

Statement by
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Madam Chairperson, Distinguished Members of the Committee

On behalf of the Government I am pleased to have the opportunity today to explain how Denmark translates the international obligations in the CEDAW into specific activities and legislation.

On a personal note, I would like to say that it is always with great respect that I enter the UN Building. To me, it represents the finest of international cooperation.

It is a privilege to have so many competent experts addressing Denmark's gender equality initiatives. It will help us improving the quality of our work.

The Danish Government is of the opinion that Denmark has come a long way to both formal and real gender equality. But many challenges and tasks still lie ahead.

The first twenty minutes of our presentation I will be speaking on behalf of the Danish Government, following this, the representatives of Greenland and the Faroe Islands will be giving a presentation on behalf of their Home Rule Governments.

Madam Chairperson

In Denmark, gender equality and women's equal rights are perceived as fundamental values. We cannot imagine a democratic society without gender equality. And we know that gender equality and women's full participation in society and the labour market are pre-conditions for economic growth.

Our Minister for Gender Equality is an avowed feminist. Gender equality is often up for discussion in Parliament, and we carry on an excellent dialogue with the NGOs.

The legislation in terms of formal gender equality is in place, and the Government always takes steps to ensure that new legislation is in accordance with the CEDAW obligations. Moreover, the convention is a relevant and applied source of law in Denmark.

Madam Chairperson

Our Name Act, for instance, is a symbol of gender equality. We have abolished the concept of married name, and men and women – spouses and registered partners – are free to choose whether they want to keep their own surnames or to take their husband's, wife's or partner's surname.

The Act on Gender Equality is improved on an ongoing basis. The latest amendment was passed last spring. The Government took the initiative to expand the act's rules on the gender composition of boards and committees appointed by ministers. These rules now also apply to boards appointed by local and regional authorities.

The Parliament has just passed an amendment to the Act on Equal Pay, ordering large companies to compile gender-segregated pay statistics.

The legislation on equal treatment in the labour market was amended in December 2005. Now the Act on Equal Treatment in the Labour Market stipulates that sexual harassment and bullying are acts of discrimination. The rules on compensation were also improved.

If people are of the opinion that they have been discriminated against on account of gender, they can file a complaint with the Gender Equality Board. This is free of charge, and the board may award compensation to the person being discriminated against.

Madam Chairperson

Danish gender equality work applies a two-pronged approach – this means that we apply the gender mainstreaming strategy at the same time as we launch special initiatives. The gender mainstreaming work enjoys high priority and is described in detail in our report and our answers to the Committee's list of issues.

A brief description of the results of Denmark's gender equality work indicates a society where:

- The educational level is high – and girls attain a higher level of education than boys.
- In general men and women are equally active in the labour market. Women account for 47.5 % of the labour force.
- Women enjoy a high participation rate of 73 % on the labour market and at the same time – by European standards – a high fertility rate (of 1.8 children per woman).
- We have a long and flexible parental leave scheme of 52 weeks. The first 14 weeks protect motherhood and are thus reserved for the mother, whereas the remaining weeks may be shared by the mother and father on an equal basis.
- We make an effort as to try and enable both men and women to reconcile working life and family life. Financial compensation from the state is awarded during parental leave and many companies allow full wages during the leave. For this reason we have just introduced a maternity/paternity cover fund which offsets employers' pay costs during leave. In this way, the costs of parental leave are divided more equally between workplaces with many male employees and workplaces with many female employees.
- Furthermore we have guaranteed day care for all children above the age of 30 weeks and a ceiling of 25 % of the expenses payable by parents for public day care. If you have a tight budget – for instance as a single mother – prices may be reduced even further.
- Finally, the public sector provides care for older people who cannot manage on their own. Help and assistance must be available in areas which otherwise often would be left solely to the woman in the family.

We have come far with establishing a comprehensive legal and political framework, but we are still faced with a number of challenges.

Our sixth report explains the gender equality challenges that the Government is trying to meet by means of a large number of special initiatives.

As regards article 5, I would like to point out the campaigns for boys and girls to eliminate prejudice and discriminatory practises and a campaign for migrant women on their rights.

For the past three years we have organised conferences for and with young people and have prepared discussion materials on gender equality for older school children. We have focused on a new theme every year: gender and health, gender and violence, gender and pornography in the public space, and gender and the choice of education and occupation. Regarding the last theme, we have prepared a comprehensive interactive web-based material on the gender-determined choice of education. It is intended for parents, teachers and pupils and aimed at persuading boys and girls to make more unorthodox choices of education (as regards to article 10).

The reason is that the Danish labour market remains highly gender segregated.

The gender segregated labour market is a focus area for the Government. We have mapped out the gender-segregated labour market, and an inter-ministerial working group announced a number of specific recommendations this spring to diminish the segregation. They will be followed up by directions for companies and by educational and labour market policies. Individuals must have a free choice of education and occupation without being limited by traditions.

The free choice applies to everyone regardless of gender and ethnic origin. For this reason the Danish Government also focuses on migrant women.

Tradition, culture, family patterns and a limited knowledge of the Danish language are some of the barriers migrant women face, and it results in a lack of contact to the labour market as well as the educational system.

Participating in the labour market is a key to integration, both for migrant women and for their children.

The participation rate is 48 % among migrant women from non-western countries and for female descendants the rate is 61 %. This is an important development.

Female descendants do better in the educational system than male descendants, the female descendants, however, have a lower participation rate in the labour market than male descendants.

A range of initiatives has been launched to eliminate the barriers that these girls and women face. The aim is to get up to 25,000 migrants on the labour market before the year 2010.

In December 2005, the Danish Government launched a four-year action plan on integration called: *“Employment, participation and equal opportunities for all”*.

The aim of the plan is to contribute to breaking the gender-role patterns and gender-linked prejudices existing for women and men, boys and girls in relation to the labour market, the educational system and organisations.

The plan consists of more than 50 specific initiatives, including debates with men with non-Danish ethnic backgrounds on gender roles and family rights, special efforts targeted at long-term unemployed young women with non-Danish ethnic backgrounds, and preparation of material on gender and cultural understanding to volunteers in associations.

Gender equality is a fundamental right in Denmark, and it applies to everyone.

The Government has also focused on forced marriages, and an action plan on this was launched in 2003. The plan consists of 21 initiatives promoting information and dialogue, counselling, "girls-only-clubs", housing, research and documentation. The Government is aware that forced marriages are a serious problem, and that a constant focus is needed.

Madam Chairperson

Trafficking and prostitution, as regards to article 6, are issues high on the Danish agenda. Denmark, like the rest of the world, experiences trafficking in women for prostitution as the flip side of globalisation. Trafficking is completely unacceptable and the Government is devoted to eliminating this modern form of slavery. For the past three years, we have been working on implementing an action plan with the prime objectives of preventing trafficking and supporting victims. We have hotlines, street outreach workers, shelters and cooperation between NGOs and the police. The Minister for Gender Equality has just this Monday launched a nation wide campaign on trafficking in women targeting both customers as well as the general public on the situation of victims of trafficking.

The Government has also launched two consecutive action plans to fight men's violence against women. The latest plan calls for improving the support of victims of violence and the treatment of abusive men. Time only allows me to briefly touch on this action plan, but I can inform you that the action plan places special focus on violence against migrant women. They make out a particular vulnerable group and require a set of specific activities which take their situation into account.

Madam Chairperson

The rest of my presentation I will dedicate to explaining our strategies to promote aspects of women in power and equal pay.

Article 7 of the Convention underlines the importance of women participating in the political decision-making process.

37 % of the members of the Danish Parliament are women, while only 27 % of the members of local councils are women. Denmark has recently implemented a far-reaching local

Government reform, which will merge a large number of municipals. This has obviously led to increased competition for seats.

Consequently, the Minister for Gender Equality contacted the local party associations before the election and encouraged them to put more women on the ballots. At the same time, material providing good examples and offering advice to both party associations and women was distributed via for instance libraries. This meant that the number of women in local councils increased slightly, however, the percentage of female mayors still dropped from 9 % to 7 %. As a follow-up, gender equality checklists have been sent to the committees preparing the mergers of the local Governments.

Two related problems are the share of women in management and in academia.

In recent years a slightly higher percentage of Danish women than men take an education – it is therefore surprising to see that not more women are represented in top positions. If you want to get the best brains, you obviously need more women.

Indeed, the Minister for Gender Equality has initiated a study which shows that more women in top position in companies resulted in better bottom-line results. This argument has now been acknowledged by trade and industry, and we are seeing the results of the Minister for Gender Equality's many initiatives in the area, as outlined in our communications with the Committee as regards article 11.

As one of the many results of the Committee's recommendations after the last examination, the Government has also focused on increasing the number of women in top university positions.

When Danish women apply for research positions, they get them as often as men do. Thus, women are not disqualified because of poor qualifications or due to their sex. Women simply do not apply for senior lectureships or professorships to the same extent as men. As in a broad number of other European countries, women drop out the higher up in the hierarchy they move.

Denmark has a lot of qualified women. Half of all university students are women, and in some training programmes, more than half the students are women. Since the future calls for more researchers and researchers who measure up to the best in the world, it is imperative that Denmark realises the potential for female researchers.

Consequently, the Government established the think-tank "All talents in use – more women in research" in autumn 2004. The outcome of the think-tank's work is a number of recommendations for the universities – for example in the form of a toolbox filled with management instruments for promoting, retaining and recruiting female talents. The recommendations for politicians include earmarking money for an initiative to cultivate young female talents. Until 2008, the Danish Government will thus earmark DKK 45 million for a research programme for young female researchers in science and technology.

But one thing is equal access to jobs; another is getting the same pay for a job. Women and men get the same pay if they perform the same job in a company, but very often they do not perform the same jobs.

The gender-segregated labour market is one of the main reasons for the difference in men's and women's pay. Other reasons are differences in length of service, training, etc. However, there is a 3-6 % gap which is yet to be explained.

The Government monitors this pay gap very closely. As mentioned earlier, the Danish Act on Equal Pay has recently been amended to include an obligation for large companies to compile gender-segregated payroll statistics. Furthermore, the Government and the social partners are putting the finishing touches on a guide to companies on how to work for equal pay to the companies.

Madam Chairperson

In conclusion, I hope that my opening statement, Denmark's sixth periodic report and the answers to the committee's list of issues have drawn a picture of Denmark's efforts to promote equality between men and women, and I look forward to a constructive and interesting dialogue with the committee.

Madam Chairperson

I would now like to give the floor to Mr. Adam Worm who represents the Home Rule Government of Greenland.

Madam Chair, Distinguished Members of the Committee

On behalf of the Greenland Home Rule Government I will first of all thank you as well as the Government of Denmark for this opportunity to give a short introduction to the section on gender equality in Greenland.

Greenland has had home rule since 1979. Gender equality in general is under the competence of the Home Rule Government. However, part of the legislation affecting gender equality is still identical with the Danish legislation. For this reason we have focused on the areas specific for gender equality in Greenland in the section on Greenland in the report. Here I will pinpoint some main points, concerning the equality council, trafficking/prostitution and new initiatives.

The Greenland Gender Equality Council, which was established in 1985, is very active and adopts focus areas for its actions each year. In 2005 and 2006, the council has focused on physical and not least mental violence against women. This has involved TV spots on the subject, which have been aired on Greenland's national TV channel. These spots support the fact that violence in or outside the home is something that we as a society cannot accept, and

threatened or abused persons receive information about preventive actions and the possibilities of receiving help.

Another target area is women's participation in public life - in politics and in management of companies, et cetera. To this end, the council has held several courses providing women with the tools to participate actively in political bodies, boards, etc. This work has been successful as 38 % of the current Greenland Parliament is women, while women make out 27 % of the members of the local councils. In Government, three out of eight members are women and four out of 13 managers in the Home Rule's central administration are women. We have five female mayors out of 18. Since 2003, the Home Rule Government has made an active effort to increase the number of women in the boardrooms of Home Rule-owned companies that are the largest in Greenland. Here 15 out of 87 members are women.

The level of misuse of women in the form of prostitution and trafficking in Greenland is considered as low. This is probably due to cultural factors and a consequence of the fact that Greenland – with our 57,000 inhabitants living in 72 towns/districts – is a small society.

Gender equality is a fundamental value in Greenland's social life and legislation. As I mentioned, parts of the legislation is similar to the Danish legislation. In 2003 the Greenlandic Act on Gender Equality was modernized.

Lastly, I will mention some initiatives in other fields of legislation which will promote gender equality.

Generally, the level of education in Greenland is lower than in Denmark, but the Home Rule has now launched a comprehensive scheme to improve educational levels. The primary and secondary school have been reformed, and we are also working on increasing the educational level among unskilled and unemployed persons. Hopefully, this will in the long run improve the social conditions. The educational system in Greenland is based on gender equality and these activities are aimed at both women and men. As a matter of fact, the women/men-ratio in high schools and at advanced studies/universities etc. is around 63 %/37 %.

In 2006 the Greenland Parliament improved the legislation on parental leave so that the parental leave now is at least 21 weeks after giving birth. Of this period the father can choose 6 weeks. The legislation stresses the joint responsibility for the child.

To get women to participate actively in public life and in the labour market, a satisfactory parental leave and satisfactory day-care offers in the form of day nurseries, kindergartens and school-based day-care facilities are essential. Greenland is doing well in this area and now around 85 % of the women are in the work force.

Greenland emphasises participating in international cooperation and providing information about our society to international forums. I do hope that these introductory remarks and the section on Greenland in the report will provide the committee with an impression of gender-equality work in Greenland.

Thank you for your attention.

Madam Chairperson

I would now like to give the floor to Ms Kitty May Ellefsen who is representing the Home Rule Government of the Faroe Islands.

Madam Chairperson, Distinguished Members of the Committee

On behalf of the Faroese Home Rule Government I will first of all thank you as well as the Government of Denmark for this opportunity to give a short introduction to the section on gender equality in Faroe Islands.

Faroese legislation contains no formal impediment to gender equality. Legislation does not distinguish between women and men, but ensures that all citizens of the Faroes are assured the same rights without regard to gender. Women and men have the same rights and the same responsibilities in all areas of society.

The Faroese Parliament passed a law governing gender equality in 1994. The principal purpose of the law was to eliminate all forms of discrimination based on gender.

The legislation stipulates that the Gender Equality Commission may 1) invoke its prosecutorial powers to investigate a case of alleged violation of protected rights; 2) may recommend that those whose rights have been violated seek legal redress for compensation; and 3) may bring a civil action alleging activities or practices inconsistent with the intent of the law.

Current legislation regarding gender equality encompasses these areas:

- Employment practices,
- Parental leave,
- Education materials,
- Commissions and councils,
- Gender Equality Commission.

Women and men have the same political rights. Both women and men have the same right to vote and may be elected to the municipal councils, the Faroese Parliament, the Government executive and the Danish Parliament, which has two representatives from the Faroes. Nevertheless, women are the minority in those political arenas where public policy decisions are made.

There are currently a total of seven ministries in the Faroes. The senior administrator at the Prime Ministers Office is a woman, the other six senior administrators are men.

There are a total of 57 Governmental agencies or institutions. In eight of the institutions, women serve as the senior administrator, which is equal to 14 % of the total.

The Gender Equality Act stipulates that the number of women and men serving on public commissions and councils shall be equal. Since the law entered into effect, the Gender Equality Commission has worked diligently to ensure that the distribution of women and men on these public councils is in accordance with the provisions set forth in the law.

In 2000, there were 284 men and 112 women serving on public commissions and councils. This is equal to 72 % men and 28 % women. In 2003, there were 253 men and 164 women serving on public commissions and councils. This is equal to 61 % men and 39 % women.

Women and men are not equally represented in accordance with the law in the councils or committees under the various ministries. The Minister responsible for gender equality has notified the respective political authorities to take the necessary steps to ensure compliance with the provisions of the law regarding appointments to public commissions and councils.

Work is underway to ensure that gender mainstreaming is addressed in the drafting of laws and in the operational activities of the central Government administration as a whole.

Work has also focused on encouraging more women to enter political life. For the 2002 Parliamentary election, the Gender Equality Commission took a leading role in arranging a forum to encourage women to enter politics. The forum was successful in many ways: the number of women who were elected corresponds proportionately to the number of women represented on the ballot.

By the end of 2005 the Minister of Gender Equality appointed a committee with the assignment to encourage more women to participate in politics. The committee with its 10 members is manned with representatives from the political parties, The Gender Equality Commission, The Association of Faroese Municipal Authorities, The Union of Faroese Women and The Association of Municipal Authorities.

Thank you for your attention.

Madam Chairperson

For the Danish Government it is of crucial importance to ensure that Denmark acts in compliance with the international obligations. It follows that we welcome scrutiny and opportunities like this to discuss the implementation of the obligations enshrined in the convention.

I can assure you that the conclusions from the Committee will be disseminated and thoroughly discussed at our return, and the implementation of all the recommendations will be considered.

Finally, I would like to introduce the delegation;

Thank you for your attention.