



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
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Concluding comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Cyprus

1. The Committee considered the combined third, fourth and fifth periodic report of the Republic of Cyprus (CEDAW/C/CYP/3-5) at its 733rd and 734th meetings, on 25 May 2006 (see CEDAW/C/SR.733 and 734). The Committee's list of issues and questions is contained in CEDAW/C/CYP/Q/5 and the responses of Cyprus are contained in CEDAW/C/CYP/Q/5/Add.1.

Introduction

2. The Committee expresses its appreciation to the State party for its combined third, fourth and fifth periodic report, which follows the Committee's guidelines and takes into account the Committee's previous concluding comments, but which was, however, overdue and lacks reference to general recommendations by the Committee. The Committee also expresses its appreciation for the written replies to the list of issues and questions raised by the pre-session working group and for the oral presentation and further clarifications in response to the questions posed by the Committee.

3. The Committee welcomes the State party's delegation headed by the Law Commissioner of the Republic of Cyprus, and which included representatives of several sectors of Government with responsibility for implementation of measures in the areas covered by the Convention, and appreciates the frank and constructive dialogue held between the delegation and the members of the Committee.

4. The Committee commends the State party for the incorporation of sex-disaggregated data throughout the report, annexes and responses to the list of issues and questions in relation to many of the provisions of the Convention.

5. The Committee commends the State party for the withdrawal of the reservation to article 9 (2) in June 2000.

6. The Committee congratulates the State party for ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention in April 2002, and for accepting, in July 2002, the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee.

Positive aspects

7. The Committee commends the State party for the significant law reform undertaken since the consideration of its combined initial and second periodic report (CEDAW/C/CYP/1-2) in 1995, aimed at the promotion of gender equality and elimination of discrimination against women and at achieving compliance with the obligations under the Convention, including amendments to the Maternity Protection Law (1997) and enactment of the Marriage Law (2003); the Equal Pay Between Men and Women for the Same Work or for Work of Equal Value Law (2002); the Equal Treatment of Men and Women in Employment and Vocational Training Law (2002); the Equal Treatment of Men and Women in Professional Social Insurance Schemes Law (2002); the Civil Registry Law (2002); the Parental Leave and Leave on Grounds of Force Majeure Law (2002); the Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) Law (2000); and the Combating of the Trafficking of Persons and Sexual Exploitation of Minors Law (2000).

8. The Committee commends the State party on the Plan of Action for the Coordination of Actions on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Sexual Exploitation of Children. The Committee also notes the development of other plans of action, including the National Action Plan on Gender Mainstreaming based on the provisions of the Convention and the Beijing Platform for Action, and its anticipated adoption before the end of 2006. The Committee also notes the inclusion of a gender perspective in the national development and other plans.

9. The Committee welcomes the establishment of new institutions relevant to the promotion of gender equality, including the Advisory Committee on Domestic Violence, the Gender Equality Committee in Employment and Vocational Training and the Investigation and Assessment of Work Committee, as well as those of a more general nature that also deal with gender equality issues, such as the Commissioner for Administration (Ombudswoman) and the National Institution for the Protection of Human Rights.

Principal areas of concern and recommendations

10. While recalling the State party's obligation to systematically and continuously implement all the provisions of the Convention, the Committee views the concerns and recommendations identified in the present concluding comments as requiring the State party's priority attention between now and the submission of the next periodic report. Consequently, the Committee calls upon the State party to focus on those areas in its implementation activities and to report on action taken and results achieved in its next periodic report. It calls on the State party to submit the present concluding comments to all relevant ministries and to Parliament so as to ensure their full implementation.

11. While noting with satisfaction the availability of the Convention in both English and Greek, as well as additional publications issued by the National

Machinery on Women's Rights, the Committee is concerned that the provisions of the Convention, including the general recommendations by the Committee, which interpret the Convention, are not widely known in the country. The Committee also notes the actions taken by the State party to conduct training programmes in gender issues for law enforcement officials, as requested in the Committee's previous concluding comments; however, the Committee remains concerned about the lack of sensitization and training initiatives, especially for judicial personnel, on gender issues and the provisions of the Convention.

12. The Committee calls on the State party to continue to widely disseminate the Convention, its Optional Protocol and the Committee's general recommendations to all stakeholders, including government ministries, the judiciary, political parties, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and the general public. The Committee also encourages the State party to develop awareness-raising programmes and training on the provisions of the Convention, including initiatives that aim to sensitize judges, lawyers and prosecutors at all levels, and the amendment of university curricula in law, where appropriate.

13. While noting the efforts made by the State party to promote gender equality and the advancement of women, the Committee remains concerned about the lack of a comprehensive and systematic approach to gender equality policies.

14. The Committee urges the State party to adopt a comprehensive and integrated approach to all its gender equality policies, in all areas. In particular, it calls on the State party to reflect such an approach in the National Action Plan on Gender Mainstreaming, which is due to be adopted before the end of the year 2006.

15. While the Committee recognizes the improvements in the National Machinery for Women's Rights, including a substantial increase in its budget and an additional staff member, the Committee is concerned about its weak authority and lack of human resources, which impede its ability to promote gender equality and coordinate and monitor gender mainstreaming into all policy areas.

16. The Committee encourages the State party to further strengthen the financial and human resources, as well as the authority and status of the National Machinery for Women's Rights, so that it can adequately fulfil its expanded mandate to play the central role in monitoring and coordinating the implementation of the National Action Plan on Gender Mainstreaming.

17. The Committee is concerned about the pervasiveness of patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted traditional social prejudices and stereotyped attitudes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family, the workplace, the classroom, media and other areas of society. The State party's report recognizes these stereotypes as the major obstacle for the advancement of women in Cyprus and as a root cause of women's disadvantaged position in a number of areas, including the labour market, political and public life, the highest levels of the education system and the media, as well as persistent violence against women, especially within the family.

18. The Committee urges the State party to increase its efforts to design and implement systematic and comprehensive strategies to foster a better understanding of and support for substantive equality between women and men

in all spheres and at all levels of society. Such measures should include awareness-raising and educational campaigns that address women and men, girls and boys, with a view to eliminating stereotypes associated with traditional gender roles in the family and in society, in accordance with articles 2 (f) and 5 (a) of the Convention.

19. The Committee recognizes that some political parties have introduced a quota system to enhance the participation of women in their decision-making bodies and as candidates for elections; that the National Machinery for Women's Rights recently launched a campaign aimed at increasing women's participation in Parliament and in local authorities; that media coverage of women candidates has improved; and that some women have been appointed to high-level posts, including the first female Supreme Court judge. However, the Committee remains concerned that despite an increase in candidates, women's participation in public and political life remains low and there has been no significant increase in women elected to office following the general elections held in May 2006.

20. The Committee recommends that the State party take measures, in particular temporary special measures, aimed at accelerating de facto equality between women and men in order to increase the participation of women in political and public life, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation 25 on temporary special measures and general recommendation 23 on women in public life.

21. While acknowledging women's high level of participation in the labour market and measures taken by the State party in support of such participation, the Committee remains concerned about the disadvantaged situation of women in employment, which is a consequence of entrenched social attitudes and gender stereotypes regarding professional occupations and family responsibilities. The Committee is especially concerned about the 25 per cent wage gap that existed as of 2004, significant occupational segmentation which contributes in part to women's lower earning capacity, as well as the continued underrepresentation of women in decision-making positions in the economy.

22. The Committee requests the State party to take all appropriate measures, including temporary special measures, to address women's disadvantaged situation in the labour market, including through the enhancement of measures to reconcile work and family responsibilities and the further development of re-entry programmes for women after career breaks for family reasons. The Committee also requests the State party to provide in its next periodic report the results of the diagnostic survey, due to be conducted soon, on the persistent wage gap and the glass ceiling phenomenon, detailed information about the strategy expected to be developed subsequently to combat this problem, and the results achieved in its implementation. The Committee further requests that the State party monitors the development of women's participation in decision-making positions in the economy.

23. While noting with satisfaction the achievements of women in education and the appointment of a woman as Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Committee is concerned about the continued gender-specific segmentation in educational subjects and the low representation of women in decision-making positions, including as teachers in tertiary education and the lower

number of female students at the PhD level, as well as in competitive research institutions.

24. The Committee encourages the State party to develop measures aimed at the diversification of women's academic and professional choices and to fully implement the relevant commitments in the National Action Plan on Gender Mainstreaming. The Committee also recommends that the State party closely monitor the career development of women to the highest levels of the education system and research institutions to ensure equal access of women and men and prevent and eliminate hidden or indirect discrimination faced by women.

25. While welcoming the positive measures taken by the State party and the legal and institutional progress made in addressing violence against women, the Committee is concerned that violence against women remains a serious problem, especially within the family. In particular, the Committee notes with concern the lack of research, data and knowledge on the extent and causes of domestic violence and other forms of violence against women.

26. The Committee urges the State party to ensure that the forthcoming National Action Plan for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family addresses all aspects, including prevention, protection of victims, prosecution of perpetrators and training of all actors involved, including the judiciary, other law enforcement personnel, teachers and health and social workers, as well as comprehensive qualitative and quantitative research. Furthermore, the Committee urges the State party to give priority to putting in place comprehensive measures to address all other forms of violence against women, in accordance with its general recommendation No. 19.

27. While recognizing the important legal and institutional measures taken to combat trafficking, the Committee remains concerned about the persistence of trafficking and exploitation of prostitution of women. It is particularly concerned about the precarious situation of cabaret artists, as well as the insufficient available research on the extent of the phenomenon of trafficking and exploitation of prostitution of women.

28. The Committee requests the State party to continue with its efforts to combat trafficking and calls on the State party to commit to the full and speedy implementation of the Plan of Action already in place. It calls on the State party to conduct qualitative and quantitative research on the extent of this phenomenon and to develop and implement without delay the large-scale public awareness campaign foreseen in the Plan of Action. The Committee also requests the State party to closely monitor the issuance of the new work visas which are due to replace the existing artist visas.

29. The Committee expresses concern about discrimination against women migrants, including domestic helpers and agricultural workers, particularly in regard to the terms and conditions of contracts and conditions of work and wages.

30. The Committee calls on the State party to monitor closely the terms and conditions of contracts, conditions of work and salaries of women migrants and devise strategies and policies for their full integration in the labour force and for elimination of direct and indirect discrimination. The Committee further recommends the adoption of measures for the integration of these women into society in order to advance de facto equality for all women. The Committee also encourages the State party to put in place measures that will enhance access to justice for migrant women in all instances of violations of employment rights.

31. The Committee is concerned about the particular circumstances of women belonging to different groups of vulnerable people, including refugees, asylum-seekers, displaced persons and disabled people and notes that, despite de jure equality, women belonging to these groups are at risk of multiple discrimination and sometimes encounter significant discrimination because of stereotypical attitudes, as well as difficulties in accessing social services and obtaining employment commensurate with their education and skills.

32. The Committee encourages the State party to incorporate a gender perspective in all government policies that target these groups. It also encourages the State party to collect sex-disaggregated data and conduct in-depth gender-sensitive research and to give a clearer picture of, and more visibility to the de facto situation of women belonging to these groups in the next periodic report. The Committee also urges the State party to eliminate the legal discrimination against children born to displaced mothers in acquiring the status of displaced person, particularly in light of the Ombudswoman's view that the existing legislation constitutes discrimination.

33. The Committee notes with concern the political environment which impedes the implementation of the Convention in the entire territory of the Republic of Cyprus.

34. The Committee urges the State party to ensure that women continue to fully participate in the peace process, in line with United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

35. The Committee encourages the State party to expand its consultations with non-governmental organizations in the implementation of the Convention and the present concluding comments, and in the preparation of the next periodic report.

36. The Committee urges the State party to utilize fully in its implementation of its obligations under the Convention, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which reinforce the provisions of the Convention, and requests the State party to include information thereon in its next periodic report.

37. The Committee also emphasizes that a full and effective implementation of the Convention is indispensable for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It calls for the integration of a gender perspective and explicit reflection of the provisions of the Convention in all efforts aimed at the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and requests the State party to include information thereon in its next periodic report.

38. The Committee notes that States' adherence to the seven major international human rights instruments¹ enhances the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms in all aspects of life. Therefore, the Committee encourages the Government of Cyprus to consider ratifying the

¹ The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

treaty to which it is not yet a party, namely, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

39. The Committee requests the wide dissemination in Cyprus of the present concluding comments in order to make the people, including government officials, politicians, parliamentarians and women's and human rights organizations, aware of the steps that have been taken to ensure de jure and de facto equality of women, as well as the further steps that are required in that regard. The Committee requests the State party to continue to disseminate widely, in particular to women's and human rights organizations, the Convention, its Optional Protocol, the Committee's general recommendations, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".

40. The Committee requests the State party to respond to the concerns expressed in the present concluding comments in its next periodic report under article 18 of the Convention. The Committee invites the State party to submit its sixth periodic report, which is due in August 2006, and its seventh periodic report, due in August 2010, in a combined report in 2010.
