



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Summary record of the 2104th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 17 October 2024, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Peláez Narváez

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

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

Ninth periodic report of Japan (CEDAW/C/JPN/9; CEDAW/C/JPN/QPR/9)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Japan joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Japan**, introducing her country's ninth periodic report (CEDAW/C/JPN/9), said that each ministry had a responsibility to address specific issues affecting women and to promote gender equality. The Cabinet Office ensured coordination between ministries, while the Council for Gender Equality oversaw the implementation of the Basic Plans for Gender Equality. Each year, the Headquarters for the Promotion of Gender Equality and the Headquarters for Creating a Society in Which All Women Shine formulated a policy package called the Intensive Policy for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, which was aimed at achieving the objectives of the Basic Plan. To strengthen the national machinery for gender equality, the Government planned to transfer responsibility for the National Women's Education Center to the Cabinet Office.
3. A law harmonizing the legal minimum age of marriage for women and men had taken effect in April 2022, while the revision of the Civil Code abolishing the waiting period for women to remarry after a divorce had entered into force in April 2024. With regard to the possibility of introducing a system allowing married couples to use separate surnames, the Government continued to monitor public opinion and relevant developments in judicial rulings and in the Diet's deliberations. Meanwhile, the Government had committed to expanding the use of former surnames and had conducted initiatives to raise public awareness of such practices.
4. Policies were being developed to eliminate discrimination against women who were foreign, who were of foreign origin or who belonged to the Ainu or Buraku communities. The Basic Plan on Human Rights Education and Human Rights Awareness-raising promoted various activities, including on the discrimination faced by those groups.
5. Numerous amendments had been made to the Penal Code in 2023, including the replacement of the term "forcible sexual intercourse" with "penetrative sexual assault", and the term "indecenty through compulsion" with "indecenty without consent". The criteria defining both offences had been clarified, and the Penal Code now clearly stated that such acts constituted offences regardless of whether the two parties were married. In addition, the revision of related legislation had enabled courts to issue stay-away restraining orders that banned spouses from approaching victims in cases of either physical or psychological violence.
6. Regarding further legal amendments, the age of sexual consent had been raised from 13 to 16; it was now a criminal offence to request or engage in a meeting with a child aged 15 or under for the purpose of an indecent act; and the statute of limitations for prosecuting sexual crimes had been extended. Over the previous three years, multiple laws had been enacted to protect victims of non-consensual, sexually exploitative use of photos or videos and to prevent sexual violence against children. In 2022, a new law had been enacted to provide comprehensive protection and support, including counselling and physical and psychological rehabilitation, to victims of sexual violence.
7. In July 2024, the Supreme Court had ruled that the provisions of the defunct Eugenic Protection Act relating to sterilization surgeries had been unconstitutional. By August 2024, 1,129 victims of eugenic surgery, including 817 women, had received approval for their claim to a compensatory lump-sum payment. Following the signing in September 2024 of a Basic Agreement with plaintiffs, defence lawyers and supporting organizations, the Government had agreed to hold continuous and regular consultation meetings to discuss further reparatory measures.
8. In June 2021, the Act on Promotion of Gender Equality in the Political Field had been amended to specify the relevant institutions responsible for promoting gender equality in politics and to encourage political organizations to take proactive measures to achieve gender

balance. The Government conducted surveys to assess political parties' progress in implementing voluntary measures.

9. The Government aimed to increase the percentage of women among candidates for the House of Representatives and the House of Councillors, to 35 per cent by 2025. The Act on Promotion of Women's Participation and Advancement in the Workplace had made it mandatory for the national and local governments to set targets for women's participation in the executive and judicial branches, formulate a corresponding action plan and make information on women's participation publicly available.

10. The Government intended to ensure by 2031 that child support was provided to 40 per cent of all single-parent households wishing to receive it, regardless of whether they had a child support agreement, and to 70 per cent of single-parent households with a child support agreement. Support for single parents and their children had been further strengthened through a number of amendments to the Civil Code in May 2024, such as the introduction of a statutory child support system that enabled a parent who lived with a child to claim a prescribed amount of child support from a parent who lived separately.

11. Regarding gender issues in employment, it was now mandatory for the national and local governments, in addition to employers with more than 300 regularly employed workers, to make information about the gender wage gap publicly available. A consultation service was available for companies that needed support in analysing factors contributing to the gender wage gap.

12. The Act on Childcare and Family Care Leave had in June 2021 been amended, thus establishing a parental leave system that allowed fathers to take leave twice, up to a maximum total of four weeks, within the first eight weeks after the birth of their child, in addition to their standard childcare leave. A further amendment in June 2024 obliged all employers with more than 300 regularly employed workers to make the rates of uptake for childcare leave among their male and female workers publicly available. Employers were also required to facilitate flexible working options for employees with young children, and the Employment Insurance Act had been amended to increase childcare leave benefits.

13. **A representative of Japan** said that the Government had successfully formulated three National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security and had established a corresponding task force to ensure intergovernmental coordination. In addition, it had implemented 57 international projects in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In 2025, Japan would assume the role of co-chair of the Women and Peace and Security Focal Points Network. The Government was committed to making every effort to advance the women and peace and security agenda.

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14. **Ms. Rana** said that she commended the State party on its evident commitment to gender equality and the women and peace and security agenda. That notwithstanding, Japan had ranked low in the Global Gender Gap Report 2024 and needed to accelerate its efforts to dismantle deep-rooted patriarchal stereotypes. She would like to know whether the Government would consider implementing legislative reforms to strengthen the enforcement of gender equality before the law and adopting a comprehensive definition of discrimination against women that was in line with article 1 of the Convention. She wondered what legal complaint mechanisms were in place for women facing discrimination and how the Government raised public awareness of such mechanisms.

15. She wished to know how the Government addressed intersectional discrimination in its legislation, particularly with regard to women from marginalized groups, including those with disabilities or from minority communities. It would be of interest to hear about any plans that the Government might have to adopt a legal definition of intersectional discrimination that encompassed the multiple, overlapping forms of discrimination faced by women. Lastly, she would appreciate information on the status of the State party's efforts to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention and, if possible, on a timeline for ratification.

16. **A representative of Japan** said that the Japanese Constitution, the Equal Opportunity Employment Act and the Basic Act on Education explicitly prohibited discrimination against

women. Under the Fifth Basic Plan for Gender Equality, the Government was taking comprehensive measures to end any such discrimination; the Council for Gender Equality was monitoring the implementation of the Plan. In accordance with the Plan, the public had to be informed of the remedies available when rights were violated. The Government was thus making every effort to carry out measures to combat discrimination against women.

17. **A representative of Japan** said that, as far as ratification of the Optional Protocol was concerned, it was necessary to take into account the State party's judicial system, legislation and policy. One of the issues requiring consideration was the setting up of frameworks. The Government had hosted 23 interministerial study groups on a communications procedure. In December 2023, one of those study groups had examined individual communications procedures under human rights treaties in other countries and had discussed the various obstacles to the introduction of any such procedure in Japan. It was difficult to give an exact timeline for ratification of the Optional Protocol, but the Government was seriously considering ratification in the near future.

18. **A representative of Japan** said that, in keeping with the Basic Act for Gender Equal Society, the Government must take the requisite measures to ensure the processing of complaints from women who faced discrimination. Local governments were likewise responsible for dealing with such complaints, and there was public funding for complaints mechanisms. Every ministry had a contact point for receiving and responding to complaints. The Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet Office distributed manuals and held training sessions on handling complaints.

19. **A representative of Japan** said that, notwithstanding the fact that the Act on the Promotion of the Elimination of Buraku Discrimination included no provisions for prohibitions or penalties, importance was placed on the implementation of measures to combat discrimination against the Buraku people.

20. **A representative of Japan** said that, as the Fifth Basic Plan for Gender Equality would end in 2025, it would be necessary to commence consideration of the sixth plan in the current fiscal year. It was not yet possible to predict the thrust of that plan.

21. **Ms. Rana** said that she wished to know how the State party would make sure that the Convention was applied and enforced more consistently in the country's domestic courts, beyond mere references in court rulings. She would appreciate it if the delegation could describe any ongoing efforts to expand education for judges, lawyers and other legal professionals on the Convention's principles, with the aim of ensuring their incorporation in legal decisions. She asked whether the delegation could shed light on the Government's engagement with civil society, human rights organizations, women's rights groups and other relevant stakeholders in developing and implementing policies and programmes related to gender equality to foster a better understanding of the Convention.

22. **Ms. de Silva de Alwis** said that she wished to commend the State party's stance on General Assembly resolution 78/241 of 22 December 2023 on lethal autonomous weapons systems and the assertion of its belief that the "human-centric" principle must be maintained in the military use of such emerging systems.

23. **A representative of Japan** said that the Constitution stipulated that treaties concluded by Japan and international law must be faithfully observed, and that therefore all the treaties and conventions to which the country had acceded were effective in domestic law. However, in light of the wording of article 24 of the Convention, the Government held that the Convention did not endow individuals with rights; it made it incumbent upon the Government to eliminate discrimination. As the Convention took effect through domestic law, the courts therefore referred to that law in their rulings.

24. **A representative of Japan** said that, every year, the Legal Research and Training Institute organized lectures for judges on international human rights law. Similarly, prosecutors received training in the provisions of international human rights treaties and the Committee's general recommendations.

25. **A representative of Japan** said that, in order to establish a gender equal society, the Government cooperated with various segments of civil society, including the Japan Federation of Bar Associations. A liaison conference consisting of 120 experts, which was

used as a forum to exchange information and views, had helped to draw up the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. Prior to the formulation of the Fifth Basic Plan for Gender Equality, a public hearing had been conducted so that the opinions of civil society and women's rights organizations could be reflected in the Plan to the fullest extent possible.

26. **A representative of Japan** said that the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security had been drawn up in cooperation with civil society with as much input from the public as possible.

27. **Mr. Safarov** said that he wished to know why non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had limited access to financial and technical support and why no independent national human rights institution had been set up. It was unclear how human rights could be fully protected without a proper monitoring mechanism. He would also like to hear what role women played in peace negotiations and peacebuilding. What was the level of women's participation in diplomacy? He would like to know whether a ministry for gender equality could be set up and would be grateful for some information about measures to deal with human rights violations by the United States military personnel stationed in Okinawa. The Committee would appreciate some details of gender budgeting.

28. **Ms. Haidar** said the Committee would welcome details of the way in which the measures outlined in the Fifth Basic Plan for Gender Equality had been implemented and examples of the progress made in achieving the specific targets set in the Plan. The Committee wondered whether the Government would consider the adoption of a temporary special measure to encourage more women to run for political office, for example by reducing the 3 million yen deposit required to stand for election. The Committee would like to hear what the Government was doing to improve the participation of women belonging to minorities, such as Buraku women, and also the participation of women with disabilities and older women, in the bodies that took decisions affecting their lives, and whether any special measures had been adopted to benefit those groups. It would be helpful to know whether the Government had considered the adoption of temporary special measures to address the plight of comfort women and of the women and girls who had survived the Fukushima disaster.

29. **A representative of Japan** said that, in 2024, Japan had 10 women ambassadors and 6 women consuls general, who accounted for 7.1 per cent of its diplomats. Female employees made up 40 per cent of the staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The ministry was endeavouring to introduce more flexible working arrangements to better enable women to continue their careers.

30. A series of measures aimed at preventing the occurrence of sexual crimes by United States forces included the strengthening of sobriety checkpoints, stepping up patrols, increasing the number of training and education programmes and reviewing rest and recuperation arrangements. A forum had been set up for cooperation between the United States Armed Forces in Japan, the Japanese Government, Okinawa Prefecture and local residents. Under article 17 of the Agreement regarding the Status of United States Armed Forces in Japan, Japan had primary jurisdiction over offences committed by United States military personnel. The authorities dealt with those cases on the basis of the law and evidence.

31. **A representative of Japan** said that the Government was considering the establishment of an independent human rights institution. However, the delegation was unable to give any timeline for its establishment. The national and regional legal affairs bureaux had regular staff and 14,000 human rights volunteers who provided counselling services. Appropriate measures were taken if there was any suspicion that human rights violations had occurred.

32. **A representative of Japan** said that there had been a significant increase in the budget of the Gender Equality Bureau. In 2024, the Government had allocated over 10 trillion yen to gender policy, with more than 3 trillion yen allotted to the promotion of a gender equal society, 400 billion yen assigned to increasing women's participation in all spheres and over 7 trillion yen going to the provision of a safe and secure working environment.

33. **A representative of Japan** said that the Government was striving to promote the participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making bodies through the provision of

facilities and equipment to enhance accessibility. Some 40 per cent of the members of the Policy Committee on Persons with Disabilities were women. The Government had instructed local governments to formulate plans for people with disabilities based on its own Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities.

34. **A representative of Japan** said that the issue of comfort women did not fall within the purview of the Convention, which had no retroactive effect. However, he wished to point out that all the women's legal claims had been settled and additional measures, including the expedition of letters personally signed by the Japanese Prime Minister, had been taken to help restore the women's honour. The Asian Women's Fund had been set up to provide atonement money and to finance medical and other forms of support. The women were provided with material support to help meet their basic needs and with counselling services. The Reconciliation and Healing Foundation had received government funding since 2016 and had given survivors and bereaved families financial support.

35. **Mr. Safarov** said that he urged the Government to set up an independent human rights institution and to give more technical and financial support to human rights NGOs.

36. **Ms. Haidar** said that temporary special measures should be introduced to eliminate gender disparity in certain areas through proactive affirmative action. Temporary special measures were not synonymous with regular programmes. They were time-bound and designed to address an acute problem. Had any such measures been taken to assist women who had been affected by the Fukushima disaster?

37. **A representative of Japan** said that the Government was devising basic information packs for women who had been affected by the Fukushima disaster, the aim being to resolve their concerns about healthcare and to promote a better understanding of the risks arising from radioactive material.

38. **Ms. Bethel** said that the State party was to be commended for its initiatives challenging gender norms and patriarchal attitudes, its measures to address gender stereotyping and its awareness-raising activities for women from marginalized communities. However, despite progress in raising awareness and implementing legal frameworks, such attitudes persisted. She would like to know how the Government measured the effectiveness of its activities and programmes. She wondered whether it would devise a national action plan containing comprehensive measures to effectively combat gender stereotyping and sexism in all spheres, including in the family. The Committee would be interested to know what preventive measures were in place to ensure that public figures refrained from making remarks that reinforced stereotypical ideas of gender roles and to encourage all sectors of the media to address the issue of stereotyping.

39. She would be interested to hear about the rationale for changing the name of the crime of rape, and she would appreciate clarification of the provision permitting the offence to be prosecuted without a complaint being brought by victims. Was the offence based entirely on the lack of consent rather than on the use of force or threats by the perpetrator?

40. Alternate reports indicated that perpetrators of sexual offences from United States military facilities were not brought to justice and that victims' rights were not protected in such cases. She would like to know what measures were in place to protect victims' rights and how many arrests, prosecutions and convictions of such offenders had been carried out under the Japanese Penal Code.

41. Other reports had highlighted gaps in enforcement and protection under the Act on the Prevention of Spousal Violence and the Protection of Victims, as well as inadequacies in resource allocation for the implementation of the Fifth Basic Plan for Gender Equality. She would like to know what measures were in place to implement and enforce the Act and ensure better protection for victims, particularly in repeated cases of gender-based violence, and whether the Government would consider extending the scope of the offence to encompass psychological, emotional and economic aspects of spousal violence. The Committee would be interested to know what legal procedure a woman needed to follow to obtain a protection order from a court. She would like to hear about any measures in place to raise women's awareness of protection orders and about capacity-building for judges and law enforcement

personnel aimed at enhancing their understanding of gender-based violence and domestic violence, their root causes and their links with gender stereotyping.

42. How was the Government addressing the resource gaps identified in the Basic Plan, particularly in relation to the funding and staffing of shelters and counselling services for victims of domestic violence?

43. **Ms. Rana** said that she would like to hear about progress in the implementation of the 2014 Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons and about any subsequent developments, particularly any improvements to mechanisms for identifying and protecting trafficking victims, including foreign nationals. Japan had criminalized trafficking in persons, but the Committee remained concerned about gaps in the legal framework in respect of exploitation and abuse of power, particularly labour exploitation. She would like to know what steps the Government was taking to close those gaps and ensure that all forms of exploitation were comprehensively covered under the Penal Code. Human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation evidently remained very underreported. Only a limited number of cases were prosecuted each year. The Committee would therefore be interested to learn how the Government planned to strengthen the capacity of law enforcement and judicial personnel to investigate, prosecute and secure convictions in trafficking cases. Because many trafficking cases involved foreign nationals, it would be of interest to find out what steps the Government was taking to enhance cross-border cooperation with neighbouring countries to ensure the safe return and protection of trafficking victims.

44. Despite the implementation of the Basic Plan and measures against child sexual exploitation, victimization persisted, particularly online. She would welcome information on the Government's efforts to enhance its measures to prevent such exploitation.

45. On the issue of the treatment of former comfort women, it was true that the events in question had originally occurred before the Convention's entry into force. However, the Committee was concerned about their continuing impact on the victims. The Committee acknowledged the excellent measures taken by the State party, but it sought assurances that it would persist in its efforts to guarantee the victims' rights to truth, justice and reparations.

46. **A representative of Japan** said that one of the root reasons for the lack of progress towards gender equality could indeed be traditional gender stereotyping and prejudice. A survey carried out in 2021 and 2022 by the Cabinet Office had revealed unconscious bias in many respondents. Based on those results, various measures had been taken, including the creation and distribution of a video to promote awareness of such bias and the organization of annual workshops to raise awareness among municipalities and businesses.

47. In order to counter stereotyped gender roles and sexist expressions in the media and advertising, the Government worked with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and media companies to encourage the industry to institute voluntary measures. Fostering greater participation by women in decision-making processes in the media would help to avoid gender bias in managerial and administrative positions, thereby reducing the risk of transmission of traditional images of gender roles, notably to children. Indeed, under the Fifth Basic Plan for Gender Equality, the Government undertook to promote women's participation in policymaking in those areas of the media that shaped people's awareness. A range of initiatives had been launched along those lines.

48. With regard to sexist remarks made by public figures, the Act on Promotion of Gender Equality in the Political Field required the national and local governments to take measures such as providing training and setting up a counselling system in order to prevent sexual harassment or other misconduct on the part of persons holding or running for public office. Individual cases involving allegations of sexist expression, defamation or insulting behaviour were dealt with in accordance with the law. If contraventions of the Penal Code or electoral law were found, or the actions interfered with official operations, appropriate action was taken.

49. **A representative of Japan** said that, based on the Act on the Promotion of the Elimination of Buraku Discrimination, a survey had been conducted in 2022. It had revealed that a certain amount of bias and discrimination persisted against Buraku people. Human rights awareness campaigns were conducted in order to eliminate such discrimination.

Between 2015 and 2016, the Ministry of Justice had conducted a survey on hate speech. It had revealed a decrease in the activities of groups organizing demonstrations involving hate speech and also a reduction in the frequency of statements aimed at excluding, harming or slandering persons belonging to particular ethnic groups. The Ministry had also carried out interviews with persons of Korean origin, often considered the main target of hate speech, about their feelings on hearing hate speech and its impact on them, and it had published the results.

50. Local authorities that had enacted ordinances on hate speech submitted information on their implementation. An exchange of information and opinions on hate speech was organized every year for ministries and local authorities to assess the current situation.

51. **A representative of Japan** said that, before the revision of the Penal Code, the offence of forcible sexual intercourse had already existed. The revised crime of non-consensual sexual intercourse had changed the criteria: the victim's difficulty in articulating non-consent had thus become an essential element of the offence. Circumstances to be taken into account in determining the existence of an offence included assault, intimidation, physical or mental impairment or the influence of drugs.

52. **A representative of Japan** said that the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security covered the prevention of discrimination and assault and took a victim-centred approach, emphasizing protection and rehabilitation, with a view to reintegration. Under the Agreement regarding the Status of United States Armed Forces in Japan, Japan had primary jurisdiction over crimes arising from acts committed by off-duty United States military personnel. Suspects in United States custody were detained until a prosecution was filed in Japan. However, the 1995 Japan-United States Joint Committee Agreement on Criminal Procedures permitted pre-indictment transfer for murder, rape and other heinous crimes in which the Japanese Government had a serious interest. From 1995 to date, five such transfers of pre-indictment custody had taken place. The Government of Japan was committed to further entrenching the rule of law by combating the culture of impunity for perpetrators, both at home and abroad.

53. **A representative of Japan** said that the amendment of the Domestic Violence Prevention Act in 2023 had greatly strengthened the protection order system. Restraining orders could be issued to victims who had suffered physical or mental intimidation or threats to their property or freedom. The duration of protection orders had been extended from six months to one year, and the penalty for violation of the order had doubled. When a spouse or partner was subject to such an order, immediate evacuation from the home was required, regardless of the person's prior length of residence there.

54. **A representative of Japan** said that the Legal Training and Research Institute, which was responsible for training judges, had conducted training sessions on domestic violence. At a workshop on protection orders, a psychiatrist had given a lecture on the psychology of victims of domestic violence and response to such acts. The course had also been distributed in video format to courts around the country. The Ministry of Justice would continue to provide such training in order to deepen understanding of the psychology of victims. In addition, training and lectures were organized on the law on domestic violence for trainee court clerks and for family court investigators.

55. **A representative of Japan** said that, in domestic violence cases, courts could issue injunctions against persons who made repeated phone calls. Applicants for protection orders were to be provided with adequate assistance, free of charge. Since the amendment of the Act, each region had established statutory councils bringing together representatives of support centres, the police, prosecutors and shelters, as well as other relevant organizations, to permit them to share information and enhance cooperation in preventing further violence in individual cases.

56. Publicly run shelters were available for emergency accommodation; comprehensive support was offered to women in accordance with their situation, as stipulated under the law. Public assistance was also provided to private-sector shelters. Municipalities also contributed funds and provided other support, for example by making available places in school for the children of victims. There were 47 shelters and counselling and support centres nationwide, and there were also interim shelters, in addition to private-sector shelters for interim

protection commissioned by the Government. In 2021, 1,335 protection orders had been issued; in 2022, 1,111; and in 2023, 1,165.

57. **A representative of Japan** said that the main focus of the Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons was status determination, promotion of victims' awareness, victim support and comprehensive measures to combat trafficking in persons.

58. **A representative of Japan** said that Japanese representatives had attended meetings of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime and had held discussions with representatives of member States and international organizations. Japan had also contributed to the budget for the management of the website of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), as a means of raising awareness. Since 2005, through IOM, Japan had supported the voluntary return of victims. By 31 March 2024 it had supported the voluntary return of 362 individuals.

59. **A representative of Japan** said that, under the Act on Regulation and Punishment of Acts Relating to Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and the Protection of Children, child pornography was defined as depictions of actual children, and that depictions of non-existent children were not subject to regulation under the Act. On the other hand, anyone distributing or displaying obscene documents, drawings or media recordings or similar materials for financial gain was punishable under the Penal Code.

60. **A representative of Japan** said that examples of his country's efforts to restore the honour of comfort women and provide them with an income included active support for the Asian Women's Fund follow-up project and contributions to the Reconciliation and Healing Foundation established in the Republic of Korea. As part of its policy on women and peace and security, Japan also supported women in conflict and conducted awareness campaigns for conflict prevention.

61. **A representative of Japan** said that, as part of measures for the detection and recognition of victims of trafficking in persons, the Japanese coastguard had been empowered to carry out the on-board inspection of shipping and to take appropriate protection measures where trafficking was suspected.

62. **A representative of Japan** said that where trafficking was suspected, immigration and security officers gathered information and sought evidence of the involvement of smugglers, and made a determination as to whether the situation fell under the legal definition of trafficking in persons. The Immigration Service Agency took due account of the victim's position and sought to ascertain the victim's wishes. If the person's wishes were considered reasonable, a change of residence status was permitted; when immigration laws had been violated, a special residence permit could be issued. The final decision was taken by the director of the regional immigration bureau, under the authority of the Minister of Justice.

63. **A representative of Japan** said that, when a trafficking victim sought the protection of a women's centre, the embassy of the country of origin was contacted, as well as the police and immigration authorities, in order to obtain protection and assistance for the victims. Many of the people who received interim protection asked to return to their countries of origin. However, for individuals requiring medium- or long-term support, psychiatric support could be provided at the regional centres, by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

64. **A representative of Japan** said that, when a counselling service considered that a person was a victim of trafficking in persons, the National Police Agency contacted the relevant bodies and determined whether the person was a victim within the meaning of the Trafficking in Persons Protocol.

65. **Ms. Bethel** said that she would be interested to know whether women, married or single, were aware of the constituent elements of the offence of forcible sexual intercourse and the fact that non-consensual sex was a sexual offence. Were women aware of the fact that they had a right to say no to sex, whether in marriage or outside marriage?

66. **Ms. Rana** said that she would like to know how the Government tailored its awareness-raising programmes on the prevention of trafficking in persons to ensure that they reached the most vulnerable groups, particularly in rural areas, including foreign women and young girls. She would also appreciate information on measures taken to prevent the

exploitation and trafficking of young women and girls, particularly those pushed into prostitution as a result of economic hardship or family instability, as had frequently been the case during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

67. **The Chair** said that she would be interested to know how the concept of the protection of sexual integrity was addressed in the revised legislation and in the Penal Code. What account was taken of persons who were unable to give consent, such as children, persons with disabilities or persons who were unable to understand that sexual relations were being imposed on them?

68. **A representative of Japan** said that the Ministry of Justice had taken a series of measures to raise awareness about the amendments concerning forcible sexual intercourse and consent that had been made to the Penal Code in 2023. The purpose and content of the law had been summarized in a simplified manner on the Ministry's website, and leaflets and posters had been distributed to schools and universities around the country. Public prosecutors and police staff had received a notice detailing the purpose of the law and key points to bear in mind when enforcing it.

69. **A representative of Japan** said that surveys conducted in 2021 and 2022 had revealed that unconscious gender bias remained widespread. The Government had taken steps to combat stereotyped perceptions of gender roles and unconscious gender bias by disseminating awareness-raising materials in cooperation with local governments, the media and private sector partners. Several workshops addressing the issue had been organized.

70. **A representative of Japan** said that four members of the United States military had been arrested in Japan, three for intercourse without consent and one for an act of indecency without consent.

71. **A representative of Japan** said that, under the Penal Code, sexual intercourse or an act of indecency was considered to be non-consensual if it was difficult for the victim to form, express, or fulfil the intention not to consent, including because of a mental or physical disorder.

72. **A representative of Japan** said that private businesses, including restaurants, had received government subsidies so that they could continue to support their employees during the COVID-19 pandemic.

73. **A representative of Japan** said that immigration bureau officials were instructed to contact the competent authorities in other agencies whenever they identified a potential victim of trafficking in persons. In such cases, protecting the victim became their highest priority. The Immigration Services Agency provided information on trafficking in a variety of languages, and contact points had been established at its regional branches to provide victims with support. Leaflets on trafficking had been made available at police stations, and support was offered to victims in up to 82 different languages at legal affairs bureaux throughout the country.

Articles 7–9

74. **Ms. Xia** said that she would like to know whether the Government intended to establish a quota system or other incentives to increase women's participation in political and public life, particularly in decision-making roles. It would also be useful to know what specific measures would be taken to increase the number and proportion of women who held senior management positions in private companies. The delegation might wish to explain why relatively few women graduates with an interest in politics entered public administration and progressed to leadership roles. It would be helpful to know what targeted, effective measures the Government had taken to combat gender stereotypes and raise awareness of the importance of women's participation in decision-making. She wondered whether the Government planned to remove the requirement for candidates to pay a substantial deposit prior to standing for election, as a means of increasing women's participation in politics. The Committee would like to find out whether the Government intended to take affirmative action to increase the representation of women in the judiciary and whether gender balance was taken into consideration when judges were appointed to the Supreme Court. It would also be interesting to know what measures the Government had taken to promote the participation of

women in the foreign service and in international affairs. Lastly, she would like to know whether any plans had been made to introduce penalties or incentives to advance implementation of the Act on Promotion of Gender Equality in the Political Field.

75. **Ms. Leinarte** said that the Committee would be interested to know whether children born to a Japanese parent and a non-Japanese parent automatically received Japanese nationality regardless of the marital status of their parents. She invited the delegation to explain the impact of a recent amendment to the Act on Nationality, under which a child born out of wedlock to a foreign mother, and recognized by a Japanese father, could no longer acquire Japanese nationality if the child was found to have no biological relationship with the presumed father. It would be interesting to know whether, under the amendment, children who had previously acquired Japanese nationality could thus be retroactively stripped of their citizenship.

76. She would like to know whether children born to two foreign nationals in Japan, and who had therefore not been awarded Japanese nationality, would later qualify for employment in public service posts, particularly if they had remained a resident of the country and had fulfilled all civic duties. It would be useful to know whether a person whose application for nationality had been turned down by the Minister of Justice was able to appeal against that decision.

77. **A representative of Japan** said that it was established under the Basic Act for Gender Equal Society that the State was responsible for the comprehensive formulation and implementation of policies, including positive actions, aimed at achieving gender equality. The Basic Act had set specific numerical targets for the participation of women in various areas and, every five years, the Government reviewed the measures taken and progress made towards those goals. The Government had called on political parties to increase the ratio of female candidates in national and local elections and to develop systems to promote a better work-life balance for women involved in politics. Work was under way to develop research on the obstacles preventing women from participating in politics. The Basic Act had set targets for the participation of women in the civil service and on the boards of private companies. Public administrations and agencies adopted their own action plans to strengthen women's participation and were required to publish the proportion of female employees working in various areas.

78. **A representative of Japan** said that women currently accounted for around 40 per cent of all staff at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and targets had been set for the representation of women at overseas missions, including for the number of female ambassadors, by 2026. The Ministry was actively working to develop the skills and motivation of its female employees in order to encourage them to progress to more senior roles. It was also using competitive recruitment processes and promoting appointments from the private sector to ensure that more women joined the diplomatic service.

79. **A representative of Japan** said that the gender wage gap in the private sector remained significant because, among other things, women were less likely to hold management positions, and also owing to differences in length of service. Under the Act on the Promotion of Female Participation and Career Advancement in the Workplace, private businesses with over 300 employees were required to draw up and publish action plans to promote gender equality and to publish information about the difference in the salaries they paid to women and men. The Government was currently considering amending that legislation to extend those requirements to companies with over 100 employees. Between 2015 – when the Act had been passed – and 2023, the proportion of women in managerial positions, while still low, had increased by nearly half.

80. **A representative of Japan** said that the Supreme Court was composed of a Chief Justice and 14 judges, 3 of whom were women. The Chief Justice was appointed by the Emperor based on the Cabinet's nomination, while the other judges were appointed by the Cabinet. By law, judges of the Supreme Court must be over 40 years of age and possess an excellent knowledge of legal affairs. The Government was committed to promoting diversity in the judiciary, including by appointing more female judges. A specific target for the number of female judges had been included in the Third Basic Plan for Gender Equality and, since

its adoption, regular follow-up activities had been carried out to review progress towards that goal.

81. The Act on Promotion of Gender Equality in the Political Field called for political parties to strengthen women's participation, but only on a voluntary basis. Parties that did not set a goal for the number of female candidates for public office were not penalized.

82. **A representative of Japan** said that the recent amendment to the Act on Nationality had not changed the rules concerning eligibility for Japanese citizenship. The purpose of the amendment had been to strengthen the language on false declarations of parenthood to ensure that no children would be granted citizenship on the basis of a false claim concerning their blood ties to Japanese nationals.

83. **A representative of Japan** said that no appeals mechanism had been put in place to enable people to challenge decisions of the authorities to reject their applications for Japanese nationality.

84. **Ms. Rana** said that she would like to know what steps the Government intended to take to ensure that Japan matched the progress made in other developed countries with respect to the implementation of a feminist foreign policy. She also wished to know what measures would be taken to promote women's participation in peace negotiations as Japan co-chaired the Women and Peace and Security Focal Points Network.

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85. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that she would like to know whether the Government had used temporary special measures to address the low numbers of women studying physical sciences and engineering and the low representation of women in teaching and lecturing posts at universities. If so, it would be interesting to know what impact those measures had made. The Committee had also learned that many female lecturers held only part-time positions. What impact did working part-time have on their career progression? Had any studies been conducted to ascertain what was preventing them from taking full-time roles?

86. The Committee would welcome information about any further action taken to address unfair practices in the conduct of entrance examinations for university medicine courses. She wondered whether the Government had considered implementing temporary special measures, such as grants, scholarships, mentorships or customized studies, to increase the number of female doctors.

87. She wished to know what measures were taken to standardize school textbooks and guarantee the accuracy of the information they contained. It would be helpful to know when the most recent audit of textbooks had been carried out and what measures had been taken to deal with publishers whose books contained material of a discriminatory nature. The Committee would be interested to know how many primary school teachers were men and what action was taken to improve the difficult working conditions often experienced by female teachers.

88. The Committee would be interested to know whether teachers received training in how to deal with verbal and psychological abuse experienced by children born out of wedlock. It would be helpful to find out whether that subject had been included in the new programmes developed by the Government to raise awareness of gender equality among teachers. She would welcome further information on the counselling offered to girls in foster care with a view to ensuring that their education did not suffer as a result of the trauma they had experienced.

89. She would like to know whether the Government would consider integrating into the school curriculum mandatory age-appropriate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights and responsible sexual behaviour. She also wished to know whether there were any plans to address the bullying encountered by lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women and to adopt educational programmes designed to address artificial intelligence-driven gender-based violence against women and girls.

90. **Ms. de Silva de Alwis** said that, since Japanese women were still lagging behind men in various areas of employment, the Committee would encourage the Government to adopt

the measures set out in its draft general recommendation No. 40 on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems, including by increasing its target quota for women's representation in management roles to 50 per cent and by introducing a radical inclusion policy for the technology sector. The Committee would be interested to know whether the Government was planning to introduce mandatory training for employers on gender bias and diversity.

91. The Penal Code had been amended to criminalize online insults following the widely publicized death of a celebrity who had suffered online abuse. She would like to know how many prosecutions had been brought under the new provision. It would be useful to find out whether whistle-blowers who called out sexual harassment were protected under the law on whistle-blowing that had entered into force in 2022 and what measures that legislation included to protect them against reprisals. She wished to know whether the Government would consider introducing incentives, such as tax breaks or eligibility for government contracts, for companies that could prove that they had reduced the gender pay gap and increased women's participation in leadership roles.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.