



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

Distr.: General
20 September 2007

Original: English

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

Summary record of the 803rd meeting (Chamber B)

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 1 August 2007, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson : Ms. Dairiam (Rapporteur)

Contents

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

Seventh periodic report of Norway

This record is subject to correction.

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

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

07-44606 (E)

0744606

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

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

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

Seventh periodic report of Norway (CEDAW/C/NOR/7; CEDAW/C/NOR/Q/7 and Add.1)

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

2. **Ms. Hole** (Norway), introducing her country's seventh periodic report (CEDAW/C/NOR/7), said that the Norwegian Government considered periodic examinations by treaty bodies to be a crucial part of international monitoring of legally binding conventions and covenants on human rights and looked forward to receiving the Committee's advice on how it could improve its implementation of the Convention. When representatives of her Government had met with the Committee in 2003, the Committee had called Norway a haven for gender equality but had expressed concern regarding inequalities in economic decision-making, violence against women and the rights and needs of immigrant girls and women. She would therefore focus her introductory remarks on those issues.

3. A broad spectrum of measures had been taken to address violence against women, including implementation of cross-sectoral action plans; creation of new institutions, programmes and projects; initiation or continuation of research; and strengthening of the provisions of the Penal Code relating to violence against women. A new plan of action against violence was currently being drawn up. A very important initiative had been the appointment by the Cabinet of a committee on aggravated sexual assault, which would present a report in early 2008 on the situation of women who had been subjected to rape and other types of sexual violence and would propose measures and strategies for reducing the incidence of such crimes. Other initiatives were described in the Government's responses (CEDAW/C/NOR/Q/7/Add.1) to the Committee's list of issues and questions in document CEDAW/C/NOR/Q/7.

4. Norway had learned that a double or even triple approach was needed to stem violence, focusing on

treatment of abusive men, strengthening of support for women and children, and research on preventive measures at the local level. Five regional centres had been set up to help coordinate, guide and support local efforts to stop violence against women.

5. Forced marriages and female genital mutilation had long been forbidden by Norwegian law. The Cabinet had launched a new action plan against forced marriages in June 2007, and considerable new funding had been allocated for its implementation. Minority groups and NGOs were also receiving funding for activities aimed at changing attitudes and behaviours. Research was under way to assess the frequency with which female genital mutilation was performed in Norway, and a new action plan to prevent the practice would be introduced in October 2007.

6. Turning to the issue of economic empowerment of women, she observed that it was puzzling that, in a country such as Norway, there were still so few women in the upper echelons of the economy and the corporate sector. The Government was committed to rectifying that situation and had introduced strong affirmative action measures to increase the numbers of women in high-level positions in the corporate sector, including legislation mandating that at least 40 per cent of the members of corporate boards of directors must be women. Companies which had initially protested, claiming that it would be impossible to find enough qualified women, seemed to have realized that not only was there no shortage of competent women but that diversity was good for innovation, the balance sheet and corporate culture. Indeed, the Confederation of Norwegian Business and Industry had, of its own accord, set up a programme called Female Future to recruit and train women for corporate management positions — a welcome initiative that showed that when the public sector paved the way with policy decisions, the private sector would follow its lead.

7. In 2003 the Committee had urged Norway to take action to eliminate the pay gap between men and women, and the country had since developed a measurement tool to detect gender-based wage discrimination. In 2006 the Cabinet had appointed the Equal Pay Commission to study the issue. Its report would be released by March 2008. A national strategy to be launched in September 2007 would focus on education and employment choices by males and females and on how schools dealt with gender equality issues. The aim was to reduce the historical gender

segregation of the labour market, which was largely responsible for the wage differential, and to promote full-time employment for women, almost half of whom currently worked part-time.

8. In the political realm, a series of initiatives had been undertaken to encourage political parties to nominate more women for elective office at the local level, including a campaign for that purpose funded by the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development. As a result, 42 per cent of the nominees for the next local elections, scheduled for September 2007, were women. The Ministry had announced its willingness to consider parity laws in order to ensure equal representation of women on party lists and boost their political participation, which remained limited. Only one out of every six of the country's mayors, for example, were women, and although the Local Government Act required that 40 per cent of appointees to political committees must be women, almost one out of three committees failed to meet that requirement.

9. Social inclusion and integration of all citizens or citizens-to-be of Norway was an important goal for the Government. With that in mind, it had taken several measures to eliminate the barriers that hindered full participation in Norwegian society by immigrant girls and women. A special directorate had been set up to promote social inclusion and integration and a new law forbidding discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity and religion, the Anti-Discrimination Act, had been enacted. A White Paper on social inclusion, which recommended measures exclusively for immigrant women, had been presented to Parliament in 2006, and a national action plan for integration and inclusion targeting the immigrant population had been introduced the same year. In addition, programmes and networks had been developed to equip immigrant girls and women with the skills that they needed to succeed in the labour market.

10. As at 1 January 2006, the Anti-Discrimination and Equality Ombud, together with the new Anti-Discrimination and Equality Tribunal, constituted Norway's national gender equality machinery. They dealt with complaints of discrimination on various grounds, although most of the complaints lodged had to do with gender equality issues. The new machinery was very visible in the media.

11. The Government's vision for a gender-equal society called for a redistribution of work, power and

care-related tasks, with more women performing full-time jobs, including jobs in male-dominated sectors, and more men being recruited into traditionally female-dominated sectors such as health care and education. To redistribute economic power, more women had to be engaged in senior and managerial positions. At the same time, women and men must share responsibilities at home. Equality in parenthood was a specific policy goal in Norway.

12. The Government believed that boys and men had a crucial role to play in achieving gender equality. Accordingly, it was preparing a White Paper on men, male roles and gender equality to be submitted to Parliament in 2008 and had also financed a chair at the University of Oslo for gender equality research, with a focus on men and maleness. In November the Government, together with the Confederation of Norwegian Municipalities, would co-host three regional conferences on gender equality issues. The main theme would be Norway's commitments under the Convention. Those events would afford the opportunity to publicize and discuss the results of the Government's current dialogue with the Committee.

13. In conclusion, she wished to highlight some recent examples of the Government's approach to gender mainstreaming in Norway. Fourteen of the country's 17 ministries now had sectoral plans for promoting gender equality or specific action-oriented plans on certain issues. One was a strategic plan for the forestry, agriculture and food-processing sectors — traditionally very conservative and male-dominated sectors — setting the goal of increasing the proportion of women employed in those areas by 40 per cent within 10 years. Another was an action plan for the defence sector, another highly male-dominated sector, aimed at increasing the number of women in the armed forces, especially in leadership positions. A third was an action plan to increase the number of female owners, operators and managers in the fishing and aquaculture industries. Finally, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a beacon for gender mainstreaming, had recently developed an action plan for promoting gender equality and women's issues in the field of development aid and an action plan to follow up Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on Women and peace and security. It was currently in the process of developing a White Paper on women and development issues.

Articles 1 to 6

14. **Mr. Flinterman** recalled that when the Committee had examined Norway's sixth periodic report, it had voiced concern over the fact that the Convention had still not been incorporated into Norwegian legislation, more than 20 years after Norway had ratified it. The Committee had recommended that the Convention should be incorporated through the Human Rights Act, which would ensure that the provisions of the Convention would prevail over any conflicting statutes and could be invoked in domestic courts. The Government in power at the time had chosen instead to incorporate the Convention into the Gender Equality Act. He was pleased to learn that the present Government had pledged to incorporate it into the Human Rights Act and wished to know when that would occur.

15. He also sought clarification of a statement in the report indicating that Norwegian statutory provisions had to be interpreted in accordance with the international conventions to which Norway was a party. As the Convention was currently incorporated into Norwegian law through the Gender Equality Act, did that mean that statutes that were incompatible with the Gender Equality Act would not be applied by courts of law? The report also indicated that the Convention had seldom been invoked before a Norwegian court. He wondered why that was the case and whether the same was true of other human rights treaties, particularly the provisions of treaties relating to gender equality.

16. Noting that the Gender Equality Act had recently been amended to prohibit reprisals against anyone who submitted a complaint claiming a breach of the Act, he enquired whether the Act also contained provisions designed to ensure that women availing themselves of the individual communication procedures under the Optional Protocol to the Convention were not subjected to ill treatment or intimidation. If not, did the Government intend to amend the Act in order to comply with article 11 of the Optional Protocol?

17. The report stated that the Gender Equality Act applied to all areas of society, with one exception: internal matters of religious communities. He was intrigued, therefore, that the present Government had decided to examine the applicability of that exception to the Church of Norway, the State church. The Committee would appreciate more information on that

issue and on the outcome of the Government's examination.

18. **Ms. Šimonović** said that the Committee had welcomed the opportunity to examine the report submitted by Norwegian NGOs but had regretted that no representatives of those organizations had been present at the time that the report was discussed. The Committee had been informed that the NGO representatives lacked sufficient financial resources to attend the meeting. She found that odd, since it was evident that the Norwegian Government had good and cooperative relations with NGOs in many fields, and would appreciate an explanation as to why funding had not been provided to enable NGO representatives to attend the session and present their report.

19. In her view the strongest argument for incorporating the Convention into the Human Rights Act was that, in contrast to the situation that had existed in 2003 when Norway's last report had been examined, more cases were now being filed under the Optional Protocol, and those cases were providing additional interpretations of women's rights under the Convention. It was therefore important to ensure the statutory position of the Convention in domestic law. In that connection, she would like to know what procedure was followed in Norway when a woman wished to file a discrimination complaint and what the court or tribunal of last instance was.

20. **Ms. Tavares da Silva**, noting that the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud dealt with discrimination on various grounds, enquired whether there had been any disadvantages to considering discrimination against women as one form of discrimination among others, given that discrimination against women was clearly different in nature from other forms. It was horizontal and structural, whereas all the other forms were much more circumstantial. She wondered whether the restructuring of the national machinery had enhanced or diminished the visibility of gender equality concerns.

21. The State party's report indicated that the Anti-Discrimination and Equality Ombud and Tribunal were Government bodies that were professionally independent. That seemed to her to be an ambiguous situation and perhaps even a contradictory one, since if they were Government bodies which functioned as national machinery they could not be fully independent; they would have to follow Government

policies and guidelines. On the other hand, based on the information in the report, it appeared that the Ombud and the Tribunal played a role in determining the basic premises for policy formulation. She would appreciate clarification regarding the status of those two institutions and regarding which entity within the Government was in charge of devising plans and policies for gender equality and mainstreaming and for coordinating and monitoring their implementation.

22. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, commended the State party for its efforts in the area of international peace brokering. It would be interesting to know whether the participation of women from the countries concerned in peace negotiations was a prerequisite for Norwegian involvement in such negotiations and whether Norway's own delegations always included women. The Committee would also like to know whether any mechanism had been established to monitor the extent to which women's needs were being met during post negotiation peacebuilding processes.

23. Norway was well known for its role as a provider of overseas development assistance. The report referred to the launch of a new plan of action for women and gender equality in development cooperation, and she wondered whether the plan provided for the direct implementation of the Convention. She expressed concern that, as evidenced, inter alia, by the fact that the Convention had been incorporated into the Gender Equality Act rather than the Human Rights Act, women's right to equal treatment seemed to be regarded as a special right rather than a core human right. She would therefore be grateful for further clarification of the Government's understanding of the right to non-discrimination and of the ways in which that understanding informed development assistance efforts.

24. **Ms. Hole** (Norway) underlined the fact that Norway was one of the few countries that had fully incorporated the Convention into its domestic legislation. Furthermore, the present Government had declared its intention to incorporate the Convention into the Human Rights Act before ending its term of office in 2009. She did not know why the Norwegian courts referred only rarely to the Convention, but she assured the Committee that the Anti-Discrimination and Equality Ombud and Tribunal often relied upon it as source of law. Norway did not have a constitutional court, so cases concerning discrimination were heard

by the Anti-Discrimination and Equality Tribunal. To date, no cases under the Optional Protocol had been brought before the courts, but she did not foresee any difficulties in that regard. Article 11 of the Optional Protocol had indeed been taken into consideration in amending the Gender Equality Act.

25. Exceptions to the Gender Equality Act were currently made in respect of internal matters in religious communities, including the State church. The current Government was committed to examining whether those exceptions could be abolished and, to that end, a Cabinet-appointed committee of lawyers had recently been charged with drafting a comprehensive anti-discrimination law. In preparation for the drafting process, the committee was reviewing the provisions of the Gender Equality Act and the Working Environment Act and was due to submit a report to the Government by the end of the year.

26. In response to the question put by Ms. Šimonović, she said that women's NGOs received government funding through the Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs. In 2007, the budgetary allocation for NGOs had increased by NKr 3 million. While NGOs wishing to attend meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women usually received financial assistance, the Government had decided that, since the purpose of the current constructive dialogue was to monitor the implementation of the Convention by State institutions, no funding would be offered.

27. As far as the national machinery for the advancement of women was concerned, the Ministry of Children and Equality was the main body responsible for coordinating gender equality policies and programmes and promoting gender mainstreaming. In 2006, it had implemented Government-wide gender-based budgeting. New mechanisms for promoting gender equality had recently been established, namely the already discussed Ombud and Tribunal. Norway had a long tradition of appointing ombudspersons in various sectors, as they offered a low-threshold, conciliatory means of resolving contentious issues.

28. Although the Office of the Anti-Discrimination and Equality Ombud was funded by the Government, it was a fully independent institution: the quarterly meetings between the Ombud and the Ministry were for the sole purpose of discussion and information sharing. She agreed that discrimination against women

was a horizontal and structural phenomenon but pointed out that, since the Ombud dealt with all cases of discrimination, lessons learned from complaints concerning one form of discrimination could be applied to complaints involving other forms. The Office of the Ombud was also in a good position to gather information about cases involving multiple discrimination. A review of the effectiveness of the new arrangements would be submitted to Parliament in 2008.

29. **Mr. Frøskeland** (Norway) said that the national plan of action for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) set out a series of measures to enhance women's participation in peace negotiations. In order to set a good example to the countries it was assisting, Norway was committed to ensuring that, to the extent possible, its own delegations were gender-balanced. The action plan would be subject to annual review, and the first such review had just been released.

30. **Ms. Hole** (Norway) said that the Norwegian Government believed that it was in the interests of society as a whole to involve women in development activities. Accordingly, the new plan of action for women and gender equality in development cooperation covered four key thematic areas: political empowerment; economic empowerment; sexual and reproductive rights; and violence against women. A White Paper on those issues was currently being drafted in order to highlight the need for women's participation in political and development processes, both as an end in itself and also as a means of achieving other objectives. She reassured the Committee that the current Cabinet would never separate women's rights from human rights. Indeed, the concept of women's rights as human rights was the underlying premise of both the national plan of action for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and the plan of action for women and gender equality in development cooperation.

31. **Ms. Coker -Appiah** commended the State party for the innovative measures it had introduced to comply with article 5 of the Convention. Referring to page 26 of the report, she enquired as to the findings of the joint research project on the sexualization of public space and its impact on young people and stressed the need to apply any relevant findings in a practical manner.

32. A growing number of men were taking advantage of their entitlement to parental leave because they were increasingly aware of the need to establish close relationships with their children. However, men's role in society should not be confined to fatherhood. Further efforts should be made to examine the concept of masculinity and its relationship to violence against women. In that connection, she asked whether the Resource Centre for Men was planning to expand the scope of its work to include programmes geared towards the perpetrators of domestic violence.

33. **Ms. Šimonović** commended the State party for its efforts to gather statistics on the number of women murdered by their intimate partner. It would be useful to know how many of the seven murders committed in 2006 had been investigated and what the outcomes of those investigations had been. With a view to reducing the number of such murders, had any steps been taken to identify the remaining gaps in the prevention and protection system? Did the Government have any plans to introduce preventive detention for potentially violent men who violated their restraining orders?

34. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, said that the rights and privileges accorded to men could be a source of discrimination because they led to feelings of superiority among the male population. In that connection, she was curious to know why the report, which should have focused on women, discussed discrimination against men. She was also puzzled by the report's reference to the need for measures that were "adapted to men's differing situations and differing interests" (p. 28). The State party should indicate the specific steps it would take to reduce obstacles to women's empowerment on the basis of a sound understanding of the concept of gender inequality.

35. Lastly, she pointed out that negative institutional attitudes towards gender equality had a significant impact on the roles of men and women in society. What had been done to combat such attitudes? In that regard, she was particularly concerned about the myths surrounding rape that seemed to prevail in Norway and their implications for the treatment of rape victims.

36. **Mr. Flinterman** welcomed the steps taken by the Norwegian Government to follow up the Committee's previous concluding comments and recommendations concerning trafficking. Referring to the State party's response to question 11 of the list of issues and

questions (CEDAW/C/NOR/Q/7), he said that he had received information from other sources indicating that there were between 2,000 and 3,000 prostitutes in Oslo, 80 per cent of whom had come from abroad. He had also heard that only 15 per cent of foreign women trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation had been awarded permanent residency permits on humanitarian grounds. There was clearly a need for more systematic data collection in those areas.

37. The Government subsidized a website designed to prevent the procurement of sexual services, but information from other sources suggested that it was having the opposite effect. It would be useful to know whether an impact assessment of the website had been conducted and, if so, what the outcome of that assessment had been. Did the State party have any plans to introduce criminal penalties for those who bought sex? Sweden's experience in that field might be useful.

38. **Ms. Hole** (Norway) said that the research project on the sexualization of public space had yielded very diverse conclusions. The Government fully intended to follow up the project and, in order to stimulate debate, had forwarded those conclusions to the National Council on Youth. Possible amendments to the Marketing Act should also be discussed. As a general rule, very few women worked in the media, and the Government had therefore introduced a number of programmes to rectify that situation. Efforts were also under way to challenge the media as an institution and to question its portrayal of male and female roles.

39. The Resource Centre for Men, financed by the Ministry of Children and Equality, was engaged in awareness-raising activities aimed at changing men's attitudes to masculinity. On the question of measures in support of men, it was true that some privileged men enjoyed every protection, but many male members of the population also needed help, notably drug users and the victims of sexual assault. A toll-free hotline had accordingly been established for men in distress. Moreover, the bulk of the low-paid and unemployed part of the population consisted of men.

40. Research had shown that men were often treated unfairly in child custody cases. The law on alimony had therefore been amended, to take into account the earnings of both the mother and the father and to allow deductions to be made from alimony payments made by former husbands according to the amount of time

they spent with their children. The Judicial Committee was in the process of reviewing the law on parenthood and children's rights. While women should be able to pursue careers and be elected to public office, the needs of men had to be taken into account as well. The Ministry of Children and Equality was, in that spirit, preparing a governmental White Paper on gender equality, with special reference to male roles and the development of positive masculinity. At the institutional level, gender mainstreaming was practised in all the ministries.

41. With regard to efforts to combat violence against women and domestic violence, the two corresponding action plans comprised an important awareness-raising dimension, aimed in particular at children. Counselling officers also played an important mediating role, which was moreover mandatory when families broke up. Members of the judiciary, the police force and child welfare services were also given training in the detection of violence in families and the care of women and child victims. The Norwegian Centre for Studies on Violence and Traumatic Stress had produced a report on the treatment of perpetrators of domestic violence, which was mainly in the hands of prison services. The Alternative to Violence organization, financed by the Ministries of Justice and Health and staffed by psychologists and therapists, also provided a treatment programme, currently centred on the southern part of the country, which offered a good basis for nationwide development. In addition, specially trained family violence coordinators had for some years been performing a useful service in all police districts. She undertook to provide information about the results of the assessment made of the measures against domestic violence, including the electronic monitoring of offenders.

42. Since 2004, nine women victims of trafficking had been granted temporary (six-month) work permits, which could be extended for successive periods of one year. It was too early to make an assessment of the impact of the measure. The website established to prevent the procurement of sexual services sought to ascertain the deep motives for the demand for paid sexual services, which had been revealed by research to emanate mainly from successful young businessmen, as part of a corporate culture. The proposal to amend the Penal Code to make it an offence to buy sexual services would soon be submitted to Parliament,

following a wide -ranging debate, and could be expected to take effect by the end of the year.

43. **Ms. Saiga** wondered whether the State party had drawn on the experience of Sweden when debating the proposal to criminalize the purchase of sexual services. With regard to efforts to combat violence, it was not clear whether the Penal Code contained adequate provisions, particularly in respect of remedies and the punishment of offenders. Were there any plans to adopt a specific, separate law on the subject? It would also be interesting to know what the Government was doing to help unaccompanied children in reception centres, and particularly to protect them from trafficking.

44. **Ms. Šimonović** said that, while she agreed that responsibility for the periodic report fell to the State party, the Committee had for many years been encouraging the submission of shadow reports, as well as informal discussion sessions with NGOs. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) provided NGOs from developing countries with support for that purpose, but it was hoped that developed countries would do likewise for their own NGOs. She urged Norway to consider the possibility.

45. **Mr. Flinterman** stressed that, 25 years after Norway's ratification of the Convention, the Government had still not incorporated the Gender Equality Act into the Human Rights Act, even though it had not withdrawn its pledge to do so. Time was running out, however, since it would remain in office for only two more years. Some had argued that, since all the requirements of the Gender Equality Act were in any case mandatory, its incorporation into the Human Rights Act was of scant importance. The key question then was whether, in the event of conflict between statutory provisions and the Gender Equality Act, the latter would prevail.

46. In its cooperation and foreign policy, Norway attached particular importance to the promotion of women's issues, in particular under Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and within the framework of the World Bank. It would be interesting to know whether the State party considered itself to be thereby discharging its obligation under article 3 of the Convention. Did it understand that obligation to extend beyond the national sphere into the international arena?

47. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, said that the question of development cooperation was important because Norway was seen

as a model for the rest of the world. She wondered whether the thematic approach outlined in the periodic report (CEDAW/C/NOR/7, p. 20), however useful, would limit its action in directly assisting other countries in implementing the Convention, notably by incorporating it into their domestic legal order. She stressed in turn the importance of the contribution made to the Committee's work by NGOs, supported by UNIFEM and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and urged the State party to provide the necessary assistance for NGOs to participate in the Committee's meetings.

48. **Ms. Hole** (Norway) said that Sweden's experience in banning the purchasing of sexual services had indeed been taken into account but that it had not yet been fully evaluated. The initial effect of the ban seemed to have been to drive such practices underground. Over and above such a measure, it was important to educate the women involved: outreach programmes were in place for that purpose in Norway and were being extended. No specific law was planned on domestic violence; rather, the Penal Code was to be strengthened. Specific assistance was provided under the Child Welfare Act for children in reception centres, with the help in particular of the NGO Save the Children. The Government was deeply concerned about the risk of trafficking to which children in such centres might be exposed and had in 2006 introduced special training for all the staff of such centres.

49. The effects of the Gender Equality Act had not yet been evaluated, but a study thereon was being prepared by the Ministry of Justice for 2008. On the question of its incorporation into the Human Rights Act, all domestic legislation was required to comply with the international treaties to which Norway was a party and was interpreted accordingly. She would pass on to her Government the suggestion regarding assistance for NGOs, whose contribution was indeed greatly appreciated. Norway was a major donor to the World Bank, UNFPA and UNIFEM and would continue to be so. It met regularly with representatives of those institutions and provided funding in support of legal action to give effect to the Convention in developing countries, notably and most recently in Afghanistan and Zimbabwe.

Articles 7 to 9

50. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** acknowledged that women's participation in political life was high in Norway, as in the other Nordic countries, but noted that it was not equal at every level. She wondered about the reasons for the apparent stagnation in the previous 15 years and whether any further measures were planned to counter it. Given that quotas were not mandatory in political parties, the possibility of making them so might be considered. It had been recognized that legislative amendments were not sufficient to change established gender structures but must be combined with a range of conditions and instruments. In view of the success of the Saami Parliament in that respect, its example might usefully be transposed to the national level. According to an NGO source, changes in electoral laws had made it more difficult for women to be elected to public office. Had any assessment been made of the impact of those changes?

51. **Ms. Belmihoub -Zerdani** said that it would be interesting to know why women's participation in local elections had not increased more significantly during the reporting period. Additional resources should be made available to provide training to prepare women for participation in local politics. On the other hand, the high percentage of women in Parliament should serve as a model for other countries, and it was commendable that a similar number of women and men served in government posts. It was also noteworthy that following a pre-election campaign in 2005, the Saami Parliament had increased the number of women from 18 to 51 per cent in the 2005 elections.

52. Norwegian women held positions of responsibility in the area of international cooperation and had made a significant contribution to the efforts to support women in developing countries. The Government had submitted three reports to the United Nations on its follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action. In addition, it was significant that the Government had organized an annual conference to monitor the follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action with the Forum for Women and Development, which was responsible for coordinating the work of Norwegian NGOs that provided development aid to women in the third world.

53. **Ms. Hole** (Norway) said that 36 per cent of candidates elected at the municipal level were women and that figure was the same for Parliament. The

Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development had carried out research on the reasons that women's participation in local elections had not increased more significantly. It had concluded that it was difficult to engage young people in general in local politics because they complained about the workload, the number of meetings and did not view local politics as pertinent to their lives. Discussions were under way to consider the feasibility of changing meeting schedules and providing free childcare services with a view to enabling young people to become involved in local politics.

54. A number of initiatives had been taken to ensure that women were nominated in party lists but such nominations were not regulated by parity laws. However, the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development had funded a campaign run by the Ombudsman's office to increase the number of women on the lists for the local elections and 42 per cent of candidates nominated for the municipal and county elections due to be held on 14 September 2007 were women. In addition, the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development had announced its willingness to consider changing the way party lists were managed and would consider enacting parity laws following the 2007 elections. The Ministry had provided its support to campaigns to promote the participation of women in elections for almost 20 years. The Saami Parliament had in fact followed the example set by those national campaigns. Nationwide discussions were under way in the Government, non-governmental organizations, schools and the media to explore ways of engaging all citizens in local politics, regardless of age, ethnicity and gender. The Government had provided significant financial support for promoting women's participation in Parliament and in local politics.

55. **Ms. Belmihoub -Zerdani** requested additional information on the voting rights of foreigners and immigrants. It would also be interesting to know whether any immigrants had been candidates in elections.

56. **Ms. Hole** (Norway) said that immigrants who had lived in Norway on a legal basis for three years were entitled to vote in local elections. In the national elections, it was necessary to hold Norwegian citizenship, which normally took seven years to acquire. It seemed certain that the number of immigrants from non-Western countries voting in local

and municipal elections had increased but her delegation did not have the data to confirm that belief.

57. **Ms. Larse n-Asp** (Norway) said that prior to the 2003 local elections 77 per cent of the top candidates in the electoral lists had been men, and in 2007 that figure had stood at 70 per cent. The current figures showed a slight but inadequate improvement. The number of candidates who were not of Norwegian origin was very low.

58. **Ms. Belmihoub -Zerdani**, reverting to the role of women in political and public life and noting that no information had been provided on the role that women played in the judicial system, asked the delegation for as much information as possible in that regard.

59. **Ms. Hole** (Norway) said that 30 per cent of all judges in Norway were women. The Government was not satisfied with that proportion and would strive to increase it.

Articles 10 to 14

60. **Ms. Halperin -Kaddari** said it was disappointing that in 2004 women had accounted for only 16 per cent of the appointments to professorships. Given that the European Free Trade Association courts had stated that the practice of earmarking certain professorships for women contravened European Economic Area law, it would be interesting to know what the Government planned to do to increase the number of women holding senior academic posts. It might be possible, for example, to include more women in the preparation of the White Paper on men, male roles and gender equality which was due to be submitted to Parliament in spring 2008. It would be useful to learn more about the role of academia in the preparation of that paper and whether any research had focused on the importance of equal parenting in changing perceptions about gender roles. She wondered whether any gender-specific research had been carried out on the preferences and aspirations of high-school students.

61. **Ms. Zou** Xiaoqiao said that it would be interesting to know whether any progress had been made in reducing the wage gap between women and men and whether any studies had been carried out to establish the causes of that gap. She asked what measures had been taken by the Government to ensure that employers were aware of the Gender Equality Act and were complying with its provisions. What

sanctions were envisaged for non-compliance and what channels for complaint were available to women?

62. She would welcome information on the measures being taken to increase the number of women in full-time employment and the steps being taken to support women who did not want to be engaged in part-time employment. How many immigrant women were involved in part-time employment? Additional information should also be provided on the legislation, sanctions and complaint procedures established by the Government to address the problem of sexual harassment, together with particulars of any sexual harassment cases that had occurred since 2004.

63. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** said that it would be of interest to know whether any consideration had been given to the possibility of providing extra-curricular activities to equip women with the skills necessary to reduce occupational segregation. The reporting State should also clarify whether specific efforts were being made to increase the number of full-time jobs in the education and health sectors and provide more data on women in different job categories and in positions of leadership.

64. With regard to undesired part-time work, it would be interesting to know whether there was a political willingness on the part of local administrations to assist central Government in promoting full-time employment for women. What percentage of women took advantage of the benefits available to mothers of children under three years of age not put in day care and what was the effect on their employment prospects, especially if there was more than one child?

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.