



General Assembly

Sixty-fifth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
2 November 2010

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 11th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 12 October 2010, at 3.05 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Melon (Vice-Chair) (Argentina)
later: Mr. Tommo Monthe (Chair) (Cameroon)

Contents

Agenda item 28: Advancement of women (*continued*)

- (a) Advancement of women
- (b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly

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10-57602 (E)



In the absence of Mr. Tommo Monthe (Cameroon), Ms. Melon (Argentina), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 28: Advancement of women (continued)
(A/65/336)

(a) Advancement of women (continued) (A/65/38, 208, 209, 268, 218, 334 and A/65/354-S/2010/466)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (continued) (A/65/204 and A/C.3/65/L.7)

1. **Mr. Benmehidi** (Algeria) observed that the feminization of poverty, the prevalence of maternal mortality, violence against women, sexist stereotypes and sexual violence were all obstacles to gender equality and attainment of the global objectives and commitments in the areas of peace and security, development and human rights.

2. The financial, economic, energy and food crises had combined to exacerbate the inequalities and discrimination to which women were exposed, in particular those living in rural areas. The complexity of the situation demanded the help of the international community, in the form of scaled-up assistance to the developing countries to preserve their economic and social stability and safeguard the fundamental interests of women and children.

3. Since Algeria had become a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1996, the Government had made major efforts to amend a wide variety of laws and regulations to eliminate all provisions that discriminated against women. For example, the Constitution had been revised to facilitate their access to elected office and their effective participation in decision-making.

4. The Family Code had also been substantially revised to bring about greater equality in family relations and parental responsibilities. Human trafficking had been criminalized, and the prison system reformed. The country had withdrawn its reservation to article 9, paragraph 2, of the Convention as well.

5. Parity in girls' and boys' school attendance was close to being achieved. Algeria had also made strides to improve health coverage, leading to a drop in maternal mortality from 117 per 100,000 live births in 1999 to 86 per 100,000 in 2008. Child mortality too had dropped from 142 per 1,000 in 1970 to 23.9 per 1,000 in 2008. Those and other similar indicators testified to Algeria's commitment to the promotion and protection of the rights of women.

6. **Ms. Werdaningtyas** (Indonesia) said that the many reviews carried out in 2010 of progress made in attaining the goals of equality, development and peace for all women had highlighted that gender equality was a fundamental prerequisite for development. Despite some encouraging progress, inequalities between women and men persisted. Those inequalities needed to be tackled through their root causes, which included poverty, prejudice and conflict, by adopting action-oriented strategies and integrated, gender-responsive approaches to meet the Millennium Development Goals. The creation of the new United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN Women) was a positive step towards strengthening the political commitment and multilateralism needed to promote gender equality and the advancement of women. The gender concerns of both developed and developing countries should be addressed equitably by UN Women, bearing in mind the different needs and capacities of each Member State.

7. The Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health was another catalyst for international cooperation. Indonesia's national health priorities had been based on Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 and reflected the spirit and objectives of the new Global Strategy.

8. Indonesia's efforts to promote the advancement of women, and thus social development, in accordance with the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women in the region of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), included the Presidential decrees issued to accelerate the implementation of the 2010 national development priorities and to promote justice in the national development programme. Policies and programmes to reduce gender inequality had been launched at the ministerial level and gender mainstreaming had been introduced to regional authorities' planning and budgeting activities. Community empowerment programmes had been introduced in urban and underdeveloped regions to

help poor women. Legislation to combat domestic violence had increased public awareness of that violation of women's human rights and minimum standards had been established for protection services provided to women and child victims of violence. Closer cooperation between Member States to combat human trafficking and coordinated actions with multiple stakeholders to address gender issues were called for.

9. **Mr. Cuello Camilo** (Dominican Republic) said that his country, with its long tradition of struggle for gender equality, had been proud to host the headquarters of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) since its inception in 1983 until its recent dissolution and merger with the new United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN Women). It was important that such research and training was conducted from developing countries as they were confronted with major challenges to the advancement of women. He trusted that the training and research activities of the new entity would continue to be centralized in Santo Domingo and hoped that the work of UN Women would have a greater impact, as a result of stable funding and an efficient, permanent staff.

10. His Government had played a key role in creating equal opportunities for men and women, through institutional reform and public policy, thus providing the basis for social development. A national council had been established to provide financing and advice to micro, small and medium-sized businesses and nationwide vocational and technical training centres offered courses in traditional and non-traditional fields.

11. In an effort to help young women out of the cycle of poverty, policies to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies, through education and better access to contraceptives, had made progress. Other important developments included the mainstreaming of gender equality throughout the national health system as part of the ten-year plan (2006-2015) of the Ministry of Health and the adoption of comprehensive measures to eliminate all forms of gender violence.

12. The Inter-Agency Committee for the Protection of Migrant Women (CIPROM) was responsible for coordinating all Government agencies involved in combating trafficking in persons and irregular migration. The Dominican Republic participated

actively in international forums on that issue and offered support to victims of trafficking through the centre for comprehensive counselling.

13. The new Constitution of the Dominican Republic promised true equality between men and women and it was hoped that one day that promise would become reality.

14. **Ms. Ferry** (Monaco) said that it was important to overcome the obstacles to implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals. Investment in women would lead to sustainable economic growth, an end to poverty and sustainable, long-term development. UN Women would help Member States to achieve those objectives by providing technical assistance and guidance, as well as coordinating the various stakeholders responsible for activities in the field.

15. She welcomed the launch of the Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health. Her Government's international cooperation policy financed activities in the least developed countries to build hospitals and clinics, train medical staff and prevent, combat and treat such diseases as sickle-cell anaemia, malaria and HIV/AIDS. As a result of awareness-raising campaigns and political commitment, notable progress had been made in preventing obstetric fistula. Her Government also financed programmes to improve access to education, training and microcredits to help women play an active role in society.

16. As the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences had noted, gender violence transcended borders, social class and religion. In an attempt to remedy that problem, the Government had recently introduced a bill to strengthen the existing legal framework for the prevention and punishment of all forms of violence against women, children and persons with disabilities, including honour crimes, female genital mutilation and forced marriage.

17. **Mr. Loayza Barea** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that significant progress had been made in gender policies to help Bolivian women, particularly those in rural areas and from indigenous communities. However, indigenous women continued to bear the brunt of discrimination and social segregation. He called for unpaid domestic work by women to be recognized as a social and shared responsibility and as women's most important contribution to social

development, as such work mitigated the negative effects of the current crises.

18. His Government had implemented actions at all levels to prevent and eliminate violence against women and to promote the full enjoyment of all their human rights. In order for women to be able to exercise their human rights it was essential to respect gender equality. The Bolivian Government had been commended by the Human Rights Council for the progress made with regard to equal opportunities, as illustrated by the fact that 50 per cent of ministerial posts were held by women, including indigenous women, and 45 per cent of Senators and 23 per cent of Deputies were women. The Constitution also included 25 articles concerning gender equality, in addition to those which guaranteed other rights, to encourage women's participation in all political, economic and social arenas. Moreover, the Constitution recognized women's rights to own natural resources and land. Efforts were being made, with the help of the media, to inform all women of their rights and responsibilities and to promote a positive image of women and gender equality both in public and private life.

19. The Constitution also established Bolivian women's right to free, safe maternity care, taking into account different cultural views and practices. With the funds derived from nationalized natural resources, the Government had set up the mother and child voucher scheme, which had provided assistance to 550,000 women and children in 2010.

20. **Mr. Badji** (Senegal) said that the recent High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals had noted the progress made towards achieving the Goal 3, but much remained to be done. The participation of women was essential for national development, yet they were underrepresented in the economic sphere, almost completely excluded from decision-making processes and often relegated to a marginal role in education and community matters.

21. The creation of UN Women was vital to improving coherence and standardizing activities carried out by United Nations agencies for the advancement of women, and he hoped that it would encourage Member States to mainstream gender issues in all their development strategies.

22. It was unacceptable that, in the twenty-first century, women's fundamental rights continued to be

violated. Senegal was determined to combat violence against women through awareness-raising campaigns, education and legislation. It welcomed the Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health and the significant financing commitments made at the last summit of the Group of Eight. The Gender Equality Act, adopted in May 2010, provided for complete parity in all elected or partially-elected institutions. Other political, legislative and constitutional initiatives and developments had been introduced to improve women's access to justice, education, employment and health care, among others.

23. **Ms. Millard-White** (Trinidad and Tobago) said that her Government was particularly committed to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women. Advocacy and public education undertaken in that area had resulted in a draft national policy on gender and development, which recognized the cross-cutting nature of gender issues and identified measures for comprehensive mainstreaming of the contributions of women to national development. The election of the country's first female Prime Minister, Kamla Persad-Bissessar, was the best example of the empowerment of women in Trinidad and Tobago.

24. The Government continued to develop initiatives to eliminate gender-based violence, increase understanding by women and men of their legal rights and responsibilities and improve remedies for redress in cases of abuse. The mass media had been used to promote gender equality, non-violence, mutual respect and understanding between the sexes. The radio and television programmes entitled "Gender on your agenda" were particularly important: they focused on the important role of men in achieving gender equality. Gender sensitivity and awareness training programmes were provided for key personnel working in the media, courts, police, social services and other institutions.

25. The Government was committed to the enforcement of gender equality through equal opportunity legislation. Criminal, civil and administrative law in the fields of matrimony, domestic violence, legal aid and advice, maternity, cohabitational relationships, family, sexual offences and occupational safety and health provided for the prevention, punishment and eradication of violence against women.

26. Some 50 programmes for low-income and unemployed women had provided training in

agriculture, tourism and care of the elderly, as well as in non-traditional sectors such as construction and security. Women's participation in national leadership and decision-making had increased. In the Lower House of Parliament, 28.6 per cent of seats were held by women in 2010, as against 11.1 per cent in 2001. Women held leadership and decision-making positions in financial institutions in the private and public sectors.

27. Primary education was universal. Males and females had equal access to secondary and tertiary education. More women graduated from those institutions than did men, but that fact had yet to translate into equal representation in employment at all levels. Improvement was required in that area.

28. While hospital services were easily accessible and available at no cost, health-related issues were a deterrent to women's advancement and empowerment, especially with regard to women's role as caregivers to ill family members. The member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) had brought the issue of the deleterious impact of non-communicable diseases on women's advancement to the attention of the General Assembly in September 2009. General Assembly resolution 64/265 on prevention and control of non-communicable diseases recognized the socio-economic implications of non-communicable diseases for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and called for a high-level meeting of the General Assembly on non-communicable diseases in 2011.

29. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) said that fifteen years ago, the *Human Development Report 1995* of the United Nations Development Programme had first emphasized the role of gender issues in development. Much had been done to equalize gender opportunities since then, but much also remained to be done. At the multilateral level, ongoing efforts had produced several key documents in 2010: the review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Commission on the Status of Women resolution on women's economic empowerment and the Human Rights Council resolutions on preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights and the elimination of discrimination against women.

30. In Colombia, the principles of gender equality and equal opportunity for men and women were enshrined in the Constitution. Its Office of the

Presidential Advisor on Gender Equality played a leading role in activities for the advancement of women. Affirmative actions in the area of employment and enterprise development included programmes to provide loans and training for women microentrepreneurs, the *Banca de Oportunidades* microcredit bank and national and regional microenterprise fairs. The Government of Colombia had also worked with unions and private business to develop an "agenda for labour equality" calling for the adoption of measures to ensure women's inclusion in the workplace. In the area of prevention of violence against women, it had worked with international cooperation agencies to develop a rights literacy programme for women and had established a board to coordinate the efforts of Government entities providing services to women victims of violence. It had also enacted laws aimed at preventing sexual violence against children and providing care for victims of such violence, strengthening the penalties for the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, and preventing violence against women.

31. Colombia welcomed the establishment of UN Women, which was called upon to develop not only a cross-cutting gender agenda for the empowerment of women within the United Nations system and but also a cohesive and effective agenda for the advancement of women worldwide.

32. **Ms. Muhimpundu** (Burundi) said that Burundi had not only accepted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; it had also written the principles of those instruments into its Constitution. It was working sector by sector to remove the obstacles to the advancement of women, including sexual violence. With the assistance of United Nations agencies and other non-governmental organizations, the Government of Burundi was developing a national multisectoral strategy to combat violence against women and had recently received funding to implement it from the Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women. It was also in the process of setting up a pilot centre to provide comprehensive services for victims of gender-based violence. In the Government, women now held 32 per cent of the seats in the National Assembly, 44 per cent of the seats in the Senate and 42 per cent of the ministerial portfolios, and progress had been made at the local level as a result of the 2009 electoral reforms. Cultural barriers

appeared to be weakening as well, but despite such signs of progress, further challenges lay ahead.

33. **Mrs. Bhoroma** (Zimbabwe) said that Zimbabwe had made Millennium Development Goal 3 central to its development strategies. Despite difficult circumstances, it was still investing significantly from its own resources to promote equality and empower women. Its national gender policy continued to promote gender mainstreaming, and in 2009 it had submitted a combined report on its implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

34. However, despite all of its efforts, it continued to be plagued by pervasive gender stereotypes, violence against women, underrepresentation of women in decision-making processes, a lack of male involvement in progressive discourses, and unequal distribution of unpaid work between women and men. Her delegation believed that the key to overcoming most of those problems was economic empowerment.

35. Zimbabwe remained committed to cooperating with all countries and stakeholders in combating trafficking in women and girls and was actively engaged in strengthening its national and subregional responses to trafficking in persons. It welcomed the adoption in July 2010 of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

36. Maternal and child mortality remained high in Zimbabwe. Her delegation appealed for the cooperation of the international community in reducing its high rate of maternal morbidity, including obstetric fistula. Much could be done to eliminate obstetric fistula by improving the health system, ending child marriages and discouraging adolescent pregnancies.

37. Her delegation lauded the establishment of UN Women and hoped that mainstreaming gender equality and the empowerment of women would remain priorities in the new entity. UN Women should be given all necessary financial and technical resources to ensure the implementation of programmes to promote women's issues at the country level. In that connection, it urged UN Women to give priority to strengthening capacities to collect, analyse and use data disaggregated by sex, age and geographical area, which would allow better policy planning and programming and was urgently needed in Zimbabwe.

38. **Mr. Wolfe** (Jamaica) said that Jamaica welcomed the establishment of UN Women and hoped that there would be a smooth transition without programme interruptions, which could adversely affect developing countries.

39. Notwithstanding its limited resources and the impact of the global economic and financial crisis, Jamaica had made progress in a number of areas, including the collection of data disaggregated by sex. Efforts to eliminate gender stereotyping, negative cultural attitudes and other discriminatory practices through ongoing public education campaigns using print and electronic media were ongoing. For example, it had recently introduced a national programme known as Fresh Start Jamaica to encourage positive behaviour changes and influence national core values.

40. To combat the continued high level of violence against women and girls, Jamaica had passed the Sexual Offences Act, 2009 establishing new provisions for the prosecution of rape and other sexual offences. It had also conducted training and sensitization sessions for judges, law enforcement officers and prosecutors, teachers, health care and social workers, and journalists, with technical assistance from the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the United Nations Population Fund, as a participant in the project "Strengthening State Accountability and Community Action for Ending Gender-based Violence in the Caribbean".

41. Jamaica was committed to ensuring the effective enforcement of existing laws and the priority passage and implementation of pending legislation, as well as to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of law enforcement and of programmes for preventing and providing redress for sexual violence. As a part of its ongoing efforts to eliminate gender-based discrimination, it had even added a Male Desk in the Bureau of Women's Affairs in 2009.

42. Jamaica continued to ensure capacity-building for women in both urban and rural communities and had made every effort to meet the needs of rural women, including ensuring their representation at all levels of organizations involved in development and planning. In order to address discrimination against women in public life, it had partnered with several local and international organizations, including the United Nations Democracy Fund, to implement programmes in that area.

43. **Mr. Habib** (Lebanon) said that peace was a prerequisite for implementing the Beijing Declaration and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. He drew attention to women who lived under foreign occupation, and stressed the need to safeguard their inalienable rights and punish all violations of those rights. Governments and the private sector were increasingly aware that women's empowerment had a significant impact on the productivity of society and on economic development. A society could only achieve its full economic and social potential when women and men enjoyed equal rights. Gender equality was also a fundamental means to achieve sustainable development, peace and security. Lebanon believed that equality must be mainstreamed in all United Nations activities and commended the establishment of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, which would, inter alia, help streamline decisions within the Organization on women's issues.

44. Despite progress towards eliminating violence and discrimination against women, numerous challenges remained. Statistics revealed that, due to gender-based discrimination, many girls were denied access to vaccinations, education and health care and that women between ages 15 and 44 were more likely to be mutilated or killed by men than as a result of war, cancer or traffic accidents. Efforts must be stepped up to hold to account perpetrators of violence against women and provide justice to their victims. Lebanon, moreover, strongly supported the Secretary-General's campaign to end violence against women by 2015.

45. Combating violence against women was a priority for the Government of Lebanon, which had recently approved legislation to criminalize all forms of domestic violence and bring perpetrators to justice. A special unit to combat such violence, protect victims and reintegrate them into society had also been established.

46. Lebanon believed that women and girls' education was a vital tool in combating violence against women, as it empowered them to change their societies for the better. In that connection, the disparity between male and female enrolment in education had been falling: overall primary school enrolment rates in Lebanon had reached 97 per cent in 2005, with 98 per cent of boys and 94 per cent of girls in school.

47. **Ms. Kolontai** (Belarus) said that her country welcomed the establishment of UN Women and hoped

that elections for the Executive Board would be held shortly. The Human Rights Council was playing an important role in putting an end to discrimination against women. Belarus supported consideration by the Council of the situation of women in the context of the universal periodic review.

48. Violence against women violated their rights and freedoms and also hampered social and economic development. Implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons by Member States and other stakeholders was one way to prevent violence against women.

49. Belarus had established a system of social service institutions providing various types of assistance to victims of violence against women. Social workers in health care, education and law enforcement agencies received comprehensive training to work with women who were victims of violence. Information and public education campaigns to prevent domestic violence and trafficking in women were being actively pursued.

50. Belarus had received the highest gender equality rating in the former Soviet Union, due to efforts by the Government to improve national legislation and incorporate international legal standards in domestic law. Its women had equal access to education and professional training, and curricula and textbooks were reviewed to make sure that they were free of gender stereotypes. In Belarus, the ratio of girls to men studying in institutions of higher education was 144 to 100. It was one of 27 countries in the world which had achieved the target indicator for the participation of women in decision-making.

51. While much progress had been made on women's issues, those which must still be addressed included gender stereotypes and gender-based violence, in particular against vulnerable categories of women such as ethnic minorities, refugees, migrants and asylum-seekers. Those gaps had a negative impact on attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

52. **Ms. Al-Suwaidi** (United Arab Emirates) said that women's issues were at the heart of development policy in the United Arab Emirates, especially with regard to women in rural areas. Under the Constitution, women were guaranteed equality in employment, social security, education, health care and other fields. The United Arab Emirates was striving to further empower women and had enacted legislation which, inter alia, stipulated women's right to maternity leave

and child care. National mechanisms and bodies to promote women's issues had also been established and the Millennium Development Goals on gender equality and women's empowerment had already been achieved.

53. Women in the United Arab Emirates participated in national decision-making at the highest levels. There were four women members of Parliament and 22 per cent of the members of the National Federal Council were women. Women represented the country as ambassadors, at United Nations bodies and at the World Trade Organization and constituted 66 per cent of the civil service, where they held 30 per cent of senior posts. Women were also prominently represented in education, the armed forces and in the private sector.

54. The United Arab Emirates had implemented a successful national strategy to combat human trafficking and was working to combat violence against women. Specialized family courts had been established in addition to shelters for women and child victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation.

55. **Ms. Barghouti** (Observer for Palestine) said that she had hoped to highlight positive developments for Palestinian women but could not, as their current situation remained critical and therefore required urgent action by the international community. The myriad ordeals Palestinian women faced under Israeli occupation could not be separated from issues they had to tackle as women. All aspects of daily life in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, had deteriorated in the past year, mainly due to the Israeli occupation and the intensification of Israeli policies against the population. Palestinian women had borne the brunt of the dire humanitarian crisis in the territory, especially in the Gaza Strip, and had been severely affected by the systematic human rights violations committed by Israel. Their right to life, to return to their homes and property, to food, livelihood, housing, education, health, development and freedom of movement had been consistently breached by Israel in the most violent and brutal manner. Unbearable human suffering continued in the Gaza Strip as a result of the Israeli military aggression launched in 2008, in which more than 1,400 people — including hundreds of innocent women and children — had been brutally killed and 5,500 injured. Gross human rights violations committed against Palestinian civilians by Israel had compounded the grave impact of the ongoing illegal blockade of Gaza. The

humanitarian, socio-economic and psychological condition of Palestinian women therefore remained very difficult.

56. Life in the West Bank also remained intolerable. Among other things, the construction of illegal settlements and the apartheid wall, home demolitions and settler terror against innocent Palestinians continued to have vicious consequences for the advancement and empowerment of Palestinian women.

57. Since 1967, some 25 per cent of the total Palestinian population had been detained. Although men were most often those imprisoned by Israel, it was the women who bore the social and financial cost and added responsibility in caring for their families.

58. All Palestinian women strove to live in an independent, free and democratic Palestine in which they could focus more on their advancement, equality and empowerment. However, they could not achieve their goals alone. She therefore called on the international community to compel Israel to end its occupation. Only then could Palestinian women fulfil their personal dreams and their aspiration to live in their own state of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

59. *Mr. Tommo Monthe (Cameroon), Chair, took the Chair.*

60. **Mr. Christian** (Ghana) said that globally, a lack of gender balance in decision-making positions and conflict management persisted, and women still constituted the majority of the poor, and in some countries lacked access to and control over resources, which increased their vulnerability to economic and social shocks. Similarly, producing reliable, accurate and timely statistics, in particular gender statistics, remained a daunting challenge for many countries.

61. Women constituted about 80 per cent of Ghana's informal labour force in the productive sectors and controlled more than 50 per cent of informal sector businesses. However, they continued to encounter difficulties in accessing credit, which prevented them from realizing their full contribution to the development of the country's economy. In response, the Government had set up programmes to provide women with microcredit, small loans and agroprocessing equipment, and to enhance their capacity through information-sharing and training.

62. Determined to address violations of women's rights, Ghana had ratified a number of laws, including the Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking Acts banning and penalizing all forms of violence and trafficking and providing rescue and rehabilitation for victims. With the support of development partners and some United Nations agencies, it was implementing a National Plan of Action on Domestic Violence and establishing a secretariat to combat human trafficking.

63. Women's participation in governance and decision-making was being spearheaded through programmes that provided support and training to women taking part in district and national elections. To ensure adequate resource allocation to gender issues, Ghana was promoting gender-responsive budgeting in key ministries, departments and agencies. To enhance evidence-based decision-making on gender equality and women's empowerment, the Government was collecting sex-disaggregated data in all districts. For those undertakings to function optimally, there was a need to enhance collaboration with development partners, donors and stakeholders, and for technical and financial support to Government programmes. Alternative funding mechanisms should be examined and best practices shared.

64. The Government also intended to intensify advocacy and raise awareness on the rights of women and launch a Network of Women on Peace and Security to enhance the number of women in decision-making positions in the country. It also intended to build two new shelters in Accra, and more throughout the country, to provide protection for women victims.

65. There was an express correlation between poverty reduction, women's empowerment, gender equality and the sustainable socio-economic development of nations. For example, the activities of an educated, and skilled woman with access to financial resources had a direct impact on the health, nutrition and educational attainments of her children. Consequently there was a need to enhance the capacity and resources of Governments to achieve gender equality in all sectors.

66. **Ms. Romulus** (Haiti) said that although 51.8 per cent of the Haitian population was female and in urban centres there were 100 women for every 86 men, political life was still dominated by men and Haiti was far from achieving a 30 per cent presence of women in decision-making roles. However, efforts made to

reverse the situation included financial incentives to political parties.

67. In both urban and rural environments, Haitian women bore a disproportionate burden in caring for family members, often in situations of poverty and unemployment. The United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM) had urged that Haitian women should be given priority access to job creation programmes, credit and training opportunities and that the social security system should be better targeted at women. With the support of the Economic Cooperation and Integration Division (CECI), the Government had encouraged financial support for women entrepreneurs, in particular to send their children to school.

68. The earthquake of January 2010 had put great pressure on rural areas, where the food security of more than 500,000 displaced people was under threat. Projects in areas not hit by the earthquake therefore had to be expanded, with an emphasis on domestic food production to reduce dependence on imports. Haitian women's contribution was key to that task.

69. Women and girls living in camps in earthquake-hit areas had also sometimes been victims of sexual violence. The Haitian National Police, in cooperation with the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), had been successful in reducing such incidents. The Ministry of Women's Affairs had launched a vast awareness-raising campaign against sexual violence, especially in earthquake-hit regions, and had sent some 100 officers to housing centres in and around the capital to investigate specific cases, with a view to future prevention, care for the victims and prosecution of perpetrators.

70. Reforms to guarantee respect for women's rights and gender equality had been introduced into the Penal Code. In 2005, the status of rape had been changed from an infringement of dignity to a crime against the person. In order to combat women victims' fear of reprisals from their attackers, the Ministry of Women's Affairs had also launched a campaign to eradicate sexist stereotypes in schools and the media.

71. **Mr. Abulhasan** (Kuwait) said that Kuwait's constitution stipulated that all people enjoyed equal rights and duties, regardless of their gender, origin, language or religion and also guaranteed maternal rights and the rights of children.

72. Kuwaiti women enjoyed a high degree of freedom, particularly in terms of their political and civil rights and in education, held numerous leadership positions, including at the ministerial level, and were prominent in the judicial system, diplomatic corps, police and armed forces. Although no seats were set aside for them in Parliament, women still constituted 8 per cent of elected parliamentarians.

73. In the private sector, Kuwait was ranked first among Gulf countries in terms of women's participation in the workforce and in economic life. Kuwaiti women also ran major corporations. Ensuring women's involvement in society was fundamental. Kuwait would continue to work to that end and would, moreover, continue to contribute to those United Nations bodies that addressed women's issues.

74. **Mr. Mohamed** (Maldives) said that the empowerment of women must involve a three-pronged approach that promoted economic, political and social equality. Progress in those spheres was essential to eradicating poverty and underdevelopment.

75. Female participation in the labour force in the Maldives had nearly doubled in the last 20 years, and that evolution had given the country the ability to endure tumultuous economic shocks. The Maldives would continue to develop policies to realize the fair and safe work conditions, equal pay for equal work and equal opportunity for promotion to which the Constitution entitled every citizen. However, discrimination, diminished market access, increasing vulnerability to crime and loss of family-oriented social benefits persisted, hindering women's participation in the marketplace.

76. Women were poorly represented in Parliament, resulting in a lack of inclusion of gender perspectives. The country was fully committed to encouraging women's active participation in leadership and decision-making at all levels.

77. In 2009, Parliament had signed on to a global call to end violence against women and had adopted a resolution on the subject. However, studies showed that in the Maldives, one in three women aged 15 to 49 had experienced physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives, including childhood sexual abuse. The Maldives had passed a bill on domestic violence very recently, which for the first time allowed for the monitoring of cases. Other tangible forms of

prevention, protection and treatment for victims of violence and trafficking were being planned.

78. In-depth data on the needs and status of women in the country was lacking, resulting in uninformed policies that addressed only the symptoms of marginalization, rather than rooting out its causes. Partners were invited to work with the Maldives to produce a baseline study that examined the social, economic, political and legal status of women in the country from a qualitative standpoint.

79. **Mr. Rakovskiy** (Russian Federation) said that his country welcomed the establishment of UN Women and believed that elections to the Executive Board should be organized so that one third of the Board would be elected each year. How long each country would be on the Board should be determined by drawing lots. The Commission on the Status of Women was a unique venue for constructive dialogue on gender issues among all interested States.

80. The combined sixth and seventh periodic report of the Russian Federation had been considered during the forty-sixth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The concluding observations of the Committee were being analyzed by the relevant ministries and agencies.

81. Measures to improve the status of women in the Russian Federation were oriented towards overcoming the consequences of the global financial and economic crisis. No Government social support programmes had been cut. Women's rights and interests were reflected in a broad range of socially oriented projects. The Government strategy for long-term socio-economic development and the demographic policy framework contained a gender component. That was appropriate, as women in the Russian Federation had traditionally occupied a solid position in the national economy.

82. **Ms. Al-Shehail** (Saudi Arabia) said that Saudi Arabia was committed to involving women in society and was working to promote women's advancement as an integral element of a general strategic plan that was consistent with sharia, particularly in education, health, social services and social development. Several resolutions had been adopted to promote women's participation in national decision-making. Meanwhile, divisions had been established in all relevant Government bodies with a view to promoting women's role in all fields and preparing them for appropriate positions. Other initiatives aimed to promote gender

equality in education, health, social services, as well as in terms of career advancement and retirement.

83. The Saudi Council of Ministers had issued guidelines and implemented measures to reinforce progress already achieved by women and thus achieve a quantum leap in the nature of women's participation in society. Saudi women participated in the Shura Council and in elections, including to chambers of commerce and industry. In addition, they were active in business, in social development and the media and ran NGOs which defended the rights of women and children and worked to combat domestic violence.

84. **Ms. Adeyemi** (Nigeria) said that her country had placed women at the heart of its development agenda, because of political will and sustained dialogue and advocacy by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, civil society and development partners. Nigeria had made efforts to combat maternal and child morbidity and mortality, HIV/AIDS and poverty, improve access and retention of girls in school and increase women's participation in governance.

85. The maternal mortality rate had dropped from 1,500 per 100,000 live births in 2000 to 704 in 2003 and 545 in 2008. In the past year, 2,819 midwives had been trained and deployed to 652 primary health-care facilities linked to 163 hospitals across the country. A model quality health service intervention programme had been launched in 2009 to provide essential medical supplies and ambulances to primary health-care facilities in rural areas. The federal budget for 2010 included provisions for obstetric fistula care and for income-generating equipment for the economic empowerment of fistula patients. In 2010, the Government had approved the establishment of gender units in all ministries, departments and agencies.

86. Full implementation of some international conventions and instruments for the advancement of women, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, remained a challenge.

87. **Mr. Ang** (Singapore) said that the governing philosophy in Singapore was based on meritocracy. The ability of a Singaporean to advance was based not on race, religion, family, class or gender, but solely on merit, resulting from hard work and achievement. That enabled the country to have the best people in leadership positions throughout society and minimized

discrimination, positive or negative, against any class of persons.

88. At the same time, Singapore recognized the importance of gender equality. As a small nation whose only resources were its people, it thrived by developing each member of society, men and women alike, to their maximum potential. Meritocracy and gender equality were compatible. True advancement of women was best achieved when the Government and society provided equal opportunities.

89. The Constitution guaranteed the equality of all persons before the law and forbade discrimination on any grounds. The Women's Charter, in place since 1961, provided the legal basis for equality between husband and wife and safeguarded women's rights in matters relating to marriage and divorce. The Penal Code protected women and girls from sexual and physical abuse, and the Employment Act prevented discrimination in recruitment, promotion and conditions of employment. It also provided for maternity benefits and made it unlawful to lay off female employees who were absent during their maternity period.

90. Education policy in Singapore provided for equal opportunity for both sexes in schools and tertiary institutions. The literacy rate of women had reached a historic high of 94.7 per cent in 2009. Women accounted for slightly more than half of the student population at the nation's universities. Representation of women in traditionally male-dominated courses such as engineering and hard sciences had increased.

91. Government policies had reaped results, with more women choosing to enter the workforce. In 2008, labour force participation for all females had reached 55.6 per cent and 57.7 per cent for married women. The increasing number of dual-income families had reduced the financial dependency of women on their husbands. The income gap between men and women in Singapore was narrowing, especially for younger and better-educated women. Changing mindsets and behaviour to deal effectively with issues of workplace discrimination was a challenge. In 2006, the Tripartite Alliance for Fair Employment Practices had been formed to raise awareness of fair and responsible employment practices and facilitate the adoption of such practices by employers. More than one thousand organizations had signed the Alliance's Employers' Pledge of Fair Employment Practices.

92. Women had also moved into decision-making positions. There were six female Permanent Secretaries in the civil service, as against just one in 2001. Twenty-two out of ninety-two Members of Parliament were women; the first female full Minister had been appointed in May 2009.

93. **Ms. Kavun** (Ukraine) said that Ukraine regarded gender equality, gender mainstreaming and the advancement of women as key to the pursuit of democracy and development and welcomed United Nations involvement in those efforts. Ukraine had made substantial progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals and gender policy had become an integral part of Ukraine's state policy. A law to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men had been adopted in 2005 and the representative for children's rights, equality and non-discrimination had started her work at the Ombudsman Office in 2010. Public awareness of gender issues had also increased. Those trends were reflected in Ukraine's report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, presented in Geneva in January 2010.

94. Admittedly Ukraine's gender equality rating by the World Economic Forum was weakening, with Ukraine ranking 113th in women's participation in legislative bodies. In order to remedy the situation, the gender ratio for members of Parliament, high-level executives and civil servants had been set at no less than 30:70. Other challenges included further developing gender statistics and combating gender stereotypes. A draft document for the period until 2016 had been prepared as the basis for ensuring equality of rights and opportunities. Ukraine believed its gender equality goals were realistic and attainable and it would continue to work to achieve them.

95. **Ms. Horsington** (Australia), speaking on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand, said that those countries reaffirmed their unwavering commitment to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment and that, 15 years on, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action remained the key instrument to that end.

96. Gender equality and the empowerment of women were not only goals in their own right but also an essential means to achieve all the Millennium Development Goals. Gains had been made towards gender equality over the last decade, but there was no

region of the world where women fully enjoyed equal rights. Those countries welcomed the establishment of UN Women and the appointment of Ms. Bachelet to lead it. They also applauded the recent establishment by the Human Rights Council of the new Working Group on discrimination against women in law and in practice, which could provide States with follow-up and tailored advice.

97. The impact of discriminatory laws, policies and practices was demonstrated by the unacceptably high number of women who continued to die from preventable causes in pregnancy and childbirth. The political will shown on maternal mortality and morbidity during the past 12 months was welcome; it must now be translated into action.

98. The recent mass rapes in July and August 2010 in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo were utterly unacceptable and a stark reminder of the work still ahead to ensure that Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security and its related resolutions were fully implemented. Impunity could not be tolerated and the perpetrators must be brought to justice. Women's rights must be protected in conflict situations and women must be able to participate fully in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Australia had committed itself to developing a national action plan on women, peace and security and Canada had recently launched its own action plan. Canada, Australia and New Zealand called on all Member States to commit to concrete, time-bound and measurable actions to ensure that the principles of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) became a reality.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.