
Committee on the Elimination of
Discrimination against Women
Eighth session

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Concluding comments of the Committee on the Elimination of
Discrimination against Women: Finland

Initial report

213. The Committee considered the initial report of Finland (CEDAW/C/5/Add.56) at its 141st, 142nd, 145th and 146th meetings, on 27 February and 1 March 1989 (CEDAW/C/SR.141, 142 and 145).

214. The representative of the Government of Finland informed the Committee that a supplement to the report had been prepared to cover the latest events but was available in English only. The report and supplement reflected the current status

of women in Finland and described the Finnish initiatives for the implementation of the Convention. She reported that the period between the time of signing the Convention and the time of ratifying it had been six years. After signing the Convention in 1980, the Council for Equality had studied it with a view to assessing the legislative changes that would be required prior to ratification and those to be introduced after ratification. Prior to ratification, several acts had been amended or introduced. Those included the Child Custody and Right of Access Act, the Guardianship Act (amended in 1983), the Nationality Act (amended in 1984), the Surnames Act (introduced in 1985) and the Equality Act (introduced in 1986). She said that the Council for Equality had carried out a detailed study on discrimination in general and on employment in particular to bring legislation into line with the articles of the Convention. That had led to the submission of two bills to Parliament, one concerning legislation on equality between women and men and the other concerning the acceptance of certain provisions of the Convention. Finland had then ratified the Convention without reservations.

215. The Equality Act promoted equality and forbade discrimination on the basis of sex, with a view to improving the status of women especially in the area of employment. The Act forbade discrimination particularly in job advertisements, in working life and in all information on educational options. A victim of discrimination could seek compensation and, according to the Act, the authorities would intervene whenever the implementation of equality was obstructed. The Act provided for equal opportunities for women and men in education and professional advancement and both could be nominated to positions in the Government and on municipal committees. She explained that there was no gender distinction in Finland. The Equality Ombudsman, the Equality Board, which consisted of five members with judicial powers, and the Parliamentary Council for Equality all worked under the aegis of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health to promote equality, provide co-ordination and monitor compliance with the Equality Act.

216. The representative gave examples of equality promotion in Finland and the problems encountered in implementing the measures that had been adopted after the ratification of the Convention. In the area of education, she said that women had a thorough general education and, in the 1980s, represented 60 per cent of the high-school graduates. In vocational training, women tended to choose fields that represented only a narrow sector of the spectrum of professions; it seemed that the choice of career was still influenced by the strict division of labour between the sexes. A government commission had proposed that a determined effort should be made at all levels of the educational system to promote equality in order to change that division. In the area of employment, studies clearly showed differences in remuneration between women and men and differences in their working conditions. It was found that the total working experience of women was only two years less than that of men; and that women changed professions and jobs less often than men. Studies had shown that the average earnings of women who worked full time amounted to only 78 per cent of those of men and the qualifications required for men's jobs attracted better remuneration than those of women. The share of part-time labour had not increased but more women than men worked irregular hours, such as shift work and part-time work. A study had shown that differences in remuneration between women and men increased considerably between the ages of 20 and 40 years and the position of women in the labour market was clearly weakened by the interruptions in their working careers and by family duties.

217. In Finland, the division of tasks in the home remained traditional although women had represented half the labour force for a considerable time. Women worked

full time and could go to work when their children were small. An equal society was considered, essentially, to mean equal responsibility and equal rights to leisure and enjoyment in all spheres of life. Various measures had been taken to ease the work-load of women, to encourage men to contribute to the care of children and to share in household work, and to enable women to reconcile family duties with working life. Some of the measures introduced to achieve equality in all spheres included municipal day-care services, an extended parental leave for which an allowance was paid, and shorter working hours for parents of very young children. For example, the Contracts of Employment Act had been amended in 1988 to allow employees to take partial leave of absence to care for children under four years of age who lived with them permanently. Partial child-care leave consisted of a reduction of working hours by mutual agreement between the employers and the employee. The problem remained, however, that women had a heavy work-load and men were unwilling or unable to make use of the social advantages that could be shared between mother and father. Women had become increasingly independent economically; they had higher expectations and demanded equality within the family. About 40 per cent of the fathers of newborn children availed themselves of the right to parental leave, but the majority took from 6 to 12 days of leave after the birth of the child and only seldom took a longer parental leave or child-care leave after the stipulated period for parental leave had expired.

218. It was reported that the provision in the legislation on working hours that had prohibited night work by women in industry had been abolished at the beginning of 1989, and that previous provisions had been replaced by legislation stipulating the maximum number of shifts that could be worked successively and providing for the removal of disadvantages suffered by women and men working on night shifts. A revision in the pension scheme, due in 1990, would recognize widowers as beneficiaries and more attention would be paid to the position of families with children and to the participation of both spouses in caring for the family.

219. Finnish women had been granted suffrage and had become eligible to vote in general elections in 1906, at the same time as men. Currently, women represented over 30 per cent of the membership of the Parliament but only 27 per cent of that of municipal councils. In Finland, no quota system for women had ever been applied to political bodies at any level and, as Finnish elections had been personal elections for decades, it had not been possible to use "long lists". The continuous increase in the participation of women in politics was attributed directly to women's active and extensive participation in society. An amendment of the Equality Act in 1987 provided that both women and men must be elected to all, and not some, municipal bodies. The objective was to attain between 40 and 60 per cent representation of both sexes. The stipulation was implemented for the first time on a larger scale at the beginning of 1987 and the equality authorities had distributed instructions to all municipalities on how equality in the distribution of women and men could be achieved. No data, however, was available on the extent to which the proportion of women in those bodies might have increased.

220. The representative reported on women's participation in trade unions and non-governmental organizations. Women's political and social organizations in Finland had contributed significantly to several reforms concerning social and family policies. The long and active participation of women was reflected in their considerable role in the trade union movement and, currently, women accounted for 48 per cent of the labour force and 50 per cent of all trade union members; the proportion of women in the executive bodies of the trade unions, however, did not reflect that level of participation. The division of the labour market according

to sex was reflected in the trade unions, where women represented 80 per cent of the members of central organizations for white-collar workers and 45 per cent of those for blue-collar workers. The representative informed the Committee that the trade unions of white-collar workers were organized mainly by women and their number in the executive bodies of other trade unions had risen in the 1980s. The fact that differences in remuneration had remained considerable had encouraged women to participate actively.

221. The representative drew the attention of the Committee to the national minorities in Finland. The report portrayed the position of women from the viewpoint of the dominant culture but there were also small numbers of Lapps, gypsies, foreigners and refugees in Finland. Refugee and alien women had founded an organization in 1988 and had participated in an inter-Nordic project on the status of migrant women. A special guidebook to aid such women was being prepared on the Finnish social security system, legislation and municipal services.

222. The representative said that the Council for Equality, founded in 1972, was a body in which various authorities and organizations co-operated that co-ordinated research on equality issues. The Council had the right to make proposals for the implementation of measures and programmes for the promotion of equality and one of its main tasks was to follow international developments in the field of equality. The Council reflected the political composition of Parliament and was elected by the Government for a maximum term of three years; the secretariat was permanent. In the 1980s, the main tasks of the Council were to study the country's obligations under the Convention and to accelerate the adoption of required measures. Its first official proposal was for a law on the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex in all aspects of working life, which had led to the passing of the Equality Act. The Council had published about 100 reports, studies, translations and publications dealing with women's studies and a quarterly journal of all equality authorities had been published since the beginning of 1988.

223. Under the Equality Act, all authorities, employers and those engaged in the field of education were obliged to promote equality actively. The equality authorities had given advice and instructions on the implementation of the obligations in practice; however, the problem remained that employers were not sufficiently bound by the Act to promote equality. The provisions of the Act were based on the general obligation not to place women and men in different positions on the basis of sex. Indirect discrimination was also forbidden. The practice of according bonuses on the basis of military service in the admittance tests for universities had been found to contradict the Act, as had that of not according to women on maternity leave study grants similar to those received by working persons. The ban on discrimination had been more clearly specified in the area of employment and, in particular, for the selection of applicants for jobs; most cases of discrimination referred to the Ombudsman had occurred in the public sector. The Equality Act provided for equal pay for work of equal value and 500 cases of non-compliance with that provision had been investigated in the previous two years. Co-operation with labour organizations and employers' organizations was essential as salaries and wages in Finland were settled mostly by collective agreements. It was also considered important to develop assessment criteria for work and tasks of equal value.

224. The representative referred to a special committee that implemented the Equality Act in public personnel administration, which consisted of representatives

of the employers and the trade unions. A number of municipalities had established equality committees to monitor the implementation of equality in various municipal sectors and to make proposals, including an equality plan.

225. The representative concluded her presentation with the observation that much still remained to be done in various sectors of Finnish society and there was a constant need to view the adequacy of the Equality Act in the light of legal practice and the resources provided for its implementation. Launching and maintaining co-operation between various authorities, trade unions and employer organizations was considered a vital task, as was that of changing people's attitudes. It was recognized that results could be achieved with legislation and official measures but that they would be inadequate without an active public opinion. The Finnish equality authorities had disseminated information on the work of the Committee and the Convention, the text of which was available in the national languages of Finnish and Swedish; the national reports to the Committee and its records had been made available to students and researchers.

226. The Committee commended the Government of Finland for its commitment and for submitting the initial report so promptly. The report had followed the guidelines and was of a high standard, being concise yet containing all the necessary information. The Committee appreciated the Government's recognition of the fact that much still needed to be done to improve the status of women in Finland. The action of the Government to present comments on the report in the supplement was commended and the Committee asked which interest groups had been contacted.

227. The Committee posed a number of questions of a general nature. It was asked whether the Council for Equality was legally autonomous, whether it had exclusive responsibility with regard to ensuring compliance with the equality laws and if it met regularly or on an ad hoc basis. It was asked whether its members were all women, whether they were jurists, whether they represented all political parties, and how they were elected and by whom. Details of the responsibilities of the Equality Ombudsman were requested and it was asked whether he was a civil servant or an expert. Data were requested on the representation of women at the ministerial and director-general levels and the reason for their low representation in the local authorities. With respect to the law on infringements against equality, it was asked who decided that an infringement had occurred and against whom action was taken. Details of the machinery set up to monitor the implementation of the equality laws and the budget for the equality bodies were requested and it was asked whether the budget had been increased to reflect the increased responsibilities of those bodies. Clarification was requested of the status of women's associations and the issues that had brought their members together, and it was asked whether the associations were decreasing since the Government had assumed the responsibility of ensuring equality.

228. The Committee asked how the Government measured the reaction of employers, employees and the general public to the Equality Act and, when opposition was raised, how the Government overcame it. Information was requested on whether the Equality Board had prevented any employers, once it had been proved that they had practised discrimination, from continuing with those practices. A more detailed definition of "indirect discrimination" was requested and how it was proved before the Court. The Committee was interested to know whether a woman could refer directly to the Convention if she had grievances or whether there were other remedies for discrimination. Although there had been an emphasis on statistics in the report, those statistics had not shown clearly whether women's contribution to

the economy by their work in the home had been included; information was requested on any studies or statistics that had been compiled.

229. Information was requested on municipal bodies as regards their budgets, composition, tasks and whether they were temporary or permanent. More details of the exceptional cases stipulated under the Equality Act were requested and, in particular, it was asked whether the provisions of associations to exclude one sex or the other were still in force and what the reactions of women's organizations to such provisions were. The report of Finland had referred to a comprehensive reform of the Penal Code and the Committee asked for more details of that reform. In particular, more information was requested on the reconsideration of the provisions regarding rape within marriage and on the discussion and public debate connected with that issue. It was asked if a third person could report a rape. The Committee asked if abortion was permissible under the law in cases of rape, both inside and outside marriage, and what the political and public views on that subject were. It was asked if there were provisions for prisoners of either sex to keep their children with them in custody. The Committee asked whether the sexual abuse of children within the family was considered a criminal offence, whether the number of such cases had increased or decreased since 1984, what protection was afforded to the victims and what had been done to study and discourage incest. It was asked whether the Government considered the existing penalties severe enough to deter incest and whether young female victims were given counselling or punishment or both.

230. More details of any affirmative action policies developed by the Equality Council, the Ombudsman or any other authority were requested and it was asked whether the setting up of equality councils in large companies was envisaged. It was asked to what extent and in what areas temporary special measures had been applied in Finland and whether they had been in force long enough for the results to be evaluated. It was asked whether such measures were also directed at men and whether there were any measures to encourage women to enter non-traditional fields of employment. The Committee asked for details of public attitudes towards temporary special measures and about the public demand for implementing measures in the public sector and asked if there had been any discussion on establishing numerical goals as opposed to fixed quotas in that sector.

231. The Committee requested examples of discriminatory advertisements and asked what the reaction had been to the report to which the representative had referred. It was asked whether the Government of Finland considered that sex stereotypes could be removed by education alone and whether there were any laws directed towards the abolition of sexist language. It was asked what the reaction of society was to fathers who took child-care leave. The Committee noted the existence of women's studies courses at the university level and inquired whether the professorships were full-time, permanent professorial posts, and whether the courses were confined to one discipline or were interdisciplinary. Details of the curricula of the courses were requested and it was asked whether the units followed could be included in other courses. The Committee asked for details of the budget allocated to women's studies courses. It was asked if the maternity packs (layettes) referred to in the report varied in accordance with the income of the mother. More information was requested on the organization and sponsorship of the family counselling courses. As Finnish men were also interested in the care and upbringing of children, the Committee found the high number of cases of incest surprising. Details of the amount of governmental support given to emergency accommodation for victims of violence were requested and it was asked how effective any special laws against domestic violence if they existed, had been.

232. As the report had stated that procurement for prostitution was an offence under the Penal Code, clarification was requested of the definition of procurement.

233. Information was requested on the amount of government funding provided for political activities, how the proportions were calculated and to what use the funds spent on supporting the political activities of women were put. Specific questions were asked on the number of women in Parliament and the areas in which women tended to be involved. Despite the laws, women remained underrepresented at the decision-making level and more details of the actual numbers and strategies established by the Government to improve the situation were requested. The Committee asked for data on the percentages of men and women who had participated in the last election as candidates and voters and whether there was a special fund to promote the participation of women in politics. More details of the training programmes to encourage women to enter new areas in international life and the results of those programmes were requested.

234. The Committee requested more details of the allocation of places at the intermediate level of education and of the results of the programmes in education, teacher training and sports. It was asked whether the recommendations of the various committees on education had been enacted and whether an analysis of textbooks had been conducted to determine whether they needed to be changed. Comments were invited on the effects of removing the quota on admission into teaching-training institutions; it was asked whether new guidelines had already been established and whether any difficulties were envisaged. It was asked whether women and men were admitted with the same marks and the reasons for the different system of points for entry. The Committee asked why the age of women graduates was higher if opportunities in education were equal and the drop-out rates the same for both sexes. Clarification of the reasons for the low number of women in science and technology was requested and whether they were related to traditional attitudes or the informal education received in the family. The increase in women university students over the last 20 years was not reflected in the number of women holding professorial or tutorial posts and the Committee asked what could be done to increase that number and which careers women university graduates preferred.

235. The Committee asked if the provision for an indefinite period of unemployment did not encourage mothers to assume sole responsibility for children. It was asked why the benefit figures had been quoted in United States dollars. Data were requested on the number and proportion of women unemployed in Finland and what action was being taken to retrain older women. More information was requested on the effects of new technology. Data were requested on the rates of youth unemployment and the numbers of young people that had stopped looking for employment. The Committee asked for data on the numbers of part-time workers of both sexes and their ages. It was asked if part-time workers had the same rights and status as full-time workers. Despite legislation, wage differentials were still considerable and it was asked if women accepted that situation and what measures were being taken to tackle the problem. The Committee asked whether the Government considered the equality bonus scheme, referred to in the supplement, to be a way of removing unequal scales of pay, and who distributed that bonus. The Committee asked if employers paid compensation when prosecuted for the violation of wage differential laws and what the Government was doing to combat sex segregation in the labour market. It was asked if any protective provisions remained in laws related to manual work that reflected women as being weaker and whether there were any other areas of work to which women did not have access.

236. The network of child-care facilities was commended and it was asked whether facilities other than those run by municipalities existed. The Committee asked how many fathers took parental leave, whether fewer of them took it because of the greater loss in wages and whether the parental-leave period was accounted for under the social security system. It was asked what proportion of parents chose to receive the home-care allowance in preference to using municipal day-care facilities and for what reasons, and what public attitudes to the facilities were. Details of the amount of the home-care allowance and the number of persons who were fully covered by collective agreements were requested. The Committee requested clarification of the term "comparable work" in the report for employees returning from parental leave and asked if the terms of parental leave did not discriminate against adoptive parents.

237. Information was requested on female-dominated work and it was asked whether any systematic evaluation had been conducted. The Committee requested a definition of the term "female farmers" in the report. It was asked if any studies on sexual harassment had been conducted. The Committee asked if the church was exempt from the Equality Act and how women entered the higher echelons of the church.

238. The Committee asked whether family planning in Finland was conducted only at health centres and whether sex education was conducted in schools. It was asked if there was any law allowing abortion, what the conditions and circumstances surrounding abortion were and what the reason was for the observed decrease in abortions. Figures on the number of illegal abortions were requested. The Committee inquired about public opinion on abortion and if there had been any debate on the subject about the methods that were used and whether abortions were performed only in hospitals or in day clinics as well. It was asked whether the reasons why abortions were required were related to the failure or inadequacy of contraceptives or to the cases of rape. More data were requested on infertility and it was asked if the research conducted was the same for both sexes. It was asked if any legislation and measures existed to avoid the abuse of women in artificial insemination, and what the attitude of the Government was. An elaboration of the proposals of the National Board of Medicine Working Group was requested and it was asked whether they covered the legal position of children conceived by artificial insemination. The Committee asked if health insurance covered operations to reverse previous sterilization operations, if that proved possible. The Committee asked how many AIDS patients had been identified in Finland and what campaign had been mounted to disseminate information and whose responsibility it was. Information was requested on the incidence of infant mortality in different regions.

239. The report of Finland had proposed that men and women should receive the same training in agriculture and the Committee was interested in the consequences of that proposal. It was asked if the status of rural women compared favourably with that of urban women. The Committee referred to reports that, in some cases, Finnish farmers had used agencies to find wives and asked whether there were any data on the incidence of such cases and whether there were counselling services or legal protection for such women, and what their roles on the farms were. It was asked whether a disaggregation of data on mistreated women was available for rural and urban areas and if any increase in their numbers had been observed. It was stated that the Farmers' Accident Insurance Act had been extended to include cooking when it was provided for the farm directly and the Committee asked for a clearer definition of that task and information on who undertook relief work on farms during maternity leave.

240. More information was requested on the League for Unmarried Mothers as regards its organization, function, and membership. The Committee asked what the average age of unmarried mothers was and what help they received from the Government. It was asked if there was any difference between divorce and the dissolution of a conjugal relationship. The Committee asked if the amended Marriage Act had had a positive impact in reducing the number of cases of violence in the family and whether women could apply to the court for divorce in such cases. The Committee requested data on the number of children adopted from outside Finland and the proportion of those adopted within Finland, on the countries from which the children came and on how successful the relationship was between the foster parents and the foreign children. Clarification was sought of the distribution of financial assets and property upon the breakdown of marriage and the rights of persons who were cohabiting with respect to property, maintenance and inheritance, and it was asked whether the children of such unions had succession rights.

241. The representative replied to the questions on general subjects posed by the Committee. The authorities for the supervision and observation of the Equality Act were the Equality Board and the Equality Ombudsman. The Ombudsman was a civil servant, appointed for a five-year term, and his functions were to examine cases to which the Equality Act could be applied and to disseminate information on equality legislation. The Ombudsman had no power to enforce the laws but was rather an investigator and adviser who could refer matters to the Equality Board, and up to then he had done so on one occasion. The Equality Board could bring an action against anyone who had acted contrary to the equality laws. The Board was composed of lawyers, including both women and men, who were appointed by the Government for a three-year term. Currently, four women and one man were members of the Board. The competence of the Equality Board and the Equality Ombudsman covered private activities and public administration. The Equality Board had made six statements in cases where it seemed that discriminatory action had been taken. The courts were not bound by the Board's statements and had rejected two of the cases. The Equality Board and the Equality Ombudsman operated under the aegis of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and there was no other division or unit to handle equality matters. The Office of the Equality Ombudsman was independent.

242. A distinction was made between the Equality Ombudsman and the Parliamentary Ombudsman, who supervised the observance of the law by public authorities in general. The competence of the Equality Ombudsman was based only on the Equality Act but it could also extend to cases in the private sector. The Parliamentary Ombudsman could not intervene in issues between individuals and private associations or organizations.

243. The Council for Equality was composed of 13 members and their personal alternates. The members were both men and women and reflected the political composition of Parliament. The Council was a policy-making body with the right to make proposals, introduce new items for discussion and co-ordinate equality issues. The representative informed the Committee that the Council's opinion on women entering the military service was negative as it considered that military service was not a fundamental human right. Furthermore, she said that civilian jobs within the defence administration and the entire spectrum of administrative posts should be widened and equality promoted in that way. The long-term projects of the Council for Equality included strategies to increase the influence and participation of women in policy-making regarding the labour market, the impact of new technology and equal pay, and in the co-ordination and promotion of women's studies. The projects also included the promotion of women in development and

bringing social pressure to bear on the need for men to change their roles. About 100 persons were involved in the work of the Council, which met once a month in plenary, as well as in ad hoc working groups. The permanent secretariat consisted of a general secretary and four research officers. The budget of the Council of 280,000 markka in 1989 was borne by the Office of the Equality Ombudsman.

244. The representative clarified one of the four exceptions to the provisions of the Equality Act by explaining that, in Finland, the principle was that no one had the intrinsic right to be a member of an association, but rather that associations had the right to decide who would be accepted as a member. According to the Finnish legal system, it was not possible for an individual to refer directly to the Convention in court and the necessary amendments had been made to the legislation before Finland had ratified the Convention.

245. The representative reported that a complete reform of the Penal Code in Finland was being prepared, one part of which would include new sanctions against discrimination in working life. It was assumed that the principle of rape within matrimony would be critically re-evaluated in the reform. In cases where rape was punishable under the Penal Code, the decision to bring the case to court was made by the victim herself but that provision, too, would probably be re-evaluated. The decision to have an abortion was for the woman concerned to take and cases of rape in matrimony were not punishable under the Penal Code.

246. In the supplement to the report, reference had been made to the fact that comments had been collected from almost 80 interest groups. Those groups included all the political parties and their women's organizations, student organizations, women lawyers and groups of ethnic minorities. Their statements had been taken into account in preparing the supplement to, and the introduction of, the report.

247. The representative reported that 350 cases of incest had been reported between 1983 and 1984 and that the subject had only recently become a matter of public discussion. According to the Penal Code, incest was considered a serious crime, with sanctions of 2 to 10 years' imprisonment. There was an Ombudsman in Finland dealing with children's matters who could be contacted about cases of incest, and the social welfare authorities assisted the victims of incest and worked in co-operation with the police. According to the law, a child under two years of age could live in a penal institution with its mother, if that was to the advantage of the child and if the mother herself requested it. There were no corresponding provisions for young children of male prisoners to live in penal institutions with their fathers.

248. The principles of article 4 of the Convention on temporary special measures were included in the Equality Act in which they were termed equality plans. In discussions on the Equality Act, questions had been raised as to whether the temporary special measures were not contrary to the Constitution and its provisions to ensure the equality of citizens. The Ministry of Labour arranged vocational training courses for adults, mainly in the industrial sector, and was undertaking a project to improve the position of women in male-dominated areas. The Ministry of Trade and Industry held special courses for businesswomen in small or medium-sized businesses. Elderly women had poorer vocational training than men, whereas younger women had, by all standards, better educational and vocational training than men.

249. The representative informed the Committee that child-guidance clinics had been available since 1925 and over 80 per cent of the population had used them. The

clinics were run by local health authorities and they arranged special maternity and paternity training courses whose main purpose was to emphasize that the responsibilities for child care were equal for men and women. Men were also encouraged to support women during pregnancy and nearly 80 per cent of first-time fathers attended the delivery. Victims of family violence were mostly women and children but also elderly people. The shelters for the victims were run by various social organizations and supported financially by the Government and the municipalities. The maternity packs were given to all women, regardless of their income or property. Each pack consisted of clothes and equipment for the child, as well as contraceptives, and it was valued at double the amount of alternative financial assistance. The pack was available to Finnish mothers who were resident in the country or abroad and to foreigners who were permanently resident in Finland.

250. The Finnish language did not contain sexist terms but 200 professional titles included the word for "man" and those would be amended to become neutral in gender. Recent studies by Finnish female linguists had also revealed sexist features in Finnish and the new edition of the dictionary that was being prepared would take them into account. With regard to discriminatory advertising, the Government recognized that the concept was important but had experienced difficulties in finding the most effective means of making advertising non-discriminatory. Legislation on advertising had its merits, especially with regard to sanctions and the competence of the authorities, but experience with the prohibition on advertising tobacco and alcohol had motivated the Government to put the onus on the advertising sector itself.

251. The representative said that statistics were not available on cases of prostitution and that prostitution was not defined as a crime in the Penal Code. Studies on prostitution were being financed by the Academy of Finland and were concentrating on the circumstances under which the phenomenon occurred and the clientele. Procuration and maintaining premises for the purpose of prostitution attracted penalties against persons other than the prostitute.

252. In response to questions posed on the political influence of women and women's organizations, the representative said that at every municipal and parliamentary election the proportion of women candidates had increased and so had the proportion of women elected. In the last parliamentary election in 1987, the proportion of women voters had been higher than that of male voters; the proportion of women candidates had been 36 per cent, of whom 31 per cent had been elected to Parliament. The lower proportion of women in municipal councils was explained by the fact that voting patterns in rural areas were more traditional than in urban areas. In some municipalities, voluntary equality commissions had been appointed by the municipal board of directors to investigate the status of women within the municipality, particularly in regard to the social services provided to families and the position of women as municipal workers. At the municipal level, political and non-political women's organizations worked together to promote equality plans in their home towns. At the national level, co-operation between the women's organizations had increased and, in 1988, all the women's organizations had formed a new co-operation committee with the objective of strengthening and promoting co-operation between women in the field of international relations and Finnish development policies. In general elections in Finland, a quota system did not exist and the only way to raise the number of women elected was by increasing the number of women candidates. Members of the governmental and municipal commissions were appointed and a target of 40 to 60 per cent representation of both sexes had been set, but there were no sanctions if the commissions did not meet that target.

In recent years, the number of governmental committees with no women members had diminished. Within the political parties, women had demanded that their share in the decision-making level should correspond to the proportion of their membership in the parties.

253. In education, the hierarchy in schools reflected that of society as a whole; the headmasters and higher administrators were men. The existence of separate teachers' training colleges for men and women was based on the fact that there were separate educational facilities in schools for sports and handicrafts. Teacher training was currently part of university education and there was a provision that 40 per cent of the places should be reserved for men. The main purpose of such a quota system had been to ensure that an equal number of men and women would be in contact with the pupils but that goal had not been achieved. As stated in the report, male students entered teacher training with lower grades than women. The failure of the quota system, together with the decisions of the Council for Equality and the Equality Ombudsman that quotas were not in accordance with the equality laws, would soon lead to the abandonment of the system. Instead of quotas in all educational fields, the Council for Equality had set goals for the distribution of students according to gender and information campaigns were being used to achieve those goals. Strategies to fulfil equality requirements between the sexes in the educational system were being prepared and attention had also been given to sex stereotypes in both the text and pictures of textbooks. In the Finnish school system, the family courses contained education on sex.

254. The representative responded to questions on women in the labour market. She said that sex segregation was a constant phenomenon that had not changed much in the last 30 years. Two thirds of all public employees were women and more than half of those using new technology in their work were women. The average number of working hours a week differed between the sectors from 37 hours per week in many female-dominated areas to 40 hours a week in the male-dominated sectors. Only 11 per cent of women workers were employed part time for 20 to 30 hours a week; but the majority of part-time workers were women. The annual leave for part-time employees was determined mainly by the provisions of the Annual Leave Act. The pension of part-time employees increased proportionately.

255. The representative said that separate wage scales for men and women were abolished when Finland ratified the Convention concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value (No. 100), which had been adopted by the International Labour Organisation in 1951. Equal pay was considered a broad issue where many problems had yet to be solved, such as the re-evaluation of women's work, the development of methods to measure the comparable worth of different jobs, the abolition of the segregation of men and women and the promotion of women in employment. Wage differences could be explained in part by the structure of education, the work experience of the employee and the ability of the sector to pay wages. The labour market partners acknowledged that gender was a factor that determined pay and, in 1988, a special equality bonus had been introduced. In Finland, wages and many social reforms were settled by collective bargaining, the essential factor of which was the bargaining power of the parties. As women formed a slight majority of unionized wage earners, it was considered that, increasingly, equal pay would become a central part of the bargaining process. An employer who violated the rule of equal pay for the same work or work of equal value could be brought to court by the discriminated employee. The court would then decide whether the employee had the right to equal pay. The Equality Ombudsman could apply to the Equality Board to prohibit the employer from continuing with the discriminatory action.

256. The traditional notion that women needed special protection in employment because they were weaker than men had been removed from legislation by the Labour Protection Act of 1958 and the Occupational Health Care Act of 1979. An employer could be asked for a written report in cases of suspected discrimination without any reason for the request being given. When claiming for compensation, claimants had to prove in a court that they were more qualified than the persons who had been selected for the jobs. The term "comparable work" was included in the legislation to cover cases of employees returning from maternity, paternity or parental leave, as that leave could last for longer than one year and their former posts might no longer exist on their return. Finland was among the first countries to study how the value of unpaid work could be reflected in the national economic statistics. The preferred term was "total working hours", which included paid and unpaid working hours; time-use studies were considered the most accurate way of showing the labour input of men and women. The Central Statistical Office in Finland had begun a study on the use of time even though there was, internationally, no generally accepted method for evaluating unpaid work.

257. In response to the question posed on sexual harassment, the representative said that the New Protection of Labour Act had come into force in 1988 and it was evident that the need for protection concerned the female-dominated sectors of employment in particular. Sexual harassment was considered a matter that related to both health and sexual discrimination. The Council for Equality had conducted the first study on sexual harassment two years previously and the equality authorities had recently launched an empirical project on sexual harassment in the work place. The traditional reticence of Finnish women hindered the acknowledgement of the hidden phenomenon but it was being discussed publicly.

258. The representative said that municipalities were responsible for organizing day-care services for children, as well as other social and health services. Municipal day-care services consisted of both family day care and kindergartens. The Government had established minimum standards for day-care facilities and subsidized part of the costs of them according to the financial resources of the municipality. Each municipality could decide whether it should organize the system itself or hire organizations for that purpose. She said that parents trusted the quality of the municipal day-care system, the prices of which were lower than those in the private sector, and it was reported to be very popular. Only 5 per cent of the kindergartens were private and many children, particularly those under the age of three, were cared for in the family. The new system gave parents of children under the age of three a choice between a municipal day-care place or a home-care allowance. By 1 January 1990, all municipalities would be under a legal obligation to provide day-care facilities for there was still a shortfall in places. The representative was confident, however, that the demand for day care would be met.

259. The representative said that following the new Abortion Act of 1970, the number of abortions had decreased. Services were available throughout the country and illegal abortions hardly existed. Despite sex education at schools and the availability of contraceptives, there were still occasions when abortion was the only solution.

260. The representative reported that the exact number of drug abusers in Finland was not known but drug abuse was not considered a serious problem. There were treatment programmes and centres for drug abusers. Finland had just signed the United Nations Convention Against Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, adopted in 1988, and did not need to change its internal

legislation to meet the requirements of the Convention. The number of reported cases of persons with HIV antibodies was 243, of whom 30 were women, and there were 41 confirmed cases of AIDS. The population of Finland was almost 5 million. The Finnish National Board on Medical Affairs had carried out information campaigns on AIDS. Charges for insemination and other hospital treatments were reimbursable under the social security system. New legislation was being prepared by the Ministry of Justice and one of the main problems encountered was that of determining whether a child should have the right to know the identity of its biological father.

261. The representative said that the authorities did not have exact information on cases in which partners for marriage were sought through agencies operating abroad; according to estimates, most of those partners came from the Philippines, Thailand and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

262. The representative reported that relief workers on farms standing in for workers on maternity leave were financed by the municipality, which was obliged to provide such a service, the costs of which were borne by the Government.

263. In response to the questions on domestic violence, the representative reiterated that there were few studies or exact statistics. In most cases, the victims were women and children. The abuse of alcohol was cited as the main reason for domestic violence and sometimes the women resorted to divorce, although family counselling services were available. The reform of the Marriage Act had abolished regulations that required that the guilt of the other spouse had to be proved and it was too soon to conclude if the reform had had any effect on family violence.

264. Under the Inheritance Act of 1965, children born in or out of wedlock were entitled to inherit from both parents. Children born out of wedlock were entitled to the allowances from the father that had been agreed between the parents under a court order. Child maintenance allowances were paid in cases where the person liable failed to pay the allowance.

265. The Adoption Act regulated both national and international adoptions. All adoptions required an order of court, which confirmed a child's legal status in respect to its adoptive parents. Adoption counselling was compulsory in Finland and it was provided by the welfare authorities or specialized organizations. Leave for an adoptive mother was shorter than maternity leave as an adopted child was usually at least two months old. The number of adoptions of children from abroad was 11 in 1985, 22 in 1986, 45 in 1987 and 55 in 1988. The children came mainly from Africa, Latin America and the Far East. The figures for domestic adoptions were 376 for 1985 and 303 for 1986.