



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

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

Summary record of the 584th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 16 August 2002, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Abaka

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

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

Combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Argentina (CEDAW/C/ARG/4, CEDAW/C/ARG/5, CEDAW/PSWG/2002/EXC/CRP.1/Add.1 and CEDAW/PSWG/2002/EXC/CRP.2/Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. del Socorro Aban (Argentina) took a place at the Committee table.*

2. **The Chairperson** announced that, in light of the serious economic, financial, political and social crisis that Argentina was currently facing, the Committee's questions would focus on the rights which must be respected even in such a difficult situation.

3. **Ms. del Socorro Aban** (Argentina) noted that the fourth periodic report of Argentina (CEDAW/C/ARG/4) had been prepared during the presidency of Carlos Menem and the fifth periodic report (CEDAW/C/ARG/5) during that of Fernando de la Rúa. During the 10 years of its existence, the National Women's Council (CNM) had proposed and coordinated activities with women politicians and legislators and with organizations of civil society; its achievements included adoption of the Quota Act and the Protection against Domestic Violence Act and amendments to the Constitution and the Criminal Code.

4. One of the CNM priorities was the creation and institutional strengthening of the 21 provincial and 240 municipal women's offices; as a federal country with a variety of social, economic and cultural conditions, Argentina needed local women's mechanisms to promote public policies with a gender perspective and to coordinate activities implemented throughout the country. The Federal Women's Council, composed of federal counsellors appointed by the provincial governments and representatives of the provincial women's offices, was responsible for discussing and approving the CNM annual plans; its Board of Directors was an intersectoral coordination body made up of representatives of all the national ministries and of the two houses of Congress.

5. That institutional network was complemented by the national and provincial women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs), many of which were members

of the provincial advisory councils on women's affairs and participated in training and technical assistance programmes. The CNM was currently proposing the establishment of working groups composed of women politicians and members of NGOs. Participants in the workshops leading to the development of the 1998 Federal Plan for Women had included 214 NGOs, 40 per cent of which had been selected to implement projects under the Plan. The ad hoc Commission on Follow-up to the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women, established in 1995, was made up of representatives of the national and provincial governments and NGOs.

6. The current crisis had arisen suddenly in December 2001, but its roots lay in the past. Wealth was increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few people while the rise in poverty, unemployment and underemployment rates and the erosion of social rights had had a direct impact on the status of women. According to the May 2002 Permanent Household Survey, the unemployment rate for the nation's 28 cities had risen from 16.6 per cent to 21.5 per cent in the past year. Gender-disaggregated data were available only for greater Buenos Aires, where 23.2 per cent of economically active men and 20.1 per cent of economically active women were unemployed; those levels had not been reached since 1990. Similarly, the unemployment rate was 18.4 for men heads of household and 15.4 for women heads of household; the higher rate of men's unemployment was a consequence of job cuts in the industry, construction and transport sectors in early 2002. The 2002 unemployment rate for women was the same as that which the Committee had noted with concern in 1997 (A/52/38/Rev.1, para. 301); the drop in that rate during the intervening years had resulted from interim policies such as emergency labour plans rather than from economic recovery.

7. It was hoped that, once the "Convertibility Plan" expired, the nation might enter a period of growth in exports, substitution of imports, adaptation to new technologies and recovery of a highly qualified labour force. Indicators projected a three-month rise in industrial production, an increase in power supply to the industrial sector, a two-month budget surplus and improved tax collection. The Government had allocated budgetary resources more effectively by focusing on a small number of emergency response plans. The Food Emergency Plan, financed by the Government and implemented through the provincial

and local governments, provided financial assistance through 31 December 2002. The Heads of Household Plan, which provided economic assistance to men and women heads of household who met the family size criterion, was designed to keep children in school and cover their health needs, offer adults education and job retraining and develop production and community service activities; it might be expanded to include unemployed young people and people over 60 who were ineligible for welfare benefits. There were currently 1,822,227 beneficiaries of those two Plans, of which 52.66 per cent were men and 47.34 per cent women.

8. In response to the health emergency, the Government was promoting decentralization and working to provide medicines, medical supplies and basic services. A national programme for universal access to medicines included an insurance subprogramme for men and women heads of households and a generic medicines subprogramme financed by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

9. The national and regional women's mechanisms were vulnerable to the crisis. All the provincial women's offices were still in operation, but most had suffered budget cuts. The CNM budget had been reduced by 74 per cent in 2000 and 27 per cent in 2001; for those years, it had also been reclassified as an activity within a programme rather than a programme in its own right. The current administration had restored it as Programme No. 17: "Public Policies for Women" as of 1 July 2002. Consequently, CNM had requested a budget increase and had been allocated an additional 295 per cent for 2003 for a total of \$8,201,088.

10. Originally established directly under the Office of the President, CNM currently operated under the National Social Policy Coordinating Council in that Office. The crisis made it essential for it to work in cooperation with such a body in order to develop social policies with an impact on women and their families; for example, agreements had been concluded with the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Health in March and May 2002, respectively. The Council had continued most of its ongoing projects and programmes with, inter alia, the World Bank and, in cooperation with the Federal Women's Council, was working to ensure that women benefited from the ongoing political

reforms and from new training and technical assistance programmes.

11. The Federal Plan for Women was designed to strengthen the national, provincial and municipal women's offices through capacity-building so that they could develop and monitor public policies for gender equality. It provided all the women's offices with identical computers, training and technical assistance, thereby promoting decentralization under the federal system. The Plan's objectives were to enable the women's offices to guide other governmental and non-governmental bodies in the incorporation of a gender perspective into their policies and programmes and to encourage organizations of civil society to play a more active role in developing and strengthening key policies and programmes for women. The Plan had been initiated in 1999 with a budget of \$15 million, shared equally by IDB and the Government. The CNM was its implementing agency and its President or any officials whom she designated were empowered to enter into cooperation agreements with participating provinces and organizations of civil society. However, its budget had been cut to \$10 million and, as a result, implementation of the National Women's Information System (SNIM) had been delayed. The Plan had two component parts: institutional strengthening and support for local initiatives.

12. In order to strengthen CNM capacities as a coordinating and implementing body, two seminars, one entitled "Public Policies on Equal Opportunity for Men and Women" and the other entitled "Women and the Mass Media: Actors, Users and Mediators of Cultural Change", had been held in 1999. From 1999 to 2002, 50 people from each of nine provincial women's offices had been given training in the gender perspective, public policy, project development and strategic planning so that they could repeat those courses within their own regions; 10 more provinces were scheduled to receive such training during the coming year. Workshops on reproductive health, prevention of domestic violence and use of the Domestic Violence Register had also been held in five provinces.

13. Project proposals for local initiatives to support public policies aimed at combating discrimination against women had been solicited. The CNM had provided technical assistance for project development; 172 proposals had been received and 51 submitted to IDB for approval. Of the projects approved, 16 dealt

with reproductive and women's health, 13 with violence, 7 with women's rights, 7 with employment, 5 with rural and indigenous women, 2 with women heads of household and 1 with education; 21 of those proposals had been submitted by organizations of civil society, 12 by provincial public sector agencies, 6 by municipal women's offices, 3 by Argentine universities, 5 by local governments and 4 by provincial women's areas. About 250 people would be involved in the projects, which would have a direct or indirect impact on 3,000 and 25,000 people, respectively.

14. As Chairperson, she had developed two externally funded programmes mainstreaming gender in public policies, programmes and activities. The Technical Assistance Project on Gender (PROGEN), implemented with Japanese funding through the World Bank, was designed to enable projects financed by the Bank to respond more effectively to gender needs and to close gender gaps. The Family Strengthening and Social Capital Promotion Project (PROFAM) was designed to foster cooperation between civil society, local governments and families in the search for alternative approaches to poverty eradication.

15. Argentine law guaranteed women the exercise of their human rights and fundamental freedoms and called for the progressive elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. However, further efforts were needed to bring national legislation in line with the provisions of the human rights instruments to which Argentina was a party. In April 2002, the Executive had requested withdrawal of the bill adopting the Optional Protocol to the Convention. However, the bill was still before the Senate and its future was being discussed in the latter's subcommittees.

16. In its concluding comments on the third report (A/52/38/Rev.1), the Committee had recommended that the Criminal Code should be brought into line with the provisions of the Convention. To that end, Chapter II, Title III, of the Criminal Code had been amended to read "Crimes against sexual integrity" rather than "Crimes against virtue", and article 119 of the Code had been amended to include sexual abuse and rape where there was penetration of any kind. The Code also included various aggravating factors leading to sentences of 8 to 20 years' imprisonment; for example, rape of a minor by an adult was punishable by 13 to 16 years' imprisonment and article 132, which had offered

impunity for offenders who later married their victims, had been repealed. The amendments included a provision allowing the courts to drop charges in the case of consenting victims over age 16 where a previous emotional attachment could be proved; however, women's organizations had proposed its repeal. It was still difficult to file a complaint and to ensure follow-up, and training for the police and the judiciary was needed. A Victims' Assistance Department had been established within the Federal Police and a General Assistance to Victims Bureau within the Public Prosecutor's Office.

17. The Committee had also recommended that the Government's plans for equality should be pursued and strengthened and their results evaluated in a more systematic way. The Federal Plan for Women and the mechanisms for its evaluation were a response to that recommendation.

18. The Committee's request for gender-disaggregated statistics had been addressed since 1996 through the National Statistical and Census Institute (INDEC) Programme for the Redesign of the Integrated System of Sociodemographic Statistics (CEDAW/C/ARG/4, p. 25). The Federal Plan for Women was implementing the National Women's Information System (SNIM); it had signed an agreement with INDEC for the development of indicators from a gender perspective so that gender-disaggregated statistics could be compiled on all matters of interest and with the Ministry of Social Development for the implementation of a joint information system for the monitoring and evaluation of social programmes. Reports on women in the areas of labour, health, justice, education and decision-making had been prepared and CNM had developed a gender gap indicator system.

19. The Committee had recommended that programmes designed to eliminate stereotyping of the social roles of women and men should be reinforced. Argentina's ratification of the Convention of Belém do Pará had made implementation of its provisions compulsory; their incorporation into domestic law provided a new legal framework for women's exercise of their rights. All but three provinces had passed legislation banning violence against women.

20. In some provinces special entities had been created to deal with issues of violence against women or to develop comprehensive prevention and treatment

programmes. In addition, a considerable number of non-governmental organizations specialized in that area, and public and non-governmental entities often worked jointly to strengthen their management and development capacities.

21. Nevertheless, despite the progress made in the legislative arena, a number of fundamental challenges remained, such as expanding services for women victims of violence, ensuring coordination among the various agencies and networks of non-governmental organizations, establishing a register of services in order to obtain reliable and comparable data, facilitating access to the justice system and to free legal representation, and promoting wider dissemination of women's legal rights.

22. While there were no national statistics on domestic violence, the Directorate of Criminal Policy of the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights was preparing a report on crimes against women, covering the period from December 2000 to December 2001, which would be published shortly.

23. The objectives of the information and monitoring system on domestic violence against women were to heighten awareness of the problem and provide policy makers with elements of judgement. The lack of reliable data for assessing the scope and characteristics of domestic violence at the national level made it difficult to formulate adequate public policies for dealing with the problem; accordingly, a Methodological Guide to Use of the Domestic Violence Register had been developed, together with software for inputting and analysing data. CNM staff had travelled to the provincial women's offices to provide training in that area.

24. Moreover, 20 member associations of the Argentine Federation of Colleges of Lawyers (FACA) had enrolled in the "National programme on access to exercise of rights and the training of domestic violence specialists", and 8 had received training.

25. The domestic violence training courses taught in the provinces reserved a number of slots for police officers, judges, and health-care professionals. The Argentine Federal Police had held annual seminars on domestic violence against women since 1995.

26. From 1997 to 2001, the Under-Secretariat for Community Assistance of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare had implemented a pilot project on

treatment and prevention of domestic violence against women, financed by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and executed simultaneously in Argentina, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Paraguay and Venezuela. Within the framework of that project, CNM had organized a national seminar on "Public policies, health and domestic violence: towards the formulation of public policies for the protection of children's and women's rights" in December 2000.

27. In the same month, Argentina had signed the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which was pending approval by the National Congress.

28. In September 2000 CNM, in conjunction with the Government Prosecutor's Department, the Secretariat for the Criminal Police and Prison Affairs of the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, and the National Council for Children and the Family, had adopted an integrated plan of action to combat the sexual exploitation of children for profit, which was designed to guarantee children's right to a life free of exploitation and violence and to strengthen the capacity of the State and civil society organizations to safeguard that right.

29. The fourth report detailed the amendments made to the Penal Code by means of Act No. 25.087 of 1999, which strengthened the penalties against corruption and exploitation of prostitution by increasing the minimum sentence if the victim was under 18 or the offender was a relative or a teacher, or where any type of intimidation or coercion was used.

30. The Penal Code did not define prostitution as a crime, but rather provided penalties for those who promoted, facilitated, profited from or otherwise exploited the prostitution of others.

31. In its concluding comments on the third report, the Committee had made a number of recommendations for improving the situation of women in the workplace. The CNM had proposed to implement them, in part, through Executive Decree No. 254/98, approving the Plan for Equality of Opportunities in the Workplace. The Plan envisaged measures to expand and regulate child care services, comply with ILO Convention Nos. 100 and 156, provide technical and professional training for women, promote employment, particularly of young women,

and establish sex-disaggregated indicators. The Decree had been incorporated into the Federal Labour Pact, signed by the federal and provincial governments in 1998; however, it had never been implemented.

32. In 2000, in conjunction with the Ministry of Labour, CNM had drafted and introduced the simplified domestic service regime, which was envisaged in title XVIII of the Tax Reform Act (No. 25.239) and provided for medical cover, retirement pensions and disability benefits for domestic workers.

33. There were currently 10 bills pending in the National Congress to punish sexual harassment in private-sector workplaces.

34. CNM had taken an active part in the drafting of Decree No. 2385/93, which incorporated the offence of sexual harassment in the Regulations governing the personnel of the central public administration.

35. Efforts to promote the employment of young women and introduce a gender perspective in employment plans had been hampered by high unemployment rates since 1995, especially in education, social and community services, and domestic work, although in 2002 unemployment had been lower for women (20 per cent) than for men (23 per cent). Nevertheless, her Government had continued its efforts to increase women's employment by establishing quotas for women in job programmes and providing vocational training to overcome gender stereotypes.

36. In addition, training programmes focused on the development of personal commercial and/or social aptitudes, so as to enable the beneficiaries to acquire additional skills which would improve their potential in the labour market.

37. With regard to health, over the past decade, maternal deaths had fallen by 25 per cent. However, in 2000, there had been 39 maternal deaths for every 100,000 live births, and 90 per cent of those deaths might have been avoided had there been adequate health services at all levels.

38. The Maternal-Infant and Nutrition Programme (PROMIN) sponsored by the Ministry of Health focused on two main areas: monitoring and qualitative-quantitative analysis of maternal and infant mortality rates; and technical assistance to the provinces in the area of reproductive health.

39. Mention should also be made of the initiative to create a national responsible parenthood programme, as well as the establishment of provincial and municipal laws and programmes recognizing the right of women and men to control their parenthood.

40. In November 2001 the Senate had approved a bill on the creation of a national register of arrears of maintenance payments, which had been passed to the Chamber of Deputies for adoption.

41. Lastly, she wished to stress that the political and electoral reforms currently being discussed in her country were a matter of concern to CNM and the Federal Women's Council, which had sought to educate governmental and non-governmental organizations as to the danger that such reforms might represent for the maintenance of the "women's quota" in elective posts.

42. **The Chairperson**, after thanking the Government for its written report and oral presentation, said that while she was well aware of the overall situation in the country, she would be grateful for updated information on how that situation was affecting women, so as to facilitate the Committee's dialogue with the State party.

43. **Ms. Ferrer Gómez** agreed with the Chairperson that the current situation of Argentine women was of enormous interest to the Committee. It was clear that the grave economic, financial, political and social crisis that the population was experiencing as a result of the failure of neoliberal economic policies was a serious obstacle to the implementation of the Convention. Women would bear the brunt of that crisis if adequate measures were not taken.

44. It was a positive sign that CNM continued to function, although with a reduced budget. The Council could play an important role in insisting on respect for the principle of equality of opportunities when the country's scarce resources were distributed.

45. She was deeply concerned at the impact on women of the Government's emergency decrees, and would be grateful if the State party could explain what steps were being taken to protect women in the most vulnerable sectors. Further details should also be provided on the content of the agreements signed in March with the Ministry of Labour and in May with the Ministry of Health.

46. Since violence against women, as well as trafficking and prostitution, were likely to worsen under current conditions, the State party should

indicate whether the Government had any plans to intensify its campaign against violence and exploitation.

47. Lastly, she urged the Government to give priority to maternal and child health, as well as education on sexual and reproductive health, and to purchase and distribute contraceptives, so that female mortality did not increase as a result of unwanted pregnancy.

48. **Ms. González Martínez** said that, since its ratification of the Convention in 1985, Argentina had complied very punctually with its obligations under article 18. She therefore found it inexplicable that, in April 2002, the Executive had withdrawn a bill by which the Senate was to have approved the Optional Protocol to the Convention, signed by Argentina in early 2000. The reason given had been that the Optional Protocol did not provide adequate safeguards against the provisions aimed at the legalization of abortion. Argentina, however, was a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and a number of other instruments. The Optional Protocol did not create further obligations; it merely provided machinery enabling women and organizations to go before international bodies to demand the implementation of the Convention. She would be grateful if the State party could indicate whether the Executive intended to withdraw from the Covenant; otherwise, its rejection of the Optional Protocol on the ground that it violated Argentine sovereignty was a clear-cut case of discrimination against women.

49. **Ms. Açar** asked whether the Committee's concluding comments on Argentina's last report had been widely disseminated. National, provincial and local public officials and civil society needed to be fully aware of those comments to ensure that the Convention was implemented. She enquired what the Government intended to do with the concluding comments on the current reports.

50. **Ms. Shin** said that she could identify with Argentina's plight, as her own country, the Republic of Korea, had itself experienced a deep recession. Women had been the first to feel the psychological and financial effects of the crisis. There had been a resurgence of patriarchal thinking, reversing more than 10 years of gains by the women's movement. Domestic violence had increased, as had exploitation of women in the workplace. With hindsight, the country had emerged from crisis because of its inhabitants' feeling

that they had to pool their efforts to cope with an emergency. Women's organizations in particular had developed close cooperation with the Government. She asked whether the phenomena she had described had been experienced in Argentina, and whether the Government had sought to work with women's organizations. Women's organizations were aware of day-to-day reality, and offered a way to detect problems and needs early.

51. **Ms. Saiga** asked for further details of the current situation of women in the country. She was pleased that CNM had continued to work effectively during the economic crisis. She had noted that it had concluded agreements with a number of ministries, but she had not fully understood the division of responsibilities between federal, provincial and municipal authorities.

52. **Ms. Achmad** asked what strategy CNM had used to continue operating, especially from the point of view of securing the support of women's groups, youth groups, labour unions, the private sector, political parties and religious and traditional leaders. She wondered whether CNM maintained relations with academic groups and women's studies centres. She also requested details of how it planned to involve such groups in formulating policy on women's issues and in monitoring the implementation of that policy.

53. **Ms. del Socorro Abán** (Argentina) said that, because of the size and federal structure of Argentina, CNM included representatives of all major ministries. It relied on the Federal Women's Council, which had two councillors from each province, to act as a channel of communication with the provincial women's offices (AMPs). It was thanks to that structure that the Federal Programme for Women (PFM) had been able to continue; the structure had taken time to build, and grass-roots women's organizations had played an important role in that task.

54. Because CNM had been able to take part in cabinet-level discussion early in the country's crisis, it had been able to conclude agreements with federal ministries. The provincial level was being consolidated through meetings with provincial health ministers to ensure that local health-care staff received training in women's rights, sexual and reproductive health and mother and child care.

55. Where there was no suitable NGO structure, CNM worked directly with the population, without waiting for political decisions from provincial leaders

or local mayors. Doing otherwise would have delayed getting the message of women's equality to men and women on the ground. That was essential, because the worsening situation in the country had placed a great burden on women, who had been forced to seek new sources of income and maintain the household, and who were increasingly falling victim to domestic violence.

56. Individual sectoral programmes had been sacrificed to make room for wider programmes shaped by the food emergency, the employment emergency and the health-care emergency. The focus had been on head-of-household assistance, with half of the recipients being women. The priority was to help those who had already been poor before the economic crisis. Advisory councils had been set up in each municipal district to determine who should receive aid. Those advisory councils included representatives of NGOs, industry and labour unions, and women's representatives had been included by express agreement between the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Human Resources Training and CNM. Youth groups had not yet been involved, however.

57. Within PROGEN, CNM would be adding a gender focus to the plans to supply medicines, hospital supplies, contraceptives and infant milk, and would be providing family-planning information and aiming to reduce maternal and infant mortality. With the social investment fund FOPAR, the PROGEN programme would be seeking to use networks of community organizations and cafeterias to feed the most vulnerable, including the elderly and pregnant women. There, CNM would be working to free decision-making, training and family matters of gender discrimination, to provide health and family-planning information and to collect sex-disaggregated statistics on the recipients of assistance.

58. The Council believed that the Optional Protocol to the Convention should be treated the same way as similar optional protocols, and would continue to press for its ratification.

59. The Committee's recommendations and conclusions would be communicated to the country's authorities and civil society. In the case of the previous report, a magazine had been printed and distributed to publicize the Committee's findings, which had also been placed on the CNM web site. It was true that

dissemination could have been wider, but the current structure had not been in place at the time.

60. **Ms. Manalo** said that she was concerned that the Government had requested the withdrawal of the bill adopting the Optional Protocol by the National Congress. Irrespective of the reasons for such withdrawal, it was in the best interest of Argentina and to the advantage of its women that the Optional Protocol should be ratified. The United Nations system could assist the Government of Argentina by furnishing relevant information on the significance of the Optional Protocol, if that would facilitate the process of ratification.

61. She was pleased to note the reforms undertaken to improve the situation of women and children in Argentina, and to secure basic social rights for domestic workers and other household workers. She wished to know whether the Government had devised a strategy to counter the effects of migration and to protect the rights and working conditions of domestic workers and care givers, in anticipation of massive emigration, which was inevitable in times of economic crisis

62. **Ms. del Socorro Abán** (Argentina) said that CNM considered the Optional Protocol a vital instrument and she assured the Committee that work towards its ratification would continue. She believed that the current meeting would greatly accelerate the process of ratification.

63. Emigration had been a source of concern, for which solutions had not yet been found. She hoped that, after the upcoming elections, there would be an environment more conducive to job creation and improved working conditions, thereby stemming the outflow of workers from Argentina.

64. **Ms. Corti** expressed her solidarity with Argentine women as they endured the hardships created by the national crisis. Nevertheless, she questioned the motives and priorities of the Government when, in such serious times, it could devote time to withdrawing the Optional Protocol from the National Congress.

65. The rights to food and health were fundamental and she was therefore anxious to know how the national health emergency affected the level of hospital and emergency care, treatment of the elderly, obstetric services, and the supply of essential medicines. The

high rate of maternal mortality could be expected to rise even further under the prevailing conditions. She was concerned at the rise of HIV/AIDS infection and prostitution and urged the Government to devote greater attention to those issues.

66. The National Women's Council had performed admirably in its efforts to safeguard the rights of women and other vulnerable groups despite the obstacles it faced. She asked whether the Council had entered into dialogue with the head of Government or had other signs of continued political support in the establishment of programmes and implementation of projects, and endorsed the views expressed by Ms. Shin on the importance of forging a relationship between State institutions and civil society. She praised the vibrant, advanced and active non-governmental movement in Argentina. The current political and economic crisis could be viewed as either a challenge and an opportunity to consolidate democracy or, if neglected, as a reversion to Argentina's undesirable past.

67. The Council could play an important role by harnessing the potential of women and advancing proposals which would engage women in the positive reconstruction of Argentina.

68. **Ms. Kapalata** said that, despite the economic turmoil, she was confident that CNM would continue to pursue its programmes and promote the rights of women. She also found the situation of health care worrisome, notably the rising incidence of transmission of HIV/AIDS in the womb. She asked what health resources were devoted to counselling, provision of medicines for pregnant women and postnatal care, as well as general health care for HIV/AIDS orphans and infected women.

69. **The Chairperson**, speaking in her personal capacity, joined previous speakers in expressing concern over the potential threats to women's health, and the surge in HIV/AIDS infection. She was gratified to learn that the national health emergency programme assisted women infected with HIV/AIDS. On the subject of sexual violence, she said that violence against women tended to rise when social structures deteriorated. Noting that Argentine legislation permitted the termination of pregnancy in certain cases, namely to protect the health of the mother and in the event of rape of a disabled woman, she asked whether the Government was contemplating extending

permission for the termination of pregnancy to all victims of rape. She was also interested in knowing how medical doctors responded to the needs of patients who sought hospital treatment as a result of induced abortions and whether they were treated promptly.

70. According to certain reports, even before the onset of the national crisis in Argentina, there had been highly discriminatory laws on social insurance; in one instance, men were able to transfer insurance benefits to their spouses whereas women could not.

71. **Ms. del Socorro Abán** (Argentina) concurred that the state of public health had begun to deteriorate before the crisis had reached its peak. A main priority for the reconstruction of the country was to rescue the health services. Thanks to the declaration of the national health emergency, most provinces were endowed with adequate primary health care and serviced in some cases, house-to-house, by trained health agents. The decree on the health emergency sought, among other things, to recover facilities, ensure normal provisions of medicines and medical supplies, and redefine essential basic benefits.

72. Unfortunately the delegation did not have the requested statistics on HIV/AIDS, but the data would be transmitted to the Committee at an early date. Taking note of the concerns expressed by the Committee, she said that Argentina regarded the provision of medicines as a matter of high priority, and sought to ensure that medicines were accessible to the public and the health service in general.

73. Her delegation would also take into account the issue of extending the coverage of the law on the termination of pregnancy and look into ways of resolving the issue. Domestic violence was on the rise and efforts were being deployed throughout Argentina to raise awareness and train personnel to handle all aspects of the phenomenon. The Ministry of Health had embarked on an intense programme of sensitization of medical personnel at all occupational levels to address the various medical and social issues which had become increasingly intertwined.

74. **The Chairperson**, thanking the representative of Argentina for her presentation, assured her of the Committee's understanding and support. Even in difficult circumstances, women should not suffer disproportionately. With sufficient political will, women could be given the level of equal treatment that

would enable them to fully contribute to the restoration of the economy and society.

75. She expressed the hope that the Committee's concluding comments would be given due consideration by the Government, and that they would be widely disseminated and discussed at all levels of authority. She urged the Government of Argentina to continue, in genuine partnership with civil society, to implement the recommendations contained in the concluding comments.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.