



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

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## Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Eighty-eighth session

### Summary record of the 2061st meeting\*

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 14 May 2024, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Peláez Narváez

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Convention (*continued*)

*Ninth periodic report of the Republic of Korea*

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\* No summary record was issued for the 2060th meeting.

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.00 a.m.*

**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention** (*continued*)

*Ninth periodic report of the Republic of Korea* ([CEDAW/C/KOR/9](#); [CEDAW/C/KOR/Q/9](#); [CEDAW/C/KOR/RQ/9](#))

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of the Republic of Korea joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that, under the Framework Act on Gender Equality, the Government had set up the Gender Equality Committee to oversee and coordinate gender equality policies across ministries. In 2019, gender equality departments in eight major ministries and a new interministerial consultative body had been established.
3. The Third Basic Plan for Gender Equality Policies, launched in 2023, aimed to promote gender equality policies by incorporating the results of the third fact-finding survey on gender equality and the feedback collected from a public call for gender equality policy ideas. Over the previous five years, a total of 150,000 gender impact assessments had been conducted for laws and projects at the central and local levels, in addition to specific gender impact assessments for 49 policies related to employment, health care and welfare.
4. The 2024 gender-responsive budget stood at approximately \$17.3 billion, which represented a 3.2-fold increase since 2010. A consultative body for gender-responsive budgeting, comprising officials of relevant ministries and private sector experts, had been introduced in 2021.
5. The Third Plan for Improving Gender Representation in the Public Sector (2023-2027) aimed inter alia to increase women's representation in substantive decision-making positions, for example by increasing the percentage of females in the senior civil service to 13.5 per cent by 2027 and promoting gender-balanced participation in the public sector.
6. To address relatively low levels of women's political participation, the Government had asked political parties to ensure that female candidates accounted for at least 50 per cent of the proportional representation nominations and at least 30 per cent of the local constituency nominations for posts to be filled under the Public Official Election Act. Such institutional efforts had contributed to a small yet steady increase in the percentage of elected female lawmakers.
7. Following an amendment made to the Financial Investment Services and Capital Markets Act in 2020 to discourage single gender boards of directors, the percentage of female board executives had increased from 4.9 per cent in 2020 to 16.3 per cent in 2023. From 2024, the Government planned to provide diversity training to human resources staff in private companies to encourage them to promote gender balance in the workplace.
8. To prevent violence against women, the Framework Act on Prevention of Violence against Women and the First Basic Plan of Policies to Prevent Violence against Women (2020–2024) had been drawn up. Key policy matters were deliberated by a Committee on the Prevention of Violence against Women, which included officials from 15 ministries and private sector representatives. A fact-finding survey on violence against women was carried out every three years to ensure that policies were evidence-based.
9. The enactment of the Act on Punishment of Stalking Crime and the Act on the Prevention of Stalking and Protection of Victims imposed stricter penalties for stalking and provided victims with enhanced support. Furthermore, related laws had been amended to increase the terms of statutory sentences for digital sex crimes and impose punishment for watching, possessing, purchasing and storing digital sex crime materials, as well as for producing them. Measures to enhance the responsibility of internet service providers to prevent the distribution of digital sex crime materials had also been strengthened.
10. The Advocacy Center for Online Sexual Abuse Victims had been launched to provide support such as counselling services, medical and legal assistance and help in deleting online content. Since its inception, the number of cases of victim support had significantly increased, from 34,000 in 2018 to 276,000 in 2023.

11. The Framework Act on Gender Equality and the Sexual Violence Prevention and Victims Protection Act had been revised in 2021 to aim to eradicate sexual harassment and sexual violence in the public sector. Public agencies were now required to report instances of sexual harassment or sexual violence to the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family without delay and to submit a plan to prevent reoccurrence within three months. Failure to comply with such obligations could lead to sanctions.

12. The Act on Prevention of Human Trafficking and Protection of Victims, which had entered into force in January 2023, set out the definitions of human trafficking and related crimes, in line with international standards. The Council for Policy Coordination on Prevention of Human Trafficking had subsequently developed the First Comprehensive Plan for the Prevention of Human Trafficking.

13. The Government had established indicators for identifying and protecting victims of human trafficking as early as possible. It had created a hotline dedicated to victims of human trafficking and taken steps to raise public awareness of the problem. Mandatory training was offered to approximately 180,000 officials who worked directly or indirectly with human trafficking victims. An emergency hotline and support centres were available for women who were victims of violence, in addition to counselling centres for victims of domestic or sexual violence.

14. The 42 educational support centres for women with disabilities offered counselling, information on legal, medical, housing and employment support and tailored capacity-building programmes. For women who immigrated for marriage, 231 multicultural family support centres provided counselling, translation and interpretation, Korean language courses and referral to other support agencies to help them integrate into society. Such centres had partnered with Women's Re-employment Centers to support the economic participation of marriage immigrants.

15. The Government was implementing projects to empower rural women, raise awareness of gender equality in agriculture and promote a gender-equal culture in rural areas. Since 2022, women farmers had been entitled to medical examinations every other year so that they could be screened for occupational diseases such as pesticide poisoning.

16. Low-income single-parent families were entitled to welfare benefits, such as a child-rearing allowance. In 2024, the Government had scaled up support by raising the age limit for the child-rearing allowance and expanding the scope of eligibility. It planned to continue raising the income threshold for the exclusion of eligibility for welfare allowances and to expand the types of support offered so that it would go beyond financial assistance.

17. To prevent career discontinuation among mothers and to increase women's participation in the labour market, the Women's Re-employment Centers offered comprehensive support and assistance. The vocational training that they provided was being expanded to include jobs in emerging technologies and fast-growing sectors as well as key local industries.

18. A working hours reduction subsidy was provided to businesses to promote flexible working arrangements for employees with young children, and a Family-Friendly Business Certification Programme had been introduced. By 2023, more than 5,900 companies had thus been certified as family-friendly.

19. The Government was endeavouring to tackle gender discrimination in employment through affirmative action. Since 2020, private and public organizations had been required to submit information on pay differences by gender, and the Government had released a list of employers that failed to comply. Between 2018 and 2022, the gender pay gap had decreased from 34.1 per cent to 31.2 per cent.

20. The Government recognized the importance of women's empowerment for economic and social development and collaborated with experts across the world on gender equality policy. It supported developing countries by offering vocational programmes for women and by 2023 had contributed \$59 million to UN Women. In August 2022, the UN Women Centre of Excellence for Gender Equality had been established in Seoul. The Centre facilitated research and development projects, education, training and partnership building.

21. **A representative of the National Human Rights Commission of Korea** said that the national gender equality policy was being weakened. The Government had announced plans to abolish the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. The post of minister had been left unfilled since the former minister's resignation, and there had been a drastic reduction in the national gender equality budget and the removal of the term "women" from various gender policies. The National Human Rights Commission urged the Government to strengthen the Ministry rather than abolish it.

22. Furthermore, the Government should make concrete efforts to implement the Committee's recommendation to provide full reparations to victims of human trafficking without delay and to strengthen its system for identifying, protecting and supporting victims of trafficking. It was also important for the Government to enhance the representation of women in various sectors. In the April 2024 general elections, women were elected to just 20 per cent of the seats in the National Assembly.

23. The Commission wished to highlight the need for affirmative action to address the gender pay gap, which still left women with earnings that were just 64 per cent as high as those of men. It was also imperative that the Government should implement measures to facilitate access to safe abortion services in the wake of a decision by the Constitutional Court to decriminalize abortion. The Government should respond to the rise in the use of conditional suspension of indictment in domestic violence cases, whereby family preservation was given priority over the protection of the rights of victims. Gender-based violence demanded an active response, including corresponding legal developments, amid the rise of technology-facilitated sexual violence.

24. Lastly, the Republic of Korea should withdraw its reservation to the Convention, approve the reform of the law on patrilineal surnames and enhance the independence of the National Human Rights Commission.

#### *Articles 1–6*

25. **Ms. de Silva de Alwis** said that she would like to know the status of a bill that had been introduced to amend the article of the Civil Act that required children to assume their father's surname, and also whether the State party would consider removing the reservation to article 16 (1) (g) of the Convention, on the right to choose a family name.

26. She would be interested in obtaining information on the Government's plans to ensure that women had access to safe abortion and that abortion was covered by national health insurance, and on the status of bills that had been proposed to comply with the ruling of the Constitutional Court to decriminalize abortion.

27. She wondered when the State party would draft an intersectional anti-discrimination law to support the strong anti-discrimination provision in article 11 of the Constitution, and whether the Government would consider withdrawing a bill amending the Government Organization Act that would dismantle the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. The Committee would welcome further information on the potential incorporation of the Ministry into the Ministry of Health and Welfare.

28. She would like to learn whether the Government would adopt proposals to amend the law on rape so as to remove the requirement for cases to include violence or intimidation and to include the lack of affirmative consent, such as free and voluntary consent, as a basis for prosecuting rape. She also wished to hear how the State party intended to address fears that victims of sexual harassment might be doubly victimized by the threat of punishment for so-called false accusations of sexual abuse.

29. It would be of interest to the Committee to know how the Government planned to replace harmful narratives surrounding feminism with positive, gender-equal rhetoric and to ensure that article 36 of the Constitution included the sharing of parental rights.

30. Given the growing spectrum of security challenges and the increasing proliferation of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles in the region, she would be curious to hear how women were involved in devising counter-missile strategies and in supporting the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

31. The Committee would be grateful for further details on how a budget to support victims of sexual slavery would be incorporated into the national action plan and how the Government party intended to ensure that the historical and current narrative relating to comfort women was accurate, such as through the revision of textbooks and school curricula.

32. She would welcome information on the State party's plans to adopt a bill on protection, support and commemorative projects for the victims of military sexual slavery and on the implementation of the ruling of the Supreme Court to provide reparations to the comfort women of the military camptown of the United States of America.

33. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that the provision of the Civil Act relating to the patrilineal naming system was being amended following the ruling of the Constitutional Court on the unconstitutionality of the *hoju* family registration system in 2005. It was necessary to devise an alternative system to promote women's rights and contribute to a gender-equal society.

34. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that further research involving public participation and consideration of systems used in other countries would be needed in order to adopt a different way of determining children's surnames.

35. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that, in order to withdraw the reservation to article 16 (1) (g) of the Convention, the patrilineal principle would need to be abolished, which would require the Civil Act to be amended. If the article in question was interpreted to mean that equal rights were to be ensured between men and women in relation to family surnames, the existing legislation did not violate the provision, as getting married did not automatically change the wife's surname to that of the husband. According to the Civil Act, if agreed at the time of marriage, a child could assume the mother's surname, and when the mother, father or child requested a surname change, the change could be made with a court's permission.

36. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that the Constitutional Court's finding that certain provisions of the country's abortion legislation were non-compliant with the Constitution did not amount to a decision declaring that legislation to be unconstitutional. The Court had called neither for the complete removal of the crime of abortion from the Criminal Act, nor for an order legalizing all induced abortions. The Government had respected the Court's decision. It supported legislative efforts by submitting bills to the National Assembly to amend the provisions on induced abortion in the Criminal Act and the Mother and Child Health Act. In total, nine bills had been proposed, and they had been discussed on three occasions by the National Assembly's Health and Welfare Subcommittee. As the time limits set by the Constitutional Court had expired before legislative amendments had been enacted, the existing provisions on abortion had lost their punitive effect.

37. As from August 2021, medical consultations on induced abortions had been covered by the country's national health insurance. The purpose was to help women obtain reliable information on the subject from specialized medical professionals.

38. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that procedures were currently in place to provide reparations for discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and that other means, including policy improvement recommendations, were being used to improve awareness of bias against sexual minorities. Four different versions of a bill on equality and on the prohibition of discrimination had been proposed in the National Assembly, and a public hearing had been held in May 2022 to review the bill. The principle of equality enjoyed widespread public support, but a more careful approach was needed, and further constructive discussion would be required in order to build social consensus on the issue.

39. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that a bill to amend the Government Organization Act was currently before the National Assembly. It included a provision to merge the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family with the Ministry of Health and Welfare in order to help the functioning and efficiency of the former. The reorganization would not lead to a deterioration in women's rights or a reduction in gender equality policies. Such policies were difficult to implement effectively in isolation and could benefit from being integrated with broader social policies such as those relating to women's health, health care, childbirth, child-rearing, poverty, income security, older persons and persons with disabilities.

The merger could ensure that gender equality perspectives were reflected throughout the life cycle of citizens.

40. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that careful consideration and discussions involving society as a whole would be required on the subject of introducing a crime of non-consensual sex. There were concerns that introduction of such an offence would shift the burden of proof onto the defendant and could undermine women's agency and capacity.

41. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that the penalties imposed on offenders in cases of sexual discrimination and secondary victimization were outlined in criminal provisions. The Equal Employment Opportunity and Work-Family Balance Assistance Act included provisions designed to protect harassed employees, for example by allowing for the possibility to change workplace, transfer to a different position or take paid leave. Perpetrators could face 3 years in prison or a fine of up to 5 million won. Since May 2022, companies that failed to take measures to protect harassed workers could have their cases referred to the National Labor Commission and could be subjected to corrective orders, with substantial remedies going to victims.

42. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that, in 2024, the fourth National Action Plan for Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women and Peace and Security 2014–2018 had been adopted. The Government was taking steps to expand women's participation in the relevant areas, especially in relation to peacebuilding policies and decision-making processes. Women now held more than 50 per cent of director positions in the country's foreign policy department and accounted for more than 30 per cent of senior civil servants working on unification and defence policy.

43. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that the Government viewed the 2015 Korea-Japan "Comfort Women" Agreement as an official agreement. The Government used that document as a reference as it continued to make efforts to resolve the situation of comfort women. Victims received support in the form of payments to cover living and medical expenses. In order to raise awareness of the issue and restore the honour and dignity of victims, the subject was included in education curricula and an annual remembrance day was held. An art competition focusing on the subject was held for young people, and digital content had been distributed online. Support was also provided to experts to conduct research on the subject.

44. A bill had been submitted to the National Assembly calling for support to be provided to comfort women visited by members of the United States military. The Government was actively participating in discussions on the bill and had set up centres in Gyeonggi Province, where many of the victims lived, to provide support for their daily needs. It would continue to consult with local governments to support victims.

45. **Ms. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen** said that she would like to know what steps the State party had taken to comply with the recommendations made by Committee in its recent decision on an individual communication. The communication related to the trafficking of three young Filipino women for sexual purposes in a prostitution facility located near a United States military base. The recommendations included revising the current E-6-2 visa category; strengthening the monitoring of entertainment companies that recruited foreign women; taking measures to ensure that the relevant G-1 visa category was applied to all female victims of trafficking; working to reduce demand for sexual services, which fostered exploitation of prostitution and led to trafficking in persons, in particular women and girls; pursuing all appropriate means to eradicate trafficking and exploitation of prostitution; and ensuring that the appropriate laws, systems, regulations and funding were in place to those ends. She wished to know whether discussions been held on such topics with representatives of the United States military base, either directly or through diplomatic channels.

46. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that the Government had recently submitted a report to the Committee in response to its findings on the individual communication filed by the three Filipino women in 2018. The report mentioned a plan of action to implement each of the Committee's recommendations, to prevent human trafficking and raise social awareness about the issue, to improve the E-6-2 visa system and to educate law enforcement officials. The Committee's Views had been translated into Korean and

posted online in order to improve the public's understanding of procedures under the Optional Protocol to the Convention. The Human Trafficking Prevention Act had come into force in 2023 and included provisions to provide foreign victims of human trafficking with legal, medical and accommodation support, vocational training and education. The Act also aimed to help resolve problems relating to expired visas and employment and to help victims of trafficking return to their home countries.

47. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that, in 2020, the Supreme Court had dismissed all of the claims made against the State in connection with the 2018 individual communication. The complainants had filed a new lawsuit in 2023, and the Government would take appropriate measures depending on its outcome.

48. **Ms. Morsy** said that she would like the delegation to provide information on the coordination between the various mechanisms in the State party's multi-layered gender architecture, which included the Gender Equality Committee, the Pan-governmental Monitoring Task Force for Eliminating Sexual Harassment and Violence and the interministerial consultative body comprising gender focal points. She would also like the delegation to clarify the reasons behind cuts to the budget of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family.

49. The Committee wished to receive information about changes made to performance indicators used in the Government's Gender Impact Assessment and the possible impact of the changes on women's empowerment and gender equality in the country. She wondered how the Government planned to improve the effectiveness of the Gender Impact Assessment, including by expanding the human and financial resources allocated to the division of the Ministry responsible for running it.

50. She would like to know whether there were plans to downgrade the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family to directorate status; how such a change might affect gender mainstreaming; whether it would affect the body's ability to comprehensively monitor the situation of women, formulate new policies and effectively carry out strategies to eliminate discrimination; and what would be done to ensure that the body would be equipped with the human, financial and technical resources it needed in order to do its work.

51. She wondered whether the Government had any plans to address structural barriers that could result in discrimination in the country and what mechanisms were in place to ensure the involvement of women's organizations in the adoption and implementation of public policies. Lastly, she wished to know of any steps taken to reinforce the gender equality and women's rights mandate of the National Human Rights Commission and to ensure that it received sufficient human, financial and technical resources to strengthen its work combating gender-based discrimination.

52. **Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia** said that she wished to know to what extent existing legislation, provisions and administrative measures had been effective in eliminating stereotypes and other structural and systemic barriers to gender equality across sectors; what steps had been taken to implement recommendations made by the National Human Rights Commission to ensure the political representation of women; and what plans were under way to achieve gender parity in elected and appointed offices, in line with the target set out in the Committee's draft general recommendation No. 40.

53. She wondered how the sustainability of temporary special measures was being ensured for a long-term impact, and she would like to receive comprehensive information about temporary special measures in sectors other than the public and education sectors. Were such measures intended to achieve targets, including quotas, affirmative action policies, incentives, innovations, targeted recruitment efforts, mentoring programmes or flexible work arrangements, in both public and private sector institutions? It would be interesting to know how performance and progress were tracked and what concrete measures were envisaged to increase the proportion of women in senior officer ranks in the armed forces and the industrial infrastructure sector, especially in Gyeonggi Province.

54. The Committee would like to hear an update on progress made in the use of regulatory policies to drive private sector funds to promote the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, affirmative procurement in public-private partnerships and

investment forecasting in core economic sectors. It would also like to know what indicators were used to benchmark success in the implementation of the Committee's general recommendations and concluding observations and how challenges were addressed in order to improve compliance with the standards set out in them.

55. She would appreciate information about steps planned by the Government, in addition to existing measures, to address concerns of regression in the country's gender equality architecture for promoting the advancement of women. Lastly, the Committee would appreciate it if the delegation could provide a comprehensive overview of the State party's whole-of-government affirmative action plan to constructively address women's rights protection and support for all categories of women, including women belonging to more vulnerable categories, and to provide enhanced access to specialized counselling centres, shelter and sexual and reproductive health services, including disability-inclusive sex education.

56. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that the Gender Equality Committee, which was made up of 15 members of the Government and 10 civilian members, discussed and coordinated important matters relating to gender equality policies. It scrutinized implementation of the Basic Plan for Gender Equality Policies, assessed the level of gender equality in the country, considered institutional improvements and took stock of overseas policies for narrowing gender awareness gaps.

57. In 2019, the Government had appointed gender focal points in various key ministries. Together, they served as a consultative body for coordinating gender equality policies between those ministries. As to the gender equality indicators, they had not been removed but rather replaced with more specific indicators to increase the effectiveness of gender impact assessments. Since 2022, projects funded by the gender-sensitive budget had been subject to performance evaluations and visibility reviews by a specialized evaluation committee affiliated with the Gender Budgeting and Settlement Council. To further support the efficient functioning of the gender-sensitive budgeting system, a consultative body comprising representatives of relevant ministries had been established in June 2014 – following the establishment of the relevant regulations – and had served until December 2020. As to the participation of women's organizations, the Government guaranteed opportunities for civil society organizations to participate in various institutional mechanisms, including policy decision-making processes and project delivery systems. In addition, representatives of women's organizations had been appointed as civilian members of the Gender Equality Committee, which oversaw gender equality policy.

58. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that, when budgeting for 2024, the Government had thoroughly reviewed the different projects and programmes, including their effectiveness. It had been obliged to scale down the budget allocation for some and, where priority was high, scale it up for others. Specifically in the field of gender equality, some of the budget changes had been due to an overhaul of the project delivery system designed to increase efficiency. Every effort was made to ensure that the national budget was distributed effectively.

59. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that, since 2013, there had been an increase year after year in the representation of women in high-ranking positions in public sector agencies. The goal now was to increase the percentage of the representation of women from 13 to 33 per cent. In line with the Framework Act on Gender Equality, representation of any gender would be capped at 60 per cent. The results of efforts to increase the representation of women in the public sector were routinely compiled and sent to the Gender Equality Committee.

60. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that to eliminate gender discrimination and promote equality in private sector employment, efforts had been made to encourage companies to comply with set standards for the employment of women. The number of participating companies continued to grow. Since 2020, any companies that failed to comply were publicly named. As a result, representation of women in the private sector, including in management positions, continued to increase. In addition, the number of female executives had risen since the enactment of the Financial Investment Services and Capital



Markets Act, which called for listed corporations with a market capitalization exceeding two trillion won to have both men and women on their boards of directors.

61. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that representation of women in political life was bolstered by the Public Official Election Act, which stipulated that a minimum number of nominees for local elections must be women. Under other national legislation, political parties must dedicate 10 per cent of the financial support that they received to activities for the promotion of women candidates, identification of women with political talent and the development of the political influence of women. In 2018, the Ministry of National Defense had abolished restrictions on the assignment of women to the military, thereby preventing gender-based discrimination in military hiring practices. The proportion of women serving as military personnel had been 10 per cent in 2023 and was on track to increase to 17 per cent by 2027.

62. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that the Government had put in place a number of legal protections for vulnerable women. Victims of sexual violence and human trafficking who did not have a lawyer were provided with legal counsel by the State. Since the review of the previous periodic report, several pieces of legislation had been enacted, including the Framework Act on Prevention of Violence against Women. In addition, the Equal Employment Opportunity and Work-Family Balance Assistance Act had been amended to further promote gender equality.

63. **Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia** said that she would be grateful if the delegation would provide information on temporary special measures in place to promote employment equality in key economic sectors such as energy, trade, technology and infrastructure. The delegation might also outline the extent to which the State party's affirmative action indicators and targets were in line with the provisions of the Convention, national development priorities and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Information on the accountability measures envisaged for tracking and sustaining performance in respect of gender equality and enhancing inclusive competitiveness in key sectors would be welcome.

64. **Ms. de Silva de Alwis** said that she wondered whether the Government might consider withdrawing the bill before the National Assembly that would restructure the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. She would be grateful if the delegation would outline how the State party ensured the independence of the National Human Rights Commission.

65. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that his delegation would respond in writing to the question regarding information about temporary special measures in key economic sectors once the relevant data had been compiled. The Government's stance on the bill on the restructuring of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, which was already being discussed by the National Assembly, remained unchanged.

66. **Ms. Rana** said that she welcomed the invalidation by the Constitutional Court of the patriarchal *hoju* system but noted that deep-rooted and discriminatory gender stereotypes persisted in many spheres, including the home, the workplace and the educational system. She would therefore be interested to know about specific plans and programmes in place to address gender stereotypes and change mindsets and would like to find out whether any awareness-raising programmes targeted men, boys and young people. Although laws addressing gender-based violence existed in the State party, their implementation and enforcement appeared weak. The Committee had received reports indicating that the judiciary was excessively lenient towards perpetrators of domestic and gender-based violence, many of whom received light or suspended sentences. Moreover, all references to in the Third Basic Plan of Policies to Prevent Violence against Women to the word "women" had been either replaced with words like "family" or deleted altogether, and the budget for the prevention of violence against women and for supporting victims of violence had been reduced. She therefore wished to learn about measures that would be taken by the Government to strengthen the implementation and enforcement of laws on violence against women and to amend the current sentencing standards. She also wished to learn whether the Government intended to amend existing legislation on the punishment of domestic violence – which currently prioritized the preservation and restoration of the family over the protection

of the safety and human rights of victims and their families – to prioritize the rights of victims of domestic violence. Would a national action plan on domestic violence be put in place?

67. The Government had cancelled its plan to amend article 297 of the Criminal Act, which lacked a definition of rape based on the criterion of the lack of consent. Currently, the definition required evidence of physical violence or intimidation, thereby excluding many instances of intimate partner sexual violence such as marital rape. She wished to know why the State party had cancelled its plan and also wished to find out about efforts that would be made to amend the legal definition of rape accordingly. The prosecution of drug-facilitated sexual violence was difficult owing to the need for proof of complete loss of consciousness or inability to resist. The Committee would like to learn about steps taken to ensure that drug-facilitated rape could be adequately prosecuted and that perpetrators could not escape prosecution simply because a witness lacked memory of the event as a result of being drugged. Lastly, she would be grateful if the delegation would outline how the Government was planning to prevent secondary victimization, including by preventing retaliatory countersuits by perpetrators of sexual violence.

68. **Ms. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen** said that the Committee was concerned about the risk that, under recently adopted anti-trafficking legislation that did not comply with the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, victims might not be successfully identified and might therefore not be protected. She wished to know whether the Government intended to amend that legislation to fully comply with the Protocol, and if it did not intend to do so, why. She also wished to know what measures were in place to ensure that police, prosecution and judiciary officers were trained in handling crimes of trafficking, in line with the Protocol.

69. Noting that the Committee had recommended repeatedly that the State party should revise the E-6-2 entertainment visa regime, under which migrant women, particularly from the Philippines, were at great risk of being forced into prostitution, she said that she would be grateful to know whether there were any plans to implement that recommendation. She would also be grateful to know whether the State party actively screened potentially exploitative establishments, such as bars in the vicinity of United States military bases; whether the owners of clubs where migrant women were trafficked were prosecuted and punished in line with the seriousness of the crime; and whether any measures were in place to work with United States military personnel, including sharing information and raising awareness about potential sex trafficking schemes. While victims of trafficking in the State party were offered G-1 visas if they cooperated with officials prosecuting perpetrators, they were also reportedly sometimes arrested for engaging in commercial sex acts that they were forced to commit. The delegation might inform the Committee how the State party ensured unmitigated access to legal and medical services for victims of trafficking, regardless of whether they cooperated with law enforcement officers, and how the authorities ensured that victims of trafficking did not suffer from anti-trafficking prosecution efforts such as arrest, detention and deportation. In view of a recent agreement between the State party and several other countries, including the Philippines, to allow 1,000 foreign domestic workers to migrate to the Republic of Korea, she wished to know what measures the Government had taken to prevent such workers from being exploited and whether it would make available the victim identification index in all of the languages spoken by those workers. Lastly, she said that commercial sex services were widespread in the country; over 50 per cent of the adult male population had admitted to purchasing sex. Yet prostitution was illegal. The Committee had repeatedly recommended that prostitution should be decriminalized for the women who engaged in it. Did the Government plan to implement that recommendation?

70. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that, as part of efforts to address gender stereotypes, in 2011, the Framework Act on Gender Equality had been adopted and a mid- to long-term gender impact assessment plan had been launched for all of the government ministries. The Act had established the Third Basic Plan for Gender Equality Policies. In view of the rise in hate speech among young men and women, addressing hate speech had been included as one of the five major tasks under the Third Basic Plan. An analysis of the influence of mass media and online content, including advertisements, was currently under way and the results, once ready, would inform public awareness-raising programmes.

71. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that the Government understood that victims of sexual violence must be protected from secondary victimization. Where alleged perpetrators filed counterclaims against victims, the substantive merits of the case were assessed in a careful, unbiased and objective manner. The judiciary would continue to approach sexual violence cases with rigour and ensure quality services and protection were provided to victims.

72. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that the Supreme Prosecutor's Office's Sentencing Commission, which was responsible for setting and revising sentencing standards and analysing sentencing data, had significantly increased the recommended sentence range for rape and had revised some sentencing factors for sexual offences. Plans were in place to revise existing sentencing guidelines for sexual crimes by March 2025.

73. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that the definition and standards contained in the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children had been enshrined in national law in 2015 when the State party had become a signatory. The Prevention of Trafficking in Persons and Victim Protection Act had been adopted in April 2021 and an action plan, including annual targets, had been put into place. The implementation of that plan was being monitored, and the monitoring had demonstrated that victims' rights were now protected during investigations and trials. The Criminal Act unambiguously criminalized trafficking in persons and provided for aggravated penalties for trafficking for the purpose of prostitution or sexual exploitation. The Government provided mandatory legal training for certain officials and had produced and distributed educational videos about the problem of trafficking, thus reaching some 180,000 people in 2023. In addition, promotional videos and leaflets had been produced and distributed to raise public awareness about trafficking in persons and victim protection. The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family and other agencies dedicated to the protection of victims' rights and interests had published information on their websites about counselling services, reporting hotlines and how to prevent trafficking in persons.

74. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that the Government was currently promoting a pilot project for foreign domestic workers. Under the project, foreign domestic workers would be hired through service providers certified by the Government pursuant to a dedicated law aimed at improving their conditions of employment, and services would be provided to households that signed a contract. Foreign domestic workers participating in the pilot project were subject to the same labour laws as Korean domestic workers. Translation into 16 languages was provided for migrant workers arriving in the country.

75. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that, under current legislation, victims of sexual violence were not criminals.

76. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that, since January 2022, the Government had restricted the handling of E-6-2 visa extensions by third-party proxies. Human trafficking victim identification indicators had been established for personnel and had significantly reduced the likelihood of human rights violations. Before issuing visas, immigration officers visited the premises of companies inviting foreign nationals for the first time to check for the suitability of performance venues and detect any potential for illegal activities. G-1 visas were granted to women victims of sexual violence or trafficking, to allow them to stay in the country until legal investigations and procedures were completed. Moreover, the Government permitted a further extension of victims' residency beyond the completion of such procedures if that was deemed necessary for their recovery.

77. **Ms. Rana** said that she would welcome information from the delegation about how the Government intended to use the report issued in April 2022 by a digital sex crime task force under the Ministry of Justice. How many of the 11 recommendations issued in the report had been implemented? Having received reports asserting that the shelters available in the State party were in poor condition, she said that she would be interested to learn about plans to improve them and ensure that their services were high-quality and effective. Lastly, she wished to know whether the data entry forms used to collect statistics on gender-based violence would be modified to codify the relationships between the victims and the perpetrators.

78. **Ms. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen** said that she would be interested to know how many entertainment visas had been issued to women in the previous five years and how many women with an entertainment visa had been identified as victims of trafficking over the same period. She would also welcome further information on the visits to the premises of prospective employers that the authorities conducted during the visa application process, as such visas were issued not locally, but by consular authorities in applicants' home countries.

79. **Ms. de Silva de Alwis** said that she would like to know what steps the Government took to measure the implementation of its digital privacy laws both inside the country and beyond its borders. It would also be helpful to know how many cases of technology-facilitated sexual harassment had been brought before the country's courts. She would be interested to find out what measures were taken to deal with acts of cybersex trafficking committed using the Telegram app and, given that the Republic of Korea was a global leader in technology, what specific action was taken to ensure that such illegal practices did not spread to other countries.

80. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that an interministerial council had been established and tasked with formulating measures to eradicate digital sex crimes under the national plan to combat digital crime adopted in 2020. The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family had also set up a dedicated unit to deal with digital sex crimes. Advocacy centres provided various support services for victims of online sexual abuse, including counselling and assistance with the deletion of video content. In order to combat digital crime of a sexual nature, the Ministry cooperated not just with other national agencies, but also with relevant institutions in other countries. The Government had also strengthened education on digital safety for schoolchildren and carried out activities to raise public awareness of digital sex crimes. Statistics on the issuance of visas would be provided in writing.

81. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that statistics on the crime of gender-based violence had been published for the first time in 2022. However, no data were currently available on the specific types of offence committed. Plans had therefore been made to carry out comprehensive research into violence against women and to identify the prevalence of different forms of violence, such as domestic violence, sexual violence and stalking. Preliminary research would be conducted in 2026 and the main survey was scheduled to take place in 2027.

82. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that information on the situation at the club located near the United States military base would be sent in writing.

#### *Articles 7–9*

83. **Ms. Ameline** said that, given that the country occupied a lowly 131st place in the rankings on women's representation in parliament published by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the delegation might wish to confirm the Government's commitment to establishing a strategy for implementing parity as a universal standard. She wished to know what measures had been planned to strengthen the system of electoral quotas and to work with political parties to ensure that they were fulfilled. It would also be useful to know what measures the Government intended to take to ensure that the provisions in the recent amendments to the Political Funds Act were implemented in practice. She would be interested to know whether the objectives concerning the representation of women in public companies set out in the Third Plan for Improving Gender Representation in the Public Sector were legally binding and, if so, how compliance was enforced.

84. The Committee would like to know what measures the Government intended to take to bring to justice perpetrators of hate speech, sexist acts and, in particular, online violence and harassment. It would also be useful to hear what measures were being taken to build a positive narrative on gender equality, to promote women's leadership in public and political life and to foster a cultural and political environment that was more favourable to women in politics. Lastly, she would welcome further information on any support offered to women's rights defenders and organizations and the conditions attached to such support.

85. **Mr. Safarov** said that he would welcome statistical information on the number of stateless women in the country and also the number of applications for naturalization submitted by migrants married to citizens of the Republic of Korea that had been rejected in

2023. He wished to know whether the Government planned to amend the Act on Registration of Family Relations to guarantee equal access to citizenship for foreign spouses of citizens. It would also be helpful to know whether the Government planned to abolish the legal requirement of a sponsorship letter from a citizen of the Republic of Korea when foreigners applied for an extension of residency. The delegation might like to confirm whether the State party intended to ratify the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. Did migrants married to citizens of the Republic of Korea still need to provide a letter from their spouse confirming their identity as part of naturalization applications?

86. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that annual targets for the representation of women in senior management positions had been established in the Third Plan for Improving Gender Representation in the Public Sector. The proportion of women in those roles had risen from 7.9 per cent in 2019 to 11.7 per cent in 2023. The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family regularly monitored the progress made towards the targets established under the Plan and submitted the results to the Gender Equality Committee.

87. The Government was taking measures to improve the methods it employed to identify and address acts of sexism and hate speech in the mass media and online. Its research had indicated that young people who were unemployed or had lower levels of income were more likely to commit such offences. It had therefore adopted policies aimed at reducing youth unemployment, strengthening safety nets, creating a fairer culture at the workplace and promoting a healthy balance between work and leisure. The Government used different mechanisms to guarantee the participation of civil society in decision-making, including in relation to the public budget. A representative of the private sector also sat on the Gender Equality Committee.

88. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that the proportion of officials employed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who were women had increased from 39.5 per cent in 2018 to 43.4 per cent in 2022. Over the same period, the proportion in senior management positions within the Ministry had increased from 3.9 per cent to 8 per cent. For the first time, a woman had been appointed as Minister of Foreign Affairs, in 2017, and female vice-ministers had been appointed in 2023 and 2024. Women had also been appointed as national ambassadors for human rights and international cooperation and for public diplomacy.

89. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that her country had ratified the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons in 1962. It was not considered necessary to ratify the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, since all persons were protected from becoming stateless under the Nationality Act, which was based on the principle of *jus sanguinis*. Under that legislation, any person whose father or mother was a national of the Republic of Korea at the time of birth was granted nationality. An abandoned child was also granted nationality when both parents were either stateless or of unknown nationality. Dual nationality was permitted both for foreigners applying to become nationals and for citizens who acquired the nationality of another State.

90. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that a bill that would enable the registration of the birth of a child of two foreign nationals was currently being reviewed by the National Assembly.

91. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that migrant workers were free to change jobs as many times as they pleased. Any female migrant worker who became a victim of sexual harassment or another crime at her workplace would immediately be sent to a shelter. Regulations had been adopted to ensure that the living conditions of migrant workers were of an acceptable standard. The provisions of the Equal Employment Opportunity and Work-Family Balance Assistance Act applied to both local and migrant workers, and migrant mothers were also able to benefit from the maternity leave system.

92. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that foreign nationals could apply for nationality of the Republic of Korea after residing in the country for five years. The residency requirement was reduced to one or two years for persons who were married to citizens. Migrants married to nationals did not need to provide a letter of guarantee from their spouse as part of the naturalization process. To date, 6,345 migrants had been naturalized.

*Articles 10–14*

93. **Ms. de Silva de Alwis** said that she would like to know why migrant children tended to spend less time in compulsory education than local children. She would welcome further information on any differences between the education received by migrant children and that received by others.

94. **Mr. Safarov** said that he would like to know how many applications for naturalization had been rejected in 2023 and how many of them had been submitted by women. He also wished to know when the Government expected to bring its proposed reform of the Act on Registration of Family Relations into effect in order to guarantee equal access to citizenship for foreign women who were married to citizens.

95. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that education was compulsory for all migrant children, regardless of their residency status, and the Government had put support measures in place to help them to enrol in public education. Special education services were also provided for asylum-seeking and refugee children, and a guidebook had been published to raise awareness of those services.

96. **A representative of the Republic of Korea** said that a hotline for migrant women provided medical and legal advice and marriage counselling in 12 languages. Migrant women could also access similar services at the 231 multicultural family support centres located throughout the country. Any foreign national raising a child with nationality of the Republic of Korea was eligible to receive the support provided under the Single-Parent Family Support Act and could also access the services of the Child Support Agency.

97. **Ms. Xia** said that she would welcome statistical data illustrating the employment rate of female graduates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects over the previous three years. She would like to know whether female graduates in STEM subjects enjoyed access to the same employment opportunities and working conditions as male graduates. It would be useful to know what proportion of teachers in higher education were women and what subjects and courses they tended to teach. The delegation might also wish to indicate whether any measures had been put in place to provide female teachers with accommodation to enable them to take positions at higher education and research institutions.

98. She would welcome further information on the impact of the Government's decision to revise its national sex education guidelines for schools, in accordance with a recommendation made by the Committee in 2018. She wished to know how effective that action had been and whether it had led to an improvement in the overall state of women's reproductive health. The Committee would also appreciate further information on any additional measures taken to address bullying at school. It would be particularly interesting to hear whether bullying victims were provided with mental health counselling and what steps the Government was taking to ensure that bullies were held accountable for their actions.

99. **Ms. Bonifaz Alfonzo** said that she would like to know what measures the State party was taking to reduce the gender wage gap and to create a better working environment for women. With regard to the latter, she would be particularly interested to know what action was taken to prevent workplace harassment and to hold those responsible to account. It would also be useful to hear what action was taken to guarantee job stability and access to social security for persons who worked less than 15 hours per week, most of whom were women. At the same time, many female employees were forced to work excessively long hours. She would therefore welcome updated information on the action taken to reduce average working hours, particularly any measures specifically designed to benefit women. The Committee would also like to know what steps were taken to increase the employment rate of women in the formal sector. In that respect, she wondered whether the measures designed to provide women with more diversified employment opportunities that had been taken under the Third Basic Plan for Promotion of Economic Activities of Career-Interrupted Women had produced positive results.

*The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.*