



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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Responses to the list of issues and questions for consideration of the combined third, fourth and fifth periodic report*

Cyprus

I. Introduction

1. The present document provides responses to the list of issues and questions submitted to the Government of Cyprus with regard to the consideration of its third, fourth and fifth periodic report (CEDAW/C/CYP/Q/5; hereinafter “the responses to the questions”).

2. Like the combined third, fourth and fifth periodic report (1993-2003) (CEDAW/C/CYP/3-5; hereinafter the “periodic report”), the present document was prepared by the Law Commissioner of the Republic who, pursuant to a decision of the Council of Ministers, is entrusted with ensuring the compliance of Cyprus with its reporting obligations under the international human rights instruments. The Ministry of Justice and Public Order is the competent Ministry for the purposes of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and, through the National Machinery for Women’s Rights, was very much involved in the preparation of the present document. The information and data on the basis of which the present document was compiled were provided by the Ministries having competence for the specific matter (i.e. the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Health, the Statistical Service of Cyprus and the Planning Bureau) and by the Law Office of the Republic, the Police and the Chief Registrar of the Supreme Court. Information was also obtained from a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and, in particular, from the Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family and the Cyprus Family Planning Association, which were able to provide information in relation to the issues and questions submitted to the Government.

* The annexes to the present report will be made available to the Committee in the languages in which they were received.

3. The information contained in the present document was discussed with all the above at ad hoc meetings with the Law Commissioner during the drafting stages. The present document will be communicated to all the above upon submission.

II. Answers to the comments and questions

Constitution, legislation and the national machinery for the advancement of women

Question 1. The report highlights the definitions of discrimination based on sex and the principle of equal treatment in employment and vocational training legislation (paras. 12 and 13). Please indicate whether there is a definition of discrimination against women in accordance with article 1 of the Convention in the Constitution or in national legislation outside the employment sphere.

Article 28 of the Constitution safeguards the principle of equal treatment and prohibition of any form of discrimination on the ground of, inter alia, gender. The Legislature, the Administration and the courts are bound by the Constitution to secure, within the limits of their respective competence, its efficient application (article 35 of the Constitution). Judicial protection is also safeguarded (article 30 of the Constitution).

The scope of the protection afforded by article 28 of the Constitution and international human rights instruments such as the Convention in relation to the prohibition of discrimination against women has been defined by constant case law of the Supreme Court of Cyprus. It has been pronounced time and again that the right of equality between men and women and the right to non-discrimination, as protected by the Constitution and international instruments:

- Are autonomous rights and not auxiliary ones for safeguarding other rights
- Are extensive rights and include equality before the law and the Administration, equality of opportunity, equality of independence and equality of dignity
- Aim to ensure for all women the actual enjoyment of their legal, economic and social rights and to help them become independent and to eliminate their dependency on men; equal treatment should exist both in law and in practice. At the same time it should allow for reasonable distinctions accepting the characteristics of the female sex.

(See also answer to question 3.)

Question 2. Please clarify the status of the Convention in domestic law. In particular please indicate whether the provisions of the Convention are considered self-executing or whether specific legislation is required in order to harmonize domestic law with the Convention and make it fully enforceable.

By virtue of article 169.3 of the Constitution, the Convention (as any international treaty properly concluded by the Republic) has as from its publication in the Official Gazette of the Republic, that is as from 12.7.1985, become part of the domestic law with superior force to any other domestic law enacted by the House of Representatives. This, in effect, means that no other domestic law enacted by the

House of Representatives can be contrary to the provisions of the Convention and no act of any organ of the administration can violate the provisions of the Convention. Otherwise, such legislation or act of the administration will be declared null and void by the courts as being contrary to the Constitution and the Convention. The Convention is fully enforceable in the Republic with superior force and can be invoked before the courts (see answer to question 3). Naturally, those provisions of the Convention which require the State to take measures are being complied with, and this is discussed in the periodic report.

Question 3. Please provide information on whether the Convention has been used or relied on in the courts, and if so, give details of cases.

The Convention has been invoked and relied upon in appropriate court cases and decisions. Naturally, in all cases, article 28 of the Constitution (which is the supreme law of the Republic) is first invoked, either alone or together with any related international human rights instruments, such as the CEDAW Convention, all having superior force to any other domestic law (see answer to question 2).

In appropriate cases, where the Court finds discrimination on the ground of gender as being contrary to the Constitution and the said treaties, including the Convention, the Court rules that this constitutes flagrant contravention of the constitutional and treaty/legislative demands for equality and equal treatment and that discrimination on the ground of sex is contrary to the Constitution and the treaties, including the Convention.

For example, in the judgement of the Supreme Court of Cyprus in the case of *Zoukof v. the Republic (1990)* J.S.C, 2609, the Court, invoking article 28 of the Constitution together with article 11 of the Convention, article 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and article 14 of the Convention for Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, stressed that the development at the international level and the incorporation in the internal legal order of the right of gender equality aims at the effective enjoyment of the legal, economic and social rights of women and helps women to become independent and to terminate their dependency on men with all the detrimental consequences in the society. Consequently, the Court found that in this case (where the authorities awarded a contract to a male tenderer compared to a female with a better offer, considering that a male would have been more suitable to handle a school canteen because he would have to deal with male adolescents), there was discrimination on the ground of gender contrary to the Constitution and the said Conventions, including the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Question 4. Concern has been expressed in the past about the persistence of discriminatory laws between women and men in a number of spheres. While the developments in legislative reform are noted, particularly in family and employment law as well as regarding violence and trafficking, please clarify whether any discriminatory laws still exist and what efforts are being undertaken to review and rectify all legislation that discriminates against women in light of the Convention.

A genuine effort has been made to eliminate all discriminatory provisions from legislation, more so during the period before accession to the European Union (EU).

It seems that legislation discriminating against women has been eliminated. Three instances which at first sight may be considered as discriminatory but which, nevertheless, have a legitimate justification are set out in annex 1.

Question 5. In its previous concluding comments, the Committee recommended special sensitization and training programmes in gender issues for all law enforcement officials and judges, particularly judges in family courts. While taking note of some training activities mainly addressed at members of the police force, please provide information on the full implementation of this recommendation.

5.1. Training of judicial personnel

The Supreme Court, responding to the need to provide for the training of judges, established, on a systematic and permanent basis, a programme for the training of judges of first instance courts. Under that programme, approved by the Supreme Court in December 1999, judges of subordinate courts receive training on a regular basis and participate in seminars in various fields of the law and on matters related to the administration of justice, including human rights. The subjects of the programme and list of seminars are shown in annex 2, part 1.

5.2. Training of police officers

Members of the police continue to receive extensive training on the subject of domestic violence and child abuse in order to enable them to deal effectively with such cases, to better understand victims and to respond to them appropriately and adequately. Given the fact that most complaints of domestic violence (80 per cent) are filed by women, and given that the law on domestic violence requires that the statements of victims be taken by police officers of the same sex as the victim, special emphasis is given to training for women police officers. Police training on domestic violence is based on a four-level approach: that is, the basic level, the advanced level, the specialized level and refresher courses. For full description see annex 2, part 2.

5.3. Training and information seminars by the Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family

Among the main functions of the Advisory Committee are the promotion of public awareness and the training of professionals. A full list of the seminars delivered by the Advisory Committee is shown in annex 2, part 3.

In addition, the Advisory Committee is in the process of preparing a national action plan for the prevention and handling of violence in the family, which will include a comprehensive training programme for all professionals dealing with domestic violence, including judges.

5.4. Training by the Cyprus Gender Equality Observatory

The Cyprus Gender Equality Observatory was founded in 2003 with the aim to empower and support all women in Cyprus through research, training, and awareness-raising programmes. During the period 2004-2006, the Cyprus Gender Equality Observatory has organized, with the subsidization and support of the National Machinery for Women's Rights (NMWR), training programmes on the

issues of gender equality addressed to civil servants, members of the police and the population living in rural areas. A full list of the training programmes is shown in annex 2, part 4.

Question 6. While the budget of the national machinery for the advancement of women has increased since the last report, its general secretariat consists of only two professionals who are assisted by external experts to cope with the increasing workload. Please indicate what steps are being taken or contemplated to strengthen the national machinery for women, including its administrative structure, budget, human resources and executive powers, in line with the previous concluding comments of the Committee.

The strengthening of the National Machinery for Women's Rights has been among the priorities of the Government. In 2004, through a European programme, an expert consultant has been assigned the task of preparing a report on the restructuring of the NMWR in line with European Union policies and strategies and experience in other EU States. Based on that report, the Ministry of Justice and Public Order has managed to secure additional staff, thus, the General Secretariat consists today of three professionals. The Budget of the NMWR has also increased during the last three years from 150,000 pounds sterling (£) (255,000 euros (€)) in 2003 to 565,000 pounds sterling (982,000 euros) in 2006. The increase in the budget has increased the possibilities for funding NGOs in promoting their own programmes and activities as well as the possibilities of the General Secretariat to use the services and expertise of the private sector in areas such as research (universities, research institutes), publications (interpretation, editing), organization of events, etc. As a consequence of that, in the area of research extensive work has been done during the period 2004-2005, and the list of the main research projects is shown in annex 3. Furthermore, an expert consultant has been assigned the task of drafting the national action plan on gender mainstreaming in close collaboration with the General Secretariat.

In addition, through the budget of the NMWR, an independent bureau, EuroPro Consultants, has been subsidized in order to offer its services and promote the involvement of the NMWR and NGOs for women in European Union programmes dealing with gender equality. This collaboration with the private sector has proved very successful and has been praised by the European Commission as a good practice.

Another important development since the periodic report is the incorporation into the website of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order of a section on gender equality, providing useful information to the public.

The efforts for the further strengthening of the NMWR will continue, especially in relation to the implementation of the new national action plan on gender mainstreaming, which is in the process of preparation. The plan in its preliminary form includes six major areas of concern with specific targets, measures and the key actors involved in the implementation and a chapter on the mechanisms and competent services which will promote and monitor the implementation of the plan. The NMWR will have a central role in monitoring and coordinating the implementation of the plan (see also the answer to question 8).

Question 7. The report states that non-governmental organizations, especially women's non-governmental organizations, provided information for the preparation of the report and that the report was subsequently communicated to those organizations. Please provide information on the regular communication/cooperation channels or mechanisms between the national machinery and those organizations and on the criteria adopted in regard to the non-governmental organizations chosen for such cooperation.

As mentioned in the periodic report, communication and cooperation between the Government and the NGOs working in the field of gender equality are constant, through the National Machinery for Women's Rights. More specifically, 15 women's organizations, including women's sections of trade unions, are members of the Council of the NMWR, which meets regularly every other month under the chairmanship of the Minister of Justice and Public Order.

Those organizations cooperate very closely with the Ministry in organizing joint events such as the recent seminar and discussion on "Gender Equality — the Cyprus and Finland experience", held in Nicosia in 16 November 2005.

For the synthesis and membership of the Council, the following criteria applied:

- It should be a relatively small body, so it can be flexible
- It should include NGOs that make a substantial contribution in the society regarding gender equality (major women's organizations and social partners)
- It should have a representative membership covering all political parties (taking into account that the majority of women's organizations and trade unions in Cyprus are affiliated to political parties)

The first Council of the National Machinery for Women's Rights, set up in 1994, consisted of 10 non-governmental organizations. Two decisions of the Committee of Ministers followed, for the enlargement of the Council, on 13 October 1999, when 3 NGOs were added, and on 28 July 2004, when two Turkish-Cypriot organizations were added.

The list with the 15 member organizations of the Council of the National Machinery for Women's Rights is attached as annex 4.

Besides the 15 organizations that are members of the Council, an additional 60 NGOs are members of the National Committee for Women's Rights, which is the largest body of the four bodies of the NMWR. The organizations do not meet regularly, but they are invited to and do become involved in the projects, programmes and activities of the NMWR (such as the EU programmes); they receive information; and they are consulted on serious issues such as the national action plan on gender mainstreaming, which is in the process of preparation.

The National Committee for Women's Rights consists of a variety of diversified non-governmental organizations, including those working in the field of domestic violence and the protection of victims, research, human rights and family planning. It also includes bi-communal women groups, displaced women's groups, immigrant women, women farmers, single mothers, elderly women, housewives and the like. The only requirement for membership of the National Committee is to be

an NGO working in the field of gender equality or interested in the promotion of equality.

All the above-mentioned organizations, members of the Council or the National Committee of the NMWR, as well as other bodies/institutions which are not members of the NMWR, are eligible for subsidization, in order to carry out their own projects and activities.

Stereotypes and education

Question 8. The report notes that traditional social prejudices and stereotyped attitudes are the major obstacle to the advancement of women (para. 8). Please provide details on whether a comprehensive strategy exists to address the prevalence of stereotypes which inhibit the advancement of women and the efforts the Government has taken to eliminate stereotypes across all sectors and spheres in accordance with article 5 (a) of the Convention.

The Minister of Justice and Public Order, Chairman of the National Machinery for Women's Rights, in consultation with the Minister of Education, has taken the initiative for the preparation of a comprehensive national action plan on gender mainstreaming. The general coordination of the preparation of the Plan, as well as the negotiations with all other ministries and Government departments and civil society has been assigned to the Ministry of Justice and Public Order.

The plan has been formulated taking into account the provisions of the Convention and the Beijing Platform for Action as well as European Union law, policies and strategies on gender equality, and on the basis of the proposals put forward by Government departments, non-governmental organizations, local authorities, the Parliament and other concerned entities.

The plan, which is now in a preliminary form, places great emphasis on education and the changing of social attitudes which is linked to all levels of education and the mass media. The Plan aims at putting all efforts on gender equality on a systematic and continuous basis. More information on the actions included under the chapters of Education and Social Attitudes is shown in annex 5.

Question 9. Please describe what efforts are in place to target men and boys to ensure that they actively contribute to the achievement of gender equality, including through sharing of family responsibilities.

The NMWR has secured funding through the European Union Programme relating to the Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality for the implementation of a project with the title "Gender equality — a responsibility of both sexes". The project, of 15 months duration (October 2005-December 2006) has as its main objectives to create and increase awareness of the role of men in the promotion of equality and in particular the role of men and fathers in the reconciliation of professional and family life and to influence attitudes, especially of young people. The Ministry of Education and Culture and the Family Planning Association are partners in the project. Additional information on this project is attached as annex 6.

Within the efforts and policies of the Ministry of Education and Culture, targeting and actively contributing to the achievement of gender equality, including

through the sharing of family responsibilities, lessons traditionally considered as gender oriented, such as home economics or design and technology, as of 1992 are compulsory at the gymnasium (12-15 year olds) and optional subjects at the lyceum (16-18 year olds) for all pupils irrespective of gender. The syllabus and approaches have been modified to meet new realities and respond to modern challenges and attitudes of equality. The changes are implemented through such topics as food nutrition, food technology, cooking, health and environment, consumer education or textiles, which are taught, promoting notions and conceptions to combat possible vestiges of sexual discrimination and enhance the new era of equality.

In addition, the Family Education Unit includes the same activities and skills for both boys and girls (relations between the two genders, emphasis on the role and responsibilities of father and mother in the upbringing of offspring, awareness about violence within the family). There is an overall approach for inter-gender education.

Moreover, in the context of the Community Initiative Programme (CIP) EQUAL 2004-2006 co-financed by the European Social Fund, the Government has set as one of its priority pillars the equal opportunities for women and men measure: reconciliation of the family and professional life. The measure includes actions for the elimination of stereotypes and enhancing awareness with regard to the equal participation of the two sexes in family responsibilities. It also aims at strengthening the collaboration between professional associations, social partners, educational institutions and training institutions for the designing of relevant educational packages.

The CIP EQUAL is now in the process of implementation and its objective is to promote, on a pilot basis, relevant practices, developed through collaboration between the private and public sectors. Its aim is the future incorporation of successful practices (best practices) in the mainstream policies of the Government.

Question 10. The report notes two examples of initiatives at pre-primary and primary school levels to change attitudes and stereotypes on gender roles (paras. 115 and 117). Please describe in more detail how the education system at all levels actively promotes gender equality and the eradication of stereotypes, and what national plans, priorities and strategies have been identified to eradicate stereotypes through the education system.

10.1. Opportunities for interaction and involvement of both sexes

Modern teaching methods, notably cooperative learning, communicative and interdisciplinary approaches, as well as projects, special rooms and sitting arrangements, all offer opportunities from pre-primary through all levels of school education for the common involvement and interaction of both sexes in the class, conducive to equality and eradication of stereotypes.

The subject of design and technology (traditionally oriented towards boys) is now taught without any undertones of gender orientation. From the mid-1990s, the subject was introduced for both genders. The new practice largely contributed to abolishing discriminative notions, with boys and girls working together at the same projects. At the lyceum (upper secondary) it is estimated that currently up to 30 per cent of the pupils opting for design and technology are girls. The textbooks and curricula for this subject are not gender biased. Significantly, assignments are common and illustrations in textbooks present both boys and girls at work.

One more effort is the encouragement of schools by the Ministry of Education and Culture to organize Math and Science fairs with a view to developing the scientific thinking and skills of both male and female pupils.

School and class students' boards are elected on the democratic principle of voting for nominated pupils and have up to now exhibited no cases of gender bias. The whole practice promotes the idea of active citizenship and instils in all students that everyone is eligible for being elected to the boards and, by extension, eligible and ready to assume official and leadership posts in society.

The goals and objectives of the Counseling and Career Education Service (CCES) are to achieve gender equality. Specifically, through counselling intervention and the teaching of the career and social education course, the counsellors promote gender equality and the eradication of stereotypes. The books that are used by the students in the above-mentioned course, edited by the CCES, enhance the change of attitudes and stereotypes with respect to gender roles.

10.2. Sex and gender issues education in public primary and high schools: train the trainers and train the teachers programmes

Since 1991 the Government has introduced the implementation of the Health Education curriculum in public schools. Sex education has been a part of this curriculum, while gender relations is an important perspective within it. Sex education has mainly been promoted in high schools.

The Cyprus Family Planning Association, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Education, has started offering training courses to primary and high school teachers for better implementation of sex and gender issue education in schools. The methodology of the training is through the means of experiential workshops, while interactive and person-centred learning is encouraged.

10.3. Workshops by the Cyprus Family Planning Association: body image through the media

The workshops aimed at empowering young people, especially women, through the provision of the appropriate tools for critical analysis of the messages received by the media in reference to body image. They included media literacy and media analysis, body image and media portrayal of women.

Question 11. The report notes that more women than men are registered at tertiary institutions (para. 125) yet women remain underrepresented as teachers at university level, as well as in decision-making positions in Cypriot society and retain lower paying jobs in the labour market. What strategies has the Government put in place or envisaged adopting in order to ensure that women seek and obtain jobs commensurate with their academic achievements?

Women's representation in higher professional and decision-making positions has been improving continuously over the last two decades. However, it is a fact that there is much room for improvement. Government policy on the issue is expressed through the following measures:

- A legislative framework to combat discrimination and, specifically, the Equal Treatment of Men and Women in Employment and Vocational Training Law, 2002 (L.205(I)/2002), which ensures the protection of women from direct and

indirect discrimination on the basis of gender with regard to access and promotion in employment

- The subsidization of awareness-raising programmes and campaigns promoted by non-governmental organizations

The issue will also be addressed within the national action plan for gender mainstreaming which is currently in the process of preparation.

The Equal Pay between Men and Women for the Same Work or for Work of Equal Value Law, 2002 (L.177(I)/2002) was amended by Law 193(I)/2004 so as to give competence to the Ombudswoman to investigate any complaint by any person who considers that his or her rights under the Law are violated.

Question 12. Please describe what time-bound strategies and targets are in place for increasing the number of female students in non-traditional fields of study, such as engineering, manufacturing and construction.

Activities and seminars on professional development increasingly encompass raising awareness on women's professional selections.

The Ministry of Education and Culture in cooperation with NGOs conducted on 26 June 2005 an information day on the topic "Encouraging young women towards engineering and applied sciences" to inform and encourage young women to pursue sectors related to fields in engineering, high technology and other applied sciences. The event was attended by about 500 girls from gymnasia and lycea and included a panel discussion and an engineering project contest.

Violence against women, trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

Question 13. Despite the ongoing initiatives to combat violence against women and the mechanisms put in place, namely the Advisory Committee on Family Violence, concern has been expressed about the persistence and prevalence of domestic violence (see for example the concluding comments of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC/C/15/Add.205 (2003), para. 45). Please provide updated statistics and information on the incidence of domestic violence and indicate what concrete steps are being taken to encourage women to make use of the provisions of the Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) Law 2000 (L.119(I)/2000).

13.1. Legislative measures

An important legislative measure in this context, enacted in 2004, is the criminalization of the failure by any person to report a case of violence against a minor or against a person having severe mental or psychological deficiencies that came to his knowledge (section 35A, of Law 212(I)/2004 amending Law 119(I)/2000). The measure is believed to have contributed to the increase in the number of the incidents reported.

13.2. Statistical information by the Statistical Services of Cyprus

From the records of the Office of the Attorney General of the Republic (see para. 81 of the periodic report) the Statistical Service of Cyprus has prepared a data entry spreadsheet, with extensive information on victims and offenders, in order to be able to record and analyse data on domestic violence. The full list of the information gathered, a preliminary analysis of data for the period January-February 2006 and the data entry spreadsheet are shown in annexes 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3.

As from January 2006, the data recording process has commenced. During the two-month period January-February 2006 a total of 154 cases were reported.

A preliminary analysis of those cases has produced the following results:

- 81 per cent of the victims were women. (See figure 1 in annex 7.4.)
- 84 per cent of the offenders were men. (See figure 2 in annex 7.4.)
- The majority of women victims (28 per cent) were between 30 and 44 years of age. (See figure 3 in annex 7.4.)
- The majority of women victims (54 per cent) were married. (See figure 4 in annex 7.4.)
- In 45 per cent of the cases, the relationship between victim and offender was husband and wife and in 22 per cent of the cases it was ex-husband and wife. (See figure 5 in annex 7.4.)
- In 61 per cent of the cases the form of violence exerted on the victims is that of physical abuse. (See figure 6 in annex 7.4.)

13.3. Statistical information on the incidence of domestic violence as recorded by the police

- (a) Updated statistics on the prevalence of domestic violence:

Table 1

Incidence of domestic violence as recorded by police, 2001-2005

<i>Year</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>Average</i>
Incidents	512	536	618	492	935	619

Although there is no evidence to exclude the possibility that the significant increase in 2005 is due to an increase in the number of incidents, the increase is to a large degree attributed to a series of measures (supervision, monitoring, circulars, and so on) taken to maximize the level of appropriate recording of, reporting and responding to incidents of domestic violence.

- (b) The following concrete steps have been taken to encourage women to make use of the provisions of the Law on domestic violence:

- The police have published a brochure entitled “Domestic violence: help is available!” which is available for the public in all police stations and divisional crime investigation departments as well as at other points of interest. The brochure defines domestic violence and it stresses that it

constitutes a criminal offence, comments on its consequences and seriousness, explains what the police can do, highlights the legal provisions and provides contact information for the police and other agencies involved in the issue.

- Police spokespersons are often invited to television and radio programmes to introduce the issue to the public and to comment on print media coverage. Likewise, police representatives are occasionally invited to participate in public forums on the issue. In addition, members of the police specializing in the area of domestic violence periodically lecture on the issue in training workshops for other professionals (e.g. teachers, medical and paramedical personnel, volunteers in NGOs, and the like).
- To further reach the public, the police operate special information booths at public events regardless of their theme. Furthermore, such information booths are set up at public events organized by the police.

13.4. Measures taken by the Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family

Each Government department collects statistical data in relation to violence in the family for its own purposes. In order to have a unified statistical picture concerning family violence, the Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family has assigned to an expert the evaluation of the process of mandatory reporting, which is directly connected to the creation of a databank for the collection and elaboration of statistics from all relevant Government departments. The above evaluation is ongoing and is expected to be completed by 30 June 2006.

The Advisory Committee, with the cooperation of volunteers from the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family (an NGO), participated with its own kiosk at the Annual International State Fair (2005), distributing booklets, leaflets, posters and other materials to the public for awareness-raising.

Furthermore, the Advisory Committee is preparing a booklet on the violence in the family laws in simple and understandable language, to make the Law user-friendly.

13.5. Measures by the Social Welfare Services

In an effort to raise awareness, the Social Welfare Services issued special booklets in 2005, which aim to inform victims of domestic violence about their rights. The booklets are available in Greek, Turkish and English. The booklets have been sent to governmental services involved with domestic violence, NGOs, professional associations and private practitioners dealing with victims of domestic violence. Furthermore, the Social Welfare Services participated with their own kiosk at the Annual International State Fair in Cyprus (May 2005), providing information on all their services, including those for victims of domestic violence.

13.6. Measures by the Office of the Law Commissioner

The Office of the Law Commissioner has issued in the form of booklets the official consolidated text of Laws 119(I)/2000 and 212(I)/2004, both in Greek and in English.

13.7. Measures by the Ministry of Education and Culture

The Ministry of Education and Culture has set up special committees for the prevention of and intervention with family and school violence. Specifically, the Ministry of Education and Culture has instructed all public schools to follow certain specified procedures regarding the prevention of and intervention with family and school violence, including violence against women. The Ministry provides in-service training to school personnel regarding family and school violence.

Question 14. The Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography reports that foreign women working as cabaret performers are forced into prostitution (E/CN.4/1999/71, para. 114). Please provide information on the steps that have been taken, if any, to curb this phenomenon, and the outcome of investigations by the Commissioner of Administration regarding the status of entrance and employment of foreign cabaret artists (para. 94).

14.1. Group of experts: Action Plan

The Group of Experts on trafficking, appointed by the Council of Ministers (Decision no. 54.281 dated 19 September 2001) has undertaken to prepare an action plan for the coordination of actions on combating trafficking in human beings and sexual exploitation of children. The Action Plan was submitted to the Council of Ministers on 21 April 2005.

The Group of Experts in preparing the Action Plan, took into serious consideration the Republic's international obligations stemming from a number of international instruments (such as conventions, protocols and recommendations of the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and other international organizations), the investigation and report of the Ombudswoman on the status of entry and employment of foreign women working under an "entry permit for employment as artist" known as an "artist permit", dated 24 November 2003, as well as the 2004 report of the State Department of the United States of America on trafficking in persons.

The Action Plan (for an English translation see annex 8.1) includes legislative and administrative measures already implemented and the list of measures that need to be taken by the competent ministries, departments and/or services for (a) prevention, (b) combating and (c) protection of victims.

On 12 May 2005 the Council of Ministers took notice of the Action Plan and decided to appoint the Minister of Interior as the Minister responsible for handling the issue of trafficking of human beings.

14.2. Measures that are being taken within the framework of the Action Plan

(a) Legislative framework

Legislative reform is now on the way in an effort of the country to bring its legislation in full compliance with the Community Acquis and its international treaty obligations. In particular, draft laws on aliens and immigration, on trafficking of human beings and on the private employment agencies have been prepared and

are now at the stage of discussion and consultation. For more details on those draft laws see annex 8.2.

(b) Measures taken by the police to combat the phenomenon of trafficking in human beings

Establishment of the Office for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

In an effort to tackle the issue of trafficking of human beings in a more concerted and focused manner the Chief of Cyprus Police, proceeded with the establishment of the Office of Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, at Police Headquarters. The newly established Office started its work on 26 April 2004. The Office has almost direct access to the highest levels of police structure and specifically to the Assistant Chief of Police.

The objectives and responsibilities of the Office are as follows:

- To collect, process and evaluate intelligence information regarding human trafficking (sexual exploitation, procuring, and other related offences)
- To coordinate the operations of all police divisions and other related departments in the area of human trafficking
- To organize and participate in operations
- To maintain statistical information
- To follow up on all cases that are under investigation, filed in Court or pending trial
- To prepare reports on human trafficking
- To investigate the Internet and watch out for child pornography pages
- To establish a strategic plan
- To cooperate with foreign-related departments

The Office cooperates closely with all related police departments and all police divisions in the execution of its functions (the crime prevention units of all divisional police headquarters, the Crime Intelligence Office, the criminal investigation departments, the Aliens and Immigration Unit, the Drug Enforcement Unit and so on). An efficient and swift flow of intelligence information is established between all police departments and the Office, and this information is analysed and processed, serving as guidance for decision-making.

At the present, the Office is staffed with two women members of the police, one Inspector and one Police Constable. They are specialized, having undergone training on issues pertaining to trafficking in human beings. They provide expert advice to the different departments of the police, when this is deemed necessary, and they also deliver lectures at the Cyprus Police Academy. Furthermore, they represent Cyprus in foreign working groups, conventions and seminars.

The vigilance imposed by all police departments and the cooperation between different police departments has proven to be positive and now more cases are reported and more offenders are being brought to justice. Indicatively, the number of cases reported increased from 9 cases in 2000 to 91 cases in 2004 and 47 in 2005,

whereas the number of persons accused increased from 18 in 2000 to 194 in 2004 and 74 in 2005 (see annex 9).

It appears that the public currently feels more secure and confident about giving information to the police regarding offences related to procuring, the sexual exploitation of women and other related offences, as is evident from the increased number of calls received on the toll-free line (1460), which is operated 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, at Police Headquarters.

The Office of Combating Trafficking in Human Beings has created and maintains an updated databank where information regarding cabarets, pubs and bars, and suspicious enterprises are kept (pictures, schedules, etc.). The databank is used for the collection and analysis of intelligence information and for the efficient preparation of operations that are carried out by the police.

Preventive and suppressive measures taken by the Cyprus police

The Cyprus police are taking numerous preventive and suppressive measures in order to eliminate and confront the problem of human trafficking in Cyprus, always within the legal framework that they are called upon to enforce. Such measures include the following:

- Raids in cabarets, nightclubs, and the like by the Crime Prevention Units
- Scrutiny of Internet pages to identify locations related to the procurement of women — escort services and advertisements in newspapers
- Inspections of cabarets, by the Crime Prevention Squads
- Inspections of bars/pubs, by the Crime Prevention Squads
- Interviews with women holding artist permits, as they are considered as a vulnerable group for sexual exploitation by the members of the Office of Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and of the Aliens and Immigration Unit
- Cooperation with the mass media and public awareness
- Cooperation with other governmental agencies and departments
- International cooperation
- Educational seminars and training, both inland and overseas, for members of the police

(c) Ministry of Interior: Civil Registry and Migration Department

In cases where the victims of trafficking are willing to cooperate with the authorities of the Republic for the prosecution of the traffickers, the Civil Registry and Migration Department, in cooperation with the police, immediately provides them with a residence permit as well as a work permit in the same or other employment sector.

The Department is also in close cooperation with NGOs, from which it receives important information for the cases of victims. All information, verbal or written, is promptly and duly examined and any necessary action is taken.

(d) Information leaflet for women nationals of third countries holding an artist permit

The aim of the leaflet is to inform women from third countries coming to work under an artist permit in Cyprus about their rights and obligations; it also contains information about the services provided by the Department of Social Welfare Services, which is the guardian of the victims of trafficking under the relevant law, and gives the contact details for Government services as well as for NGOs that can provide guidance, assistance and support to the victims of trafficking.

The leaflet, available in Russian, English, Bulgarian and Romanian, is disseminated at the points of entry to all women coming to the Republic to work under an “artist permit” and is also available on the websites of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as from the consular authorities of the Republic abroad. The leaflet is updated regularly for accuracy.

(e) Information leaflet for other third country nationals holding a work permit

Foreign workers other than those holding an artist permit may also be considered as potential victims of exploitation. For that reason, the Department of Labour of the Ministry of Employment and Social Insurance has prepared a leaflet for all foreign workers providing information about their rights and obligations. It contains information as well as contact details for persons desiring to file a complaint against his or her employer.

The leaflet was prepared in Greek and will be translated into languages spoken by the foreign workers in Cyprus.

(f) Campaign

In cooperation with the Council of Europe, the Ministry of Interior, in collaboration with all other competent ministries, is organizing a campaign for awareness-raising. The campaign will include posters, television spots and seminars.

The National Machinery for Women’s Rights subsidized the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies for the preparation and distribution of leaflets and posters for raising awareness regarding the sexual exploitation of human beings as well as for conducting a survey and for collecting data on the issue.

Question 15. The report notes the vulnerability of the country to trafficking of women due to its geographical location (para. 88). Please provide available data on: trafficking in Cyprus; updated information on the situation and number of foreign women who are victims of trafficking; measures taken by the Government to assist and support these women and to prosecute traffickers; and results of initiatives described in the report to address this problem.

15.1. Artist permits

According to information received from the Ministry of Interior (Migration Department) for the period 2004-2005, the Government issued 8,621 artist permits to persons holding passports of Belarus, Bulgaria, Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation and Ukraine (4,621 in 2004 and 4,000 in 2005). The permits are issued for a period of only three months and can be extended for another three months. During the same period, 359 women holders of passports from those same

countries who were in Cyprus on an artist permit departed either for Lebanon (270) or for the Syrian Arab Republic (89), which are considered to be destination countries of women trafficked for purposes of sexual exploitation. The percentage of artist permit holders departing for Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic in relation to the total number of artist permits issued at the given period of time is around 4 per cent. Around 1 per cent represents artist permit holders who are not repatriated but are leaving Cyprus for other destinations. The vast majority (95 per cent) depart from Cyprus with their country of origin as their final destination.

The percentage of artist permit holders who are not repatriated is quite low and cannot lead to the conclusion that Cyprus is a transit country point for trafficking of human beings. The Government policy to oblige agents of foreign workers to issue two-way (return) tickets for the artist permit holders prior to their arrival in Cyprus and the restrictions for artist permit holders on departing for any country other than their country of origin, except under extraordinary circumstances, are contributing to ensuring that the vast majority of artist permit holders are indeed repatriated.

It should be noted that the reference made here to artist permit holders, does not imply that, on the whole, these women are considered to be victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. Reference is made in view of the fact that they are considered to be a vulnerable group for sexual exploitation.

15.2. Number of cases presented to court and number of persons charged with offences relating to trafficking of human beings (see also answer to question 14.2 and annex 9)

15.3. Number of foreign women identified as victims of trafficking

For the year 2004, out of the 117 foreign women identified as victims, 66 cooperated with the police, while for the year 2005, 42 women out of 55 identified as victims cooperated with the police in order to bring offenders to justice. All the women involved in those cases are considered victims and no charges are brought against them before the courts, regardless of the fact that they may or may not cooperate with the authorities. Most of the victims involved in such cases are women working under an artist permit.

15.4. Centre for the Protection of Victims of Trafficking

The efforts of the Government to encourage the development of a shelter (for victims of trafficking) by the non-governmental sector have not succeeded. As a result, the Social Welfare Services have secured a budget for the operation of a shelter in 2006. The Services are now in the process of finding an appropriate building for that purpose.

15.5. Manual of interdepartmental procedures for the handling of cases of victims of trafficking

The Social Welfare Services are in the process of developing a manual of interdepartmental procedures which will provide clear steps on how to deal with victims of trafficking more effectively and efficiently.

15.6. Cyprus anti-trafficking network

A number of non-governmental organizations working in the areas of trafficking and the protection of human rights are working together to establish a platform of NGOs in order to assess, watch and combat the trafficking problem in Cyprus.

Participation in public and political life

Question 16. Notwithstanding the recent appointments of women to high-level posts, the report notes that in 2001, 85 women were candidates in parliamentary elections, but only 6 were elected (para. 97). The report states that reasons for women's low representation in politics include the "invisibility" of women as well as conservative traditional features of Cypriot society (para. 100). Kindly indicate whether, beyond the measures indicated in the report, any special temporary measures in line with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention are envisaged and whether any measures, including measures to reconcile public and private responsibilities, are being implemented to support the candidacy of women who are running for political and public office. This should include information on what plans are in place to encourage all political parties to introduce the quota system to increase the number of women on their electoral lists (para. 68).

Most political parties have introduced the quota system to favour the participation of women in their decision-making bodies. Some of them have also quotas for their candidate lists. However, this has been made possible through the parties' memorandum or constitution and not through legislation.

The NMWR, in view of the 2006 parliamentary elections (in May) and those for the local authorities (in December), has launched a campaign aiming at increasing women's participation in Parliament and in the local authorities. Part of the campaign has been devoted to contacts or meetings with the leaders of all political parties, during which positive action measures to accelerate de facto equality in political life have been discussed. The Minister of Justice and Public Order and Chairman of the NMWR himself, accompanied by Members of the Council of the NMWR, have drawn the attention of the leaders of the political parties to the Recommendation Rec 2003(3) of the Council of Europe entitled "Balanced participation of women and men in political and public life".

The recommendation, which has been translated into Greek and has been widely distributed in a booklet by the NMWR, gave rise to a lively debate on various measures, including positive action measures in the field of public and political life. The contacts and discussions with political parties have been broadly covered by the media. The campaign continued with contacts with the mass media in an effort to give visibility to women's issues and women candidates especially during the pre-election period. The NMWR came to an agreement with the major media owners and directors for the showing of a television spot urging citizens to vote "men and women". In addition, the NMWR has subsidized the production of a short film on the same lines to be used by NGOs and the media during the pre-election period. A booklet for women in the 2006 parliamentary elections has been also prepared by the NMWR, to be widely distributed.

In view of the elections for local authorities, in December 2006, the NMWR is now in the process of formulating proposals for a campaign to support women's participation in local authorities.

Question 17. Please provide information on women's participation in negotiations and resolution of the Cyprus conflict.

Women have been actively involved in the efforts to find a solution to the Cyprus problem. The participation of women in the Diplomatic Service of the Republic of Cyprus is conducive to that effort. Currently, eight women ambassadors or ministers plenipotentiary are either heads of mission of the Republic of Cyprus abroad or directors of various divisions at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nicosia.

The "Cyprus Question" Division, which deals specifically with all issues relating to the "Cyprus Question", including efforts to finding a solution to the Cyprus problem, is currently headed by a woman. Over the years the Republic of Cyprus has appointed women as heads of mission in various posts, such as London, Washington, D.C., Beijing, New Delhi, Strasbourg (France), Madrid, Helsinki, Stockholm, Lisbon and The Hague. At the moment, from a total of 156 diplomats in the Diplomatic Service of the Republic of Cyprus, 38 are women (24 per cent).

One of the permanent advisers to the President of the Republic and the negotiating team for the solution of the Cyprus problem, acting as international law and constitutional adviser, is a woman. During the process of finding a solution to the Cyprus problem under the auspices of the Secretary-General (the Annan Plan), a woman (the Law Commissioner), was head of the Technical Committee of the Laws. For decades an eminent woman, who had been Minister of Justice, then Law Commissioner and subsequently Attorney-General of the Republic, was a member of the negotiating team for succeeding Presidents of the Republic and adviser for all efforts to find a solution to the Cyprus problem.

Employment

Question 18. In the light of the significant legal reform undertaken in the areas of work and employment, namely in regard to equal treatment and vocational training, equal pay, social security, maternity protection and parental leave, what is the assessment made of the impact of these provisions on the improvement of women's situation in the labour market?

During the period 2002-2004 the employment rate of women aged 15 to 64 increased, while the gender gap in employment exhibited a slight increase of 0.4 percentage points. Women aged 25 to 54 and women with tertiary education had the highest employment rates. The unemployment of women continued to fluctuate at higher levels than that of men, while women with tertiary education had the lowest unemployment rate among women. The gender gap in pay remained stable during the period under review (at 25.1 per cent) and this could be connected with the fact that women increased their share in employment in lower-paying occupations and decreased their share of employment in higher-paying occupations. More detailed information regarding the position of women in the labour market is given in annex 10, part 1.

The impact of the provisions of the equal pay legislation on the improvement of women's situation in the labour market is that the discrimination against women which was present in collective agreements has been eliminated. Furthermore, those provisions lay down the necessary mechanisms and procedures (inspectors, a committee for investigation and assessment of work) for the investigation of complaints in relation to equal pay. A victim of discrimination regarding equal pay is also entitled to access to the Ombudswoman and the courts (see also answer to question 11).

The parental leave provisions focus on and assist in reconciling employees' work and family life. They ensure that on the expiration of parental leave the employee may return to work to the same or a similar position (a position not inferior to the one held before taking parental leave). All the acquired rights or rights to be acquired in relation to an employee on the date that parental leave starts shall remain the same until the day the parental leave ends. All such rights, including any changes relating to an employee's employment arising from legislation, collective agreements or practice, shall accrue to him or her on the expiration of the parental leave.

The Social Insurance legislation does not contain any discriminatory provisions against women. All the discriminatory provisions that existed in the Social Insurance Scheme were removed with the Social Insurance (Amendment) Law (L.51(I)/2001) with regard to the payment of increases for dependants to women beneficiaries and the insurance of women employed in agriculture as self-employed persons.

Moreover, the equality of treatment between men and women in occupational social insurance schemes has been achieved with the enforcement of the relevant legislation (Law 133(I)/2002) and, in addition, any discriminatory provisions included in the Provident Fund legislation have been abolished with the amendment of the Provident Fund Law (L.130(I)/2002). For more information see annex 10, part 2.

Question 19. The report notes that, although the unemployment rate in Cyprus is low, women form the majority of the "long-term unemployed" in Cyprus. The percentage of women in long-term unemployment increased from 55 per cent in 1990 to 63 per cent in 2003 (para. 143). Please indicate the reasons for the increase as well as what plans are in place to address the problem of women's unemployment.

It is worth noting that in absolute numbers, in 2003, only around 500 women were registered as long-term unemployed, which constituted around 4 per cent of the total number of unemployed.

Within the framework of development of human capital, emphasis is placed on measures co-financed by the European Social Fund aiming at the integration of unemployed and inactive women in employment. They include the following:

- A new scheme, which is characterized by a comprehensive approach providing guidance, training, acquisition of on-the-job experience and assistance in job placement
- Expansion and improvement of care services for children, the elderly, the disabled and other dependants

- Also a new scheme, which is the promotion of flexible forms of employment such as part-time employment and flexible hours of work
- Enhancement and modernization of the Public Employment Services aiming at the provision of individualized service and active support to the unemployed.

Question 20. The report indicates that even though flexible forms of employment have not developed much, women constitute the majority of part-time workers (para. 141). Please provide updated sex-disaggregated data of categories of part-time work and indicate whether there is proportional payment of pensions and social benefits to part-time workers.

Table 2
Percentage distribution of part-time employment by sector of economic activity, sex and gender differences, 2002 and 2004

<i>Economic activity (NACE)</i>	<i>2002</i>			<i>2004</i>		
	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Gender difference</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Gender difference</i>
A Agriculture, hunting and forestry	49.3	50.7	-1.4	52.2	47.8	4.4
B Fishing	-	-	-	-	-	-
C Mining and quarrying	-	-	-	-	-	-
D Manufacturing	26.7	73.3	-46.6	33.0	67.0	-34.0
E Electricity, gas and water supply	-	-	-	-	-	-
F Construction	100.0	0.0	100.0	87.8	12.2	75.6
G Wholesale/retail trade/repairs	26.0	74.0	-48.0	27.1	72.9	-45.8
H Hotels and restaurants	30.2	69.8	-39.6	35.1	64.9	-29.8
I Transport/storage/communication	81.1	18.9	62.2	41.9	58.1	-16.2
J Financial intermediation	20.3	79.7	-59.4	22.4	77.6	-55.2
K Real estate/business activities	38.7	61.3	-22.6	38.8	61.2	-22.4
L Public administration	44.2	55.8	-11.6	38.8	61.2	-22.4
M Education	6.9	93.1	-86.2	17.4	82.6	-65.2
N Health and social work	0.0	100.0	-100.0	34.6	65.4	-30.8
O Other services	26.2	73.8	-47.6	28.2	71.8	-43.6
P Private households	0.0	100.0	-100.0	0.0	100.0	-100.0
Q Extra-territorial organizations	61.1	38.9	22.2	0.0	100.0	-100.0
Total	31.0	69.0	-38.0	33.7	66.3	-32.6

Source: Statistical Service of Cyprus, *Labour Force Survey*.

Table 3
Percentage distribution of part-time employment by occupational category, sex and gender differences, 2002 and 2004

Occupational categories (ISCO-COM 88)	2002			2004		
	Males	Females	Gender difference	Males	Females	Gender difference
0 Armed Forces	-	-	-	-	-	-
1 Legislators and managers	100.0	0.0	100.0	32.4	67.6	-35.2
2 Professionals	21.7	78.3	-56.6	44.7	55.3	-10.6
3 Technicians	57.1	42.9	14.2	39.2	60.8	-21.6
4 Clerks	16.9	83.1	-66.2	10.2	89.8	-79.6
5 Services and sales workers	20.6	79.4	-58.8	19.1	80.9	-61.8
6 Agriculture and fishery workers	79.2	20.8	58.4	83.7	16.3	67.4
7 Craft and related trades workers	61.3	38.7	22.6	64.3	35.7	28.6
8 Plant and machine operators	19.8	80.2	-60.4	60.4	39.6	20.8
9 Elementary workers	18.8	81.2	-62.4	18.3	81.7	-63.4
Total	31.0	69.0	-38.0	33.7	66.3	-32.6

Source: Statistical Service of Cyprus, *Labour Force Survey*.

According to the Part-time Employees (Prohibition of Unfavourable Treatment) Law, 2002 (L.76(I)/2002), every part-time employee shall be entitled to equal terms and conditions of employment and to equal treatment and shall be afforded the same protection as that given to a comparable full-time employee.

The Social Insurance legislation does not discriminate between part-time and full-time workers. Under the Social Insurance legislation, contributions and benefits are earnings-related irrespective of the type of employment (part-time or full-time employment). It is noted that persons with low earnings who are employed on a part-time basis generally benefit from the provision of the legislation regarding the payment of minimum pension.

Question 21. The Parental Leave and Leave on Grounds of Force Majeure Law, 2002 recognizes the right of both parents to take leave from work to care for a child (para. 161). Please provide information about the practical results of this law and, in particular, whether men are taking advantage of this right and of measures to encourage them to do so.

Since the enactment of the Parental Leave and Leave on Grounds of Force Majeure Law, 2002 (L.69(I)/2002), 165 women and 3 men have exercised their right to parental leave. This is a relatively new law, which introduces the institution of parental leave in Cyprus. The Department of Labour Relations takes measures so that employees are encouraged, through seminars and lectures, to take advantage of the parental leave right. For this purpose, the Department of Labour Relations has

prepared explanatory leaflets on the Law and to this effect there is dissemination of information through television and radio programmes.

Question 22. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (E/C.12/1/Add.28, para. 285) notes that domestic workers enjoy little protection against being forced to work unduly long hours. Please indicate what measures the Government has taken to address the position of domestic workers, including measures to ensure that they benefit from existing labour legislation.

Ensuring the enforcement of labour legislation and protecting the rights of all workers being employed in the Cyprus labour market is one of the main priorities of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance.

To that effect, a significant number of inspections are carried out by officers of the Ministry, and a mechanism for resolving complaints submitted by an employee (Cypriot, European Union or third-country national) has also been established, through which issues relating to the violation of terms of employment are examined and determined.

With regard to the employment of third-country nationals in particular, the official procedure provides for the compulsory signing between the employer and employee of a contract of employment, the form of which is set by the Government (prepared by the competent Departments of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance and the Ministry of Interior), both in Greek and in English. Each such contract indicates in detail the terms and conditions of employment (including salary, leave, social security benefits, medical and other entitlements from the employer), ensuring that foreign workers are aware of the rights and other benefits they are entitled to.

All complaints submitted by employers and employees are examined by officers of the District Labour Relations Offices. According to the established procedure, the two sides involved are requested to attend a meeting with the officer (accompanied by their lawyers, if they so wish), and efforts are made to reach a solution. In cases where no agreement can be achieved, a report is prepared and submitted to the Director of the Civil Registry and Migration Department. If the examination reveals that the employee's complaint is justified, a recommendation is made in the report for either allowing the complainant to find another employer and/or depriving the employer of employing foreign workers. If the employer does not act in conformity with the final decision of the Director of the Civil Registry and Migration Department, the complainant has the right to appeal to the Labour Disputes Court.

Health

Question 23. The report states that there is an urgent need for an evaluation of the situation with regard to abortion and that this issue will be explored in a forthcoming behavioural study with regard to AIDS, sex and sexually transmitted diseases (para. 171). Please provide details of the terms of reference of this study, and indicate how it will contribute to the full implementation of article 12 of the Convention and general recommendation No. 24.

Also state what measures have been taken to increase women's and girls' access to reproductive and sexual health services and to family planning in order to avoid unwanted pregnancies and women's recourse to illegal abortion.

In respect of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, the Ministry of Health is planning to perform a pilot project involving adults between the ages of 20 and 60 years, and it will be based on the same pilot project that was conducted in Limassol and was granted the "Jacques Parizot" award, with the difference that this project will include questions regarding abortion.

Another specialized programme involving artist permit holders has been formed since 1995 since they are considered to be a high-risk group for HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections. The programme educates women and empowers them to protect themselves from these kinds of infection. The programme was initially funded by the World Health Organization and is currently implemented by the Cyprus Family Planning Association with the cooperation and support of the Ministry of Health. Owing to its success the programme continues, with occasional reviews.

Peer education programmes are implemented through young volunteers of the Youth for Youth group of the Cyprus Family Planning Association, with the objective of assisting young boys and girls to acquire the necessary attitudes and knowledge regarding sex and reproduction, which will lead to safe behaviour.

In 2003, the Cyprus Family Planning Association conducted a study called "Sexuality, sexual and reproductive health: an exploration of the knowledge, attitudes and beliefs of Greek-Cypriots adolescents". The research showed that, despite the recent socio-economic changes in Cyprus, traditional attitudes and limited knowledge still prevail regarding sexuality and sexual and reproductive health among adolescents. The results of the research are an important step towards the full implementation of sex education in secondary schools.

Rural women

Question 24. Please provide specific data and information on the position of rural women in Cyprus, including their access to education, health care and employment and participation in public and political life.

24.1. Education in rural areas

Owing to the geographical distribution of rural communities in Cyprus, access to education is very easy, either at the district schools especially catering for out-of-reach communities (transport is free of charge) or at urban schools at close proximity to villages. There are State institutes dispersed all over Cyprus, which can act as second-chance schools for pupils and adults alike for Foreign Languages and Computer Science, as well as any for other curricular or extracurricular subject upon demand.

Based on the population censuses of 1992 and 2001, a significant decrease was exhibited in the proportion of rural women aged 20 to 64 who never attended school, from 4 per cent in 1992 to 1 per cent in 2001; during the same period the share of rural women aged 20 to 64 who never completed primary education decreased from 16 per cent to 7 per cent. In contrast, the share of rural women who

completed third level education more than doubled, from 8 per cent to 17 per cent over the same period. It is also evident that the gap between urban and rural women with regard to educational level decreased over the same period. For more detailed data see table 1 in annex 11, part 1.

24.2. Health in rural areas

Primary health care in Cyprus is provided mainly by the public health sector services; at both urban and rural health centres and at subcentres throughout the Government-controlled area of the Republic. There are 32 health centres, out of which only 8 are urban and the rest are rural. In the communities the Government provides over 220 subcentres.

Women from rural areas have no problem in gaining access to public health services; in the last few years the number of outpatient visits to the rural health centres has increased. At the same time, by the use of a referral system, secondary and tertiary health care is offered to them in Government hospitals, which operate in all towns.

It should be noted that according to the Health Survey 2003, the proportion of rural women who had ever had a test for breast cancer was higher than urban women, 64 per cent as compared to 63 per cent respectively (see table 2 in annex 11, part 2). Furthermore, the proportion of rural women who had ever had a test for cervical cancer was also high and stands at 79 per cent, as compared to 82 per cent of urban women (see table 3 in annex 11, part 2). According to the same survey, 79 per cent of rural women assess their health status as very good and good, as compared to 78 per cent of urban women. For more detailed data, see table 4 in annex 11, part 2.

In addition, projects are being conducted in order to bring women in rural areas in Cyprus in line with the gender equality movement. The Cyprus Family Planning Association is involved as a partner in the DELOA project — itinerant workshops for rural women under the European Union programme, Grundtvig-G1, in which Spain is the coordinator and Cyprus, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Portugal and Romania are partners. The workshops consist of sexual health, family planning and especially gender equality issues, including equal opportunities and rights. Through the project, data will be gathered that will allow the transfer and mainstreaming of intervention policies on gender equality towards men and women in rural areas.

24.3. Employment in rural areas

The female participation rate in rural areas increased from 38 per cent in 1992 to 40 per cent in 2001, but remains lower than the female participation rate of urban women (46 per cent and 49 per cent, respectively). Detailed data of the female participation rates by age and urban/rural residence during the period 1992-2001 is shown in table 5 in annex 11, part 3.

The number of employed women in agriculture, according to the Labour Force Survey, exhibits fluctuations during the period 2000-2004. Especially for that period, the number of employed women increased slightly by 1.3 percentage points from 2002, constituting 35.7 per cent of the total employment of the sector and 4 per cent of the total female employment. For more detailed data, see table 6 in annex 11, part 3.

In respect of women's employment in rural areas, the NMWR and the Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW) undertake a series of activities. Through their activities the NMWR and the BPW endeavour to (a) inform, educate and train women in rural areas so that they have a better chance to enter the labour force; and (b) offer them practical support in the form of access to finance and advisory services in their effort to develop entrepreneurial activity. This is achieved through the following:

- The actions developed and realized in the framework of various European programmes, which the NMWR realizes or participates in as a partner
- The design and implementation, in cooperation with other organizations or bodies, of specific schemes, measures and incentives

Detailed description of those activities is given in annex 1, part 4.

Question 25. Please outline whether the national rural development policy contains a gender focus and details of the opportunities provided for women through the Rural Development Plan (para. 185).

The Rural Development Plan (2004-2006), which is currently in the process of implementation, does not include measures that are exclusively addressed to any gender. However, it includes measures that target, to a large extent, the female rural population. Such measures are as follows:

(a) **Measure 1.1.5.** It encourages, promotes and strengthens small scale processing activities for agricultural products. The measure refers primarily to activities carried out by rural women.

(b) **Measure 1.4.** The main objective of this measure is to promote and enhance vocational training for farmers in rural areas. In the context of this measure, training programmes specifically designed for the Cypriot rural women are developed.

(c) **Measure 2.8.** It encourages the promotion and strengthening of small scale handicraft activities, which traditionally address rural women who seek supplementary employment and additional income.

As already mentioned, the implementation of the Plan is in progress, and the results will be evaluated at the end of the programming period.

Vulnerable women

Question 26. Please provide information and sex-disaggregated data about the situation of immigrant women and women of racial and ethnic minorities and, in particular, what measures are in place to enhance their de facto equality in all sectors, including in employment, health, education and participation in decision-making.

According to the population census of 2001, the majority of foreign residents in Cyprus, 55.7 per cent were women, out of which 44.6 per cent were residents of the 25 countries of the European Union, 22.6 per cent were residents of other European countries, mainly Bulgaria, Romania and the Russian Federation and approximately 28.5 per cent came from Asian countries, mainly the Philippines and

Sri Lanka. The sex-disaggregated data of foreign residents is given in full detail in tables 1, 2 and 3 of annex 12. Data regarding employment of foreign workers, disaggregated by sex, is not available at present. Detailed data of total foreign workers is given in table 4 of annex 12.

Immigrant women, women of racial and ethnic minorities, and asylum seekers and refugees in Cyprus are entitled to apply for free medical treatment in the public health services. The public health services provide treatment free of charge, or at reduced fees, mainly to patients with low incomes, independently of sex or origin, provided that they are eligible. Emergency health services are offered to everyone free of charge.

Finally, with the implementation of the Safeguarding and Protection of the Patient's Rights Law 2004 (No. 1(I)/2005), there is a specific provision which prohibits any form of discrimination in relation to access in health care.¹

Regarding employment, all labour legislation applies to both foreign and national workers (legally working in Cyprus) without any discrimination on the basis of sex.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, in its efforts to ensure that foreign workers enjoy equal treatment with nationals in regard to the terms and conditions of employment, has established certain procedures to be followed in the field.

Some of the main procedures are as follows:

- Written contracts of employment signed by both parties containing all terms and conditions of employment (hours of work, salary and other benefits, holidays, overtime pay, duties etc), on the basis of labour legislation and/or on the basis of collective agreements
- Appointment of inspectors whose duties include the inspection of the terms and conditions of the foreign workers at the workplace
- An established procedure for investigating complaints by foreign workers, including complaints by housemaids, regarding the terms and conditions of their employment. The settlement of complaints is initially assigned to the District Labour Offices, and in the case that a solution is not reached then the complaint is assigned for examination to a committee, which operates under the presidency of the Migration Officer

Provisions for ethnic minorities or new minorities as well as immigrant workers and asylum seekers apply to both genders without any discrimination. This includes education offered to all children (boys and girls at the age of compulsory education).

¹ Section 7(1) of the Safeguarding and Protection of the Patient's Rights Law 2004 (No. 1(I)/2005) provides that "Health care shall be provided to all equally and without unfavourable discrimination", and Section 7(2) provides that "Where as a matter of fact, a choice must be made between patients for the provision of a particular health care service, this should be made without discrimination, in a fair manner and on the basis of objective scientific/professional criteria".

Question 27. Please provide sex-disaggregated data and information on the overall situation of asylum seekers and refugees in Cyprus, including whether gender-related forms of persecution are recognized in determining refugee status.

Cyprus is a party to and is bound by the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, and the provisions of the said Convention apply in Cyprus as part of the domestic law with superior force to any other domestic law (see answer to question 2).

Pursuant to the Refugee Laws 2000 to 2005 (Law 6(I)/2000, as amended) gender-related issues determine recognition of refugee status. Under the refugee status determining procedures, gender-related persecution is examined in the context of membership of a particular social group as one of the grounds that may lead to refugee status recognition. The Asylum Service, which is the competent authority for examining asylum applications at the first level has, for example, granted refugee status to an Iranian woman for reasons of being married to and divorced from a non-Muslim man since had she been sent back to Iran, she would have been considered an adulterer if she chose to remarry; in a similar case, an Iranian woman was recognized as a refugee for reasons of committing adultery (adultery by force). The above cases involve *Rajm* (stoning to death).

A non-governmental organization, named APANEMI, which operates as a women's information and support centre, is running, among others, special programmes on asylum and refugee issues. It is funded by the European Refugee Fund. These programmes refer to women asylum seekers and women refugees and include the provision of psychological support, social assistance, legal counselling and material aid.

Sex-disaggregated data and statistics regarding asylum claims and the number of recognitions of refugee status on the ground of being a member of a particular social group are not available yet. The Asylum Service will be able to give those statistics following the implementation of the Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Community Statistics on Migration and International Protection from January 2007. For data on the total number of asylum applications and decisions see annex 13.

Family law

Question 28. The report notes that emphasis is being placed on implementation of new legislation in the area of family law (para. 195). Please elaborate on the concrete steps being taken towards implementation of these laws and the results of any analysis undertaken to evaluate their impact.

Since 1989, there has been a reform of Cyprus family law in almost all family matters. Starting with the amendment of the Constitution (First Amendment), which deals with the grounds of divorce, there followed extensive legislation, such as the Family Courts Law of 1990, the Family Courts (Religious Groups) Law of 1994, the Parents and Children Relations Law of 1990, the Property Rights of Spouses Law of 1991, the Legal Status of Children Born Out of Wedlock Law of 1991 and the Adoption Law of 1991. Those laws and any other legislation enacted after 1989 are fully compatible with the principles of equality of the sexes and of non-

discrimination, which are enunciated by article 28 of the Constitution, article 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and article 14 of the Convention for Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms as well as article 16 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Following research carried out with the assistance of the President of the Family Court in Nicosia, it was established that applicants in the Family Court (irrespective of sex) could make use and take advantage of the procedures under the aforesaid laws, and the principle of equality and non-discrimination is respected at all levels.

Furthermore, the Legal Aid Laws 2002 to 2005 (L. 165(I)/2002, as amended) provide for free legal aid, inter alia, for proceedings before the Family Court, either based on the provisions of any international treaty or in relation to matters of family relations, parental responsibility, alimony, recognition of a child, adoption, property relations of spouses and any other dispute in the marriage or in the family. Legal aid in this respect includes advice and assistance in relation to proceedings and representation by a lawyer in court; representation includes any kind of assistance which is usually provided by a lawyer in relation to proceedings at all stages, until the delivery of a judgement, as well as appeal proceedings.

To increase public awareness, especially of women, on the provisions of the Family Law, the NMWR has organized many events and seminars and has subsidized the organization of such events by women's organizations as well as the production of information materials. The collaboration of the NMWR with the mass media has proved effective in organizing special radio programmes educating the public on issues relevant to family law.

The Socialist Women's Movement, with the financial support of the NMWR, has introduced the "communication line for women" which provides to all women in Cyprus information on all matters concerning women's rights and gender equality including legislation in the field of family, labour and immigration law. From 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., women experts answer the phone and provide information immediately or within a short period of time, depending on the complexity of the question.

Optional Protocol

Question 29. Please provide information about steps taken to educate the public about the Optional Protocol, which Cyprus ratified in 2002.

- The National Machinery for Women's Rights has prepared and issued a book entitled *Human Rights of Women* and has disseminated it broadly and free of charge to the public. The idea was based on a similar publication by UNESCO. The book includes all relevant international legal instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol, translated into Greek.

A special event was organized at the University of Cyprus in 2002 by the Cyprus Federation of UNESCO Clubs and Associations and the National Machinery for Women's Rights, during which the book was presented.

- The National Institution for the Protection of Human Rights, which is very active in disseminating information and in promoting public awareness with respect to human rights, has included among its projects ones relating specifically to the Convention and the Optional Protocol. Among others, the National Institution for the Protection of Human Rights has issued publications on the text of human rights instruments, including the Convention and the Optional Protocol.
- The Convention and its Optional Protocol as well as the periodic report are on the website of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order.
- The Minister of Justice and Public Order, who is the Chairman of the National Machinery for Women's Rights, on many occasions makes special reference to the importance of the Convention and its Optional Protocol, encouraging women to make use of these instruments.
