

2 February 2007

Original: English

ADVANCE UNEDITED VERSION

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

15 January-2 February 2007

**Concluding comments of the Committee on the Elimination
of Discrimination against Women: Greece**

1. The Committee considered the sixth periodic report of Greece (CEDAW/C/GRC/6) at its 767th and 768th meetings, on 24 January 2007 (see CEDAW/C/SR.767 and 768). The Committee's list of issues and questions is contained in CEDAW/C/GRC/Q/6, and Greece's responses are contained in CEDAW/C/GRC/Q/6/Add.1.

Introduction

2. The Committee expresses its appreciation to the State party for the sixth periodic report, which followed the Committee's guidelines. It also expresses its appreciation to the State party for the written replies to the list of issues and questions raised by the pre-session working group and for the oral presentation and further clarification in response to the questions posed orally by the Committee.

3. The Committee commends the State party for its delegation headed by the Secretary-General for Gender Equality, and which included women and men representing different ministries and Government offices. The Committee expresses its appreciation for the frank, constructive dialogue held between the delegation and the members of the Committee.

4. The Committee notes with appreciation that the report was prepared in a participatory process involving government bodies, non-governmental and women's organizations and independent experts.

5. The Committee commends the State party for its ratification, in January 2002, of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

6. The Committee notes with appreciation that the State party is considering acceptance of amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee.

7. The Committee also commends the State party for objecting to reservations entered by other States parties that it considers incompatible with the object and purpose of the Convention.

Positive aspects

8. The Committee commends the State party on its recent legal reforms aimed at eliminating discrimination against women and promoting gender equality. In particular, it welcomes: the introduction, in 2001, of article 116, paragraph 2, of the Constitution, which establishes the State party's responsibility for taking special measures to ensure the elimination of discrimination against women; and the adoption, in 2002, of Law 3064/2002 on the Suppression of Trafficking in Human Beings; in 2003, of Presidential Decree 233/2003 regarding the provision of assistance to victims of trafficking; in 2004, of Law 3274/2004 related to issuing a temporary residence permit to victims of trafficking; in 2006, of the Law on Combating Domestic Violence; and, in 2006, the Law on Equal Treatment between Men and Women in the Field of Employment, Labour and Occupation.

9. The Committee commends the State party for its political will expressed during the constructive dialogue to implement fully the provisions of the Convention.

10. The Committee expresses its appreciation to the State party for the signing of a memorandum of cooperation between the General Secretariat for Gender Equality and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in order to promote and protect the rights of refugee women and girls, and for having elaborated an action plan to implement the memorandum.

11. The Committee congratulates the State party for the legal measures taken to increase women's employment, in particular the introduction of Law 3250/2004, which redefined the categories of people eligible for recruitment, through, inter alia, the enlargement of the category of mothers with underage children at a 10 per cent quota, and which provided that a quota of up to 60 per cent of the various categories of the unemployed who benefit from such employment positions be reserved for women.

Principal areas of concern and recommendations

12. While recalling the State party's obligation to systematically and continuously implement all the provisions of the Convention, the Committee views the concerns and recommendations identified in the present concluding comments as requiring the State party's priority attention between now and the submission of the next periodic report. Consequently, the Committee calls upon the State party to focus on those areas in its implementation activities and to report on action taken and results achieved in its next periodic report. It calls on the State party to submit the present concluding comments to all relevant ministries and to Parliament in order to ensure their full implementation.

13. The Committee notes with concern the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society. These stereotypes present a significant impediment to the implementation of the Convention and are a root cause of violence against women, as well as of the disadvantaged position of women in a number of areas, including in all sectors of the labour market and in political and public life.

14. The Committee recommends that the State party take measures to bring about changes in traditional patriarchal attitudes and in gender-role stereotyping. Such measures should include awareness-raising and public educational campaigns addressed at women and girls, as well as, in particular, men and boys, with a view to eliminating stereotypes associated with traditional gender roles in the family and in society, in accordance with articles 2 (f) and 5 (a) of the Convention. It also recommends that the State party further clarify the causes of persistent inequality between women and men, including through studies on the institutional rules that reinforce gender-role stereotyping, the specific manifestations of stereotypical ideology in the State party, the costs of placing the burden of homemaking solely on women and the monetary value of women's unpaid labour, and use the insights gained as basis for taking enhanced measures to address these stereotypes.

15. While noting that national legislation provides for sanctions for acts of discrimination based on sex and remedies for violations of the rights to non-discrimination and equality, the Committee is concerned that women may not be aware of, or do not have easy access to, the remedies available to them in case of violation of their rights.

16. The Committee requests that the State party remove impediments women may face in gaining access to justice. The Committee urges the State party to provide legal aid services and sensitization about how to utilize available legal recourses against discrimination, as well as to monitor the results of such efforts.

17. While noting the measures taken by the State party to enhance the integration of minority women into Greek society, such as the Integrated Action Plan for the Social Integration of Roma Women, the Committee remains concerned that women from ethnic minority groups, in particular Roma and Muslim women, continue to face multiple forms of discrimination with respect to access to education, employment and health care. The Committee regrets the lack of information and data in the report about those groups of women.

18. The Committee calls on the State party to implement effective measures to eliminate discrimination against ethnic minority women, in particular Roma and Muslim women, and to enhance their enjoyment of human rights. The Committee requests the State party to provide, in its next report, information on the situation of women from ethnic minority groups, including with regard to access to education, employment and health care, and on the impact of measures taken to enhance such access and results achieved, as well as trends over time.

19. While welcoming the adoption of the Law on Combating Domestic Violence in 2006, in particular the inclusion of marital rape as a criminal offence and the prohibition of physical violence against minors, the Committee is concerned that the

availability of the mediation procedure in criminal cases for certain types of domestic violence at the instance of the prosecutor may lead to the re-victimization of women who have suffered violence.

20. The Committee recommends that the State party carry out studies and monitor closely the Law on Combating Domestic Violence, particularly its mediation procedure, in order to ensure that the legislation is implemented in a way that respects and promotes women's human rights and does not lead to perpetrators escaping punishment. The Committee calls on the State party to put in place training measures for judges who conduct mediation in criminal proceedings for domestic violence cases so as to enhance their capacity to deal with violence against women in a gender sensitive manner.

21. While welcoming the various measures implemented to combat trafficking, including the revision of legislation and the adoption of an integrated National Plan of Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, the Committee remains concerned about the persistence of trafficking in women and girls and about the insufficient enforcement of legislation on trafficking.

22. The Committee requests the State party to effectively implement the integrated National Plan of Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. It also calls upon the State party to ensure that legislation on trafficking is fully enforced, in particular by effectively prosecuting and punishing offenders. It also recommends that the State party increase its efforts to prevent human trafficking and provide assistance and support to women victims.

23. While applauding the establishment of an obligatory one-third quota for each sex in the electoral lists of local elections and for the collective bodies of all Government agencies, the Committee is concerned about the underrepresentation of women at all levels of political and public life and in decision-making, particularly in Parliament, and in the foreign service. The Committee is further concerned about the limited participation of women in trade unions and employers' associations.

24. The Committee calls upon the State party to effectively enforce the existing quota law in order to increase women's participation in local elected bodies and in the collective bodies of all Government agencies. It recommends that the State party implement temporary special measures in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and its general recommendation 25 as a means to accelerate compliance with the provisions of articles 7 and 8 of the Convention and to increase women's political participation in all areas, including in Parliament and the foreign service. It also recommends the implementation of awareness-raising activities about the importance of women's participation in decision-making for society as a whole. The Committee further suggests that, in compliance with articles 2 (e) and 7 (c) of the Convention, the State party take appropriate measures to ensure women's equal participation in trade unions and employers' associations. It encourages the State party to monitor the impact of measures taken and of trends over time.

25. The Committee is concerned that, due to inadequate access to family planning and contraceptive methods, abortion is often used by women and adolescent girls as a method of birth control. It regrets the lack of data about the incidence of abortion

disaggregated by age and ethnic group of the persons undergoing it. The Committee is also concerned about the high number of caesarean sections performed.

26. The Committee recommends that the State party implement programmes and policies aimed at providing effective access for women, including minority women and adolescent girls, to health-care information and services, family planning and contraceptives, thus avoiding the need for women to resort to abortion as a method of birth control. The Committee urges the State party to implement programmes of sexual and reproductive health education for men, women and adolescents in order to foster responsible sexual behaviour. The Committee further calls on the State party to implement initiatives, in close consultation with the medical profession, aimed at reducing the number of caesarean sections performed.

27. The Committee expresses concern about the low representation of women, including women from minority groups, in tertiary education.

28. The Committee urges the State party to implement measures to raise awareness of the importance of education as a human right and as a basis for empowerment of women. It recommends that the State party adopt temporary special measures in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and general recommendation 25, on temporary special measures, in order to increase the representation of women, including minority women, in tertiary education. It requests the State party to report on the measures taken and their impact in its next periodic report.

29. The Committee expresses concern about the situation of women in the labour market, which is characterized by high female unemployment, the concentration of women in low-paid sectors of employment and the wage gap between women and men. The Committee is also concerned that no statistical data was provided on the number of men who take parental leave in both the public and private sectors.

30. The Committee urges the State party to ensure equal opportunities for women and men in the labour market through, inter alia, temporary special measures in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and general recommendation 25, on temporary special measures. The Committee recommends that efforts be strengthened to lower female unemployment, eliminate occupational segregation, both horizontal and vertical, and to narrow and close the wage gap between women and men. The Committee recommends that the State party conduct regular reviews of its legislation in accordance with article 11, paragraph 3, of the Convention, with a view to reducing the number of barriers women face in the labour market. The Committee also urges the State party to monitor the use of the parental leave provisions by women and men as an indicator of shared family responsibilities and to develop incentives to encourage more men to avail themselves of parental leave. It calls upon the State party to monitor the impact of measures taken and results achieved and to report thereon in its next periodic report.

31. The Committee expresses concern about the lack of information on the situation of immigrant women who are unable to obtain birth certificates for their children.

32. The Committee calls upon the State party to take measures in order to ensure that children of immigrant women are provided with birth certificates.

33. The Committee expresses concern about the non-application of the general law of Greece to the Muslim minority on matters of marriage and inheritance, as Muslim communities can choose to be governed by Sharia law. The Committee is concerned that this situation leads to discrimination against Muslim women, in contravention of the Greek Constitution and article 16 of the Convention. The Committee notes with concern the continuing phenomena of early marriages and polygamy within the Muslim community notwithstanding the fact that they are in conflict with the Greek constitutional order and the Convention.

34. The Committee urges the State party to increase efforts to raise the awareness of Muslim women of their rights and of remedies against violations, and to ensure that they benefit from the provisions of Greek law on marriage and inheritance. The Committee calls upon the State party to enforce its laws prohibiting early marriages and polygamy and to take comprehensive and effective measures aimed at eliminating these practices, in line with the Greek constitutional order, article 16 of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation 21 on equality in marriage and family relations.

35. While welcoming the work of the Research Centre for Gender Equality aimed at supporting Government policy on the promotion of gender equality and the advancement of women, the Committee notes with concern that the results of the studies carried out by the research centre, especially on minority women, have not been included in the State party's report.

36. The Committee requests the State party to include, in its next report, the results of the studies carried out by the Research Centre for Gender Equality, in particular with regard to minority women. It also encourages the State party to use the results and findings of such research as basis to further enhance its legislative and policy framework aimed at the practical realization of the principle of equality between women and men.

37. The Committee encourages the State party to accept, as soon as possible, the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee.

38. The Committee urges the State party to utilize fully in its implementation of its obligations under the Convention, the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, which reinforce the provisions of the Convention, and requests the State Party to include information thereon in its next periodic report.

39. The Committee also emphasizes that a full and effective implementation of the Convention is indispensable for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It calls for the integration of a gender perspective and explicit reflection of the provisions of the Convention in all efforts aimed at the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and requests the State party to include information thereon in its next periodic report.

40. The Committee notes that States' adherence to the seven major international human rights instruments¹ enhances the enjoyment by women of

¹ The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination

their human rights and fundamental freedoms in all aspects of life. The Committee therefore encourages the Government of Greece to consider ratifying the treaty to which it is not yet a party, namely, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

41. The Committee requests the wide dissemination in Greece of the present concluding comments in order to make the people, including government officials, politicians, parliamentarians and women's and human rights organizations, aware of the steps that have been taken to ensure de jure and de facto equality of women, as well as the further steps that are required in that regard. The Committee requests the State party to continue to disseminate widely, in particular to women's and human rights organizations, the Convention, its Optional Protocol, the Committee's general recommendations, the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".

42. The Committee requests the State party to respond to the concerns expressed in the present concluding comments in its next periodic report under article 18 of the Convention, which is due in July 2008.

against Women, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.