



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women
Sixty-second session**

Summary record of the 1345th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 3 November 2015, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Hayashi

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

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

Combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Lebanon (CEDAW/C/LBN/4-5; CEDAW/C/LBN/Q/4-5 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Lebanon took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Riachi Assaker** (Lebanon), introducing the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Lebanon (CEDAW/C/LBN/4-5), said that she wished to begin by drawing the Committee's attention to the current situation in Lebanon, particularly in regard to the armed conflicts in the region and the consequent influx of refugees into the country. Lebanon, a small country with approximately 4 million inhabitants and a population density of 400 inhabitants per square kilometre, was hosting more than 2 million refugees. The country's infrastructure and resources could not meet the humanitarian requirements of such a large number of people, whose arrival also raised serious security and political issues.

3. Apart from the half million Palestinians who were waiting for Israel to grant them their right to return to their own land, there were currently 1.6 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon, of whom 52 per cent were children. Some 200,000 Syrian pupils were studying in Lebanese State schools, while the total number of Lebanese pupils was no more than 175,000. Syrians were also competing with Lebanese for jobs, and unemployment among Lebanese currently stood at 21 per cent. In 2014, the World Bank had estimated the economic losses suffered by Lebanon as a result of the refugee crisis at around US\$ 7.5 billion.

4. The refugee problem was just one of the consequences Lebanon was suffering as a result of the wars in the region. Combating terrorist groups on the country's borders was a further drain on human and financial resources. At the same time, Israel was continuing to occupy Lebanese territory and daily violated national sovereignty by land, sea and air. Despite the challenges, the Government was striving to fulfil its international obligations, including those relating to women and children.

5. The periodic report of Lebanon took account not only of the Convention but also of the Committee's concluding observations to previous reports and of relevant general recommendations. It also addressed issues faced by specific categories of women including older persons, persons with disabilities, victims of landmines and refugees. Apart from covering the activities of State agencies the report also highlighted the important role played by NGOs. Much important progress had been made since the presentation of the previous report in 2006. The Labour Code and the Social Security Act had been amended to allow Palestinians to claim compensation for dismissal or end of service on an equal footing with Lebanese. It also waived their obligation to pay for a work permit. The Penal Code no longer recognized mitigating circumstances for so-called "honour crimes". Other legislative amendments had sought to improve gender equality in matters involving inheritance, the allocation of pensions and other social benefits. Under Act No. 293 of 2014 on the protection of women and other family members from domestic violence, governorates were required to assign a public prosecutor to receive and follow up on complaints relating to domestic violence, and a domestic violence unit had been created in the Directorate General of the Internal Security Forces. The new Act also introduced amendments to the Penal Code, increasing penalties against perpetrators of domestic violence and criminalizing marital rape.

6. Thanks to the efforts of civil society organizations over the previous decade, there was greater awareness of the importance of women's issues in Lebanon. Successive Governments since 2006 had all expressed their commitment to support women, provide opportunities for development, and implement the relevant international treaties, first among them the Convention. That commitment had been evident above all in the response of the authorities to efforts by the National Commission for Lebanese Women to introduce the gender perspective into policies regulating public institutions, as a result of which a network of gender focal points had been set up within those institutions. Advances had also been made in other areas, such as gathering data on trafficking in women and girls, drafting women into the Internal Security Forces and increasing the proportion of women in the judiciary, which had risen from 29 per cent in 2004 to its current level of 41 per cent.

7. Unfortunately, scant progress had been made in other fields. Despite the efforts of women's organizations, no amendments had been made to electoral laws and no gender quotas had been introduced. The rate of unemployment among women was twice that among men.

8. She said that no progress had been made on withdrawing the reservations of Lebanon to articles 9 and 16 of the Convention, and efforts to amend the Nationality Act and introduce a law on civil marriage faced formidable challenges. However, she could announce that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had accepted the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention.

Articles 1 to 6

9. **Ms. Ameline** said that Lebanon was facing an unprecedented institutional, political and economic crisis, and that, as part of the efforts to resolve it, it was important to relaunch the debate on women's role and place in Lebanese society. Reforms had to focus on equality, which was seen by the Committee as vital for stability. She hoped that the reform of the Constitution would result in the withdrawal of the reservations to articles 9 and 16 of the Convention.

10. In light of the constitutional provision whereby all Lebanese were equal before the law, it was important to consider introducing civil legislation to run alongside and in addition to religious laws governing personal status, not least because religious laws sometimes deprived women of certain fundamental rights. She commended Lebanon for recent legislative reforms which had addressed areas of concern to the Committee, and she wished to know how the judiciary was being assisted in applying the new laws. Were there any further plans to improve the legislative framework, particularly the Penal Code and electoral laws?

11. The Committee recognized the efforts Lebanon was making on behalf of refugees and would welcome some statistics about female refugees, who were particularly exposed to the risk of violence. She wondered how Lebanon was tackling the issue of statelessness as it affected refugees and how it was managing refugee flows since it had closed its borders. She wished to draw the delegation's attention to the Committee's general recommendation No. 30, on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations and No. 32, on the gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality and statelessness of women.

12. **Ms. Riachi Assaker** (Lebanon) said that, although Lebanon had had an open frontier policy, the country had reached a point where it could no longer take in refugees and the frontiers had been closed. Nonetheless, persons in dire humanitarian circumstances could still seek asylum in the country. Lebanon was making every effort to assist the refugees present on national territory. However, in many areas, the authorities were unable to satisfy the requirements of their own people, so meeting

even the basic needs of refugees, whose numbers were equivalent to 50 per cent of the national population, presented an enormous challenge. Lebanon had received support from other nations but the situation remained critical. The authorities could do no more than their means allowed and were hoping for a prompt political solution.

13. **Ms. Azouri Jamhuri** (Lebanon) said that the constitutional provision whereby all Lebanese were equal before the law did not specifically relate to non-discrimination. On that count, it was more important to consider the 1990 preamble to the Constitution, under which Lebanon undertook to abide by international treaties, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Any law incorporating the provisions of such treaties would have constitutional rank and would prevail over other laws.

14. Lebanon was unable to withdraw its reservation to article 16 of the Convention without first amending the Constitution, under which religious communities had the right to administer all matters involving the personal status of their members. Without such an amendment, any legislation to introduce new personal status provisions, even optional ones, would be challenged on the grounds of non-constitutionality, not least by the leaders of the religious communities themselves. By contrast, as to article 9, amending nationality laws would not require any constitutional amendments.

15. The Lebanese judiciary treated Lebanese and non-Lebanese equally. The courts had been protecting women and children who were victims of domestic violence even before the enactment of Act No. 293. In one case it had been ruled that a father who had used violence against his wife and children could not return to the family home as long as his family was living there, despite the fact that he was the owner.

16. As stated in the periodic report, a number of amendments had been made to the Penal Code, although much work remained to be done. A committee formed to update legislation had concluded its revision of the Code and, among other things, had recommended the repeal of article 522. The comprehensive text approved by the committee would be considered once the legislature was functioning normally again.

17. **Ms. Ameline** asked how Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), which had a bearing on women refugees, was being applied in the State party and whether any mechanism had been established on the basis of the resolution. As to the question of the Constitution, she said that, while she was well aware of the existence of conflicting norms, the “cultural exception” that prevailed in the State party was hindering the proper application of international law including the Convention; other States had amended their constitutions to do away with such cultural exceptions. It was not a question of interfering with the State party’s institutional and political system but of seeking ways of broadening the scope of its legislation and bringing it more in phase with the demands expressed by civil society. She urged the State party to step up efforts to reform its anti-discrimination legislation based on article 2 of the Convention, which contained a comprehensive definition of forms of discrimination against women.

18. **Ms. Azouri Jamhuri** (Lebanon) said that the provisions of international instruments to which Lebanon had acceded generally took precedence over national law, and would be considered to do so by judges when invoked by individuals in courts of law. However, there was one exception, namely penal provisions, in respect of which the Penal Code prevailed. She recognized that it was important to amend the Code to bring it into line with article 2 of the Convention, as recommended by the Committee.

19. **Mr. Karam** (Lebanon) said that he was somewhat concerned by the comments about the need for legislative reform to ensure that there was no discrimination against women in Lebanon. One aspect of such reform related to the Constitution and covered

social, economic and cultural rights, while another aspect related to the Penal Code and was proving more problematic. Likewise there were difficulties with legislation on personal status and nationality issues. With regard to the latter, it must be remembered that Lebanon hosted more than 400,000 Palestinians refugees and over 1 million Syrian refugees, all of whom needed to be accounted for in some way under the State's sectarian system.

20. In implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), educational measures would be put in place to address reproductive health and the marriage of minors. Early marriage could not be prohibited as it was regulated by the different sects in Lebanon; however, the situation was currently being reviewed by parliament's administration and justice committee. Amendments to labour law and social security law allowed Palestinians to work in most sectors with the exception of public office and other occupations regulated by law. Education was accessible to all persons on Lebanese territory. The implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) required greater cooperation and sufficient funds.

21. **Ms. Pomeranzi** said that she recognized the difficulty Lebanon faced in dealing with the current refugee crisis and its impact on women's security; the State party's resilience under the circumstances was indeed commendable. Referring to information provided in the State party documentation on the national machinery for the advancement of women, she said it seemed that the role of the National Commission for Lebanese Women was largely one of consultation and coordination. Given the very complex situation of women in Lebanon, she asked how the Commission discharged its mandate, seemingly without the necessary financial and human resources. She also asked how independent the Commission was and what its relationship was with government agencies and NGOs.

22. **Ms. Zou Xiaojiao** said that the report contained very little information on the mandate of gender focal points in ministries and public institutions. She asked whether they worked full time and what measures were in place to institutionalize their work and ensure their access to information so that they could discharge their mandate effectively. What results had been achieved to date under the national action plan prepared by the National Commission for Lebanese Women and what measures were planned to achieve its strategic objectives? Had any budgetary, human and technical resources been allocated to the Commission since the consideration of the State party's third periodic report and were there any plans to upgrade the Commission to make it a ministry?

23. **Ms. Gabr** said that during the consideration of the third periodic report concerns had been expressed about the State party's failure to apply temporary special measures. Yet it seemed that no real progress had been made in that area. A bill on general elections had been drafted but seemed limited in scope. She would welcome more information on developments in legislation governing municipal elections as well as the delegation's views on how to improve women's participation in political life. A start could be made by improving their social conditions. Since Lebanon had not yet ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, she enquired whether any provision was planned for women with specific needs. She requested information on the ratio of girls in professional and technical education and asked whether there were targeted measures for women heads of households in rural areas.

24. **Mr. Karam** (Lebanon) said that the National Commission for Lebanese Women was an advisory body responsible for drawing up plans and policies that related to all women in Lebanon. In cooperation with civil society, the Commission had devised a national action plan for women and had recently issued its first annual report on that plan. The Commission had also developed indicators for all sectors covered by the plan that would help in setting priorities for its work at the national and international

levels. Gender focal points had specific mandates and were empowered to communicate directly with the Commission. Capacity-building measures for gender focal points and a strategy to mainstream gender issues in ministries had also been developed. The results achieved under the national action plan to date were positive.

25. **Ms. Hamdan** (Lebanon) said that all draft legislation relating to elections aimed to establish quotas to ensure the participation of women. More women had been elected to municipalities as a result of recent measures implemented. Women had been recruited to the security forces and women now accounted for more than 40 per cent of the judiciary. However, the percentage of women holding political and ministerial positions remained low. More campaigns to raise awareness of women's right to stand as candidates and be elected to office were needed. Although the law governing nationality had not been amended, steps had been taken to grant residence permits to foreign spouses of Lebanese women.

26. **Ms. Riachi Assaker** (Lebanon) said that, since the 1980s, the percentage of women represented in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had risen from under 5 per cent to over 30 per cent.

27. **Ms. Pomeranzi** said that it was important to strengthen the capacity of the National Commission for Lebanese Women in view of the critical situation facing many women in Lebanon, but the State party documentation made no reference to plans to do so. The current crisis called for action at the national and international levels with priority accorded to gender-related issues.

28. **Ms. Gabr** said that the principle of temporary special measures was not limited to participation in political life and was also applicable in the social sphere. For example, quotas could be established for women with special needs, for women's education and for women heads of households.

29. **Ms. Ameline** asked whether there had been any progress with plans to establish a national human rights commission in accordance with the Paris Principles. She emphasized that every opportunity, such as the post-2015 development agenda and the upcoming climate change conference, should be seized to increase women's representation in decision-making roles.

30. **Mr. Karam** (Lebanon) said that efforts had been made in recent years to institutionalize the work of the National Commission for Lebanese Women on various levels and that the experience gained was being consolidated to ensure the Commission's effectiveness. Owing to the current situation in Lebanon it was not possible to implement all measures; however, some progress had been made thanks largely to the Commission's close cooperation with civil society. Legislation on the establishment of a national human rights commission had been drafted in consultation with all relevant stakeholders and was awaiting final approval.

31. **Ms. Riachi Assaker** (Lebanon) said that, while it was true that the post-2015 development agenda related to many areas of women's daily life, regrettably Lebanon did not have the necessary institutions to take and apply decisions relating to that agenda in the near future. It had far more urgent priorities to deal with.

32. **Ms. Azouri Jamhuri** (Lebanon), reverting to the issue of temporary special measures, said that priority was accorded to enabling women to reach decision-making positions through their participation in political and public life, but the same principle could be applied in other sectors. For example, the network of gender focal points had created a new administrative culture that could gradually be disseminated. As far as persons with disabilities were concerned, there was exemplary legislation, which set quotas for their employment in the public and private sectors and which did not discriminate on grounds of gender.

33. **Ms. Gabr**, referring to paragraph 7 of the replies to the list of issues (CEDAW/C/LBN/Q/4-5/Add.1), said that the Government should exert an influence on family life education, which played a vital role in the eradication of gender stereotypes. In that connection, she wished to know whether the textbooks used at all levels of education would be amended to ensure their compliance with the Convention. It would be interesting to hear how the Government cooperated with civil society and religious organizations to help promote positive images of women, including in the media. The delegation should comment on any lessons learned from the experiences of neighbouring countries in that regard.

34. **Ms. Al-Dosari** said that she would appreciate information on measures to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, and to raise awareness of that issue among law enforcement officers, health professionals, social workers, community leaders and the general public. She invited the delegation to describe the training provided to officials responsible for handling complaints of violence and to comment on reports of a decline in the number of prosecutions for femicide.

35. **Ms. Hofmeister** said that the system of response to human trafficking and to the exploitation of prostitution in Lebanon was not working. Pimps and traffickers, who were mostly men, were not sentenced properly and prostitutes and victims, who were mostly women, were treated as criminals. She would like to know what the obstacles were to the implementation of Act No. 164 of 2011, on the punishment of human trafficking offences, and asked whether a national action plan had been drawn up to combat trafficking in women. She also wished to know whether the Government intended to decriminalize prostitution as a means of reducing demand and to enforce the laws that punished individuals who profited from prostitution more strictly. The delegation should state whether women who wished to leave the sex industry received support, including legal aid, and comment on reports that a lack of judicial independence was impeding women's access to justice.

36. **Ms. El Mohtar** (Lebanon) said that the Directorate General of General Security organized joint training courses with law enforcement officers and representatives of civil society, who were encouraged to exchange best practices for the handling of domestic violence cases. The Directorate, which adopted a proactive approach to training, had developed guidelines for the investigation of such cases and a circular on dealing with domestic violence had been distributed among public prosecutors.

37. **Ms. Azouri Jamhuri** (Lebanon) said that the Ministry of Education and Higher Education reviewed school textbooks. Input was provided by civil society organizations, one of which had recently conducted a study on the portrayal of women and made recommendations for amendments to the Ministry. The term "family life education" in paragraph 7 of the replies to the list of issues referred to the education that was given in households, over which the Government had no control. While most parents chose to instil a culture of equality in their children, some continued to propagate negative stereotypes.

38. There was a distinction to be drawn between the State-owned media and the private media. The former, which had fewer resources and a smaller audience, presented women in a good light. The latter, however, was commercial and demanded. Lebanon was a country based on freedoms, which the Government could not limit unless strictly necessary.

39. Although parliament had not yet repealed article 503 of the Penal Code, which provided that husbands could not be held liable for marital rape, Act No. 293 on the protection of women and other family members from domestic violence criminalized the use of violence or threats against a spouse for the purpose of exercising matrimonial rights to intercourse and provided for heavier penalties in the event of

repeat offences. Article 522 of the Penal Code would be repealed once parliament had formally adopted the amendments to the Code.

40. As to the Committee members' requests for additional information, she said that the committee tasked with preparing the periodic report of Lebanon had faced monumental challenges, not least because of the length of the reporting period. The committee had been forced to omit certain items of information so as to comply with the word limit.

41. **Ms. Chdid** (Lebanon) said that the Directorate General of General Security was working with civil society to prevent trafficking in persons and to respond to the complaints filed in that regard by domestic workers. The Directorate had signed a memorandum of understanding with Caritas Internationalis and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to protect trafficking victims and offer them lasting solutions. On 26 January 2015, the Ministry of Justice had concluded an agreement with Caritas, whereby the latter undertook to provide victims with shelter, legal advice and psychosocial care. Moreover, 56 domestic staff recruitment agencies had been blacklisted in a bid to protect workers from trafficking.

42. The Directorate organized training courses for law enforcement officers and held weekly lectures by experts on human trafficking. It had prepared a manual on the rights of foreign domestic workers that was handed out in airports, and had set up hotlines for trafficking victims and for women working in nightclubs who had entered Lebanon under the artiste visa scheme.

43. **Ms. Azouri Jamhuri** (Lebanon) said that Acts Nos. 164 and 293 contained specific provisions on prostitution. The former stipulated that the existence of consent was insufficient to absolve persons charged with causing or inciting prostitution, while the latter provided for prison sentences for anyone found guilty of incitement to commit immoral acts or of incitement to prostitution for gain. Given that the two laws had been enacted only recently, more time was needed before their effectiveness could be properly assessed.

44. **Ms. Al-Dosari** asked what steps were being taken to raise awareness of laws that prohibited domestic violence and to protect NGOs that offered shelter and other forms of support to victims.

45. **Ms. Gabr** asked whether the Government intended to review school curricula, some of which reportedly served to reinforce gender stereotypes, and said that she would welcome any further details on government efforts to encourage a balanced portrayal of women in the State-owned media and to cooperate with civil society and religious leaders in the eradication of stereotypes.

46. **Ms. Ameline** asked whether there was an interfaith dialogue among political stakeholders and, if not, what measures were envisaged to open one. She requested statistics on the number of arrests and prosecutions for human trafficking and recalled the importance of establishing a mechanism to evaluate legislation and its implementation. While noting the need to avoid government interference in the media, she said that agreements with advertising agencies to promote positive images of women had proved successful in other countries.

47. **Ms. Azouri Jamhuri** (Lebanon) said that educational curricula were regularly revised. The Government acknowledged the importance of the contribution of civil society and NGOs, and cooperated with them in the areas covered by the Convention.

48. A technical task force had been set up on violence against women. It worked with medical and aid agencies, international bodies, national ministries and United Nations agencies, in an effort to include a broad range of stakeholders. While no law could prevent a crime from being committed, potential perpetrators were now more

aware of the seriousness and possible consequences of their actions. Delays in handing down judgements in cases involving the murders of women were the result of pressures on the judiciary in Lebanon, and were not related to gender.

49. **Ms. El Mohtar** (Lebanon) said that the Directorate General of the Internal Security Forces worked closely with NGOs on campaigns to encourage women to report cases of violence. A circular had been issued on dealing with domestic violence and women could file complaints anonymously, which encouraged a relationship of trust with the authorities. They could also submit complaints through social media, which facilitated communication with women at risk.

50. **Mr. Karam** (Lebanon) said that security measures in women's shelters were enforced at the request of a judge. Closer cooperation was needed with the security forces in that regard. The Government was aware of the importance of working with all stakeholders, including religious institutions. Despite the conflicting interests in play, constant efforts were made to find common ground.

Articles 7 to 9

51. **Ms. Ameline** said that she regretted the fact that Lebanon had not made further progress with regard to women's representation and empowerment. The adoption of quotas should be made a priority, and trade unions and political parties should be made aware of the need to promote women's leadership and active participation. Special temporary measures should be used to increase women's representation in senior diplomatic and civil service roles. The role women played in multilateral and bilateral diplomatic relations was a reflection of a State party's political commitment to women's rights.

52. Accompanying measures, too, were required in the field of human resources management, in order to ensure that a pool of suitable female candidates was available for promotion. A long-term strategy was needed to overcome what amounted to significant resistance, and legislative change was required in order to modernize society.

53. **Ms. Nadaraia** said that she welcomed the State party's timely submission of its report, in spite of the difficult situation in the region. The question of the State party's reservation to article 9, paragraph 2, of the Convention had been raised several times in the past but more explicit answers were needed. Lebanon maintained its reservation and had not amended the Nationality Act to allow Lebanese women to pass their nationality on to their spouses or children. As mentioned in the report, a ministerial committee set up in 2012 to discuss amendments to the Act had rejected a proposal to give women the right to pass their nationality on. Thus there was still flagrant discrimination against women in the area of nationality and citizenship. Lebanese women and their children were denied one of their fundamental rights. A basic demand of Lebanese civil society was the amendment of the law on nationality, in the name of equality between men and women. She asked the delegation to explain what strategy the Government intended to apply in order to enable it to lift the State party's reservation to article 9. What was the status of the reform begun in 2012?

54. **Ms. Riachi Assaker** (Lebanon) said that, although women's participation in trade unions and administrative posts, for example, was low, some progress had been made. There were a number of female high court judges, and 30 per cent of senior posts in the diplomatic service were held by women. Trade unions, too, had female members in senior positions, notably at regional level. The situation was gradually improving, and long-term measures were being taken to change attitudes and promote the role of women in those bodies.

55. **Ms. El-Sayed** (Lebanon) said that no new legislation had been introduced relating to women's participation, but women were increasingly visible in managerial positions, the judiciary, and the law enforcement services. Women were becoming more active in political parties and trade unions, and existing female members worked to further strengthen women's participation. Some parties had run workshops and training programmes for women. Proposals had been made for a 30 per cent quota for general and municipal elections, and special measures to promote competition and provide training to women standing in elections were under consideration, but the electoral bill had yet to be approved. The Government had tried to take a varied approach to strengthening women's participation in elections, working with NGOs and civil society.

56. **Ms. Chdid** (Lebanon) said that efforts had been made to promote the recruitment of female officers to the Internal Security Forces. Women currently made up 10 per cent of military personnel.

57. **Mr. Karam** (Lebanon) said that many attempts had been made to amend domestic legislation on citizenship but there was resistance from both politicians and religious leaders. The National Commission for Lebanese Women had tried to achieve a compromise solution. The case of the Palestinian refugees was a sensitive topic, and there was still resistance to regulating their status. For example, proposals to grant Palestinians resident in Lebanon for more than 10 years civil, if not political, rights had been rejected, as they were thought to conflict with the provisions of the Constitution.

Articles 10 to 14

58. **Ms. Zou Xiaojiao** said that she was concerned at gender segregation in higher and vocational education. Few women enrolled on hotel management courses or in science subjects, for example, while few men enrolled on nursery care courses or tourism. She asked what the Government's strategy was in that regard, notably in the context of the 2011-2021 National Strategy for Women, which aimed to identify areas for intervention, including gender stereotyping in educational choices. She requested further information on the implementation of the strategy and the results achieved. Noting that gender segregation in the education system resulted in certain disadvantages for women in the labour market, she asked whether any programmes existed to advise women and girls on non-traditional career paths.

59. According to a recent United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) report, the State party was at risk of not meeting the Millennium Development Goals on primary education, gender equality, or illiteracy. There was a gender dimension to the literacy issue, as there were far more illiterate women than men in Lebanon. She invited the State party to comment on the report and asked what progress had been made in that regard. Could the delegation provide statistics on literacy and literacy programmes? She asked what the school dropout rates were for rural girls, and asked what the Government was doing to tackle the problem of girls dropping out of school. She was concerned that the situation might deteriorate, given the difficulties currently facing the State party. What steps were being taken to guarantee compulsory, free education? Was training on the Convention provided to teachers? What measures was the Government taking to support vulnerable women, such as poor women in urban centres, and women in rural areas?

60. **Ms. Patten** asked what measures the Government had taken to support and protect female migrant workers, a particularly vulnerable group. She asked why the national trade union federation's application to create a union for domestic workers had been rejected. What were the requirements for setting up such a union? There were reports that, in a number of cases, deaths of domestic workers had been

attributed to suicide or a fall from a height. She asked what measures were being taken to properly and formally investigate such cases. She would like to know what mechanisms there were for coordination with migrant support groups, so as to ensure that migrant workers had access to justice, health care and psychosocial support. She asked what the status was of the bill on ratification of the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), and the bill on decent work for domestic workers. Noting that the latter bill contained provisions on the confiscation of passports, and in view of reports that more than 80 per cent of domestic workers had their passports taken away, she asked what measures were in place to prevent the exploitation of such workers. She would like information about the situation of migrant workers in irregular situations, and about any measures to prevent arbitrary, unlawful or discriminatory treatment. Were domestic workers still subject to mandatory HIV/AIDS testing and deported if the results were positive?

61. She asked whether the amendments to the social security and labour legislation contained any provisions to punish sexual harassment. The State party's report had contained no specific information on measures to tackle vertical and horizontal occupational segregation, and she would like to know what the Government was doing to ensure the equal participation of women in highly skilled and managerial jobs, as well as in non-traditional areas of employment. What measures existed to provide effective job training, retraining, placement and counselling services to women?

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.