

## NETHERLANDS

### **CEDAW A/49/38 (1994)**

245. The Committee considered the initial report of the Netherlands (CEDAW/C/NET/1 and Add.1-3) at its 234<sup>th</sup> and 239<sup>th</sup> meetings, on 17 and 20 January (see CEDAW/C/SR.234 and 239).

246. In introducing the report of the Netherlands, which consisted of three parts, one concerning the European territory and two others concerning the autonomous islands of the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba, the representative of the Government stressed that the Convention was considered to be an integral part of the internationally recognized human rights instruments that formed part of the Netherlands legal and political order. The Convention was valued not only as the international legal basis for the national programme of legal reforms, but also as a source of reference for the development of policies and programmes for women's equality. She outlined important revisions of and additions to existing legislation as a result of the ratification of the Convention.

247. In referring to the country's emancipation policy, she said that the coordination and integration of the policy in all ministries and departments was hampered by the fragmented structure of administrative and political decision-making, which constituted an obstacle to the effectiveness of the national machinery. Efforts to redress that problem included the use of the Department for the Coordination of Emancipation Policy as a centre of expertise on policy-making in matters of equality. She said that part of the emancipation-support policy was the provision of financial support to non-governmental organizations for their activities in this field.

248. She stated further that under the law of the Netherlands a Convention to which the country had become a State party automatically became part of the Netherlands legal order, and that national laws and regulations which were contrary to the Convention's provisions lost their validity. In the course of her explanation of the ratification process, she mentioned the adoption, in the very near future, of a general equal treatment act. The Government was instructed to report to Parliament on the implementation of the Convention four years after its entry into force and every subsequent four years. She cited, as an example of the functioning of the Government's emancipation support policy, the preparation for the Committee of a "shadow report" by non-governmental organizations, which counterbalanced the official report because it accurately reflected the relationship between the Government and private voluntary organizations, and an additional advisory report by the external advisory body belonging to the national machinery.

249. The representative of the Netherlands Antilles said that the Convention not only contributed to identifying some existing deficiencies in the infrastructure with regard to the implementation of some of its provisions, but it also showed constraints in the field of reporting in general, for instance with regard to the collection of statistical information. She emphasized the relationship between economic activities and their effect on the status of women and confirmed her Government's intention never to let the economic status of the country justify non-compliance with the provisions of the Convention. She said that the pace of the Convention's implementation could be affected by different factors in the community.

250. She reported on a decrease in the unemployment rate among women in recent years and a recent decision to apply the principle of equal pay for equal work to all civil servants. Consciousness-raising programmes on gender issues had been carried out. She also highlighted the role of the Bureau for Women's Affairs as the coordinating body of the national machinery in the field of women and development and said that one of the priority areas of its agenda was violence against women.

251. The representative of Aruba pointed out that the entry into force of the Convention had given a new impetus to the rights of the female population. The rapid economic development in the last five years had caused a sharp increase in the participation of women in the local labour force. While the proportion of women in the labour market increased to over 50 per cent in 1993, the corresponding changes in labour conditions and in the social field, which were necessary to facilitate the combination of professional work and family tasks, were still lagging behind. The Government of Aruba was, therefore, studying the possibility of part-time work and an increase in the number of day-care facilities.

252. The representative said that the predominant influence of economic factors on important areas of the society explained why it was that women were not particularly active in women's rights movements. However, they were pioneers in providing information about HIV/AIDS and were very active in providing information on, and preventing, child abuse. The Aruban Human Rights Committee, which was formally installed in 1993, dealt with reporting obligations and was authorized to advise the Government on human rights issues and to raise consciousness among the population about the existence of human rights in a society where there was no network of non-governmental organizations. The Committee had also introduced human rights education in the general school curricula. The Convention had been translated into Papiamentu and presented in a simplified version to the public.

### General observations

253. Members of the Committee commended the extensive, very detailed report, which adhered to the general guidelines and also contained ample statistics and graphs, and its presentation to the Committee. They welcomed the fact that the Convention had led to revisions of and additions to existing legislation and that it had been ratified without reservations. They noted that human rights education was included in school curricula and that the Convention had been translated into the native language of Aruba. Members were favourably impressed by the fact that, one year before presenting each subsequent report to the Committee, the Government would have to report to Parliament, and they commended the concern that was shown about the issue of sexual preference. Members noted that the Government gave support to women's groups. In reaction to the members' concern as to why non-governmental organizations had not been consulted in the course of the report's preparation, the representative explained that much value was attached to the distribution of power and the spread of responsibilities in the country. Since non-governmental organizations were independent, they were responsible only towards their respective constituencies; they could criticize, question or judge governmental policies, but were never responsible for them. The critical input of non-governmental organizations was sometimes a challenge to government policy, but was never an integral part of it; in that way those organizations did not lose their independence.

254. Members made specific reference to the "shadow report" prepared by non-governmental organizations and were interested in the Government's reaction to some of the issues addressed in it. The representative said that it was not necessary to discuss all the issues raised in the shadow report, since many of the same issues would be addressed under the different articles of the Convention.

255. In reaction to the observation that the report should have been more result-oriented and should have given a more in-depth analysis of both the status of women and the policy approach taken by the Government, the representative explained that that was partly the result of the fact that contributions to the report came from different parts of the Administration and that it proved difficult to follow the Committee's guidelines without losing sight of the country's policy priorities. Committee members felt that the many efforts undertaken were not matched by an equal number of positive results.

256. Whereas some members commented on the fragmented nature of the national machinery, others said that its structure highlighted the political will of the Government to introduce the policy of women's rights into the mainstream. The representative replied that, in her country, national machinery meant a complex of various institutions responsible for dealing with different aspects of the advancement of women. The main political responsibility for the emancipation policy rested with the State Secretary for Social Affairs and Employment and, at the administrative level, its core was the Department for the Coordination of Emancipation Policy. The Emancipation Council and the Equal Opportunities Commission also belonged to the broad national machinery. In addition, the role played by other ministries and departments, local and regional authorities, trade unions and non-governmental organizations was also highlighted. In follow-up remarks, members asked whether the transfer of responsibility on women's issues to the regional and municipal levels posed a danger, and requested information on this in subsequent reports.

257. When members stated that women's issues should also be included in the mainstream of the activities of all of the government departments in the Netherlands Antilles, the representative said that the national machinery had started to function in 1989 and had been restructured under the competence of the Minister for General Affairs, who was currently the Prime Minister. In 1992, the Government had organized a workshop on human rights and the reporting procedures for participants from different social strata, during which the Convention was also dealt with. It was important for the national machinery to receive information on gender bias from all interested parties in order to tackle the areas of concern in a structural way. Data were currently gathered in an insufficiently uniform way and the conduct of research in the five islands that comprised the Netherlands Antilles faced practical difficulties, related to the decentralization in several policy fields and the specific needs and characteristics of the different islands. Recognizing the need for population studies, the Bureau for Women's Affairs was working on an integral draft policy plan for women and development.

258. The representative of Aruba reported that in 1986 the Government had appointed a "focal point" for women's affairs at the Directorate of Social Affairs. Despite numerous efforts, that had not yet led to the development of an integral and interdepartmental emancipation policy.

259. Members expressed their hope that the island countries would be kept informed about the

presentation of their reports to the Committee and about the Committee's reactions.

### Questions related to specific articles

#### Article 2

260. In reply to questions about what was meant in the report by "the working of the Constitution on equal treatment in horizontal relationships", the representative of the European territory said that "horizontal relationships" referred to relationships between citizens, as opposed to the "vertical relationship" between citizens and the State. One of the main aims of the anti-discrimination legislation was to determine in which cases citizens were obliged to respect the fundamental rights of their fellow citizens and in which they might follow their own convictions.

261. Commending the measures taken to combat the problem of violence against women, members asked which measures had proved to be the most successful and requested information on the amount of money spent on those measures. The representative explained that the various instruments that had been used in that respect were changes in legislation, research and care and assistance to victims. The prevention of sexual violence was a policy priority. In 1993, approximately \$40 million was spent on various policy measures, such as shelters, information and innovative projects and the supporting structure. The responsibility in all such matters lay with various ministries.

262. Replying to the question how many women had made use of the possibility of filing recourse action in cases of discrimination, the representative said that, since its revision in 1989, the Equal Opportunities Act had been used in some 40 to 50 court cases and over 500 cases had been dealt with by the Equal Opportunities Commission. Referring to the new guidelines for public prosecution concerning cases of discrimination, of September 1993, the representative stated that they would be reviewed after the entry into force of the General Equal Opportunities Act.

263. More information was requested on the follow-up policy document on sexual violence against women and girls. The members of the Committee made positive comments on the Government's interpretation of equal access of women to jobs in the military.

#### Article 3

264. In reply to the members' requests for copies of the social atlas on the situation of women, the representative said that it was available only in Dutch.

265. When asked who was responsible for financing support centres at the national, regional and provincial levels and whether a coordinating body for the various levels would be set up, as well as whether the Government intended to institutionalize the funding for women's centres, the representative explained that each case was different. Some ministries subsidized certain projects on a permanent basis, whereas other organizations and national support centres were funded for limited periods. Often after the initial period an evaluation was conducted and it was decided on a case-by-case basis whether the subsidy should be prolonged and which party should take the responsibility. The overall responsibility for the emancipation support policy resided with the State

Secretary for Emancipation Policy.

266. Regarding the summary of the position of women based on most recent statistics, referred to in paragraph 323 of the report, the representative said that it was unfortunately not available in time for the session and would be sent to the members of the Committee immediately after publication.

267. Reacting to the disappointment expressed by members at the abolition of the Cabinet Committee for Emancipation Policy in 1991, the representative explained that that was the result of a process of political and administrative reform.

268. Members asked how it was possible that the Queen could be President of the Council of State, which was the highest advisory body in the country, serving her in fact with advice.

#### Article 4

269. Regarding a request for further information on the targets set and the timetables provided for temporary special measures, the representative stated that the goal of government policy was to impose positive action or preferential treatment by law only as a measure of last resort. Although the Government had set targets to increase the number of women in almost every sphere of the civil service, no sanctions were applied if targets were not met.

#### Article 5

270. Members welcomed the reports from non-governmental organizations on article 5 and requested clarification of the policy for equal rights of lesbian women. The representative postponed presenting an overview of related government policies and programmes to the second periodic report.

#### Article 6

271. It was asked whether, within the Bureau for Women's Affairs, there were special departments to deal with the abuse of women and children. The representative of Aruba stated that the issue remained a sensitive area of concern. According to data obtained from the Police Department, offences related to the sexual abuse of women and children constituted a considerable part of their workload and the figures were increasing. A private organization had been set up to help children who were victimized by such crimes and adults could seek legal redress or obtain help at the Bureau of Family Difficulties.

272. Doubts were expressed as to whether voluntary prostitution could be considered an entirely personal matter and a profession. Confronted with the issue of the forced prostitution of immigrant women, the representative of the European territory of the Netherlands replied that traffic in women was considered a problem of forced prostitution and that persons who were illegally in the Netherlands and had been forced into prostitution would be granted a residence permit for the period of time covering any investigation into their situation and the court session.

273. Regarding the HIV/AIDS situation in the Netherlands, it was reported that the Government

had been formulating a policy on HIV/AIDS since the beginning of the epidemic, a policy which was being implemented at national, regional and municipal levels, in close cooperation between the competent health ministry and interested groups. Its key aims were prevention of the further spread of HIV, care, research and prevention of discrimination against infected persons, including AIDS-information campaigns for prostitutes.

274. Regarding a question about the reasons for the increase in sexual violence, the representative said its increase was not influenced by the fact that pornography was not prohibited. It was even possible that the availability of pornography for adults had had a restraining influence on the incidence of violence against women.

#### Article 7

275. The Committee commended the way in which the report of the Netherlands mentioned the dates of introduction of male suffrage and universal suffrage, when the vote was conceded to women. They expressed surprise at the scarce references in the report to policies of the European Union that promoted equality of opportunities between women and men. Members asked what the reactions of the Government and non-governmental organizations were to positive measures, including legislation to include a larger number of women in electoral lists, and they requested further clarification on the electoral system and on the possibility of modifying lists of candidates in order to introduce more women. The representative explained that one of the main aims of the emancipation policy was to try to increase the number of women in politics and public administration. As the candidates were put forward by the autonomous political parties, and the Government had no influence in that sphere, it could only exercise indirect influence through measures such as the provision of grants to political parties for activities aimed at increasing the number of women in politics or the setting-up of special working groups dealing with the issue. The political parties themselves decided on the names and the order of candidates on the list and it depended on the importance given by the individual parties to women in politics as to whether women were elected.

276. Regarding the size of grants given to political parties, the representative said that an amount of about \$2.7 million per year was given by the Government to political parties for training, education and related activities, but only if the activities were related to matters of importance to the functioning of the democracy, and only if a party was in financial difficulty.

277. In response to the request for an analysis of the progress made and the obstacles encountered in securing parity democracy, the representative explained that, regarding the composition of elected bodies, parity between women and men was not an objective to be achieved by the Government and that parity democracy was rejected as conflicting with the basic principles of democracy itself.

278. In answer to a question about the target figure for female Queen's Commissioners, the representative said that new Queen's Commissioners were appointed by the Cabinet, according to the relative strength of the political parties in the Second Chamber of Parliament, from among "the veterans" from the field of public administration, only a few of whom were women.

279. Regarding the number of women in administrative and political positions in provincial and

municipal governments, the representative said that detailed figures would be provided to the Committee in a brochure.

280. Further questions were posed as to whether the marked decline in the membership of most political parties was the same for women and for men and whether women's membership in non-governmental organizations had increased. Considering that some parties mandated that their members belong to a particular church, it was asked whether there was a danger of religious fanaticism.

281. Regarding the number of women deputies in the Parliament of the Netherlands Antilles, their representative stated that currently 13 per cent of the members of Parliament were women, and 30 per cent of the ministerial and junior ministerial posts were occupied by women.

#### Article 8

282. Asked about government policies to increase the number of women in the diplomatic service, the representative of the Netherlands explained that policy measures were geared towards the recruitment and promotion of women and that preferential treatment was applied in cases where candidates had equal qualifications. In the case of couples with both partners in the diplomatic service, a number of arrangements had proved to be satisfactory to all parties concerned.

#### Article 10

283. Members inquired whether programmes demonstrated that a lack of education was an obstacle to gender equality.

#### Article 11

284. Regarding the employment rate of women, which until recently was relatively low in the Netherlands, it was said that it could be explained by historical, economic and social development, but that thus far social scientists had not been able to give a generally accepted answer.

285. As to the question whether the increased number of women in part-time employment was a manifestation of direct or indirect discrimination against women, the representative said that that was not the case. Most women sought part-time jobs themselves in order to achieve a better balance in their lives between their various duties, and men too were looking for part-time work.

286. Regarding questions concerning the number of working hours that qualified a job as part-time and the percentage of women working in double part-time work, the representative stated that, in general, that qualification was applied to jobs with less than 38 to 40 hours per week and that no statistics were available on the number of women working in double part-time jobs.

287. Considering that women were highly concentrated in a limited number of occupations, in spite of having the same educational level as men, several measures were being taken to redress the situation, such as awareness campaigns through teaching materials and the media.

288. The representative said that the requests for more information on pay differences between women and men and pay for work of equal value would be answered and supplemented by statistics in the second periodic report. Group action was possible in cases of unequal pay, and that was one of the main reasons for having introduced group action. Data on female agricultural workers would also be supplied in the subsequent report.

289. Members inquired whether sanctions existed in the event that the public employment services did not meet the set targets. Regarding women working in the private sector, the organizations and enterprises concerned carried out affirmative action for which they could receive government grants.

290. Asked about the volume of paid work at home, the representative said that official statistics differed a great deal from one set of statistics to another and that legislation to improve the situation of those doing paid work at home was in preparation.

291. Regarding questions about the position of women enrolled in private social insurance schemes, the representative said that any related problems should soon disappear in view of the forthcoming implementation of relevant legislation.

292. In response to questions about the former and the current taxation situation for women, and concern expressed by members about the negative effect of the so-called breadwinner's benefit in the system of personal income tax on women's participation in the labour market, the representative stated that the major tax reform in the 1980s removed de jure differential treatment of women and men. A person's decision to enter the labour market was influenced by various considerations. It was, therefore, not certain whether the system really functioned as a disincentive for all women to enter the labour market.

293. Members asked whether the Government provided child-care facilities to single and unmarried mothers, whether affirmative action was undertaken aimed at employing more women in managerial positions and what the social security situation and unemployment benefits of women as compared with men were. Members commented that the labour market schemes and targets for unemployed women were not obligatory enough for officials.

294. Regarding the question whether women who suffered discrimination at work could refer in court to article 11 of the Convention, the representative replied that it was possible only in litigation against the State, but not against a private employer or another citizen.

295. When asked whether the Government of Aruba was planning to eliminate the provision according to which dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy was legal, the representative of Aruba stated that in the instance of female government employees no cases of dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy had ever been presented. In the private sector, dismissal required special previous approval and pregnancy was not considered to be sufficient reason to grant such permission. As the Civil Code prohibited dismissal in cases of sickness, pregnancy was considered to be included under "sickness".

## Article 12

296. In reaction to the comment by members that the report was not detailed enough on the question of health, the representative of the Netherlands said that in 1994 a study would be conducted on the access of women to health services.

297. Replying to a question about the availability of special programmes for women who were already infected with HIV/AIDS, the representative said that while all government programmes were accessible to both women and men, the Government subsidized a "Women and AIDS" office and self-help groups were trying to get women out of their isolation. Although tourism was one of the main industries in Aruba, the prevalence of AIDS infection was relatively low. The National AIDS Commission offered care and counselling, as well as control measures, including health education. Specific information and guidance was also provided to prostitutes.

298. Following a request for further information on drug addiction among women and related programmes, the representative of the Netherlands explained that the central objective of the drug policy was to reduce, as much as possible, the risks that drug abuse presented to the users, their environment and society. A pragmatic approach to the problem proved to be more effective and statistics showed that generally one woman was addicted for every three men.

299. Asked about the Government's position on euthanasia, the representative stated that she did not think it proper to link euthanasia with women's issues.

300. Referring to the question whether there was legislation regarding artificial insemination and whether it was based on ethical or on scientific principles, the representative replied that artificial insemination was not regulated by law. However, hospitals had their codes of conduct and an individual physician with a different view on the matter could refer a woman to a colleague to undertake the procedure. It was important that women applying for that procedure not be refused on the basis of their marital status, sexual preference or lifestyle. Pregnancy at an advanced age was currently not covered by law.

301. Members of the Committee requested clarification about the abortion policy in the country. It was explained that the reason for the five-day waiting period was to safeguard responsible decision-making and to give the women the chance of reconsidering if they wished to. Abortion could be carried out only by a physician in a hospital or clinic with a permit and was allowed only in a medically or socially untenable situation in which it was deemed necessary.

#### Article 16

302. Turning to the question whether any reform was under way regarding the order of names of married couples, the representative reported on a bill on equality between men and women in choosing family names that was currently being considered by Parliament.

303. Regarding the question whether cases of rape within marriage had been dealt with in court since the entry into force of the new legislation in 1991, the representative replied that there had been some cases, most of them situations in which the spouses were divorced *de facto*, but not *de jure*. Replying to a related question, she said that, before that law was adopted, a replacement of the words "through force" by "against the will" had not been considered, since it would have given a

chance to question the victim about her attitudes.

304. Regarding the high number of divorces in the Netherlands Antilles, the social, cultural, economic and political reasons for that phenomenon and the question whether it was not also influenced by the low minimum age of marriage for women, the representative replied that currently the Civil Code was undergoing an integral revision. In spite of the low minimum age of marriage, women generally entered into marriage at the age of 18 or above. Experience showed that reasons for divorce were short periods of marriage, especially if the wife was self-supporting, domestic violence against women, unfaithfulness of the husband and the general empowerment of women.

305. Responding to an additional question relating to international technical cooperation, the representative stated that development cooperation relating to the women in development policy had to operate within the overall development policy, which might force the Government to take a more selective approach.

### Concluding comments of the Committee

#### Introduction

306. The Committee commended the State party for not entering any reservations and for undertaking such conscientious efforts in legislation as well as other measures, first before ratifying the Convention, and secondly for its implementation.

307. It also applauded the State party for presenting such an extensive report, including a general description of the country and statistics on the situation of women. It wished, however, for a more in-depth analysis and a more result-oriented description of legal and other policy measures in subsequent reports, including more comparative data, as well as information on the financial cost of the projects described.

308. It noted with satisfaction that the answers given by the State party to the questions posed by the Committee filled many of the lacunae and even further improved an already excellent presentation.

#### Positive aspects

309. The Committee commended the State party's efforts to establish a comprehensive national machinery as well as the requirement for each future report on the Convention to be submitted to Parliament before being presented to the Committee.

310. It noted with appreciation the extensive research, policy and support measures taken by the State party that explored the causes of and combatted the various forms of violence against women.

311. It also commended the financial support given to women's initiatives and women's organizations by the Government as well as its willingness to listen to their concerns and demands. The Committee also applauded the fact that the State party implemented the Convention by developing policies and other measures to eliminate discrimination based on sexual preference.

312. It noted with satisfaction that the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba actively implemented the Convention despite economic difficulties, including publicizing its content in general and in the schools.

#### Principal subjects of concern

313. The Committee voiced concern whether the mainstreaming of the State party's national machinery impacted on its effectiveness. In this respect it also noted with concern that the transfer of equality policies and measures from the central to the provincial and municipal levels might result in a loss of political will and financial support.

314. Another concern was raised by the character of an emancipation policy that gave only limited financial support to women's projects rather than institutionalized support.

315. The Committee also expressed concern on the thinness of the State party's reporting on article 11 compared to the reporting on other articles and wondered whether this reflected insufficient attention by the Government to women's employment issues.

#### Suggestions and recommendations

316. The Committee suggested that in the second report more information should be given on the national machinery of the Netherlands Antilles and the Netherlands Aruba. It recommended the inclusion of more information on the legal and other policy measures to eliminate discrimination on the grounds of women's sexual preference as well as on the results, including data, of the efforts of provincial and municipal governments regarding policies and other measures for women.

317. It suggested that more result-oriented policies regarding women's employment, including affirmative action, pay issues and child care, were to be pursued and to be reported upon.

## **CEDAW A/56/38 (2001)**

185. The Committee considered the second and third periodic reports of the Netherlands (CEDAW/C/NET/2 and Add.1-2 and CEDAW/C/NET/3 and Add.1-2) at its 512th and 513th meetings, on 6 July 2001 (see CEDAW/C/SR.512 and 513).

### **(a) Introduction by the State party**

186. In introducing the second and third periodic reports, the representative of the Netherlands indicated that the Netherlands had fully endorsed the Convention and that, during recent decades, a genuine revolution had taken place in the labour market whereby, while in 1988 only one third of women had paid employment, in 2001 the level of participation had risen to 52 per cent. There was, however, still evidence of a “male breadwinner’s model of society”, as demonstrated by the low numbers of women in senior positions and in technical professions, and the large number of women in part-time jobs which did not provide economic independence. The representative indicated that the Government would remain firm on accelerating the emancipation process.

187. The representative emphasized that paid employment was a prerequisite for economic independence and that women’s economic independence contributed to a more equal balance of power, which had proved to be the most effective instrument for preventing and combating violence against women. The participation of women in the labour force was the focus of the Government’s recent Multi-year Plan on Emancipation Policy, which involved all governmental ministries. Set targets included that 65 per cent of women would be in paid employment by 2010 and that 60 per cent of women who were currently in part-time jobs would be fully economically independent.

188. The representative indicated that labour participation by women could be increased only through a reallocation of care tasks between women and men. A number of measures had been taken in that regard, including doubling the capacity of childcare facilities; the introduction of the Work and Care Bill, which provided for four weeks’ leave for foster parents or parents of adopted children; flexible use of the provisions for three-months’ parental leave; 10 days’ leave per year to care for a sick child, partner or parent; and a law giving employees a right to work more or fewer hours per week. In addition, the project entitled “Daily routine”, which aimed at a better alignment of education, childcare and leisure facilities, had been established. The Government would be delineating a “Daily routine” policy in the near future.

189. The strategy of gender mainstreaming had been accepted by the Government and all departments had a responsibility for gender mainstreaming, with each having formulated measurable emancipation tasks. Examples in this regard included a new tax system, which promoted the economic independence of women; the preparation of a tax measure aimed at facilitating women’s re-entry into the labour market; and efforts to increase the number of black, ethnic minority and refugee women on local councils.

190. Domestic violence was still a serious problem in the Netherlands, and the Minister of Justice had submitted to the Parliament a plan of action to combat domestic violence, which included more

severe punishments for the perpetrators of such violence. In accordance with European Union policy, the Netherlands had appointed a national rapporteur on trafficking of persons and was the first country of the European Union to do so.

191. The representative of the Netherlands highlighted aspects of the Multi-year Plan on Emancipation Policy, including a life-cycle project which examined diversity in lifestyles.

192. On behalf of the Government of the Netherlands Antilles, another representative explained the restructuring programme and aggressive economic policy in place, indicating that, while obstacles existed, developments in gender equality had taken place. Among these were the entry into force of the first part of a new civil code, which abolished a number of discriminatory laws and granted women equal rights in issues pertaining to marriage and the family. Irretrievable breakdown had been delineated as the only ground for divorce and either spouse could request termination of the marriage on that ground. Differences in status between children born in and out of wedlock had been eliminated; a law had been enacted which provided protection to domestic workers, most of whom were women; and termination of labour contracts on the basis of marriage and pregnancy had been prohibited. In addressing increased sexual violence against women, the penal code had been amended to increase the maximum punishment available for sexual offences and special training had been given to police officers in dealing with victims of domestic violence. Campaigns condemning violence against women had also been carried out in collaboration with local non-governmental organizations. The representative indicated that regional collaboration on gender issues between Aruba, Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles was being expanded.

193. On behalf of the Government of Aruba, the representative indicated that the National Bureau of Women's Affairs, established in 1996, had had an important role to play in raising awareness of women's rights, existing discriminatory laws and traditional attitudes and practices. Owing to limited resources, most of the Bureau's projects had been carried out within the context of the regional collaboration between Aruba, Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles. The three had agreed to develop projects on job training for women, gender-awareness training for media personnel, on sexuality and reproductive health of teenage mothers and on violence against women. A regional meeting would be held on women's participation in positions of leadership and decision-making. The Aruban parliament had approved a new civil code which eliminated existing discriminatory laws, and a medical insurance scheme aimed at providing health care for all persons had been introduced. Efforts were under way to counteract violence against women, including through the establishment of a shelter for battered women and the introduction of draft amendments to the criminal code, which included marital rape. Also of importance was the establishment of a Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS theme group for the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS in Aruba. In closing, the representative mentioned several remaining areas of concern, including sex-segregation in the labour force, with the employment of women concentrated in the lower-skilled and lower-paid occupations, and low levels of women's participation in politics and decision-making.

#### (b) Concluding comments of the Committee

##### Introduction

194. The Committee commends the Government of the Netherlands on its second and third periodic reports, which are in accordance with the Committee's guidelines for the preparation of periodic reports. It also commends the Government for the comprehensive written replies to the questions posed by the Committee's pre-sessional working group, and the oral presentation of the delegation which sought to clarify the current situation of women in the Netherlands, as well as in the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba, and provided additional information on the implementation of the Convention. The Committee also welcomes the written responses to a number of additional questions posed during constructive dialogue, which were provided in the final week of the session.

195. The Committee congratulates the Government for its high-level delegation, headed by the Secretary of State for Social Affairs and Employment. The Committee expresses appreciation for the constructive and frank dialogue that took place between the delegation and the members of the Committee but expresses regret that no representatives of the Governments of Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles were able to be part of the delegation which presented the reports, since it considers that this would have enhanced that dialogue.

#### Positive aspects

196. The Committee commends the Government on its conceptual approach to the implementation of each article of the Convention which incorporates, wherever possible, three policy levels: achievement of complete equality for women before the law; improvement of the position of women; and efforts to confront the dominant gender-based ideology.

197. The Committee also commends the Government on its extensive programme of legislative and administrative reforms which contributes to the implementation of the Convention.

198. The Committee further commends the Government on its programme to combat trafficking, in particular the appointment of the National Rapporteur on Traffic of Persons, whose aim is to provide the Government with recommendations on how best to tackle the problem of trafficking, and for its commitment to combat this phenomenon at the level of the European Union.

199. 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.

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

201. The Committee welcomes the establishment in Aruba in 1996, in accordance with the Committee's recommendations, of the National Bureau of Women's Affairs.

#### Factors and difficulties affecting the implementation of the Convention

202. The Committee notes that there are no significant factors or difficulties which prevent the effective implementation of the Convention in the Netherlands.

### Principal areas of concern and recommendations

203. The Committee expresses concern that the policy in the Netherlands of balanced division of paid work and unpaid care has not produced the expected results, since the burden of unpaid care still falls mainly upon women. The Committee is also concerned that women who work outside the home devote twice as much time as men to unpaid work, and that there are still insufficient child-care places.

204. The Committee recommends that the policy of balanced division of paid work and unpaid care be reviewed. It also recommends that greater efforts be devoted to the development of additional programmes and policies to encourage men to share family and caring responsibilities. The Committee also recommends that the Government ensure the availability of sufficient childcare places, and an uninterrupted long school day.

205. Despite the efforts made to combat discrimination in the Netherlands, the Committee expresses concern at the continuing discrimination against immigrant refugee and minority women who suffer from multiple discrimination, based both on their sex and on their ethnic background, in society at large and within their communities, particularly with respect to education, employment and violence against women. The Committee also expresses concern about manifestations of racism and xenophobia in the Netherlands.

206. The Committee urges the Government to take effective measures to eliminate discrimination against immigrant, refugee and minority women, both in society at large and within their communities. It urges the Government to respect and promote the human rights of women over discriminatory cultural practices, and take effective and proactive measures, including awareness-raising programmes and programmes to sensitize the community to combat patriarchal attitudes and practices and stereotyping of roles and to eliminate discrimination and violence against women in immigrant and minority communities. The Committee also urges the Government to eliminate xenophobia and racism in the Netherlands by strengthening its efforts to combat the activities of racist and xenophobic groups based in the country.

207. The Committee is concerned about the lack of information in the reports on the de facto situation of women of ethnic and minority communities in respect to their access to education, employment and health services. It is also concerned at the limited information on their freedom from violence, including female genital mutilation, domestic violence and honour crimes, as well as other discriminatory practices, such as polygamy, early marriage and forced pregnancy.

208. The Committee urges the Government to provide in its next report detailed information, including statistics disaggregated by sex and ethnicity, on the implementation of the Convention with respect to different ethnic and minority groups resident in the territory of the State party.

209. Noting the recent legislation on the abolition of the ban on brothels, which came into effect in October 2000, the Committee emphasizes that prostitution poses for women risks of exploitation and violence.

210. The Committee urges the Government to begin monitoring this law immediately and provide,

in its next report, an assessment of the intended as well as unintended effects of the law, including those pertaining to risk of violence and to health, in particular in regard to those women without residence permits who are engaged in prostitution. The Committee also urges the Government to increase its efforts to provide training and education to prostitutes in order to ensure that they have a full range of options for earning their livelihood.

211. The Committee expresses concern about non-European women who have been trafficked, who fear expulsion to their countries of origin and who might lack the effective protection of their Government on their return.

212. The Committee urges the Government of the Netherlands to ensure that trafficked women are provided with full protection in their countries of origin or to grant them asylum or refugee status.

213. Although acknowledging the efforts undertaken by the Government to solve the problem of discrimination faced by women at the workplace through all of the legislative measures aimed at improving women's economic status, including, inter alia, the Work and Care Bill, the Flexibility and Security Act, the Working Conditions Act and the Working Hours (Adjustment) Act, the Committee expresses concern over continuing discrimination in employment and business enterprises. The Committee also expresses concern with the "horizontal" and "vertical" gender segregation of the labour market, and the concentration of women in part-time employment. The Committee further expresses concern that, in the private sector, women earn on average 23 per cent less than men, although when adjusted in the light of the work they do and their personal characteristics, this differential is reduced to 7 per cent.

214. The Committee urges the Government to increase its efforts to eliminate stereotypes relating to traditional areas of employment and education for women. The Committee recommends efforts to improve the conditions for working women so as to enable them to choose full-time, rather than part-time, employment in which they are currently over-represented. It also urges the Government to eliminate the discrimination that part-time workers face in relation to overtime.

215. The Committee expresses concern that elderly women may be marginalized within, as well as insufficiently covered by, the health insurance and pension systems and urges the Government to pay special attention to the needs of elderly women in "Daily routine" programmes.

216. The Committee expresses concern about the low presence of women in high-ranking posts in all areas, in particular in academia where, according to 1996 figures, women hold only 5 per cent of professorships.

217. The Committee also expresses concern about the low participation of women in political and public life. In the present Government, women hold 26.75 per cent of posts in ministries whereas, according to 1998 figures, only 7.5 per cent of posts at the level of ambassador, permanent representative and consul-general are filled by women.

218. The Committee urges the Government to make efforts to facilitate an increase in the numbers of women in high-ranking posts, including in decision-making in politics, the economy and academia. It recommends the adoption of proactive measures to encourage more women to apply

for these posts and, where necessary, the implementation of temporary special measures, as provided for in article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention.

219. The Committee notes with concern that, in the Netherlands, there is a political party represented in the Parliament that excludes women from membership, which is a violation of article 7 of the Convention.

220. The Committee recommends that the State party take urgent measures to address this situation, including through the adoption of legislation that brings the membership of political parties into conformity with its obligations under article 7.

221. The Committee expresses concern that there is insufficient information on the issue of HIV/AIDS included in the reports and requests the Government to provide such information in its next periodic report, in accordance with general recommendation 15 of the Committee.<sup>6</sup>

222. The Committee also expresses concern at the absence of information in the reports on tobacco and alcohol addiction among women. It further expresses concern at the absence of information on drug addiction among women, in particular in the light of decriminalization of the use of certain drugs. The Committee requests that information on these areas be provided in the next report and, taking account of paragraph 10 of its general recommendation 24 on women and health,<sup>2</sup> on any measures adopted to address these issues.

223. The Committee further expresses concern that the new Law on Names provides that, where the parents cannot reach an agreement as to the name of a child, the father has the ultimate decision. The Committee believes that this contravenes the basic principle of the Convention regarding equality, in particular article 16 (g) thereof.

224. The Committee recommends that the Government review the Law on Names and amend it to comply with the Convention.

225. The Committee found it difficult to evaluate the implementation of the Convention in Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles because no representatives of the Governments of those territories were part of the delegation which presented their reports.

226. The Committee urges that Government of the Netherlands to ensure that the Governments of

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<sup>6</sup> [Official Records of the General Assembly,] *Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/45/38), para. 438.

<sup>2</sup> *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/54/38/Rev.1), chap. I, sect. A.

Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles are sufficiently supported so that they can be part of the delegation of the Netherlands when it presents its next periodic report to the Committee.

227. The Committee expresses its concern about the status of women in Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles where, despite the strides that have been made towards strengthening the legal position of

women, gender equality is far from being achieved and gender-based stereotypes persist. The Committee expresses particular concern about the negative effects that the structural adjustment programmes might have on women in the Netherlands Antilles and on the limited resources available to the National Bureau of Women's Affairs in Aruba, which might prevent the effective implementation of projects aimed at empowering women.

228. The Committee urges the Government of the Netherlands to strengthen its economic support to Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles, in particular support for programmes on capacity-building to better achieve gender equality, including support for the implementation of the Convention.

229. Noting the positive contributions of the Netherlands to the process of elaboration of the Optional Protocol, the Committee urges the Government to ratify that instrument as soon as possible.

230. 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.

231. The Committee requests the wide dissemination in the Netherlands, including in Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles, of the present concluding comments in order to make the people of the Netherlands, in particular governmental administrators and politicians, aware of the steps that have been taken to ensure de jure and de facto equality for 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 in the twenty-first century".