



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

Distr.: General
6 April 2005

Original: English

**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
Thirty-second session

Summary record of the 673rd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 18 January 2005, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Manalo

Contents

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the
Convention (*continued*)

Combined second and third periodic reports of Croatia

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of this document* to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza.

Any corrections to the record of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

05-21100 (E)

0521100

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention *(continued)*

Combined second and third periodic reports of Croatia (CEDAW/C/CRO/2-3, CEDAW/PSWG/2005/I/CRP.1/Add.2 and CEDAW/PSWG/2005/I/CRP.2/Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Croatia took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Štimac-Radin** (Croatia), introducing her country's combined second and third periodic reports (CEDAW/C/CRO/2-3), said that Croatia had undergone major changes since the submission of its initial report in 1998. Croatia's accession to the European Union, one of its foremost political goals, was currently being negotiated. The European Commission had recognized Croatia's stable institutions, its basic laws ensuring equality between men and women and its institutional structures to promote and monitor gender equality. In Croatia, gender equality was regarded as a principle of the highest constitutional order; the Law on Gender Equality, adopted in 2002, guaranteed protection against discrimination and defined the prerequisites for equal opportunities in all areas of social life.

3. Croatia had also adopted anti-discriminatory legislation, including the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence and the Law on Homosexual Communities. Its second National Policy for the Promotion of Gender Equality served as an umbrella document for the promotion of women's rights and the fundamental Government strategy for the advancement of gender equality. Under the Law on Gender Equality, the Government Office for Gender Equality was the main Governmental expert body, replacing the Commission for Gender Equality.

4. In 2001, the Parliamentary Committee for Gender Equality had been formed; an independent Ombudsperson for Gender Equality had been appointed in 2002. The Ombudsperson was responsible for monitoring implementation of the Law on Gender Equality, and for hearing complaints. On the whole, the provisions of the Law on Gender Equality reflected the provisions of the Convention, particularly the definition of discrimination contained in article 1 and the provisions of article 2 on embodying the principle

of the equality of men and women in the Constitution, legislation and other regulations.

5. Participation of women in political life and decision-making had been growing steadily since the 1990s. Women currently accounted for nearly 25 per cent of the members of the Croatian Parliament, and two deputy speakers were women. Four of the country's fourteen ministers were women, and one of its two Deputy Prime Ministers was a woman. In addition, 30 per cent of the top Government officials were women. Four of the thirteen candidates that had stood for office in the recent Presidential election had been women; the current Deputy Prime Minister, who had stood for election as the ruling party candidate, had made it to the second round of balloting. Croatia had exceeded the 18 per cent average among Council of Europe countries for female representation in Parliament; in May 2003, it had been ranked 14th by the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Nonetheless, its aim was to achieve 50 per cent representation of women by continuing a lively public debate that had already lasted more than 10 years, and through specific action by Government bodies, individual politicians and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

6. Croatia had taken a number of temporary special measures in accordance with articles 3 and 4 of the Convention, not only under the Law on Gender Equality but also in electoral legislation requiring equal gender representation on political parties to ensure electoral lists. Under a positive action measure, political parties were allocated a 10 per cent increase in funding for each representative of an underrepresented gender. Despite those special measures, however, female representation in local government (about 14 per cent) remained significantly lower than at the national level. The Office for Gender Equality had already launched a number of activities to promote gender equality in local elections scheduled for April.

7. Since its inception in March 2004, her Office for Gender Equality had been cooperating with many non-governmental organizations, in keeping with its mandate and her Government's firm commitment in that regard. The Office had provided financial support to a number of NGO projects, including one aimed to increase women's participation in political life, launched by the Women's Network of Croatia, the umbrella organization for women's NGOs. It had also financed a number of NGO publications, including a report on a research project on women in politics and a

study of women in the labour market. Together with the Centre for Women War Victims, her Office had published a second edition of “Prostitution and Trafficking in Women”. It had also published a handbook on shelters for women as part of a 16-day campaign to eliminate violence against women.

8. Croatia had declared 22 September as the National Day of Campaigning against Violence against Women and had adopted a National Strategy for Protection from Family Violence (2005-2007), prepared with input from NGO representatives. The Government had also organized a symposium entitled “Philosophy and Gender” in conjunction with the Croatian Philosophy Society and, in cooperation with the Centre for the Education and Counselling of Women, had organized a series of seminars entitled “Awareness and politics” for local NGOs and county gender equality commissions. That had triggered the formation of many additional county gender equality commissions — 10 in a period of four months — fulfilling the Office’s long-term goal of establishing a network of coordinated institutional mechanisms at the local and regional levels.

9. Consistent with the Law on Gender Equality, coordinators had been appointed to administrative and government administration offices, and as the entities responsible for implementing the Law on Gender Equality — a complex document which was sometimes vague — had been established in 2004. The existing institutional framework for implementing legislation and the National Policy for the Promotion of Gender Equality must still be developed further. In particular, her Office’s financial, human and organizational resources must be strengthened.

10. Turning to article 10 of the Convention, she said that there was no gender discrimination in education. Input from representatives of women’s NGOs would be reflected in a plan for new textbooks currently being drafted by the Ministry for Science, Education and Sport. A number of measures had been taken to prevent discrimination and improve women’s position in the labour market, and to provide incentives to women entrepreneurs.

11. While Croatia was implementing most of the provisions of the Convention, certain obstacles to social change persisted. Thus, on the basis of the conclusions contained in a national report on the implementation of the objectives of the United Nations

Millennium Declaration, prepared by the Croatian Parliament, government entities and representatives of NGOs and civil society, her Government had singled out a number of priorities for promoting gender equality and empowering women, including gender-sensitive school curricula, increased participation of women in national and local political life, a reduction in violence against women, improved economic status for women, greater gender sensitivity in the media, improvements in the collection and management of gender-disaggregated statistics, greater balance between women’s professional and family lives, greater participation of women in civil society organizations and decision-making and the promotion of institutional capacities for gender equality, including the strengthening of the Office for Gender Equality.

12. Croatia had made every effort to implement the Committee’s final recommendations following the presentation of its initial report in 1998. In that context, her Office had launched a series of publications; the first volume, entitled “A brief guide through CEDAW”, was designed to disseminate the Convention among the general public.

Articles 1 to 6

13. **Ms. Gabr** enquired about the coordination and financing of the various mechanisms that implemented national legislation aimed at achieving compliance with European standards of gender equality. In addition, what action had been taken to change stereotyping and to prevent violence against women? She would appreciate specific figures on the number of persons arrested and penalized under the State party’s laws on prostitution, trafficking in women and sexual exploitation of women, and on other aspects of their implementation.

14. **Ms. Popescu** commended the State party on its ratification of the Optional Protocol, its adoption of the amendment to article 20 of the Convention, its legislative reforms and its progress in establishing democratic institutions since its initial report. Welcoming, in particular, the adoption of the Law on Gender Equality and the National Strategy for Protection from Family Violence, she requested information on successes and setbacks in their implementation, and on the number and type of complaints submitted under them. Could the delegation identify the main challenges encountered thus far by the Office for Gender Equality and the previous

Commission for Gender Equality in implementing the National Policy for the Promotion of Gender Equality?

15. Turning to the situation of minority women, she enquired about the number of stateless Roma women and the measures being taken to facilitate their acquisition of citizenship under the Law on Croatian Citizenship (CEDAW/C/CRO/2-3, p. 33). Lastly, referring to page 21 of the combined reports, she sought details on the current situation of approximately 96,000 returnees of Serbian nationality, particularly as concerned the restoration of their property and their reintegration in society.

16. **Ms. Zou** Xiaoqiao asked for information about entities to promote gender equality in addition to the Government Office. Referring to the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence and the Law on Misdemeanours, she asked how the courts determined whether a case of domestic violence should be characterized as a crime or a misdemeanour, and whether there was a centre for examining injuries resulting from domestic violence.

17. **Ms. Pimentel** said that she wished to know how many shelters for victims of domestic violence had been opened or were supported by the Government and what admittance procedures applied. In particular, she wondered whether victims needed to contact the police first or could approach shelters directly. She was particularly curious about the situation of minority women.

18. **Ms. Shin**, referring to Croatia's response to question 12 (CEDAW/PSWG/2005/1/CRP.2/Add.1) that the law provided three types of legal sanction (fines, imprisonment and protective measures) to protect victims of domestic violence, said that she wished to know whether it was ever the case in Croatia, as elsewhere, that the wife ended up paying the fine; why, if over 3,000 cases of domestic violence had been reported in the first quarter of 2004, only 188 penal procedures had been initiated and whether law enforcement officials received any training or specific instructions in that regard. The reporting delegation should also indicate whether any funding was provided for shelters set up and operated by NGOs and, if so, whether such funding was guaranteed.

19. **Ms. Patten**, referring to legislative reforms, said that she wished to know how efforts to promote gender equality had affected women's lives; whether the judiciary was responsive and sensitive to such efforts

and, if so, whether any examples of judgements passed could be provided; whether law enforcement officials were familiar with the Convention; and whether any training was provided for them in that regard. Regarding statistics, she asked which government department was responsible for collecting gender-disaggregated data and whether such data were made accessible to women. Referring to the statement on page 18 of the combined reports that the 1997 Social Welfare Act had determined a wider set of rights for persons with disabilities, she wished to know to what extent the Act had improved those rights, in particular with regard to women with disabilities, and which Ministry was responsible. The Committee would also appreciate a clarification concerning the amendments made to the Act. Lastly, she also wished to know whether the budget of the National Policy for the Promotion of Gender Equality had been increased; whether any data were available on the decrease in the rate of application for disability pensions for women; whether the application rate for disability pensions for men was also decreasing; and whether an evaluation would be carried out.

20. **Ms. Štimac-Radin** (Croatia), responding to the questions concerning the financing of institutional mechanisms, said that the Office for Gender Equality was directly responsible to the Government and, under the Law on Gender Equality, reported to it once a year. It was a Government body financed by the State budget. The Office for Human Rights was also responsible to the Government. The Ombudsperson for Gender Equality, on the other hand, was appointed by, and directly responsible to, the Parliament, though also financed by the Government budget. Lastly, there was the Gender Equality Committee, which was a parliamentary committee. Those mechanisms were part of an overall framework that included other key institutions, such as the recently created institution of gender equality coordinators responsible for mainstreaming gender equality in national policies, which all Ministries and State bodies must now have.

21. While some coordinators had already been appointed, they were still being trained by the Office for Gender Equality. There were also a number of gender equality commissions at the local level. She considered it a huge achievement that, in less than a year since its inception, the Office for Gender Equality had already set up such commissions in 10 counties. The process of training local officials and promoting

cooperation with local commissions was ongoing. In order for stereotypes to change and gender equality to be achieved, it was not enough to introduce new legislation; it was also essential to raise awareness among the general public. Strengthening institutional mechanisms was, therefore, the main objective.

22. Even though the institutions responsible for implementing legislation had been set up only a few months after the new legislation had been adopted, a number of provisions had already been implemented. The process was, however, an ongoing one. The conclusions of an evaluation carried out by Council of Europe experts to the effect that local bodies needed to be strengthened had also been taken into account. The Office for Gender Equality also had a committee responsible for monitoring the implementation of legal provisions and the National Policy for the Promotion of Gender Equality. The current policy, covering the period 2001-2005, was about to expire, and one of the Office's tasks was therefore to prepare the new policy, which must be submitted to Parliament by the end of 2005. The Office also planned to revise the way in which the national policy was evaluated, by involving both the public and NGOs in the process. She was confident that, as a result, the third national policy would be much more cooperative and effective than previous ones.

23. In her view, cooperation at the State level was good. However, it was her Office's task to ensure that new institutions became an effective and integral part of the ongoing process of promoting and mainstreaming gender equality. Now that Croatia was a candidate for European Union membership and a date had been set for accession negotiations, one of its priorities was to bring its legislation into line with European legislation. It was, therefore, already in the process of harmonizing and amending its entire body of law.

24. Croatia's legislation was well developed with regard to national minorities, of which there were many, and included the Constitutional Law on National Minorities, which regulated national minority rights. The Office for Gender Equality, in cooperation with the Office for National Minorities, had set up a working group which included representatives of national minority women, including the Roma, and aimed to prepare a specific plan to improve their status in society. Eight minorities were currently represented in the Parliament, but an analysis by her Office of the

participation of minority women in public life had shown that, like women in general, they were underrepresented, with the figure standing at around 22 per cent.

25. **Ms. Klajner** (Croatia) said that the 22 national minorities in Croatia all had the right to participate in elections and — between them — had eight guaranteed seats in Parliament. The Roma did not have their own guaranteed seat, but belonged to a group of smaller minorities which, together, did. The legislator had tried to create a fair system by allocating 20,000 votes per seat. However, while the Roma were in fact the largest minority within their group, their candidate had not been elected. In addition, the Constitutional Law on National Minorities provided for the participation of minorities at the local and regional levels. National minorities numbering 100 could elect a representative on town and municipal councils, while those numbering 300 could elect a national minority council. Such councils were new and designed to enable national minorities to participate in the decision-making process. They had been particularly important for the Roma, who, until 2000, had had no local council representatives.

26. In response to the question concerning citizenship, in 2003, she said that Croatia had adopted the National Programme for the Roma, which had been drawn up with the participation of NGOs, including Roma NGOs, human rights groups and Government bodies. The programme was due to be evaluated in 2005. There were insufficient data on the number of Roma without citizenship, though the number was known to be high. Under the National Programme for the Roma, mobile teams of representatives of Government Ministries and Roma associations had, in 2004, visited every Roma settlement in the country. It had been discovered that, in the county with the largest Roma population, all of them had citizenship. In other parts of the country where some did not, the teams had provided information on how to apply for citizenship and, in particular, how to do so free of charge. Many Roma did not apply for citizenship precisely because of the cost involved; others had papers from other countries, particularly since the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and in Kosovo. The mobile teams had proved very effective and would continue to be used in the future. Lastly, a booklet was being prepared on the subject of citizenship and other rights.

27. **Ms. Jelavić** (Croatia), in response to the question concerning domestic violence, said that the 1998 Family Law was the first example of Croatian legislation that strictly prohibited domestic violence (art. 118). It also included a misdemeanour provision specifying procedures for dealing with perpetrators of domestic violence. The Law had been the first step in sanctioning domestic violence and attempts had been made to raise awareness among the public, experts and institutions of the need to implement it. However, in the light of the high number of domestic violence cases, it had become clear that the two provisions were inadequate and, in 2003, a number of amendments had therefore been made to it. In addition, it had been decided that specific legislation on domestic violence was needed and, in July 2003, the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence had been adopted.

28. In the same year, the new Family Law had entered into force, though without the now redundant article 118. Domestic violence was sanctioned as a criminal act under the Criminal Code, and the procedure followed was therefore a criminal one. The Law on Protection from Domestic Violence, meanwhile, was implemented under the same procedure as the Law on Misdemeanours and the magistrates' courts were competent in that field. The Law on Protection from Domestic Violence provided three types of legal sanction: fines, imprisonment and protective measures. The last had been introduced with the aim of improving protection and encouraging perpetrators to change their conduct, as sanctions alone were not enough.

29. There was a clear need to protect victims of domestic violence, many of whom were forced to leave their homes. However, the Government did not have any shelters that could accommodate mothers and children together and therefore relied on civil society to do so. Under the Social Welfare Act, legal entities and natural persons were given permission to set up such shelters in cooperation with the relevant social services, provided they had the necessary space, staff, facilities, etc. The procedure for NGOs wishing to set up such shelters was also simplified. As a rule, the maximum length of stay was six months, though that could be extended to one year. Though a number of shelters had already been set up, there was a clear need for additional capacity; statistics for 2003 showed that, while around 300 women and children requiring

emergency accommodation had been placed in shelters, over 500 had not.

30. **Ms. Štimac-Radin** (Croatia) said that the Government attached great importance to the implementation of legislation and was concerned by the increase in the number of domestic violence cases, or, at least, in those being reported. In that regard, it had drawn up a national policy on the prevention of domestic violence until 2007, one of the main aims of which was to conduct an in-depth analysis of shelters for victims of domestic violence, possible measures to improve the situation, the need for new shelters and the possibility of setting up a shelter network. In short, shelters were a very important strategic goal for the Government.

31. **Ms. Stažnik** (Croatia) said that her country had established a Judicial Academy to acquaint legal professionals with European and international standards regarding domestic violence. The Ministry of Justice provided training on violence, and violence against women in particular, to judges and public attorneys, as well as seminars on trafficking in persons. Croatia had established a legal framework for the problem of trafficking in persons, which was in line with the relevant United Nations standards and provisions. Amendments to the Penal Code had created an effective framework for penalizing the perpetrators. Croatia's Penal Code provided penalties for those engaging in crimes such as cross-border prostitution, the abuse of minors involving pornography and the illegal cross-border transport of persons.

32. A normative framework had been established for the protection of witnesses, including special measures for the protection of minors, and the law also punished legal entities facilitating prostitution. With respect to trafficking in persons, the law also made provision for protecting those in need and sheltering victims. Guidelines had been established on providing assistance to victims, involving the police, Government agencies, NGOs and international organizations, and mobile teams had been formed to provide assistance to victims of trafficking. A database had been set up, enabling all the agencies concerned to share information with the Ministry of Justice.

33. **Ms. Kerovec** (Croatia) said that Croatia's Bureau of Statistics was responsible for gathering all Government data, including data on women, and that all such data were published on official web sites.

34. **Ms. Vidović** (Croatia), responding to the Committee's questions regarding returnees, said that, between 1995 and 2004, 327,000 persons had returned to Croatia, 36 percent of whom were women. In 2004, 12,448 persons had returned, 58 per cent of whom were Serbs and 42 percent were Croats. Also in 2004, a total of 2,312 homes had been returned to their owners, and compensation was being provided for those whose homes had not yet been returned. There was a specific Government department that was constantly engaged in dealing with the problems of returnees.

35. **Ms. Simms** said that, on the basis of the State party's responses to the Committee's issues and questions (CEDAW/PSWG/2005/I/CRP.2/Add.1), she was very concerned that the effect of its policies might be to create a hierarchy of minorities, and that the disadvantaged might not find their rightful place in Croatian society, despite the measures taken. The State party was rightly focusing on the lack of education and the violence in minority communities, but should focus also on educating its mainstream society and on providing anti-racist education to judges, lawyers, teachers, policemen and doctors. The State party should take a wider view of the concepts of discrimination and equality and, in its next periodic report, demonstrate that it had taken an integrated approach aimed at ensuring that its most marginalized groups found a place in society.

36. **Mr. Flinterman** said that he wished to know whether there had been any cases in which the Convention had been invoked in the courts, or referred to by judges. If there had been no such cases, he would be grateful for an explanation, since the Convention had been in force in Croatia since 1991. The establishment of a Judicial Academy was a welcome development, and he would like to know how exactly how the Convention was integrated into its programmes. The State party had mentioned, in its report (CEDAW/C/CRO/2-3), that under the Law on Gender Equality, women might submit petitions to the Gender Equality Ombudsperson. He wondered whether women could apply directly to the ordinary courts or were obliged to act through the Ombudsperson, and whether the Ombudsperson was qualified to act on behalf of women who had suffered discrimination. Croatia's signing of the Optional Protocol to the Convention was also a welcome development, and he wished to know whether the Ombudsperson procedure must be exhausted before cases could be brought

before the Committee under the Protocol. Lastly, he wished to know whether the Ombudsperson was aware of the Convention, or whether his or her mandate was based solely on the general concept of gender equality.

37. **Ms. Dairiam** said that the State party's responses to the Committee's questions on the challenges of implementing its national policy on gender equality had not been satisfactory, although there was certainly evidence that institutional arrangements for the promotion of equality had been set up at the central and regional levels. It was of paramount importance that the State party mainstream its policies. She wished to know in particular whether the Government's Office for Gender Equality had developed a position paper setting out policy aims and explaining the provisions of the Convention. The Committee would also appreciate information regarding the nature of the data gathered by the national machinery for women's advancement, and especially whether they included gender-sensitive, qualitative data capable of indicating obstacles to women's advancement.

38. **Ms. Arocha Dominguez** said that she would be grateful for more information about statistical coordination between the Office for Gender Equality and the Bureau of Statistics. She was concerned at the lack of certain data concerning the situation of women in Croatia. It was important that reporting States be ready to comment upon trends in gender-related indicators.

39. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** said that although the Office for Gender Equality appeared to enjoy a certain degree of autonomy, it seemed to operate outside the Government arena. She therefore wished to know whether it functioned merely as a Government executing agency, or whether it was able to influence policy, and whether NGOs coordinated closely with Government agencies working to promote women's advancement. The Committee also wished to know whether the rights of Croatia's various minorities were guaranteed on the same basis as those of the rest of its population.

40. **Ms. Gaspard**, noting that the State party had made significant progress in implementing the Convention and the Committee's recommendations, said that she wished to know whether the Office for Gender Equality was able to influence Government policy, and whether the Parliamentary Committee for Gender Equality had studied the combined periodic

reports prior to their submission to the Committee or would be involved in follow-up to the current meeting. Although it was clearly important to implement gender policy at the regional level, it was often the case that local authorities lacked the means or the competence to do so. She therefore welcomed Croatia's engagement at the local level, but would appreciate more information about any relevant guidelines issued to local authorities.

41. **Ms. Coker-Appiah** said that she wished to know whether the State party's draft law for the protection of witnesses had already been introduced and, if so, whether any women had made use of its provisions and whether anybody had been convicted for trafficking in persons. She would also appreciate more information concerning Government shelters and reception centres for the protection of women victims.

42. **Ms. Morvai** said that she would be grateful for information about the Gender Equality Ombudsperson and the national machinery for women's advancement. In particular, she wished to know about their budgets, staffing and methodologies, about the number of cases that the Ombudsperson's Office had handled, as well as the outcome of those cases, and about their interaction with NGOs. The Committee also wished to know about funding for NGOs. The State party had not provided statistics about Roma women or about how the National Programme for the Roma was monitored. Although she understood the difficulties involved in gathering information while respecting individual privacy, it certainly was possible to do so, and it was essential that the State party have access to such data.

43. In its combined reports, the State party had used very patronizing language in referring to Roma women. It must be proactive in reaching out to Roma NGOs and encouraging them to take part in the planning and monitoring of programmes. Croatia's participation in the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol) was welcome, but she would urge it to target the demand side of prostitution — represented by the men who abused women — and she wished to know whether it had introduced programmes to help women escape prostitution.

44. **Ms. Klajner** (Croatia) said that her Government had taken steps to educate the population about the Roma population, including measures to curb negative

media reporting. The Government had adopted the National Programme for the Roma in 2003 and had joined in the Decade for Roma Inclusion initiative, whose action plan focused on four key areas: education, health, employment and housing. Each key area involved a long-term and short-term component, and major strategic focuses included gender equality, poverty, and women's participation in all social processes. Roma women had participated in preparations for the Decade for Roma Inclusion, and Government policy sought to help the Roma participate in political decision-making through a comprehensive support system.

45. **Ms. Štimac-Radin** (Croatia) said that the Office for National Minorities dealt specifically with the issue of Roma women and institutional attitudes towards minorities. The mandate of the Office for Gender Equality for its part covered a wide range of issues, one of which involved cooperation with Roma organizations concerned with the status of Roma women. On a more general level, the Government of Croatia had recently adopted a national programme for the protection and promotion of human rights and a national strategy for combating all forms of discrimination.

46. The Office for Gender Equality had been established in March 2004 with a staff of three persons and was a new autonomous body that was directly accountable to the Government. Its mandate included the adoption and amendment of laws and other acts, and the drafting of new national policies for the promotion of equality and for monitoring their implementation; the preparation of reports on Croatia's fulfilment of international obligations in regard to gender equality and monitoring the harmonization of laws; and cooperation with NGOs on gender issues.

47. Since the Office for Gender Equality's establishment eight months earlier, one priority had been to establish mechanisms to ensure gender equality. Thus, national commissions for gender equality had been established. Currently the Office was building up that network, and the next step would involve training of its officials at the local level. The institutional change occurring in Croatia was demonstrated by the fact that, in 2005, the Office for Gender Equality would begin drafting a new national policy for the five-year period 2005-2010. However, when the last national policy had been drawn up in

2001, Croatia had had no law on gender equality, and the Office had not yet been established.

48. Regarding the financing of NGOs, the Office for Gender Equality had launched its first project for NGOs by supporting the Network of Croatian Women, which focused on women and politics. As local elections were scheduled in four months, an important priority was to increase women's political participation at the local level as the percentage of women in local politics lagged behind the figure at the national level. The Office for Gender Equality played a key role in a number of areas including formulating proposals relating to the Millennium Development Goals, which the Government had adopted. The Office had also played the role of mediator between the Government and the NGO sector, for example, in the project for removing gender stereotypes from school textbooks. The implementation strategy for strengthening gender equality policies had been reinforced by the establishment of the post of a Gender Equality Ombudsperson, who had recently been appointed by the Parliament. That office had more human and financial resources than the Office for Gender Equality, and, while both worked on promoting gender equality, each had different responsibilities.

Articles 7 to 9

49. **Ms. Khan** asked for more information about the Law on Croatian Citizenship, gender stereotypes in textbooks and the National Programme for the Roma. She wanted to know if the reporting State intended to revise citizens' rights and whether the Programme had gender disaggregated data on Roma women in terms of health, education, citizenship rights and violence against them. The Office for Gender Equality and the Parliament's Gender Equality Committee should take up the issue of full citizenship rights of Roma to remove discrimination and ensure them access to the full range of human rights.

50. **Ms. Zou Xiaojiao** took note of the discrepancy between the increased percentage of women in Croatia's Parliament, which had increased from 5.7 per cent in 1995 to 25 per cent in 2003, and their low representation at the local Government level. She asked if research had been undertaken to determine the reasons for women's low representation in city and municipal councils. If such research had been done, what were the reasons for that disparity? If not, what was being done to increase their number? Regarding

the eight seats reserved for minority delegates in Parliament, the Committee wished to know how the Government guaranteed those seats and how many women from ethnic groups were represented in Parliament. Lastly, she asked what percentage of the total ethnic population did the Roma represent.

51. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** commended the establishment of local gender equality offices, recalling that their counterpart in Germany had played a very important role in looking after women's interests after reunification. She also lauded the involvement of NGOs as well as Croatia's steps in linking European Union directives on women's equality with the relevant Convention articles. It was important for Croatian Government officials to understand that linkage. The delegation had said that all Ministries and State bodies had to encourage women to apply for positions and that job advertisements would contain relevant affirmative action statements. Had the reporting State achieved the targeted numerical goals? Lastly, the Office for Gender Equality had wanted women to comprise 40 per cent of head teachers by 2005. What percentage had been achieved at the end of 2004?

52. **Ms. Štimac-Radin** (Croatia) said that the key to increasing the political participation of women at the local level lay with the political parties, which nominated persons for inclusion on the lists of candidates. Each political party and municipality had its own list. Unfortunately, women were often not even members of such parties in small localities, and there was greater resistance on the part of local politicians to nominating women for political office. The Office for Gender Equality was working through local bodies and local NGOs to organize campaigns to persuade political parties to nominate many more women in forthcoming local elections.

53. The coordinators in ministries had been appointed only in 2004 and were responsible for ensuring that the Gender Equality Act was implemented and cooperating with the Office for Gender Equality. Currently, those ministerial coordinators needed additional training. Regarding the need for coordination of European Union directives and the Convention's provisions, she pointed out that one of the functions of the Office was to find the commonalities between them. The Office had also translated and published 5,000 copies of a Council of Europe document on women's participation in that body, which had been disseminated to all relevant Government officials. The European

Commission, for its part, had recently launched a programme on gender equality, in which Croatia would be participating.

54. **Ms. Stažnik** (Croatia) said that Croatia's laws on witness protection, which had come into effect in January 2004, were helpful for the victims of female trafficking since witnesses in such cases had the right to special protection programmes. No information was readily available as to how the Law on Gender Equality and the Convention were reflected in judicial decisions. Croatia had no official statistics on discrimination cases or data on the number of court cases dealing with gender discrimination because such cases came under the purview of different national laws.

55. Turning to the question of educating court and legal officials on implementing the Convention, she said that the newly established Judicial Academy had a programme of ad hoc and specialist training to provide information on such issues as the implementation of international instruments and their linkage with national legislation, as well as to how international instruments should be used in court proceedings. In the next two years, the Judicial Academy's work would focus on international law, the instruments of different international organizations, most importantly the United Nations, and the Council of Europe, and European Union standards.

56. Croatia's misdemeanour laws linked the questions of prostitution and trafficking in women. There was also a preventive strategy to fight trafficking, which had just been adopted. A study was to be carried out on the causes of and trends in trafficking, and preventive measures included public awareness campaigns for young people involving television and radio commercials, brochures explaining the dangers of trafficking and information for obtaining assistance. Public organizations also worked in schools, organized seminars and workshops, and launched activities in the printed media.

57. **Ms. Klajner** (Croatia) said that the Roma not only had the same rights as everyone, but that they also had special rights such as the freedom to use their own language in schools. The sum of \$3.5 million had been allocated from the State budget for the Roma, and funds had also been provided by individual Ministries, such as the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport. On the question as to why national minorities were

guaranteed places in the Parliament, she said that minorities comprised only 7.5 per cent of the population and were dispersed all over Croatia. That made it unlikely that they would be elected through political parties. Of the eight persons occupying the seats reserved for ethnic minorities in the Parliament, only one was a female.

58. While the official number of Roma stood at 29,000, the Government believed the figure was between 32,000 and 40,000. Roma often declared themselves to be Croats or members of other ethnic groups as they wanted to escape the prejudices held against them by the majority of the population. Lastly, the citizenship law was being amended as two of the prerequisites — the need to know the Croatian language and the need to be literate — were often not met by the Roma. Another measure to help the Roma was the policy of raising the percentage of Roma in the police force. A few had already graduated from the Policy Academy, including one woman.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.