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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

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Summary record of the 864th meeting (Chamber A)
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 3 November 2008, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Šimonović . . . . . (Croatia)

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Second and third periodic report of Myanmar

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

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

Second and third periodic report of Myanmar (CEDAW/C/MMR/3; CEDAW/C/MMR/Q/3 and Add.1)

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

2. **Mr. Lwin** (Myanmar), introducing the report (CEDAW/C/MMR/3), said that implementation of the Convention was a high priority for his Government, which was carrying out a series of national plans aimed at promoting and protecting human rights. Traditionally, women and men had enjoyed equal rights in Myanmar. Human rights, including women's rights, were enshrined in a new Constitution that had been approved by an overwhelming majority of voters in May 2008 and precluded any discrimination based on race, birth, religion, official position, status, culture, sex or wealth. General elections would be held in 2010.

3. The combined second and third periodic report had been prepared by a 25-member Drafting Committee set up by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement and comprising representatives of other relevant ministries and of such non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as the Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation (MWAF), the Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association (MMCWA), the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), the Myanmar Women's Sports Federation (MWSF) and the Myanmar Women Entrepreneurs' Association (MWEA). The Drafting Committee had transmitted successive drafts of the report to the departments concerned and to the Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs (MNCWA) for comments and had submitted the resulting text to the Foreign Affairs Policy Committee of the Government, which had approved the report.

4. The MNCWA had been established in 1996 in order to ensure implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; the MWAF had been set up in 2003 to implement the principles and guidelines laid down by the MNCWA. The Myanmar Women's Affairs Organizations, formed in all states and divisions, promoted cooperation with national and international NGOs. The MMCWA, MWEA and MWSF had been established in the early 1990s.

5. Laws protecting women included the Penal Code and the Suppression of Prostitution Act of 1994. Under the National Plan of Action adopted in 2002, the MNCWA Subcommittee on Violence against Women had organized talks, opened counselling centres, received complaints and disseminated legal information through the media. The MWAF reviewed domestic violence complaints and helped victims bring the perpetrators to justice. Penalties for sexual violence were stiffer where the offenders were military or law enforcement personnel. The MWAF had provided Cyclone Nargis victims with food, clothing, shelter and microcredit facilities and had participated in assessments of the situation of women in disaster areas.

6. With regard to violence against and trafficking in women, the MWAF carried out countrywide awareness-raising programmes; participated in family tracing, rehabilitation and reintegration activities led by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement in cooperation with such bodies as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (UNIAP), World Vision, Save the Children, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Association François-Xavier Bagnoud (FXB International); and planned to provide training for trainers in collaboration with IOM and UNIAP. The Government addressed human trafficking comprehensively and resolutely through specific legislation; a National Plan of Action, implemented in cooperation with NGOs; bilateral partnerships with destination countries, such as China and Thailand; and regional and multilateral cooperation.

7. Domestic law was consistent with, inter alia, the United Nations Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking. Myanmar was a party to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Convention) and participated in the Asia Regional Trafficking in Persons (ARTIP) Project, sponsored by Australia, and the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT). As a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), Myanmar contributed to their efforts to

combat human trafficking. Repatriation, rehabilitation and reintegration of trafficking victims were also carried out under the 2005 Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law.

8. The Ministry of Health engaged in promotion, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation activities designed to improve the health of the population in accordance with the National Health Policy and the State's social objectives. Comprehensive maternal and child health-care services, a crucial component of the National Health Plan, were provided in urban and rural areas as part of the Reproductive Health Care Programme, organized in 1996. Those initiatives received support from the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF and bilateral cooperation agencies and were conducted in cooperation with various NGOs and volunteer organizations. The Reproductive Health Care Programme operated in coordination with the National HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases Control Programme.

9. Although the maternal and child mortality rates were declining, further efforts were necessary in order to achieve Millennium Development Goal Nos. 4 and 5. With a view to attaining Goal No. 6, the National HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases Control Programme, in cooperation with United Nations agencies and national and international NGOs, focused primarily on women and adolescents. Compared to the level of support enjoyed by other developing countries, international assistance for drugs, equipment and professional training was inadequate, especially in view of the reduced accessibility and unfavourable climate of Myanmar's remote areas.

10. The primary goals of the Government's education policy were to ensure universal access to education and to promote continuous learning. To that end, the authorities and NGOs had taken steps to enhance school enrolment and retention rates and to promote basic functional literacy through countrywide non-formal education programmes. A literacy rate of 95.07 per cent among women (higher than the national average), balanced school enrolment rates for boys and girls and, in 2005-2006, a 58.5 per cent female enrolment rate in higher education attested to equitable educational opportunities in the country, although the Government currently offered male medical students incentives designed to attract them to remote areas. Community Learning Centres and Reading Circles had been set up throughout the country. The Government encouraged cooperation with the private sector on the provision of training in information and communication technologies for women, and with United Nations agencies and NGOs on the provision of vocational training designed to provide women with income-generating skills.

11. The Ministry of Labour ensured the enforcement of legislation on workers' rights in accordance with international standards. Workers could bargain with employers individually or collectively although, in practice, such negotiations were conducted through the Township Labour Supervisory Committees. Employed women enjoyed legal rights in respect of working hours, weekly rest, paid holidays and leave, occupational safety and health and social welfare.

12. In cooperation with United Nations agencies and international NGOs, the Department of Social Welfare in the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement took prevention, protection and rehabilitation measures in favour of such vulnerable groups as children, adolescents, women, persons with disabilities and older persons.

13. The Government had established the National Disaster Preparedness Central Committee in 2004. In the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis, a tripartite group consisting of Government and United Nations and ASEAN representatives was set up in order to ensure the smooth implementation of relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction initiatives and various clusters had been formed, including one for the protection of children and women. In cooperation with its aforementioned partners and local NGOs, the Department of Social Welfare was conducting assessment surveys on women, older persons and persons with disabilities with a view to drawing up plans of action for the storm-hit areas.

Articles 1-6

14. **Mr. Flinterman** asked whether the Constitution provided for the direct applicability of international human rights conventions. If the Convention was directly applicable, he would like to know whether it prevailed over any domestic legislation with which it might conflict. He wondered whether the failure to invoke the provisions of the Convention in judicial proceedings was a sign of a lack of awareness of its provisions on the part of judges or women's organizations. He would welcome further details

regarding any efforts to disseminate the Convention and information on the role that women had played in the drafting and adoption of the new Constitution. Under chapter 8, paragraph 352, of the Constitution, no equal opportunities provision could "prevent appointment of men to the positions that are suitable for men only"; he enquired as to the grounds for and potential implications of that stipulation.

15. It would be useful to know whether the MWAF was empowered to rule on complaints submitted to it or to bring them before a court of law, whether it helped women institute legal proceedings and the number and nature of the complaints, that had been submitted to it. Lastly, he requested information on the relationship between the MWAF and the Myanmar Human Rights Body, the latter's composition, and the role of each of those bodies in handling complaints filed by women.

16. **Ms. Shin** asked how many NGOs and, in particular, how many women's NGOs existed in Myanmar; why NGOs should register with the Government; whether registration was compulsory or subject to any criteria; how quickly NGOs were granted permission to register; and why they were prevented from receiving domestic or international funding. Noting the lack of sex-disaggregated statistics in the report, she requested information regarding Myanmar's data-collection system.

17. She wondered whether women living in the northern Rakhin region were included in the country's population statistics; whether the Government envisaged granting citizenship to the lawful residents of that area, particularly Muslim women, many of whom lived without proper registration, in order to enable them to enjoy their civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights; and whether the MMCWA provided assistance to those women.

18. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, enquired as to whether the Constitution defined discrimination against women in accordance with article 1 of the Convention and whether Myanmar guaranteed substantive equality with respect to all rights. She wondered how the provision regarding positions suitable only for men could be compatible with gender equality and how the customary laws of the nation's many ethnic groups could be aligned with the Constitution and the Convention on the basis of appropriate data-collection methods.

19. **Mr. Lwin** (Myanmar) maintained that a wife's right not to take her husband's name, the customary management of the husband's wages by his wife and the constitutional provisions against discrimination were proof of gender equality in Myanmar.

20. **Mr. Aye** (Myanmar) noted that in addition to proscribing all forms of discrimination, Chapter 8 of the Constitution provided for equal opportunity in employment, trade, business, technical know-how and exploration of art, science and technology (para. 349); the right of men and women to equal wages for similar work (para. 350); equal rights for mothers, children and expectant women as prescribed by law (para. 351); non-discrimination in appointing or assigning duties to civil service personnel (para. 352); the prohibition of slavery and trafficking in persons (para. 358); and equal rights to education, health care and to distinctions and financial awards accorded by the State for outstanding educational achievement (paras. 366, 367 and 368). Women were free to divorce and, in that event, were entitled to a share of the family property and to custody of their children. The constitutional provision reserving to men positions suitable only for them was meant to protect women from work in remote or hazardous areas. Women whose rights under the Convention were violated could address themselves to the police, the Ministry of Home Affairs or the MWAF for administrative or legal action.

21. **Ms. Kyi** (Myanmar) said that in line with Committee recommendations, the MNCWA, in cooperation with Government departments and national and international NGOs, compiled sex-disaggregated data and indicators in various areas, including demography, education, health, the economy and violence against women. As a result, the MNCWA, in cooperation with the MWAF, had published gender statistics in 2001, 2005 and 2006. Various ministries had improved the collection of data disaggregated by sex, age and region (urban or rural) in some areas that were important under the Convention. An annual yearbook published by the statistical services included sex-disaggregated demographic and health-related data.

22. The MNCWA had distributed the Committee's concluding comments widely to its members and to ministry units and NGOs for follow-up action. The MWAF disseminated information on gender issues to the general public and to rural, ethnic and other minority women at the grass-roots level in all states,

divisions, towns and villages through letters, women's affairs organizations, the media and lectures given at civil service training institutes. Complaints submitted to the MWAF were reviewed by a committee, which, where appropriate, forwarded them to the departments concerned for action. In some cases, women's organizations provided free legal assistance and advice to women filing complaints. Domestic violence cases were often handled by the counselling centres, reported to the MWAF and transmitted to the appropriate units. Of the several thousand cases brought to the attention of the MWAF every year during the period 2005 to 2007, approximately half had been referred to the departments concerned for legal action.

23. **Mr. Aye** (Myanmar) said that Myanmar's Human Rights Body had been organized in 2007 in the spirit of the Asian Human Rights Charter and the ASEAN human rights body. Chaired by the Minister of Home Affairs, it had 19 members, including four NGOs, and eight subgroups (on home, legal, social, economic, health, education, international and women's affairs). Its primary purpose was to establish a national human rights commission in accordance with the Paris Principles and to study international human rights norms and standards, including the International Bill of Human Rights and the related United Nations instruments. Complaints were not handled by the Human Rights Body but by various ministries, departments and agencies, including the police. A Ministry of Home Affairs bureau investigated such cases.

24. Persons not entitled to Myanmar citizenship were issued identity cards enabling them to apply to travel. NGOs were not subject to funding restrictions. They were, however, required to register with the Ministry of Home Affairs and report their resources and expenditures since terrorist groups were known to use NGOs and non-profit organizations for money-laundering and for financing their illegal activities.

25. **Ms. Tin** (Myanmar) explained that the MMCWA was financed through contributions from its approximately 10 million members, whose number had been increasing at the rate of more than 2 million per year; income from small businesses and buildings; and donations. Its accounts were monitored closely by the Government. State funding was used primarily for infrastructure development, especially the construction of buildings at the central and state levels. The Association cooperated with the Ministry of Health on immunization campaigns and other projects. Unregistered women could become members of the MMCWA, which had branches throughout the country.

26. **Mr. Flinterman** requested further information regarding the positions that, according to the Constitution, were suitable only for men. He also asked who had jurisdiction to resolve any conflict between provisions of the Convention and domestic law; whether the term "discrimination", as used in the Constitution, encompassed direct and indirect discrimination in the public and the private sectors; and what role of the judiciary played in upholding human rights.

27. **Ms. Shin** asked which four NGOs were members of the Human Rights Body, whether it included any women's NGOs and whether a time frame for creating the human rights commission was envisaged. She would appreciate receiving a copy of the NGO registration form. She would also like to know how many women lived in the northern Rakhin region and how many of them had been issued identity cards.

28. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee and referring to the legal status of the Convention in Myanmar, asked whether the country applied a monistic or a dualist system with regard to international law.

29. **Mr. Aye** (Myanmar) specified that the positions suitable particularly for men were military and police posts and Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education jobs in remote areas. Conflicts between the Convention and domestic law should be resolved on the basis of the Constitution and domestic law or through amendments thereto. The Constitution, which had been adopted recently, would enter into force at the first plenary meeting of parliament. There was judicial protection of human rights inasmuch as any citizen could file a complaint with, inter alia, the courts, alleging violation of those rights. The four NGOs participating in the Human Rights Body were the MWAF, MMCWA, MWSF and USDA. Preparatory work for establishment of the human rights commission was expected to be completed in 2009. Statistics regarding the persons who had repatriated to the northern Rakhin region from Bangladesh, many years earlier, with the assistance of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) were not readily available. The immigration

authorities would have any available data on that matter.

30. **Mr. Lwin** (Myanmar) stressed that the inhabitants of Rakhin region were of Rakhin nationality. Of the 250,000 people who had returned there from Bangladesh, with which Myanmar engaged in bilateral cooperation on that issue, since 1992, 25,000 had chosen to remain in refugee camps. Myanmar society was characterized by religious tolerance and those returnees were not discriminated against; they were treated in accordance with Myanmar's immigration law.

31. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** said that there was ambiguity with regard to the budget of the MNCWA, which, as an inter-ministerial body, could make use of the staff and other resources of various ministries. She wondered how such a broad-based organization as the MWAF could have been established by the Government on a top-down basis. Requesting clarification of the resources available to the Federation, she expressed concern that it might use volunteer rather than professional staff. Lastly, she asked why the mandate of the MNCWA did not seem to contain any explicit reference to implementation of the Convention.

32. **Ms. Zou**, referring to the Working Committee of the MNCWA, asked how many members it had, whether they were permanent staff or volunteers and whether any mechanism for assessing the effectiveness of the gender policies and programmes for which it was responsible. She would welcome information regarding the Working Committee's relations with the MWAF, which was also responsible for implementing such policies and programmes, and regarding the Federation's degree of autonomy. It would be interesting to know whether the MNCWA had any effective means of monitoring the situation of specific female groups, such as poor rural women, and whether, over and beyond women's development, it envisaged focusing on the elimination of discrimination against women.

33. **Ms. Kyi** (Myanmar) replied that the MWAF comprised six working groups and six divisions and carried out activities related to, inter alia, violence against women, human trafficking, women's rehabilitation and reintegration, the girl child, education, health and culture. The Federation's structure consisted of a central executive body and women's affairs organizations established in all states and divisions. Those organizations received annual guidelines from the central body, to which they reported on a quarterly basis. The human resources used by the MWAF were experts and intellectuals who volunteered their services; its activities were carried out by NGOs. The MWAF, MMCWA and MWEA implemented numerous plans for assisting poor rural and minority women throughout the country by providing microcredit, health, education and cultural development benefits in line with the Convention.

34. **Ms. Tin** (Myanmar) said that the Ministry of Health carried out gender-related research and awareness-raising campaigns and offered training to basic health staff at the central, provincial and township levels. Ministry initiatives covered 70 per cent of the rural population. Qualitative studies conducted in 2006 had revealed a lack of awareness of gender disparities with regard to health care. Accordingly, training and training-of-trainers' modules had been developed with a view to promoting gender-sensitive attitudes towards health. New HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, reproductive health and leprosy control programmes would be launched in 2009.

35. **Ms. Kyi** (Myanmar) said that the MWAF, whose president, vice-president and general secretary were members of the MNCWA, had 4.3 million members and, although an NGO, carried out activities complementary to the Government's development plans according to MNCWA guidelines. The MWAF had its own budget with initial financing from the Government and further funding from donations and small businesses operated by the Federation.

36. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, observed that although specific needs had been invoked to justify reserving some positions for men and providing incentives to male medical students, no temporary special measures, such as quotas, seemed to have been taken in order to accelerate the advancement of women in any field.

37. **Ms. Shin** stressed that the Government was ultimately responsible for implementation of the Convention and asked what means were available to the MWAF, as an NGO, to hold the Government accountable in that respect. She requested the delegation to provide the Committee with copies of court documents regarding accusations of rape by military personnel and of the text of laws and

regulations stipulating disciplinary measures against members of the police and the armed forces who committed acts of violence against women. She would welcome information on any mechanism designed to monitor sexual assault by the military and on any training provided to policemen and soldiers in light of United Nations Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008). She enquired as to the number of counselling centres for women and asked whether they were run by the Government or by NGOs. Noting that the management of a husband's wages by his wife was evidence of a stereotyped image of male and female roles, she asked what steps the Government was taking in order to change such perceptions, including the acceptance of violence against women.

38. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, asked whether the Government planned to adopt a specific law on violence against women and domestic violence. Since the minimum age for marriage was 18, she was astonished that the Penal Code stated that unwanted sexual intercourse between spouses did not constitute rape unless the wife was under 13.

39. **Mr. Aye** (Myanmar) replied that the provision in question reflected customs in India; it did not apply to Myanmar, where persons under 18 could not marry. Regarding the allegations of rape by soldiers, a special investigation team had been sent to the localities concerned. Incriminating evidence had been found in two cases and the perpetrators had been sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment. Training on gender-related issues had been provided to more than 1,000 police officers, justice professionals and other civil servants, especially in border areas, and to dozens of trainers.

40. **Mr. Thein** (Myanmar) said that the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement cooperated with UNICEF and took temporary special measures, including the provision of assistance for mothers in the form of preschool childcare, educational programmes for children, technical assistance through NGOs and training at a home sciences centre.

41. **The Chairperson** pointed out that those activities did not constitute temporary special measures but steps related to, inter alia, maternity benefits. In future, consideration should be given to adopting the type of measures referred to in the Committee's general recommendation No. 25.

42. **Ms. Chutikul**, referring to trafficking in persons, asked what training was provided to civil servants in view of the reports of inappropriate police and immigration practices and procedures for handling returnees, particularly women and girls, along the Thai and Chinese borders and especially in the state of Kachin. Mothers accompanying their daughters were reportedly being arrested and imprisoned without proper investigation. She would welcome information on local mechanisms used by the central anti-trafficking authorities and on related research, particularly regarding ethnic minority groups in comparison to urban groups. It would be interesting to know what the composition and activities of the monitoring and evaluation team were; whether data was compiled systematically on individual cases, including on the sentencing of the traffickers, or whether there were plans for such data collection; whether the working group on prevention addressed the root causes of human trafficking; how witnesses were protected; what tangible bilateral cooperation took place with Thailand and China; what Myanmar's assessment and recommendations regarding the effectiveness of COMMIT were; and what the sources and uses of the funding available for assisting human trafficking victims and combating that crime were.

43. **Mr. Aye** (Myanmar) said that during the period 2003 to 2006, law enforcement officers, mainly police and immigration personnel, had received training under the Australian-sponsored Asia Regional Cooperation to Prevent People Trafficking (ARCPPT) project. A special anti-trafficking task force, deployed in the border area, had been expanded from nine to 19 units. Currently, training for trainers on human trafficking was provided at the police academy. In cooperation with NGOs and neighbouring countries, training and awareness campaigns were also organized for criminal justice and administrative staff and for citizens in the areas affected by trafficking. As a safeguard against abuse of authority, all prosecution orders were issued by a central anti-trafficking body chaired by the Minister of Home Affairs and comprising the deputy Chief Justice, the deputy Attorney-General, the deputy Minister of Home Affairs and the Chief of Police. In some cases, it was difficult to decide whether a suspect was a trafficker, a smuggler or a migrant. In that connection, research was conducted by an expert team provided by IOM and data collection and analysis were carried out by the central body. Monitoring and evaluation were pursued as part of the 2007-2011

National Plan of Action in line with COMMIT. A working group on prevention was in place; chaired by the Deputy Minister of Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, it included representatives of the MWAF and national and international NGOs.

44. Repatriation could involve drawn-out procedures. Relevant information was disseminated through the Myanmar focal point, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which, through its network of embassies and the telecommunication facilities of the Ministry of Home Affairs, was in contact with the focal points of other countries, such as China, Malaysia and Thailand. Information-sharing facilitated family tracing and nationality confirmation. In some cases, repatriation required air transport or the mediation of organizations such as World Vision and Save the Children-United Kingdom. Occasionally, repatriation was complicated and prolonged by the desire of the countries involved to use the victims' testimony in order to take legal action against the offenders. Although it had no witness protection law, Myanmar took police action to protect witnesses in cases involving organized crime. Efforts to combat human trafficking and provide support for its victims were funded from the budgets of the ministries concerned and of the National Plan of Action, as well as from donations and the confiscated assets of offenders.

45. **The Chairperson** said that the copies of the five-year action plan and the first biannual progress report, which had been received by the Committee, indicated that the issue of human trafficking was actually being addressed by the Government.

Articles 7-9

46. **Mr. Flinterman** asked what provisions of the Constitution guaranteed the equality of men and women as candidates for public office and whether it was true that the Constitution reserved one fourth of the seats in both houses of parliament for members of the military, which was primarily a male institution. He would welcome information on any measures intended to increase the number of women in high-ranking civil service posts and in State organizations and agencies or to create an environment enabling NGOs and civil society associations to play a role, in cooperation with the Government, in implementation of the Convention. Lastly, pointing out that keeping activist Daw Aung San Suu Kyi under house arrest might reinforce the idea that political decision-making was an area reserved for men, he asked what steps the Government planned to take in order to counter stereotypical thinking by encouraging women to aspire to high-level posts, run for election or pursue a military career.

47. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, enquired as to the percentages of decision-making posts held by women in Myanmar.

48. **Mr. Aye** (Myanmar) said that the recent adoption of the new Constitution would be followed by enactment of a new election law that would preclude gender-based discrimination. The armed forces were not a wholly male institution; they included female officers up to the rank of colonel. The provision reserving a percentage of parliamentary seats for military officers was based on security considerations in the face of threats posed to the country since it had regained independence.

49. **Ms. Kyi** (Myanmar) stated that the number of women who were, inter alia, general or managing directors, professors, engineers or entrepreneurs was increasing. Women accounted for only 3.4 per cent of civil servants holding deputy director or higher posts in the various ministries, but their participation in the education sector was high. At primary, secondary and university levels, 55 to 97 per cent of the teaching staff were women; on the whole, the numbers of male and female school principals were comparable; and women occupied 66.5 per cent of deputy director or higher posts. In the health sector, 44.1 per cent of deputy director or higher posts were held by women. Women's organizations held or participated in workshops and in national and international seminars and forums and carried out awareness-raising and capacity-building programmes. During the period 2006 to 2007, women had accounted for 36.06 per cent of the staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and for approximately half the staff of Myanmar's delegations to United Nations agencies and other international organizations. The overall participation of women in the foreign service was increasing,

50. **Mr. Lwin** (Myanmar), referring to the quota of parliamentary seats reserved for members of the military, suggested that through their participation in the armed forces, where they served primarily in medical units, women were given an opportunity to perform responsible work in the political sphere. The measures taken by the Government in the case of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi were based on security

considerations and had no gender-related significance; similar measures had also been taken against men. Discrimination had no place in Myanmar's culture and tradition.

51. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, asked how many women served as ambassadors or heads of mission abroad; according to Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) data, the percentage of ministerial posts held by women in Myanmar was zero. She urged the Government to use the draft election law, which was expected to be adopted, to ensure that parliament included a significant number of women who could promote women's development at the national level.

52. **Ms. Shin** reminded the Myanmar delegation that she was still waiting for replies to her questions regarding violence against women; the documentation of rape cases; laws, rules and regulations related to military and police discipline; the role of the MWAF in implementation of the Convention; and the number of counselling centres and shelters in the country.

53. **Ms. Zou** also noted that her questions had not been answered.

54. **Mr. Flinterman** asked whether the identity documents issued to Muslim minority women would, in due course, lead to full citizenship and, if so, whether there was a time frame for that development.

55. **Mr. Lwin** (Myanmar) said that although no women currently served at the ambassadorial level, that situation would soon change. Deputy heads of mission were often women.

56. **Mr. Aye** (Myanmar) said that police and military officers found guilty of rape were punished according to civilian law and, in addition, according to police and military disciplinary provisions. That practice was an effective means of ensuring discipline in the armed forces.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.