



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

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

Summary record of the 742nd meeting (Chamber A)

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 9 August 2006, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Šimonović (Rapporteur)

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In the absence of Ms. Manalo, Ms. Šimonović, Rapporteur, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

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

Sixth periodic report of Denmark (continued)
(CEDAW/C/DNK/6; CEDAW/C/DEN/Q/6 and Add.1)

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

Articles 7 to 9

2. **Ms. Zou** congratulated Denmark on achieving a 38-per-cent level of women's representation in Parliament. However, women's advancement had not been nearly as marked within other decision-making bodies. She wished to know whether the Danish Government was considering future steps to support women's advancement to decision-making positions, and in particular whether it had considered any programmes to build women's leadership skills.

3. She also sought the views of the Government as to the reasons for the decrease in the number of women mayors after the recent municipal elections, and also asked what percentage the Government had been expecting to be elected. What future steps would the Government take to improve the situation?

4. **Ms. Simms**, noting that Danish women were doing very well in educational terms, observed that that success had not sufficiently increased women's presence at the highest levels of decision-making. In a country where so much had changed to the benefit of women, it was puzzling that they had not made more progress in breaking the "glass ceiling", and she wondered whether that was because patriarchy was still so strongly entrenched that women had been taught to be afraid to seek the highest positions. There seemed to be a need for special measures, perhaps in the area of educating women or of strengthening their resolve, and she asked what, if anything, the Government was doing to rectify the situation.

5. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** expressed concern at the fact that women's political participation at the local level was lower than at the national level. Since people

interested in politics usually started at the local level and grew into national politics, that situation painted a worrying picture for the future. She asked whether the Government knew the reasons for the drop, and how the trend could be reversed.

6. With respect to the financing of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), given that gender discrimination was generally directed towards women and that women's NGOs were trying to assist the Government in implementing its policies, it might be argued that the Government had a responsibility to support them financially. Not to do so might be seen as a form of indirect discrimination.

7. She was very pleased to note that Denmark had a gender dimension in its development cooperation policies, and asked whether the concluding comments of the Committee or of other human rights treaty bodies were structurally integrated into the decision-making processes of the relevant institutions. She had heard from various NGOs that they were not being consulted as to what countries and development issues should have priority in Denmark's development cooperation policies.

8. With regard to the action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, she suggested that the temporary special measures referred to in article 4 of the Convention might be applied by Denmark in order to rapidly increase the number of women in its international missions and peacekeeping forces. She asked for more information on the action plan and its results.

9. **Ms. Gaspard** congratulated Denmark for seeking to achieve equal representation of men and women on public councils, commissions and committees, but wondered why similar measures were not taken for other bodies. For example, the disappointing electoral results might represent an opportunity to make use of article 4 of the Convention to compel the political parties to have equal numbers of men and women on the electoral rolls. When France had stipulated equal representation of men and women on the electoral rolls, men had objected that sufficient women would never be found, but once the law had been put in place, more female candidates had come forward than could be accommodated on the rolls. In Norway, towns were rated on the basis of their success in achieving equality

between men and women. She asked whether Denmark had any similar policies.

10. **Ms. Šimonović**, speaking as a member of the Committee, asked why, after the 2004 elections, the percentage of women in the Faroese Parliament was only 9.4 per cent, while the number of women in the Faroese executive body was zero. She asked what actions would be undertaken in the future to address that situation.

11. She also asked what percentage of Denmark's ambassadors were women. As there had been a specific action plan to increase the number of women in senior posts in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the number of female ambassadors would be an indicator of the progress achieved.

12. **Ms. Abel** (Denmark) said that the Department of Gender Equality had prepared a report on the results of the most recent municipal elections, which had been disappointing. The Department had found that it was in the larger municipalities that women were doing better, with regard both to representation and to putting gender equality on the agenda. Women's political participation did indeed start at the local level, but the connection between local activity and national participation now seemed to be missing. In view of the difficulty of balancing family responsibilities and political duties, being active in municipal politics might not be particularly appealing to women. It had to be acknowledged, too, that the initiatives carried out had merely maintained the status quo.

13. The drop in the number of female mayors had been a surprise, and the Department recognized the need to devise, in cooperation with the municipalities, measures to reverse that trend. One existing positive factor was that a salary was paid for participation in municipal politics. That, together with the provision of child care, might make municipal politics more attractive to women. Denmark did not, however, intend to take the approach of reserving a certain number of seats for women in municipal elections.

14. Turning to the question of why there were not more women in senior decision-making positions, she said that that phenomenon could be observed in the private sector, in municipal politics and in the university education sector. Women in Denmark were just as highly educated as men, and did not seem to show a lack of courage.

15. A Government think tank had made a number of recommendations for increasing the number of women in senior educational positions. One concrete result had been the creation of a special pool of research positions that were reserved for younger female researchers, so that over time they would become qualified for more senior positions. With regard to the private sector, the Government had undertaken a genuine dialogue with private companies, pointing out that women's advancement should be part of a company's business strategy. A study had indicated that the companies that had the most women in top positions were those that had the best business results. The current attitude was that it was foolish in business terms not to use the best-qualified people, and that qualified women should therefore not be disregarded. Denmark hoped that the Department's initiatives would have achieved demonstrable results by the time Denmark next reported to the Committee.

16. **Ms. Damkjaer** (Denmark) said that, since 2002, the number of women occupying senior positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had increased from 12 to 14 per cent but, while things were clearly moving in the right direction, it would take time to achieve full gender equality. In order to build on existing achievements, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had adopted a new action plan entitled "Equality in the Foreign Service 2005-2009", which provided, inter alia, for the introduction of a mentoring programme designed to inspire future women leaders.

17. In response to the questions put by Ms. Schöpp-Schilling, she said that issues relating to gender equality and development were discussed by the Board of the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA). Taking the Convention's provisions as the basis for its actions, the Danish Government had introduced a number of measures designed to mainstream a gender perspective into its development cooperation activities. Thus, in 2004, a new strategy on gender equality in Danish development cooperation had been launched, with a view to ensuring that women had equal rights, equal access to resources and equal opportunities to obtain political and economic influence. The strategy provided, in particular, for special measures in certain fields; the Committee's concluding comments and recommendations were an obvious source of information and inspiration in that regard. In 2005, the Minister for Development Cooperation had adopted an HIV/AIDS strategy which

accorded particular importance to women's rights, and a strategy for the promotion of sexual and reproductive health and rights had been launched in 2006.

18. During its membership of the United Nations Security Council, Denmark had made every effort to mainstream a gender perspective into various resolutions, and the Government was continuing to implement its action plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Several articles of the Convention were indeed directly relevant to that resolution, and the Danish Ministry of Defence was currently conducting an internal assessment to identify ways of recruiting more female staff members, stepping up its efforts to protect the rights of women and girls and increasing the number of women involved in peacebuilding and reconstruction processes. The results of that assessment should be published during the third quarter of 2006, at which point the Government also intended to broaden the scope of its action plan on resolution 1325 (2000) to include cooperation with the police and NGOs.

19. **Ms. Abel** (Denmark) said that, in addition to the regular financial support provided to them by the Government, NGOs were entitled to apply for supplementary funding for specific initiatives. A group of Danish women's NGOs had recently devised a collective strategy for the promotion of the rights enshrined in the Convention, which was currently being disseminated in the media.

20. **Ms. Ellefsen** (Denmark) agreed that the Faroese authorities must step up their efforts to encourage more women to become involved in politics. The fundamental obstacle to achieving that objective was women's reluctance to run for office, which, according to a survey conducted by the Gender Equality Commission, stemmed from the fact that they did not have time to take on additional responsibilities. In order to remedy that situation, the Minister for Gender Equality had, in late 2005, appointed a 10-member committee responsible for promoting women's participation in political life.

Articles 10 to 14

21. **Ms. Simms** said that, although women in Denmark were performing extremely well academically, they were still underrepresented in decision-making at the highest levels. Since female students tended to favour more traditional disciplines,

she enquired whether the Government was taking any steps to promote greater diversification. She had the impression that, in spite of the measures already taken to ensure equal opportunities, women continued to stay at home with their children. Further efforts were clearly needed to deconstruct persistent patriarchal patterns of behaviour and received ideas.

22. Turning to the question of racial minorities, she requested concrete statistics on the integration of second-generation immigrants into the Danish workforce. While Denmark's educational system placed considerable emphasis on integration, she was concerned that immigrants were being encouraged to abandon their own cultural and linguistic heritage and to embrace only Danish culture and customs. Such practices could lead to feelings of alienation within the immigrant community and should be discouraged.

23. **Ms. Saiga** requested further clarification of the arrangements for parental leave in Denmark, since there were some discrepancies between the information contained in the report and that provided during the State party's introductory statement. In particular, she enquired as to the exact duration of maternity and paternity leave with full pay. The report also referred to "economic compensation" of DKK 163,000 per year payable during parental leave, but it was unclear whether that compensation consisted of a State benefit in lieu of salary. If so, was the amount of the benefit adjusted to take account of the family's income?

24. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling**, referring again to the State party's development cooperation policy, asked whether the Committee's concluding comments and recommendations were used systematically during the selection of priority issues.

25. Turning to the situation of migrant workers in Denmark, she would be grateful for statistical information on the types of employment obtained by both young and older migrant workers. The State party should indicate, in particular, the level of those jobs and whether they were full- or part-time. She also asked whether any research had been carried out on how male migrant workers reacted to the idea of their wives seeking employment and, if so, whether the Government had taken such research into account in the design of relevant policies.

26. Lastly, she had noted from the report that the pay gap between women and men working in the private sector was considerable. She would like to know what,

if anything, had been done to follow up the assessments conducted in 2003 and enquired whether the Government had considered adopting binding measures to force companies to offer equal pay for work of equal value.

27. **Ms. Gaspard**, commenting on the dearth of women teachers in higher education, noted that the situation apparently had not changed since the last report and that it was unlikely to change unless decisive action was taken. Higher education posts were filled by committees consisting largely of men, who preferred to keep them for other men. She referred to the issue of women immigrants, asking what Denmark was doing to give immigrant women access to vocational training, since they usually arrived after their husbands were established in the country and had problems finding employment. Was the immigration status of such women independent, or was it linked to their husbands' status, and if so, were they at risk of expulsion in the event of separation, including for reasons of domestic violence?

28. **Ms. Coker-Appiah** noted that the report indicated that women were not a prioritized target group for HIV/AIDS prevention and that most HIV-positive women had been born abroad. She wondered whether that meant that they had been infected in their country of origin, and whether they had access to antiretroviral drugs. If they were at risk, then efforts should be made to target them in AIDS programmes.

29. **Ms. Tan** enquired about the results of the survey to establish target activities for gender equality in rural areas, and about policies and programmes being set up to encourage equality in rural communities, especially in political, social and economic decision-making bodies at all levels.

30. **Ms. Andersen** (Denmark), on the subject of parental leave, noted that fathers had two weeks of paternity leave, while mothers had four weeks of prenatal leave and 14 weeks of post-natal leave. Both had 32 weeks of parental leave, which was an individual right. In addition to the State benefit of DKK 163,000, referred to by Ms. Saiga, many public- and private-sector employers provided full pay during parental, paternity and maternity leave. However, the extra burden borne by employers in female-dominated sectors, which were especially likely to provide full pay, had led to an increase in the pay differential between women and men. The Danish Parliament had

therefore passed a law requiring all employers to contribute to a common fund out of which maternity, paternity and parental leave benefits were paid.

31. **Ms. Damkjaer** (Denmark) pointed out that although there was no specific requirement that the Committee's conclusions should be incorporated into Danish development programmes, all such programmes had to be based on a gender analysis. Since that approach was based on the principles laid down in the Convention, such an analysis would, de facto, be based on the Committee's conclusions.

32. **Ms. Abel** (Denmark) returned to the issue of education and the need to have more women in its higher echelons. Denmark's labour market was very gender-segregated, and the education system was a part of that. The Government had, however, published educational materials for schools and provided interactive discussion material on the Internet for parents and students, many of whom were surprised to learn just how gender-divided their country's education system was. Denmark was proud of the educational integration of its second- and third-generation immigrants, with the girls doing as well as their ethnically Danish peers.

33. Special efforts were being made to help immigrant women, including those with small children, to enter the labour market. Language barriers had to be overcome and ethnic and other prejudices had to be addressed. Cultural considerations were no excuse for a lack of gender equality, and it was imperative for Denmark to make very clear how much women's potential was needed by Danish society. There was also an action plan to deal with barriers to integration. Studies had established that there were clear gender differences within Denmark's ethnic immigrant communities, with boys needing an extra push to get them into education, and women needing a greater pull to enter the job market. Campaigns were being launched, targeted at both men and women, and a tour was planned for September in which male ethnic role models would discuss how an ethnic background could be reconciled with gender equality. Danish society, for its part, must not fall prey to prejudices such as the idea that ethnic women were not interested in jobs or that their customs limited their labour-market participation. Another prejudice was that ethnic immigrant boys were likely to be involved with gang culture. Attitudes needed to be changed on both sides, to bring immigrant families fully into Danish society.

34. **Ms. Andersen** (Denmark) highlighted the need for cooperation between the social partners, the Ministry of Employment and the Department of Gender Equality. A new law required any company employing more than 35 people to provide gender-disaggregated statistics on pay and to discuss issues of gender equality with employees and at board meetings. In compiling the statistics, companies could avail themselves of free support from Government statisticians.

35. **Ms. Abel** (Denmark), responding to the question concerning the statement in the report that most HIV-positive women in Denmark belonged to ethnic minorities and had been born abroad, said that those women had indeed been infected in their country of origin.

36. **Mr. Torp Andersen** (Denmark), responding to the request for information on the employment situation of ethnic minority women in Denmark, said that more ethnic minority women than men held low-paying positions and worked in areas such as the hotel and restaurant industries. The opposite was true for the rest of the population.

37. **Ms. Abel** (Denmark), responding to the question concerning the rights of immigrant women who were victims of domestic violence and were not permanent residents, said that there was no discrimination in that regard. She referred the Committee to her earlier response.

38. As to the situation of rural women, she said that no rural area in Denmark was more than 10 kilometres from a town with good educational facilities. Denmark's agricultural sector did not, therefore, face the same issues as the agricultural sectors of other countries. A greater effort did, however, need to be made to get rural women into employment. In particular, an effort was under way to encourage more women to go into farming.

Articles 15 and 16

39. **Ms. Bokpé-Gnacadjia** asked whether the new legislation raising the required age for spousal reunification from 18 to 24 years had met its objective of combating forced and arranged marriages. The report contained no indication that it had; on the contrary, it seemed to suggest that the phenomenon persisted among ethnic minorities. She would appreciate comparative data for 2003 and 2005, in particular.

40. The age requirement of 24 years for spousal reunification seemed to be based on a simple presumption that any marriage before that age must have been forced or arranged. However, was there any actual proof that the people who had been refused family reunification because of that requirement had been in forced or arranged marriages? Also, were there any cases of couples who had disproved that presumption and had their request granted? She would appreciate more information about the broader impact of the legislation, which in her view was discriminatory.

41. **Ms. Tan** said that she would be interested to know more about the impact of the Government's action plan for 2003-2005 on forced, quasi-forced and arranged marriages and whether it would continue beyond 2005. Regarding the new law allowing a domestic abuser to be removed from the home, she asked what burden of proof was borne by the victim, stressing that it must not be unreasonable. She was also curious to know whether the Government was planning to amend the law to allow courts to order the parties to seek counselling. In order to stem violence against women, the violence itself must be removed.

42. **Ms. Abel** (Denmark) said that the rule that a person must be at least 24 in order to bring a foreign spouse into the country — a rule that applied, moreover, to all citizens — had been introduced to protect young women. The Government had taken a number of initiatives to show people that they had other options besides forced marriage. Initiatives included setting up hotlines, providing information to young people and professionals, and offering professional help and protected housing. Given the difficulty of obtaining statistics on forced marriage, it was very hard to say by how much it had fallen.

43. The rationale behind the law allowing a domestic abuser to be removed from the home was that it was easier to remove a violent husband than a whole family. It did not mean that women could no longer go to crisis centres. The model was a legal experiment, as it relied on an assessment from the police officers involved. It was important to take swift action in response to concrete incidents of domestic abuse. A system of counselling was being considered. The idea was that in less serious cases, the perpetrator would be sent for counselling, rather than sentenced; in more serious cases, the perpetrator would, of course, be sentenced.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.