



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

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

Summary record of the 417th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 29 January 1999 at 10.15 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. González

Contents

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

Adoption of the report of the pre-session working group

Combined second and third periodic reports of Thailand

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

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

Adoption of the report of the pre-session working group (CEDAW/C/1999/I/CRP.1 and Add.1-4)

1. **Ms. Corti**, speaking as Chairperson of the pre-session working group, introduced the group's report (CEDAW/C/1999/I/CRP.1) and its addenda containing lists of issues and questions with respect to the periodic reports of four States parties, namely China (CEDAW/C/1999/I/CRP.1/Add.1), Colombia (CEDAW/C/1999/I/CRP.1/Add.2), Greece (CEDAW/C/1999/I/CRP.1/Add.3) and Thailand (CEDAW/C/1999/I/CRP.1/Add.4). In a brief overall analysis of the situation of the four States parties in question, the pre-session working group had noted that the majority of the reports reviewed had followed the Committee guidelines and that the States parties had made an effort to implement the Convention through legislative and other measures, and through increasing cooperation with non-governmental organizations. The working group had also noted continued discrimination against women, particularly in employment, as a result of economic globalization. Unemployment and poverty among women were increasing, and cultural and customary norms continued to impede the full implementation of the Convention. Lastly, the pre-session working group had noted the persistence of violence against women, particularly the sexual exploitation of women, including trafficking, which had become a global phenomenon. She hoped that the Committee would adopt the report by consensus.

2. *The report of the pre-session working group (CEDAW/C/1999/I/CRP.1 and Add.1-4 was adopted.*

Combined second and third periodic reports of Thailand (CEDAW/C/THA/2-3; CEDAW/C/1991/I/CRP.1/Add.4)

3. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Chutikul, Ms. Chulajata and Mr. Vienravi (Thailand) took places at the Committee table.*

4. **Ms. Chutikul** (Thailand), introducing her country's combined second and third periodic reports (CEDAW/C/THA/2-3), said that her presentation would be a summary of a more detailed draft distributed to Committee members, containing answers

to the questions of the pre-session working group. With regard to the questions on anti-discrimination measures, she noted that Thailand had withdrawn five of its seven reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The thorniest problem was posed by the reservation on article 16 concerning family life and marriage, owing to Thailand's male-dominated patriarchal society. Petitions by the National Commission on Women's Affairs to amend the laws on betrothal and divorce, which discriminated heavily against women, had been rejected by the Council of State. That ruling was currently being appealed.

5. Focusing on questions 56 and 57, she said that an amendment to the Civil and Commercial Code had been included in the Twenty-Year Perspective Policies and Planning for the Development of Women (1992-2011). Cohabitation, whether with persons of the same sex or a different sex, was not accepted in Thailand and cohabitants' rights, particularly their financial rights, were not recognized. As for question 4, a proposal for an umbrella anti-discrimination law had been rejected on the grounds that it would necessitate too many amendments to the various laws containing gender-related provisions, including the new laws on prostitution, nationality and labour. The new Constitution and the Labour Protection Law introduced the principle of gender equity in employment and, for the first time, prohibited sexual harassment. Amendments must still be made to provisions which prohibited alien husbands of Thai women from applying for Thai citizenship, permitted a husband to rape his wife, established an overly narrow definition of rape and prohibited foreigners and Thai women who married foreigners from holding title to land.

6. The most significant legislative development had been the promulgation of the new Constitution the year before, whose article 30 established equal rights between men and women; nonetheless, time-consuming legal processes were delaying its implementation. The Constitution established a National Commission on Human Rights, which, inter alia, proposed legislative amendments and remedial measures to the Government and provided assistance to abused and exploited women. Women's rights were being taken into account by a national committee, of which she was a member, appointed to draft a national policy and master plan of action on human rights. In fact, the Convention and the Convention on the Rights of the Child were already

integrated into the curricula of law faculties and of women's study programmes in the universities. Human rights education initiatives charted in the master plan of action would be particularly gender- and child-sensitive.

7. The Twenty-Year Perspective Policies and Planning for the Development of Women (1992-2011) and the Beijing Platform for Action had been incorporated in a five-year development plan for women within the larger Eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan. The National Commission on Women's Affairs, established in 1989, was responsible for promoting the advancement of women, building gender-awareness, increasing women's participation in decision-making and coordinating relevant activities among government ministries and between the Government and non-governmental organizations. As a result of legislative amendments, women could now become governors, generals in the armed forces (although not yet in combat zones) and district officers.

8. Referring to question 9, she said that the National Commission was conducting the evaluation requested by the United Nations, to be completed by 30 April 1999. The Beijing Platform for Action had been translated into the Thai language, and five regional meetings had been organized to disseminate its content and promote it at the grass-roots level. Special emphasis had been placed on gender equality, violence against women and girls and trafficking in women and children.

9. Turning to questions 14 and 15, she said that stereotyping of women persisted but that public awareness of the problem had increased. The National Commission had launched a project to evaluate stereotypes in elementary school textbooks, which were now being revised by the Ministry of Education. The enrolment of women in traditionally male areas of study had increased; for example, the number of female police officers had risen from 15 to 23 in the past two years. Stereotyping in the mass media persisted, although attitudes were being changed somewhat by television programmes and talk shows. The National Commission had sponsored a research project on the use of the media as a tool for promoting the advancement of women, organized seminars on the topic of women and the media and proposed the incorporation of gender-sensitive elements and cultural values into a national plan for the development of the

mass media, information technology and communications. No recent statistics on the number of women in the media were available; however, she noted that, in 1988, 83 per cent of the students enrolled in mass media studies had been female. Currently, most newspaper editors and news commentators were male.

10. Referring to questions 7, 8, 12, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 55, on groups that needed special protection, she said that in 1998 there had been 140,000 displaced persons in 16 refugee camps in Thailand. Of that population, 72 per cent had been from Myanmar, while Cambodians, Indochinese and displaced students from Myanmar had accounted for 26 per cent, 1 per cent and 0.5 per cent, respectively. There were no statistics on women and girl refugees, whose most pressing needs were education and health services. The Ministries of the Interior, Health and Foreign Affairs, in collaboration with domestic and international relief agencies, non-governmental organizations and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), provided assistance to the refugee population.

11. Since the submission of Thailand's combined second and third periodic reports, legislation had been adopted with regard to the trafficking of women and children. A revised version of the Prostitution Prevention and Suppression Act of 1996 had decriminalized commercial sex workers and reduced the penalties applicable to them. It had also prohibited the use of children under the age of 18 in commercial sex operations and established stiff penalties for those who lured or detained them for such purposes. As to why the Penal Code penalties were not used, she said that under that Code the payment of money in exchange for services was the determining factor in the imposition of heavier fines on customers of sexual workers than on men who had had sexual intercourse with minors or had committed rape. Another law stipulated penalties for those in any way engaged in trafficking of women and children and made provision for assisting the victims. A third law, the Penal Code Amendment Act, made investigative and interrogative methods and procedures more woman- and child-friendly.

12. The National Commission on Women's Affairs, in cooperation with non-governmental organizations and implementing agencies, had formulated a national policy and plan to eradicate exploitative commercial sex, which covered prevention, suppression, assistance,

protection and the rehabilitation of victims. The National Commission was also formulating an action plan to deal with Thailand's role as a receiving, transit or sending State for the trafficking of illegal women migrants. In collaboration with various agencies, including the police and immigration services, the National Commission on Women's Affairs was preparing a manual on the treatment of women and child victims of trafficking. In 1999, bilateral negotiations were scheduled to begin among the countries in the Mekong subregion on trafficking and assistance to its victims; two subregional meetings on the matter had already been organized.

13. In order to combat sexual tourism, the National Commission had distributed pamphlets warning tourists that having sex with children was a crime, and the Government was revising the laws on places of entertainment. Moreover, the Tourism Authority had been requested to attempt to attract tourists who were more interested in nature and culture. Additional measures included educational programmes and the training of law enforcement officers.

14. In order to combat domestic violence and violence against women, pamphlets had been distributed; the National Commission had worked with the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration to establish centres for victims of violence in the city's six hospitals; and local networks of health workers, medical personnel and women police officers were being established. The National Commission was developing an action plan to eradicate violence against children and women, with the participation of non-governmental organizations and other government agencies. Other measures included training and awareness-building through the mass media.

15. Hill-tribe women and girls, whether or not they were Thai nationals had access to health and education services with the help of both governmental and non-governmental organizations. However, since they generally lacked the necessary documents, they had difficulty in finding jobs, and the problem was being aggravated by the unrest in neighbouring countries. In that connection, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would be organizing an international meeting on migration in March.

16. Child labour was a serious concern in Thailand. An estimated 16 per cent of children between 10 and 14 years of age were engaged in some form of labour.

Educational loans and skills development programmes had been organized with the support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and non-governmental organizations in order to upgrade the skills of children already in the workforce. The recently adopted Labour Protection Act improved the protection of children against exploitation and raised the legal employment age from 13 to 15 years. She stressed the need to change traditional attitudes concerning children and their duties to their parents, which was a major factor in the perpetuation of child labour.

17. Although, child pornography was not addressed in the Penal Code, proposed legislative amendments would establish penalties for the production or possession of pornographic materials involving children. It was extremely difficult to enforce existing laws on pornography.

18. Replying to questions 5 and 6 and 22 to 26, on participation, she said that women currently represented only 2 to 8 per cent of those holding political office but that the situation was slowly changing. Women accounted for 13 to 35 per cent of the members of agricultural and non-agricultural cooperatives; the number of women judges in the trial courts and the court of appeal had increased significantly in the past 12 years. The number of female attorneys and commissioned police officers had also increased moderately in the 1990s.

19. Women accounted for 35.5 per cent of the members of the diplomatic corps and held approximately 5.5 per cent of the senior positions. Their participation in development planning varied; in some development agencies, there were no women; however, women represented 63 per cent of the researchers in the Thailand Development Research Institute. More than half the members of the National Commission on Women's Affairs were women, about one third of them from non-governmental organizations (although, in Thailand, it was common practice for Government personnel to join non-governmental organizations as well).

20. The dearth of women in profession areas, particularly at the decision-making level, could be explained by their tendency to remain in traditional careers; their reluctance to brave the risks of Thai political life; their child-rearing responsibilities; lack of training or preparation for career development; de

jure and de facto discrimination; and other types of family obligations. Affirmative action, which was prescribed in article 30 of the new Constitution, would be necessary in order to achieve the goal of ensuring that 30 per cent of decision-making positions were occupied by women; however, affirmative action was not readily accepted by men. A non-governmental organization, the Women in Politics Institute, had organized training courses for women, which had enabled many of them to enter politics at both the local and national levels.

21. Turning to the questions on education, she said that under the new Constitution, 12 years of basic education would be offered to all without charge. Scholarships from a number of sources had been offered to girls at risk in the northern and north-eastern provinces as well. The number of female scholarship recipients had increased from 39 per cent in 1990 to 63.5 per cent in 1998. In 1997, 50.8 per cent of the students at the public universities were women. Only monks could enrol in Buddhist universities. The National Commission on Women's Affairs was urging the authorities to consider female students for acceptance at the police academy.

22. In reply to questions on employment, she said that the new Labour Protection Law which took effect in 1998 stipulated gender equality in employment. In the public sector, men and women received equal pay for equal work. In the private sector most companies practised equal opportunity; however, some small companies did not pay the minimum wage as required by law. The new law also provided for pregnancy and maternity leave and imposed fines or terms of imprisonment on employers terminating female employees because of pregnancy. On the advice of a doctor, a pregnant employee could request a temporary change in her duties. Both the public and private sectors provided 90 days of paid maternity leave with an additional 150 days without pay if needed. In cases where employers abused the law, women could file complaints with the National Commission on Human Rights. Trade unions in general were not very involved in women's issues, although there were a few remarkable women leaders in the various unions and associations. Under the new Labour Protection Law, sexual harassment was prohibited for the first time in Thailand. The National Council on Women's Affairs, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social

Welfare, was in the process of establishing a mechanism for its enforcement.

23. Since the economic downturn, many men and women had been laid off. The Ministry of Social Welfare had provided training programmes in modern job skills and entrepreneurship. In 1996, 41.5 per cent of those enrolled were women. In addition, loans were available at the national and local levels for income-generating activities.

24. In reply to the questions on health, she said it had been suggested that the conditions under which abortion was allowed should be expanded to include risk to the fetus, although many strongly opposed that suggestion. Effective family planning programmes to prevent unwanted pregnancies could be seen as a preventive measure against abortion. Family planning was mainly in the hands of women, although after information campaigns, male vasectomy was gaining some acceptance. Condoms had been used more frequently since the onset of the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) epidemic.

25. No statistics were available on teenage pregnancies. According to 1990 population statistics, the average age for first marriage for women was 20.5 years and 22.4 years for the first child. Breast and uterine cancer were major causes of death among women and campaigns to encourage screenings and check-ups had been launched. The Ministry of Public Health had indicated that women made up about 20 per cent of the total of those who had contracted HIV/AIDS. AIDS-prevention campaigns targeted to women were focused on providing them with knowledge and coping mechanisms. Most volunteer health workers at the village level were women; they were given regular training on AIDS and other important health issues.

26. Men and women had equal rights with regard to inheritance of property. Indeed, in some parts of the north-eastern provinces, female children inherited the land instead of male children because they were expected to care for their parents until they died. Some problems arose, however, when a Thai woman married an alien. Although the law did not prohibit her from owning land, she must promise not to give the land to an alien, who was not allowed to own land under Thai law. She must prove that the money paid for land was her own before marriage; in other words, she could not

use her husband's money or their joint assets to buy land. The same conditions applied if she was not legally married to an alien but cohabiting with him.

27. There was much debate on the land issue, and the National Commission would propose an amendment to the Nationality Law whereby children with one Thai parent could automatically receive Thai nationality. In practice, land officers had a great deal of discretion and could abuse the regulations. There was no discrimination against women in access to bank loans and other forms of credit. Statistics were not divided by rural or urban sectors; rural women had the same rights as other women, including access to the justice system.

28. In conclusion, she noted that the Convention had been a major influence on Thai women. Even though a great deal of work had been done, much more lay ahead. She hoped that the restructuring of the National Commission would result in the further advancement of Thai women.

29. **Ms. Chulajata** (Thailand) said that the National Commission on Women's Affairs had been established with the mandate to spearhead the programme for the advancement of women in Thailand. Its major activities were in four areas: policy and planning, including research and development; protection of women's rights; cooperation and coordination with Government agencies and non-governmental organizations; and information and advocacy.

30. As a policy unit and a national focal point for the advancement of women, the National Commission had formulated a national women's development plan as a component of Eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan. A national policy and plan of action on family institutional development and on the prevention and eradication of the commercial sexual exploitation of children had also been established. The Council of Ministers had recently agreed to upgrade the status of the National Commission to the departmental level. Its structure had been extended and some ad hoc committees appointed to work on family development, violence against women, revision of the marriage and family laws, women's labour and social welfare. However, owing to the current economic crisis, preparations for that new status would be somewhat delayed. A women's information network had been built up to collaborate with women's study centres, research institutes, documentation centres and

active non-governmental organizations in compiling gender disaggregated data, developing databases and disseminating information through print and the Internet.

31. During the economic crisis, the National Commission had been asked to prioritize the implementation of its plans and programmes. Future activities would include policy intervention with government agencies to adjust their programmes to the national economic crisis, with special attention to gender concerns and disadvantaged women, and the integration of gender-based analysis into the mainstream of government policy and planning.

32. **Ms. Kim Yung-Chung** said that it was gratifying to learn that during the reporting period, efforts to remove most of the reservations to the Convention had been successful. She remained concerned, however, that women were still under-represented in public life and in politics and that the target of 30 per cent women in decision-making positions was still far from being met. She urged the Government to adopt and implement special temporary measures to correct that situation. Regarding stereotypes, it was encouraging that some women's studies programmes did exist. Perhaps the National Commission's research would help the Ministry of Education in its efforts to revise textbooks. The portrayal of women in textbooks and the mass media were crucial factors in eliminating stereotypes.

33. Court procedures for the enforcement of women's rights were weak in the public sector, and apparently there was no relief in the private sector. The Government must therefore introduce new anti-discrimination laws. Trafficking in women and the issue of minority group rights called for concrete measures. The new Child Labour Act must also be strictly enforced. The legal age for employment, currently set at 15, still seemed too young, and consideration should be given to raising it.

34. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** said that from the information presented thus far, it was clear that the Convention had had an impact in Thailand. She encouraged the Government to publicize the relationship between the Convention and the Beijing Platform for Action, as the former provided the legal basis for implementation of the commitments contained in the latter.

35. The new Constitution was an impressive document, and she was pleased to learn that it contained equality, affirmative action and anti-discrimination clauses. She deplored the fact, however, that it did not define discrimination as it was understood in article 1 of the Convention. The use of the term “unjust discrimination” was worrisome because it could provide justification for using cultural norms to support certain forms of “just” discrimination. She urged the National Commission on Women’s Affairs to go forward with its proposal for umbrella legislation on general discrimination. Perhaps members of the Royal Family could use their influence to change attitudes in that area.

36. She was encouraged by the proposal to enhance the status of the National Commission, but regretted that its resources had been cut because of the economic crisis. Finally, she would like to see figures on the number of women in retraining programmes for 1997 and 1998, the period after the economic crisis had struck Thailand. She wondered if registration as unemployed was required for enrolment in such programmes.

37. **Ms. Goonesekere** said that it was important to use the constitutional remedies against discrimination that were in place, and that Thailand might consider the experience of other countries in the region in making progressive policy changes. It was very important to put a general equality law into place as the equal pay laws did not cover many dimensions of the question. The public sector should seek ways to ensure that qualified women did not suffer from a “glass ceiling” inhibiting their advancement. The new role of the National Commission as a government structure should be carefully assessed.

38. It was unclear whether the draft name amendment act had been accepted; it could have a significant impact on women’s access to credit and land ownership. Passage of the Prostitution Prevention and Suppression Act was a major achievement, and the Government should now focus on enforcement and police training, and the allocation of resources to that effort.

39. **Ms. Gabr** inquired what effects there had been on women following the seminar on cultural rights and the right to development that she had recently attended in Thailand. She also asked how Thailand was dealing with the question of child labour, since it was a

phenomenon that affected both women and the economic state of the country generally. It was important that Thailand should move towards lifting its remaining reservations to the Convention. She further requested clarification of the legal status of the Convention within the framework of Thailand’s national legislation: paragraph 36 of the report was ambiguous. Lastly, she requested further elaboration of the reply to question 13.

40. **Ms. Abaka** noted that, according to the report, medical services were available to all women. Effectively, however, women in rural areas suffered hidden discrimination because, although they had a strong preference for women doctors, the number of such doctors was very low. It was a serious issue; if the woman was not healthy, her whole family suffered. She wondered what action was being taken to encourage more women to take up the biological sciences. Meanwhile, male doctors should be given training in human rights standards, particularly women’s rights, including their reproductive rights. Indeed, such training should be introduced into the curriculum of medical schools. She noted that in 1983 an attempt had been made to bring in legislation on the possibility of terminating the pregnancy of women who had psychological problems. It had been a noble endeavour that had been defeated in the Senate on religious grounds; yet article 1 of the Convention outlawed discrimination on the basis of religion. Lastly, she noted the high suicide rate among women as well as men. To neglect women’s mental problems was to undermine the most basic right of all, the right to life.

41. **Ms. Ferrer** said that in a country where most of the population — and probably the authorities, too — held highly traditional views the real challenge was to change attitudes, such as the notion that girls’ gratitude to their parents should take a monetary form. Unless the minds of the opinion-makers, in particular, were changed, the rights that existed on paper were worthless. With regard to prostitution, she was concerned about the reportedly high proportion of children involved. She requested further information about government programmes to counter the phenomenon and about how the Government proposed to reduce the numbers of prostitutes and sex tourists.

42. **Ms. Myakayaka-Manzini** said that domestic violence required a better solution than simply raising awareness. It was a public, not a private, issue and should be dealt with by the whole community. She

urged the adoption of a comprehensive law covering every aspect of such violence, including marital rape. She also requested more information about women's property rights. It seemed discriminatory that, if married to a foreigner, women could not own land unless they signed an undertaking not to transfer it to their husband, yet no such demand was made on men married to foreign women. Lastly, she encouraged the Government to consider how it could enhance women's participation in the decision-making process; some outstanding problems could be solved thereby.

43. **Mr. Vienravi** (Thailand) assured the Committee that he took women's and children's rights extremely seriously. Thailand had acceded to a number of the international human rights conventions, but nonetheless change might come only gradually in his country. With regard to the question of prostitution, he pointed out that a large number of prostitutes were from neighbouring countries. The extent of the problem was such that in April 1999 a seminar on migration was to be held in Thailand, where the discussion would be on managing the flow of migrants and, above all, tackling the problem of traffickers. The women and children coming into Thailand were not wrongdoers but victims. It was their Governments that needed to be aware that it was not right to send their girls into prostitution. The situation would not, however, improve while the economic prospects of Thailand's neighbours remained bad. The number of displaced persons had never been higher; since the Second World War, Thailand had given refuge to hundreds of thousands of people. He acknowledged that women and children at the borders were not always treated well, but efforts were being made to train officers in the field.

44. **Ms. Goonesekere** said that, while economic factors contributed to prostitution, women who crossed borders to prostitute themselves were often forced to do so by traffickers, which was a gross violation of their human rights. Host countries must meet their obligation to provide a minimum standard of protection for those women. The adoption in Thailand of new legislation on prostitution and trafficking was an important step, but its enforcement would require real political commitment. There was also a need to raise awareness of men's sexual responsibility, especially given the risk of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). She welcomed the extension of compulsory education from six to nine years. The successful

implementation of that measure would facilitate the enforcement of the New Labour Protection Act, which raised the minimum age for employment to 15 years.

45. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** said that it was not clear to her whether prostitution had been decriminalized since, according to the Thai report, the new Prostitution Prevention and Suppression Act merely reduced penalties imposed on commercial sex workers (para. 94). She was concerned that prostitution in brothels, which was inherently exploitative, did not appear to be recognized as such under Thai law because the prostitutes were paid for their services.

46. **Ms. Abaka** said that she would like to know what were the latest figures for male and female life expectancy. She wondered whether the Thai Government had taken account of women's generally greater life expectancy in framing its health policies; whether it had introduced tax breaks for working women who were caring for elderly parents; and whether there were any programmes to prepare young people for old age.

47. **The Chairperson**, speaking in her personal capacity, said she was concerned that hill-tribe women were unable to obtain Thai citizenship because they lacked the necessary documentation. She asked what measures the Government was taking to guarantee the right of children to be registered after birth and to acquire a nationality.

48. With regard to cross-border prostitution, she said that host countries had a duty to curb demand by imposing the penalties provided for in law against clients.

49. **Ms. Chutikul** (Thailand), responding first to the questions posed on the subject of affirmative action, said that that concept was very new in Thailand. The National Commission on Women's Affairs had campaigned for the inclusion in the law on the establishment of the National Commission on Human Rights of a provision to the effect that eight of the Commission's 22 members must be women. That law was currently before the State Council. Her Government had also taken special measures for the advancement of the predominantly Muslim ethnic minority groups residing in five provinces of southern Thailand, including the introduction of quotas with respect to university entrance.

50. She agreed that increasing access to education must go hand in hand with efforts to eradicate child labour. The new Constitution provided that children should receive 12 years of compulsory schooling. Once her Government had implemented that provision, it would raise the minimum age for employment to 18. In the meantime, it was working in partnership with the International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) with families at the grass-roots level on projects to promote income-generating activities with a view to obviating the need for children's employment. It had also introduced scholarships funded by non-governmental organizations to ensure that children remained in school for the nine years currently required by law. Following the introduction of the 1998 Labour Protection Act, most large manufacturers had ceased to employ persons under the age of 18 because of the copious paperwork required under the new regulations. Firms which continued to employ minors were obliged to provide them with recreational and educational facilities, and members of the public were being encouraged to report non-compliance.

51. The use of the term "unjust discrimination" was the result of a translation error. It should not be inferred that in Thailand some forms of discrimination were regarded as just. In fact, the Constitution prohibited all discrimination. While the international instruments to which Thailand was a party did not have legal status, they served as a reference point for the revision of domestic laws and regulations. She agreed in that context that there was a need for an anti-discrimination law; however, there was little public support for such a measure at the current time. If the bill on the less contentious issue of children's rights was adopted, the National Commission on Women's Affairs would then consider introducing similar legislation on women's rights, but much work would need to be done to convince the public of the need for such a step. She welcomed in that regard the recommendation that Thailand should study the experiences of other countries of the region. As to the suggestion that the National Commission should seek the support of members of the Royal Family, she believed that the subject of women's rights was too controversial, although the Queen had accepted a proposal that the year of her sixtieth birthday should be declared Thai Women's Year, and much had been achieved for women as a result of initiatives launched during the year.

52. She shared the view that the National Commission would benefit from increased funding, as well as greater cooperation with other Government bodies, but sacrifices must be made at a time of economic crisis and the Commission had not suffered disproportionately.

53. Women were entitled to register as unemployed. According to the statistics for 1998, they had accounted for 42.6 per cent of unemployed persons and 70 per cent of seasonally inactive persons. She would submit data on their participation in training and retraining programmes at a later date.

54. She did not consider that the economic crisis had impeded women's exercise of their cultural rights. Her Government was taking a number of measures to alleviate its impact on their economic situation, including the allocation of loans to the poorest families. She too was concerned that women were suffering discrimination with respect to their access to those loans. While both sexes were obliged to seek their spouse's consent before taking out a loan, that requirement was not always enforced in the case of men, since there was no indication of their marital status, whereas, under the name act, married women were compelled to use the prefix "Mrs." before their family name. She noted in that connection that the draft name amendment act had been rejected by the State Council, despite its approval by the Cabinet.

55. With regard to the problems of prostitution and trafficking, she agreed that the relevant legislation must be more effectively enforced. Her Government had introduced special training for law enforcement officers to that end.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.