



**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 (partial)* of the 1347th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 4 November 2015, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Hayashi

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* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

This record is subject to correction.

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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)*

Fifth periodic report of Uzbekistan (CEDAW/C/UZB/5; CEDAW/C/UZB/Q/5 and Add.1)

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

2. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan), introducing the fifth periodic report, said that pursuant to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Oliy Majlis (parliament), the President and the Government of Uzbekistan, together with civil society, had deployed significant efforts towards improving the political, socioeconomic and cultural status of women in the country. In 2015, approximately 60 per cent of the budget had been allocated for the social protection of the population, including women and girls. Over the last three years, funding for health care had increased more than twofold, with priority accorded to improving the quality of care for women's and children's health and promoting safe childbirth. Regular health check-ups were provided for women and children and rural health services were being overhauled. Average life expectancy for women was currently 75 years.

3. The Government adopted a range of legislative, institutional, educational and other measures to implement the provisions of the Convention and the Committee's recommendations. In order to increase the representation of women in politics, the law on parliamentary elections set a 30 per cent quota for women candidates nominated by political parties. Legislation had been adopted to protect the rights of women in the area of marriage and family relations, and amendments had been introduced to existing legislation to combat violence against women, domestic violence and outdated customs and practices. Various legislative acts had been adopted to strengthen the role of civil society. For example, the Social Partnership Act, enacted in 2014, had significantly enhanced the role of civil society in the protection of women's rights and allowed for the establishment of public commissions for social partnership under various local government bodies. Cooperation between government agencies and NGOs dealing with family, women's and children's issues was being stepped up. The number of NGOs in Uzbekistan had increased by more than 50 per cent during the reporting period.

4. Improvements to the institutional framework for the protection of women's rights included amendments to the Charter of the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan to ensure that it provided comprehensive support to women. An interdepartmental committee as well as local mobile units had been established to monitor observance of the national plan of action to implement the Committee's concluding observations and recommendations. Dedicated human rights units in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Justice and the Office of the Procurator-General also monitored the observance of women's rights to ensure compliance with national and international law.

5. Uzbekistan actively participated in the World Programme for Human Rights Education. The Convention had been translated into Uzbek and widely disseminated. Information on the protection of women's rights and the provisions of the Convention was incorporated into the curricula of general and specialized educational institutions and training programmes for teachers, health-care and social workers, law enforcement officials, judges and lawyers.

6. Uzbekistan cooperated closely with various international organizations and bodies, including the human rights treaty monitoring bodies, the Human Rights

Council and the special procedures mandate holders. A national plan of action to implement the recommendations of the Human Rights Council and treaty bodies adopted in November 2014 had been updated in April 2015.

7. UN-Women was represented in Uzbekistan where its activities focused, inter alia, on women's economic empowerment and supporting the national plan of action to implement the Committee's recommendations. As a result of such activities, the quality of life of Uzbek women had improved. They had acquired new communication and negotiation skills and participated more in decision-making.

8. Some of the factors hindering the implementation of the Convention in Uzbekistan were the global recession, the country's geopolitical position, the threat of international terrorism and religious extremism and drug trafficking.

9. At least 10 of the 17 recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals were closely connected with gender issues. Uzbekistan had begun work on the establishment of national objectives based on those Goals that would encompass gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

10. Uzbekistan would continue to fulfil its obligations under the Convention and to support all United Nations initiatives relating to the promotion and protection of women's rights. His delegation looked forward to an open and constructive dialogue with the Committee.

Articles 1 to 6

11. **Ms. Patten** said that, while she welcomed the information provided by the State party on its cooperation with civil society, it was regrettable that not one NGO was present in the meeting room. Moreover, the fact that the Committee had not received any reports from NGOs caused her concern in the light of allegations that they were subjected to intimidation and harassment. She asked whether the current report had been reviewed by the parliament before its submission to the Committee; whether the Committee's concluding observations on the report would be discussed in the parliament; and what system was in place for following up on the Committee's recommendations.

12. Although Uzbekistan had ratified the Convention in 1995, it had not yet completed the necessary procedures for the incorporation of its provisions into domestic legislation, as required by Uzbek law. She wished to know what was causing the delay and whether any technical assistance had been sought in that connection.

13. Reiterating the concerns of the Committee and other treaty bodies about the delay in approving the bill on guarantees of equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women, she said she would appreciate information on the real obstacles to its enactment. She wondered whether the bill contained a broad definition of discrimination against women, in line with article 1 of the Convention, and a comprehensive list of all prohibited grounds of discrimination.

14. She asked what efforts Uzbekistan had made to strengthen the institutional framework for the promotion and protection of human rights. In particular, she wondered whether it had sought technical support from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on the establishment of a national human rights commission, in conformity with the Paris Principles, as recommended by the Human Rights Council.

15. She asked to what extent the Convention was visible to the population of Uzbekistan and whether it was invoked in the courts or their rulings. She asked whether the Government was considering ratifying the Optional Protocol to the

Convention, which would emit a strong signal about its determination to guarantee the exercise of all women's rights.

16. The information provided about the State party's cooperation with the Human Rights Council and its special procedures was much appreciated; however, she wished to know why the Government had failed to accede to requests for visits and to reply to related correspondence from various mandate holders, including the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders.

17. While acknowledging the efforts undertaken to design new methods for data collection, she said that reports had been received of data often not being made available to NGOs and development partners. She asked whether there was government support for the establishment of a sustainable mechanism for the regular collection of gender-based statistics.

18. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said that he disagreed with the statement that there was intimidation of NGOs. To his knowledge, four NGO reports had been drafted in connection with the fifth periodic report. He had three of them to hand, yet for some reason they had not been posted on the Committee's website.

19. It was established practice in Uzbekistan to adopt national plans of action to follow up on the recommendations of treaty bodies, including those of the Committee. Civil society played an important role in drafting and implementing those plans. The reports and concluding observations of treaty bodies were usually discussed by parliament. The Committee's concluding observations in connection with the fourth periodic report (CEDAW/C/UZB/CO/4) had been discussed in both houses of parliament. The fifth periodic report had been discussed in the Legislative Chamber (lower house of the Oliy Majlis) prior to its submission to the Committee.

20. The bill on guarantees of equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women had not yet been enacted, because Uzbekistan had its own specific procedures for the consideration and approval of draft legislation, which was reviewed not only by parliamentary committees but also by national and international experts. Moreover, there were different approaches to guaranteeing equal rights. In some countries, women's rights were not protected by specific laws but by broader legislation such as the Civil Code and Family Code.

21. Concerning the incorporation of treaty provisions into domestic legislation, he said that, by and large, all of the economic, social, cultural and other rights and freedoms set forth in the Convention were recognized and implemented under Uzbek law. The provisions of the Convention were not directly invoked in ordinary courts or by law enforcement agencies; however, the Supreme Court could refer to the provisions of international human rights treaties in its findings.

22. The national human rights institutions of Uzbekistan were based on the Paris Principles. The Office of the Human Rights Commissioner (Ombudsman) had been established some 20 years previously — one of the first of its kind in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) — as had the National Centre for Human Rights. Uzbekistan enjoyed close cooperation with human rights experts: two OHCHR representatives were scheduled to visit the country the following month and three representatives had paid visits the previous year. Uzbekistan also cooperated closely with the United Nations human rights machinery, including the Human Rights Council and its special procedures. During the reporting period, it had replied to 60 requests for information from mandate holders. It was the sovereign right of a State to refuse or accede to requests for visits, according to whether it deemed such visits essential.

23. With assistance from United Nations bodies and the Asian Development Bank, Uzbekistan had established its first website on gender statistics and training had been provided for staff in the national bodies responsible for statistics. A compendium of information on women and men in Uzbekistan was published every few years. The current situation of data collection was perhaps not entirely satisfactory, but greater efforts would be made to develop gender-based data and statistics in the future.

24. **Ms. Marufova** (Uzbekistan) said that awareness-raising was central to the State party's efforts to implement the Convention. An information booklet containing the text of the Convention together with the relevant provisions of national legislation had been published in Uzbek and Russian and widely disseminated among the authorities responsible for education, health care and other relevant areas. Details of the Convention's provisions had been discussed in the parliament, within the main ministries and among law enforcement bodies and had been incorporated in teaching materials for law, medicine and other specialist areas of study. Articles published in the media had reached an estimated readership of more than 2 million people and various seminars and symposiums had been organized, including an international conference on women and the development of civil society held in December 2014. Women's groups, youth organizations and local authorities were the main target audience for those events.

25. Responsibility for monitoring implementation of the Convention and the Committee's concluding observations lay with the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan. All of the Committee's local branches had individual implementation action plans and were required to submit quarterly information bulletins to the central body.

26. **Ms. Patten** said she would welcome clarification of the status of the bill on guarantees of equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women. Was a draft still in the pipeline or had it been shelved?

27. **Ms. Haidar** said that the Committee had indeed received shadow reports from Uzbek NGOs and that their content had been taken into account. However, she was concerned that no national NGOs were present at the meeting and wondered whether restrictions on freedom of movement might be the reason.

28. She had also been concerned to learn from alternative sources, including the country gender assessment conducted by the Asian Development Bank in 2014, that the NGO sector in Uzbekistan was engaged mainly in the provision of services and carried out little advocacy work. Furthermore, although the State party had provided copious information about monitoring procedures, little information about its efforts to ensure accountability had been provided. What happened when bottlenecks or obstacles were identified? She, too, would like to know what particular factors were delaying enactment of the bill on guarantees of equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women and where the main sources of resistance to its adoption lay.

29. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said that, in application of the Committee's previous recommendations, a gender perspective was being incorporated into school textbooks, all new laws underwent a gender assessment prior to adoption and a booklet on the status of implementation of the Convention was currently being drafted. The Government was committed not just to effective monitoring but also to the achievement of tangible results.

30. Having ratified approximately 70 human rights instruments, the Government of Uzbekistan had learned that a cautious approach to ratification and careful analysis of the implications were essential to avoid subsequent implementation difficulties. The Optional Protocol to the Convention was one of several instruments currently being considered for ratification. The equal rights and opportunities bill was still under review and he was unable to provide a likely time frame for its adoption.

31. The Government had not been aware that it was expected to send to the meeting, in addition to a high-level delegation, representatives of the national NGOs working on women's issues, which numbered more than 600. He took issue with the suggestion that the absence of NGOs might be indicative of restrictions on their movement. He would appreciate clarification as to the role NGOs might play in the dialogue between the Government and the Committee.

32. **Ms. Leinarte**, referring the delegation to the Committee's general recommendation No. 6 on effective national machinery and publicity, said that, ideally, under such machinery, every piece of legislation, every policy and every action should be assessed for its impact on gender equality and a comprehensive, integrated gender strategy should be underpinned by a single overarching national gender equality action plan that was publicly and widely known. She would appreciate clarification as to whether such a plan existed in Uzbekistan; the delegation's references to a number of differently titled plans suggested that several were running concurrently. An integrated gender strategy should also incorporate effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms that encompassed all sectors at the highest possible level and fostered efficient cross-sector coordination. States parties were accorded considerable flexibility in choosing the most appropriate institutional mechanisms and strategies, provided those prerequisites were met.

33. With the aforementioned prerequisites in mind, she urged the delegation to address the concern raised by the Committee in its previous concluding observations that the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan was serving as the national machinery for the advancement of women even though it had no executive authority and no State resources. How could the Women's Committee ensure implementation of the Convention at the national, regional and local levels given those limitations? A more detailed explanation about the various components of the national machinery and how gender was mainstreamed in laws, policies and programmes at all levels would be useful.

34. She was concerned about the State party's lack of progress in the use of temporary special measures, which appeared to be in part due to a lack of understanding of the concept among NGOs and Government officials. Referring the State party to the Committee's general recommendation No. 5, on temporary special measures, for a fuller explanation, she asked whether any such measures were currently being developed in any area of public life.

35. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said that the national machinery for the advancement of women embraced five core components — the legislative component; the institutional apparatus, namely the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan; education and awareness-raising; monitoring and oversight; and the international component, entailing close cooperation with European and other international bodies. Those components were the cornerstones of the country's integrated gender equality strategy. The national plans of action to implement the recommendations of the various United Nations treaty bodies were, in turn, an important element of that strategy. Ten or more such plans might be running concurrently — one for implementation of each of the international human rights instruments to which Uzbekistan was a party and one for implementation of the recommendations resulting from the universal periodic review process. Gender issues were a feature of all national action plans, although just one focused specifically on women's rights. Accountability and impact measurement were also key considerations in all of them.

36. **Ms. Marufova** (Uzbekistan) said that the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan had been the main national body responsible for implementing State policy for the advancement of women for more than 20 years. Over the reporting period, various steps had been taken to streamline and strengthen the national mechanism. The post of

deputy minister responsible for women's affairs was created by virtue of a presidential decree dated 2 March 1995, on enhancing the role of women in the development of the State and civil society. Furthermore, deputy mayors and deputy governors responsible for women's affairs were appointed throughout the country in accordance with that decree. The post of consultant on religious education and spiritual development was also established by virtue of a presidential decree on additional measures to promote the activities of the Women's Committee, issued in 2004. There were more than 8,000 such publicly funded consultants providing services in local communities.

37. The Women's Committee had over 200 regional offices and more than 400 members of staff, who were provided with grants from the State. There were some 41,000 branches of the Committee in Government ministries, departments, companies and other organizations and institutions. The Committee cooperated with all State bodies and worked closely with international organizations accredited in Uzbekistan. Furthermore, it was involved in various female student study groups in educational institutions. It also ran crisis centres for women to help integrate them into society. Lastly, State funding for the Committee had increased in recent years by just over 4 per cent.

38. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said that, although the Women's Committee had the legal status of non-governmental organization, the Government was taking steps to grant Committee leaders in the districts and provinces of Uzbekistan the rank of deputy minister or deputy governor so that they could be involved in State decision-making. The Women's Committee worked exclusively in the interests of women and served as coordinator of the burgeoning women's movement in Uzbekistan.

39. With regard to temporary special measures, he would like to draw the Committee's attention to a document prepared by the Women's Committee, with assistance from various NGOs and UN-Women. The document, which could be consulted on the website of the Women's Committee, analysed the factors which impeded progress towards gender equality and contained specific recommendations for the introduction of temporary special measures in employment, education and other core areas.

40. **Ms. Marufova** (Uzbekistan) said that the document in question was the fruit of an investigation into the further implementation of article 4 of the Convention which had been carried out by an expert working group and had included an examination of international practice in the use of temporary special measures. The document, which had been submitted to the Ministry of Justice, called for accelerated adoption of a law on State guarantees for the equal rights and freedoms of women and men and provided detailed guidance as to the form those guarantees should take. For example, it stipulated that the gender balance on State councils and committees should be in line with national demographics and that, whenever equally qualified male and female candidates were considered for a particular position, preference should be given to the candidate whose gender was least represented. The document also proposed that the current 30 per cent quota for women on electoral lists should be raised to 50 per cent; that specific criteria should be introduced for the promotion of women in diplomatic service; and that childcare should be more widely available.

41. **Ms. Haidar**, referring back to the lack of progress on the guarantees of equal rights bill, asked how the State party would be able to guarantee results and accountability without an appropriate legal framework. She would also like to know what the Women's Committee would be doing to ensure that its recommendations became policy. Did it have any executive authority or was it simply an advisory body?

42. **Ms. Leinarte** said that further clarification regarding the status of the women's committee was needed since, if she had understood correctly, it appeared that none of

the components of the national machinery for the advancement of women were in fact part of the Government.

43. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said that the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan was the main body responsible for promoting and protecting the rights of women and was formally a non-governmental organization. However, deputies at all levels of Government, including deputy ministers, mayors and governors, were represented on the Committee, and it was thus directly involved in the decision-making process. He noted that the system in Uzbekistan was unique in that regard.

44. The Government was indeed taking international best practices and standards into account in drafting legislation on gender equality and domestic violence. The parliament itself decided when legislation was to be adopted, in line with its own schedule and priorities. The bill on guarantees of equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women was a framework law, bringing together standards and regulations set out in other acts, such as the Family Code and the Labour Code. As such, there was much to be gained from adopting the bill.

45. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, said that although it was not possible to force the parliament to adopt legislation, all branches of government had obligations under the Convention.

46. **Ms. Al-Dosari** said that it would be useful to learn more about common gender stereotypes in the country and the policies implemented to overcome them for the purpose of striking a better work-life balance. She wished to know what steps had been taken to change attitudes, customs and practices that adversely affected women. She asked whether the State party had established time frames for the adoption of legislation aimed at modifying or eliminating discriminatory stereotypes.

47. The delegation should be more specific about the gender mainstreaming measures that the Government was taking in the education sector, efforts made to incorporate gender equality and human rights into the curriculum and action taken to eliminate stereotypes from teaching materials. What was the Government doing to encourage women to apply for non-traditional training courses and jobs? She would appreciate learning more about the role of the media in combating stereotypes and whether any measures had been taken to promote a positive image of women. What part did civil society play in combating stereotypes and fostering change?

48. **Ms. Jahan** said that the State party should provide updated information on the status of amendments to the legislation on violence against women, including measures to eliminate certain harmful practices. She was concerned that domestic violence was often considered to be a family matter rather than a criminal offence and frequently went unreported. The use of euphemisms such as women in "adverse situations" instead of explicit references to violence and the prevalent silence surrounding the issue fostered a culture of impunity. The denial of the gravity of the crime of domestic violence led to widespread failure in the legal system, particularly with respect to preventing violence, providing support for victims and ensuring access to justice. She was concerned about the limited use of protection orders and a preference for mediation in cases of domestic violence. What measures were planned to reverse that trend and improve access to justice for women?

49. Reports indicated that the above-mentioned culture of silence had driven some women to suicide. She asked what the current status of the bill on domestic violence was and whether the Government envisaged a time frame for its adoption. To what extent were non-governmental organizations, both foreign and national, involved in the drafting process? She would be grateful for further information about the contents of the bill, particularly whether its provisions covered mental and physical violence, early and forced marriage and bride kidnappings.

50. She was concerned about reports that the practice of female genital mutilation was becoming more prevalent. What measures were being taken to combat that phenomenon? She wished to know whether the bill on domestic violence defined marital rape as a criminal offence. She would appreciate it if the delegation would comment on reports of the forced sterilization of Lyuli, or Roma, women and of a female human rights defender, noting that those were extremely serious allegations. She would welcome further information about women's access to justice, measures taken to raise awareness about women's rights and improve access to legal aid. She asked whether gender-sensitive training was provided to judicial and law enforcement staff.

51. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan), concurring that all branches of government were responsible for the implementation of the Convention, said that the delegation would transmit the Committee's comments and recommendations, including those concerning expediting the adoption of legislation on equal rights and equal opportunities and on domestic violence, to the parliament. The practice of female genital mutilation did not exist in Uzbekistan. Rape by a spouse was considered an aggravating factor in rape cases and was treated as a criminal offence. The Roma community in Uzbekistan was very well assimilated into Uzbek society, and the absolute majority held Uzbek nationality. Turning to the issue of women's access to justice, he said that the Committee's general recommendation on the issue, No. 33, had introduced a number of new developments and covered a lot of ground. Training was provided to judicial staff and measures were being taken to improve women's awareness of their rights under the law and legal literacy. The suicide rate for women in Uzbekistan was very low — in fact, much lower than in Europe.

52. The Government acknowledged that a holistic approach was needed to combat gender stereotypes. Domestic violence rates had fallen, although it remained a problem in certain areas, for example in rural regions, where patriarchal attitudes towards women persisted and their role was confined to housewives or carers. The Government had adopted a cross-cutting approach to promoting the participation of women, focusing on ensuring equal access to education and employment, and had taken measures specifically aimed at improving women's involvement in politics and civil society. In order to eliminate gender stereotypes, particularly in rural areas, there was a need to raise awareness about gender equality and disseminate information through the media, including by featuring women in positions of leadership on television.

53. **Ms. Rakhimova** said that the bill on domestic violence was currently under review. Other legislation had been adopted on related issues, including legislation on administrative and criminal liability for violations of the minimum legal age for marriage. Legislation had also recently been adopted in the field of education, under which administrative penalties for preventing children from completing the compulsory 12-year general secondary education, specialized secondary education or vocational education had been introduced.

54. Protections against domestic violence were provided for under current criminal law, which covered offences against the life or health of a woman, sexual freedom, the family and morals, such as incitement to suicide, assault, forced abortion, rape and other forms of sexual violence. The bill on domestic violence identified the government and civil society entities responsible for prevention measures, including the courts, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and the Ministry of Health. It set out a definition of domestic violence and of the victims of such violence.

55. Restraining orders could be issued by the courts to perpetrators of domestic violence, banning them from contacting their victims or entering the home. Any form of domestic violence was duly recorded by the authorities. Persons who committed

less serious offences could be charged with an administrative offence. In such cases, the relevant details of the case would be transmitted to the courts. Preventive measures included lectures, workshops, school presentations, information leaflets, television and radio broadcasts and press releases. Information on domestic violence was included in the curriculum of law faculties and the police academy.

56. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said that the Government had submitted information in reply to a questionnaire for the Secretary-General's coordinated database on violence against women and could transmit the relevant data to the Committee. He would also be glad to submit to the Committee documents on the status of implementation of General Assembly resolutions 62/136, on improvement of the situation of women in rural areas, and 62/206, on women in development.

57. **Mr. Khudayarov** (Uzbekistan) said that the programme on maternal and child health aimed to ensure broad access to improved medical care, particularly in the field of reproductive health, including in rural areas. Measures included the provision of free modern contraceptives.

58. **Ms. Gabr** said that she was concerned about the number of trafficking cases, which had mostly involved young women aged between 15 and 25. She asked how support centres for victims were funded, how victims were identified and what protection and rehabilitation measures were available. She would be grateful to have further information on cooperation with non-governmental organizations to combat human trafficking. She wished to know how the Government was dealing with the problem of forced and child labour in the cotton industry. Given that the State party's report contained few details about prostitution, it would be useful to have additional information on its prevalence and measures to tackle the demand for it. That information was relevant, as violence against women was known to occur in the sex trade.

59. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said that the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection had signed a memorandum of understanding with the International Labour Organization (ILO), which had drawn up a Decent Work Country Programme for the period 2014-2016. As part of that Programme, independent experts from ILO had monitored the harvesting of cotton, finding that child labour was not used systematically and that there was a general trend towards the elimination of the worst forms of child labour. The most recent harvest had been overseen by a dozen or so international experts, whose reports were still being produced. Uzbekistan had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and had developed close cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund.

60. **Ms. Rakhimova** (Uzbekistan) said that mechanisms had been set up to identify victims of human trafficking at border checkpoints, in health facilities and in labour inspectorates. In all cases, a report was sent to the relevant department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Victims could also appeal to the Ministry or the prosecution authority directly.

61. In 2008, the Government had adopted an anti-trafficking law, which provided for the creation of a specialized, State-funded institution responsible for giving legal, medical and other support to victims. The law also stipulated that victims should be placed in a rehabilitation centre, with minors kept separate from adults and women from men. In cases involving minors, the centre was required to inform the competent authorities and to take measures to establish the identity of the parents or guardians.

62. In 2009, pursuant to a resolution adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers, the National Rehabilitation Centre to Assist and Protect Victims of Human Trafficking was opened. Victims, who were admitted on a voluntary basis, could leave when they

wished and, if necessary, stay beyond the indicative time limit of 30 days. The Centre monitored victims' health and their success in finding employment for a year thereafter.

63. Social partnership was one of the fundamental concepts underlying efforts to combat human trafficking. With that in mind, an interdepartmental commission had been set up to coordinate activities carried out by the State and by civil society organizations, including the Women's Committee. In total, 209 commissions had been established to foster cooperation between the Government and civil society with regard to a range of matters. On 15 October 2015, a social support centre had been opened in Tashkent to provide various forms of assistance to vulnerable groups of women and victims of human trafficking.

64. **Ms. Marufova** (Uzbekistan) said that the Women's Committee worked to raise awareness of human trafficking among the general public. It gave prevention seminars for women free of charge and encouraged women returning from abroad to attend job fairs organized by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. Since its inception, it had held over half a million information events and, in 2013 alone, had responded to 210 requests for assistance from women victims. It also ran seminars for university students on human trafficking and the dangers of illegal immigration. The Women's Committee had aided the return to Uzbekistan of over 13,000 women, including 130 victims of human trafficking.

65. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said that Uzbekistan was a source country for human trafficking and that a commission which included mayors and other high-level officials had been created to combat the offence.

66. **Ms. Haidar** said that the impact of measures to prevent gender-based violence was diminished by the lack of a legal definition and of a law on domestic violence, which meant that perpetrators could not be held liable. There was also a lack of statistics on fatal and non-fatal domestic violence and of information on preventive, punitive and protective measures.

67. **Ms. Jahan** asked whether studies had been conducted to gauge the effectiveness of measures aimed at changing public attitudes towards domestic violence, which was widely considered to be a private matter. She said that it would be interesting to know what was being done to ensure that incidents of domestic violence were investigated thoroughly and whether there was a unit of the Ombudsman's Office specializing in gender-based violence.

68. Turning to allegations of violence against women prisoners, she noted that a prison ombudsman had been appointed on a pilot basis in the Bukhara region. She wished to know whether any follow-up measures had been taken, whether there were plans to replicate the experiment in other detention facilities and whether, more generally, the Government took into account the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (Bangkok Rules).

69. **Ms. Gabr** asked what steps were being taken to protect women from forced labour, what punishments were imposed on individuals who coerced women into working and what assistance was offered to victims. She would also appreciate information about efforts to reduce the demand for prostitution.

70. **Ms. Al-Dosari** asked what measures had been taken to promote gender equality in education, whether particular attention was paid to women in school curricula and what was being done in school settings to eradicate stereotypes.

71. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez**, citing a government declaration that women deserved respect as mothers and heads of household, said that such statements overlooked the

role of women in other aspects of life and had the potential for stigmatizing women without children.

72. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said that he agreed on the need for a law on domestic violence, which would serve as a framework law if adopted. At present, perpetrators were liable under the Code of Criminal Procedure and punishments were provided for in the Code of Administrative Liability and in the Criminal Code. It was important to note, however, that domestic violence could not be dealt with through legislation alone, which was why the Government had favoured a broader approach encompassing Uzbek society and its institutions.

73. In response to a question from Ms. Jahan, he said that surveys had been carried out to shed light on public attitudes towards domestic violence and that a feedback mechanism for government policies was in place. The Ombudsman's Office did not have any specialized units but did have branches throughout the country.

74. **Mr. Khudayarov** (Uzbekistan) said that sterilization was not a common form of birth control in Uzbekistan and that the procedure was performed only if medically indicated. Over the past three years, there had been no cases of forced sterilization involving women. Moreover, in accordance with national law, all citizens and residents of Uzbekistan, regardless of their ethnic background or faith, had equal access to medical care.

75. **Mr. Shodiyev** (Uzbekistan) said that prisoners were separated by sex, age and type of offence and that conditions were in keeping with international standards, including the Bangkok Rules. Inmates were given fresh bedding and an opportunity to bathe at least once a week. They also had access to medical services and received prompt treatment for infections and diseases. Women prisoners were provided with adequate hygiene facilities, food and clothing.

76. Inmates had the right to complain to any national or international body and special boxes were provided in prisons for that purpose. Prisoners' correspondence was not subject to any censorship. The Ombudsman or his representatives could conduct prison visits without prior notice and speak to inmates in private.

77. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said that the number of cases of prison violence was declining and that the incarceration rate was relatively low. The Government cooperated closely with the United States Agency for International Development, the World Health Organization and other international partners to help rehabilitate women prisoners. It was also taking measures, particularly in the field of education and employment, to change the prevailing view of women as mothers and homemakers. In recent years, the percentage of women in employment and the number of women heads of small businesses had increased.

78. **Ms. Marufova** (Uzbekistan) said that the Government paid great attention to stereotypes in the media. On the main State-owned television channel, many editors and presenters were women and talk show panels were gender balanced. The Women's Committee, meanwhile, had contributed to the development of a study tool for journalists with the aim of breaking down stereotypes in the media.

79. **Ms. Rakhimova** (Uzbekistan) said that law enforcement agencies in Uzbekistan were taking specific steps to reduce demand for prostitution and to identify persons seeking to exploit women for the purpose of prostitution. In 2014, investigations had been launched into 60 cases of trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation.

80. **Ms. Haidar** invited the delegation to comment on the case of Mutabar Tojibaeva, an Uzbek human rights activist living in exile who had submitted a communication to the Human Rights Committee in which she claimed to have been subjected to forced sterilization.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.