

SWEDEN

CEDAW A/39/45 (1984)

200. The Committee considered the initial report of Sweden (CEDAW/C/5/Add.8) at its 18th and 19th meetings, held on 8 August 1983 (CEDAW/C/SR.18 and 19).

201. The report was introduced by the representative of the State party who stated that, at the time of ratification of the Convention, Sweden had fulfilled the undertakings implied by the articles, which were not specifically mentioned in the report.

202. In order to implement its policy for the promotion of sexual equality, the Swedish Government had made certain organizational reforms in 1983: a Minister with a special secretariat for that purpose in the Ministry of Labour had been made responsible for ensuring that the Government took account of sexual equality when it prepared policies, and a special body, made up of senior officials from all ministries, had been established to help her carry out her task. A Council on Equality Issues had been established to ensure contacts between the Government, the political parties represented in the Parliament, employers' and workers' organizations and women's associations. In addition, a Commission made up of politicians and social workers had been made responsible for research.

203. For the promotion of sexual equality, a National Plan of Action had been established containing a broad range of measures and recommendations aimed at strengthening equality in a number of fields such as education, employment, family policy and family law, housing and community planning, health and the social field.

204. The Committee on Equality referred to in the State party's report identified some methods that had been used to increase the representation of women in trade unions and political parties, using mass media and other means for the moulding of public opinion. Sweden attached particular importance to equality of the sexes in its international co-operation activities.

205. The representative of the State party was commended for her introduction of, as well as for, the report, focussing in particular on the problems of implementation with regard to each article of the Convention. Some experts stated that Sweden had almost fully realized the aspirations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Several experts made reference to education programmes, to the creation of the Ombudsman and to the consideration being given to immigrant women.

206. Some members of the Committee remarked on the organizational reforms carried out by the Swedish Government to promote equality of the sexes, the entry into force of the Act concerning Equality between Women and Men at Work and the establishment of an Equal Opportunities Commission whose first task was to consider complaints submitted to it by the Ombudsman with a view to summoning employers to appear or to be fined.

207. Nevertheless, the Committee was of the view that the report lacked pertinent information

regarding legislation and empirical data referring to employment indicators, demographic policy and women's participation in the political, economic and social life of the country (articles 7, 8 and 14 of the Convention). The reference made in the report to previous answers given to other United Nations organs was not very enlightening. Some experts also noted that, in the field of education, Sweden had taken unusual and notable steps to promote the equality of women and to avoid occupational segregation.

208. The percentage of women in positions of managerial and judicial responsibility as well as the statistics presented on unemployment in Sweden led some experts to the conclusion that the Equal Opportunities Act was not observed in practice and that women were victims of discrimination in Sweden.

209. Several members regretted that the annexes referred to in the report were not available and requested the representative to furnish them.

210. Clarification was requested on the statement made in the report to the effect that the Convention should not have been confined to discrimination against women, but that instead it should have been given a wider approach in terms of sexual discrimination. It was asked whether men were discriminated against in Sweden.

211. Additional information was also requested on the role of the Office of the Ombudsman and the Equal Opportunities Commission and as to how it was organized. It was of interest to the members to know how the Equal Opportunities (State Employment) Ordinance of 1 July 1980 had come into being, how it was implemented and what results had been achieved since its promulgation.

212. A question was asked at what point pregnant women could leave their work and whether social services were available for parents to share the child-raising duties.

213. Furthermore, the Committee was eager to learn the area where women's organizations or non-governmental organizations were active in the country and what part they played in the promotion of equal rights. Some experts were under the impression that the status of women had been improved more as a result of government action than of women themselves.

214. They inquired as to whether women participated in promoting new legislation and what was the percentage of women deputies.

215. The experts were also interested to know whether the Government was taking any measures to reduce women's unemployment and asked for additional differential statistics. They also requested precision on whether the new system implemented in 1982-1983 was expected to lead to better results and on the effect of material incentives given to employers hiring women.

216. Another question referred to who was responsible for labour market training and who was paying for it.

217. The experts asked what was the significance of the problem of prostitution, and concern was expressed regarding the rehabilitation of prostitutes, as well as the working modalities of the

Government's campaign against pornography under the Public Order Act. Information was requested on punitive measures with regard to rape and battering. Information was also requested on sexually discriminating advertising.

218. As the representative of Sweden had pointed out that some of the issues raised seemed to be linked to alcoholism and drug abuse, the Committee was of the opinion that more details should be given about specific measures implemented to remedy such trends and it wondered how unemployment among women was related to the problem referred to.

219. With reference to marriage and the family, some experts asked whether there was "marriage for a fixed period".

220. Although some experts welcome the initiative of having women in penal institutions moved to regional centres closer to their home, they felt that might mean there was an increase in women's criminality and clarification was requested in that regard. Also, it was not altogether clear whether that measure was also applicable to male prisoners. Some experts wished to know if there were special facilities for juvenile women inmates.

221. Several members of the Committee commended the special measure established for immigrant women workers and for the preservation of their cultural and national heritage and requested information on the specific programmes in that area.

222. The experts were interested to know the extent to which the new Names Act of 1982 was being used and if it had induced any change in behaviour. Details of conditions for adoption were also requested, particularly whether a single person could adopt a child and under what conditions. Additional information was required on the incidence of divorce and abortion and on whether there were special rehabilitation programmes for teenage mothers.

223. A question was asked about regional employment quotas and how they worked and were implemented and what was the rate of female representation in Government.

224. The Committee was interested to know whether there was equal pay for work of equal value in Sweden.

225. Given the fact that 10 per cent of the beneficiaries of parental leave were men, some experts asked what was the effect on their career development, including promotion.

226. Some experts also wondered if there were any negative reactions or effects resulting from the extensive social measures adopted and what was the extent of the support from public opinion.

227. Specific information was also requested on the participation of women in the cultural life of the country and in high-level scientific positions.

228. Because of the opening of the armed forces to women, it was also asked whether a woman in Sweden could become Supreme Commander of the Swedish Armed Forces.

229. In replying to the questions put to her, the representative of Sweden explained what was meant by the statement that the Convention should have been given a wider approach in terms of sexual discrimination. In this regard, the Swedish philosophy was that the concept of equality required a readiness to abolish all kinds of discrimination based on sex. It was true that women were the ones who were traditionally discriminated against, but some discrimination against men could also occur. For example, whereas widows received a pension, widowers were not eligible, military service was not compulsory for women while it was for men.

230. Elaborating on the role of the Ombudsman and the Equal Opportunities Commission, she explained that both were appointed by the Government. The Ombudsman was responsible for ensuring compliance with the Act on Equality between Women and Men at Work. If persuasion through negotiations with the employer in order to reach an agreement failed to bring about compliance by employers, the Ombudsman had recourse to other measures, such as referring discrimination disputes to the labour court. The Commission was chaired by a court lawyer who followed trends in the labour market and imposed fines when employers omitted to take the measures to promote equality suggested by the Ombudsman. So far, the aspirations of the employers to take such active measures to promote equality has been met by voluntary means. The Ombudsman was increasingly consulted as people were becoming more aware of the existence of that facility. Most of the cases were brought against public employers. The investigations of the Commission were somewhat different and were intended to support certain programmes and actions aimed at providing equal access and opportunities, mainly in the field of employment.

231. In responding to another question, she said that women could take leave of up to 60 days prior to confinement. Furthermore, either parent was entitled to take up to 12 months of paid parental leave and could stay at home until the child was 18 months old. Either parent could work a six-hour day until the child was eight years of age. Parenthood education aimed at family planning was offered to both men and women. There were child-care facilities, but presently not enough places at the day-care centres. When a parent was staying at home looking after a child under three years of age, the time was eligible for pension based on gainful employment.

232. In response to a question on the role of women's organizations, she said that they had existed in the country since the last century and had always played a crucial role in bringing about important changes.

233. In providing the requested data on unemployment, she stated that, in June 1983, 3.5 per cent of the work-force was unemployed, affecting 3.2 per cent of men and 3.9 per cent of women.

234. Training was undertaken at State expense through an organizational network and participants aged 20 and over received a stipend. Social security for the unemployed was provided through unemployment insurance. Regional quotas for employment were reserved for each sex and the labour market board dealt with that issue.

235. Regarding a question on marriage for a determined period, it was explained that there were no legal provision for marriage contracts of a limited time.

236. As a result of the prohibition of public performances of pornographic nature, live sex shows

had been prohibited and sex clubs no longer existed. Instance of rape were addressed to the District Attorney who pursued the case.

237. The number of prisons for females in the country had been increased not in response to an increase in female criminals, but in order to permit women to be imprisoned in their home regions as men were. In fact, the proportion of prison inmates in the country comprised 98 per cent males as against only 2 per cent females, a proportion which had not significantly changed over the years.

238. As regards adoption, a single man or woman had the right to adopt a child.

239. Responding to the numerous requests with regard to political participation and high-level participation of women in Swedish life, the representative of Sweden presented figures indicating a relatively low level of female participation in positions such as, Under-Secretaries of State, directors-general, members of the Supreme Administrative Court, county governors, regional representative and members of Parliament. However, an increase over the years had been evident. Women's representation in the Riksdag and the municipal councils had roughly doubled between 1971 and 1982, with women accounting for 47 per cent of the Stockholm Municipal Council.

240. Women in Sweden had been in relatively low paid occupations, although in the manufacturing sector women's salaries were now 90 per cent of those of men.

241. Child care provided by municipalities covered only 37 per cent of children in the 0-6 years age group, although the demand was for 51 per cent coverage.

242. As regards public opinion and the media, there were various differences in the utilization of television, radio, books, newspapers and so forth by men and women, indicating that because of the existing division of labour, women had less time for recreational activities.

243. With respect to women's participation in the armed forces, any occupation in that field would be open to women.

244. The representative of Sweden concluded by saying that any questions left unanswered would be taken up at a later date in future reports.

245. Some experts recommended drawing the attention of States parties to the desirability of using the positive experiences referred to in the above-mentioned report in order to make further progress in eliminating discrimination against women, not only de jure, but also de facto.

CEDAW A/43/38 (1988)

720. The Committee considered the second periodic report of Sweden (CEDAW/C/13/Add.6 and Corr.1) at its 125th and 127th meetings, held on 1 and 2 March 1988 (CEDAW/C/SR.125 AND 127).

721. The representative of Sweden, in introducing the second periodic report, informed the Committee that the report had been prepared by the Equality Affairs Division of the Ministry of Labour in collaboration with other authorities, women's organizations and other non-governmental organizations.

722. Since the second report had been prepared, a woman Minister of Justice had been appointed. The cabinet was now composed of 6 women and 15 men.

723. In Sweden, equality in the labour market was considered to be one of the most important paths to overall equality in society. The Government had become more aware of the close relationship between family policy, labour-market policy and policy of equality between women and men. Therefore, family policy aimed at creating a good environment for children to grow up in and at providing economic support for families with children. Another important aspect was to give children and parents time for each other. It was essential to have the possibility to combine parenthood with gainful employment.

724. The above principles were fundamental to the equal opportunities policy to be presented in Parliament on 8 March 1988 by the Minister of Equality Affairs.

725. The representative explained that the policy was in fact a five-year plan of action covering the subjects of women in the economy, equality in the labour market, in the educational system and in the family, and women's representation in the decision-making and advisory assemblies.

726. The Government had announced a target of 30 per cent for women's representation in governmental decision-making bodies. The current percentage was only 16 per cent.

727. The fulfilment of Sweden's commitment to the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women ^{7/} remained a priority.

728. Developments over the last eight years, since the adoption of the Swedish Equal Opportunities Act, had been encouraging. The equal opportunities ombudsman had successfully followed the implementation of the Act and had also made recommendations to amend it. The Labour Court and the political parties had also agreed that it might be appropriate to evaluate the Act.

729. The parental insurance scheme would be increased from 12 to 18 months. It was expected that

^{7/} Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

child-care facilities would be available from 1991 on for all children from 18 months of age whose parents worked or studied.

730. Equality depended upon choices by individuals and their decisions regarding education, profession or the division of work at home between the spouses. Therefore, equality between men and women could not be the subject of political decisions. Governments should strive to provide the framework within which each single person could make his or her own choices. It had to be constantly examined to keep prevailing circumstances under review, which would benefit not only women but society as a whole.

731. In her reply to questions regarding what progress or changes had occurred since the presentation of the initial report and what obstacles remained to the achievement of equality between women and men, the representative said that the policy on equality was an integrated part of a policy for full employment. In 1987, 90 per cent of women, aged 25 to 55 years, were in the labour force compared to 93 per cent of men. There was only 1.9 per cent unemployment in Sweden. The trade unions had actively fought for reduced wage differentials and women had increased their participation in the work of trade unions. Women were exercising their political rights by voting in larger numbers than men, and women made up about one third of the members of Parliament and of elected municipal decision-making bodies. Regarding the obstacles encountered, she mentioned the sex-segregated labour market and the uneven sharing of responsibility for unremunerated housework, which accounted for the high number of women in decision-making bodies both in the private and public sectors. One expert raised the question of the regulation of the labour market, which, in her opinion, was not yet promoting equality of opportunities between men and women, since 38 professions were occupied by women and 134 by men; 88 per cent of the active female population was in teaching and the majority of women worked part time.

732. Regarding the question of which new legal remedies were available to women in courts or other tribunals in cases of discrimination in employment, in the public or in the private sphere, such as the provision of goods and services, the representative stated that there were no legal differences in the way men and women were treated in any area. A new law on legal support for victims of sexual offences had been introduced and would enter into force in July 1988.

733. Regarding the publicizing of the translation and distribution of the Convention and the question whether women's organizations had been involved in the preparation of the initial and second reports of Sweden, the representative said that the Convention before ratification had been sent for comments to authorities and organizations. Therefore, it had also been translated and further distributed to authorities, political parties, labour-market organizations, women's organizations and other non-governmental organizations. In addition, wide publicity had been given especially to the second report.

734. As to whether there were any disadvantaged groups in regard to the enjoyment of equal rights, and whether any special measures had been introduced to remedy this, the representative replied that it remained the legal provision concerning reimowers which would be revised within a year. Legally, she explained there were no disadvantaged groups in Sweden.

735. In reply to the question whether the Commission on Equality between men and women was

independent or attached to the Government, how it obtained its operational funds and how the members were appointed, she replied that the Commission was an independent authority, its budget was decided annually and all members were appointed by the Government.

736. With regard to rights for fathers to transfer their parental leave to the mother, the representative said that there were no plans to preclude fathers from this possibility. The question of introducing quotes had been discussed but deferred.

737. In reply to the information requested on pornography laws and on whether any guidelines had been issued in relation to the representation of women by the media, the representative said that a bill was pending in Parliament prohibiting the representation of sexual violence in printed material and films. The question of compulsory censorship for video films sold or hired for private use was also being considered

738. With regard to the question whether prostitution had abated and whether rehabilitation programmes existed for prostitutes, she replied that, since 1980, there had been no survey on prostitution. Existing prostitutes were often alcoholics or drug abusers living in the large urban areas. An AIDS campaign had been launched, including specific measures for prostitutes. There were a few treatment centres for prostitutes in Stockholm and some more were planned.

739. On the request for information on the number and proportion of women in policy-making positions, the representative stated that, in 1986, 6 per cent (or 112) of all persons in senior ministerial and executive posts were women. In the government office, 16 per cent of the higher executive staff were women; there were 108 women (31 per cent) in Parliament; 23 per cent of the judges were women; all 29 judges in the housing courts were men. In the legal aid offices, 30 per cent of the lawyers were women; however, 45 per cent of law trainees were women. No significant changes had been noticed at ambassadorial or trade union levels.

740. As to whether there had been any changes in the participation of Swedish women in international organizations and international delegations, the representative replied that decisions made by the Government were based on merit alone.

741. With regard to the programmes introduced by the Equal Opportunities Commission, no formal evaluation had been carried out.

742. As to details requested on any change in the proportion of women at each level of education, including tertiary education, the representative replied that no significant change had been noted and added that, as to tertiary education, 63 per cent of all new students in culture and information were women; 54 per cent of all new students in administrative, economic and social studies were women; and 86 per cent of health students and 23 per cent of technical students were women. There had not been any significant change in the proportion of women entering vocational training in traditionally male areas since 1985. In labour-market training, 4,218 women had begun untraditional vocational training during the last year, which represented 16.5 per cent of the total of women in labour-market training. In 1987, a quota had been introduced in the vocational training for production and maintenance engineering.

743. As to whether there had been any increase in the number of women appointed to high-level teaching positions, the representative replied that only 5 per cent of the professors were women. A study was being undertaken on the procedures concerning the appointments of professors taking the question of equality into account.

744. Several questions dealt with matters of employment, salaries, hiring practices and statistical information, as well as eventual changes in the proportion of women or of married women in the work-place and in different sectors of employment. It was also asked whether goals of equal pay were being achieved and if average wages of women were between 70 and 90 per cent of men's. The differences were due to different occupations and working hours. The goal of equal pay was almost achieved but the segregation of the labour market made the wage-gap persistent. There were no new affirmative action programmes to ensure that a minimum proportion of women were employed in each sector. There were no special labour statistics by marital status but by age. Recently, the Central Bureau of Statistics had been asked by the Minister of Labour to devise a programme of persons entering the labour market by occupational groups. The Equal Opportunities Act provided the legal framework to appeal cases on grounds of discrimination. The normal procedure was to enter into mediation or conciliation before taking action in Labour Court. A total of 32 cases had been brought to Labour Court, out of which 23 had been dismissed. The Act had been in force for eight years and the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman had successfully seen to it that the Act was observed.

745. Several questions were raised regarding part-time employment and the representative answered that through the Parental Leave Act, parents could work six hours a day if they had children under 8 years of age. A problem, however, was that an increasing number of women were working part-time on an involuntary basis. Measures to reduce this increase were being undertaken by the Labour Market Board. One million individuals were working 34 hours or less; out of these 260,000 were men and 800,000 were women. Of all employed persons, 209,000 worked less than they wanted and 75 per cent of these were women. Benefits to workers were regulated through collective bargaining. Normally a person working 17 hours a week had the same rights as full-time workers. Very few part-time workers worked less than 17 hours.

746. With regard to the question whether the target to have child-care facilities for all who needed it by 1991 would be reached, she answered positively and stated that 80 per cent of all pre-school children had access to child-care facilities.

747. In reply to the questions whether women had the same pension entitlements as men, were the entitlements linked to earning levels and how were women who worked part-time affected, the representative answered that women and men had the same entitlements. Explanations on Sweden's pension scheme could be found in the report. If there was a difference in the supplementary pension for women, it was due to the fact that women on an average contributed less and for a shorter period to the supplementary pension fund than an average man. The pension scheme was in fact distributing resources from men to women.

748. The experts thanked the representative for a splendid and detailed report and for all the answers provided both in her introduction and to the questions asked. It was felt, however, that the format of the report showed that guidelines for periodical reports had to be elaborated by the

Committee and there were areas where additional information and clarification was needed. Compliments were presented on the results that Sweden had achieved which could set precedents and become a model for many countries. It was impressive how legislative provisions were followed by concrete action.

749. Experts asked for more details regarding the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Women's Representation, which was to be presented in 1987.

750. The experts had noted the problem of the increase in the number of women choosing part-time employment and had also noted the explanations provided by the representative, but further elaboration was requested regarding measures foreseen to solve the problem, for example, could women be helped to pursue a career while working part-time.

751. The representative was also asked to give additional details on the new policy to deal with sexual harassment at the work-place since many members of the Committee could benefit from criteria and modalities used.

752. The debate regarding sex discrimination in advertising and pornography and sexual violence portrayed in films and videotapes, versus freedom of expressions, was a very appropriate and important one. It was stated that the principle of equality could not be undermined by the principle of freedom of expression, as each freedom had its own particular obligations. With reference to article 16 of the instrument on Government and the Freedom of the Press Act, the representative was asked whether she could enlighten the Committee as to how that debate had proceeded in Sweden.

753. The view was also expressed that the formulation contained in the introduction regarding equality within the family was a very particular and delicate norm to set. It was agreed with the Swedish representative that this pertained to the realm of individual decisions within the family and could not in reality be legislated upon. All that Governments could do was to facilitate the services provided in order to make those decisions a matter of choice and not of obligation. It was also asked if women had to take up gainful employment for economic reasons.

754. Regarding occupational segregation, it was asked what additional measures were foreseen to remedy the low number of women not choosing the technical and scientific fields. Sweden was a very advanced country and it was discouraging to all that there were so few women engineers. These technical careers, it was pointed out, were the most promising at the present time.

755. Additional details were requested on the social insurance schemes, since the number of years at work did not seem to affect the final reimbursement made to pensioners. It was asked what were the widows' benefits.

756. It was noted that the goal of equal pay was allegedly almost achieved. However, it had not been stated whether reference was made to equal pay for equal work or equal pay for work or equal value.

757. The representative agreed with the Committee that there were indeed problems related to the involuntary use of part-time work by women. As a rule part-time workers received less in company

training, they were less active in union work and they advanced more slowly than full-time workers. It should be remembered, however, she added, that part-time work for many women was a temporary arrangement and that women increased their working hours once children grew older. Part-time work was for many women a way to combine gainful employment with the care of children.

758. Organization methods had been devised, especially in the health-sector where a large proportion of the employed worked part-time. It was the opinion of the Swedish Government that it was essential for both women and men to combine parenthood with gainful employment. Family was not the exclusive domain of women, extensive welfare programmes such as the Parental Leave Act made it possible for both women and men to combine parenthood with gainful employment. To obtain full supplementary pension, a minimum of 30 years of work was required.

759. In regard to the question on procedures to investigate sexual harassment, the representative agreed that this was an important and difficult question. The Swedish Work Environment Act stipulated that the working environment should be not only physically but also psychologically sufficient. Sexual harassment was primarily seen as a problem of relations at the work place, which meant that it had to be approached as other working environment problems.

760. The question of protection against sex discriminatory advertising versus freedom of expression and freedom of expression and freedom of the press was vital and much discussed in Sweden. The National Board for Consumers Policies was currently conducting a special survey on sex discriminatory advertising. The question of establishing quotas in political life was much discussed. Only the new Environmental Party urged quotas. In some municipalities, the question had been raised and a quota system was used on a voluntary basis. Environmental policy was of great interest to the Swedish Society and many women were active in this important movement. Various methods were being used to increase the number of male pre-school teachers. By 1991 it was estimated that a total of 26,000 new teachers would be required if the desired increase in child care facilities was to be met.

761. As to widow's pension a reform was being suggested which will establish that men as well as women will have a right to a pension when their spouses had passed away. This reform had been heavily debated and it would reduce the widow-pensions on the one hand and increase equality on the other.

762. She agreed that segregation in the labour market was a major worry. She admitted that this was a long-term project which could only be solved by a combination of several measures targeting education choices as well as labour market conditions.

763. In cases of discrimination based on sex, a trade union member first had to contact his or her trade union. If the trade union did not want to take action, the complainant could turn to the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman who, depending on the merits of the case, could pursue it.

764. Finally, she stated that the question of equal pay for work of equal value remained an unresolved question. Comparative worth was a new instrument for equality and still under discussion in Sweden.

765. It was commented that, according to the experience of one country, men tended to share in household duties and child care in the rural areas more than in the urban areas.

766. The representative was once again congratulated for the detailed replies submitted and for the progress achieved. The Committee looked toward to the receipt of Sweden's third report.

CEDAW A/48/38 (1993)

474. The Committee considered the third periodic report of Sweden (CEDAW/C/18/Add.1) at its 226th meeting, on 1 February (see CEDAW/C/SR.226).

475. In introducing the report, the representative reminded members that active and continuous work was needed to achieve a balance of power and de facto equality between men and women, which meant that the differences in conditions in society had to be made more visible and taken into consideration in all policy fields. Of as much importance as political will was activity by women themselves in demanding changes and improvements. Although Sweden had come further than many other countries, problems still remained and prejudices and traditional views persisted, which prevented women from the full enjoyment of entirely equal opportunities.

476. She described the latest developments in Sweden, pointing out that the Minister of Social Affairs, who was also Deputy Prime Minister, had taken over equality issues in January. As a result of the general election in September 1991, a coalition Government had been formed, which included 8 women in a cabinet of 21 ministers. Among others, the ministers of finance, justice and culture were women. The number of women in Parliament had decreased (from 38 to 34 per cent) mainly because two new political parties, both with a low proportion of women, had obtained seats in Parliament.

477. The new Equal Opportunities Act had entered into force on 1 January 1992. Its purpose was to strengthen the possibilities for men and women to have the same opportunities in working life, and to improve cooperation between employers and employees in order to attain equality and prevent the occurrence of differences in pay and other terms of appointment.

478. Employers were obliged to take active steps to promote equality at the workplace: those with 10 or more employees had to draw up a plan for their work to achieve equality. An account of how the measures had been implemented had to be included in the plan for the following year. In addition, employers had to ensure that no employee was subject to sexual harassment. An employer who did not comply with the obligations would be liable to a fine. The Equal Opportunities Ombudsman and the Equal Opportunities Council oversaw compliance with the Act.

479. The second part of the Act contained several provisions concerning sex discrimination. The rules on pay discrimination had been strengthened so as to enforce the principle of equal pay for equal work and work of equal value. Cases of infringement were tried mainly by the Labour Court on the initiative of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman or a trade union.

480. Moreover, the Act contained proposals to strengthen the Five-Year Plan of Action for Equality. Violence, battering and other forms of physical abuse against women were considered to be serious expressions of the lack of equality and imbalance of power. Corrective measures included the nationwide training of personnel (police officers, judges, medical doctors and social welfare officers) who came into contact with battered women. The aim was also to achieve better coordination between the authorities at the regional and local levels. The police had been allocated funds to provide technical equipment and bodyguards for women who were subjected to threats of violence. In addition, Parliament was taking action to increase the penalties for crimes of trivial

assault from a fine to imprisonment for up to six months. The sentence for aggravated assault was at least one year and at the most 10 years.

481. In accordance with general recommendation 18 (tenth session), 14/ the representative mentioned special provision concerning the status of disabled persons. She also referred to a bill that would strongly increase the financial support for disabled persons, and the provision of a supplementary pension for those taking care of a disabled child. She noted the project entitled “Women with disabilities”, which was intended to create networks, stimulate activities and draw attention to the situation of disabled women.

482. She said that the Swedish educational system was undergoing a change. Municipalities were free to set their own priorities for the use of resources but the general goals were set by Parliament. The national goal, according to the Education Act, was the achievement of equality between men and women. Recently the Government had instructed the National Agency for Education to develop a strategy to attain the goal. Two working groups had been set up to study the promotion of equality in the school system and female participation in higher education.

483. The participation of women in the labour market was very high; 83 per cent of Swedish women were gainfully employed in 1991. However, women’s increasing participation had not been matched by a similar increase in men’s use of the parental benefit. Currently, only 8.1 per cent of fathers used the benefit to stay at home on almost full salary during the first 12 months after the birth of a child. A new working group, “Fathers, children and working life”, had been appointed to deal with the issue and to study the obstacles in working life that hindered men from taking such a leave of absence.

484. The labour market continued to be sex-segregated to a large extent. Together with other measures, the upgrading of women’s traditional work was considered important. The issue of pay differences was high on the agenda in Sweden. A Committee had been appointed to look into the matter and it would be presenting its report to the Government shortly.

General observations

485. Members commended the third periodic report for its comprehensiveness, with regard to both content and form. Members noted that there was not much need for further questioning. Sweden was praised for submitting its reports in a timely, interesting and well-organized fashion. Moreover, the fact that the Government had not made reservations to the Convention was noted with appreciation. The Committee was pleased that the Government recognized the importance of the Convention as a major human rights instrument.

486. The members acclaimed the activeness of Swedish women, which they characterized as a movement, in promoting equal opportunities between men and women for many years. They

14/ [Official Records of the General Assembly], Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/46/38), chap. I.

referred to the research and analysis conducted, the political pressure exerted and their other means

of work. Special reference was made to an international meeting (Kvinnor kan) held the previous year at Stockholm, at which thousands of women had gathered to examine the achievements of Swedish women in all fields of society. Many members had had a chance of participating in the extraordinary event. They had recognized how the women's movement in Sweden had attracted an extremely large number of women, who had a strong will and the enthusiasm to make still further progress in their status.

487. The valuable experience of the policies of the Government of Sweden was said to provide a good model for other States parties. The formula for bringing about equality seemed to be a combination of Government action to determine the framework, and a positive individual response, for the removal of all the barriers. Government policy concentrated not only on equality between men and women, but also on the improvement of the living standards of all citizens, which had made Sweden a model of the welfare State. While the policies of the Government were praised, anxiety was at the same time expressed by the Committee about what would happen if the welfare system (if it was the main contributor to the advancement of women) was called in question and policies changed on account of structural economic problems. Members specifically asked whether the new Government of Sweden would continue the policies of the previous Government and maintain the same social services. The Committee expressed its concern about how the Government would adjust its policies to reflect economic reality during the recession. It was hoped that the continued and sufficient exercise of the existing machinery and power of women would ensure that adjustment policies would not be detrimental to Swedish women.

488. The representative replied that the welfare State of Sweden was not over yet, although economic recession had precipitated a serious discussion concerning the necessary adjustments. The Government intended to maintain and further a high level of social services. She noted that economic problems had strengthened the movement of women in their work of defending equal rights.

489. The Committee also applauded the institution of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman to monitor and implement equal rights legislation. Moreover, a tribute was paid to the work of women's organizations in instituting development programmes in developing countries. Noting that Sweden had been ranked first in an index concerning the status of women, ^{15/} a member pointed out the flawed methodology of using certain indicators, representing mainly social and economic measures. Such a practice had a negative effect on the ranking of poor countries, which might have succeeded better in the human rights area, specifically concerning women's rights. A more realistic and objective system of evaluation was required to conform the methodology of measuring human development to the criteria used by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, giving consideration, among others, to the social role of women, their participation, self-administration and individual mobility.

490. While the high political participation of women was acknowledged, the Committee was concerned about true equality in the labour market. Although women's participation rate in the labour market was one of the highest in the world, women still lacked access to the highest positions, especially in the private sector. Taking into account the high level of education and the encouraging

^{15/} Population Crisis Committee, Population Briefing Paper No. 20, June 1988.

policies of the Government, members regretted that the labour market remained highly sex-segregated. The Committee asked an additional question about a possible new concept of gender neutrality, as reference was made in the Equal Opportunities Act to “the equal rights and opportunities for men and women”. Members considered that, in order to promote women’s rights in professional life, the law should stipulate more explicitly the goal of improving the status of women. The representative answered that, although the wording of the Act was not biased in favour of either sex, the law in the first instance clearly stated its aim, namely, improving the status of women.

491. An additional question was asked concerning the role of non-governmental organizations in the preparation of the third periodic report and, specifically, how many and what kind of organizations had been involved and what kind of consultations had been held between them and the Government. The representative replied that the Council on Equality Issues, consisting of 29 members from non-governmental organizations, women’s organizations, political parties etc. had made valuable comments on the report. The Minister of Equality Affairs held consultations with the Council four to five times a year in order to share information.

Questions related to specific articles

Article 2

492. The Committee wanted to know, with a view to extending the protection afforded under the Penal Code, what the most frequent forms of sex discrimination in Sweden were. The representative replied that sex discrimination usually concerned the conditions of women in working life, which was why the Equal Opportunities Act (a part of the labour law) regulated that area. In addition to the Constitution, there were rules in other fields also, most notably in education. Sex discrimination was not treated as a criminal offence, except in cases of violence and molestation. No decision had been made, nor was one likely to be made in the near future, on extending the scope of the Swedish Penal Code to cover sex discrimination.

493. Regarding the punishments for employers who infringed the Equal Opportunities Act, the representative said that employers could be forced to pay compensation to the victims. Compensation was paid for both financial loss and moral injury. Although there had been a tendency towards awarding higher compensation, the level of payment had generally been recognized to be rather low. The highest amount paid so far had been 40,000 kronor (US\$ 5,600).

494. The representative did not believe that a fear of punishment led to the settlement of discrimination disputes by negotiation. On the contrary, the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman had a duty to attempt to bring about a voluntary settlement first. Only if the ruling would constitute a precedent, or for other special reasons, would the case be presented at the Labour Court. Moreover, many women felt the judicial process to be difficult and embarrassing.

495. Asked about the nature of the majority of the cases that had been brought to court, the representative said that most were related to conditions for work. Usually the problem was about evaluating and comparing qualifications for the job concerned. The hearing of a case thus centred more on the merit of the candidate than on the issue of discrimination. Section 17 of the new Act

was intended to deal with cases where the employer had a direct discriminatory purpose.

496. Clarification was requested on the national machinery, especially in view of the recent transfer of responsibility for equality issues from the Ministry of Culture to the Ministry of Social Affairs. It was noted that proper coordination and integrated problem-solving were essential for efficient work. The representative stated that there was no ministry dealing solely with equality issues; the issues had been incorporated into various ministries, depending on which minister was responsible for equality affairs, which, in turn, depended on the political situation and who wanted to assume responsibility for the task. The Equality Affairs Division was a coordinating body monitoring and influencing other ministries to take gender perspectives into account in their proposals, recommendations and legislative work. It functioned as a watchdog for other bodies.

Article 3

497. Referring to a bill that would strongly increase the level of financial support for disabled people, the Committee requested that a copy of the bill be made available, as well as information on how it affected disabled persons. Members asked whether disabled women had their own non-governmental organizations or whether they acted inside the existing women's organizations.

Article 4

498. Replying to a question on the award of parental benefit until a child was eight years old, the representative said that the duration of parental benefit totalled 15 months, which could be deferred and spread over an eight-year period. Parents could decide between them how they divided the time taken off from work; however, both parents could not receive such a benefit simultaneously. Fathers were entitled to 10 days of leave with parental benefit in connection with childbirth.

Article 5

499. With regard to the funding of the Ethical Council, the funds were received solely from the advertising associations and the Council did not receive any funds from the Government.

500. Asked about the incidence of violence, statistics on the subject and recent trends, as well as the most frequent forms of violence, the representative said that assault was the most frequent form; 14,285 cases had been reported in 1991. In comparison with 1990, there had been a slight decrease. The trends concerning reported rape had been more or less constant since 1989; however, the statistics did not provide an accurate picture since many women did not report such crimes. There had been limited, inconclusive research on the reasons for male aggression, but there was a consensus that the overall explanation lay in the lack of equality and imbalance of power between men and women.

501. In general observations, the Committee, referring to training given to persons dealing with battered women, wished for more information on the effects of that training in the next periodic report. In a time of changing social patterns, the key questions were how to change the violent pattern of male behaviour and how to reach suffering women. It was suggested that a survey should be conducted among the battered women themselves.

502. Referring to the achievements of the Government of Sweden in other fields, members noted with concern that the trend of violence was constant. They pointed out that the issue had appeared on the agenda of the Government quite recently, which was a reason for them to request that a closer relationship be forged between the Government and the grass-roots levels, especially women's groups. The Government was asked to consider taking a different approach to the treatment of domestic violence, because the problem seemed to be hidden, as reflected in the under-reporting. If the cases were treated as other criminal offences were, with the police being obliged to arrest and prosecute the perpetrators regardless of whether the women wished to prosecute or not, with therapy provided for the perpetrator, the positive outcome would be a changed social attitude towards domestic violence.

503. The representative responded that the subject of violence had not recently been taken up by the Government and it had definitely not been forgotten, as legislation had been quite severe and public procedures provided. Domestic violence was an extremely difficult area with particular characteristics that could not be compared with those of other acts of violence. The policy of the Government in addressing the problem was to take into account all aspects of the equal opportunities policy in order to bring about changed patterns of behaviour in all fields.

504. With regard to men's response to the "Daddy come home" campaign, the representative said that no statistics were available on the impact of the campaign. The campaign was continuing, taking different forms each year. Its aim was to achieve changed behavioural patterns in the long run.

505. In an additional question, members asked whether statistics were available that would show differences between urban and rural areas with regard to men's use of the parental benefit. The representative regretted that no such information was available but hoped that some statistics could be included in the next periodic report.

506. Asked about the role of men within families, she referred to a recent study, which had shown the amount of time that women and men spent on work. The amount of time was approximately the same, the difference being that only half of the working time of women was paid. Members asked for more information on single-parent households and on the sharing of household tasks.

Article 6

507. Asked about public opinion, as well as that of women's organizations, on prostitution, whether prostitution was increasing or decreasing, and whether mainly Swedish women or also immigrants were involved, the representative said that the latest survey concerning prostitution was 10 years old. Currently the issue of whether the act of purchasing the services of a prostitute should be criminalized was being debated intensively and a committee had been appointed to study the matter.

Article 7

508. Regarding legislation that would ensure a certain proportion of women in the lists of candidates for popular election, the representative stated that such legislation did not exist. However, many political parties had internal rules or practices on the nomination of women.

509. Asked whether Sweden still promoted the “Fifty-Fifty” campaign as seen in some international forums, the representative stated that the goal remained the same, although the Government could not impose a certain behaviour on political parties. The Government was only responsible for certain areas (boards of public bodies, committees, working groups etc.). To affect the political parties, public opinion needed to be created. Generally, women remained active in political life; all political parties had their own women’s organizations.

510. The representative gave a positive answer to a question concerning the current target of attaining 30 per cent of women on public bodies. On committees and at the regional level, the number was slightly under 30. The next goal was 40 per cent by 1995. An evaluation of measures taken in recent years would be presented to the Government shortly. In an additional question, an explanation by the Government was requested concerning the obvious obstacles women experienced.

511. Asked about the efforts of employers’ and employees’ organizations to increase the number of women in decision-making bodies, the representative said that general activity had risen in that field. She referred to training and projects, which were aimed at both encouraging women to seek higher positions and bringing about a change in attitude. Special reference was made to the Swedish Trade Union Confederation, which had created a large network and acted successfully as a pressure group contributing to an increased visibility of the problem.

Article 11

512. Regarding the current level of female unemployment, the representative said that it had increased to 3.6 per cent, as against 5.5 per cent for men. The unemployment rate for young women was as high as 9.1 per cent (11.6 per cent for young men).

513. In an additional question, the Committee indicated its serious concern about the high unemployment rate among young girls, as the first work experience of a person was crucial to her or his attitude towards employment generally. Members asked whether the Government intended to improve the situation. The representative replied that the Government had not given up its goal to maintain full employment in the country. The unemployment rate was, however, likely to increase in the future, because of the restructuring of the public sector, especially at the local level. The Government planned support programmes for young unemployed persons.

514. Asked about the criterion on which the decision to phase out gradually the widow’s pension had been based, the representative noted that the main reason was to strengthen the financial support provided for children and to have the same rules for men and women.

515. Concerning the minimum wage, she explained that it was not covered by legislation; wages were set by collective bargaining. Collective agreements might contain minimum wage provisions for certain categories of worker.

516. The Committee asked whether the goal that all children under six years of age should be entitled to State child-care facilities had been reached. The representative replied that some municipalities had reached the goal, while others still lacked a sufficient number of child-care

facilities. The issue was currently being discussed within the Government.

517. Asked about the sex-segregated labour market, the representative noted that the same problem prevailed in the school system. In reply to a question about the effects of the Equal Opportunities Act, she said that an evaluation of the Five-Year Plan of Action for Equality would begin in 1993 and its results would affect the implementation of the new Act. Members pointed to the low percentage of women in higher positions, especially in trade unions and private enterprises. They asked whether private companies had internal plans of action to promote the progress of women in the workplace. The representative referred to a strong women's movement in trade unions, and was hopeful that the situation would improve in the near future. A study had revealed that, although the very top-level echelons lacked women, many women were employed at the level immediately below. The Government tried to encourage companies or offices to promote women to higher positions. She remarked that it was very important to have statistics to make the problem more visible. She affirmed that the provisions of the new Equal Opportunities Act applied similarly to public and private employers.

518. Asked about the disadvantages experienced by disabled women in entering the labour market, she said that she presumed that double disadvantages for them existed, although there were no studies on the matter. In reply to a question concerning male dominance and promotion differences in the Foreign Ministry, the representative said that a network had been created recently among the women working in the foreign service aimed at improving the situation within the Ministry.

519. Additional questions were asked about women working part time, since the number in Sweden was extraordinarily high. Members also asked what the results had been of the Government effort to reduce involuntary part-time work and what was the attitude of labour unions. The representative referred to the previous Government's declaration to consider other measures if the situation remained unchanged. Although the previous Government had had no success on that issue, she hoped that changes would occur under the new Government. Since the unemployment rate had increased, however, part-time employment had become a minor problem.

Article 12

520. A member of the Committee requested information on the incidence of AIDS/HIV among women.

Article 16

521. An additional question was asked about the trend concerning single-parent households, what the divorce rate was, and how many children were born out of wedlock. The Committee also wanted to know about public opinion on single-headed households, and what women especially thought about the matter. No statistics were immediately available, but the Government promised to include them in the next periodic report.

Concluding observations

522. The experience of Sweden could be viewed with both admiration and anxiety. Sweden was at the vanguard of the movement for women's rights, but the experience also showed how long the process took and the problems that remained. On account of economic crisis and technological progress, many Western European countries were facing new challenges, not least a welfare State like Sweden, which in former years had guaranteed full employment for its citizens. All the changes would have an effect on the status of women also. The Committee observed that it was therefore essential that Swedish women, among others, doubled their efforts in pushing women's rights further forward. The Committee expressed its hope that women would, after their efforts, stand even stronger, together with the welfare State itself.

CEDAW A/56/38 (2001)

319. The Committee considered the fourth and the fifth periodic reports of Sweden (CEDAW/C/SWE/4 and CEDAW/C/SWE/5) at its 510th and 511th meetings, on 5 July 2001 (CEDAW/C/SR.510 and 511).

(a) Introduction by the State party

320. In introducing the report, the representative of Sweden informed the Committee that non-governmental organizations, including women's organizations, with which the Government had an open dialogue, had been given the opportunity to comment on the reports and that the Government expressed its appreciation for their contributions.

321. The representative stressed that Sweden's vision of society was one in which women and men enjoyed equal rights, equal opportunities and equal responsibilities, and in which each individual was treated with respect, regardless of age, gender, ethnic or cultural background, disability or sexual orientation. Since 1994, the Government's annual statement of governmental policy on mainstreaming had been adopted and, accordingly, all ministers were responsible for ensuring gender equality within their respective policy areas. She pointed out, however, that gender mainstreaming did not exclude women from measures aimed specifically at the promotion of gender equality.

322. The representative indicated that, although Sweden was generally considered to be a society in which there was a high degree of equality between women and men, there were examples of power imbalances between the sexes. An extreme example was men's violence against women, which was frequent and widespread and which was a priority area for governmental action. While there was no evidence that violence against women had escalated, the rate of reporting had increased as a result of efforts aimed at the collection and dissemination of information and improved response by the police and social welfare authorities. Governmental efforts to address violence against women included research, the introduction of training programmes for relevant sectors and the passage of legislation, including laws concerning support for crime victims. Violence against women with disabilities was being addressed. Increased attention needed to be given to men who committed acts of violence against women, and the representative noted that Sweden supported men's organizations working against violence against women. A special project to address violence against immigrant women had been introduced, and amendments to the Aliens Act provided for special residence permits for immigrant women and children who had been subjected to violence by their partners. The Aliens Act also restricted the capacity of Swedish residents with a history of violence to women and children to bring partners into the country.

323. The representative indicated that action to combat trafficking was also a priority for Sweden and that, in addition to regional and national efforts undertaken in that regard, the Government had, in December 2000, signed the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. Since January 1999, with the entry into force of a law prohibiting the purchase of sexual

services, the exploitation of prostitutes had been a criminal offence, and the number of street prostitutes had declined.

324. In 1999, the Aliens Act had been amended to provide for the granting of asylum on the basis of gender-based persecution. Few women had taken advantage of the provision, although the majority of all women seeking asylum had been granted permission to remain. Guidelines on refugee women had been prepared by the Migration Board, and projects to support immigrant girls and women had been introduced.

325. Although significant progress had been made with respect to representation of women in decision-making, further efforts were required. Representation was strong in the public sector, but only 5.2 per cent of those on boards of directors in the private sector were women. The starting point in Swedish efforts towards equality between women and men was the provision of equal access to education. The educational choices of women and men were, however, divided along gender lines and, although some women had entered male-dominated fields of study, few men had entered female-dominated ones. Only 13 per cent of professorships were held by women, and the Government had introduced revised recruitment targets for universities.

326. Women and men enjoyed high employment rates, although the labour market was segregated along gender lines. Since 1993, the Swedish Labour Market Board had received earmarked funds for work to address gender segregation in the labour market, and the National Board for Industrial and Technical Development had carried out programmes aimed at increasing the number of women entrepreneurs. The representative noted that a key to reducing discrimination against women in the labour market was the reconciliation of family and work responsibilities. In 2002, the parental benefit would be increased by 30 days, with two fathers' months included in the benefit scheme.

327. The representative informed the Committee that the pay gap between women and men was a governmental concern. On average, women's wages were about 83 per cent of men's. She indicated that the pay gap should be made visible and its underlying causes studied closely. New provisions in the Equality Act obliged employers, together with trade unions, to survey and analyse all discriminatory wage differences and to take appropriate measures to resolve them.

328. The representative indicated that the issues addressed in the Beijing Platform for Action corresponded with issues that formed the basis of Sweden's national policy for gender equality. Sweden, along with other European Union partners, was developing indicators to evaluate progress in the 12 critical areas of concern.

329. The representative expressed satisfaction at the adoption and entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention, and indicated that Sweden's ratification process would be finalized in 2002. She concluded by indicating that a press conference, focusing on the Committee's concluding comments, would be convened after the current session.

(b) Concluding comments of the Committee

Introduction

330. The Committee expresses its appreciation to the Government of Sweden on its fourth and fifth periodic reports, which comply with the Committee's guidelines for the preparation of periodic reports. It commends the Government for involving non-governmental organizations in the preparation of the reports. The Committee also expresses its appreciation for the information given in response to the issues raised by the pre-session working group and during the oral presentation.

331. The Committee commends the Government of Sweden for its large delegation which made possible a constructive and frank dialogue with the members of the Committee.

Positive aspects

332. The Committee commends the Government of Sweden for the progress made in ensuring gender equality in women's political participation and decision-making, where it is regarded by many other countries as a model. It notes with satisfaction that the application of measures in line with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention has led to concrete results in some areas.

333. The Committee commends the Government of Sweden for its important achievements in the promotion of equality between women and men and especially for the involvement of boys and men in promoting gender equality and changing sexual stereotyping and traditional and stereotypical values.

334. The Committee commends the Government for passing legislation that provides residence permits to individuals who have a well-founded fear of persecution on the basis of sexual orientation or gender, particularly in cases that involve discrimination against women.

335. The Committee commends the Government for its efforts to incorporate gender mainstreaming into its overall policy framework and at all stages of the policy-making processes, while at the same time implementing women-specific programmes to encourage gender equality.

336. The Committee commends the Government for its willingness to place objections to reservations entered by other States parties that it considers incompatible with the object and purpose of the Convention.

337. The Committee also commends the Government for having accepted the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention.

338. The Committee commends the Government for signing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and its Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air.

Factors and difficulties affecting the implementation of the Convention

339. The Committee notes that there are no significant factors or difficulties that prevent the effective implementation of the Convention in Sweden.

Principal areas of concern and recommendations

340. While the Government has taken significant steps to address discrimination against women in the workplace through the passage of the Gender Equality Act and the establishment of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman, the Committee expresses concern that the wage gap between women and men, in both the public and private sectors, has not narrowed during the past 10 years. The Committee is of the view that this disparity is linked to the persistence of gender segregation in the labour market.

341. The Committee urges the Government to adopt policies and active measures to accelerate the eradication of pay discrimination against women, including job evaluations, collection of data, further study of the underlying causes for the wage gap and provision of increased assistance to social partners in collective wage bargaining, in particular in determining wage structures in sectors dominated by women. The Committee requests the Government to provide more information in the next periodic report on its efforts to eradicate the wage gap.

342. The Committee expresses concern with the existence of gender-based segregation at all levels of the educational system, including the choice by girls and boys of traditional disciplines and the attitudes of teachers that perpetuate and reinforce stereotypical gender roles.

343. The Committee recommends that the Government strengthen its efforts to eliminate gender stereotypes in educational curricula and consistently integrate awareness and understanding of gender equality in teacher training. Given the clear correlation between the choice of field of study and placement in the labour market, the Committee recommends that the Government increase its efforts towards ending gender segregation in students' choice of field of education and encourage both women and men to choose non-traditional fields of education.

344. While the Committee commends the Government for the impressive advances made by women in terms of representation in decision-making in politics, it expresses concern that women's representation in executive and decision-making positions in the private economic sector, as well as on central governmental boards and boards of government-controlled companies, continues to be low. It also expresses concern about the low representation of women as chairs of local and municipal boards.

345. The Committee recommends that the Government take steps to facilitate the options insofar as employment of women in the private sector, inter alia, through the implementation of temporary special measures in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention, wherever possible. The Committee urges the Government to take measures to increase the representation of women in decision-making positions in all sectors, including central governmental boards, county and municipal boards, particularly as chairs of those boards, and in government-controlled companies.

346. The Committee expresses concern about the low level of women's representation in the judiciary.

347. The Committee urges the Government to adopt a procedure that ensures that women are not discriminated against when appointments to the judiciary are made.

348. While noting the high number of women in the lower ranks of the foreign service, the Committee nevertheless expresses concern about the low level of representation of women in the higher echelons of the service, in particular in ambassadorial posts.

349. The Committee recommends that current policies to increase the representation of women in the foreign service, particularly as ambassadors, continue and that measures be taken to ensure that women in the foreign service are not disadvantaged in terms of posting to locations requiring senior staff.

350. The Committee expresses concern that, despite the high achievement of women in tertiary education, there are very few women professors in the universities. There also appears to be an imbalance in the access of women, as compared to men academics, to research grants and other resources.

351. The Committee urges the Government to facilitate, by means of its policies, an increase in the number of women in high-ranking posts at universities and to ensure that women professors are not discriminated against insofar as access to resources, including research grants.

352. The Committee notes that, despite the considerable efforts made with regard to combating violence against women, including in the family, the prevalence of violence against women demonstrates the persistent power imbalance between women and men.

353. The Committee urges the Government to collect more data on the nature and scope of violence against women, in particular within the family, and to continue its efforts to implement and strengthen current policies aimed at combating violence, with special attention given to women with disabilities and migrant and minority women.

354. While welcoming the criminalization of the purchase of sexual services, the Committee expresses concern that this might have increased the incidence of clandestine prostitution, thereby rendering prostitutes more vulnerable. It also expresses concern that Sweden has become a country of destination for trafficked women.

355. The Committee encourages the Government to evaluate the effect of the current policy of criminalizing the purchase of sexual services, especially in view of the complete lack of data on clandestine prostitution which may have incidental effects on the trafficking of women and girls. The Committee encourages action in Sweden and, through the Government of Sweden, continued efforts within the European Union to combat trafficking of women, including measures to prevent trafficking, the collection of data, the provision of services for trafficked women and measures to penalize those who facilitate such trafficking.

356. Taking note of the efforts of the Government to combat discrimination, the Committee expresses concern about the continuing discrimination against immigrant, refugee and minority women in Sweden, including in education and employment, and at the gender-based discrimination and violence that they face in their own communities. The Committee also expresses concern about discrimination against Sami and Roma women.

357. The Committee urges the Government to take effective measures to eliminate discrimination against immigrant, refugee and minority women and to strengthen its efforts to combat xenophobia and racism in Sweden. It also encourages the Government to be more proactive in its measures to prevent discrimination against immigrant, refugee and minority women, both within their communities and in society at large, to combat violence against them and to increase their awareness of the availability of social services and legal remedies.

358. Noting Sweden's support of the Optional Protocol to the Convention and its early signature to that instrument, the Committee encourages the Government to ratify the Optional Protocol as soon as possible.

359. The Committee requests the Government to respond to the concerns expressed in the present concluding comments in its next periodic report submitted under article 18 of the Convention. It also requests that future reports not make reference to previous reports but briefly summarize previously stated information.

360. The Committee requests the wide dissemination in Sweden of the present concluding comments in order to make the people of Sweden, in particular governmental administrators and politicians, aware of the steps that have been taken to ensure the de jure and de facto equality of women and of the further steps that are required in this regard. It requests the Government to continue to disseminate widely, in particular to women's and human rights organizations, the Convention and its Optional Protocol, the Committee's general recommendations, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the results of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".