



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

Distr.: General
21 February 2006

Original: English

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

Summary record of the 711th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 25 January 2006, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Manalo

later: Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani (Vice-Chairperson)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

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

Combined initial, second and third periodic report of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (CEDAW/C/MKD/1-3, CEDAW/C/MKD/Q/1-3, CEDAW/C/MKD/Q/1-3/Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Jakimovski** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), introducing the State party's combined initial, second and third periodic report (CEDAW/C/MKD/1-3), said that the Convention had entered into force in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in 1991. In 2003, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention, and in 2004 it had submitted its report. As indicated in the report (p. 6), international treaties ratified in accordance with the Constitution were directly applicable and could not be changed by law. In other words, they were a direct source of law.

3. The report indicated progress in areas such as education, health care, political participation and the non-governmental sector. However, much work still needed to be done to achieve full implementation of the Convention in all spheres and throughout the country, particularly regarding social and economic life, the status of women in rural areas, violence against women, and trafficking in women and girls. The dialogue with the Committee was of huge importance, as it would provide clear guidance for future activities.

4. The Constitution contained a number of key provisions relating to gender equality, namely article 9, according to which citizens were equal in their freedoms and rights, irrespective of gender, and all citizens were equal under the Constitution and before the law; article 50, paragraph 1, according to which any citizen could invoke the protection of freedoms and rights determined by the Constitution before the regular courts and the Constitutional Court; article 54, paragraph 4, according to which restrictions of freedoms and rights could not discriminate on any grounds, including gender; and article 110, according

to which the Constitutional Court protected the freedoms and rights of the individual against discrimination on any grounds, including gender. The principle of non-discrimination had also been incorporated into domestic legislation. Moreover, in an effort to move towards European standards, legislation relating to gender equality had been improved. As part of its rapprochement with the European Union, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was harmonizing its laws — for example, the 2005 Law on Labor Relations, criminal law and family law — with relevant European Union legislation.

5. Despite a solid legal framework, functional institutional protection and increasing awareness, women still faced some forms of discrimination, particularly those typical of traditional societies. In that regard, the Government realized that it was crucial to mobilize all relevant segments of society in order to eliminate gender discrimination and was on the right track in terms of policymaking. The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, which housed the Department for the Promotion of Gender Equality, worked continuously to promote gender equality at the national level and supported women's activities, in accordance with the National Plan on Gender Equality and the Beijing Platform for Action. Many activities had been carried out under the National Plan over the past few years. Almost all had been implemented through joint action by women in various sectors, including NGOs, political parties, the Government, the Parliament, local self-government and trade unions, and on the basis of joint strategies and coordination at the national level, individual work in organizations, group campaigning, mutual cooperation and support from the Women's Lobby, and support for volunteer work.

6. One of the priority activities of the National Plan on Gender Equality was the empowerment of women, including equal access of women to politics and other decision-making spheres. In 2002, the Law for Election of Members of Parliament had been amended to require a minimum 30 per cent representation of either gender on candidate lists. As a result, the number of women MPs had increased, with 22 or 18.3 per cent of the 120 MPs elected in 2002 being women. Following insertion of the same requirement in the Law on Local Elections in 2004, at least 3 per cent of the 85 mayors elected in 2004 had been women. In the meantime, 309 or 22.2 per cent of the 1,391 elected council members had been

women, an increase of 13.8 per cent over the 2000 elections.

7. In order to incorporate the concept of gender equality and advance the status of women at the local level, and in line with one of the strategic objectives of the National Plan on Gender Equality, Committees on Gender Equality had also been established in 10 cities. The main task of those Committees — whose membership was mixed in terms of both gender and politics — was to exert a positive influence on local politics in order to overcome the specific problems facing women at the local level. The Committees had also prepared local action plans, which identified specific aims and needs for each municipality.

8. The proposal to adopt a Law on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women was part of affirmative action at the national level. The Law — which would ensure equal opportunities in all areas of life by specifying general and special measures and determining competencies, tasks and obligations for the responsible entities — would be adopted in two stages. It had been approved by the Government and was currently being reviewed by the Parliament. Detailed information regarding the Law had been provided in the responses to the list of issues and questions (CEDAW/C/MKD/Q/1-3/Add.1).

9. One strategic aim in the area of social policy was to ensure equal access to employment and equal treatment with regard to rewards and promotion. A priority in that area was to harmonize labour legislation with the European Union acquis. As part of the labour legislation reform of 2005, the Government had adopted the Law on Labor Relations, which incorporated provisions from European Union Directives on equal treatment regarding access to work, education and working conditions and on the burden of proof in cases of discrimination. The Law defined direct and indirect discrimination, the exceptions to the prohibition of discrimination and, for the first time, the notion of sexual harassment. It was expected to change the labour market, where women currently accounted for 40.7 per cent of employees, 20.9 per cent of employers and 18.4 per cent of self-employed persons. According to the Labor Force Survey for the third quarter of 2005, women accounted for 41.3 per cent of all unemployed persons.

10. Education, meanwhile, was accessible to all on equal terms. Reform of the education system had

revealed the need for a National Strategy for the Development of Education. That document — a comprehensive strategy that identified six main areas of intervention — had now been finalized and was being reviewed by the Government. The Ministry of Education had introduced gender-balanced curricula at all levels of education, and statistics showed a balanced representation of both genders in enrolment policy and in the education and graduation process. The Ministry of Education was also taking measures to tackle the high dropout rate among certain ethnic communities, particularly the Roma and rural ethnic Albanians, and to reintegrate the pupils concerned — primarily girls — in the education system. To that end, seminars had been organized for school principals, teachers and representatives of professional services (e.g. psychologists). Training focused on ways to reduce the dropout rate, while information packs had been distributed to help schools detect the causes.

11. Another priority of the National Plan on Gender Equality was to identify the extent of violence against women and to create legal and institutional prerequisites for its prevention and elimination. In 2000, the Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research — at the request of an NGO — had carried out a survey on violence against women. Of the 850 women interviewed, 61.5 per cent had suffered psychological violence, 23.9 per cent had suffered physical violence and 5 per cent had suffered a violation of their sexual integrity. Those and other findings of NGOs were yet another argument in favour of the urgent need to change the way in which society viewed the phenomenon. An important element of criminal law reform had therefore been to make domestic violence a separate offence. The amendments made to the Family Law in 2004, meanwhile, had for the first time introduced provisions prohibiting family violence into civil law. In order to implement those provisions, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy had opened four centres for family violence victims within the respective social work centres. It also planned to extend the network.

12. One of the strategic priorities of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy concerned continuous training to equip people with the necessary knowledge and skills to recognize violence and render assistance to victims. As part of ongoing cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) office in Skopje, between November 2004 and May 2005 a

cross-sectoral training course had been organized on working with victims of family violence in the community, in which 86 professionals from various backgrounds had participated. In June 2005, a month-long national campaign on dealing with family violence had been organized with the aim of strengthening the trust in State institutions of potential victims of family violence, recognizing the problem of family violence and encouraging victims to ask for help. The campaign had targeted both the general public — particularly women and children — and the media. A 24-hour national SOS hotline had also been set up for family violence victims and received an average of 120 calls per month.

13. To implement its strategic objectives regarding women's health, in 2005 the Government had adopted a programme to protect the population against AIDS and a programme on the early detection and prevention of reproductive diseases. The former promoted United Nations recommendations for preventing and eradicating HIV/AIDS and focused, *inter alia*, on research and monitoring, laboratory tests, training for health-care workers and health education for the entire population, particularly high-risk groups. The latter, meanwhile, aimed to reduce the number of cervical cancer deaths and offer women screening in order to detect precancerous conditions early. In 2005, screening had been provided for 20 per cent of the female population aged between 19 and 65. The Government also intended to develop promotional material to popularize the programme's activities.

14. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was working hard to prepare for European Union membership, harmonizing its legislation with European Union standards. Particular attention was being paid to issues relating to human rights and freedoms, as well as equal opportunities for every citizen. In that regard, it would continue to work on gender equality, as it was aware that a truly democratic society required the full and unimpeded inclusion of both women and men on an equal footing and in all areas.

15. *Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani (Vice-Chairperson) took the Chair.*

Articles 1 and 2

16. **Ms. Šimonović**, speaking as a member of the Committee, asked whether the report had been formally adopted by the Government and whether it

had been presented to any parliamentary committees or NGOs. She was also interested to learn whether any cases involving the Convention had been brought before the national courts. She was pleased that the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had ratified the Optional Protocol and wondered whether information regarding the Convention and the Optional Protocol was offered at the university level. Finally, she wished to know whether the general recommendations had been translated into the national languages.

17. **Ms. Popescu** was pleased that the Convention had been ratified without reservation and asked whether measures had been taken to ensure its broad dissemination. More specifically, she wondered whether the Government had attempted to raise awareness of the Convention among NGOs, trade unions, women's associations and grass-roots organizations. With respect to national legislation, she wished to know when the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men was expected to enter into force and whether the Law on Labor Relations contained sanction mechanisms. Additional information regarding the areas covered by the Law on Labor Relations would also be welcome.

18. **Ms. Khan** wondered whether the notions "direct discrimination" and "indirect discrimination" referred to in the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men conformed with article 1 of the Convention and whether they were appropriately interpreted and applied to eliminate discrimination against women. She reiterated that national legislation must include both anti-discriminatory clauses and provisions for sanctions and wished to know whether any cases had arisen where sanctions had actually been applied. Additional information regarding the introduction of regulatory measures to prevent trafficking, prostitution and domestic violence would be appreciated. Finally, she requested further details concerning public education campaigns and legal aid programmes.

19. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** wished to know whether the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men ensured a basis for gender equality in all areas of life and whether the mechanisms for the implementation of the Law would be required to coordinate gender mainstreaming in all sectors of policymaking or only in labour and social policies.

20. **Ms. Gnacadja** asked whether the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men had met with any opposition during the approval process and whether discussions in Parliament had focused on any particular points. She would like more information on the steps being taken by the Government to ensure that women were aware of how they could defend their rights. Given that the Convention was recognized in domestic legislation, she would be interested to know whether any cases based on the Convention had actually been brought before the courts. Lastly, she expressed the hope that the Unit for the Promotion of Gender Equality, which had only one employee, would have additional human and financial resources made available to it.

21. **Ms. Gabr** said that she would appreciate further information regarding the proposed special parliamentary committee for gender equality. Also, having noted that a considerable number of Roma women were experiencing difficulty obtaining citizenship, she wondered how the Government could ensure that the Convention was being applied in that situation.

22. **Mr. Flinterman** said that he would welcome further clarification regarding the status of the Convention within the Macedonian legal system. Specifically, it was unclear whether a court could set aside a national law that was in conflict with the Convention. He also wished to know whether any gender discrimination cases had been submitted to the Ombudsman since the writing of the report.

23. **Ms. Grozdanova** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that representatives from State institutions and NGOs had been asked to contribute to the preparation of the report. The report had been adopted by the Government before being submitted to the United Nations and NGOs had been informed of its content through workshops and public debates within the Macedonian women's lobby. The general public had also been informed of the report through the national and local media.

24. **Ms. Geleva** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that there were no cases involving the direct application of the Convention before either the regular courts or the Constitutional Court. The Constitution guaranteed the equality of citizens and prohibited discrimination on various bases, including gender. The issue of non-discrimination was also

addressed in administrative, civil and criminal legislation. The Government had established several institutions to protect citizens' freedoms and rights, such as the Ombudsman and the Permanent Survey Committee for Protection of Citizens' Rights and Freedoms. Citizens could also seek protection of their rights before the European Court of Human Rights.

25. **Ms. Mingova-Krepieva** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that several female Members of Parliament had helped formulate the answers to the Committee's questions. With respect to the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, the aim was to attain 40 per cent female participation in all sectors. Protection against discrimination was provided in various laws, including the Law on Labor Relations, the laws on education and criminal laws. With regard to misdemeanours, protective measures and penal sanctions would be applied if the laws were violated. In reply to the question regarding the proposed special parliamentary committee for gender equality, the committee had not been established as yet. In the meantime, the Female MPs Club reviewed, from a gender perspective, all legislative items being discussed in Parliament and made suggestions regarding possible amendments.

26. **Ms. Trajkovik** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that, in 2004, Parliament had amended the Law on Family and had changed the conception of family violence and victims of family violence to encompass physical injury or emotional or sexual abuse or exploitation of any member of a family, regardless of gender and age. Since the amendment to the Law had criminalized family violence, the police service had begun keeping precise statistics on such incidents. Furthermore, family relationship was seen as an aggravating circumstance in crimes involving sexual abuse.

27. **Mr. Trajanov** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said he wished to clarify that the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men was only one of the laws in the area of labour; others covered such topics as protection for workers, unemployment insurance and safety inspections. The Law on Labor Relations placed special emphasis on employment discrimination, but most of the other potential areas of discrimination were covered in the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. The aim of that Law was to improve the status of women, establish equal opportunity as an obligation of society as a

whole and remove impediments to equality. The Law on Labor Relations prohibited discrimination on various grounds including gender, defined direct and indirect discrimination, and also contained provisions regarding sexual harassment.

28. **Mr. Jakimovski** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that there had been some discussion whether the title of the new law should mention “equal rights” or “equal opportunities”, but the consensus had been to emphasize opportunity in order to avoid resistance. His was the only country in the world to recognize the Roma as an ethnic community, with their own municipality, and to grant them citizenship.

29. **Ms. Kamberi** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that equal conditions applied to citizenship for women and men of any ethnic group, and citizenship was granted with full transparency. The Roma played a particular role in the educational workshops and round tables held with their community on the citizenship process, and, with the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, brochures and other media materials had been prepared in the Roma language on the rights and obligations of citizens and the process of registering births, marriages and deaths. In 2005, 1,508 Roma had become citizens, with 498 applications pending.

30. **Ms. Grozdanova** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), in reply to questions on the dissemination of information about the Convention, said that the UNDP country office had cooperated in seminars on gender equality and informational programmes about the Convention. It had been translated into the Macedonian and Albanian languages and copies had been distributed through NGOs and political parties. All Ministries held regular seminars on human rights.

31. The Gender Equality Unit had two permanent staff members and a contractor who was working on a project on trafficking of women. The Unit would grow into a sector and would expand its mandate to include the practical implementation of gender equality. A number of NGOs had made significant contributions to the achievement of its strategic objectives.

32. **Ms. Geleva** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that human rights had been incorporated into the curriculum of primary and secondary schools, and basic human rights instruments,

including the Convention, were covered at the university level in the law and political science departments.

33. The Constitutional Court decided on the conformity of laws with the Constitution. In the case of a conflict between a domestic law and an international treaty, the treaty would prevail.

34. About one third of the complaints to the Ombudsman were made by women, but there was no special category for complaints of gender discrimination. A comprehensive reform of the judiciary was under way. There was a centre to provide continuing education and training for judges.

Article 3

35. **Ms. Shin** asked whether, when the Gender Equality Unit expanded to become a sector, its mandate would also expand to encompass other areas of equal opportunity. She wondered if it would have sufficient resources and staff to meet the increased demands. The National Action Plan had been in effect since 1999, and she would like to know if there had been any evaluation of the results, if another phase was planned, and if there had been any NGO involvement in its implementation. She would also like to know more about the Unit’s operations and how it coordinated with other Ministries.

36. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** said that she would like to know whether the local equal opportunity offices had been mandated by the Law on Equal Opportunity and to be informed about their role in local self-government councils, their membership, how members were selected and whether they had paid staff. She would also be interested to hear more about the Club of Women Parliamentarians, including whether it was a formal organization or an informal group. Finally, she wondered if criticism from NGOs had been considered in the preparation of the report.

37. **Ms. Dairiam** said that her concerns involved refugees and asylum-seekers, half of whom were women. She would like to learn more about procedures to ensure a gender perspective in decisions regarding their status, and whether women were required to apply as individuals even if they arrived with family members. She also wondered if gender persecution was considered as grounds for granting asylum and how women victims of violence and heads of households

were treated. Finally, she asked about any special measures for support to trafficked women.

38. **Ms. Saiga** suggested that, since no cases of gender discrimination had been brought before the Ombudsman, the Government should publicize the existence of that office for both men and women.

39. **Ms. Grozdanova** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) explained that the unit to be established on equal opportunities for women and men would deal exclusively with that issue. The Action Plan was indeed overly ambitious and, accordingly, it would be revised and given new priorities and objectives. The results of the Plan had not been evaluated thus far, and no NGOs were involved. However, every Ministry had a contact person to monitor compliance with the gender perspective.

40. Referring to the possible need for an extensive campaign to increase awareness about the new Equal Opportunities Law, she pointed out that preparation of the Law had been very transparent and that the relevant unit's main task would be to disseminate information on its implementation. Moreover, the many gender equality committees and local self-government units were working well; their membership included members of political parties and NGOs, both male and female. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs planned to increase the autonomy of the local administrations with respect to gender equality and ways to incorporate it into local policy. All gender awareness campaigns involved the local administrations and political parties, which monitored the development of programmes and promoted the amendment of provisions on the status of women.

41. She drew attention to her country's economic and financial situation, which was the reason why gender budgeting had not been put into practice, and said that the Government would be informed of the need for gender budgeting.

42. **Mr. Jakimovski** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the small staff of the existing equal opportunities unit had not been sufficient to deal with the wide range of tasks assigned to it and, despite the recent downsizing of the Ministries, its staff had been increased.

43. **Ms. Mingova-Krepieva** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), responding to the question concerning the role of the local self-government units

in monitoring the gender perspective in legislation, explained that all laws were reviewed in Parliament to harmonize them with European legislation. She cited the many European directives which were taken into account in that exercise but stressed that the basic document was the Convention. Following local elections, seminars were held for women members of the local self-government units on how to review documents from a gender perspective, and the lobbying of associations of women's organizations had succeeded in ensuring a greater role for women in her country's political life.

44. **Ms. Trajkovik** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) explained that the Ombudsman was elected by Parliament with a view to safeguarding the legal and constitutional rights of citizens. The Ministry of the Interior cooperated closely with the Ombudsman and with NGOs.

45. Additional information would be provided subsequently on the MINOP Group, which had been established in 2002 and which dealt with the rights of Roma and Albanian women. Members of the Group were also members of a special group that monitored police activities. Although the problem of police misconduct was open for discussion, there had never been any complaint of such misconduct.

46. No request for asylum had ever been received from a woman victim of trafficking. A major effort had been made to train the relevant personnel to deal with victims of trafficking, and their skills were continuously being upgraded. Moreover, a special unit had been established to combat trafficking, and a project organized jointly by the Ministry of the Interior, international organizations and the Helsinki Committee on Human Rights provided special training for police officers in human rights and in combating discrimination against women in police operations.

47. **Mr. Jakimovski** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) added that the law governing asylum-seekers allowed them to submit applications for asylum for other family members. His country was also building special facilities to accommodate asylum-seekers and refugees.

48. **Ms. Geleva** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) drew attention to the fact that the work of the Ombudsman had been decentralized through the creation of six regional offices, thereby making those services more accessible to all citizens.

Article 4

49. **Ms. Patten** urged the Government to amend its Constitution to include the possibility of adopting special temporary measures to ensure implementation of the Convention, and she asked whether the Government would consider taking temporary special measures to address discrimination, for example, against Roma women.

50. **Ms. Khan** supported **Ms. Patten** regarding the need for temporary special measures, because legal equality did not always guarantee de facto equality. She asked whether the Government had identified those areas where Roma women experienced discrimination and what would be done to assist the large proportion of unemployed Roma women.

51. Since the National Action Plan was apparently the only document dealing with the advancement of women, she asked what progress had been made, for instance, for Albanian women, and what the priorities, budget and time frame were for that programme.

52. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** asked whether the Equal Opportunities Law, which was clearly not a temporary special measure per se, contained provisions allowing for application of the temporary special measures which the Committee believed were required. She also expressed concern about the use of the term “positive discrimination”.

53. **Mr. Jakimovski** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) acknowledged that the Equal Opportunities Law was merely a framework for action and that the Government must develop ways to intervene, particularly in cases of multiple forms of discrimination. His country was a signatory of the Decade of Roma Inclusion and conducted special activities to eliminate discrimination, especially against Roma women, and to provide education for Roma children and housing and employment for the Roma people as a whole.

54. The Government had adopted special measures on behalf of Albanian women as well, particularly in rural areas, and two universities had been established in primarily Albanian areas with a remarkably high enrolment of Albanian women. Furthermore, a framework agreement had been prepared on the employment of ethnic groups in public administration.

55. **Ms. Grozdanova** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that much progress had been

achieved in securing participation by women in decision-making, notably among ethnic minorities. The number of Roma women elected as council members had increased from one in 2002 — the only Roma woman in elective office in South-East Europe — to four in 2005. The law on parliamentary and local elections had been amended in order to accelerate the increased representation of women in public office. In response to the question on the National Action Plan for Gender Equality, she said that there was no specific time frame or budget; it was implemented through the priority activities of the relevant department of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy.

56. **Mr. Jakimovski** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) emphasized the budget constraints that had forced the Government to downsize its programmes, including for the Decade for Roma Inclusion. An increased allocation for that purpose should be possible the following year.

57. **Ms. Mingova-Krepieva** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the Law on Equal Opportunities included provisions for special temporary measures to speed up the achievement of gender equality through the implementation of periodic plans. All the relevant Government services were expected to contribute to that end and were held accountable.

58. **Ms. Trajdovik** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that women were encouraged to apply for posts in the Ministry of the Interior through a transparent recruitment process. In the Ministry itself, 14.4 per cent of the staff were women; in the uniformed police, the proportion was 7 per cent. Efforts were being made to increase those percentages, but it was a lengthy process.

59. **Ms. Kamberi** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that her country was one of nine that had adopted the initiative known as the Decade for Roma Inclusion 2005-2015. Gender issues was one of the strategic areas that it covered. It included special measures to improve the situation of Roma women.

Articles 5 and 6

60. **Ms. Pimentel** expressed concern about the improper presentation of women in the media as a factor impeding their equal treatment. She asked whether there were special policies or strategies to

combat gender stereotypes at an early age, in particular through education.

61. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** endorsed that concern. She noted that measures had been taken to combat media messages that did not give a positive image of women. She wished to know whether the media might be used not only to stop stereotyping but also to provide models and guidance for women. In the pre-session working group not enough information had been provided about ways of countering the traditional stereotyping of women's role in the family. She asked how information could be imparted about the new relations between men and women.

62. **Ms. Morvai** noted the reference to pimps in the report (CEDAW/C/MKD/1-3, p. 53). She wished to know what action the Government was taking against procurers. She asked how many had been prosecuted and how many given criminal sentences; likewise for traffickers in human beings. She also enquired whether the clients of prostitutes were treated as criminals. Since the country had ratified the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, it was under the obligation to take women out of prostitution. She asked what programmes were being implemented to that end and whether action was being taken to address the demand side. She noted the contradiction, apparent from the report (p. 52), between treating prostitution as a crime yet not regarding it as illegal.

63. **Ms. Ivanova** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that school textbooks were an important means of socialization, at pre-primary, primary and secondary levels. The books used in education were carefully chosen for each age group and were complemented by other suitable types of literature. Handbooks were also issued to teachers to provide them with guidance in combating gender stereotyping.

64. **Ms. Grozdanova** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that in her country, as elsewhere in the region, women were inadequately represented in the media. However, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy had since 2000 organized a number of seminars with journalists in the electronic and print media. Considerable progress had thus been made in sensitizing men to the issue; further progress was expected. In the coming period, with Norwegian

assistance, work with the media would be carried out centrally and locally to overcome gender stereotyping.

65. **Mr. Jakimovski** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that, in the post-conflict situation of his country and of the region generally, prostitution and trafficking in women had been rife. In the previous three years, however, the police had managed to neutralize all the centres of prostitution. In urban areas, in particular, regular action was taken by the police to eliminate prostitution. One notorious procurer had recently been sentenced to five years' imprisonment. A campaign was also under way, with the involvement of several ministries, to educate and rehabilitate women who had fallen into the hands of traffickers. That was particularly necessary as his country had become a transit country for white slavery.

66. **Ms. Trajdovik** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) noted that her country had ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Under the national Action Plan for 2006-2008, the State would continue to fight trafficking in persons and illegal migration; very successful action had already been taken to close the channels through which trafficking was carried out. In that endeavour, it engaged in international, regional and subregional initiatives. Significant progress had been achieved, reflected in the sharp reduction in the number of related criminal offences in recent months.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.