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**Committee on the Elimination of  
Discrimination against Women**

**Exceptional session**

**5-23 August 2002**

**Excerpted from: Supplement No. 38 (A/57/38)**

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

**Combined fourth and fifth periodic report**

256. The Committee considered the combined fourth and fifth periodic report of Greece (CEDAW/C/GRC/4-5) at its 585th meeting, on 19 August 2002 (see CEDAW/C/SR.585).

*(a) Introduction by the State party*

257. In introducing the fourth and fifth periodic report, the Secretary-General of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality stated that gender equality was one of the State party's major goals and that its gender equality policy reflected the State party's political will, which was based on democracy, economic and social integration, participation, non-discrimination, tolerance and social justice.

258. The representative noted that the General Secretariat for Gender Equality, which functioned as the government body responsible for women's rights and gender issues, had been established within the Ministry of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization. Its six-year action plan for gender equality concentrated on four major areas of concern: women and politics, women and the economy, social rights and stereotypes.

259. Work in the area of gender equality had broadened to accommodate new and emerging issues brought about by globalization, such as trafficking in human beings, the new information technology and migration, as well as new strategies, such as gender mainstreaming.

260. Since the presentation of its second and third periodic reports in 1999, the representative stated that the State party had taken measures to strengthen its legal and policy framework. It had been among the first 23 countries to sign the Optional Protocol to the Convention on 10 December 1999, which it ratified in 2001. In addition, the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention had been accepted domestically and was awaiting action at the international level. Article 116, paragraph 2, of the Constitution had been revised to ensure fully the legal basis for positive measures and policies for the elimination of gender inequalities. The revised provision had been adopted by Parliament on 16 April 2001.

261. Taking note of the importance of women's participation in the decision-making process, the representative indicated that two laws had been adopted, in 2000 and 2001, which established the following:

(a) Balanced participation of a percentage equal to at least one third of each sex in decision-making councils, committees of public administration, public organizations and local authorities;

(b) Balanced participation of a percentage equal to at least one third of each sex in the candidates' lists for municipal and prefectural elections.

262. In the education sector, the representative noted that, in 2001, 61 per cent of the graduates from Greek universities had been women. The representative also noted that the General Secretariat, through its Research Centre for Gender Equality and in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, had produced a large number of studies and pilot projects which were being used for the advancement of women in education and future gender mainstreaming policies.

263. The General Secretariat, in collaboration with non-governmental organizations, had been working on the issue of violence against women for many years. The representative informed the Committee that the General Secretariat had also been cooperating with the National Centre for Public Administration on the design and implementation of new awareness-raising seminars on violence against women for police officers, judges, social workers, hospital doctors and civil servants in the health and welfare areas.

264. Trafficking in persons was a complex problem that had been given high priority on the political agenda. In April 2001, a Special Committee Against Human Trafficking had been established to study, design and oversee the impact of specific anti-trafficking measures to combat the problem. The Special Committee consisted of high-ranking police officials, representatives from relevant Ministries, the academic community, the International Organization for Migration, and the General Secretariat for Equality. Its main objective had been to update the State party's anti-trafficking legislation to bring it in line with existing international legal instruments. Greece had signed the United Nations Convention on International Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, and draft legislation on trafficking had also been submitted to Parliament in July 2002.

265. In concluding, the representative assured the Committee that the State party was making systematic efforts to promote gender equality and mainstream gender, generally, at all stages of the policy-making process, and in its policies.

*(b) Concluding comments of the Committee*

### **Introduction**

266. The Committee commends the Government of Greece for its combined fourth and fifth periodic report. It also commends the State party for the written replies to the questions of the Committee's pre-session working group, and the oral presentation of the delegation that sought to clarify the current situation of women in Greece, and provided additional information on the implementation of the Convention.

267. The Committee commends the State party on its delegation headed by the Secretary-General of the General Secretariat for Equality. The Committee appreciates the frank and open dialogue that took place between the delegation and the members of the Committee.

### **Positive aspects**

268. The Committee welcomes the 1999 revision of the Constitution, particularly the revision of article 116, paragraph 2, which legalizes the use of temporary special measures as provided for by article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention in order to achieve substantive equality between women and men.

269. The Committee appreciates the close links between the General Secretariat for Equality, other governmental bodies, civil society and the Research Centre on Equality Matters.

270. The Committee welcomes the growing number of non-governmental organizations that play a prominent role in promoting women's empowerment in Greece.

271. The Committee notes with appreciation the numerous policies implemented through the six-year action plan in order to promote gender equality and the advancement of women. It particularly commends the State party for its successful policies in reducing the illiteracy rate generally and among women in particular.

272. The Committee also commends the State party for having ratified the Optional Protocol.

### **Principal areas of concern and recommendations**

273. While noting initiatives to eliminate stereotypes, the Committee is concerned that deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes persist.

**274. The Committee recommends that the State party intensify its efforts, inter alia by strengthening specific programmes targeting men and boys, to change stereotypical roles and discriminatory attitudes and perceptions about the roles and responsibilities of women and girls and men and boys in the family and in society.**

275. The Committee expresses concern at the prevalence of violence against women, and at the lack of specific provisions on domestic violence and marital rape in the current legislation on violence. The Committee is also concerned that no comprehensive plans to address all forms of violence against women have been adopted by the State party.

**276. The Committee requests the State party to place a high priority on the introduction and implementation of comprehensive and holistic measures to address violence against women and girls in the family and society in accordance with its general recommendation 19. It calls on the State party to include specific provisions on domestic violence, including marital rape, in the new draft legislation on violence against women and to ensure its speedy enactment. The Committee recommends that the State party increase its awareness-raising measures, including zero-tolerance campaigns through the media and public education programmes, to ensure all forms of violence against women and girls, including domestic violence, are regarded as morally and socially unacceptable.**

277. The Committee is concerned about the absence of specific legal provisions and measures to address sexual harassment, especially in the workplace.

**278. The Committee urges the State party to take all necessary measures, including introducing specific legislation, in order to empower women to take action with regard to sexual harassment.**

279. The Committee is concerned that the State party is increasingly becoming a country of transit and destination for trafficked women and girls, inter alia for purposes of sexual exploitation, and that the draft legislation on “the elimination of trafficking in human beings, of crimes against sexual freedom, of pornography against minors, and generally sexual exploitation and assistance to victims of these crimes” insufficiently protects the human rights of women and girls who have been trafficked.

**280. The Committee urges the State party to design and implement a holistic approach to combat trafficking in women and girls. It urges the State party to review the draft legislation in order to strengthen the provisions on assistance and to ensure the protection of the human rights of trafficked women and girls. It also urges the State party to further strengthen provisions related to the sexual exploitation of trafficked women and girls.**

281. The Committee is concerned about the limitations women face in gaining access to employment in the police and the fire brigade.

**282. The Committee recommends that the law governing women’s employment in police and the fire brigade be reviewed in order to eliminate discrimination against women.**

283. While noting a major decline in unemployment during 1999-2001, especially among women, the Committee expresses concern that women, especially young women holding university diplomas, still constitute the majority of the unemployed in the State party. It is also concerned about the persisting wage gap between women and men, and that women are paid lower salaries than men for the same work and work of equal value.

**284. The Committee urges the State party to continue developing policies and adopting proactive measures to increase the employment rate of women, in particular young women, and accelerate the elimination of the wage gap between women and men. It also requests the State party to provide more information in its next periodic report on measures taken to eliminate the wage gap.**

285. The Committee is concerned that fathers are not taking childcare leave and that this reinforces negative stereotypes regarding working matters.

**286. The Committee requests that the State party introduce individualized paid paternal leave for childcare.**

287. While noting the high rate of women acquiring degrees, the Committee is concerned about the underrepresentation of women in decision-making and political bodies, particularly in Parliament, the economic sector and academia.

**288. The Committee recommends that the State party take measures, inter alia in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention, in order to realize women’s right to participation in all areas of public life and, particularly, at high levels of decision-making. It also urges the State party to adopt proactive measures to encourage more qualified women to apply for high-ranking posts in academia and to implement temporary special measures, such as quotas, with goals and timetables, where necessary.**

289. The Committee is concerned at the low number of women in the diplomatic service, particularly in postings abroad, and the fact that few Greek women work in international organizations.

**290. The Committee recommends that the State party take measures, including in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention to encourage women to enter the diplomatic service and to provide opportunities to access the highest rank of the diplomatic service. It also recommends the introduction of measures to provide information to women on options for employment in international organizations.**

291. Noting that the rate of abortion has decreased by 30 per cent during the years 1994 through 2000, the Committee is concerned that abortion is still perceived as a means of birth control. It also notes with concern that an unusually high percentage of women deliver through Caesarean section.

**292. The Committee recommends that the State party ensure the availability and accessibility of affordable contraceptive means for both women and men as part of a comprehensive health policy, including reproductive health. The Committee encourages the State party to promote programmes of sex education for both girls and boys. It calls on the State party to encourage responsible sexual behaviour and take all appropriate steps to eliminate the use of abortion as a means of birth control. The Committee also recommends that the State party implement awareness-raising programmes on the benefit of natural birth in order to decrease the number of deliveries through Caesarean section.**

293. The Committee expresses concern at the discrimination against minority women living in Greece, particularly Roma women, including with respect to access to education, who suffer from double discrimination based on both their sex and ethnic background, in society at large and within their communities.

**294. The Committee urges the Government to take effective measures to eliminate discrimination against minority women. It urges the State party to respect and promote the human rights of women and to take effective and proactive measures, including awareness-raising programmes, to sensitize public opinion at large, and particularly the police, on the issue of minority women. It also urges the State party to address the forms of discrimination including with regard to access to education, by minority women through its legal, administrative and welfare systems.**

295. The Committee is concerned about the marginalization of Muslim women with regard to education, employment, and by the non-application of the general law of Greece to the Muslim minority on matters of marriage and inheritance, resulting particularly in the practice of polygamy and repudiation. The Committee is concerned that this situation leads to discrimination against Muslim women and negatively impacts on the realization of their human rights as protected under the Greek Constitution and the Convention.

**296. The Committee urges the State party to accelerate its efforts aimed at improving Muslim women's education and employment opportunities. The Committee also urges the State party to increase the awareness of Muslim women of their rights and remedies and to ensure that they benefit from the provisions of Greek law.**

297. The Committee urges the State party to deposit, as soon as possible, its instrument of acceptance of the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Committee's meeting time.

298. 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.

299. Taking account of the gender dimension of declarations, programmes and platforms for action adopted by relevant United Nations conferences, summits and special sessions (such as the special session of the General Assembly to review and appraise the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (the twenty-first special session), the special session on children (the twenty-seventh special session), the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and the Second World Assembly on Ageing), the Committee requests the State party to include information on the implementation of aspects of these documents relating to relevant articles of the Convention in its next periodic report.

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