



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

Distr.: General
11 November 2014

English only

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

Summary record (partial)* of the 1262nd meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 30 October 2014, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Neubauer (Vice-Chairperson)

Contents

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

Combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of Guinea (continued)

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

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of this document* to the Editing Section, room E.5108, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

Any corrections to the records of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

GE.14-19585 (E) 111114 111114



* 1 4 1 9 5 8 5 *

Please recycle A small graphic of a recycling symbol, consisting of three chasing arrows forming a triangle.



Ms. Neubauer (Vice-Chairperson) took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

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

Combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of Guinea (continued)
(CEDAW/C/GIN/7-8; CEDAW/C/GIN/Q/7-8 and Add.1;
HRI/CORE/1/Add.80/Rev.1)

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

Articles 7 to 9 (continued)

2. **Ms. Kaba** (Guinea) said that few women occupied decision-making positions in public administration but that women occupied one of the Government's national coordinator posts, three ambassador positions and the majority of posts in the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Advancement of Women and Children. Many women also led electoral campaigns. The new independent electoral committee would ensure respect for the 30 per cent quota for women in public administration, which was not met at present, and for the inclusion of women on electoral lists. Furthermore, the bill on parity and revised draft Civil Code, which dealt with quotas, were before the National Assembly. The women's network of former ministers also actively engaged in settling political disputes between parties. Programmes were launched to build women's capacity and knowledge of the political domain, encourage women to stand for senior positions, and provide public service training. Lastly, efforts were made to tackle gender roles in the home, which, together with increasing industrialization, contributed to unburdening women from domestic and agricultural chores, thereby broadening their employment opportunities.

Articles 10 to 14

3. **Ms. Haidar** acknowledged the crisis the country was experiencing at present. She was concerned at the lack of improvement in the rates of early marriage, teenage pregnancy, school dropout and harassment in education, despite political will and action in that regard, and asked for information on measures to prevent those problems, such as sexual education and awareness-raising for students and teachers. She wondered what measures were in place to tackle social norms and stereotypes in education. What was being done to monitor implementation and evaluate the impact of relevant legislation? What was the current budget allocation for the prevention of teenage pregnancy and were there plans to increase it with a view to empowering adolescent girls through sexual education?
4. **Ms. Schulz** asked whether there were plans to redress the lack of women working in the formal and modern sectors. What action was taken to ensure the implementation and long-term effectiveness of programmes aimed at increasing the percentage of women and young workers in public administration? What measures were adopted to provide public service training to women and what long-term objectives were set in that regard? She asked whether literacy programmes had been established and what activities were carried out to enhance the economic empowerment of all women, particularly of economically active women, to enable them to rise to higher positions and expand their businesses. Further information would be appreciated on sections of the population covered by social security, including informal economy workers. Had the Government envisaged compensatory measures for inhabitants who had suffered a loss of work owing to the Ebola virus epidemic? Lastly, she invited the delegation to comment on reports of forced labour and of extremely harsh conditions for women domestic workers.

5. **Ms. Nwankwo** expressed concern about the national budget allocation for health care, which was significantly lower than the level recommended by the African Union, and about the high rate of maternal mortality. She urged the State party to implement its plans to set up more health clinics to improve access for women from remote areas and thereby reduce the maternal mortality rate. She asked, given that free Caesarean sections were only performed in major hospitals and that 46 per cent of women gave birth without medical attention, whether there were plans to address the lack of maternal medical facilities and assistance.

6. Expressing deep sadness over the Ebola virus outbreak, she emphasized that women bore the heaviest burden of the disease as they were the primary caregivers and the main cross-border workers, and had thus been most exposed to the disease. It was essential that the State party should consider the gender perspective and equality of access to facilities and information when designing strategies for the control of Ebola. She asked whether the Government worked with grass-roots groups as vehicles for the dissemination of information about Ebola, involved women in discussions on disease prevention and management, and had plans to provide compensation to women for loss of employment and subsequent long-term lack of economic empowerment.

7. **Ms. Kaba** (Guinea) said that a national administration college had been established to provide public service training for young people and women. The programme involved all governmental ministries and ensured employment for all students in a public service department, including at senior level, following their six-month training period. It would be expanded to all graduates who were unemployed in the future. The reform plans for the public service focused on increasing the percentage of women workers in administration.

8. Currently, 70 per cent of girls were enrolled in secondary school and efforts were being made to increase the number of those who continued to university level. The national budget allocation for education was the largest public investment and stood at between 11 and 17 per cent. With support from international bodies, school facilities had been built in rural and urban areas, providing access to school for the majority of children. Literacy programmes for women were implemented nationwide in vocational training centres with a view to reducing the currently high rate of illiteracy. Attitudes towards sexuality, teenage pregnancy and early marriage were changing, and parents, whose role in sexual education was vital, were increasingly open to discussing sexuality and attending family planning consultations with their children. Additionally, pupils received sexual education from primary school level upwards. Initiatives were taken to strengthen the social security scheme, including developing a national health insurance and retirement pension system, and expanding coverage to the whole population.

9. The Ebola virus epidemic had triggered severe health, social and economic problems and had caused people to dramatically alter their way of life. Women agricultural workers endured particular hardship owing to border closures which prevented them from exporting their produce and continuing trade with neighbouring countries. An interministerial committee had been set up to study the impact of the virus on all activities and sections of the population, and took into account the particular consequences on women.

10. **Ms. Aïssatou Diallo** (Guinea) said that significant progress had been made in reducing the maternal mortality rate through various measures, including the establishment of a national road map to hasten the reduction of maternal and infant mortality; a revised family planning strategy; a review focusing specifically on maternal mortality; relevant training at all levels; the establishment of review teams and a family planning action plan. The Ministry of Health was seeking additional funding but there was a lack of trained staff. Work was under way to improve access to sanitation facilities in isolated areas through a building programme. A request had been made at the government level regarding the recruitment of 2,000 midwives.

11. **Ms. Kaba** (Guinea) said that the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Advancement of Women and Children was registering midwives, who would be provided with mobile telephones and organized into networks in order to improve health-care provision.

12. **Mr. Camara** (Guinea) said that the national authorities viewed child labour as being a form of trafficking in persons. Many children from rural areas were sent to work for families in the capital and their wages were pocketed by middlemen. A child protection agency had been established, which received information from local child protection committees, as child domestic workers had no contracts or protection. A referencing system and database had been set up regarding child victims of trafficking. Work was ongoing to prepare campaigns to promote respect for children's rights among employers and families. The International Labour Organization (ILO) Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) had been incorporated into the Children's Code and a number of middlemen had been prosecuted.

13. **Ms. Kaba** (Guinea) said that a national coordinating body on the response to the Ebola virus disease had been established. That body cooperated closely with all the sectorial departments concerned. Non-governmental organizations were also free to make proposals, which were taken into account in the coordinating body's budget plans. The Government, associations and parliamentarians had, from the outset of the emergency, taken part in information and awareness-raising campaigns targeting, inter alia, marketplaces, schools, churches and mosques. A programme funded by the United Nations Children's Fund was now in place, as a part of which women parliamentarians, women from civil society and women government employees travelled around the country disseminating information on precautionary measures regarding the Ebola virus disease. An appeal for assistance had also been made to the international community.

14. **Mr. Barry** (Guinea) said that, currently, only fathers had the right to receive family benefit payments. However, efforts would be made to change that system and to enable women to receive such payments.

15. **Ms. Kaba** (Guinea) said that the draft revised Civil Code reflected the fact that women usually looked after the children in families. Accordingly, women would be entitled to receive family benefit payments.

16. **Ms. Ameline**, referring to the State party's obligations and the Committee's expectations in terms of concrete results, emphasized the importance of quantified targets, action timetables and logistical infrastructure. She called on the State party to do its utmost to stamp out child labour and the torture and ill-treatment of children and to ensure that all children received an education. The State party possessed considerable natural resources and had great potential in terms of growth. She expressed the hope that any future democratic transition would involve economic change and social development and that the general population would benefit from the nation's wealth. Progress could be sped up through training for women on the use of new technologies and literacy programmes.

17. **Ms. Schulz** requested more detailed information on the support provided to women working in the informal sector.

18. **Ms. Haidar**, referring to the point raised by Ms. Ameline, asked whether the State party was in a position to develop timelines and indicators and carry out continuous assessment of projects. There was an urgent need to produce concrete results. Had the State party approached any international organizations in order to request technical assistance regarding benchmarks and other related tools?

19. **Ms. Nwankwo** said that health spending in Guinea accounted for only 3 per cent of the national budget which fell far short of the pledge contained in the 2001 Abuja Declaration, whereby the Member States of the African Union had undertaken to allocate at

least 15 per cent of their national budgets to health. How were the authorities going to ensure that investment in the health sector was increased? The figures for the maternal mortality rate contained in the State party's report were significantly lower than those contained in reports produced by a number of international organizations. Even if the Government's figures were correct, the rate was still very high. The authorities should determine what the maternal mortality rate actually was and then reflect on how best to address the issue.

20. **Ms. Kaba** (Guinea) said that a large number of seminars on organizational skills had been held for women working in the informal sector. Workshops involving the participation of foreign experts were also run for young girls wishing to learn a trade. The United Nations Population Fund had provided equipment for a project scheduled for 2015, under which 2,000 young girls would be trained in dress-making. Bank accounts had been opened for those girls so that they could receive a monthly allowance. A microcredit fund had also been set up for them and money had been set aside for literacy programmes and training in accounting and business management and organization. Multifunctional platforms had also been installed, particularly in rural areas, for instance, to enable women working in the informal sector to generate income. The general population could use the platform to charge their mobile phones, listen to the radio and watch television. Part of the income generated through that platform was reinvested in a fund run by the women concerned. The Government had even provided groups of women with credit to buy tractors, seeds and fertilizer. Such loans could be repaid in kind or in cash once the harvest was gathered.

21. **Ms. Aïssatou Diallo** (Guinea) confirmed that health accounted for only 3 per cent of the national budget. Almost three quarters of that budgetary allocation was spent on wages. Efforts had been deployed to obtain additional funding from the National Assembly. The figures on maternal mortality contained in the reports prepared by a number of international organizations reflected the situation in the State party in 2005. A more recent study showed a reduction in the maternal mortality rate. Emergency obstetric and neonatal care had been identified as essential in efforts to reduce the maternal mortality rate. The need for such care was not currently being met and hospitals were unable to carry out the nine signal functions. Work was under way to reorganize the structure of the health service. Obstetric care was provided free of charge, but, owing to the topography and size of the country, it was difficult for women in isolated areas to access health facilities. Furthermore, there were very few ambulances available. Schools of midwifery had been opened and former midwives had been brought out of retirement to provide care directly, or to act as mentors for trainees.

22. **Ms. Kaba** (Guinea) said that the underfunding of the health sector was a serious problem. However, even less money was set aside in the budget for the advancement of women. She asked the Committee to recommend that the national authorities focus more on the advancement of women and gender equality when preparing the national budget in the future.

23. **Ms. Pomeranzi** said that the funds allocated to microcredit were rather too low to have any real impact. Projects for the empowerment of women were often based on a perceived failing on the part of women, when, in fact, their comparative economic weakness was usually a function of society's devaluation of their work. She therefore suggested that the issue might be best tackled from a broader policy angle and that the various women's support funds should be included in the credit and poverty-reduction projects implemented in Guinea by the World Bank and African Development Bank, as a means of boosting the economy as a whole.

24. **Ms. Gabr**, noting that rural women faced greater challenges than their urban counterparts, asked what measures the national machinery for the advancement of women had taken in that regard and whether there was a rural development plan. She wished to

know how women, especially those in rural areas, were protected in terms of wages, pensions and social insurance and what specific measures were in place for elderly women and women with disabilities. She enquired about the results of the Country Strategic Opportunities Programme 2009–2014, in particular the third objective regarding microcredit.

25. **Ms. Kaba** (Guinea) said that rural women tended to be better organized than urban women because they set up professional cooperatives. The role of the national machinery was to provide financing and help women develop networks. Although the Country Strategic Opportunities Programme had not been as successful as hoped, women were beginning to organize themselves and the lessons learned would inform future policies and programmes. Guinea had marked the International Day of Older Persons and, although elderly women were only a tiny proportion of the population, the Government was keen to support them. The Ministry of Labour and the Civil Service had adopted a policy that all persons with disabilities who had a degree and who applied for a civil service position should be hired. Children with disabilities were entitled to an education, although it sometimes proved difficult to obtain adapted teaching materials and equipment.

26. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** asked whether the State party had requested and received assistance from other African countries during the Ebola crisis.

27. **Ms. Kaba** (Guinea) replied that the Government's regional and international appeal for assistance had been answered by a number of countries, including Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Mali and Senegal, and that overall the countries in the region had shown great solidarity.

Articles 15 and 16

28. **Ms. Ameline**, referring to the issue of forced marriage, stressed the urgency of the matter and said that awareness-raising efforts should be strategic, comprehensive and directed at all regions and social categories. Drawing the delegation's attention to the Committee's general recommendation No. 29, she encouraged the State party to raise the minimum marriage age and address the economic consequences of divorce. She emphasized that women's equality in the family was a key element of their empowerment. She asked whether the revised Civil Code would provide for the training of judges so as to ensure that ordinary law prevailed over customary law.

29. **Ms. Schulz** asked what measures the Government had taken to ensure that all marriages were registered; whether women in a customary or religious marriage could appeal to the civil courts in family disputes; whether the civil courts had any oversight of decisions taken by customary or religious authorities in family matters to ensure that they did not discriminate against women; and whether customary and religious authorities nationwide were informed of equality and non-discrimination standards. Recalling that it was the State party's duty to safeguard the principle of non-discrimination, she warned that it would have to be doubly vigilant once the new egalitarian Civil Code came into force because customary law would then be even more out of step with ordinary law.

30. **Mr. Barry** (Guinea) said that, under the revised Civil Code, the marriage age would be 18 for both men and women and that the economic imbalance between spouses would be taken into account in divorce proceedings. He stressed that customary courts no longer existed. Regarding child custody, he said that Guinean law was fully in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and that custody was granted to the parent who could best meet the child's education, housing and development needs. Women were encouraged to marry civilly and religious leaders now issued marriage certificates. A regulatory framework was being developed to manage the issues arising from the dual marriage system.

31. **Ms. Kaba** (Guinea) said that the delegation was very satisfied with the dialogue and exchange with the Committee and that it had drawn many lessons which it would strive to put into action on the ground.

32. **The Chairperson** commended the State party on its efforts and encouraged it to take all necessary measures to implement the Committee's various recommendations. She hoped that the State party's commitments would translate into real and substantive reforms to further the rights of Guinean women.

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 4.45 p.m.