

CROATIA

CEDAW A/50/38 (1995)

556. The Committee considered the report of Croatia that had been requested on an exceptional basis at CEDAW's thirteenth session, at its 279th meeting, on 31 January 1995 (see CEDAW/C/CRO/SP.1).

557. The representative of Croatia made a statement in which she informed the Committee about the protection of human rights of women in her country and on how the war in Croatia had affected women. She emphasized that women's ability to exercise their human rights and participate at all levels of decision-making in her country should be considered in the light of the complex situation of the war, which affected various parts of Croatia differently. In the first part of her presentation, the representative informed members of the Committee about the Croatian legislation pertaining to women's economic, social and political roles. The Croatian legislation was in full compliance with the provisions of the Convention and the representative identified the various laws and measures in Croatia that ensured equality of human rights of men and women according to those provisions. In Croatia there were no laws or regulations that discriminated against women. She also drew attention to the high standards of the protection of women at work, during maternity and in health in general. She pointed out, however, that in spite of laws and measures that guaranteed women's equality in all spheres of life in Croatia, women did not use the existing legislation to its fullest extent, particularly in so far as their rights to equal political participation were concerned. She pointed out that the war in her country prevented women from benefiting fully from the enabling legislative environment, and as a result of the war women in Croatia suffered maltreatment, torture, humiliation, degrading treatment and rape.

558. The representative of Croatia stated that women accounted for 23 per cent of all wounded and 20 per cent of killed civilians. Twelve per cent of wounded women suffered disabilities and serious bodily impairment. Women accounted for 24 per cent of forcibly disappeared or missing persons. The disturbing violations of women's rights in which women were used as part of the tactic (as tools) of ethnic cleansing had taken place at the end of 1991 and the beginning of 1992. Women were captured and detained in prisons, where, according to the accounts of some of the 744 women who were subsequently released from camps in Serbia, the conditions were extremely poor. Women were maltreated and often beaten. The representative pointed out that more than half of the detained women were older than 45. Children were also detained in prisons and camps along with women. There were accounts of mass rape of women. The pattern and time of occurrence of mass rape suggested strongly that it was used as a method of ethnic cleansing. Rapes were perpetrated within the occupied territories of Croatia and in the detention camps located in Serbia.

559. The problem of forcibly disappeared or missing persons involves two categories of women victims: women who are themselves forcibly disappeared and missing, and women whose family members are forcibly disappeared and missing. All this causes the most complex problems.

560. The Croatian Government organized the provision of help and support to victims of war. It

made a commendable effort to collect information relating to the violation of women's rights by encouraging women to provide the testimonies of those violations. Testimonies by women constituted not only the source of information on violations of women's rights, but also a form of psychological support and therapy that were badly needed by women who had experienced the physical and emotional scars of rape. Five hundred testimonies of women victims of various forms of maltreatment were collected. Among those cases rape accounted for 10 per cent. Sixty per cent of raped women were, at the same time, victims of torture and maltreatment. It is believed, however, that the actual number of raped women is much higher than that reported. For cultural, religious and historical reasons women sometimes do not report sexual abuse or deny its occurrence. As a consequence of rape, four children were born. The representative of Croatia stated that all such children were cared for by their mothers and their respective families, by foster families or by the appropriate government institutions.

561. The Government of Croatia had made significant efforts to provide assistance to 103,671 displaced and 111,017 refugee women in the territory of Croatia who had suffered violations of their human rights, including rape and maltreatment. They were provided with basic necessities such as food, accommodation, health care and schooling. At the beginning of 1993, the Government had established a comprehensive programme for the protection and assistance of the victims of war, consisting of 10 projects. One project dealt with the provision of gynaecological care for women who had suffered sexual abuse. However, the Government was not able to implement that programme because of lack of financial resources and lack of support from international organizations and foreign Governments.

General observations

562. Members of the Committee thanked the representative of Croatia for the submission of a thorough and comprehensive report despite the extremely difficult circumstances in her country. One member deplored the fact that the Croatian Government had not been able to present the report last year as requested. Members expressed their satisfaction with the efforts of the Government of Croatia to reflect the provisions of the Convention in the Croatian legislation and to ensure equality between men and women in all spheres of life. They deplored the violations of women's human rights that took place in the context of the war and expressed their concerns at the impact those violations had on women's lives and their physical and mental health. They commended the Government of Croatia for its effort to provide assistance to women victims of war.

563. Members of the Committee expressed their solidarity with the women of Croatia and their hope that a peaceful solution to the war would be found soon. One member said that from the report of Croatia she had concluded that there had been no aggression against women living in Croatia. She also understood that the events described in the report were events that had taken place in the past and involved primarily refugee women from Bosnia and Herzegovina. She thus wanted to know if her understanding of the situation was correct and that the events described in the report were not happening currently. She also wanted to know if women who had suffered rape in the course of the military conflict had been able to have access to the abortion services, psychotherapy and adoption services and if they were entitled to monetary compensation. Responding to that comment, the representative of Croatia stated that women who became pregnant as a consequence of rape had a right to abortion. Women could also decide whether to keep children conceived as a

result of rape or offer them for adoption. Women in Croatia were still the victims of the atrocities committed against them in the temporarily occupied territories. During the period from April 1992 to September 1993, 12,468 persons had been forcibly displaced from the occupied territories, and placed temporarily under United Nations protection; the representative referred members of the Committee to the table that had been submitted to them prior to the meeting.

564. One member of the Committee requested further information concerning the gynaecological treatment programme for the victims of rape that had been mentioned in the representative's presentation. Other members requested more information on the lack of financing for that programme so that they could make a proposal with respect to that issue.

565. Members wanted to know if the Government of Croatia had succeeded in bringing persons responsible for the violation of women's human rights and for war crimes to the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. She also wanted to know if there had been any incidents of aggression against and abuse of women by the Croatian army. In reply, the representative pointed out that the Croatian army was organized to defend the country against the "brutal Serbian aggression" and, initially, had not even been properly armed. She stated that it was conceivable that rapes by the Croatian army had occurred; nevertheless, rape had never been used by the Croatian army as a tool of ethnic cleansing. Any confirmed cases of rape by Croatian soldiers would be prosecuted under Croatian law.

566. The Committee members expressed their concern at the lack of national machinery for the advancement of women and for the protection of their human rights. They acknowledged the particularly difficult circumstances in Croatia, but nevertheless stressed that national machinery for women was very important and could be very helpful to women in such times of difficult circumstances. As women tended frequently to be treated as second-class citizens, they needed spokespersons to uphold their rights and articulate their special needs.

567. With regard to missing persons mentioned in the report, one member pointed out that she appreciated the fact that the Government of Croatia was in touch with the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances of the Commission on Human Rights. She suggested that the Government should also get in touch with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women.

568. Questions were raised with respect to the Comprehensive Programme for Protection and Help to Victims of War initiated by the Government of Croatia in 1993. One member of the Committee commented that it was incomprehensible that such a programme was unable to secure the necessary funding. She herself was aware of funds available in Germany for the financing of such programmes in the zones of military conflict in the former Yugoslavia. She wanted to know: (a) who coordinated the efforts to obtain funding for that programme; (b) whether it was the Government or non-governmental organizations; (c) why their efforts did not succeed; and (d) whether the lack of success was the result of excessive bureaucracy. In reply, the representative of Croatia stated that the programme was a comprehensive effort designed to help all victims of war. She confirmed that substantial help and resources had been committed to Croatia for the purpose of solving various problems of refugees and displaced persons. The biggest portion was used to cover their extensive basic needs, such as accommodation, food, schooling and health care. Over the past year, some \$24,200,000 had been spent on health care for refugees. Although that programme did not receive

direct financial support, assistance to victimized women and other persons who suffered as a result of the war was provided through regular funds obtained by the Government of Croatia.

569. Having expressed her concern at the maltreatment and rape of women during the war in Croatia, one member of the Committee commented on the role of NGOs and women's organizations with respect to the current situation of women in Croatia and in the neighbouring republics. She wanted to know what women's organizations existed in Croatia and how they cooperated with international non-governmental organizations. She also wanted to know which international non-governmental organizations had visited Croatia. She asked the representative to state specifically what kind of assistance her Government wanted the Committee to provide. Concerning the involvement of NGOs, the representative of Croatia stated that her Government appreciated their assistance and their effort to deliver help to the victims of the war.

570. Several members of the Committee commended the Government of Croatia on its effort to provide the information on the situation of women in that country. They condemned mass rape and deplored its use as a weapon of ethnic cleansing. They encouraged the Government to seek peaceful means to resolve the military conflict. But they also stated that peace was not just the absence of war, but also social justice for all. They called for punishment of the perpetrators and wanted to know what had been done in that respect, whether complaints had been taken to the newly established International Tribunal and how women were involved in that process. Members of the Committee expressed concern at the effects of the war on children and wanted to know whether children had continuing access to education and how war and the crimes committed in that context were reflected in school curricula.

571. Members noted that the report of the representative of Croatia documented and properly identified the gender-specific impact of the war. They commented on the positive effects of breaking the silence and letting women talk about crimes committed against them. One member cited the document prepared by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) that defined the rape of women during the war as "the war crime". She stated that the UNESCO report stressed the need to "name the guilty and record the crime in law" and she wished the representative of Croatia to respond to that statement. She also wanted to know what, if anything, had been done to provide women who had suffered rape and other forms of abuse with the monetary compensation for their suffering.

572. Responding to questions concerning the punishment of perpetrators of war crimes, the representative of Croatia stated that her Government had established a Commission on War Crimes which was collecting data and evidence concerning war crimes. The International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991 had been established and its work had just begun. The Government of Croatia was cooperating fully with the Tribunal and had already forwarded to the Tribunal the data it had collected. In order to bring the perpetrators to trial, however, the full support and cooperation of the international community was essential.

573. Members of the Committee raised questions relating to the reintegration into society of the victims of sexual and other forms of abuse. Concerns were expressed at the impact those events had on young girls who might need psychiatric and other help for some time to come. The Committee

members encouraged the Government of Croatia to follow up the victims on a case-by-case basis.

574. One member commented that in the past, women in Croatia had been used as a tool of war. She stated that the time had come for women in that country to become the heart of the "machinery for peace". She encouraged the Government to initiate the dialogue on peace and expressed her hope that a peaceful solution would soon be found.

575. Members of the Committee commended the Government of Croatia for its efforts to provide women who suffered as victims of war with assistance, health care and psychological counselling. One member raised the question of the possible spread of HIV/AIDS among abused women and the devastating impact it would have on the country and its women. She wanted to know if any information on the magnitude of that disease was available to be sent to members wishing to see it.

576. Responding to the question concerning the spread of HIV/AIDS, the representative of Croatia stated that information had been collected and would be presented in the next report. She also stated that her Government had undertaken a comprehensive programme to control the spread of the disease.

577. The Committee members commended the Government of Croatia on its efforts to extend care and protection to refugee and displaced persons on the territory of Croatia. They wanted to know how many children were among the displaced population and whether they received adequate care. They wanted to know if medical help was available to them and how they were prepared for reintegration into the life of the society after the trauma of war.

578. In referring to the problems of refugees and their dependants, the representative of Croatia stated that refugee women received financial support that was augmented if they had children. They also had full rights to primary health care and education in Croatia, and to secondary health care in the event of life-threatening problems, free of charge. The Government of Croatia sought to assist persons disabled by the war and to provide psychological and social support to victimized women.

579. Concerns were expressed at the low participation of Croatian women in the political process. It was stated that, as the main agents of peace, women had to come to the forefront of all levels of decision-making. They should therefore be encouraged to participate more actively in the political process. In reply, the representative of Croatia stated that women in her country participated in the decision-making process, although somewhat insufficiently. She cited some progress in that respect in the judiciary and referred members of the Committee to the initial report for more information on the issue. She stressed that the reason for the low participation of women in decision-making was the war and its consequences. She emphasized that women in Croatia had a right to participate in decision-making at all levels, a right which was upheld by the Constitution and recorded in law.

580. The view was expressed that throughout the war in the former Yugoslavia, women were used as a weapon of war. Women should use that common experience to initiate peace. The Committee urged the women of Croatia and the women of other regions that suffered from the war to join their efforts in their search for a peaceful solution to the military conflict.

581. The representative of Croatia thanked the members of the Committee for their interest in the

situation of women in Croatia and for their solidarity with the victims of the war.

Concluding comments of the Committee

Introduction

582. The Committee commended the representative of Croatia for submitting, at its request, her country's report on an exceptional basis, in spite of the difficult situation which Croatia is still undergoing.

Positive aspects

583. The Committee took note of the sufficient information and data, which confirm that the principle of equality is laid down in the Constitution of Croatia, that the protection of the rights of women is institutionalized and that the provisions of the Convention are an integral part of the country's legislation.

584. The Committee noted with relief that the Government of Croatia, the United Nations and international cooperation have set up support programmes for women and girls who were the victims of violence in order to provide them with the psychological, medical and social assistance that they require.

Principal subjects of concern

585. The Committee noted with concern that following the war in which Croatia was the victim, the situation of women in the occupied areas is alarming. Violations of the rights of women, violence, rape and sexual abuse were perpetrated against women and girls because of their sex.

586. The Committee noted with dismay that rape became systematic in nature and was used as "weapon of war" in order to force women to undergo humiliation and torture and leave their homes. The specific objective of the aggression was not only territorial gain, but was also part of the policy of "ethnic cleansing".

587. The Committee was also deeply concerned about the fact that many women were still missing and about the material and psychological effect this had on their families.

Suggestions and recommendations

588. The Committee recommends the establishment of a national mechanism to protect and expand the rights of women and encourage participation by women in the political field, decision-making and the struggle for peace. Although women were used by men as "a weapon of war", their solidarity and their organization in non-governmental organizations can constitute an instrument for peace.

589. The Committee recommends that the displaced and refugee women should not be marginalized and that they should be provided with necessary support and assistance by the Croatian Government.

590. The Committee encourages the Government of Croatia to continue its efforts and its social integration programmes, particularly for girls, who are just beginning their lives.

591. The Committee recommends above all that it is necessary to break the silence concerning the sexual abuse and aggression of which women are the victims, identify the guilty parties and bring them before national and international courts, and provide financial compensation to the victims.

10/ [Official Records of the General Assembly], Forty-ninth session, Supplement No. 38 (A/49/38), chap. I, sect. B.

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80. The Committee considered the initial report of Croatia (CEDAW/C/CRO/1) at its 363rd, 364th and 368th meetings, on 21 and 23 January 1998 (see CEDAW/C/SR.363, 364 and 368).

81. The representative of Croatia indicated that her country had acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, without reservations, on 8 October 1991. The initial report covers the period up to 1994 and the next report will be a combined second and third report.

82. The representative informed the Committee that, at the time of submission of the initial report, peace is the priority in her country. However, she emphasizes that only through peace and the development of democracy will women be able to achieve advancement in all areas. Croatia has finally achieved a level of peace, stability and security that has enabled it to channel its activities towards social development and the promotion and protection of human rights. The advancement and empowerment of women in all areas of public life are essential for the full implementation of social justice in a democratic society.

83. The Commission for Equality of the Government of the Republic of Croatia was established in May 1996 and has drawn up the national policy for the promotion of equality, based on the Beijing Platform for Action, after consultation with women's non-governmental organizations. The policy was adopted by the Government in December 1997.

84. The national policy provides for specific measures to achieve particular goals in the areas of political decision-making, the economy and the economic position of women, health care, education, human rights of women and violence against women in war and peace.

85. Another representative informed the Committee of the implementation of the Convention in the area of justice. She noted that constitutional rights of Croatian women are protected by the ombudsperson and that both women and men are entitled to all legal remedies available through court proceedings. A new penal law has been introduced and its implementation began on 1 January 1998. She introduced statistics on acts of violence against women, rape in marriage, sexual harassment, prostitution (including international prostitution) and other criminal acts. Trends in such behaviour have instigated changes in the penal code. The representative noted, however, that both men and women may be perpetrators and victims of crime.

86. A number of legislative provisions provide special protection for the family and, in particular, for women in their role as mothers and caregivers. Special rights are accorded to women and these are not regarded as discriminating against men, whose rights are also recognized. Parenthood is seen as a joint responsibility and this is reflected in legislation and by-laws.

87. Women are not allowed to work in jobs involving hard physical labour or underground or underwater labour, nor in any jobs classified detrimental to the life of women. Night work is prohibited by law unless it is approved under special circumstances and conditions. Employers are prohibited from requesting information on matters unrelated to employment issues, and this is a

means of protecting pregnant women from discrimination in the workplace.

88. Minor changes to the law on health care have been introduced since the initial report. Health insurance and causes of hospitalization are described and it is noted that statistics on termination of pregnancy showed that abortions and miscarriages are at the lowest level ever.

89. The national policy on equality, which implements the Platform for Action, was adopted in Beijing in December 1997. The policy was developed to promote equality and is a mandatory document, with Ministries and other authorities being obliged to carry out its provisions. The policy, which was developed in cooperation with non-governmental organizations and the Commission for Equality, consists of two parts, a survey of the existing situation and specific measures to address crucial areas.

90. The representative concluded her presentation by examining particular articles of the Convention and their implementation. She indicated that there is a high unemployment rate for women, although there are equal opportunities for women in education and employment.

Concluding comments of the Committee

Introduction

91. The Committee congratulates the Government of Croatia for ratifying the Convention without reservations and notes with satisfaction that the country's initial report followed the guidelines and presents comprehensive data on the situation of women in Croatia.

92. The Committee welcomes the excellent oral presentation of the Croatian delegation, which supplements and updates the written report. The Committee expresses its appreciation to the Government of Croatia for its high-level delegation, headed by the Deputy Minister for Labour and Social Welfare. This demonstrates the State party's commitment to the Convention and its appreciation of the work of the Committee.

93. The Committee further welcomes the extensive answers provided by the delegation to its questions. This reflects a sincere effort by Croatia to address the concerns raised by the Committee during the presentation of the State party's report.

Positive aspects

94. The Committee commends the Government on the fact that the Convention has been incorporated into the national laws of Croatia and may be invoked before the courts by any citizen.

95. The Committee welcomes the establishment of the Commission for Equality in Croatia. It also welcomes the national policy for the promotion of equality, which has been adopted to implement the Beijing Platform for Action. The Committee is pleased to be provided with copies of the national policy.

96. The Committee commends the efforts made by the Government of Croatia to cooperate with

civil society and non-governmental organizations and its promise of further efforts to improve cooperation with non-governmental organizations in the future, particularly in view of the presence of highly competent and active women's non-governmental organizations in Croatia. The Committee welcomes the fact that the national policy envisaged cooperation with such organizations.

97. The Committee notes with satisfaction the delegation's oral responses, reflecting willingness to give further consideration to areas and concerns raised by the Committee. In this context, the Committee is very pleased to hear the Government's oral commitment to examine the following issues in the light of the Committee's suggestions:

- (a) The need for measures to eliminate stereotypes that restrict women's role to that of mothers and caregivers;
- (b) The need for measures to improve the participation of women in political life;
- (c) The appointment of a deputy ombudsperson to deal specifically with women's rights;
- (d) The need to improve public awareness about the Convention so that it may be used more frequently throughout the judicial system;
- (e) The possibility of instituting a system of restraining orders, in particular to protect women subjected to domestic violence;
- (f) The need to commence a dialogue and to coordinate efforts with trade unions on measures to protect women in the area of employment, in particular with respect to illegal pressuring of women by employers in relation to pregnancy within a certain period after the commencement of employment;
- (g) The need for increased assistance to family members, in particular women, taking care of the elderly;
- (h) The need to collect more detailed information on the situation of rural women.

98. The Committee notes with great satisfaction the existence of programmes to assist women with special needs.

99. The Committee is pleased to be informed of the measures implemented to eradicate gender stereotypes within the education system. It is also pleased with the introduction of measures to introduce human rights education into schools.

100. The Committee is generally impressed by the health-care system in Croatia and by the Government's clear commitment to universal coverage.

Factors and difficulties affecting the implementation of the Convention

101. The Committee notes that Croatia faced significant economic and social difficulties as a consequence of the country's recent involvement in armed conflict. Repercussions include the presence of large numbers of refugees and displaced persons. The Committee also notes difficulties resulting from the transition to a market economy and a democratic political structure. The Committee observed that in the absence of gender-sensitive policies and measures to counteract negative effects, these changes may have a negative effect on women's enjoyment of their human rights and impede the implementation of the Convention.

Principal subjects of concern

102. Despite some clarification during oral responses by the delegation, the Committee remains very concerned about the view expressed in the State party's report that women themselves bear full responsibility for their low level of participation in public life. This suggests that the Government lacked understanding of indirect and structural discrimination and its impact on women..

103. The Committee is particularly concerned about the consistent emphasis placed on women's roles as mothers and caregivers in Croatian legislation pertaining to a variety of areas. While legislative provisions protecting maternity are important, the Committee is concerned that prioritizing that aspect of women's lives reinforces traditional and stereotypical role expectations, which tend to limit women's full participation in society. The Committee comments that despite the fact that women in Croatia are well-educated and participate in the labour force in large numbers, a careful and gender-sensitive analysis of the emphasis on motherhood vis-à-vis women's roles in the public sphere is needed on the part of the Government to assure de facto gender equality in the Croatian society of the future.

104. The Committee expresses concern that data has not been collected in some areas. In particular, the Committee is concerned that minimal attention has been paid to the issue of women living in poverty and that no sex-disaggregated data are available on that topic. It is also concerned that no sex-disaggregated data have been collected on human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) and that no reliable data had been collected on teenage pregnancy.

105. The Committee expresses concern that in view of the complex ethnic and religious composition of the population of Croatia, the report does not include statistical information on the social, economic and political standing of minority women.

106. The Committee is disturbed to note the Government's view that there is no need to specify gender inequality every time the issue of equality is raised. The Committee is of the opinion that this might contribute to the concealment and perpetuation of, in particular, de facto inequality. It points out that, in order to increase the visibility of gender issues and to promote a gender-sensitive national agenda, it is crucial to incorporate gender in all discussions of equality.

107. While the Committee is reassured to be informed that acts of domestic violence are prosecuted by public attorneys at the request of the victims, it expresses concern with regard to the adequacy of measures to encourage women to come forward with complaints and about the fact that prosecution by public attorneys ex officio or upon the complaint of third parties is not incorporated in legislation on domestic violence.

108. The Committee expresses concern that there is evidence that church-related organizations adversely influence the Government's policies concerning women and thereby impede full implementation of the Convention.

109. In the area of health, the Committee is particularly concerned that services pertaining to women's reproductive health are the first to be affected as a result of the Government's financial constraints. It is also concerned about information regarding the refusal, by some hospitals, to provide abortions on the basis of conscientious objection of doctors. The Committee considers this to be an infringement of women's reproductive rights.

Suggestions and recommendations

110. The Committee recommends that the Government of Croatia continue to implement and strengthen the measures it is taking to empower women and to mainstream gender issues. It encourages specific affirmative actions targeted to numerical goals and quotas, in particular in those areas such as political and decision-making positions in public life where women's de facto equality has not been improving at the desired pace.

111. The Committee urges the Government of Croatia to adhere to its oral statement of intention to give further consideration to the issues outlined in paragraph 97 above with a view to undertaking measures in response to the concerns of the Committee.

112. The Committee urges the Government of Croatia to take further measures to promote recognition of the variety of roles that women play in society. To that end, it suggests that it is crucial to educate the Croatian public with regard to the importance of an equitable distribution between women and men of family roles and "caring responsibilities".

113. The Committee recommends that the Government take advantage of existing bodies of knowledge relating to indirect and structural patterns of discrimination. It emphasizes that the Government, rather than women themselves, have primary responsibility for implementing strategies to eliminate these forms of discrimination.

114. The Committee requests that the Government of Croatia include more detailed information on the implementation of the provisions of article 6 of the Convention in future reports. The Committee requests that additional data be collected on the status of women involved in prostitution. The Committee would also appreciate more detailed information on the problem of trafficking in women, in particular migrant women, and the measures taken to implement legislation in this area.

115. The Committee recommends that the Government of Croatia collect and make available statistical information pertaining to the social, economic and political status of minority women with a view to developing specific policies to respond to the needs of different groups.

116. The Committee requests that more information be provided about the situation of women with disabilities in future reports.

117. The Committee strongly recommends that the Government take steps to secure the enjoyment

by women of their reproductive rights by, *inter alia*, guaranteeing them access to abortion services in public hospitals. It is suggested that the Government examine fully the implications for women, in particular, of funding cuts for contraceptives and that it implement strategies to address any detrimental impact on women.

118. The Committee urges the Government of Croatia to take the necessary steps to incorporate the participation of non-governmental organizations in the preparation of the country's next report to the Committee.

119. The Committee requests wide dissemination in Croatia of the present concluding comments in order to make the people of Croatia, and particularly government administrators and politicians, aware of the steps that have been taken to ensure de facto equality for women and the further steps required in this regard. It also requests the Government to continue to disseminate widely, and in particular to women's and human rights organizations, the Convention, the Committee's general recommendations and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.