, coordination and promotional agency. One of the functions of the CNCPS is to attend to the strategic planning of the Government's social policies and programmes, its intervention strategies, its commitment to results, and the design of mechanisms for coordinating the programmes implemented by various agencies of the National Executive. It is chaired by Alicia Kirchner, Minister for Social Development. The functions, structure and membership of the CNCPS are described in Section B of the sixth periodic report.

Change of name of the national agency for the advancement of women: the Committee was informed about the efforts made by the Government to strengthen this agency; a number of changes were made to this end, including the change of its name, by Decree No. 326 of 2010, from "*Consejo Nacional de la Mujer*" to "*Consejo Nacional de las Mujeres*" [no change in English] in order to enhance the sense of the inclusion in the institutional structure of each and every one of Argentina's women, with all their voices, interests, situations, diversity and visions.

The institutional structure: the new structure of the National Women's Council was approved by Decree No. 1836-DEL 2010, including the creation of the national coordination unit for the prevention, treatment and eradication of violence against women; the unit's head will be appointed as a senior official of the National Executive, with the rank and status of under-secretary.

This new structure is designed to respond to the Council's needs and to the new role and responsibilities which it assumed under the Violence against Women Act.

The expansion of the Council's structure entails a larger budget which, in accordance with the founding statute, will be taken care of by Source 11, Jurisdiction 20, of the General Secretariat of the Nation. It is not yet possible to specify the amount which will be allocated by the Cabinet of Ministers, but the amount will certainly be determined within the next few months.

Section B of the sixth periodic report, which describes the evolution of the budget allocated to the Council, indicates a steady increase to a level of 5,067,000 pesos in 2008; the 2009 budget amounted to 6,338,000 pesos, to which should be added external funding of \$US 1,935,000 from a programme of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); the funding from this programme enabled the Council to recruit 25 professional and technical staff.

In relation to other bodies, the National Women's Council is:

- A founder member of the Tripartite Commission on Equality of Opportunities for Men and Women in the Workplace (CTIO);
- A member of the board of the National Microcredit Fund of the Ministry of Social Development;
- A member of the Gender Policies Council of the Ministry of Defence;
- The National Women's Council has a Federal Women's Council, which represents all of the provincial women's offices: a federal adviser is appointed for each of the provinces covered by these offices to help to determine the principal means of carrying out the agreed activities in good time;
- The National Women's Council also has an Executive Board which monitors and supervises the public policies of every State agency. The Board's membership consists of the ministers and secretaries of State, together with representatives of other governmental bodies who are brought in order to ensure coordination and the incorporation of gender perspectives in public policies at the national level.

Programmes and action plans

6. The report refers to the national plan of action for the eradication of violence against women in the family promoted by the National Women's Council. Please provide additional information on the national plan, including detailed information on material and human resources that are allocated to the plan, and whether indicators as well as time-bound targets have been established to assess the implementation of the plan in all regions of the country.

The Violence against Women Act (Law 26.485), which was promulgated on 1 April 2009, brought about an important change in the handling of violence against women by establishing an integrated and crosscutting approach to the phenomenon of sexual violence, as prescribed in the Act's guiding principles (art. 7). Article 3 states explicitly that recognition must be accorded to all the rights set out in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of

Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará), the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and Law 26.061 on the comprehensive protection of the rights of children and adolescents.

The Violence against Women's Act seeks to prevent and punish behaviour which has in the past placed women and children in particular in a subordination position to men, creating an unequal power relationship which directly and indirectly affects women's lives, liberty and security in all spheres (art. 4). According article 6 (a), the handling under the Act of a domestic or family "violent act" is determined by the context in which women conduct their relationships, but it is made clear that such acts are not limited to that single context and may take more than one form (arts. 4, 5 and 6). The Act defines the contexts of this violence (domestic, institutional, workplace, obstetrical, and media) and its forms (physical, psychological, sexual, economic and asset-related, and symbolic) (art. 5), as well as specifying the competent State agencies and the relevant procedures and addressing the establishment of an integrated action plan and a gender observatory (art. 12 *et seq.*) as means of providing a concrete response to this very complex problem. In articles 8 and 9 the National Women's Council is designated as the lead agency, with responsibility for formulating public policies to give effect to the Act's provisions, and it is emphasized that the three branches of State power have an obligation to adopt guiding principles and concrete measures, in accordance with the role assigned to them under the Act (art. 11).

The Act assigns specific responsibilities to the Executive: the Cabinet of Ministers and the Secretariat for Cabinet Affairs and Public Administration (art. 11.1); the Ministry of Development (art. 11.2); the Ministry of Education (art. 11.3); the Ministry of Health (art. 11.4); the Ministry of Justice, Security and Human Rights, the Secretariat for Human Rights and the Secretariat for Security (art. 11.5-5.1 and 5.2); the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (art. 11.6); and the Ministry of Defence (art. 11.7).

This public policy Act is applicable throughout the country (art. 44) without any need for the provinces to accede to it, but the local situation must be taken into account in the application of the Act, especially its procedural aspects (art. 19 *et seq.*).

Accordingly, the National Women's Council has made an effort to bring together and coordinate all the relevant State agencies in a process of consultation and participation with regard to the implementation of the Act and adoption of the necessary regulations; this process was initiated by the National Social Policies Coordination Council and its President Alicia Kirchner at a meeting with the most senior officials of the ministries and the Supreme Court of Justice, which established the authority responsible for applying the Act and its regulations.

It should be pointed out that the commitment and consent achieved with regard to the Act's regulations and the agreement on the basic features of the action plan do not address solely the technical design of the regulations but also constitute an authentic process of enhancing awareness of the problem in order to secure the sustainability of the policies and measures carried out.

The design of the Act's regulations is based on the criteria of comprehensiveness and a crosscutting approach to tackling sexual violence; several discussion forums have therefore been established for actors and stakeholders in the world of gender policy, who have begun to draft the regulations bill; they include:

- An inter-institutional committee consisting of representatives of the various ministries and secretariats designated in the Act. This forum is coordinated by the National Women's Council, but the fundamental aspect of its work is the input provided by the various agencies in the light of their approach and responsibilities;
- An honorary advisory council consisting of representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international bodies, trade unions, the academic world, the Judiciary, and social organizations working in this field. A virtual forum for determining the topics for discussion was established in the National Institute for Public Administration (INAP);
- The Federal Women's Council is the forum in which the provinces and the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires air their specific concerns; the National Women's Council accepts its inputs and recommendations and is taking them into consideration in the drafting of the regulatory decree;
- A legal analysis forum for discussions among judges and lawyers with expertise in this area, especially on matters connected with the judicial application of the Law;
- As the regulations bill is still at the stage of legal analysis by judges, the text cannot be annexed to this report. It is expected that a final version will become available in May 2010.

The honorary advisory council referred to in article 9 (c) of the Act, together with its powers, membership, coordination and operational arrangements, term of office and function, was established by Resolution No. 9 of 2010, dated 8 March 2010. Leaflets on this participatory forum, to be distributed by the National Women's Council, were also produced.

The Act, resolutions and other legislation mentioned above may be consulted on the Council's web site (www.cnm.gov.ar).

Programmes and activities of the National Women's Council for application of the Act

Technical assistance programmes and measures have been carried out under two basic programmes:

1. "Comprehensive protection measures to prevent, punish and eradicate violence against women" (UNDP project ARG. 09/016);
2. "Strengthening of the provincial and municipal women's offices and civil society organizations" (CNM Resolution No. 6/2009).

1. The two-year UNDP project (ARG 09/016) consists of a work plan for the period 2009-2011; the general objective is to promote and create the necessary conditions for the effective application of the Violence against Women Act through the participation of the relevant State agencies and civil society organizations. The specific objectives include doing the groundwork for producing the *action plan to prevent, punish and eradicate violence against women* and for advancing the technical reinforcement of the national, provincial and municipal institutions.

Both these objectives constitute responses to two key features in the array of public policies on sexual violence: the need to devise comprehensive protection

policies and the need to reinforce all the provincial and municipal women's offices in an effort to secure the equitable application of the Act throughout the country.

Work is proceeding under the programme, with differing degrees of advancement, on the drafting of the following two instruments required by the Act:

- Technical assistance for the personnel responsible for prevention and victim support at the national, provincial and municipal levels;
- Formulation of local measures and strategies for implementation of the Act;
- Communication strategy for enhancing awareness of and preventing sexual violence against women.

1.1. Action plan: Consolidation of the technical group responsible for drafting the national action plan on prevention, victim support, and eradication of sexual violence against women. This plan will constitute the tool for implementing the provisions of the Act.

November 2009 saw the creation of an interdisciplinary working group composed of experts on the subject of sexual violence and women's human rights; it has started drafting the national action plan.

To this end it has analyzed data from the various national and provincial jurisdictions and has studied the experience of other countries, Spain in particular, drawing on the action plan of that country, whose legislation and federal structure are similar to Argentina's.

The initial structure of the national action plan was based on several priority areas of intervention: social development, education, health, justice, security, human rights, employment, defence, and communication media. The working group also established the objectives and the action to be taken with regard to awareness-raising, prevention, victim support, and eradication of violence against women; these measures will be coordinated with the national and provincial ministries and secretariats and with the national and provincial machinery for the advancement of women, in accordance with guidelines designed to ensure equality between women and men and the eradication of sexual violence against women.

The following strategic objectives were established:

- To improve the response to sexual violence;
- To alter the model of social relations.

To produce a multidimensional scenario, other topics were incorporated in the areas of intervention mentioned above:

- Research and analysis;
- Training and specialization for professionals;
- Mobilization and participation of stakeholders;
- Coordinated work within and between institutions;
- Continuous results-oriented monitoring and evaluation of the action plan.

1.2. The Observatory on Violence is intended to develop a permanent information system on the topic and on the design and presentation of the coordination arrangements required for the establishment of the national action plan.

This task was entrusted to an interdisciplinary team of professionals set up under the National Women's Council; it started work at the end of 2009 and is coordinating its activities with the persons responsible for drafting the national action plan. The priority objectives for the first quarter of 2010 are to identify sources of information, to construct indicators to facilitate continuous measurement, and to produce reliable national data on the subject of violence against women and make this data available to the public. There are currently two working parties: (a) working party on the identification of sources of information; and (b) working party on the technical design of measuring tools and on the construction of indicators. They have planned their work for this quarter with a view to establishing a list of sources of information in the shape of public and private bodies, already on board or to be contacted, and a list of indicators for compiling and recording data on the various types of violence against women and the forms which it takes in different contexts, bearing in mind the recommendations of international, regional and national organizations and the types and modalities of violence against women defined in the Violence against Women Act.

1.3. Conduct of regional meetings under part I of project ARG 09/016: as executing agency the National Women's Council is responsible for coordinating the promotion of changes in the social and cultural patterns which produce truly unequal relations between the sexes, in order to build up provincial legislation and harmonize it with the Act. It is hoped that inter-institutional agreements will then be concluded with the various representatives of the provinces and that the existing provincial resources and services will be inventoried with a view to produce an updated resource guide to be used as an input in the drafting of the national action plan.

A total budget of \$US 1,985,768 has been allocated to the programme "Comprehensive protection measures to prevent, punish and eradicate violence against women" (UNDP project ARG 09/016, 2009-2001).

2. The programme "Strengthening of the provincial and municipal women's offices and civil society organizations", to be carried out by the National Women's Council in the period 2009-2011. The purpose of this programme is to contribute to the implementation of the public gender policies designed to promote equality between women and men in all areas of society by attaining the following objectives:

(a) Strengthening the social management capacity of the provincial women's offices (AMPs), the municipal women's offices (AMMs) and civil society organizations; (b) Boosting the technical capacity of the AMPs by improving their coordination with academic bodies; (c) Reinforcing inter-institutional coordination at the provincial and municipal levels; and (d) Disseminating useful and relevant information on women's rights and on the resources available for ensuring the exercise and protection of those rights.

The institution-building programme for the AMPs, AMMs and civil society organizations provides for the financing of their project proposals. The proposals

which they make in this regard have to relate to training, extension work, technical assistance or equipment to strengthen the local activities.

The AMPs, AMMs and civil society organizations are the programme's direct targets; they will draft and submit project proposals to the National Women's Council and they will then be responsible for executing and monitoring these projects.

The implementation of this programme and the attainment of its objectives are addressed in agreements between the Council, the AMPs, the AMMs and civil society organizations based on the proposals submitted to and subsequently approved by the CNM technical team assigned to the programme.

Components to be funded:

1. Equipment: the resources to be provided under this component include computer equipment, furniture and cameras. The aim is for the support materials to be used as vehicles for the establishment of activities and their continuation.

2. Training, extension work and technical assistance: the aim under this component is to boost the human capital of the operational teams of governmental bodies by providing training and technical advice in, amongst other things, the design, monitoring and evaluation of projects incorporating a gender perspective, management, the use of modern social-management techniques, and familiarization with information and communication technology (e-mails, web sites, etc.).

This component will include activities connected with:

2.1. Training: organization of training activities such as workshops, seminars, series of conferences, briefings, working sessions, and provincial and/or regional meetings;

2.2. Communication and extension work: publicizing the activities and the topics dealt with by the provincial and/or municipal women's offices; and invitations to participate in the training and technical assistance activities. This component will include activities connected with the design and printing of graphic materials (leaflets, magazines, posters) and audiovisual materials (information videos, on-line newsletters, etc.);

2.3. Technical assistance: provision of specific technical resources such as inventories, handbooks, recording equipment, and studies and research materials, as well as advice on specific subjects. The programme provides for the CNM technical team to provide technical assistance to optimize the incorporation of gender perspectives in the project proposals to be submitted.

The proposals will fall within the Council's strategic areas of intervention: women and work; sexual violence; women's human rights and citizenship; and strategic communication and publicity for the advancement of women's rights.

At the present stage the programme is receiving and evaluating the proposals submitted by the AMPs, AMMs and civil society organizations and concluding the related agreements with the provinces.

Budget allocation:

The programme "Strengthening the provincial and municipal women's offices and civil society organizations" established by CNM Resolution No. 6/2009: 2010 –

805,000 pesos (Source 11 – Programme 17 – National Women’s Council – Office of the President).

The campaign “Otra vida es posible” (A different life is possible) for gender equity and against violence. This campaign is intended to raise people’s awareness of this very serious problem so that, by participating actively in society, they will make a collective commitment to its transformation. The campaign is based on the definition of violence as “any act or threat of physical, psychological, sexual or economic violence which manifests the existing inequality between men and women”.

This initiative originated at the end of 2008 from the Department for Equity and Standards of the Ministry of Education and the Alicia Moreau de Justo Foundation with the aim of making people more aware of the problems of gender inequality and violence against women; it is implemented with funding from the UNDP office in Argentina and is operated in conjunction with the National Women’s Council, the Secretariat for Human Rights and various governmental agencies, international organizations and civil society institutions.

The campaign has three key components, which are independently implemented but closely interrelated: three radio and three television spots, a web site, and a competition for the production of short audiovisual films, radio spots, comic strips, written texts, and posters.

The radio and television spots address various aspects of these problems; they were first broadcast as a public interest campaign, starting on 6 March 2009, in the context of International Women’s Day. They stress that violence is not a natural act but a violation of women’s human rights and they illustrate its various manifestations (physical, psychological, sexual, economic) and the difficulty of breaking free from violence (“breaking the circle”), as well as drawing attention to its impact on children. Their content is provided jointly by the campaign’s technical teams, while production is in the hands of the producer Bruno Stagnaro and professionals from the ETER School of Communication.

The web site (www.vivirsinviolencia.gov.ar) was created in order to provide information of interest on this subject. It includes the radio and television spots, educational materials, one map showing the location of the victim-support centres throughout the country and another showing the location of institutions working on gender topics in education, communications, health, etc., links to sites of interest, and an invitation to join in.

The competition “*Otra vida es posible*” invites people to produce radio spots, short videos, posters, comic strips, and written texts on violence against women. The competition is open to education institutions and community organizations and/or groups of persons in the various categories. The rules and conditions are available on the web site and will also be distributed in an accessible format to institutions throughout the country.

The opportunity to participate offered by the competition is essential if all the different voices and artistic works are to report on the various manifestations of these extremely serious problems in all the regions of Argentina and in differing socio-cultural contexts, as well as on the possibilities of change generated in every area by the joint efforts to eradicate inequality and violence.

Initial results of the campaign

- Extension work: the mass and community media throughout the country not only ran items on the campaign but also conducted interviews and produced special reports on the campaign and its subject matter;
- Institutional coordination: one outstanding feature of the campaign is the close collaboration between civil society organizations, international bodies and governmental agencies. Such a process is almost unprecedented at the national level; it has been made part of the relationship between the State, civil society and the world of education in order to enhance awareness of these problems and encourage joint efforts to tackle them;
- Local impact: the institutions participating in the campaign have promoted, by means of events organized in the provinces, the use of the radio and television spots, activities using the information and training materials available on the web site, and participation in the competition through various bodies, including the National Women's Council, the Federal Human Rights Council, and the Federal Council of Education Departments;
- Access to information: during the period when the radio and television spots were being broadcast the campaign's web site received an average of 6,800 visits a day and had accumulated over 300,000 by the end of May. As a result of the airing of the spots and the visits to the web site, one of the victim-support hotlines for women suffering violence in Buenos Aires province received double the usual number of calls in March and April, registering an increase of over 50 per cent. The callers stressed that the web site (www.vivirsinviolencia.gov.ar) had been the source of their information on access to the hotline;
- Favourable context for the formulation and implementation of public policies: in November 2008 the National Senate gave partial approval to the draft Violence against Women Act (Law 26.485). In the week following the launching of the campaign the National Congress adopted the Act, which was duly promulgated in April 2009 by President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. The Act designates the National Women's Council as the lead agency for the implementation of public policies incorporating gender perspectives;
- Educational content: one of the campaign's most interesting aspects is its powerful approach to tackling the fundamental causes of these problems, designed to prevent society from becoming increasingly violent and producing new assailants and victims.

Participating institutions:

Spanish International Cooperation Agency (AECID)

National Women's Council

Alicia Moreau de Justo Foundation

Ministry of Social Development

Ministry of Education

Ministry of Justice, Security and Human Rights

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Religion

Ministry of Health

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Secretariat for the Media

National public media system

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

Office of the President

Campaign authorities:

María Inés Vollmer, Under-Secretary for Equity and Education Standards,
Ministry of Education

Lidia Mondelo, President of the National Women's Council

María Sonderéguer, National Director of Human Rights Training, Department
for the Promotion of Human Rights, Secretariat for Human Rights

Carlos Felipe Martínez, UNDP Resident Representative

Technical coordination of the campaign – contact details:

www.vivirsinviolencia.gov.ar / otravidaesposible@gmail.com;

www.cnm.gov.ar – Link: Campaña “Otra vida es posible”.

7. *The report refers to Law 26.150 on sexual education, creating the National Programme on Sex Education, with compulsory application throughout the country, at all educational levels and from the age of 5 years. The report also points out that a commission has been created to elaborate a proposal for its application in the whole country. Please provide information on efforts to achieve effective implementation of sexual education in public and private schools in the formal educational system at all levels. Also, please provide information on the Commission, as well as on its functioning, composition and structure.*

The National Programme on Comprehensive Sex Education was established by Law 26.150 (the Sex Education Act), approved on 4 October 2006. The Ministry of Education, through its coordination unit for this Programme, is the agency responsible for the gradual introduction of the regulations.

The official view of the Ministry of Education is that the curriculum outline for sex education offers a comprehensive concept of sexual relations, a concept produced after two years of deliberations in the Interdisciplinary Commission on the Introduction of the National Programme; this commission was made up of representatives of different faiths and sex education experts. It discussed the curriculum to be taught in schools, and this curriculum was approved by the Federal Education Council in 2008 in discharge of the State's responsibility under the Sex Education Act to guarantee the right of children and adolescents to receive sex education in school.

The Commission was multidisciplinary and drew its membership from many different sources.

Once an agreement had been reached on the implementation of the Act, the provinces began in March 2009 to teach the minimum curriculum approved by the Federal Education Council. Children at all levels of education, in private and public schools, including faith schools, will be taught in the classroom a comprehensive course on sexual relations, both from the scientific standpoint and from the standpoint of human rights, obligations and emotions.

The general principles are designed to ensure equality, respect for individual differences free of gender or any other kind of discrimination, and the promotion of values which reinforce a comprehensive training in responsible sexual relations.

The provinces take an integrated approach to the curriculum instead of reducing it to the traditional biological model. It was proposed that at the initial and primary levels the approach should be general, leaving open the possibility of more specific treatment in secondary.

Taking these common and mandatory rules approved by the Federal Education Council as the starting point, each province can make changes or adjustments in the light of its socio-cultural context.

The Ministry of Education will furnish continuous technical support for the provinces in the shape of training courses and teaching materials to be distributed to all schools during 2010. The idea is that the teachers in every school should discuss among themselves the curriculum content and the ways of incorporating it in every subject. Although a school may have specific personnel whose task is to improve the quality of the education, the aim is that all teachers should be capable of dealing with any situation which comes up in the classroom.

The National Programme on Comprehensive Sex Education is to produce evaluation indicators; they will become available in the course of 2010.

The activities of the Ministry of Education are coordinated with the Ministry of Health and are being carried out as part of the regional project "Harmonization of public policies on sex education, prevention of HIV/AIDS, and drug use in schools", which is being implemented by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) in conjunction with Brazil's International Centre for Technical Cooperation (CICT) and the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ).

(Official information from the Ministry of Education: National Programme on Comprehensive Sex Education. Web site: www.me.gov.ay.)

Stereotypes and cultural practices

8. *The report points out that although women attain higher levels of education, they continue to choose domains related to social areas, which has an impact on their future salaries. Have measures been introduced to address the problem? Please provide information on whether any efforts are being made to change social and cultural patterns causing the stereotyping which has resulted in women and girls choosing traditional stereotypical roles.*

Gender stereotypes and the influence of the mass media

The sixth periodic report described the high levels of education attained by women but stated that a large proportion of them continued to opt for traditional social occupations (education, health, services). The underlying reasons for these choices are often to be found in the stereotypes constructed through the media and

the influence of the media's valuation of female and male roles, the country's inherent sexual violence, especially symbolic violence, and the persistence of a number of myths that certain activities are unsuitable for women, ones requiring physical strength, for example, or trades or technical occupations, which the culture regards as more suitable for men (points 15, 16 and 17).

Where legislation is concerned, the profound alteration of cultural practices delivered by the Violence against Women Act (Law 26.485) marked a major step forward, for the Act introduced the concept of "media violence", defined in article 6 (f) as "any publication or dissemination of stereotyped messages or images by any of the communication media which directly or indirectly encourage the exploitation of women or their images or injures, defames, discriminates against, dishonours or humiliates women or impairs the dignity of women or adolescent or pre-adolescent girls in pornographic messages or images which legitimize unequal treatment or constitute socio-cultural patterns perpetuating unequal treatment or generating violence against women".

Article 5, paragraph 5, of the Act refers to "symbolic violence", defined as "violence which uses stereotyped patterns, messages, values, images or signs to transmit and perpetuate domination, inequality or discrimination in social relations and legitimizes the subordination of women in society".

In addition, article 11, paragraphs 8 (a) - (e), invests the Secretariat for the Media with responsibility for promoting, through the national media system, the dissemination of messages and the conduct of permanent campaigns to increase the awareness and understanding of the public at large and of women in particular of women's right to a violence-free existence, and also to promote in the mass media respect for the human rights of women and to introduce a gender perspective in the handling of violence, to encourage the elimination of sexism in reporting, and to promote, as a matter of corporate social responsibility, the conduct of publicity campaigns to prevent and eradicate violence against women. To this end, training in the subject of violence against women will also be provided for media professionals.

Law 26.522 on the audiovisual media, which was adopted recently, contains in its regulatory section specific provisions to support and reinforce the incorporation of gender perspectives in the media, emphasizing the impact of education and the presence of gender stereotypes in the media and the need to eliminate them, as may be seen from the following passages of the Law:

Title I, chapter I, article 1:

Paragraph 8 (h): To strengthen education curricula and programmes by including a major gender component in formal and informal education for all and to improve women's capacity to use the communication and information media to develop in themselves and in girls the ability to understand and handle information and communication technology content;

Paragraph 9 (e): To encourage a balanced and multifaceted image of women and men in the communication media.

Title I, chapter I, article 3:

Paragraph (m): To promote the protection and maintenance of equality between men and women and diversified, egalitarian and non-stereotyped treatment, avoiding any discrimination based on sex or sexual orientation. (This article

mentions the National Women's Council as the national agency with which gender-equality policies are to coordinated.) (www.comfer.gov.ar/web/ley26522)

As noted in the sixth periodic report, the Observatory on Discrimination on Radio and Television has proved to be an excellent tool for obtaining a comprehensive picture of the audiovisual media, thanks also to the action taken by the Federal Audiovisual Communication Authority (AFDCAV) in conjunction with the National Women's Council and the National Institute on Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism (INADI).

This Observatory, staffed by personnel from the Federal Authority on Audiovisual Communication Services (AFSCA), INADI and the National Women's Council, has been in operation since March 2007; its purpose is to discuss and analyze any discriminatory content in television and radio programmes or advertising. The quality of the papers produced by the Observatory has been acknowledged by Frank La Rue, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and by leading Argentine academics.

In its reports and at meetings with persons responsible for programmes and advertising the Observatory's team has warned of the need to incorporate gender perspectives and cultural diversity in social communication, journalism and advertising courses.

In August 2009 staff of the Observatory acted as members of the teaching panel of the optional seminar on "Communications, human rights and discrimination: theories, practices and tools" of the National University of La Plata. It emerged that 50 per cent of the students who spoke had considered the problem of sexual violence and its appropriate handling in the mass media. As the results achieved are making a contribution to the attainment of the objective pursued this year, the Observatory will continue to work with the University during the second term.

Other national universities have joined in the project with a view to replicating this encouraging experience:

National University of Lomas de Zamora: social sciences faculty, social communication course, with a university extension seminar entitled "Communication and discrimination" in the first term;

University of Buenos Aires: social communication course of the social sciences faculty, with a curricular seminar entitled "Media and communication: the case of the Observatory on Discrimination on Radio and Television".

Violence against women

9. *In its previous concluding comments (see A/59/38, part two, paras. 378-379), the Committee urged the State to ensure that a comprehensive approach is taken to address violence against women and girls, taking into account its general recommendation No. 19 on violence against women. The report refers to various laws that have been passed, both at the national and local levels, on violence within the family. Please provide detailed information on the present legislation regulating domestic violence in the country. Kindly specify whether marital rape is covered by legislation.*

Violence against women: the legislation in question includes the Violence against Women Act (Law 26.485), a comprehensive public policy law on sexual violence which is fully in force throughout the national territory. The regulations for this Act are currently being drafted. Where its implementation in the provinces is concerned, although the Act is fully in force its procedural part will have to be adapted for each jurisdiction: the fact that Argentina is a federal State must be kept in mind (see point 6).

With regard to marital rape, article 5 of the Act establishes three types of violence and paragraph 3 of this article refers explicitly to marital rape and rape in other binding relationships or relations of kinship, regardless of whether the persons live together, as an act of sexual violence.

10. Please provide statistical information on how many cases of violence against women and girls were reported during the period under consideration. Please also include detailed information on how many perpetrators of acts of violence against women were prosecuted and punished in the same period of time. Regional differences should be reflected in those statistics. Please also provide statistical information on how many women were murdered per year as a result of domestic violence during the period under consideration.

On this point readers are referred to the information given in the sixth periodic report – until such time as the National Women’s Council has the statistics which are being produced following the establishment of the Observatory on Violence under the new Law 26.485 (para. 6: Observatory on Violence) in conjunction with the statistics unit of the Supreme Court of Justice; readers are also referred to the statistical reports produced for the Supreme Court by its Domestic Violence Office (www.csjn.gov.a; link *ovd-informes estadísticos*).

11. The report refers to an office set up by the Supreme Court to deal with cases of domestic violence. Please provide detailed information on the office, its creation, composition and structure.

As noted in the sixth periodic report, the Supreme Court of Justice has created a Domestic Violence Office. Among its reasons for taking this action the Supreme Court stressed the complex nature of the phenomenon of domestic violence and the implications of intervention by jurisdictional bodies with differing powers and functions. The Court was acting in compliance with its constitutional mandate to guarantee justice when it created this Office in order to offset the effects of jurisdictional fragmentation and unify the criteria for recording cases of domestic violence, which at present are not identified separately.

The Office facilitates the access to justice of persons affected by domestic violence, who currently are unaware of the judicial remedies, and at the same time it rationalizes the use of resources through the indisputably increased efficiency of having one office dealing with all the courts. It also facilitates the optimum use of material and human resources. And the production of statistics and the resulting analyses by the supreme authority of one of the branches of State power will help to underline the true magnitude of the problem.

The Court established the Office’s functions and approved its operational rules, the duties and functions of its officers and other personnel, the administrative procedures for handling applications, the interrelationships with the competent courts and other public agencies, and the nature of the statistics to be produced in

order to obtain organized information on cases in which action may be required (Orders Nos. 39 and 40 of 2006). In addition, the Court established by Resolution No. 2570/06 the manning table for the officers and other administrative, technical and service personnel of the Office and dealt with the necessary budgetary formalities to enable the Office to start operating.

By Resolution No. 862/07 the Court ordered the opening of a register of applicants for the 56 posts on the Office's professional manning table, which includes lawyers (21 posts), doctors (seven posts), psychologists (14 posts) and social workers (14 posts). Annexes I and II of Supreme Court Order No. 12 of 2008 list the Office's personnel, professional posts and the service shifts and opening hours (www.csjn.gov.ar – link *ovd*). This will facilitate future collaboration on the implementation of prevention programmes and will offer an important means of altering the perception of this type of violence and dispelling the attitude that it is a matter which should remain private.

On the initiative of the Vice-President of the Supreme Court, Elena Highton de Nolasco, a new working group on domestic violence was set up under the Court's auspices to formulate strategies for tackling this serious problem through the provincial supreme courts.

In the context of the work which has been proceeding for almost a year now in the Commission on Access to Justice, nine ministers from the provincial supreme courts, including eight women, were invited to collaborate on the introduction of arrangements modelled on the Domestic Violence Office, which operates under the National Supreme Court, in the country's provinces.

This new initiative by the Supreme Court resulted from the interest which the Office had aroused among the members of the provincial courts.

The arrangements established by the Court through the Office, which has begun operations, offers victims of abuse in the family a direct round-the-clock service on every day of the year.

The Office provides information, guidance and an initial legal, medical and psychological assessment to persons requiring this attention.

The Commission on Access to Justice also held a separate meeting in the Palace of Courts to evaluate the initial results of the data collection, which have provided a map of the situation in the country's various systems for obtaining access to justice.

It emerged from this exercise that 22 provinces have already introduced measuring mechanisms, which are at different stages of implementation. The strategies of the Supreme Court include justice information centres, "multi-door" offices, and victim-support and domestic violence offices.

Itinerant justice services constitute another mechanism, introduced in particular in areas remote from urban centres: these services are provided by officials and judges who make regular visits to remote settlements to attend to people's complaints.

A full set of the Office's statistical reports will be found on the Supreme Court's web site: www.csjn.gov.ar – link *ovd*).

Women's Office of the Supreme Court of Justice

By Order No. 13/2009 the Supreme Court created its Women's Office, which chaired by the Minister, Carmen Argibay, and has the following functions:

- Representing the Supreme Court in dealings with the other branches of State power to coordinate the application of the Violence against Women Act and with the supreme courts of the provinces and the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, and the federal and national appeals courts with regard to all matters connected with the attainment of the objectives of Decree No. 13/09;
- Representing the Supreme Court in dealings with other bodies working, with the same aims as the Women's Office, in the supreme courts and higher courts of other countries, for the purpose of exchanging information about the experience gained and the measures adopted to achieve gender equity in the context of the Judiciary, with a view to improving Argentina's system;
- Maintaining links with international bodies concerned with gender issues;
- Preparing the periodic reports required under existing national and international agreements;
- Proposing training, research and technical assistance agreements to ministers and, where necessary, to the other branches of State power, the international bodies referred to in the Act, academic institutions, associations and organizations having a connection with training in the Judiciary;
- Producing reports on the needs and shortcomings of judicial bodies in terms of the proper discharge of national and international obligations in this area, both within the Office's jurisdictional activities and with regard to the interpersonal relations which the conduct of those activities involves;
- Promoting, continuously and with increasing force, the implementation of the necessary gender policies for incorporating gender perspectives in the provision of judicial services and in the sphere of labour relations;
- Establishing the objectives of each unit of the Women's Office, adapting them to the needs emerging from the reports and assessments produced by the management unit;
- Arranging for the publication and updating of information on the measures carried out and on the documents produced by the Women's Office in the relevant section of the web site of the Supreme Court;
- Reporting to the Supreme Court on progress towards the attainment of the objectives set in Order No. 13/09.

Numbers of women in the justice system

In organizational terms the Women's Office consists of a secretariat, a management unit, a training unit, a data collection unit, and a gender research unit.

With regard to data processing and statistics, the Office's data collection unit is responsible for proposing changes in the statistics kept, in coordination with the National Women's Council and the Secretariat for Justice.

The outputs so far include the construction of a gender map of Argentine justice and the production of statistics on women's participation in the various bodies of the justice system at the national, federal and provincial levels.

The figures for the whole country are 54 per cent women and 46 per cent men, while at the provincial level there are 55 per cent women and 45 per cent men. However, the Supreme Court has totals of 58 per cent men and 42 per cent women, with two women ministers at the highest level and 30 women deputy-secretaries as against only nine men, and 22 female and six male heads of office.

The remainder of the gender map shows very large majorities of women in certain areas, such as the federal social security justice system (57 per cent women) and a very high proportion of women in the national labour justice system (64 per cent).

The proportion of women is lower in most of the provinces in the highest post of minister: there are provinces in which the representation of women is very promising, since such representation is unprecedented in the judicial history of provincial districts.

Attention is drawn to the example of the Supreme Court of the Province of Buenos Aires, which has two women members, one of them, Hilda Kogan, the first-ever President of the Supreme Court.

The following provinces have a large proportion of women in the justice system in general and in the highest posts: Córdoba, Chaco, Mendoza, Misiones, Salta, San Luis, Formosa, and Entre Ríos (gender map of the justice system: www.csjn.gov.ar).

Lastly, the Office of the Public Prosecutor has 48 per cent women on its staff, and the Office of the Ombudsman has the Ombudsman herself, Stella Maris Martínez, and 56 per cent women on its staff of assistant ombudsmen.

12. The report refers to violence against women in the workplace and to various bills on harassment and violence in the workplace that have been presented in 21 provincial legislatures and in the National Congress. Please provide information on the status of those bills and on the incidence of harassment in the public and private sectors.

With regard to the information given in the sixth periodic report concerning harassment and violence in the workplace, attention is drawn to the provisions of the Violence against Women Act (Law 26.485), article 6 (c) of which defines violence against women in the workplace as “[any act] which discriminates against women in the public or private sphere and obstructs their access to employment, recruitment, promotion or job stability and security by imposing requirements relating to civil status, maternity, age, physical appearance, or the conduct of a pregnancy test”. Any act which “infringes the right to equal pay for equal work or function” also constitutes violence against women in the workplace. This provision also covers “systematic psychological harassment of a given female worker in order to secure her dismissal”.

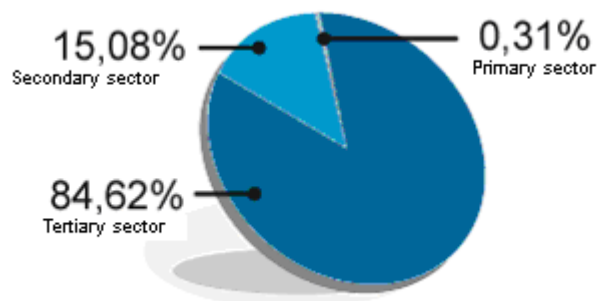
The regulations for this Act are currently being drafted; the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security is working on the workplace harassment section in the Inter-Institutional Commission created by the National Women's Council in 2009.

Where the public policies to be introduced under the Act are concerned, article 11, paragraph 6, invests the Ministry with responsibility for implementing programmes of awareness-raising and training and of incentives for enterprises and trade unions to eliminate workplace violence against women and promote their rights, opportunities and equal treatment in the labour sphere, on the basis of respect for the principle of non-discrimination. The Ministry must also work to prevent sexual harassment and secure the reinstatement of women who suffer violence, as well as ensuring respect for the labour rights of women who have to stay away from work as a result of violence, with a view to complying with the administrative decisions on labour matters and the decisions of the courts.

As noted in the sixth periodic report, the Ministry has an Office for Support of Victims of Workplace Violence (OAVL); this Office has produced a detailed report on the representations made to the Office since 2006: it appears that most of the persons applying for advice are employed in the tertiary sector.

In fact, as shown in the figure reproduced below, some 80 per cent of the applications were made by workers in this sector. Next came workers in the secondary sector (15 per cent). There were also a few cases in the primary sector.

Distribution of applications to OAVL, by sector of economic activity



This distribution reflects to a large extent the structure of the labour market in the metropolitan area (City of Buenos Aires and its conurbation), where most of the jobs are concentrated in the services and industrial sectors. It is precisely in this region that most of the OAVL advisers have been working so far: 74 per cent of them are employed in the federal capital and 18 per cent in the Province of Buenos Aires (mainly in the City's conurbation). It should be pointed out that most primary sector workers are found outside the urban centres.

The incorporation of the "sex" variable in the analysis produced the following results: all the applicants employed in the primary sector were men; the proportions of men and women were similar for the applicants from the secondary sector (51 per cent women and 49 per cent men); and most of the applicants from the tertiary sector were women (62 per cent).

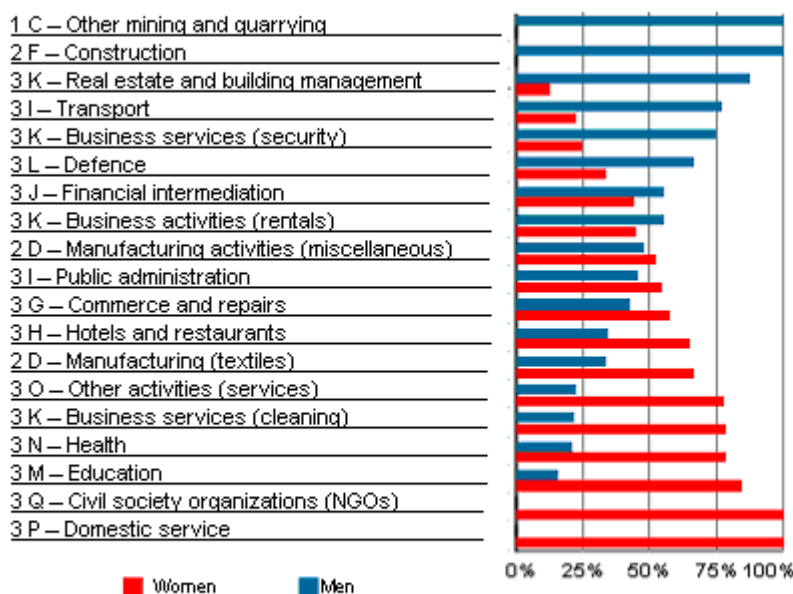
These data raise questions about the factors involved, which may be connected with institutional and cultural issues as well as psychological and social ones.

Information on these factors may facilitate the formulation of working hypotheses to guide the preventive measures needed. This exercise has shown that, although in 60 per cent of the cases analyzed the applicants were women, it is in the secondary sector that the impact of the gender factor is most obvious and significant. One consideration to be borne in mind is that in the labour market women account for 18.4 per cent of workers in manufacturing (2006). One possible explanation for this is that 43 per cent of the applicants from this sector work in textiles production, a traditionally female branch of activity.

In the services sector most women are found in business services (27 per cent), health (19 per cent), commerce (13 per cent), and hotels and restaurants (10 per cent).

To give a more detailed picture, the three sectors and the branches of activity are disaggregated by sex in the following figure.

OAVL – Sector of activity and distribution by sex



Source: OAVL. The numbers on the right side of the figure indicate the sector of economic activity: primary (1); secondary (2); tertiary (3).

Type of violence by branch of activity

Analysis of the type of violence found in each branch also provides interesting data: psychological violence turns out to be the predominant type in all branches, for both men and women.

Physical violence (71 per cent) predominates among the cases dealt with by OAVL in the construction sector, an activity employing mostly men. The following proportions of physical violence are found in other branches: commerce (27 per cent); manufacturing (17 per cent); health (11 per cent); financial intermediation (11 per cent); other activities (11 per cent); business services (9 per cent); hotels and

restaurants (8 per cent); public administration and defence (6 per cent); education (5 per cent); and transport, warehousing and communications (5 per cent).

Some sectors present more cases of sexual violence than others, for example: commerce (21 per cent); hotels and restaurants (15 per cent); business services (10 per cent); manufacturing (9 per cent); other activities (8 per cent); and education (5 per cent).

These statistics were obtained from the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (www.trabajo.gov.ar).

Exploitation of women

13. The report refers to various draft laws on trafficking that have been presented to the Congress. Please provide information on the status of those bills and their content as well as on any laws or measures that prevent trafficking in women and girls at present in the country, both at the federal and local levels. Also, please provide information on what regional and federal strategies and policies exist to prevent, investigate, punish and suppress national and international trade and trafficking in women and girls.

14. The report points out that a specialized unit has been created to investigate crimes against sexual integrity, as well as trafficking and children in prostitution. Kindly describe how the unit functions. Also, please provide information on the number of prosecutions, acquittals and convictions, as well as on how many sanctions have been imposed in connection with those crimes during the period under consideration.

The Law on the prevention and punishment of trafficking in persons (Law 26.364) amending the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure, which was adopted on 20 April 2008, prohibits and punishes all forms of trafficking in persons. It will be implemented under the National Programme on the Prevention and Punishment of Trafficking in Persons and on Victim Support.

This Law classifies trafficking in persons as a federal offence, defines it as “the recruitment, transport and/or transfer, either within the country or from or to a foreign country, or the receipt of persons for the purposes of exploitation” and makes an age distinction between victims: over- and under-18s. In the latter case the Law requires that they must have been introduced into prostitution by deception, fraud, violence, threats or any other means of intimidation or coercion, abuse of authority or of a situation of vulnerability, or offering or receiving payment or reward.

The offence includes the recruitment of persons, either for sexual exploitation, slavery-like practices, forced labour, or the illegal removal of organs or tissue.

The Law imposes quite stringent penalties, including deprivation of liberty for three to 15 years. These penalties are sufficiently heavy and are proportionate to the penalties prescribed for other serious offences such as rape.

The Prosecution Unit on Kidnapping for Ransom and Trafficking in Persons (UFASE) indicated in its 2009 report that northern Argentina, in particular the north-east, is one region where persons are recruited for sexual exploitation and transport for forced labour.

The country's southern provinces are clearly destinations for the transport of persons for sexual exploitation. The head of UFASE, Prosecutor Marcelo Colombo, maintained that most of the persons recruited in the north-east are "adult and under-age women for sexual exploitation and men for forced labour, from Paraguay and Bolivia respectively"; these countries have historically provided forced labour for Argentina.

Since its creation UFASE has established contacts with NGOs, the Secretariat for Human Rights, the Office of the Ombudsman, the consulates of several countries, and the International Organization for Migrations (IOM). This same report concluded that the lack of integrated statistics makes this phenomenon especially difficult to detect and investigate and that only a few cases are brought to light; there is certainly a hidden number of offences of this kind in Argentina.

In 2009, 67 per cent of the total of 195 victims reported were women aged under 21. As a result of these reports, 38 persons were prosecuted; nine of them have been placed in pre-trial detention and 13 have been committed for trial. Progress has also been made in a number of cases: there have been 38 prosecutions and one 10-year sentence has been handed down in Santa Fe province.

Argentina has clearly made some progress as a result of the trafficking legislation, for the classification of trafficking as a federal offence led to the creation of several official bodies, including the Office for Rescue and Support of Victims of Trafficking and special divisions in the security forces.

Where prevention is concerned, the Government has funded media campaigns against trafficking in persons, in particular in Misiones province. It has stepped up its prevention efforts by working with international bodies and NGOs. The City of Buenos Aires has continued a campaign to prevent the exploitation of workers which runs an Internet site and a free telephone hotline to enable the public to report places where people are alleged to suffer this kind of exploitation. The Government has provided training in how to deal with trafficking for national personnel before they are seconded to international peacekeeping operations. Another Government-funded campaign was entitled "No trafficking without clients".

The Office for Rescue and Support of Victims of Trafficking, which operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice, has coordinate the victim-support activities, offering access to medical and psychological treatment and legal advice. It has also provided protection for victims who cooperated as witnesses with the investigators of the security forces and with the prosecution service. The Argentine authorities have encouraged victims to cooperate in investigations and in legal proceedings against traffickers.

The Government does not grant formal migrant status to trafficking victims from abroad, but they are usually not deported. However, trafficking victims who are nationals of countries which are members or associate members of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) can obtain temporary residence in Argentina under its migration legislation.

(Information provided by UFASE (headed by Prosecutor Marcelo Colombo) and the National Programme on the Prevention and Eradication of Trafficking in Persons and on Victim Support of the Ministry of Justice.)

Participation in political and public life

15. *The report points out the low representation of women in trade unions (21.76 per cent), in enterprises and as heads of departments in universities. Please provide updated information and statistics on the participation of women in those areas during the period under review, and indicate whether the Government is considering temporary special measures, as outlined in article 4, para. 1, and general recommendation No. 25, to increase the participation of women in those areas.*

16. *The report points out that a bill was drafted after a number of meetings among women coordinated by the Instituto Nacional contra la Discriminación, la Xenofobia y el Racismo that were aimed at debating strategies related to parity between women and men in the field of enterprise. Please provide information on the status of the bill and on its scope and main content.*

Women's situation and participation in enterprises and trade unions have undergone little change from the percentages given in the sixth periodic report; however, action and measures are being taken to reverse the trend in these areas.

Data provided by the Department of Technical Programming and Labour Statistics of the Ministry of Labour show that women felt the least impact during the global crisis: unlike men, women saw their unemployment rate remain stable at 9.8 per cent in the [...] quarter of 2008 and 10.1 per cent in the same quarter of 2009. However, the male rate rose in the same period from 6.3 to 8.3 per cent. This may also have been due to the fact that women were employed in the activities which suffered least during the crisis: education, health and services. In addition, enterprises retained more women in departments such as human resources. Men lost jobs in the financial sector. This fact also shows that there is extensive specialization at the managerial level: women predominate in "soft" posts and men in "hard" or production posts.

The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, through its Labour Secretariat, which conducts the collective bargaining between employers and workers, is seeking to introduce specific gender equity clauses in collective agreements and is providing training for trade union leaders through the Coordination Unit for Trade Union Training, which produces materials incorporating gender perspectives with the assistance of the International Labour Organization (ILO). However, no updated statistics are available on women's participation in all associations and trade unions. The Tripartite Commission on Equal Treatment and Opportunities for Men and Women in the Workplace (CTIO) is another forum for active participation by workers' confederations, including the General Confederation of Labour (CGT) and the Workers' Confederation of Argentina (CTA), and by employers' organizations; this forum expressed its concern to fill the quotas for female trade union representatives and even more so for female representatives of employers' organizations, since women's representation remains at a very low level, as indicated in the sixth periodic report.

Where participation in enterprises and trade unions is concerned, the National Institute on Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism (INADI) is carrying out the project "Labour parity between men and women in the world of work and business"; the information on women's participation provided in the context of this project is taken from a 2007-2008 survey of industrial, services and financial enterprises

accounting for between 30 and 40 per cent of business GDP: only 40 per cent of the enterprises had any female executives and only 11 per cent of these executives were in decision-making posts.

The project has clear objectives, such as helping to strengthen the capacity of trade union representatives, both male and female, to produce action plans and strategies to remove the persisting discriminatory arrangements and thus to secure sustained progress, in the workplace itself and through workers' collectives, towards effective equality of opportunities and parity of treatment in employment. Other objectives include monitoring the incorporation of diversity policies in private businesses, agencies of the national, provincial and municipal authorities, trade unions, international institutions and civil society organizations in order to promote equality of opportunities in access to employment, equal pay, training and participation in decision-making.

The activities included working meetings in 2009 with women trade unionists representing various trade union organizations: the CGT, the CTA, and the National Union of Civil Servants (UPCN), among others.

Working meetings were also held with women representatives of enterprises, employers' organizations, professional colleges and councils, etc. And seminars and training sessions were conducted on various topics connected with parity, in both employment and business matters, with ILO technical assistance. (Detailed reports will be found at: www.inadi.gov.ar)

As noted in the sixth periodic report, the National Women's Council was involved in the drafting of the bill "Non-discrimination and effective equality between women and men in decision-making in enterprises"; the bill has been submitted to Parliament and is awaiting consideration in committee; this is the latest information obtained from INADI.

In general terms this bill promotes the implementation of positive discrimination measures in enterprises, in particular in the administrative, representative and oversight bodies of private businesses, which should have mixed membership: no more than 60 per cent should be provided by either sex, and it the composition should be proportionate to the numbers of men and women in the branch of activity. The bill prescribes a maximum period of eight years from the date of its promulgation for enterprises to comply with its provisions. Private businesses which fail to fulfil their obligations under the forthcoming Law will be punished by being banned from bidding for public contracts or becoming suppliers to the State.

Among other INADI activities, attention is drawn to the establishment of the Observatory on compliance with the Law on trade union quotas for women. INADI is currently concluding agreements with trade union organizations, for example with the Argentine Association of Communications Workers (AATRAC). The National Women's Council and the Ministry of Labour's Tripartite Commission (CTIO) were invited to join the Observatory as expert members.

There has been little change in the academic world in the proportion of women holding managerial posts in establishments of higher education, but it is important to stress the recent assumption of the post of senior women's dean of the law faculty of the University of Buenos Aires by Mónica Pinto, a lawyer with extensive experience of human rights and gender issues.

Finally, mention must be made of a business experiment which is being carried out under the MEGA programme on enterprise certification and is contributing to the incorporation of gender perspectives and the promotion of gender equity in the business world: this is a very interesting pilot project, initiated in 2009 and set to continue in 2010; it is partly funded by the World Bank under one of its global programmes and is drawing on the experience of similar projects in Mexico, Canada, Chile and Egypt.

MEGA programme on enterprise certification in gender equality

One of the priorities of INADI under the National Plan to Combat Discrimination (Decree No. 1086/05) is to carry out active public and private policies to encourage diversity through the Network of Enterprises for Diversity. The MEGA programme has thus been incorporated as a governmental policy for the design of innovative diversity-management tools in the business world. The MEGA programme is voluntary and is intended for enterprises wishing to demonstrate their commitment to gender equity.

The implementation of this programme is coordinated with the National Women's Council, the Public Administration Office, the CTIO, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, and the Ministry of Industry and Tourism (see the annexed report on the compilation of statistics and outcomes).

The MEGA Technical Advisory Committee met in November 2009 to assess the eligibility of the participating enterprises for the award of the MEGA 2009 stamp of approval. The enterprises' plans were reviewed and approved by INADI, the pre-evaluation reports by the Technical Advisory Committee, and the progress evaluations by the official certifying agencies for the following seven enterprises: Coca Cola de Argentina; BBVA Banco Francés, ADECCO, Sesa Select (a training and personnel recruitment company); Wal-Mart Argentina; Cosméticos Avon; and Mazalosa S.A. (a women's clothing design, manufacture and marketing company).

The Technical Advisory Committee requested the enterprises to work specifically on equity in policies for reconciling family and work, for example the extension of paternity leave and the granting of leave in connection with adoption. It also requested them to take steps to learn about women's and men's attitudes to work, for example by producing sex-disaggregated surveys of their workers' opinions. Lastly, the enterprises were requested to apply the gender equity criteria of the MEGA programme to their value chain.

Specific recommendations were made to each enterprise with regard to the arrangements for continued enhancement of gender equity which they had introduced. The MEGA 2009 stamp was awarded to the seven businesses named above.

Education

17. The report points out that Law No. 26.058 of 2005 on professional technical education redesigns technical education nationwide and that in its article 40 specific actions are mentioned whose implementation will guarantee access to and permanence of technical education for youth (male and female) during a situation of social risk or when facing difficulties in obtaining apprenticeships. It also states that actions will be taken to incorporate women into professional technical education. Please provide specific information on what actions are being

implemented at present to guarantee access to, sustainability and completion of technical education by and for women.

18. The report refers to the National Plan on Scholarships which grants 500,000 scholarships per year to students 13 to 19 years of age who are at risk of dropping out of school. Please provide detailed information regarding the specific requirements and terms of those scholarships for girls or women. Please provide information on the major reasons why girls or women discontinue their education and indicate whether those statistics are kept on a comparative basis.

19. In its previous concluding comments (A/59/38, part two, paras. 382-383), the Committee requested the State to include in its next report comprehensive data and information on the educational situation of women and educational opportunities available to them, including in the area of vocational education. Please provide detailed information on the types of vocational and technical education, disaggregated by sex and field of study.

17. Vocational Training Act

This 2005 Act seeks to unify the country's technical education arrangements by establishing standard curricula for schools nationwide and to improve the quality and encourage the permanent updating of training options, as well to incorporate the gender equity component mentioned in the Act.

At present, there are some 500,000 students attending the country's 1,392 technical schools. This amounts to an 11 per cent increase in technical school enrolment over the past two years.

One of the reasons for this increase was the improvement of the quality of education by measures such as the establishment of the National Vocational Training Fund. In 2004, before the Act was adopted, the budget was 15 million pesos, but by 2008 it had risen to 330 million pesos (a budget increase of about 2,000 per cent).

The measures to restore technical education set out in the Act, the Fund established under the Act, and the support provided through the improvement plans, as well as the Scholarships Incentive Programme and the "Switch on to equality" National Plan, all make essential contributions to the construction of an Argentina based both on economic growth and on social and gender equity.

The National Institute for Technical Education (INET) operates the two programmes, which supplied the following data:

1. The Scholarships Incentive Programme for students in technical schools reached 63,000 students (50 per cent of them women) in 2008;
2. The Technical Graduates Monitoring Programme.

The Technical Graduates Monitoring Programme obtained its initial data from the first national census of secondary students, which indicated that there has been a significant increase the number of women enrolling in technical schools.

Thirty-seven per cent of the students are female in provinces such as Buenos Aires and Santa Fe, which have 80 per cent of the 1,392 public technical schools. Women are traditionally well represented on the agriculture, chemistry and information technology courses but they are also enrolling for technological courses such as electronics. It should not be forgotten that work processes have changed and

that as a result of the automation of many tasks physical strength is no longer a decisive factor.

Eighty-nine per cent of the enrolment intend to move on to higher education, and 87 per cent obtain their secondary education in a technical school.

This Programme, created by the Ministry of Education, produced the first inventory of secondary education. It is undertaking linear monitoring in three stages:

1. The first stage (2009) was to take a census of the 95,000 students in their last year in public technical schools in order to create a profile of them;
2. The second stage will be carried out in 2010: a representative sample of students will be surveyed to determine whether they have taken jobs or are continuing their studies (including the courses chosen) and to establish their gender profile;
3. The third stage will consist of a repetition of the same questions after a one-year interval, i.e. in 2012. On the conclusion of this stage more specific data will be available on:
 - The quality of the students' education;
 - The proportion of female graduates from secondary;
 - The proportion of secondary graduates taking university courses, and whether they obtain skilled jobs and receive higher salaries than ordinary secondary graduates for having followed a double-shift timetable and studied for one year longer;
 - The proportion of women obtaining jobs and the terms of their employment.

Information from the provinces in which most of the country's technical schools are located:

Province of Buenos Aires

According to information supplied by the Cabinet Office of the Province of Buenos Aires and the Ministry of Education, 30 per cent of the current enrolment in technical schools are girls. This means 44,800 girls in a total of 164,000 students in the province's technical schools.

The commonest courses chosen by girls include information technology and construction and electrical trades. The increased female enrolment is also illustrated by the qualifications obtained: one example is that of aircraft maintenance, a course from which about 500 girls graduated at the end of 2009.

The following information was obtained on the main technical schools:

- Technical school No. 3 in La Matanza: about 100 students graduated in construction trades every year. For this course alone, the female enrolment increased by 10.5 per cent over two years. According to the female students and the teachers, the reason for this change lies in the opening up of the labour market and the elimination of discrimination against women as a result of the excellent qualifications obtained by women;

- In the Municipality of Quilmes the female enrolment increased by 20.4 per cent over two years, with girls accounting for 25 per cent of all technical school students: the schools in this municipality had 1,339 girl students in 2007, as against 1,683 in 2009;
- In the City of La Plata girls account for 23 per cent of the technical school enrolment.

City of Buenos Aires

The City's technical schools have a similar number of girl students as the Province of Buenos Aires. According to the City's Ministry of Education, 23 per cent of the 32,793 students in public technical schools are girls. Girls account for 45 per cent of the enrolment in ordinary public secondary schools.

Province of Córdoba

The enrolment in technical schools has grown six times faster than in all the other public and private schools. The numbers of children completing initial and primary education have also increased. According to provisional data from the province's Ministry of Education, a total of 69,086 students have enrolled in technical schools in 2010, an increase of 3,798 over 2009, and 49 per cent of them are girls. In comparative terms, this means a rise of 4.85 per cent in enrolment, a record level when compared with the average increase elsewhere in public and private education, where the rise was only 0.75 per cent.

With this contribution from the technical schools, the increase in the enrolment at the initial, primary and secondary levels, for both public and private sectors, totals 1.12 per cent, representing an increase of 8,202 children for the whole system.

National "Switch on to equality" Plan and National "One pupil, one computer" Programme

Secondary schools will receive 250,000 laptop computers under the National Programme "One pupil, one computer", as it was dubbed by the Ministry of Education. The aim is to provide every pupil with a laptop which can be used at home on permanent loan but which is kept by the pupil when he or she leaves school.

The programme has a total budget of 323 million pesos, 76 per cent of which is earmarked for the purchase of the computers by the public tender announced in August 2009. A further 14 per cent of the budget is to be spent on fitting out of classrooms and other school buildings and on specific technical infrastructure for the programme, such as electric cables and connections for the computers, as well as on the necessary human resources for administering and supporting the programme. The remaining 10 per cent is for training of teaching staff, which will be arranged independently by each province in the light of their specific needs and circumstances.

In this first stage the programme is aimed specifically at the last three years of specialized technical courses. This segment represents about 240,000 students in 1,156 technical and agro-technical schools throughout the country. The priority accorded to technical schools is due to the importance of computers for vocational training and subsequent effective placement in the labour market. The programme covers not only systems and information technology but also agricultural and

construction occupations, for example; it is also intended that students should go on to higher education on completion of technical school. “The objective is to enhance the technical profile required by this sector by means of incremental scholarships to contribute to students’ maintenance and enable them to complete their higher education in a technological or engineering occupation.”

The netbook used by the programme is an Exomate X352, sold by the Argentine company EXO. This model is based on the Classmate machine powered for some years now by Intel. It has a 12-inch screen and an Intel Atom N450 low-energy processor (1.66 GHz). It also has 1 Gb of RAM memory (expandable to 2 Gb), a webcam, a 160-Gb hard disc with a capacity of three USB ports. It can be connected by wi-fi or cable, with an Ethernet modem. It also has a slot for a 3G navigation chip. The software is Linux (Rxart Exomate) and Windows XP: the operating system can be selected whenever the machine is switched on. It also has the Microsoft Office 2007 package and OpenOffice as well. The machines have both general and specific educational applications, for chemistry and mathematics for example. They come with GIMP for image editing, Audacity for working with audio, and la suite for Learning Essentials teachers.

The first batch of machines was delivered in March/April 2010, and the remainder will be distributed in the period August-October.

18 and 19. Education as factor of inclusion and gender equality: scholarship programmes

The 2006 National Education Act posited education for the first time as a public good and a personal and social right to be guaranteed by the State. This is the context in which to view the scholarship programmes, which in 2007 reached 500,000 poor students in 6,673 secondary schools throughout the country. As prescribed in the Education Finance Act, the scholarships are worth 500 pesos each and represent a total investment of 250 million pesos.

In order to continue ensuring that all of Argentina’s children and young people, in particular those from vulnerable social groups, are able to exercise their education rights, in 2008 the coverage was increased to 700,000 recipients in primary and secondary schools. In 2009, the number of scholarships increased as a result of the inclusion of ICT scholarships for students of information and communication technology (1,750 scholarships), with an additional investment of 155 million pesos.

In addition, the Bicentennial Scholarships for students on scientific and technical courses (30,000 scholarships for students taking degree and technology courses) are awarded to poor students who enrol for higher education courses in the applied, natural, exact or basic sciences (degree and university and non-university technology courses). The programme’s annual budget amounts to about 145 million pesos, and the hope is to help 150,000 students over the next five years. University students receive a scholarship of 500 pesos a month in the first two years of their course, 800 pesos in the next two years, and 1,200 pesos a month in their last year. Students taking technology courses received a scholarship of 350 pesos a month in the first two years and 500 pesos in the third. In addition to helping young people to enrol in and complete higher education courses, this programme is designed to encourage them to opt for courses essential to the development of the country’s

production capacity and to increase the number of young people taking courses held to be of strategic importance.

In the period 2009-2009 a total of 41,858 students nationwide applied for scholarships; the scholarships were distributed as follows:

- 26,044 for degree courses
- 15,814 for tertiary courses
- 8,725 for technology courses
- 7,089 for teacher-training courses

Fifty-three per cent were awarded to men and 47 per cent to women. Forty per cent of these recipients were from technical schools and 60 per cent from other schools in the system. To date, there has been an average increase of 9.5 per cent in enrolment for priority courses in the national universities. The courses showing the biggest increases include: civil engineering (+15.2 per cent); electrical engineering (+12.5 per cent); chemistry (+10.8 per cent); food technology (+10.5 per cent); industrial engineering (+8.7 per cent); agronomy (+6.9 per cent); and mechanical engineering (+6.3 per cent).

A further 16,500 scholarships were awarded to students from indigenous communities to enable them to complete their secondary education and to train as bilingual teachers.

As a final comment, it must be stressed that, leaving aside the fact that all the country's education policies, including the scholarship programmes, prescribe criteria of non-discrimination, with a gender dimension, more girls than boys enrol in Argentina's schools and the gender-equity targets have been more than attained in that regard.

The coverage of the education system in Argentina is very high for both males and females, and the literacy rates of young people in the 15-24 age group are almost the same for the two sexes, attaining values close to 100 per cent in all the reference years (2009 report on the Millennium Development Goals). Enrolment figures for males and females over the last three-year period have followed the decade-long trend, with the exception that relatively more boys than girls are found in the lowest levels (general basic and multimodal education), which is consistent with the fact that there are more males than females among the country's population of children and adolescents. When basic education is taken together with tertiary and university education, the female ratio exceeds 100 per cent. This means that there are significantly more females than males at the higher levels of education.

There may be various reasons for the tendency for females to remain longer in education, including the fact that males are usually the first enter the labour market and thus exit the education system.

Table 4.1. Monitoring indicators, 2000-2008
To promote gender equality and equity

Indicators	Years								
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Combined ratio of females in general basic and multimodal education (urban total) I	93.6	97.7	101.4	95.2	104.0	98.0	96.0	97.7	97.1
Combined ratio of females in general basic, multimodal, tertiary and university education (urban total) I	101.4	103.7	106.7	102.2	111.3	104.2	111.0	103.6	108.8
Male literacy rate (%) in the 15-24 age group (urban total) I	99.1	99.2	99.1	99.3	99.8	99.2	99.4	99.2	99.4
Female literacy rate (%) in the 15-24 age group (urban total) I	99.4	99.3	99.5	99.6	99.9	99.5	99.5	99.6	99.6
Percentage of females in paid jobs in the non-farm sector (urban total) I	40.1	40.3	41.3	43.0	42.6	42.5	42.4	41.6	41.8
Pay gap between men and women (urban total) I	0.76	0.76	0.77	0.71	0.66	0.66	0.70	0.67	0.71
Female/male ratio in senior posts in the public and private sectors (urban total) I	0.50	0.53	0.55	0.45	0.40	0.35	0.41	0.37	0.42
Percentage of seats held by women in the National Congress II	s/d	30.6	s/d	s/d	s/d	s/d	s/d	s/d	s/d
Percentage of seats held by women in provincial legislatures II	s/d	22.1	s/d	s/d	s/d	s/d	s/d	s/d	s/d

Sources: I – CNM extrapolation from EPH-INDEC figures.

II – CNM extrapolation from figures from the national and provincial legislatures.

As already pointed out, the fact that females remain longer than males in the education system and obtain higher qualifications is not always reflected in comparative advantages when they join and compete in the labour market. (See data on and measures for women in enterprises and on non-traditional technical education courses: points 15, 16 and 17 of the list of issues and questions.)

Health

20. *The report refers to limited instances in which abortion is not prohibited. Please specify whether the Government has undertaken any measures to decriminalize abortion. Also provide detailed information on how many women were prosecuted for having illegal abortions in the period under consideration and what sanctions were imposed.*

The Ministry of Health has no data on women who have been prosecuted for having illegal abortions. A few years ago it produced a technical handbook on handling non-punishable abortions for the health teams concerned; this handbook is currently being distributed throughout the public health system.

The National Women's Council has been monitoring, as an *amicus curiae*, legal proceedings in which women request permission to have abortions and has expressed itself clearly in defence of the human rights of the women concerned.

A bill on voluntary interruption of pregnancy, entailing repeal of article 85, paragraph 2, and articles 86 and 88 of the Criminal Code, was tabled recently in the National Chamber of Deputies. The main thrust of this bill is to recognize a woman's right to opt for the voluntary interruption of her pregnancy during the first 12 weeks and to obtain an abortion in the health system. The bill also establishes that, leaving aside the 12-week provision, all women will be entitled to decide to interrupt their pregnancy if it was caused by rape certified by a court or police report or a complaint made to a health facility, if there is any risk to the woman's health or life, or if there are serious foetal deformities. Any doctors or other health personnel having conscientious objections will have to make them known to the authorities of the referral establishments within 30 days of the promulgation of the forthcoming law; any personnel joining the health system after that date will be able to state their objections when they take up their posts. Professional personnel who have not stated objections within the time limit will not be able to refuse to perform abortions. In all cases the competent health authority will have to ensure correct professional practices, but it will be possible for abortions to proceed without any prior judicial authorization, except in the case of girls aged under 14, when the consent of at least one of their legal representatives will be required, together with guarantees of the full exercise of the rights and safeguards prescribed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Law 23.849).

21. Please provide detailed information on how many women have reported becoming pregnant as a result of rape in the past four years and how many have died because of illegal abortions. Kindly provide detailed information on any efforts taken to address that issue. Please also provide information on measures taken to raise victims' awareness of the importance of receiving medical treatment after an attack.

This information is not collected at the national level. The absolute numbers of deaths due to abortion in recent years are as follows:

2005: 79

2006: 93

2007: 74

2008: 62

The Department of Maternity and Infant Care and the Programme on Improvement of Post-Abortion Care have been established in order to upgrade the medical care of women who have had abortions. Their main purpose is to provide humane care for all patients with complications resulting from abortion (either spontaneous or induced), including respect for their sexual and reproductive rights and with emphasis on information and guidance with respect to sexual and reproductive health and on the provision of the means of contraception chosen by the users before their discharge from hospital, with a view to avoiding any future unplanned pregnancies, such pregnancies being the main reason why women find themselves in this sad situation.

Health teams are being trained for this purpose throughout the country in theoretical and practical workshops. A guide to improved post-abortion care has been produced to support this training, and CDs with an updated bibliography have been reproduced and distributed, together with a video on this subject made by the Ministry of Health in facilities of the public health system. A leaflet for potential users of these services has also been produced and distributed with the aim of encouraging early intervention (thus avoiding complications resulting from unsafe abortions - the primary cause of maternal mortality in Argentina), determining the demand, and publicizing the available means of contraception.

In addition, some of the country's provinces, the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires and a number of municipal authorities have adopted protocols on the care of victims of sexual violence. In order to correct the unequal access to care services in this area the National Sexual Health and Responsible Parenthood Programme (PNSSPR) has drafted a national protocol on the care of victims of sexual violence, which will ensure exercise of the rights set out in the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This protocol incorporates and acknowledges as antecedents the provincial and municipal rules on this topic; it has the following goals:

1. To guarantee the exercise of their human rights by victims of sexual violence;
2. To reduce morbidity among victims of sexual violence;
3. To prevent pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS by providing emergency services;
4. To ensure that evidence is obtained and preserved, furnish psychological care, and accommodate and treat victims for as long as necessary.

A survey made by the PNSSPR in 2009 indicated that 13.2 per cent of the hospitals which provide means of contraception (90.1 per cent of all the country's hospitals) also have specific services for caring for victims of sexual violence. Only 2.1 of the primary care facilities provide such services.

22. The Committee, in its previous concluding comments (see A/59/38, part two, paras. 380-381), expressed concern about the lack of information on the State party's efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of the National Programme for Sexual Health and Responsible Parenthood and requested the State party to include in its next periodic report comprehensive information on its evaluation. The report provides information on the impact of the Programme. However, 4 of the programme's 10 objectives have not been evaluated because statistical information from 2005 has not been consolidated. Please provide statistical information regarding those objectives so that the impact of the programme in those four areas may also be assessed.

Immediately following its creation the National Sexual Health and Responsible Parenthood Programme (PNSSPR) was housed in the National Institute of Maternity and Infant Care, under the auspices of the Department of Community Health. In 2006 it acquired administrative and financial independence under the Department. At that time it established as its central objective the closure of the

gaps in the provision of sexual and reproductive health services to the people. To this end it proposes to carry out measures to address the key defect in the provision of these services: access to quality care.

In the PNSSPR the right to sexual and reproductive health is understood to mean the capacity to enjoy a satisfactory and risk-free sex life and to decide whether to have children and their number and spacing. This right is the fundamental premise guiding its activities and strategies. Its work is designed to guarantee men and women access to appropriate and timely information on sexual and reproductive health, as well as to safe and effective methods of regulating births, and to provide appropriate pregnancy and childbirth services. The chief priorities are universal free access to the sexual and reproductive health services, equality of opportunities, quality care, and the redistribution of material and non-material resources.

The foundations were laid in 2006 for a unified system for monitoring and evaluation of the programme; although it was initiated only recently, considerable progress has been made with its implementation. In addition, 2005 saw the conduct of the first sexual and reproductive health survey, as part of the National Nutrition and Health Survey (ENNyS), with the principal aim of obtaining information to guide and set the priorities for the PNSSPR in the light of women's needs in this area.² The findings made it possible to identify patterns of behaviour and provided information about women's sexual and reproductive health, as well as facilitating an evaluation of the circumstances and ways in which women exercise their sexual and reproductive rights. In 2009 a set of indicators was chosen for monitoring the programme's implementation from that year and the progress made towards its objectives.

A national system for the supply of contraceptives was established and consolidated in the context of the measures introduced under objective 2 of Law 25.673, which establishes the State's obligation to ensure that the whole population has access to information and advice and to means of contraception. A subsystem for the supply of means of contraception to women and a subsystem for the supply of condoms were established in 2007 as an initial step in consolidating this policy. The target population of the first subsystem is women of reproductive age (15-49 age group), excluding pregnant women, who are not members of a social security or prepayments scheme. This criterion is justified by the fact that, being excluded from private social security schemes, it is these women and girls who are least able to afford means of contraceptive and are therefore more vulnerable. The target population of the subsystem for the supply of condoms is men and women in the 15-64 age group who are not members of a social security or prepayments scheme. Although the members of this group are considered to be of reproductive age, only a very small number of the adolescents in the group are sexually active. Only a few over-65s use contraceptives.

In the period 2003-2009 the PNSSPR distributed a total of 75,954,806 contraceptive items at a cost of 28,418,097 pesos.

² Interviews were conducted in 2004 and 2005 with girls and women in the 10-49 age group living in towns of over 5,000 inhabitants, which is where some 84 per cent of the country's population live. The survey population consisted of 1,612 pregnant girls and women and 6,605 who were not pregnant. In the latter group, 6,092 girls and women had already had their first sexual relations.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total items</i>	<i>Total cost (pesos)</i>
2005	21 085 968	7 000 800
2006	14 690 651	6 343 612
2007	6 576 984	2 476 355
2008	15 377 611	6 857 636
2009	9 326 700	5 739 694

In 2006, 78 per cent of the health establishments in the public sector offered sexual and reproductive health services, but by the end of 2009 the figure stood at 86 per cent of all providers.

A breakdown of the figures for the various jurisdictions over the past year provides a more detailed picture of their differing levels of coverage. According to data from the provincial programmes in the 13 of the 21 provinces which reported in this period (Chaco, City of Buenos Aires, Córdoba, Corrientes, La Pampa, Mendoza, Neuquén, Salta, San Juan, San Luis, Santa Cruz, Tierra del Fuego, and Tucumán), 100 per cent of the provincial service providers distributed some kind of means of contraception. In five of the other eight provinces the proportion of such providers was above 90 per cent: Buenos Aires (98 per cent); Chubut (96.7 per cent); Entre Ríos (94.6 per cent); Jujuy (96.1 per cent) and Misiones (97 per cent). The figures were 67.4 per cent for La Rioja, 53.9 per cent for Santiago del Estero, and 26.7 per cent for Catamarca.

These figures indicate that an average of 91 per cent of providers distributed some means of contraception.

There has been a significant decline in the number of authorized providers of other sexual and reproductive health services, such as post-abortion care, support for victims of sexual violence, and surgical sterilization. And provision of these services is even rarer in the provincial primary care facilities: Neuquén is the only province where these facilities provide sexual violence services, and only Mendoza has three performing vasectomies.

To sum up, the number of facilities in the public health subsystem offering sexual and reproductive health services has increased significantly and fairly uniformly, thus helping to institutionalize the PNSSPR throughout the country.

With regard to the provision of means of contraception, since 2003 the PNSSPR has been distributing, free of charge, oral, injected and lactation-period hormonal contraceptives, inter-uterine devices (IUDs) and condoms. In 2006, with the blessing of Law 26.130, tubal ligation and vasectomy were added to the list. The new national regulations establish that Argentina's three health subsectors (public, social security, and private) have to provide these forms of surgical intervention entirely free of charge and subject only to the requirements that the patient should be of the age of majority and give his or her informed consent. In that same year the PNSSPR added emergency contraception, also known as "the morning-after pill", to the free services available in the public health system. In contrast to the rest of the programme's performance, it is clear that in some cases the provision of these latter two methods, and to a lesser extent of IUDs, has met with strong resistance from providers of health services. Reports and research produced since the establishment of the programme describe the various obstacles encountered by women seeking to

exercise their sexual and reproductive health rights. Other obstacles are connected basically with a lack of information or appropriate resources on the part of users and with sexual violence.

With regard to the target population of the PNSSPR services, the information provided by the provinces indicates that 2,068,951 persons obtained sexual and reproductive health services, including means of contraception. The maternal mortality rate fell from 333 in 2006 to 296 in 2008. Deaths due to abortion also declined in that same period, from 93 in 2006 to 62 in 2008. Hospital admissions for abortion also fell:

2005: 68,869

2006: 67,472

2007: 59,960

It should be added that in 2008 the Ministry of Health introduced the National Cervical Cancer Prevention Programme, whose function is to implement measures to prevent this pathology and reduce its incidence and the associated mortality rate.

23. The report points out that in 2005, 52 per cent of cases of maternal mortality were related to insufficient medical care and quality of health services. Please provide statistical information on the main causes and rates of maternal mortality during 2006 and 2007. Also, please provide information on major efforts carried out to enhance access to quality health services across the country.

Maternal mortality in absolute figures

2005: 279

2006: 333

2007: 306

2008: 296

Maternal mortality by cause

	2005	2006	2007	2008
Direct obstetrical causes	2.1	2.5	2.2	2.3
Indirect obstetrical causes	0.7	0.9	1.1	0.8
Terminations by abortion	1.1	1.3	1.1	0.8

Introduction of the NACER Plan

Since 2005 the Ministry of Health has been promoting in the country's 24 provincial jurisdictions, under the NACER Plan, the introduction and development of provincial mother and child health insurance schemes (SMIPs) with a view to improving, from an "equity" standpoint, the access of mothers and children to a basic package of services, selected for their relevance to health care, which is expected to help to reduce maternal and infant mortality by addressing those causes which can be tackled by means of diagnosis, prevention and timely treatment. These health insurance schemes are to be introduced in several stages and will incorporate new and more complex methods of tackling those causes of maternal and infant mortality which are difficult to bring down, methods such as surgical treatment of

congenital heart conditions, sophisticated maternal and neonatal care, and diagnosis and prevention of a number of chronic diseases. There are also plans to extend the coverage to other population groups, such as children and young people up to age 18 and women up to age 60.

The State has contributed to the establishment and consolidation of these schemes in the form of results-based transfers, which had totalled 363,328,393 pesos by 31 July 2009. One innovative aspect of the NACER Plan is that the transfers from the National Government to the provinces and from the provinces to their providers are tied to agreed, specified, measurable and verifiable outcomes which have an impact on maternal and infant mortality. This investment of economic resources is tailored to the needs of the providers, who decide on the final destination of the funds; this is a noteworthy aspect of this programme as a public health policy which seeks to build up the local management capacity. As of 30 June 2009 SMIPs had funded 12,798,451 maternal and child treatments listed in the NACER Plan. These treatments are delivered by a network of public providers, who enter into annual commitments under the Plan and make it possible to target the efforts of the provincial authorities effectively on the attainment of the objectives. As of 30 September 2009 a total of 5,481 participating providers had received over 250 million pesos in respect of invoiced treatments and the outcomes achieved. These services and care were delivered to the Plan's target population: children up to age six years and pregnant women lacking any formal health coverage for a period of 45 days following childbirth; there have been 1,031,166 beneficiaries so far. Members of this population are identified and listed and assigned to an establishment in the public care network, which must submit reports on the treatment provided, in accordance with the good practice protocols.

The operation of this model is based on a reporting system which facilitates both the allocation of transfers to the provinces and the monitoring of the health outcomes. The performance of the provincial health systems and the results achieved are monitored by means of a set of health indicators which evaluate and reward the best results in terms of the early involvement of pregnant women, the monitoring of healthy children, sexual and reproductive health care, the formation and operation of local death-registration committees, and the immunization coverage, to mention some of the aspects evaluated. In order to verify that the rewarded health outcomes have actually been achieved the Plan uses a mechanism of oversight and concurrent external audit which examines the clinical records of the participating providers and produces regional, provincial and departmental data for the specific monitoring of the care received by the Plan's target population

Strategic Plan for the Reduction of Maternal and Infant Mortality 2009-2011

In 2008 the provincial health ministries agreed at a meeting of the Federal Health Council (COFESA) to implement this Strategic Plan for the period 2009-2011. The following action has been taken so far to give effect to the Plan:

- Identification of the provinces requiring priority attention owing to their maternal and infant mortality rates;
- Guarantee of the "provincial political will" to bring about the necessary changes;
- Involvement of the national and provincial social stakeholders;

- Conduct of participatory working sessions to determine the causes of the problem and propose measures for tackling it;
- Establishment of targets;
- Social communication;
- Signature of political agreements between the National Government and the provinces;
- Joint monitoring of the Plan;
- Evaluation of the outcomes.

Targets

<i>General objectives</i>	<i>Current national situation (2007)</i>	<i>Impact</i>	<i>Targets for 2011</i>
Reduction of maternal mortality	4.4%	25%	3.3%
Reduction of the number of abortion-related deaths	22.6%	50%	11.3% of all abortion-related deaths at all ages
Reduction of deaths from cervical cancer	46.8%	30%	60% of screened women in the 35-64 age group

24. *The report points out that in 2005, the teenage pregnancy rate was relatively high. Please provide statistical information on how many cases of teenage pregnancy were reported during the period under review.*

Percentages of babies born live to mothers known to be aged under 15 in 2005:

2005: 0.4

2006: 0.4

2007: 0.4

Percentages of babies born live to mothers known to be aged under 20 in 2005:

2005: 15.2

2006: 15.4

2007: 15.6

25. *The report refers to National Law 26.130 on surgical contraception, which was passed in 2006 and regulates the medical practice of fallopian tubal ligation or vasectomy. Please provide information on the implementation of that law across the country and indicate major difficulties that have been encountered in attempts to implementing it effectively.*

Tubal ligation is offered by 31.1 per cent of the hospitals providing means of contraception, but only 6.2 per cent perform vasectomies.

There are 11 provinces in which the number of hospitals performing tubal ligation is below the average. In four provinces none of the hospitals perform this operation (Chubut, Entre Ríos, Jujuy, Tucumán); in two provinces (Neuquén, Tierra del Fuego) all the hospitals dispensing means of contraception perform it; and in two provinces (Córdoba, La Pampa) 90 per cent of providers perform it.

The main impediment to the availability of tubal ligation is ignorance of the regulations on the part of medical personnel and the conscientious objection of a significant number of health providers who, on religious or doctrinal grounds, refuse to perform the operation.

The proportion of hospitals performing vasectomies is low in 10 provinces and nil in another five; the City of Buenos Aires has the biggest proportion of hospitals performing this operation (54.5 per cent).

26. *In its previous concluding comments (see A/59/38, part two, paras. 380-381), the Committee expressed concern regarding the increase in sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. Please provide statistical information on the percentage of people infected with HIV/AIDS during the period under consideration, disaggregated by sex, age and ethnic group. Please indicate whether there is a national registry providing comparable data that could facilitate access to information. Please also specify whether any programmes specifically dedicated to women and girls have been introduced to combat sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS.*

There is no statistical information disaggregated by age or ethnic group, only by sex.

Rate per 100,000 inhabitants and in percentage terms

Cases

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Both</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Both</i>
2001	3 640	2 010	5 667	20.0	10.6	15.3
2002	3 288	1 861	5 151	17.9	9.7	13.7
2003	3 626	2 233	5 859	19.6	11.6	15.5
2004	3 760	2 446	6 208	20.1	12.5	16.2
2005	3 257	2 042	5 299	17.2	10.4	13.7
2006	3 008	1 836	4 844	15.8	9.2	12.4
2007	2 765	1 657	4 422	14.3	8.3	11.2
2008	2 434	1 633	4 967	12.5	8.1	10.2

The national male/female ratio of new HIV infections has remained stable for several years at about 1.6 males for every woman diagnosed. At the regional level, there were very small declines in most of the provincial jurisdictions except for Buenos Aires, which remained stable at 1.2, and in Cuyo, which has recently seen a slight increase. At both levels the ratio increased in step with age, with the figure for the 15-24 age group rising to double that of the 35-44 age group, the group in which the widest variations were found.

Argentina's AIDS mortality rate peaked at 59.6 deaths per million inhabitants in 1996 before declining and then stabilizing at 40 per million in 1999. Disaggregation of the figures by sex shows that, while the male rate has fallen very sharply, the female rate had quadrupled by its peak and was three times higher throughout most of the period 1990-2007. The narrowing of the gap between the sexes in recent years has been produced by a bigger fall in the male mortality rate.

AIDS mortality rate, by sex, per million inhabitants

	Deaths				Rate (percentages)		
	Male	Female	Cause uncertain	Total	Male	Female	Total
1990	243	41	2	286	15.2	2.5	8.8
1991	389	68	3	460	24.0	4.0	13.9
1992	631	111	6	748	38.4	6.5	22.3
1993	683	124	9	816	41.0	7.2	24.1
1994	963	232	17	1 212	57.1	13.3	35.3
1995	1 385	363	24	1 772	81.2	20.5	51.0
1996	1 614	440	44	2 098	93.5	24.5	59.6
1997	1 351	438	40	1 829	77.4	24.1	51.4
1998	1 252	421		1 673	70.9	22.9	46.5
1999	1 087	382		1 469	60.9	20.9	40.4
2000	1 120	351	1	1 472	62.1	18.7	40.0
2001	1 092	382		1 474	60.0	20.2	39.7
2002	1 142	386		1 528	62.1	20.2	40.7
2003	1 155	416	2	1 573	62.3	21.5	41.5
2004	1 055	396	1	1 452	56.4	20.3	38.0
2005	923	381	3	1 307	48.8	19.3	33.9
2006	1 015	388		1 403	53.2	19.5	36.0
2007	994	429	2	1 425	51.6	21.4	36.2

The AIDS Administration has produced in conjunction with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) handbooks on the integrated care of HIV-infected women; these handbooks were drafted during field work in each province with the health personnel involved in providing the care (gynaecologists, obstetricians, psychologists, members of local communities, etc.) and with relevant scientific associations. The handbooks cover care, prevention, reproductive health, and legal questions; they are available at: www.msal.gov.ar/sida.

Programmes for the prevention of vertical transmission of HIV and syphilis have also been carried out.

Social and economic benefits

27. *The report states that although in principle there are no limits on women's access to lines of credit, mortgages and other forms of credit, in practice such impediments exist, particularly with respect to access to lines of credit and guarantees. Please provide information on the constraints faced by women in that regard, and specify whether efforts are being carried out by the Government in order to eliminate any de facto inequality between women and men on the issue. Also, please indicate what efforts are being made in that area to address the marginalized situation of indigenous Afro-Argentineans and other minorities.*

The sixth periodic report emphasized the absence of obstacles to women's access to lines of credit and other financial instruments. A set of measures was also introduced by ministries and other state agencies (the Ministry of Production, for

example) to ensure that both women and men have access to various loan instruments. All these measures are designed to reinforce the vigorous policies to generate jobs and stimulate consumption; their modalities and requirements are extremely flexible, so that they are accessible to social groups historically excluded from such policies. Although the sex-disaggregated impact on access has not yet been evaluated, no gender requirements or specific restrictions have been identified.

Set of policies carried out by the Ministry of Production:

- Loans for the purchase of consumer durables: the Government invited banking institutions to tender to provide these funds, setting guide rates of 11 per cent for pesos and 7 per cent for dollars. The loans are for 12-month terms. Consumer loans may be used for the purchase of domestic electrical appliances, clothing, footwear and holiday trips. The target in this group is 700,000 loans. Loans for 48-month terms may also be granted for the purchase of vehicles in amounts up to 90 per cent of the purchase price, at fixed interest rates. The target in this case is 100,000 loans;
- Plan for the replacement of bicycles, utility vehicles, and lorries: loans for the purchase of lorries and utility vehicles, with 70 per cent paid in instalments and a down-payment of 30 per cent or 12 months, and with terms of up to 36 months;
- Exchange plan for white goods: purchase of white goods at a discount when a similar used item is given part-exchange. The loans are for 12 months at a rate of 11 per cent;
- Extension of the incentives scheme for investment and local production of capital goods and farm machinery: this scheme promotes the purchase of capital goods and farm machinery by reducing import tariffs. The incentive operates as a tax credit equivalent to the tariff (14 per cent) which may be applied to the payment of value added tax (VAT), advanced payments against profits and minimum assumed profits, and domestic taxes. In 2008 this scheme turned over a total of 1,004 million pesos and benefited 2,000 registered businesses. Additional conditions were incorporated in the latest extension of the scheme: (i) maintenance of staffing levels; and (ii) a time limit of 60 days for the production of the invoices on the basis of which the subsidy is calculated;
- Incorporation in the tax allowance scheme for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) of a component for the financing of working capital: this consists of loans at a subsidized rate (12.5 per cent) for amounts not exceeding 300,000 pesos, for a term of 12 months;
- Loans for SMEs and micro-enterprises belonging to a value chain: this operates through the formation of regional/sectoral networks for lines of credit to fund the modernization and/or expansion of the production processes of SMEs and micro-enterprises. The central enterprises act as guarantors of bank loans for the procurement of capital goods of domestic origin;
- Promotion of investment in capital assets and infrastructure works: this consists of tax benefits for enterprises submitting projects for investment in infrastructure works and production activities of high social and economic impact connected with electricity generation, hydrocarbon mining and

processing, hydraulic works, roads, railways and other projects designed to expand production capacity in all economic sectors. The scheme provides for the prompt refund of the VAT on the goods or infrastructure works included in the investment project submitted by the enterprise and/or for the accelerated depreciation of goods under the profits tax. Application may also be made for exemption from import duty and accounting and audit fees in respect of new goods or equipment produced abroad and required for the implementation of the infrastructure works.

Rural women

28. *In its previous concluding comments (see A/59/38, part two, paras. 376-377), the Committee expressed concern regarding the situation of rural women, particularly in view of their extreme poverty and lack of access to health care, education, credit facilities and community services. The report points out that difficulties faced in the promotion of the rights of rural women include sexism, violence and other difficulties related to women's health and education. It also states that there is a lack of coordination within various institutions working on those problems. Please specify what efforts have been carried out by the Government to promote coordination between different institutions in order to tackle those difficulties. Please also specify whether the national budget sets aside a specific amount for programmes to benefit rural women.*

29. *Please provide information on how the mortality rate of rural women compares to that of urban women. Please also provide statistical information on infant mortality rates in rural areas compared to those in urban areas.*

The sixth periodic report (Special section on application of article 14 of the Convention) indicated the governmental agencies and described the programmes concerned with rural women, beginning with the arrangements and forums for joint work with various agencies and programmes of the National Government. Contact was then made with a number of bodies with a view to exchanges of experience and pooling of efforts in the incorporation of gender perspectives in the relevant public policies. During the presentation of the sixth report the Argentine delegation will be able to update the required information.

Amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention

30. *Please describe progress towards acceptance of the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention.*

The National Congress approved the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention by Law 26.486 of April 2009.