



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
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Summary record of the 983rd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 14 July 2011, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Pimentel

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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 Italy (continued)
(CEDAW/C/ITA/6 and CEDAW/C/ITA/Q/6 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Italy took places at the Committee table.*

2. **The Chair** said that, at the invitation of the Committee, other members of the delegation would be speaking by teleconference from Rome. She invited the delegation to continue replying to questions raised at the previous meeting.

Articles 1 to 6 (continued)

3. **Mr. Brasioli** (Italy) said that data on forced and early marriage were not collected because the practice was rare in Italy, as in other Western countries, and because it had not been included by the United Nations Statistics Division as one of its recommended indicators to measure violence against women in all countries by 2015. The requested updated statistics on gender violence for 2010 were being distributed to Committee members.

4. The Equal Opportunities Code ensured equal treatment and provided tools for legal protection in labour disputes. Article 3 of the Constitution addressed discrimination in all other cases; there was also specific legislation that applied to certain sectors. With regard to the company in northern Italy that had allegedly laid off women workers for sexist reasons, he clarified that no such steps had been formally taken, nor had any workers filed indemnity claims to supplement loss of income. Should dismissal proceedings be initiated, the labour unions, the Department of Labour, the employer and the local government would work together to ensure compliance with the law and the principle of equal opportunity. In addition, any worker could request the support of the equality adviser for the region at any time.

Articles 7 to 9

5. **Ms. Bareiro-Bobadilla** said that the fact that the reporting State had recognized the marginalization of women in the country's political life in its report

offered hope that it would consider the solutions proposed by the Committee.

6. The amendments to the Electoral Code did not fully take into account the gender equality guarantees of article 51 of the Constitution. However, she welcomed the announcement of draft legislation ensuring equality in political participation and would appreciate more details on its basic premises. Specifically, did the proposed law fall under article 4 of the Convention, providing special temporary measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality, or did it approach gender parity as a component of democracy, namely, as a factor to be accounted for in the same way that ideological and territorial differences were? Several countries had embraced the latter approach to gender parity as an innovative means of implementing article 7 of the Convention.

7. Since many regions had not elected any women to their councils, it would be useful to know how the central Government would ensure women's participation in politics and public administration across the country. Internationally, the very low number of women ambassadors was particularly troubling. The State party had couched its statistics in language indicating that women were not interested in political participation. On the contrary, the statistics made it evident that the country's institutional culture excluded women, and it was the political space itself that had to be changed, not women. She would welcome comments as to how Government intended to effect that change.

8. **Ms. Murillo de la Vega** said that, particularly in view of Italy's historic leadership in the women's movement, the country's present situation was distressing. It seemed that the Government framed the issue of women's participation generally as a "problem", requiring changes in women's attitudes, rather than viewing existing institutions and attitudes as the obstacle. Women made up only 7 per cent of the leadership of multinational corporations, while the country was ranked seventy-fourth in the world in the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report. It did not appear that Italy's highly educated and accomplished women were playing any part in resolving the country's economic crisis, including in a decision-making capacity. The opening statement by the Italian delegation had stressed a firm belief in meritocracy when it came to political participation. Yet, contrary to democratic principles, women's

political participation stood at a mere 11 per cent, even though the report (CEDAW/C/ITA/6) recognized that more women than men had completed university studies and with greater success. The Government had not even responded to the petitions sent to the Senate by a large number of women calling for measures to improve their participation. She asked whether the Government intended to establish a requirement for women's proportional inclusion on electoral ballots, as other European countries had, or whether it would leave that important task to the will of the political parties, and if there were any concrete proposals to promote parity in local government administration as well including any plans to make women aware of opportunities for participation. She asked why length of service was the only criterion for advancement in the judiciary, given that women had only relatively recently been given access to careers in that field and their low representation was an issue of concern. Lastly, she wondered whether there was a mechanism by which women's civil society organizations could regularly engage in a dialogue with the Government.

9. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** said that, given the constitutional amendment on gender equality that had been introduced in 2003, a legislature only 20 per cent of which was made up of women represented little progress. With its highly educated female population, Italy was a potential model for Arab countries to its south. Equal political representation began at the local level, and she hoped to see substantial progress in that area in the country's next report.

10. Data on the percentage of women in the judiciary should be provided, as well as further details on women in senior positions in universities. She also requested information on any efforts by the Government to improve the situation of Roma women, in particular to enable them to become citizens.

Articles 10 to 14

11. **Ms. Neubauer** said that approximately 20,000 Roma children under the age of 12 did not attend school on a regular basis owing to hostile attitudes towards the Roma community in Italy. The Third Committee of the General Assembly had even recommended specific action by the Government in order to prevent racist acts. She would appreciate details on what had been done to prevent Roma girls from dropping out of school and to support Roma families.

12. **Mr. Bruun** said that he had not found evidence of any significant improvements regarding the labour issues raised by the Committee in its 2005 concluding observations. A significant wage gap between men and women persisted, as did the discrepancy between the southern and northern regions in terms of women's employment rates. The situation of vulnerable groups also remained a matter of concern.

13. It was astonishing that, in 2007, under the guise of deregulation, the Government had repealed legislation prohibiting the practice of so-called "white resignations", by which women were forced to sign letters of resignation upon employment, to be kept on file and used for their dismissal if they became pregnant. The practice was a grave violation of article 11 of the Convention; the State party's own report had acknowledged that maternity discrimination hindered women's access to the labour market. Although the report had mentioned initiatives to provide day-care services for workers, there did not appear to be a coherent policy for reconciling parenthood and work, although many successful models were available in the European region. Furthermore, many of the policies in place actually contradicted the stated aims of social programmes. He wished to know whether there were plans to provide childcare services specifically to low-income women and to improve the conditions for parental leave, by making it available also to men and offering maternity benefits to women under irregular work contracts.

14. It appeared that the situation of women had little bearing on how employment policies were designed. It would be interesting to know if the Government had any plans to give women working full-time the flexibility to reduce their hours, and to enable mothers with young children to work part-time or part-time women workers to choose to work full-time. He asked whether sexual harassment in the workplace was treated as an ordinary criminal offence or whether it was subject to special procedures, in which case he would appreciate details on any action taken and the specific remedies awarded to victims.

15. **Ms. Jahan**, recognizing the Government's will to integrate Roma and migrant workers into the labour market, said that the best way to accomplish that goal would be to provide vocational training in the public and private sectors and increase opportunities for self-employment. She requested employment statistics specific to Roma and migrant women. Although the

quota system had been abolished in Italy, such temporary special measures were instead important for improving the participation of women in general in the labour market.

16. The poor safety conditions, exploitation, discrimination and physical and sexual abuse faced by women migrant workers was a matter of concern, particularly in the agricultural sector in the south of the country. Information on measures to prevent and redress discrimination against them, as well as on mechanisms to monitor their treatment and investigate violations of their rights would be welcome. She also wished to know whether such workers were covered by the national social security system, and what Italy's position was regarding accession to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and the special legislative measures on migrants recommended by the International Labour Organization.

17. **Ms. Patten** asked how the Government was monitoring the implementation of labour laws and policies by the private sector. She noted that the disturbing discriminatory employment practices were clearly the product of the limited access of women to power structures and economic decision-making processes. She asked whether the Government was planning to enact a bill on equal opportunities in employment. Although in its opening statement, the delegation had described a long-term approach to the advancement of women that favoured recruitment on merit over a quota system, she stressed that the country's precarious employment situation also required short- and medium-term strategies, including quotas aimed at accelerating de facto equality. In the light of the blatant violations of labour law by the private sector, she wondered whether the Government intended to review the relevant sanctions imposed and would like to know how it monitored the submission of biannual reports on labour practices by companies. Lastly, independent sources had reported that the measures taken to integrate disabled persons in the workplace were unsatisfactory. The reporting State should indicate how it would address that situation.

18. **Mr. Brasioli** (Italy) said that women had been able to join the diplomatic service since 1960. Since then, the number of female applicants had grown steadily, outnumbering men in recent years. Women also accounted for 35 per cent of newly recruited diplomats in recent years.

19. **Mr. Palma** (Italy) said that the political representation of women, while growing at the national level, had stagnated at the local level. In response, following the municipal elections in 2011, the Minister for Equal Opportunities had launched a campaign urging newly elected mayors to increase the number of women in local government, and that had led to a two-fold increase. The Minister had also proposed a bill that required voters in municipal elections to select candidates of different genders alternately when ranking them in preferential votes. In the region of Campania the use of this system had led to a 40 per cent increase in the number of elected female officials. With respect to provincial elections, which did not use the preferential voting system, the bill required women candidates to make up one third of the party lists. If approved, the bill would take effect starting with the next local elections. He noted that the Government could not make legislation concerning regional electoral laws.

20. Reflecting the priorities of the European Commission, a law had been recently adopted that required women to make up one third of company boards of directors and provided local authorities with a strong sanctions mechanism for non-compliance.

21. To improve Government cooperation with civil society organizations, the Minister had recently re-established the National Commission for Equal Opportunities between Men and Women, where women's associations, NGOs and trade unions could engage in dialogue with the Government.

22. He noted that twenty-five Italian universities offered a postgraduate degree in the subject area of women, politics and institutions, which sought to prepare women for leadership positions in government. Regarding the presence of women in the diplomatic service and the judiciary, recent reforms called for 50 per cent of posts to be filled through public competitions based on merit rather than by political appointment. That approach favoured equal treatment and was expected to increase the number of women in leadership positions.

23. Responding to a question asked at the previous meeting, he said that the Ministry for Equal Opportunities was the national focal point on human trafficking. He personally chaired an inter-ministerial commission that managed and supervised projects in that area.

24. **Mr. Ardita** (Italy) said that the claim that there were not enough women in the judiciary was out of date. Although women had only recently entered that career path, many had already reached leadership positions and had been involved in high-profile cases.

25. A large proportion of the members of the Superior Council of Magistrates (CSM), which was responsible for the appointment of judges, were women. Recently, the Council had also established membership quotas for women in national judicial associations. Women also consistently accounted for over half of the candidates for the competitive examinations for the judiciary.

26. Regarding the presence of women in the prison guard corps, an equal number of men and women had participated in a recent competition for senior posts and five women occupied top-level positions in the management of the penitentiary system.

27. **Ms. Riccardi** (Italy) said that with the adoption of Legislative Decree No. 66 in 2010, the Military Code no longer included the provision that once limited the recruitment of women for specific roles in the military. The number of women serving in the armed forces had been growing steadily since the elimination of that restriction. Regarding the system of promotion, she noted that seniority, which was taken into consideration equally for both men and women, was only one of the elements taken into consideration, along with merit and the successful completion of coursework, examinations and assignments.

28. **Mr. Vulpiani** (Italy), speaking by teleconference from Rome, said that Italy's laws prohibited the Government from reporting data for individual ethnic groups. International organizations estimated that there were up to 150,000 Roma living in Italy, the great majority of whom were either Italian citizens or citizens of other European Union countries who were granted equal rights. The remainder had come to Italy following the Balkan conflict in the early 1990s. The Minister of the Interior had issued a special decree allowing those individuals to stay in Italy without a permit.

29. Discrimination, not citizenship status, posed the greatest obstacle to the ability of the Roma to enter the labour market. The Government had allocated significant resources and implemented a variety of projects to include more Roma women in the labour market and to help develop micro-enterprises operated

by Roma women. There were also regional initiatives targeting vulnerable groups, which included Roma women, as well as projects funded by the Ministry of Equal Opportunities that targeted the Roma specifically. The Government followed the European Commission principle of Roma inclusion by designing explicit but not exclusive intervention programmes.

30. **Ms. Musto** (Italy), speaking by teleconference from Rome, said that Italian schools were answerable to local authorities and needed to meet local needs. Measures at the national and regional levels sought to foster learning and achieve greater social integration for Roma children. The need for those measures had grown over the previous decade along with the increase in immigration. Support was provided to regions in the south and regions that did not receive assistance from the European Social Fund. Financial resources were allocated based on local need and enabled schools to offer greater educational opportunities.

31. **Ms. Baroni** (Italy) said that the Government was concerned with the negative effect the economic crisis was having on expenditures for programmes targeting women, people with disabilities and immigrants. Retirement pensions and health-care expenditures left little in the budget for other social services. The limits of the social welfare system had been exacerbated by the economic crisis and demographic trends, and there was a need for a new system. Some regions managed and funded health services more efficiently than others, demonstrating that a different organizational model was possible.

32. While the gap between male and female employment rates in Italy was one of the greatest in Europe, women were also catching up faster than in other countries. Although Italy's gross domestic product and its industrial output had suffered as a result of the financial crisis and 2 per cent of jobs had been lost, the employment rate of women was less affected. This was due to the greater fluidity of the women's labour market achieved by the reforms of 2003. The Government had shown a great commitment to preserving jobs and had extended income support to all forms of flexible employment. The national plan "Italy 2020" called for a 6.8 per cent increase in the overall employment rate and a 12 per cent increase in women's employment rates. A job-credit programme, which sought to develop stable employment in the south, provided a financial incentive to employers to hire hardcore unemployed women on contracts of at

least three years by paying half of those employees' salaries.

33. **Ms. Matarazzo** (Italy) said that there had been a large-scale effort in recent years to increase funding for childcare services and access to them. The Government had invested in early childhood services in the public sector and monitored quality targets throughout the country to achieve steady progress. As a result, there were fewer regional disparities and Italy was close to reaching the European Union target for the percentage of children with access to early childhood services.

34. As part of an effort to improve women's employment rates, the Government had funded projects to develop flexible work models and to develop legislation for parental leave. In a telling cultural shift, Italian fathers had asked for 10 per cent of all granted parental leaves.

35. **Mr. Ferrante** (Italy), speaking by teleconference from Rome, said that legislative measures had ensured that people with disabilities had access to the job market. The number of women with disabilities in the job market had grown significantly in recent years. The Ministry of Labour supported measures that favoured a work-life balance such as telework, which was beneficial for women with disabilities.

36. The National Observatory on the condition of people with disabilities had a working group that focused on the topic of inclusion of people with disabilities on the job market and was preparing a report to the United Nations on the implementation in Italy of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities and was developing a two-year action plan for implementing policies in this field.

37. **Ms. Popescu**, referring to article 12, said that she was pleased that a shadow report had been submitted in addition to the official report and encouraged cooperation between the Government and civil society.

38. The agreement between the Government and the regions, which carried much of the responsibility for providing health-care services, stated that all citizens should have access to care either free of charge or upon payment of a participation fee. The Constitution also stated that free health care should be provided to the poor. An explanation should be provided for the significant differences that remained between regions with respect to access to health care and the lack of an efficient network to guarantee regular medical care.

Additional information concerning steps being taken to improve access to care for women living in the south and the islands would also be useful. Noting that Roma, Sinti and migrant women faced additional language and cultural barriers and possessed insufficient knowledge about the programmes available to them, she wished to know what additional health-care guarantees there were for those women. Given the indications that the security package was making access to health-care services even more difficult than before for Roma and migrant women, more information on the implications of that policy should be provided.

39. In view of the growing HIV/AIDS epidemic in the immigrant population, more details would be useful regarding the way HIV testing was being carried out, the measures being taken to prevent mother-to-child transmission and the availability of retroviral medication. Lastly, she wished to know what measures were being undertaken to counteract discrimination and stigma facing women living with HIV/AIDS. In particular, there had been reports that women living with HIV/AIDS did not have access to specialized care in the prisons.

40. **Ms. Pires** said that, according to the report, over 60 per cent of women in southern Italy in the target population did not have access to mammograms under the National Prevention Plan. That was said by other sources to be due to an excessive concern with service delivery and insufficient attention to specific needs; yet others maintained that lack of information caused women to be fearful of screening for breast cancer and unaware of its benefits. She asked what was being done to inform the 50-69 age group of the service, and why the 40-49 and 70-79 age groups were not also being contacted. It would also be interesting to know whether family risk factors influenced targeting. She enquired, lastly, what treatment was given to women prisoners with addictions, and how much of the 10 per cent of the national budget that was devoted to health went to women's health.

41. **Ms. Zou Xiaqiao** reminded the delegation that Italy had not yet complied with the obligation of States parties to submit core documents to the Committee. Turning to article 13, she asked how rural women obtained credit and what Government policies were in place to ensure that women generally had access to credit on an equal basis with men. Noting that, according to NGO sources, the average difference

between the retirement pensions of men and women was, at 30 per cent, significantly higher than between their levels of paid employment, she asked what measures were being taken to help elderly women, particularly in rural areas, who were thus subject to increased risk of poverty. She wondered about the reasons for the reported lack of reliable data on the socio-economic status of rural women; that was no excuse for not helping them. Further information would also be appreciated about national strategies for the advancement of women, action to promote gender awareness and special measures for particular groups.

42. **Ms. Rasekh**, returning to article 12, said that, since depression was a major cause of disability for women, it was regrettable that the report provided no statistical information on that phenomenon, nor on addiction to alcohol or drugs among the female population. It was unacceptable to refer to such dependence as a lifestyle, as in paragraph 434 of the report; its root causes needed to be studied. Had the Ministry of Health or any other authority taken any action to that end? Had it investigated the causes of mental illness? The Committee would welcome in particular any light that might be shed on why women were more prone to depression than men. Information would also be appreciated about any campaign against excessive drinking by women, especially during pregnancy, or preventive measures taken by the Government. She commended Italy for its action to combat violence against women and requested details of its strategies and services in support of victims. She also asked what was being done to train doctors and health-care staff to deal with such cases and to report them, as well as any action to prevent cardiovascular diseases among women.

43. **Ms. Patten**, while welcoming the candid and informative response to question 29 (CEDAW/C/ITA/Q/6/Add.1, paras. 240-285) of the list of issues and questions (CEDAW/C/ITA/Q/6), stressed that consideration of the report was not just a formal exercise; it was an opportunity to take stock. Accordingly, it raised a number of questions to which further replies would be appreciated. Did the Government intend to develop special programmes to keep women from leaving rural areas; what measures were being taken or proposed to involve rural women in policies and decisions affecting them; what was the Government doing to ensure that members of the judiciary and law-enforcement services received

training in the Convention and all its related issues? She encouraged the State party to compile statistics for the purposes of more closely focused action.

Articles 15 and 16

44. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** said that the family-law issues addressed in the periodic report were minor, procedural ones. The required length of divorce proceedings — three years — gave cause for concern, as it aggravated the risk of spousal violence, and she enquired whether any research had been carried out on the effects of such lengthy proceedings. She also wondered whether there was mandatory mediation in cases of violence. The Committee would also welcome clarification of Act No. 54/2006, which seemed to suggest a default rule of shared custody between parents in cases of divorce. The question was whether custody was to be understood in legal or material terms. She referred to the disputed concept of parental alienation syndrome and asked whether any research had been conducted on the outcomes of contested custody. She also wished to know if divorced women who had conformed to traditional gender roles were protected against destitution in cases of the separate property option adopted by most couples under matrimonial law. It would be interesting to learn whether pensions and other intangible property were shared by divorced spouses and whether the same rules applied to de facto unions, particularly in view of the definition in article 29 of the Constitution of marriage as the foundation of society.

45. **Ms. Ricci** (Italy) said that the centralized approach to health care in Italy guaranteed equal access to health services throughout the country. The State monitored service levels and differences between regions and worked with the regional authorities to ensure the local implementation of health-care plans. The Ministry of Health was engaged in an ongoing study on the health status of the immigrant population in order to set health targets and had issued a pamphlet on infant health care, translated into several languages. The Ministry, in cooperation with civil society organizations, was also involved in a project to provide health-care services in Roma camps. As for the recently introduced security package, that did not prevent foreigners from benefiting from such services, since they were no longer obliged to produce residence permits for that purpose.

46. **Ms. Cecconi** (Italy) said, with regard to breast-cancer screening, that the 50-60 age group selected was a pilot group and that in the coming period the target group would be expanded with a view to reducing cancer mortality rates. The challenge was to persuade the women invited to attend screenings to turn up for them. In any case, the quality of the services provided would be monitored and targeting mechanisms would be reviewed. It was true that screening had not been as widely available in the south and in the islands, but additional efforts were being made to extend and support the services available regionally, particularly through transfers of funding under the National Prevention Plan. An impact study had been carried out and published on the effectiveness of the screening programme; it had shown that, while there had been an increase in the incidence of breast cancer due to the ageing of the population, the related mortality rate had been steadily decreasing, thanks in part to the targeting of women with a high genetic risk of cancer. With regard to the issue of women with HIV/AIDS in prison, goals and guidelines had been set, both for prevention and treatment, including the use of antiretrovirals. The rates of infection for women generally, mainly through heterosexual transmission, were higher than for men and were constant across different socio-economic groups. Despite the difficulty of providing the necessary services in the prison environment, the rate of infection among women prisoners remained low.

47. **Mr. Ardita** (Italy) said that there were only 2,900 women in Italian prisons, as against 64,000 men. In absolute terms, there had been an increase in drug dependency among such women, but not in relative terms; the proportion in that category had continued to be some 20 per cent, which compared favourably with the rest of Europe, where the average rate was 28.6 per cent. As for the rate of HIV/AIDS infection among women prisoners in Italy, that was 5.5 per cent, as against 9.2 per cent for the rest of Europe.

48. **Mr. Brasioli** (Italy) informed the Committee that fuller information would be duly sent to it in response to any questions that remained unanswered.

49. **The Chair** thanked the delegation for the additional information and explanations provided and said that the Committee looked forward to receiving the next periodic report of Italy and continuing its rich constructive dialogue with the State party.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.