



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**

Twenty-fourth session

Summary record of the 493rd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 19 January 2001, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Abaka

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

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

Third and combined fourth and fifth reports of Egypt (continued) (CEDAW/C/EGY/3 and CEDAW/C/EGY/4-5)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the representatives of Egypt took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Tallawy** (Egypt), responding to the question on Egypt's reservations to the Convention, said that the Government was doing its utmost to take the necessary steps to withdraw its reservations. However, a number of measures, including legislative reform, publicity campaigns, sensitization and lobbying, had yet to be undertaken in order to ensure that future parliamentary submissions on the withdrawal of reservations would be considered positively.

3. With regard to the participation of women in the political field, she said that improvements during the most recent elections had yielded a modest 40 per cent increase in the number of women involved in the process. Nevertheless, further efforts would be made to sustain that trend.

4. The Government of Egypt had been applying the provisions of article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention to accelerate de facto political equality between men and women. Some politicians and members of the judiciary had not been aware at the time the 1987 law was enacted that, as a consequence of ratifying the Convention, domestic law actually permitted the establishment of quotas. There was an ongoing debate on the issue of electoral reform, which would provide better opportunities for women. Furthermore, there was no law preventing women from becoming judges, and the fact that there were no women judges related to the practice of existing members of the judiciary.

5. With regard to Ms. Aouij's concerns regarding nationality, she was hopeful that the unconstitutional aspects of the treatment of women would be addressed and resolved. The ruling of the Supreme Constitutional Court, to the effect that the provisions of the decree by the Ministry of the Interior requiring the prior permission of husbands for women to acquire passports were unconstitutional, was also heartening, and the

National Council for Women would continue its vigilance in that respect.

6. With regard to the enforcement of laws aimed at the effective implementation of the Convention, she said the National Council for Women was trying to establish focal points within government ministries and other forums to monitor such implementation. Strategies already undertaken for that purpose included training and awareness campaigns.

7. **Ms. Abdel Satar** (Egypt) said she wished to respond to the comments made by Ms. Abaka, in her capacity as an expert, regarding the punishment for rape. The penalty for that offence was either life or temporary imprisonment. Life imprisonment with hard labour meant 20 years' imprisonment on the basis of conditional release, while temporary imprisonment with hard labour ranged between 3 and 15 years. If, under the circumstances of the case, the court decided that clemency should be allowed, the sentence could be reduced by one or two degrees to six months' imprisonment.

8. Under the Penal Code there was no death penalty, however, unless rape was accompanied by abduction by force. The court could reduce the sentence by a degree to life imprisonment with hard labour or by two degrees to temporary imprisonment with hard labour, which lasted for at least three years. The death penalty could therefore be reduced to three years with hard labour.

9. Abortion, without medical justification, was punishable under the Penal Code. The prison sentence of the woman in question, or of a third party, ranged between 24 hours and three years. If the abortion was induced by a physician, the sentence was harsher because such action was deemed to contravene professional medical ethics. In response to Ms. Abaka's question however, abortions performed in order to protect the life and health of a pregnant woman were permitted, and neither the woman nor the person carrying out the procedure was criminally liable. In reference to the responsibility of the Ministry of Health in the prevention and treatment of human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), she said that other entities and organizations were also involved in the promotion of public health through the submission of advice and recommendations on the treatment of the disease.

10. **The Chairperson** highlighted the fact that HIV/AIDS raised not only a health issue, but also social and human rights issues. She also reiterated that her concern over abortion laws led her to wonder whether women with serious conditions were reluctant to seek medical attention because of the existence of such laws and the fear of being stigmatized.

11. **Ms. Manalo** commended the Egyptian delegation on its inspiring presentation of the institutional and legal improvements aimed at achieving the effective implementation of the Convention. Those improvements demonstrated the Government's ability to promote successful women political candidates, particularly in conservative regions of Egypt. Egypt's innovative approach in that regard truly served the cause of good practices and might be a useful model for other countries to emulate.

12. Concerning the status of the National Council for Women, she took it that the Council was both a semi-governmental and a political institution. As such, she wondered to what extent the Council could commit the Government of Egypt when reporting to the Committee.

13. The Council had made great strides in overcoming conservative and patriarchal forces and with respect to the legal reform of the laws on marriage, and she said the Committee was most interested in the findings that proved that Islam was not a barrier to the freedom of women. Rather, it was highly supportive and protective of the rights of women, and she thought it might be useful for the Committee to receive a copy of the study in due course. Under the new laws, women had the right to repudiate marriage, but she wondered whether other rights, such as custody, support and inheritance, were affected by such repudiation. Regarding the issue of violence against women, she asked whether any legislative action had been taken to prohibit honour crimes. Were there also laws against harassment in the workplace?

14. In conclusion, she said she was pleased that legal reforms had been adopted in Egypt, and believed it would be useful to examine the statistical indicators in order to assess the potential effectiveness of those reforms.

15. **Ms. González** expressed satisfaction at the conscientious responses provided to the Committee and highlighted the progress made in the area of legislative reform. Nevertheless, she hoped that the elimination of

illiteracy among women would figure among the goals of the programmes established by the National Conference of Egyptian Women.

16. Noting that existing laws appeared to combine the pension granted to women with that of their spouses and brothers, she was curious to know why women depended on men for such income, and furthermore, why there was a reference to "brothers" in addition to husbands. Were working women also granted special leave to care for children, and if so, were there special requirements to qualify for leave, and what was the duration of such leave? She also asked whether there were specific provisions in the Penal Code regarding the punishment of violence perpetrated within the context of the family.

17. On a practical matter regarding the participation of women in the political field, she wondered whether women could change their election cards when they changed residence. Did the Government intend to implement activities aimed at the elimination of stereotyping in urban areas, and could the delegation provide further information regarding the physical punishment of university students?

18. She noted that Egypt was a signatory to international instruments such as the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, and that there were laws against prostitution; she requested more information and statistics, however, on the real situation, including whether or not those who availed themselves of the services of prostitutes were liable for punishment, whether the National Council for Women and non-governmental organizations were working together to reform relevant legislation and whether any services or programmes for the rehabilitation of prostitutes existed.

19. She also noted that women's organizations were being created to serve women's needs and help them increase their contribution to the community, a trend which should be encouraged; she wondered, however, what specific support was provided to organizations involved for example in human rights or environmental questions in general. Finally, referring to the response to the Committee's question No. 54, in relation to article 15 of the Convention, she noted that men and women received very different treatment under the law if they committed an act of violence against an adulterous spouse; while not officially described as

honour crimes, such provisions were certainly discriminatory and the relevant laws must be reformed.

20. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** requested more information on the material consequences under current legislation in cases where women repudiated their marriage, and she suggested that the study on the relationship between the Shariah and the Convention should be translated into English and provided to the Committee. She also requested some clarification on the real powers and influence of the National Council for Women and its mandate to communicate the Committee's conclusions to the Government and suggested that the Council should recommend that the latter ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

21. The legal reforms already undertaken were most welcome and, if in fact the Convention took precedence over the Constitution, full use of article 4, paragraph 1, should be made to promote the advancement of women. In the area of the judiciary, if those responsible decided to appoint women judges, a significant number of women judges should be appointed in order to bring about real change. With regard to Law No. 153 concerning non-governmental organizations, she wondered whether that law actually increased bureaucratic restrictions on non-governmental organizations, as some of the latter claimed, and why the Supreme Court had declared it unconstitutional.

22. She also requested more information on the general employment situation of women, in particular in the growing private sector, and whether existing laws were actually implemented, since increased privatization often led to discrimination against women, for example in cases of pregnancy. Noting the creation of free-trade zones, she wondered how many women were employed in those zones and what their working conditions were, for example whether they had union contracts.

23. With regard to article 14, she noted that rural development plans took into account the need to improve the lot of rural women; however, since rural women accounted for more than 50 per cent of the total female population, she requested more information on their situation, especially young and middle-aged women and how they had been affected by privatization. The National Council for Women must also make every effort to change stereotypes of women as the principal caregivers and perhaps try, like some

countries, to promote the notion of parenthood because it was essential in the global economy that women should enjoy true equality in the labour market. She recognized that legal procedures had been instituted to prevent and punish violence which occurred in police custody but wondered if in practice women were encouraged to complain and had a right to deal with female police officers, and what action the National Council for Women was taking in that area.

24. **Ms. Goonesekere** noted the important progress which had been made in promoting women's rights but stressed the importance of linkages with international instruments and the need to eliminate the vestiges of colonial legal traditions, such as the legal age of majority of 21. More information would be welcome on the issue of child marriage, related high school drop-out rates and increased violence against pregnant adolescent girls, issues which must be dealt with from a health and education perspective, as well as on the problem of violence against women, prostitution, rape, honour killings and violence while in custody. With regard to the latter, she acknowledged that the police were being provided with human rights education, but wondered whether the same was being done for the military. Since rape was defined as sexual intercourse without consent, she wondered whether it was necessary to prove the use of force in cases of rape and what the legal status of other grave sexual assaults was. She was also concerned about violence against pregnant women and further wondered whether punishing prostitutes was not in fact punishing the victim, and whether their clients were also subject to punishment.

25. The law which prevented a mother from transmitting her nationality to a child if the father was identified, supposedly to avoid the problems posed by dual nationality, should be challenged; a solution adopted in some countries was that, at the age of 21, a child could opt for one or the other nationality. She stressed that children should be seen as the responsibility of society, not just of women; the experience of other countries could provide useful examples. With regard to the law on non-governmental organizations, which had been struck down by the Supreme Court, it was important that the Government should not attempt to introduce new legislation with a view to circumventing the Court's decision.

26. **Ms. Tallawy** (Egypt), in response to Ms. Manalo's concerns, said the National Council for

Women, created by presidential decree, had its own budget and enjoyed a special status; it had great freedom in its spending decisions, was the sole body responsible for gender issues and represented Egypt in that regard at the international level. The study on the Shariah and women's issues would be translated and provided to the Committee, and, with regard to honour killings, she said that the law did not permit such killings, which were treated like any other crime by the authorities. As for the Committee's question 64, on inheritance rights, she currently had no additional information to provide.

27. Responding to questions from Ms. González, she pointed out that the statistics contained in the report dated from 1996, whereas the January 2001 figures indicated that the female illiteracy rate had dropped from 63 per cent to between 47 and 50 per cent; more than 3,000 one-class schools for girls had been created in remote areas, and various efforts were continuing to encourage young girls to go to school. With regard a widow combining her pension with that of her brother, she said that such a practice was quite understandable, since in Islam the woman was the responsibility of the nearest male relative, even if she had no source of income. She also confirmed that women who changed electoral districts could of course transfer their right to vote to their new place of residence, on condition that they applied for a new voting card by the deadline set before the election.

28. In response to Ms. Schöpp-Schilling's questions, she said that the National Council for Women would lobby the Government to sign the Optional Protocol to the Convention and continue to promote the use of temporary special measures under article 4, paragraph 1, to promote gender issues. With regard to Law No. 153 concerning non-governmental organizations, she said that that law did not in fact restrict their freedom but on the contrary removed obstacles to their operations and reduced government oversight. The law had been overturned by the Supreme Court not because of any fault with its substance but for procedural reasons, since the Executive branch had not introduced it in the upper chamber of Parliament for debate. A new law with substantially the same content, jointly drafted with non-governmental organizations for the first time, would be presented to Parliament in the near future.

29. With regard to the question from Ms. Goonesekere about the State party's report, she

said non-governmental organizations had not participated in preparing the report; however, the National Council for Women had not yet been established at the time. The Council was quite aware of the need to ensure non-governmental organization participation and, at a practical level, such cooperation was already occurring. She had no firm position on lowering the age of majority to 18. As for human rights training for the military as well as the police, she said that such training was unnecessary since the military did not concern itself with civilian matters.

30. **Ms. Abdel Satar** (Egypt), with regard to women's rights in cases of divorce, said that where a woman repudiated her husband simply for reasons of incompatibility, under the Shariah, she would waive any right to alimony and repay the dowry. However, in cases of abuse or failure by the husband to support the wife, including when he had been imprisoned for more than a year or was suffering from a chronic disease of which the wife had not been aware before the marriage, the wife had the right to sue for divorce before the courts and would retain all her financial rights. The woman could also retain custody of children, since the right to stay with the mother was considered a right of the child. With regard to inheritance, the passage of time would eventually extinguish the woman's inheritance rights, but not the children's.

31. Turning to the question of honour crimes, she stressed that they were not allowed under the Penal Code but acknowledged that there were provisions which punished an adulterous wife or a wife who killed an adulterous husband, more severely than an adulterous husband or a husband who killed an adulterous wife. She recognized that those provisions were discriminatory and should be amended. As for prostitution, she acknowledged that the prostitute and not the client was punished, but stressed that it was above all repeated involvement in prostitution which was punished. However, the laws dealing with prostitution were under review and would be amended if necessary to ensure equal treatment for men and women.

32. **Mr. Khalil** (Egypt) said that domestic violence was covered by the general law penalizing all acts of violence or abuse committed by or against men or women, regardless of motive. Such violence could constitute grounds for divorce. With respect to procedures for interrogating women accused of crimes, the police were responsible for the initial interrogation,

which must be conducted in accordance with the relevant rules and regulations laid down in the Penal Code. Women could be bodily searched only in the presence of a female police officer and were detained only in women's detention centres. Initial interrogations could not last more than 24 hours; after that time, officials from the Attorney-General's office conducted a secondary interrogation.

33. In reply to the question on the status of the Convention in Egyptian law, he said that the Constitution was the supreme law of the land. However, when the Constitution had been adopted in 1971, Egypt had already become a party to many international human rights instruments, and the rights enshrined in those instruments had been included in the Constitution. Thus, those rights could not be affected by any other laws. The Supreme Constitutional Court was responsible for the administrative monitoring of all legislation. If any law was found to be inconsistent with constitutional provisions, that Court declared the law null and void. Its verdicts were published in the Official Gazette and were not subject to appeal. If any attempt was made to redraft a law which had been found unconstitutional, the Court would annul it again. Thus, the Egyptian legislature had found it easy to accede to international instruments because their provisions were already enshrined in the Constitution.

34. Although the use of corporal punishment had formerly been permitted in the educational system, it was currently prohibited by the Ministry of Education. He fully shared the views expressed by the Committee on the need to implement the laws on women's employment. Judges and other personnel in the legal system had received training in the correct application of the relevant laws, with very positive results.

35. **Ms. Zoul Fokkar** (Egypt) said, in reply to a question posed at the preceding meeting by Ms. Acar, that 1,227 cases had been presented in the first three months after the adoption of the law on repudiation (khul). The law provided that no more than six months could elapse between the initiation of proceedings and the termination of marriage. The procedures under that law had been implemented smoothly and experience thus far had been very positive.

36. With respect to marital property, Egyptian law did not recognize the concept of common property. Wives retained their name and the property they had owned before marriage. However, under the new law enacted

in 2000, marriage contracts could contain an agreement between the spouses to share the property acquired during marriage in case of divorce.

37. In reply to Ms. Schöpp-Schilling, she indicated that 32 per cent of women workers were government employees, 12 per cent worked in the public sector and 16 per cent worked in the private sector. In the informal sector, 41 per cent of women workers were in the agricultural and service sectors. The proportion of women in the informal sector tended to rise or remain stable, while the proportion of men tended to fall gradually. The National Council for Women was giving priority to women in the informal sector and to female heads of household. Free-trade zones had been privatized. Although privatization had had a negative impact on women's employment, social programmes and microcredit projects were helping women who had become unemployed as a result of that process.

38. Previously, there had been discrepancies between the public and private sectors with regard to leave without pay for purposes of child care. However, under the law adopted in 1996 in compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, all working mothers with newborn children were entitled to take leave without pay of up to two years on up to three occasions during their employment. No special conditions were attached to that provision; it was a right that was granted automatically upon request. However, the National Council for Women was considering advocating a change in the law to make it applicable to all mothers with children, not just mothers of newborns.

39. With respect to women in the judiciary, there had not been a single year since 1951 when there had not been a court case in which a woman sought the right to be appointed to the judiciary. The National Council for Women was active in a case currently before the Supreme Court, and planned to initiate a project on the establishment of an ombudsman for women to support women who fought for their rights in the courts, particularly in connection with nationality cases and women who wished to fill positions in the judiciary.

40. **Ms. Shin** said that the description of the National Council for Women had indicated that the Council had the power to represent Egyptian women in bilateral and multilateral forums. However, she hoped that it had considerable power and influence within Egypt as well. She asked for information on the number of staff

members of the Council. She noted that most of the Council's 30 members came from non-governmental organizations and the academic community. She hoped that the members from non-governmental organizations participated in their capacity as members of such organizations and reported back to the latter on the plans and activities of the Council.

41. Egyptian law was gender-blind in that it made no distinction between men and women in characterizing violence as a crime. However, it was important to understand the psychology and dynamics of violence against women in order to eliminate the phenomenon. Thus, Egyptian law was not as strong as it should be in its approach to domestic violence, rape and female genital mutilation. In addition, the crime of rape was too narrowly defined. A national survey should be conducted on all forms of violence against women. Egypt should also take steps to help women feel less afraid of reporting cases of violence to the police. Specialized police units should be established to receive complaints from women, and non-governmental organizations should be encouraged to provide support in that area. In view of the high percentage of illiterate women in Egypt, the media and mobile units should be utilized to spread awareness of the issue of violence against women.

42. **Ms. Feng Cui** said that Egypt's third and combined fourth and fifth reports contained virtually identical descriptions of the Government's activities to implement article 14 of the Convention, even though several years had elapsed between reporting periods and the rural population had grown during that time. She wondered whether there had been any changes in the Government's efforts to help rural women. The combined fourth and fifth reports indicated that the number of households that had benefited from the productive families project of the Ministry of Social Affairs had been over 50,000 in 1990 but only about 20,000 in 1998; she wondered why the number of beneficiaries had fallen so drastically. The third report indicated that, in 1992, some 1,500 women had been trained under the rural women leaders project; the combined fourth and fifth reports showed exactly the same figure. She asked whether that meant that women were no longer receiving training under that project. Although the Egyptian authorities had replied to the Committee's questions on microcredit, they had provided no details on the implementation of microcredit programmes or on the number of rural

women who had benefited from them. Such information should be provided in Egypt's next periodic report, as should information on the percentage of rural women who gave birth in hospitals.

43. **Ms. Hazelle** said that a holistic approach should be taken to the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS. The legal, social and cultural implications of gender-based violence and the emphasis on women's reproductive role threatened to contribute to an increase in HIV/AIDS among Egyptian women. She welcomed the assurance that the issue of nationality would be revisited, particularly with a view to enabling women to confer their nationality on their children. She remained concerned about gender-based violence in all its forms and about women in detention and honour crimes in Egypt. While she welcomed the penalization of crimes committed by men in the context of adultery, she pointed out that honour crimes could involve other family members as well, and asked whether any awareness programmes for judges were being implemented in that regard. Lastly, she was concerned about the survey, referred to at the preceding meeting, which had indicated that domestic violence occurred mainly among less educated persons. Since it was well known that domestic violence permeated all levels of society, she wondered how that survey had been conducted, where the researchers had focused their efforts and whether women in other social groups had been left without a voice.

44. **Ms. Taya** said that the combined fourth and fifth reports gave two different rates at which girls dropped out of primary education: 1.21 per cent (Part One, sect. I) and 7 per cent (Part Two, art. 10, sect. II); she asked which figure was correct. She welcomed the detailed explanation of how the Egyptian Government was trying to reduce female illiteracy and drop-out rates and of the historical and social factors that hindered those efforts. Countries which, like Egypt, had implemented structural adjustment policies often found it difficult to maintain or increase their education budgets. As a result, drop-out rates, especially among girls, and education quality tended to deteriorate in such countries. In view of the importance of literacy programmes, drop-out reduction programmes and the reform of school curricula, she asked what amount of budgetary resources was currently allocated to the education sector in general. She asked what difficulties Egypt had encountered in sustaining the political will to avoid cutting its education budget.

45. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** said she welcomed Egypt's recognition that the implementation of the Convention was the responsibility of all State authorities. She wondered whether non-governmental organizations participated in the development and implementation of policy with respect to women's issues. Article 11 of the Egyptian Constitution indicated that the State was responsible for enabling women to reconcile their family and work responsibilities. However, the practical measures taken in that regard did not go beyond the area of maternity, in the strict sense. She asked whether men also benefited from measures to help reconcile work and family responsibilities; the lack of such measures would reflect an emphasis on women's stereotypical role as mothers. She was disturbed by the report's reference to women's rights in that area as "privileges". Reconciling family and work responsibilities was a right, not a privilege.

46. She was concerned about Egypt's treatment of prostitution. Women, many of whom were forced into prostitution, were the victims of the practice, and yet they were the only ones who could be convicted, while the men who had exploited them became their accusers. Such an approach was neither just nor effective in eliminating prostitution. Egyptian law also contained discriminatory provisions with respect to honour crimes. Although the concept did not exist in the letter of the law, it did exist in the spirit of the law, since men were subject to a lesser punishment than women for such crimes.

47. **Ms. Livingstone Raday** expressed concern that marital rape was not recognized under Egyptian law, despite the fact that according to a recent survey, 93 per cent of women in Egypt, considered it a form of domestic abuse, as against 46 per cent of men who considered it a matter of entitlement. Under Law No. 6 of 1998 violence against a wife was considered a crime only if it was aggravated. She could not believe that changing such a provision was contrary to the Shariah, so any resistance to reform must be based on patriarchal rather than religious objections.

48. **Ms. Tallawy** said that the National Women's Council was well respected in Egypt and enjoyed a good partnership with non-governmental organizations. One of its 11 committees, which was chaired by a former minister, had non-governmental organizations as its subject, so any implication of exclusion was clearly mistaken. As for the suggestion that the Egyptian Government was gender-blind on violence,

she strongly refuted any such idea. The relevant statistics were inadequate, but the Government was extremely aware of the situation. In the past, women had not reported cases of domestic violence, but attitudes were changing and cases of violence were given wide coverage in the press. She made no apology for the fact that Egypt's two reports were similar: a mere three years separated them, so only the statistics had needed updating. With regard to the question of the productive-families project, she pointed out that two dates had been transposed in error in the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports (CEDAW/C/EGY/4-5), under the section dealing with article 14; in fact, some 56,545 families had benefited by 1998.

49. As for the training of rural leaders, the courses had not stopped, but they had become so successful that they had been taken over by the Ministry of Health and other agencies and banks; the figures therefore did not appear in Egypt's report to the Committee. As for the education budget, in 2000 it had amounted to LE 17 billion and in 2001 LE 18 billion: the largest ever.

50. Article 11 of the Constitution was intended to reconcile the demands of work and the home, but that did not entail laying the burden exclusively on women. In Egyptian culture, men were expected to shoulder equal responsibility. With regard to the importance of international standards, her Government was among those which had drafted the Charter of the United Nations; it attached great importance to both the Charter and the international covenants, which guided it in its legislation. Lastly, she found it difficult to credit the statistics quoted by Ms. Livingstone Raday. Indeed, she would be surprised if a representative sample would comment on such a sensitive matter as marital rape.

51. **Ms. Mtengeti-Migiro** requested clarification of the position regarding the Supreme Court decision on passports. The representative of Egypt had said that a ministerial decree had been overruled by the Court and she wondered whether, as in some countries, there was a possibility of the Supreme Court revising its own decisions. The risk that provisions even less advantageous to women might be introduced should act as an incentive to the National Council for Women to continue pressing for legislation on the matter.

52. **Ms. Achmad** commended the Council's activities, especially the support it gave to women who wished to be active in politics and its dialogue with

non-governmental organizations. She asked, however, whether men who supported, and became active in promoting, sexual equality found themselves shunned by other men. If so, she wondered what strategies existed both to help them and to find more male supporters. Secondly, she asked whether facilities for women's studies existed at universities: it was an extremely important issue, which, indeed, should not be restricted to women.

53. **Ms. Regazzoli** said that, in relation to number 19 of the list of issues and questions (CEDAW/PSWG/2001/I/CRP.1/Add.4), there remained a question about the application of article 162 of the Law of Criminal Procedure. She asked whether the police or prison officials were sufficiently trained not to subject women to further violence in the course of questioning. She also asked whether there existed any places of refuge for women at risk and any advisers who could give psychological help. Furthermore, she wished to know whether adequate penalties existed for men who sexually intimidated women. She also asked whether, in an era of globalization, the labour position had worsened for women and whether any pressure had been put on the Government by international agencies to raise women's retirement age, which she understood to be 60.

54. **Ms. Tallawy** said that there was a long tradition of male supporters of sexual equality. A group of men a century before had argued for such equality on religious grounds; but they had been persecuted. She hoped that a new generation of male supporters would emerge. As for the question of women's studies, one such course existed in a university media faculty. With regard to shelters for women, one such was run by a non-governmental organization established in the late 1940s to give discreet help to unmarried, pregnant girls. The Ministry of Social Affairs provided similar help, but it was given little publicity in order not to arouse negative reactions.

55. **Ms. Zoul Fokkal** said that, in addition to the crime of rape, which involved penetration, Egyptian law recognized a separate offence, which could be termed "sexual aggression". With regard to prostitution, she said that the exploiter of a prostitute was also considered criminal, liable to punishment by imprisonment. The client, however, unfortunately went free, and the Council was working towards an amendment of that provision. As for so-called "honour crimes", she conceded that the phrase was colloquially

ascribed to any form of aggression connected with adultery. The law, however, made no distinction whatever between various kinds of aggression, except insofar as harassment, for example, was less serious than rape or sexual assault. Honour crimes remained a problem, however, partly because cases often went unreported. The Council aimed to establish a research centre providing better data on violence against women.

56. With regard to freedom of mobility, she said that there was no danger of the Supreme Court, which monitored compliance with the Constitution, revising its own judgement. There was, however, a danger of new legislation giving husbands a say in their wives' mobility. The Council was keeping a close watch on the situation. As far as the labour situation was concerned, privatization and structural adjustment had had an adverse effect. Training courses to remedy the situation had been organized. The retirement age remained 60 for women, but an early retirement package, with compensation, was available for men and women. In that context, she welcomed the suggestion that programmes should be organized for older women.

57. **Ms. Tallawy** said that there was an increasing number of centres for older people, which were now being run by non-governmental organizations, with funding from the Ministry of Social Services.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.