



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
Twenty-ninth session

Summary record of the 610th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 1 July 2003, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Ms. Açar

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The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

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

Combined initial, second, third, fourth and fifth periodic reports of Brazil (CEDAW/C/BRA/1-5)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Fernandes (Brazil) took a place at the Committee table.

2. **Ms. Fernandes** (Brazil) said that the report of Brazil was the result of a collective effort by women's organizations, a human rights expert, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The updated information which she would provide orally covered the period October 2002 through June 2003. President Luis Inácio Lula da Silva, elected in January 2003, had established poverty reduction and the enhancement of citizenship rights as the primary goals of his administration. In an effort to combat discrimination, he had created the Special Secretariat for Women's Policies, the Special Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality Policies and the Special Human Rights Secretariat, all of which functioned directly under his Office.

3. The Special Secretariat for Women's Policies, created on the first day of the new administration and ratified by Act No. 10683 of May 2003, was responsible for advising the President on policies in matters affecting women; developing and implementing anti-discrimination campaigns; creating a gender planning mechanism to promote gender equality; carrying out cooperation programmes with public and private organizations at the national and international levels with a view to the implementation of policies benefiting women; and monitoring the implementation of affirmative action legislation and the development of public policies for application of the gender equality and anti-discrimination agreements, conventions and action plans signed by Brazil. It consisted of a cabinet and three departments: the Institutional Coordination Department, the Thematic Programmes and Actions Monitoring Department and the Women's Policy Planning Department. The Special Secretariat also included the National Council on Women's Rights, created in 1985, which had been restructured to include members of women's organizations, the relevant ministries (Planning, Health

and Labour) and the Special Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality Policies.

4. A document entitled Public Policies for Women and published in March 2003 included the President's first message to Congress, one chapter of which dealt with the Government's commitment to gender equality. The new administration had undertaken to strengthen public policy in the area of women's rights, engage in networking designed to ensure the dissemination and implementation of the Convention and allocate the human and budgetary resources necessary to the achievement of those goals.

5. After an arduous battle in the Senate, Brazil had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention in 2002. In January 2003, a new Civil Code consistent with the Constitution had been adopted. The Code had invalidated legislation which had discriminated against women and had introduced concepts such as spousal equality and replacement of the term "man" by "person" as a generic reference. Husbands had been given the right to take their wives' family name; the status of partners in a "stable union" and the rights of children born out of wedlock had been enshrined; and it had been established that child custody should be granted to the parent best able to exercise it.

6. However, the Brazilian State and society continued to harbour prejudices which discriminated against women and reflected a failure to recognize their cultural, social and economic achievements throughout history. For example, the Constitution did not grant full labour rights to domestic workers, who accounted for 18 per cent of the economically active female population. Brazilian law also failed to guarantee the rights of partners in same-sex relationships, although case-law decisions had recognized such relationships and the welfare and property rights derived therefrom. Brazil had sponsored a draft resolution on human rights and sexual orientation (E/CN.4/2003/L.92) at the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on Human Rights.

7. Congress had before it bills that would amend the 1940 Penal Code, which included provisions that discriminated against women and prohibited abortion except where the mother's life was at risk or in cases of pregnancy resulting from rape. However, legislators were strongly resistant to the idea of decriminalizing abortion or extending the grounds for voluntary interruption of pregnancy even though Brazil was a party to several international instruments which

recommended less repressive legislation on abortion and regarded it as a public health issue.

8. The absence of legislation prohibiting domestic violence or establishing the offence of emotional abuse and the courts' tendency to discriminate against women victims of sex crimes made it difficult to enforce the provisions of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women, which Brazil had ratified in 1995. The courts continued to perpetuate stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination against women and even where institutional mechanisms and public policies for gender equality had been developed, there was a gap between the law and social reality, particularly in the case of the black, mixed-race and indigenous populations.

9. Women made up 51.3 per cent of Brazil's population. Of that total, 45 per cent were African Brazilians, 16.1 per cent were rural dwellers and 24.4 per cent (over 30 per cent in some parts of the country) were heads of household. According to the Synthesis of Social Indicators 2002, published by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, inequality was the most striking feature of Brazilian society. There had been some improvement in the areas of health, education and housing, but the gap between the extremes remained wide. Women earned less than men at all levels of education, fewer women than men were entitled to an old-age pension upon retirement and black workers' wages were half those of whites, particularly in the cities; poverty was greatest among the black population.

10. In an effort to restore and maintain the dignity of a major part of the population, especially women, the Government had established the Special Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality Policies and the Zero Hunger Programme, which was a political cornerstone of its policy and attacked the structural causes of poverty through actions designed to generate jobs and income, provide incentives for first-time hiring and family farms, and strengthen land reforms. The Programme issued cards which entitled women to food subsidies and identification documents which qualified them for loans; it also facilitated their acquisition of rural property and access to credit.

11. The previous Government's failure to enact social policies had greatly harmed the public education and created an alarming trend towards the privatization of education. Under the new Government, the Ministry of

Education and the Special Secretariat for Women's Policies had signed an agreement establishing the Student Mother Programme to provide literacy training for the mothers of students covered by the State scholarship programme, which was designed to keep children in the schools. Funding for the education of children aged 7 to 14 had been expanded to include the entire period from pre-school through high school; the Government was also advocating the adoption of quotas for black students in public universities and was working to improve the quality of instruction and the number of places available at all levels of education as a means of combating racial discrimination.

12. Since 1932, Brazilian women had had the right to vote and to run for office. They accounted for 51.3 per cent of the electorate but only 14.8 per cent of senators, 8.2 per cent of members of the Chamber of Deputies, 12.6 per cent of State members of the legislative assemblies, 11.6 per cent of city council members, 7.4 per cent of State governors and 5.7 per cent of mayors. There was only one woman on the 11-member Supreme Court and two women on the 33-member Federal Court of Justice. However, the number of women in high-level posts had increased as from January 2003; currently, the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Social Security, the Ministry of Mines and Energy, the Special Secretariat for Women's Policies and the Special Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality Policies were all headed by women, of whom three were black.

13. In 1995, a quota policy, which required the slates of political parties and coalitions to include a minimum of 30 per cent and a maximum of 70 per cent of candidates of each sex, had been adopted. Although that policy had not significantly increased the number of women elected to office, it had drawn attention to the issue of women's political participation and to the need to implement awareness campaigns aimed at political parties and women themselves.

14. At various international conferences, Brazil had supported the recognition of new human rights and, in particular, of sexual and reproductive rights as a means of empowering women in other areas. It planned to extend its affirmative action policies beyond the area of election quotas, encourage Government agencies to adopt policies that valued the work done by women, appoint more women to represent Brazil at the international level, strengthen the role of state and city councils and women's councils, appoint more women

to management posts in the federal administration, launch media campaigns to promote women's political participation, organize seminars and training programmes to prepare women for the exercise of power, and work with political parties and the Public Prosecutor's Office to strengthen implementation of the quota policies.

15. Seminars were being held to foster respect for gender equity among members of the national police and judiciary and to encourage Latin American law enforcement agencies to give increased priority to international human rights instruments; campaigns were being launched to increase public awareness of human rights instruments and of the jurisprudence of international courts; more women were being appointed to posts in the judiciary; the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Public Defender's Office were working together to eliminate discrimination against women; domestic legislation was under review; and regulations for enforcing constitutional provisions guaranteeing women's rights were being enacted.

16. During the past ten years, Brazil's mortality rate had dropped and its fertility rate had fallen from 5.8 children per woman in 1970 to 2.3 children per woman in 2000; thus, the population was growing at only 1.4 per cent per year. Act No. 9273 of 1996 had established the right to family planning under the national health system. In 1983, the Ministry of Health had launched the Programme of Full Assistance to Women's Health, which included education, prevention, diagnosis, care, treatment, recovery and gynaecological care with a focus on family planning and the diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. However, political, technical and administrative difficulties had prevented full implementation of the Programme.

17. Although pregnancy-related complications were not among the top ten causes of death, the maternal mortality rate was high and 92 per cent of such cases were preventable. The primary causes of maternal mortality were haemorrhages, hypertension, puerperal fever and circulatory problems caused by pregnancy, childbirth and abortion. That situation was improving as a result of better obstetrical care and family planning; implementation of the Family Health Programme, the Health Community Agents Programme and the Programme for Prenatal and Birth Humanization; State programmes for high-risk

pregnancies; greater availability of contraception; and support services for women victims of sexual violence.

18. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS remained high among women and the elderly, but the incidence of infection had declined since 1999 because of the counter-measures taken by the Ministry of Health. Measures to improve health care for women had included a women's health hotline, the inclusion of race and ethnicity in Single Health System data, a focus on sickle-cell anaemia and other diseases with a higher incidence in the black population, early diagnosis of cervical and breast cancer and setting up committees to monitor and combat maternal mortality.

19. Although women's share of the labour market was about 40 per cent, they often earned low wages and had poor job security. Those difficulties were more serious for certain ethnic groups and in certain parts of the country, such as the North East. The new Government had established a "First Job" programme for women aged 15 to 24, improved training (especially for managerial posts), taken steps to improve school attendance for children aged 0 to 14 in order to help working mothers and continued to combat child labour in accordance with International Labour Organization Conventions 138 and 182, which had been incorporated into Brazilian law in 2002 through a constitutional amendment in 2001.

20. Violence against women inside and outside the home (including emotional and sexual abuse and harassment) and trafficking in women and girls were still common. They should be tackled by methods including countering gender stereotypes in the media and combating organized crime. Since 1995, 339 Special Police Departments for Assistance to Women and 71 women's shelters had been set up, but those numbers were still too low relative to the size of the country and women's needs. In 1998, the Ministry of Health had established standards for the care of women victims of violence, covering emergency contraception, prophylaxis for HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases and the right to legal abortion where rape resulted in pregnancy. There were 85 hospital units and 113 out-patient units providing such care in 2003, but once again, the number was too small. The Special Secretariat for Women's Policies was in charge of a government programme to prevent and combat violence against women. It included provision for a working group to draft legislation on domestic violence, measures to improve assistance, treatment

and accommodation for victims and better education and training regarding such violence.

21. In conclusion, the situation of Brazilian women had undeniably improved between 1995 and 2002. The feminist and women's movements had played an important role in establishing public policies that enabled the Convention to be implemented. However, not enough progress had been made: the situation of Brazilian women should be seen against the background of a continent-sized country with regional differences in economic development. It had severe social exclusion and poverty, which disproportionately affected women, side by side with prosperity and advanced technology, resulting in one of the world's worst income-distribution maps.

22. The Brazilian Government recognized that eliminating poverty required a break with existing social, cultural and structural views that kept women in a subordinate role and gave them unequal access to economic, social and political resources. Combating poverty had become a struggle for independence, dignity, respect and human rights, including the right to development. Public policies incorporating gender mainstreaming, race and ethnicity and sexual orientation should be proposed, developed and monitored. Civil society was encouraged to contribute to government policy by the Multiannual Programme, which laid down goals in connection with the national budget for the next four years (2004 to 2007), focusing on sustained growth, more jobs, better income distribution and social inclusion. The conference on policies for women which the Special Secretariat for Women's Policies would hold between December 2003 and March 2004 would involve representatives of the Government and feminist and women's organizations.

23. The Government's commitment to justice and equality also involved adhering to the international treaties to which the country was a party. At the United Nations, it had taken part in the activities of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). Within the Organization of American States (OAS), Brazil had taken part in the work of the Inter-American Commission of Women. In the Southern Common Market (Mercosur), it had participated in the work of the specialized meeting of women. Lastly, the Government and the Special Secretariat would strive to implement affirmative action and public policies to comply with agreements,

conventions and action plans to promote equality between men and women and combat discrimination and to improve implementation of the Convention by the time that it presented its next report to the Committee.

24. **The Chairperson**, speaking on behalf of the Committee, thanked the representative of Brazil for her informative, frank and critical assessment of the situation of women in that country. Brazil was in an extraordinary position: although it had ratified the Convention in 1984, it had only just complied with the provisions of article 18, paragraph 1, which required an initial report on implementation one year after ratification, and at least every four years thereafter.

25. As a result, the women of Brazil had been deprived of international scrutiny of their situation for a long time. The obligation to report to the Committee was a cornerstone of the Convention with which Brazil had failed to comply, the Committee was pleased that it had taken the opportunity extended to all countries with outstanding reports. It had also taken positive steps to improve implementation of the Convention by removing its reservations to article 15, paragraph 4, and article 16, paragraph 1 (a), (c), (g), and (h), in 1994, by ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention in 2002 and by ratifying the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, in order to give the Committee more meeting time.

26. **Ms. Ferrer Gómez** said that she was impressed that the Government had been in office for only three months but had already made extensive plans to improve the situation of women by altering public policies and focusing on the most vulnerable. The Zero Hunger programme was a vital component of that action, and she asked for further details of how it helped women, particularly those who were heads of household. She also wished to know more about the situation of indigenous women, how their cultural, political and social needs were met and how violence against women in indigenous communities was being dealt with. The idea behind the 1973 Statute of Indigenous Peoples had been that indigenous people should evolve until they could be assimilated by the society around them. The new Government obviously saw the situation differently; she asked how it proposed to change the law to bring it into line with the new Constitution, which had given the indigenous population specific recognition and rights, and the

amended Civil Code, which had eliminated indigenous peoples' legal incapacity.

27. She recognized that changing policy in a country of Brazil's size and structure was a challenge and asked what steps could be taken to ensure that all state and local governments complied with the Federal Government's decisions, particularly in connection with gender mainstreaming and combating violence against women. Evaluating the results of policy implementation was a challenge for the same reasons. The reporting State should indicate whether there were mechanisms in place to assess the effectiveness of policies. Brazil's report had also mentioned the collection of data on women's participation in society; she asked whether such data had been compiled to assess whether food-security trials in the North East of the country had met women's needs.

28. **Ms. Šimonović** said that she was struck by a contrast: Brazil had ratified the Convention in 1984, but had submitted to the Committee a report covering 18 years, yet it had ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1992 and reported to the Human Rights Committee four years later. She asked why the difference had arisen. The report indicated that the Government and non-governmental organizations had been involved in its preparation, but she wondered whether it had been officially adopted by the Government or the National Congress.

29. The report had also mentioned a shortage of gender-disaggregated data. She asked whether there were plans to make up the shortfall in that regard. The report referred to Brazil's participation in the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly on "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", held in New York in 2000 (Beijing +5). She wondered if Brazil had drawn up specific national action plans to implement the outcomes of those conferences, as its report to the Committee should include such details.

30. Finally, she enquired about the status of the Convention in Brazil's legal system. The 1988 constitution had included among the rights that it protected rights set forth in the international treaties to which Brazil was a party. The Committee would like to know whether national or international law prevailed in the event of a conflict of laws, and whether the

judiciary decided which law prevailed. The question was made particularly relevant by the Brazilian representative's assertion that judges were still applying discriminatory legislation.

31. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** said that she had been struck by the large contribution to the report made by non-governmental sources. In the light of Brazil's 18-year delay in presenting the initial report, she would like to be reassured that the Government had a sense of ownership of the report, that it had been, for example, circulated to the other ministries and discussed in the legislature, that there was at least a structure in place in the Brazilian Government not only to follow-up the present report but to take responsibility for future reporting obligations.

32. **Ms. Shin** said that she joined others in congratulating Brazil on withdrawing its reservations and ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention. She had received the impression that the Brazilian Government was well aware of the provisions of all the international treaties and protocols that it had ratified. However, ratification was one thing, implementation another. In relation to the new commitment to implementation, she wondered what efforts had been made to let people know about the provisions of the Convention and the Protocol, for example, whether they had been translated into Portuguese and other languages used in the country, or whether there had been publicity and awareness-raising regarding the ratification of the Optional Protocol.

33. She had been disturbed to see the term "equity" used in quite a number of places in the report where the term "equality" would be more appropriate. It was hoped that the usage was inadvertent and not a matter of policy. The two terms were not synonymous, and the Committee was firm on its insistence on real equality between men and women.

34. **Ms. Saiga** said that she too was interested to know who had responsibility for the drafting of the report and for follow-up. In a vast federal system, it was always a matter of concern how federal policy could be translated into local policy. The Committee would also appreciate clarification on the position and powers of the three special secretariats within the government structure and the implications of their direct link to the Presidency and wondered whether they were unique or whether special secretariats had been established in areas other than human rights and

discrimination. She was glad to know that the Government was well aware of the inadequacy of statistics in certain areas.

35. **Mr. Flinterman** asked what instruments were available to the federal Government to encourage state governments to implement the Convention and what measures it could take in the event that state governments were not complying.

36. **Ms. Gaspard** noted that the title of the State party's report, "Combined initial, second, third, fourth and fifth periodic reports", was a sort of fiction, a way to overcome the problem of past non-compliance, and the Committee expected Brazil to adhere to the normal reporting deadlines in future. She welcomed the richness and the honesty of the report, which recognized that serious efforts would be required in a number of areas, including the area of judicial interpretation, and seemed to testify to a strong political will to implement the Convention.

37. In terms of the method by which the report had been elaborated, she wished to know whether the legislature had been involved in its preparation and if the Brazilian delegation to the Committee planned to report back to the legislature. Often the gap between the provisions of the Convention and domestic legislation was due to a lack of knowledge of the country's international obligations on the part of the legislators, and the very fact of debating such a report could help to raise awareness and hasten progress in adapting legislation. Since the report had pointed out some of the discrepancies in judicial interpretation and enforcement of the law, the Committee would like to know how the Government planned to disseminate knowledge of the Convention in law schools and among magistrates, prosecutors and police officers.

38. **Ms. Gnacadja** said that she was happy to see that the Federal Constitution and many of the state constitutions explicitly prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex and that Brazil had also ratified the Inter-American Convention to Promote, Punish and Eradicate Violence against Women. The Committee welcomed the considerable progress made towards gender equality since the adoption of the Constitution in 1988 and wished to congratulate the delegation on the quality of the work that had gone into the preparation of the report and the frankness and specificity of its diagnosis of the obstacles.

39. However, she was concerned about the admitted lack of data on the rates of violence against women and girls and would like to know what plans the Government had to remedy that lack, since without such information it was impossible to design effective policies and measure progress. She was also concerned that the direct subordination of the Special Secretariat for Women's Policies to the Presidency might have the effect of restricting its autonomy of action.

Article 2

40. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** congratulated the delegation on their comprehensive and frank report. She was encouraged by the country's forward-looking Constitution, which enshrined the principles of non-discrimination and the equality of men and women, and by the evident political will of the Government to advance women's equality, as demonstrated by the legal reforms taking place and the new government programmes being instituted. Despite the difficulties of implementation faced in a very large country, it was hoped that the process of building gender equality would be accelerated. She was also impressed by the strength of the women's movement in Brazil and the Government's capacity to work with it.

41. In addition, she wished to reinforce the point that the terms "equity" and "equality" were not interchangeable; "equity" related to fair treatment of persons, whereas "equality" was a broader concept implying equal rights, opportunities, dignity and responsibilities, and as such was deliberately avoided by some countries wishing to take a narrow view of their obligations under the Convention. For example, in the law concerning political participation, the aim of applying quotas was to achieve equality, rather than equity, of participation.

42. **Ms. Shin** said that she was not clear about the precise status of the Convention in relation to the Constitution and other domestic law. Since the report had raised the problem of judicial decisions that diverged from the Convention and the Constitution, the Committee would like to know what programmes were contemplated to train the judiciary in gender-equality issues. In the light of the discriminatory laws still on the books, she wondered whether the Government was willing to form a legal review team to examine the entire body of laws for discriminatory elements and propose changes. She welcomed the New Civil Code, but understood that even that might need further

changes to bring it into line with the Convention. Since the Government's efforts to reform the Special Section of the Penal Code seemed to be meeting with resistance, the reporting State should indicate what strategy the Government intended to pursue to change legislators' minds.

43. **Mr. Melander** said that the status of international treaties in Brazilian law was unclear, and obviously many laws contrary to the Convention were being applied. On the other hand, there were some good penal provisions that were not being enforced, because police did not investigate, prosecutors did not prosecute and judges did not apply them. While a number of educational programmes had been launched, clearly more were needed, targeted, for instance, at police station commanders. He would like to know if there were any plans to create a kind of ombudsman's office that could prosecute such failures to act on the part of law enforcement officials. The Committee would also like to know if any efforts were under way or contemplated to abolish the "self-defence of honour" plea, by which men sought to justify violence against spouses or sexual partners.

44. **Ms. Morvai** pointed out that a number of the laws mentioned in the report, for instance, the law on judicial separation that determined that a woman must resume the use of her maiden name when she separated, as well as many of the laws still part of the current Penal Code, represented *prima facie* discrimination against women and were completely incompatible with the Convention. Although the Government seemed to be aware of that fact, nevertheless, the police, prosecutors and judges were required to enforce those archaic laws. The Committee would like a status report on the bill to revise the Penal Code, and whether the Government had set a deadline for itself to annul those discriminatory laws. Training for members of the judiciary and law enforcement in cooperation with non-governmental organizations with experience in the area of violence against women might be useful.

45. On the subject of domestic violence, she was surprised that the recent decision of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights ordering prosecution for a perpetrator of domestic violence, compensation for the victim and an end to condoning violence by the State, had not been mentioned, and she wondered how Brazil had enforced that decision. While Brazil could hardly be congratulated for submitting an initial report after

18 years, it did show the good intentions of the new Government and acknowledged the work of the strong women's movement in the country.

46. **Ms. Gnacadja** said that she would like to hear more about the place of the Convention in domestic law. The Constitution penalized discrimination, but it appeared that a great deal of discretion in that area was left to judges. The Committee would like to know specifically who was competent to rule on matters of discrimination and who had the authority to abrogate discriminatory legislation.

47. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** said that she was concerned at an apparent disregard among the judiciary for the principle of equality. The Committee would like to know the budget allocated for the training planned for the members of the judiciary, if such training was obligatory, and if not, whether any incentives were being offered for participation and a time frame for its completion established. She found it difficult to gain an overall picture of the situation with regard to legislative reform, and therefore would like to know if a timetable had been established for abolishing existing discriminatory legislation.

48. **Ms. Saiga** said that she was concerned at the statement that the New Civil Code had revoked "most" discriminatory provisions, as it implied that it still contained discriminatory laws, and would welcome a status report on the revision of the Penal Code being considered by the Ministry of Justice. Although it had been stated that the Government was implementing as public policy the domestic violence law rejected by Parliament, she would like to know if there were any plans to reintroduce the bill.

Article 3

49. **Ms. Popescu Sandru** said that the national anti-discrimination machinery included, in addition to the Special Secretariat for Women's Policies, special secretariats for racial equality and for human rights in general. She wondered which of those structures had the most direct responsibility for indigenous, African and Asian women, who suffered double discrimination, and whether there was any overlap among those three bodies. It would be interesting to know if there were any plans to amend the Statute of Indigenous Peoples, which, along with the Constitution and Civil Code, regulated the status of indigenous women. The report also stated that the law provided the right to file

complaints of discrimination, and the Committee would like a description of the mechanism for filing such complaints. Finally, she would like to hear about any efforts to disseminate the Convention and the Optional Protocol among indigenous and minority women.

50. **Ms. Patten** wondered if the recent ratification of the Optional Protocol would give impetus to the removal of the discriminatory provisions remaining in the New Civil Code. It would be helpful to hear more about the actual impact of the laws to guarantee women's rights outlined in the report on the daily lives of women in all sectors of the population. She would like to know about any efforts to ensure that women benefited from those laws and would welcome data about women's access to legal aid services.

51. The report presented a fair assessment of inequality and social exclusion in Brazil. In addition to the Zero Hunger Project, which was designed to combat the structural causes of such exclusion, she asked what other measures were being taken for women's economic empowerment. The reporting State should indicate which Ministry was responsible for issuing the electronic meal cards and the criteria for issuing them. More details on access to other social programmes, for instance the land allocation programme, would be useful as well. Lastly, the Government had taken some ambitious and challenging initiatives. It would be interesting to know the extent to which it had adopted a multidisciplinary and cross-sectoral approach to them.

52. **Ms. Gaspard** inquired about the current status of the National Council of Women, the means available to the Special Secretariat for Women's Policies, and the extent of coordination with other ministerial departments.

53. **Ms. Shin** said that she would like more details about the Special Secretariat in three main areas. First, she asked how much power it had compared to other levels of government. Since one of its functions was to advise the President, it would be interesting to learn how often that advice was implemented. Turning to resources, she enquired how many people were on the staff of the Special Secretariat, how large its current budget was and whether that represented any increase over the resources allocated to the previous national mechanism. Lastly, on the subject of policy, many projects and programmes had been mentioned, but

there seemed to be a lack of a comprehensive plan. The Committee would like to know the level of involvement by non-governmental organizations in policy-making, planning and evaluation.

Article 4

54. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** said that the long list in the report of measures taken as affirmative action reflected a certain amount of ambiguity. It was important to clarify that concept further without overly generalizing it. It also appeared that some acquired rights in the area of maternity protection, for example child care, were being jeopardized. She would like to receive assurances that the new Government would not restrict them.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.