



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
Seventy-third session

Summary record of the 1696th meeting*

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 5 July 2019, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Gbedemah

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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*)

Fourth periodic report of Côte d'Ivoire ([CEDAW/C/CIV/4](#); [CEDAW/C/CIV/Q/4](#) and [CEDAW/C/CIV/Q/4/Add.1](#))

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Côte d'Ivoire took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Ms. Bakayoko-Ly** (Côte d'Ivoire), introducing her country's fourth periodic report ([CEDAW/C/CIV/4](#)), said that the Government of Côte d'Ivoire understood that the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women was a prerequisite for the successful achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and inclusive national development.
3. Accordingly, Côte d'Ivoire had established the protection of women's rights as a priority, having ratified most of the international and regional instruments for the promotion of gender equality, including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa of the African Union.
4. In recent years, Côte d'Ivoire had undertaken major legislative, legal and institutional reforms in order to create an environment conducive to the elimination of all forms of gender-based discrimination. Those included the adoption of the Marriage Act in 2013, enshrining the principle of joint household management by the spouses and abandoning the concept of head of the family, the adoption of a national strategy to combat human trafficking in 2015, the establishment of the National Observatory for Equity and Gender in 2014 and the adoption of the National Strategy for Combating Gender-based Violence in 2014.
5. The 2016 Constitution enshrined the principle of equality between all citizens and set out a list of prohibited grounds of discrimination, which included sex. It also guaranteed equal rights for men and women in areas such as compulsory education, property ownership, access to employment, protection of persons with disabilities, political participation and access to the labour market, and established the obligation for the State to promote and protect women's interests and to ensure their development.
6. Women were protected against all forms of violence and practices such as female genital mutilation and early marriage were prohibited. The strategic priorities of the National Strategy for Combating Gender-based Violence included the prevention of that phenomenon, justice and the fight against impunity and security sector reform. In addition, 61 units to combat gender-based violence had been created and 14 counselling offices had been opened in selected police stations. Over 100 community and religious leaders had also undertaken to combat the practices of excision and early marriage. Following the launch of the HeForShe campaign, the President had committed to work steadfastly towards the elimination of all forms of gender-based violence.
7. In order to fulfil the constitutional requirement for all persons to enjoy free and equal access to justice, a legal aid system for impoverished persons had been introduced in the 1970s and was still operational. As part of the project to support improved access to rights and justice, legal clinics had been opened in six cities in 2013. The purpose of the clinics was to render the justice system more accessible to citizens by empowering vulnerable persons to claim their rights and by supporting them in their dealings with justice services. Legal information centres had likewise been established in three cities in 2015.
8. The Constitution also required the State to take action to promote women's political rights by providing them with greater opportunities for representation in electoral assemblies. To that end, in March 2019, the Council of Ministers had put forward a bill intended to increase women's representation in such bodies by imposing a minimum quota of 30 per cent for women on electoral candidate lists. The National Assembly was likewise working to increase the number of women in decision-making posts. During the last legislative term, three women Vice-Presidents had been appointed compared with eight men.

9. As a result of the Government's efforts to improve the population's access to health care, 68 per cent of the population were now living less than 5 km from a health-care centre, compared with 44 per cent in 2012. It had also introduced a targeted free care policy for pregnant women and children under 5 years of age. Furthermore, the roll-out of universal health-care coverage in July 2019 would allow the most impoverished persons to receive low-cost care in public health-care institutions.

10. The Government's proactive education policy was likewise designed to promote gender equality. Under Act No. 2015-635 of 17 September 2015, education was compulsory for children between 6 and 16 years of age. The strategic actions undertaken by the Ministry of Education, which included the construction of classrooms for preschool and primary school children, the provision of free textbooks in primary schools, the integration of comprehensive sex education into the curriculum and the adoption of measures to combat teenage pregnancy, had led to an increase in the enrolment and retention of girls in schools. The Ministry of Women, Family and Children's Affairs further promoted schooling for girls through a network of early childhood care centres and community action centres for children. In addition, special education and training institutions offered women and girls who had dropped out of school a second chance to learn a trade and to gain access to employment, including self-employment.

11. Major reforms had also been undertaken in the area of peace and security. The Technical Military Preparatory School had been opened to girls in 2013 while the National Gendarmerie had been opened to women in 2014. Following the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), Côte d'Ivoire had made a commitment to protect women during armed conflicts and to increase their participation in conflict resolution and post-crisis reconstruction. An action plan had been adopted to that end in 2007 and had been revised in 2019.

12. The Government considered the economic empowerment of women to be the surest way of eradicating gender-based violence and of achieving inclusive economic growth. To that end, it had launched a number of initiatives to assist vulnerable women, especially rural women, which included the National Women and Development Fund, which supported some 13,500 women, the Female Entrepreneurship Fund and the Support Fund for the Women of Côte d'Ivoire, which had provided some 200,000 women with income-generating opportunities. The financing mechanisms available to women included microfinance, mutual credit and savings funds, cooperatives and village savings and credit associations, all of which had contributed to a decline in the rural poverty rate.

13. In the field of employment, the Labour Code required every employer to ensure that all employees received equal pay for the same work or work of equal value, regardless of sex. Since July 2015, labour legislation governing private sector companies had undergone significant reform. Act No. 2015-532 of 20 July 2015 granted new mothers 14 weeks of maternity leave, which could be extended by a further two weeks in the case of multiple births. Following the adoption of a law on the employment of persons with disabilities in 2015, some 1,100 persons with disabilities had been recruited to the civil service with women accounting for 33 per cent of the new recruits. Moreover, following the entry into force of Act No. 2013-33, female employees now enjoyed income tax deductions on an equal footing with their male counterparts.

14. Despite the efforts made by the Government and other stakeholders, there were still a number of challenges to overcome, such as the underrepresentation of women in decision-making posts and electoral assemblies, the high dropout rate among female students in secondary and higher education, the persistence of early marriage and gender-based violence, the high teenage pregnancy rate and the high female illiteracy rate. On the instructions of the President, the Government had developed a social programme covering the period 2018–2020. Its strategic priorities included providing accessible health-care services and improving social protection, increasing school enrolment rates for children between 6 and 16 years of age, improving access to decent work for women and young people and guaranteeing the well-being of the rural population.

Articles 1 to 6

15. **Ms. Verges** said that, while the Committee welcomed the steps taken by the State party to amend its legislative and constitutional framework to better protect women's rights and its efforts to promote gender equality, it remained concerned by the absence in the 2016 Constitution of a clear definition of discrimination against women that was in line with article 1 of the Convention. She asked whether the State party intended to incorporate such a definition into its domestic legislation and to adopt a specific law prohibiting discrimination against women. Despite the fact that the Constitution established the primacy of duly ratified treaties over domestic legislation, it appeared that the State party had still not brought its domestic legislation fully into line with the Convention. The delegation might explain how the State party intended to remedy that situation and provide information on cases in which the Convention had been invoked before the national courts.

16. Noting that the Ministry of Women, Family and Children's Affairs was reviewing a number of laws, including the Persons and Family Code and the Criminal Code, for the purpose of identifying and repealing or amending provisions that discriminated against women, she asked what the timeline was for completing the review process and enacting the necessary legislative amendments.

17. She also wished to know whether there had ever been assessments of the impact on women's access to justice of Decree No. 2016-781 of 12 October 2016 laying down the procedures for the application of the Code of Civil, Commercial and Administrative Procedure and Decree No. 2014-259 of 14 May 2015 on the rates for court fees and charges in civil, commercial, administrative and corporate matters and, if so, what the outcome of the assessments had been. How had the State party gone about raising women's awareness of the opportunities provided by the two decrees in question? What steps had the State party taken to provide vulnerable women with free legal aid?

18. **Ms. Ameline** said that lasting peace and security could only be achieved through effective transitional justice, the involvement of both men and women in peace processes and social transformation driven by the principle of equality.

19. While the State party was to be commended on its efforts to consolidate the rule of law in the country, a number of shortcomings persisted, particularly with regard to the fight against impunity. Recalling that the post-electoral crisis had resulted in some 3,000 deaths and many unresolved rape cases, she noted that both national and international inquiries had concluded that crimes amounting to violations of women's fundamental rights had been committed during that period. It was her understanding that a number of the acts of violence committed had been characterized as lesser offences and not crimes and that not all of those acts had been prosecuted. She would appreciate an update on the status of any cases pending before the courts. It would also be useful to know whether perpetrators of acts of sexual violence or violations of women's fundamental rights could benefit from the amnesty granted by Ordinance No. 2018-669 of 6 August 2018 and whether the issuance of that Ordinance had terminated the mandates of the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the National Commission for Reconciliation and the Special Commission of Inquiry.

20. As in many other countries, women did not appear to be sufficiently involved or to be effective and equal partners in peace and reconstruction processes in Côte d'Ivoire. Women had an essential role to play in creating the conditions for peace and stability, in both the public and private spheres. She asked what steps the State party had taken or planned to take to ensure that women were at the centre of such efforts going forward.

21. Gender equality was a prerequisite for achieving sustainable development and for overcoming the myriad challenges facing the international community. The State party should take advantage of the post-electoral crisis period to build lasting peace and to redefine the role of women in Ivorian society, in keeping with the spirit and letter of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions.

22. **Ms. Bakayoko-Ly** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the Ministry of Women, Family and Children's Affairs had launched a project to restore the rights of women who had been victims of sexual violence during the post-election period, which had resulted in 67 case files being transmitted to the Special Investigation Unit. A total of 54 female complainants had

received a medical check-up and 4 counselling sessions. Female victims of gender-based violence could seek confidential support at the counselling offices operating in certain police stations. Some police stations also had special gender desks where victims of gender-related crimes could gain access to a variety of police services. Two ministerial circulars, one setting out the elements of the offence of rape and recalling the obligation to accept complaints of rape with or without a medical certificate and another on receiving and handling complaints of gender-based violence, had also been issued. A local legal aid office had been established in every court of first instance and a central legal aid office had been established in the Chancellery. Some 200 judges, prosecutors, lawyers and clerks had received training on how to handle cases of gender-based violence since 2012, while military and paramilitary forces had been receiving similar training since 2011. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also assisted women in gaining access to justice.

23. **Mr. Nevry** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that many of the legislative amendments introduced to date were aimed at improving access to justice for women. Those amendments, which addressed many of the concerns raised by the Committee, had been approved by the National Assembly and were awaiting promulgation. The gender desks, which were operated by specially trained staff in police stations, gendarmerie stations and courts, provided female victims of gender-based violence with fast-track access to the justice system and a range of physical and mental health-care services.

24. **Ms. Chaudron** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the decentralization of the legal aid system had allowed a greater number of women to gain access to the justice system.

25. **Ms. Bakayoko-Ly** (Côte d'Ivoire) said she wished to add that, between 2012 and 2014, the judicial authorities had received 474 applications for legal aid, 80 per cent of which had been accepted. Tougher penalties had been introduced for those who were responsible for child marriage. The Criminal Code now stipulated that anybody who forced a minor to enter into a customary or religious marriage would be punished with 1 to 5 years' imprisonment or a fine of 360,000 to 1 million CFA francs.

26. Regarding the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), she pointed out that many more women were attending the Technical Military Preparatory School and the gendarmerie academies. She recalled that in 2015 the armed forces and the Human Rights Division of United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire had established a mechanism to monitor and follow up on human rights violations. In 2017, the armed forces had been removed from the United Nations list of parties credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of rape or other forms of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict. Côte d'Ivoire currently had 59 female police officers and gendarmes, and 150 female soldiers participating in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

27. **Ms. Ameline** said that she wished to know the specific number of cases of conflict-related violence and whether the amnesty provided for under Ordinance No. 2018-669 of 6 August 2018 covered acts of sexual violence, which often amounted to war crimes. She asked whether the Ordinance provided for the dismantling of the institutional framework that had been established as a result of the post-electoral crisis. Lastly, she asked what would be the main components of the new National Action Plan for the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325.

28. **Ms. Verges** said that while the adoption of legislation and judicial reforms showed the willingness of Côte d'Ivoire to address discrimination against women, she remained concerned about the implementation of the law. For example, the fact that only 474 requests for legal aid had been submitted between 2012 and 2014 suggested that the public was not well informed about the availability of the service, or that justice institutions did not have the capacity to provide it. She asked whether a date had been set for the adoption of amendments to the Persons and Family Code and the Criminal Code. Clarification might also be provided as to whether the new National Council on Human Rights had been accredited and what powers had been invested in it to defend women's rights.

29. **Ms. Bakayoko-Ly** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that Ordinance No. 2018-669 applied to offences against State security and did not cover rape, gender-based violence or sexual violence. The amended Criminal Code would be adopted soon, but not on 16 July 2019, as had originally been planned.

30. **Ms. Chaudron** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that, since 2014, the Government had worked to raise public awareness about the availability of legal aid services in courts of first instance throughout the country. As a result, the number of people using those services was much greater now than in the period 2012–2014.

31. **Ms. Yoli-Bi** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the first National Action Plan for the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 had been revised and updated and the second version would be issued later in 2019. The Plan comprised four priority areas, namely: the protection of women and girls against violence, including female genital mutilation; inclusion of gender considerations in development programmes and policies; the participation of women and men in national reconstruction, reintegration and peace processes; and strengthening the participation of women and men in decision-making.

32. **Ms. Bakayoko-Ly** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the National Council on Human Rights, established pursuant to Act No. 2018-900 of 30 November 2018, was a financially independent administrative authority that complied with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles). Amendments to the Criminal Code and the Persons and Family Code had been adopted in June 2019 and would shortly be published in the Official Gazette.

33. **Ms. Toé-Bouda** said that she welcomed the State party's efforts to implement the Convention, especially the formulation of a law providing for a quota of female candidates in elections and the adoption of provisions to combat violence against women. Noting that gender units, focal points and directorates existed in various institutions, she asked what staff and resources they had been assigned. She also wished to know what steps had been taken to increase the human and financial resources of the Ministry of Women, Family and Children's Affairs. What timetable was envisaged for the gender audit of ministries and what had been the outcomes of the audits already completed? What measures had been taken to update the National Policy on Equal Opportunity, Equity and Gender in view of the impact of the post-electoral crisis on women and the State party's commitments within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals? Lastly, she asked to what extent the Ministry of Women, Family and Children's Affairs had formalized gender-responsive budgeting, considering that that process had commenced in 2012.

34. **Ms. Tisheva** said that she congratulated the State party on the adoption of the Constitution of 2016, on the passing of laws to improve women's access to education, justice and property ownership, and on the establishment of the National Women's Council and the National Observatory for Equity and Gender. Yet despite those measures, Ivorian women were still disproportionately affected by poverty and by discrimination in the areas of land ownership, health care, education and employment. Moreover, the adoption of the draft ordinance providing for a 30 per cent quota for women in the parliament had been delayed and women remained underrepresented in decision-making spheres. It was therefore clear that women required temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women, in accordance with the Convention. Accordingly, she wished to know what temporary special measures the Government had taken or was planning in order to accelerate the realization of gender equality, by what mechanisms or laws it might implement and evaluate such measures, and whether it required technical support or guidance in doing so. She wondered when the draft ordinance providing for a 30 per cent quota would be adopted, and whether the State party might also adopt framework legislation to underpin and coordinate its gender equality policies and mechanisms.

35. **Ms. Binaté** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that, following the successful implementation of the gender audit exercise on a pilot basis with the participation of three ministries, the Government and the African Development Bank were cooperating on a project to extend the gender audit to a further eight ministries. Moreover, based on recommendations made after the pilot phase, a gender directorate had been established within the Ministry of Education in 2019.

36. **Ms. Bakayoko-Ly** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the Ministry of Women, Family and Children's Affairs allocated significant resources to programmes for women, including the AgriFed programme, which promoted the empowerment of rural women working in agriculture. Côte d'Ivoire participated in the Sahel Women's Empowerment and

Demographic Dividend initiative, whose objectives included educating women about reproductive health. Furthermore, the Government implemented a social safety net project in which it provided low-income families with a quarterly allowance to help them escape poverty; it was expected that 125,000 households would benefit from the project by the end of 2020. The Government recognized that women's economic independence was crucial to achieving inclusive sustainable development and that helping women in precarious situations had positive impacts in other areas, such as children's schooling.

37. The National Policy on Equal Opportunities, Equity and Gender was currently under review. The Ministry of Women, Family and Children's Affairs worked with other ministries, especially those with financial portfolios, on gender-sensitive budgeting; that process, too, was ongoing. The draft ordinance providing for a 30 per cent quota for women would be presented to the National Assembly on 16 July 2019.

38. **Ms. Verges** said that she wished to know the extent to which the National Women's Council and the National Observatory for Equity and Gender were operational, and how they related to the Ministry of Women, Family and Children's Affairs.

39. **The Chair** said that she would appreciate clarification of how the State party monitored and evaluated the measures it took to promote gender equality.

40. **Ms. Yoli-Bi** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that amendments to the Electoral Code were being drafted in anticipation of the adoption of the draft ordinance establishing a 30 per cent quota for women in the parliament, so that the measure could become law. The National Observatory for Equity and Gender and the Ministry of Women, Family and Children's Affairs would both be responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of the law.

41. **Ms. Chaudron** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the National Electoral Commission verified compliance with the existing provisions of electoral law relating to the alternation of men and women on lists of candidates.

42. **Ms. Binaté** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the National Observatory for Equity and Gender was attached to the Office of the Prime Minister; its role was to monitor and raise awareness of gender equality issues. Conversely, the National Women's Council was a separate entity with regional presence, whose role was to identify the needs of all women in the country and to report its findings to the Ministry of Women, Family and Children's Affairs.

43. **Ms. Acosta Vargas** said that she would welcome more information on the campaigns that had been carried out to combat sexist and discriminatory stereotypes, especially their duration and coverage and whether religious leaders had participated in them. Given the continued high prevalence of harmful practices against women and girls, she was concerned that neither the campaign on zero tolerance for female genital mutilation nor on the law against female genital mutilation had been effective enough; indeed, it appeared that fewer than 10 people had been convicted of the practice since 2012. Accordingly, she wished to know what protection was available for families who did not wish to subject girls to mutilation and what policies the Government envisaged to eradicate it. Furthermore, the Committee believed that early marriage and early pregnancy remained at high levels and it would therefore welcome an explanation of why the accelerated plan to combat early marriage and pregnancy and the accelerated plan to combat pregnancy among schoolgirls had not achieved the desired results. What steps might be taken to rectify the shortcomings of those plans? Considering that the introduction of tougher penalties did not always improve compliance with the law in situations requiring a cultural change, she wondered how the Government planned to enforce the prohibition of child marriage.

44. Notwithstanding the State party's efforts to address gender-based violence since 2014 and the safeguards provided by the Constitution of 2016, she was concerned that Côte d'Ivoire did not have a comprehensive law on gender-based violence and that the Criminal Code contained no definitions of sexual violence, domestic violence, marital rape or serious forms of sexual harassment. She asked whether there were plans to introduce amendments to include such definitions in the criminal law. She asked when the bill on the comprehensive care of survivors of gender-based violence would be adopted, so that all survivors would be able to obtain a medical certificate free of charge, thus improving their access to justice. Given that survivors' access to justice depended on them trusting the authorities, she asked

whether the Government monitored quality of the care provided to women victims, whether officials were punished for failing to provide adequate care, and to whom women should address complaints in such cases. Did the Government plan to conduct a survey on women's perceptions of their access to justice? She would also appreciate further information on the coordination and the financing of the operational action plan of the National Strategy for Combating Gender-based Violence.

45. **Ms. Gabr** said that she wished to know what were the main pillars of the five-year action plan to combat trafficking in persons and what activities and programmes were provided for under the plan. She asked what measures were in place to give effect to Act No. 2016-1111 of 8 December 2016 on combating trafficking in persons, including any victim identification and witness protection mechanisms, and what efforts were being made to establish data collection and analysis relating to trafficking in persons. She would like to know whether the Government envisaged setting up an interministerial committee with a broader mandate to address all trafficking-related crimes. She asked how the authorities cooperated with other United Nations agencies on trafficking and whether the Government received technical or financial support from them. She also wondered how the Government cooperated with civil society and the NGOs running the shelters in providing assistance to victims of trafficking.

46. She asked whether any children attending Qur'anic schools had been forced into begging. She would like further information on the operations and funding of child protection mechanisms and on the role of the Directorate for the Protection of the Child attached to the Ministry of Family, Women and Children's Affairs. She asked what efforts were being made to limit the demand for prostitution and ensure victims' rehabilitation. She wondered whether the services facilitating women's access to justice could be extended to women who had been subjected to violence and sexual exploitation and whether any officials involved in the trafficking or exploitation of girls and women had been arrested.

47. **The Chair** asked what follow-up was given to the outcomes of the studies conducted by the Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs in 2012 and by Alliance Côte d'Ivoire in Abidjan in 2015 on trafficking and forced prostitution.

48. **Ms. Bakayoko-Ly** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that a multisectoral and coordinated regional approach had been taken to address gender-based violence and implement ministerial policies. In practice, victims of gender-based violence were exempt from paying the standard fee for medical certificates attesting to the violence inflicted on them. Interministerial support services were in place to provide comprehensive assistance to victims of such violence and there was no impunity for offenders. Two-week campaigns were launched to raise awareness about gender-based violence. Training was also provided with a view to reducing violence against women and early marriage to community and religious leaders, who were subsequently raising awareness of the issue within their communities.

49. Qur'anic schools in the country had been institutionalized and pupils attending them sat the national exams. The associated begging and child exploitation had been reduced as a result and the country served as an example to the region in that regard. Work was carried out by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Women, Family and Children's Affairs and NGOs to deal with adolescent pregnancy and provide young mothers with support. A committee had been established composed of adolescent mothers to raise awareness of the issue and related risks among schoolgirls.

50. **Ms. Binaté** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that over 60 support services and numerous gender desks operated effectively to address gender-based violence and provide assistance to victims. With a view to reducing adolescent pregnancy, schools had been built in closer proximity to residential areas to prevent pupils from having to travel long distances to get to school. All-girls boarding schools were also being built and funds had been secured for the construction of seven more such schools. Sexual relationships between teachers and pupils were prohibited and punished, and cases had been prosecuted.

51. **Ms. Chaudron** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that, when teachers noticed that a girl's absence coincided with an excision ceremony, judges and medical professionals, among others, were alerted and a search was mounted, almost always resulting in the girl's being found just before the excision was performed. The medical tests carried out at the beginning of the

school term also provided an opportunity to identify girls who had been subjected to female genital mutilation, whose families were subsequently visited to discuss the matter. Awareness-raising among families was carried out with a view to reducing the practice.

52. **Ms. Nanan** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that workshops were organized for judicial officials to build capacities and raise awareness of gender-based violence. Gender units had been set up under the public prosecution service to process complaints by victims of gender-based violence. Information regarding those complaints was forwarded to the Directorate of Civil and Criminal Affairs of the Ministry of Justice to ensure adequate follow-up. The new Criminal Code, which was yet to be enacted, set out a definition of rape and other forms of violence against women.

53. **Mr. Nevry** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that marital rape was included in the definition of rape in the new Criminal Code. A statistical office had been established to regulate and oversee the collection of data regarding all aspects of women's affairs.

54. **Ms. Yoli-Bi** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that specialized doctors, designated by the Ministry of Health and Hygiene, were responsible for assisting victims of female genital mutilation or rape and issuing medical certificates free of charge to such victims. Activities under the National Strategy for Combating Gender-based Violence were funded out of the budget of the Ministry of Women, Family and Children's Affairs.

55. **Ms. Binaté** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the Directorate for the Protection of the Child was responsible for developing the national child protection policy. Its mandate also included placing abandoned children in the country's four nurseries for babies and toddlers deprived of parental care and two orphanages and identifying and providing shelter for street children and problem children.

56. **Ms. Bakayoko-Ly** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that an overarching policy was in place to prevent child trafficking and exploitation; two committees had been established to combat children trafficking; and the five-year action plan to combat trafficking in persons 2018–2021 drew on lessons learned from the previous plan. Measures to combat child trafficking included identifying child victims of trafficking and providing them with education and vocational training, awareness-raising in the community and facilitating access to funds, particularly for families in an irregular situation with children working in plantations. Around 70 per cent of the objectives set out in the plans to combat child trafficking had been attained. The Government was also addressing irregular child migration, which had been the focus of the previous celebration of the Day of the African Child. Special support programmes and teams had been set up to raise awareness of the situation of street children, who could nevertheless not be removed by force from the street.

57. **Mr. Nevry** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that an agreement had been signed between the Government and the Lions Clubs International for the renovation of a new reception centre for street children, to provide them with medical assistance and rehabilitation with a view to reintegrating them into society.

58. **Ms. Bakayoko-Ly** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that a shelter had been established in Soubré, a region with high rates of child trafficking, which had taken in some 60 child victims of trafficking and provided them with education or vocational training. Another shelter had been established in Bouaké to support and provide education for children vulnerable to trafficking.

59. **Ms. Gabr** said that she would appreciate an overview of the system to combat trafficking, including awareness-raising in communities, training of judicial officials, and coordination among the two anti-trafficking committees, the work of the First Lady of Côte d'Ivoire, Ms. Dominique Ouattara, the five-year action plan to combat trafficking in persons and the outcome of the studies on trafficking and forced prostitution. Street children should be referred to as "homeless children" or "vulnerable children" to foster a more positive approach to their situation. She recommended broadening the mandate of the relevant interministerial committees to deal effectively with trafficking in all its forms.

60. **Ms. Acosta Vargas** asked when the new Criminal Code would enter into force, what funding had been earmarked for the National Strategy for Combating Gender-based Violence adopted in 2014 and how the Government would ensure that women affected by gender-based violence had effective access to justice in practice. She also asked whether the

Government would envisage conducting a survey to gather women's opinions on victims' access to justice.

61. **Ms. Peláez Narváez** asked whether women who had been subjected to female genital mutilation were officially recognized as women with disabilities and whether they were provided with assistance and rehabilitation. She would like further information on the situation of girls and women with disabilities who were victims of sexual abuse, the resulting pregnancies and abortions, the forced sterilization of such women and measures undertaken to eliminate such abuses. In the light of reports of obstacles to obtaining justice faced by women with disabilities, she asked what was being done to provide for the necessary access to the courts and legal support to improve that situation.

62. **Ms. Verges** asked how the Government envisaged enforcing the application of Act No. 98-757 of 23 December 1998 penalizing female genital mutilation and what legislative and other measures would be taken to reduce the rates of early marriage and adolescent pregnancy. She asked whether the National Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission included in its target groups women victims of violence committed in the post-electoral period.

63. **Ms. Bakayoko-Ly** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the Government was firmly committed to eliminating child trafficking and that there was a robust and comprehensive system in place to that end, which took into account all aspects of trafficking, with the involvement of NGOs, governmental ministries and relevant industries. Efforts would be made to improve coverage of the second action plan to combat child trafficking for the period 2018–2021. Work was being carried out to ensure that all aspects of trafficking, including victim and witness protection, were covered in national legislation.

64. **Ms. Chaudron** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that progress had been made to ensure access to justice for persons with disabilities through, for example, the provision of sign language interpreters and the installation of ramps in courts. Actions to make persons with disabilities aware of relevant reporting procedures had resulted in more complaints being lodged by them with the police and the national human rights machinery.

65. **Ms. Bakayoko-Ly** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that access to employment for persons with disabilities had also been improved. There were many associations of persons with disabilities in general and women with disabilities in particular, which were very active in the country.

66. **Mr. Nevry** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that a combination of factors had greatly facilitated victims' access to justice, including gender desks at police stations, which provided an appropriate environment for victims of gender-based violence to give statements, training on gender-based violence for officials in the justice system, a free legal aid system for low-income victims and the fact that NGOs had the power to bring civil cases on behalf of victims.

67. **Ms. Yoli-Bi** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that women with obstetric fistula – a potential consequence of female genital mutilation – received appropriate care from the State and specialist NGOs. They were regarded as having a disability because they were often marginalized by society. Given that a culture of silence persisted regarding sexual violence within families, campaigns had been launched to raise awareness among community and religious leaders, as well as families themselves, in order to encourage victims to come forward. Schools had special units whereby child victims could report incidents of sexual violence. In the past, families had often pressured victims to retract their complaints, but that was no longer possible because the courts continued such cases of their own motion. Peace huts and other centres allowed women to report incidents and their cases were referred to the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Public Freedoms. Special units had been set up by the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission to hear the accounts of women who had been victims of sexual violence during the post-election crisis. The amended Criminal Code had been adopted and would be promulgated in the near future.

Articles 7 to 9

68. **Ms. Tisheva** said that, since a quota for female candidates for political parties of 30 per cent was widely considered insufficient among experts, she wondered whether the State

party would increase it to 50 per cent. She would be interested to know whether the Government might consider taking urgent action in that regard, given the poor results seen thus far in terms of women's representation. She would appreciate an outline of the measures taken or planned to ensure women's representation at the local and regional levels of government. She wished to know how the Government intended to increase the participation of women in the judiciary and what tangible results had been achieved by having a higher proportion of women working in the justice system. She would be glad to learn how the State party would promote the participation of women from different communities, including women with disabilities in particular. It would be useful to know what measures the State party might introduce to enhance women's involvement in community life and to protect human and women's rights defenders in accordance with international requirements. She wondered what action the Government would take to raise awareness among society of the importance of women's involvement in decision-making. She asked what leadership and business training programmes had been developed and what financial and human resources had been allocated to those programmes. She wondered whether the State party might consider adopting a comprehensive law on gender equality.

69. **Ms. Acosta Vargas** said that she wished to know what steps had been taken to repeal the discriminatory provisions of the Nationality Code, especially those regarding the transmission of nationality by women to their minor children, and to extend the amendments to the Code to take into account traditional and non-civil marriages and ease the requirements under the law on the acquisition of nationality by adoption to cover non-formal adoptions. She wondered what measures had been introduced following the adoption of law on civil status to ensure that birth registration was accessible throughout country.

70. **Ms. Chaudron** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that only marriages performed by a registrar were recognized by law. Religious and traditional ceremonies conducted without a certificate of civil marriage, which had been a source of underage marriage, were penalized. Recent amendments to the marriage law had removed the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate children and a man no longer required the approval of his wife to recognize a child born out of wedlock as his own. Foreign spouses of Ivorian nationals, whether male or female, were eligible for Ivorian nationality, provided that they declared to the official during the marriage ceremony their intention to apply for nationality. Birth in the country automatically conferred entitlement to Ivorian nationality. Action had been taken to raise awareness of the importance of birth registration and local officials and midwives were authorized to register births.

71. **Ms. Nanan** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that Act No. 2018-863 had introduced new mechanisms for declaring births, allowing registration in maternity wards and in village health centres.

72. **Ms. Bakayoko-Ly** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the ultimate goal was to achieve equal representation of men and women in elected office; however, that was unlikely to be achieved soon. The Government worked with NGOs to encourage women to put themselves forward as candidates and to support those who did so.

73. **Ms. Yoli-Bi** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that 10 per cent of electoral candidates were women and the outcome of elections often reflected that figure. The new quota of 30 per cent would serve to enhance the visibility of women in politics and encourage other women to run for office. The fact that electoral lists alternated male and female candidates meant that women would not be left at the bottom of those lists.

74. **Ms. Acosta Vargas** said that it was unclear whether women who had been married in a traditional ceremony would be able to pass their nationality on to their children if those children were adopted.

75. **The Chair** said that she would appreciate clarification as to whether traditional marriage had any legal effect.

76. **Ms. Verges** said that she wished to know whether the birth registration mechanisms under the 2018 law had been implemented throughout the entire country. It might be more useful to have a quota for the number of women elected rather than for female candidates in order to ensure that 30 per cent of women actually held office. She would appreciate

clarification of the measures taken to ensure the representation of women in both the public and private sectors.

77. **Ms. Tisheva** asked how the State party intended to boost the representation of women at the local government level.

78. **Mr. Nevry** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that, since the adoption of the law on marriage in 1964, only marriages registered with the civil authorities were recognized, although the law had allowed a period of one year for couples married in traditional ceremonies to register. Traditional marriages had no legal force and, at best, they were regarded as de facto unions. The Government worked to raise awareness of the law surrounding traditional marriages. Adopted children acquired the nationality of the adoptive parent or parents, regardless of marital status.

79. **Ms. Nanan** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that single and married persons were equally entitled to adopt children.

80. **Ms. Yoli-Bi** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that mobile offices travelled around rural villages to register births all over the country. Village chiefs, who were recognized as public officials, were also permitted to register births. Work was under way to digitize the entire civil registry system to enable birth certificates to be issued anywhere nationwide. The new system had been piloted in the region of Sassandra in 2018.

81. The number of women elected to public office was proportionate to the number of female candidates. The proportion of women candidates had never far exceeded 10 per cent; however, with the new quota in place the number of women elected to public office was expected to increase significantly. A report being drafted by the Government in conjunction with UN-Women and civil society organizations would serve to guide policy for enhancing the participation of women in the public and private sectors. Measures to achieve gender parity in accordance with article 37 of the Constitution of 2016 were in their early stages and more time was needed for them to bear fruit.

Articles 10 to 14

82. **Ms. Song** said that she wished to know what specific measures had been taken to implement the Strategic Plan to Accelerate the Education of Girls and ensure that no girls were left behind by the education system. She wondered what was being done to help girls from low-income families and those living in remote areas to receive an education. She would appreciate additional information on monitoring committees around schools referred to in the report, including who the members were, what their responsibilities were and how they functioned. It would be useful to know what incentives had been given to parents to encourage them to send their daughters to school. She wondered what measures had been adopted to combat early marriage and teenage pregnancy, which were major causes of school dropout among adolescent girls, and to allow young mothers to continue their education. She would like to know what steps had been taken to increase the number of female teachers, especially at the secondary school level, in order to make schools more girl-friendly and to encourage female pupils to attend. She would welcome information on efforts to tackle sexual harassment and violence in schools. It would be helpful to know, in particular, whether there was a complaints procedure in place. She would be interested to hear how many teachers had been punished for raping or indecently assaulting students, what punishments had been imposed and what assistance the victims had received. She asked whether the Independent Literacy Service was a government body and whether its literacy courses were all free of charge. Lastly, she wished to know whether women received training on non-traditional subjects at the centres established under the enhanced literacy policy in order to expand their employment opportunities.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.