



**PERMANENT MISSION OF GREECE TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT  
BY THE HEAD OF THE GREEK DELEGATION**

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**ON THE SIXTH PERIODIC REPORT OF GREECE  
SUBMITTED UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION  
ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS  
OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN  
UNDER CONSIDERATION BY THE UN COMMITTEE  
ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION  
AGAINST WOMEN**

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*Chairperson,  
Distinguished Members of the Committee,*

It is, indeed, an honor and a privilege for me to appear before your Committee in order to present and elaborate on the 6<sup>th</sup> Periodic Report of Greece, submitted under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. I look forward to engaging with you in what I expect to be a frank, fruitful and constructive dialogue today.

I have not come here to give an embellished picture of women's situation in Greece, because I am aware that we have not achieved the level of equality that we all desire for our societies. But I have come to discuss with you the efforts undertaken by my country to tackle various forms of discrimination against women and the major results achieved.

But before I start, may I be allowed to introduce the members of our delegation:

- Myself, as Secretary General for Gender Equality of Greece. Let me explain that the **General Secretariat for Gender Equality** is a unit of the Ministry of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralisation. It is the **national machinery** in the field of gender equality, competent for the formulation, monitoring and implementation of gender policies and measures at national level.
- Ms. **Stamatina Yannakourou**, Doctor of Law, Special Advisor to the Secretary General for Gender Equality.
- Ms. **Ifigeneia Katsaridou**, General Director, Research Center for Gender Equality (KETHI).
- Ms. **Eleftheria Yannakou**, First Counselor, Permanent Mission of Greece to the U.N.
- Dr. **Elias Kastanas**, Special Legal Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- Dr. **Heracles Moskoff**, Expert Counselor, Department of International Development Cooperation (Hellenic Aid), Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- Ms. **Georgia Alexopoulou**, Expert, Ministry of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization.
- **Mr. Alexandros Vidouris**, Second Secretary, Permanent Mission of Greece to the U.N.

*Chairperson,  
Distinguished Members of the Committee,*

Greece attributes great importance and strives to fully respect its international commitments. The need to comply with the CEDAW and to put into effect the Beijing Platform for Action led the Greek State to undertake active initiatives and adopt legislative and other measures aiming at improving women's situation in all sectors. The preparation of our periodic National Reports, as well as sustained effort to implement the Observations and Recommendations of your Committee, contributed to our identifying regulatory gaps, problems in the implementation of the legislation as well as equality deficits in general.

I would like to point out the main developments and key reforms that have been attained in the field of gender equality from 2001 up today:

- The **Greek Constitution has been revised** and for the first time there has been enshrined obligation of the State to adopt **positive measures** as a means of achieving real equality between men and women. The new regulation is in conformity with article 4 (1) of the CEDAW, as interpreted by the Committee's General Recommendation No 25, and article 141 (4) of the EC Treaty on positive measures.
- A special law has been adopted, concerning the prevention and repression of **domestic violence**. A new competence to provide consultative services to victims has been entrusted to local government.
- The new legal framework against **trafficking in human beings** qualifies relevant acts as criminal offences – mostly felonies. Severe punishments for the perpetrators have been established, as well as affective protection and assistance to victims.
- **Granting of a residence and work permit and a reflection period to trafficking victims** has been facilitated by law.
- A recent law on **equal treatment between men and women in the field of employment, labour and occupation**, tackles **sexual harassment** as a form of discrimination on the grounds of gender.

- An **obligatory 1/3 quota in favour of each sex** has been established in the electoral lists of local elections. The same quota has been established for the collective bodies of all governmental agencies.
- Special regulations for the improvement of civil servants' **parental leave in favour of men are promoted** under the New Civil Servants' Code that is being discussed in Parliament.
- **New mechanisms of promoting gender equality have been established and the existent ones have been reinforced.** In 2002, a **permanent Parliamentary Committee on Equality and Human Rights** has been created. A **National Committee for Equality between Men and Women** has been set up by law, as the official forum of dialogue between the State, the social partners and NGOs, for the formulation of the national strategy for gender equality and gender mainstreaming, in line with the **General Recommendation No 6 of your Committee**. In addition, a law has entrusted the Greek **Ombudsman** – an Independent Authority – with the competence to monitor the implementation of equal treatment between men and women in employment, both in the public and, for the first time, in the private sector. Hence, a **special Department for Gender Equality** will be created with office of the Greek Ombudsman.

In parallel, the General Secretariat for Gender Equality, as the competent governmental body, has been strengthened, with a significant increase of its administrative and scientific personnel. In October 2006, the Finnish Presidency of the EU examined the role of **government mechanisms** for gender equality, on the basis of indicators related to the observation of member-states' progress within the framework of the Annual Follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action. Greece, compared to other EU member States, was ranked among the best (**2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> respectively**) concerning the responsibility level of the government mechanism and the human resources employed by it.

- Since 2004, Greece has been implementing an **integrated National Plan of Action against trafficking in human beings** aiming at screening, identifying, protecting and assisting the victims, as well as giving relevant support to the countries of origin through prevention and reintegration programs. In this framework Greece, following relevant European Council's decision,

coordinates a Plan for cross-border and interregional cooperation and operational action of police services in the countries of S.E Europe under the code name “ILAEIRA”. The Vice President of the European Commission Fratini argued that the objective of “ILAEIRA” is the dismantling of organized trafficking networks of a transnational character and the release, protection and assistance of victims.

***Chairperson,***

***Distinguished Members of the Committee,***

Greece attributes great importance to the CEDAW, as the most valuable tool for the promotion of women’s human rights and the improvement of their position in society. We also attribute great importance to the Recommendations of your Committee, which we carefully studied in order to prepare the 6<sup>th</sup> Periodic Report of our country. In particular, as concerns the publication of the Committee’s Conclusions and Recommendations following consideration of the combined 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Periodic Reports of our country, the texts were translated into Greek and were forwarded, along with the Meeting’s Minutes, to all Ministries and public bodies involved. In addition, NGOs were also informed and the Greek press covered widely the whole issue.

Parallel NGO reports are also an important tool in identifying gaps and challenges, both for the UN Committees and the Governments concerned. A dialogue without NGO input would be ineffective and incomplete. However, such reports do not always depict a fair and accurate picture of the efforts made to implement a human rights convention. These reports should be considered with the same critical approach as the countries’ reports.

Please allow me now to briefly present to you the measures taken by the Greek State in order to meet the Recommendations of your Committee, which also accelerated several critical changes during the last period.

## **1. Elimination of negative stereotypes concerning the role of men and women in society and the family**

The most important tools for eliminating negative stereotypes are educational process and sensitization of parents and particular fathers, on which our country is focusing. Special programs addressed to minors and adults – both women and men, teachers and parents - are being implemented. I will indicatively mention some of them.

- At the level of Secondary Education and Initial Vocational Training, a programme for the sensitisation of public school teachers has been launched. It has a total budget of 25 million Euros and is implemented in all regions of the country. In the course of its implementation, 7.500 teachers are being trained in order to implement specially designed educational programmes, from which a significantly large number of students is benefiting.
- Aiming at tackling professional segregation and stereotypes, we are implementing a Program of enriching libraries with relevant material in all public schools of technological education (764 in total), following the identification of specific needs and a study on the existing of titles on gender issues.
- Another significant Program entitled “**Equal partners – reconsidering the role of men in work and private life**” was recently completed within the scope of the 5<sup>th</sup> Medium-Term Community Action Plan of the European Commission for Gender Equality. The objective of the program was to raise awareness of public opinion and society on how to reconcile work and family life with men’s involvement. The main target groups were pre-school children, adolescents and fathers.
- In order to challenge stereotypes as to the role of men and women, special training programs are being implemented throughout Greece in the so called “Parents’ Schools” that were first created in 2003 and constitute a distinctive structure of lifelong learning, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. During the period 2003-2006, **54 Parents’ Schools** were established and have been operating in all Regions of the country.

## 2. Legislative and other measures to tackle violence against women and girls

In October 2006, a **new legal framework substantially enhanced the fight against domestic violence**, responding to the relevant Recommendations of the CEDAW Committee as well as of other UN Committees.

This law mainly protects the fundamental rights of women through the introduction of five critical reforms:

- It provides for **stricter penalties** for acts that are already qualified as criminal offences under the Criminal Code, when these are committed in the context of the family as defined by law.
- **Rape within marriage is regarded as a criminal offence.**
- **Non-marital cohabitation between men and women is covered by the scope of the law.**
- **Physical violence** against minors as a disciplinary measure is explicitly forbidden.
- The institution of **mediation in criminal cases** is established as an innovative instrument for certain domestic violence offences.

To raise public awareness on the issue, a television campaign is currently being broadcasted all over the country. At the same time, relevant printed material has been distributed since November 2006, while training seminars take place in all public administration and local authorities, in collaboration with the National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government, as well as special seminars for NGOs.

The particular interest of the Greek State regarding issues of violence against women has been evidenced, inter alia, through the voluntary financial contribution of 12,650 Euro by Greece, to the Division for the Advancement of Women for the purpose of the preparation of the UN Secretary General's study on the elimination of all forms of violence against women. Furthermore Greece participates actively in the Council of Europe's Campaign to Combat Violence Against Women 2007-2008.

### **3. Measures to combat sexual harassment**

In August 2006, a new law was adopted, which addresses sexual harassment in the workplace, incorporating, at the same time relevant EU Directive into domestic law and responding to related recommendations of this Committee. **For the first time, sexual harassment is defined by Greek law and is explicitly regarded as a form of discrimination in the workplace on the grounds of gender, and is forbidden both as regards access to employment, the whole spectrum of the labour relationship and occupation.**

### **4. Fighting against trafficking of women and girls**

Since 2001, Greece started to tackle trafficking in human beings and sexual exploitation of women and girls, in a systematic way. Since August 2004, the Greek government has been implementing an integrated National Action Plan against trade and trafficking in persons. This Plan covers all the spectrum of actions and more specifically: screening, identification, protection and support of the victim, granting of a residence permit, a work permit and a reflection period, voluntary repatriation with financing of reintegration programs, training of police officers, judges and public prosecutors, information and raise awareness of the society and the creation of a national database for monitoring the phenomenon. The National Action Plan is coordinated at political level by a Special Inter-ministerial Committee of Secretary Generals in cooperation with specialised NGOs and the IOM.

- An important turning-point was a Memorandum of Cooperation between the Special Committee on the one hand and twelve (12) NGOs and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on the other.
- There has been an extensive television campaign, aiming to raising the awareness of the public opinion.
- Training seminars have been organized for Judges, Public Prosecutors, Police officers and Health Officials concerning the screening and referral process, run by the State in cooperation with NGOs and other bodies (for instance, the Association of Public Prosecutors, the I.O.M., the International Association of Police Officers etc.).



- The National Centre for Social Solidarity (E.K.K.A.), a legal entity supervised by the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity, is providing a 24 hours hotline, psychological support and shelters for the victims.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through the Hellenic Agency for International Development (Hellenic Aid), aims at combating human trafficking in the fields of prevention, protection and prosecution. The Plan of Action of the Hellenic Aid includes, inter alia, screening, identification and referral to shelters, accommodation, psychosocial and legal assistance and assisted voluntary repatriation in the countries of origin. It also includes training of prosecutors, police officers and regional initiatives aiming to address root causes of trafficking in human beings in the countries of origin.
- Greece is expected to be among the first countries to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, which has signed in November 2005.

#### **5. Abolition of quotas unfavourable to women in the police and fire service**

- **In 2003** quotas unfavourable to women regarding their admission to police academies and their recruitment as border guards were abolished
- **In 2005** the provision on a 10% quota for the admission of women to the schools of the Fire Brigade's Academy was abolished by law. In **2006** the provision on a 15% quota for the admission of women to the Municipal Police was equally abolished by law.

#### **6. Increase in women's employment rate – Pay gap**

As concerns women's employment rate, there was an increase from 43% in 2004 to 46.1% in 2005 and 47.5% in the second quarter of 2006 (ESYE Data – National Statistical Service of Greece). As concerns women's unemployment, the percentage was reduced from 16.2% in 2001 to 15.3% in 2005 and 13% in the third quarter of 2006 (ESYE Data). But despite its downward trend, this percentage remains still higher than the respective percentage for men. For that reason, female employment constitutes a **national priority** for us and this is also shared by the social partners and

enterprises. Supporting women's employment constitutes a special objective of our country's National Reform Program 2005-2008 as well.

In all training programs for unemployed run by the Greek Manpower Organization, a quota of at least 60% in favour of women is set. In 2005 and the first quarter of 2006, 35,000 women benefited from national employment and training programs. Moreover, the State has been strengthening the child care and social care facilities as a support to women's employability. Today, 1,520 structures are operating at a national and regional level, with a capacity of 73,000 children. Additionally, the Ministries of Interior and Employment are elaborating a new institutional framework for promoting women's employability, through new methods of bridging the gap between work and family life. This includes the use of existing structures as well as direct financial support to women for child care services. This new institutional framework will be completed in early 2007.

In order to **reduce the pay gap** reaching in Greece a percentage of 10%, according to the Eurostat figures for 2005, we took proactive measures in cooperation with the private sector as well as employers' associations. So, a **Protocol of Cooperation** was signed between the State and the top level Employer Associations of the country. The Protocol aims at mobilizing the business sector in favour of equal professional opportunities for women and men and equal pay in practice.

Moreover, a **Memorandum of Cooperation** was signed between the General Secretariat for Gender Equality and the Greek Network for Corporate Social Responsibility in order to further promote equal opportunities for men and women among the members of the Network.

## **7. Paternity leave**

The new Civil Servants' Code recognizes the right of the father civil servant to parental leave for childcare. More specifically, the father employee has the right to reduced working hours or a nine-month paid leave. The same right is also recognized to single-parent families.

## **8. Women's participation in decision-making**

The balanced participation of men and women in the organizations and bodies of the public sector and the local authorities, has been guaranteed by law since 2000, with a participation quota of 33% of each gender in the collective bodies of the above-mentioned organizations. In addition, since 2001, a quota of at least 1/3 participation of each gender in electoral lists for local **elections** is provided for.

At the same time and in view of the recent local elections that took place in October 2006, the State supported women candidates with seminars of training, empowerment and elaboration of educational handbooks on communication skills for women followed by a television campaign. As a result there was an increase of **47.5% of women Mayors elected compared to 2002.**

**As concerns the application of qualified women for high-ranking positions in academia, we would like to stress** that women's participation in the teaching and research staff of universities has been increased from 25% in 2001 to 30% in 2004. Moreover, in Technological Education Institutes women represented **39%** of the teaching staff in 2004.

## **9. Women's career in the Diplomatic Corps**

Members of the Diplomatic Service are appointed following successful attendance of the Diplomatic Academy, after a special examination. From 2001 onward, there is an almost balanced distribution of the two genders in the posts of students admitted to the Academy (for instance, 11 women and 12 men in 2001, 8 women and 7 men in 2006). It follows that under-representation of women, which, today may still be observed in highest ranks of the diplomatic service, is expected to disappear gradually within the next few years when significant number of minister Counsellors are expected to promote to Ambassadorial positions.

## **10. Elimination of discriminations and acceleration of efforts for improving employment and education of women belonging to minority groups and Roma**

**The Roma, women and men, form** an integral part of the Greek population, and **enjoy full protection of the Greek Constitution and law.** Taking into consideration their way of life and their special living conditions, they are recognized by the State as a **socially vulnerable group of the population**, in favor of which **positive measures and actions** are adopted. Since 2002, an **Integrated Action Plan for the Social Integration of Greek Roma** has been implemented, under the auspices of an Inter-Ministerial Committee coordinated by the State Secretary of the Ministry of Interior. Within the context of this Plan and up to this day, 728 Roma women participated in programs of social integration, 70 Roma women have been placed in new work positions in enterprises and 20 Roma women have been subsidized in order to create small individual companies. Moreover, 715 Roma women participated in programs facilitating their integration into the labour market. Besides, 1,200 Roma were trained during the year 2005-2006 in Adult Education Centres, **women comprising 83.5% of them.**

Women members of the Muslim minority of Thrace are beneficiaries of various programs addressing their education and employment. For example, in the region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace a special Project of integrated interventions aims at enhancing women's employability through various actions of counseling, training, entrepreneurship etc. There is also a special program for the Education of Muslim children – boys and girls-, under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, which offers many educational opportunities to improve their school performance. New books on various subjects, including Greek language and grammar, have been drafted in order to facilitate their progress. Within the framework of this project, new policies have been introduced combating the phenomenon of school drop-outs and encouraging future integration of pupils into the labor market. We should also note that Greek legislation provides for a special quota of 0.5 % for the admission of minority students to higher education institutes. Following these policies, there is equal participation in primary as well as secondary education. As regards tertiary education, 40% of Muslim students are women.

## **11. Women's Health Issues**

The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs implements programmes on Health Education in schools. 70 experts in charge of Health Education Programmes have been appointed to the 58 Directorates of Primary and Secondary Education, to coordinate and support the implementation of those programmes by training teachers.

During the period 2000-2006, 4.500 programmes on Health Education issues have been realized, on average, annually.

Educational material on the subject, prepared especially for secondary school students was produced and respective material for primary school students has been ordered by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs.

During the present School Year, (2006-2007), a training programme on Sexually transmitted diseases addressed to primary and secondary school teachers is being implemented, aiming at informing students through properly trained teachers, a practice that will be supplemented by lectures given by the experts in charge of Health Education.

Moreover, lectures on contraception methods were given in more than 100 schools, i.e. 70.000 students, all over Greece, organized by the Greek Association of Family Planning and the Ministry of Health.

As regards the issue of the caesarean section, the percentage of deliveries by this method in our country is quite high, reaching 37%. Among the measures implemented to achieve its reduction is the creation of Units for Painless Delivery at the Family Planning Centers of obstetrical hospitals, as well as the information programmes for women, on the advantages of natural delivery, carried out by the Ministry of Health in cooperation with Family Planning NGOs.

## **12. Amendment to article 20 para 1 of the CEDAW**

Greece is fully aware of the need for the Committee to have sufficient meeting time in its disposal in order to discharge its important functions. We are considering favorably the acceptance of the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, which, in our legal order, is subject to ratification by Parliament.

### ***Chairperson***

### ***Distinguished Members of the Committee***

The 6<sup>th</sup> Periodic Report of Greece is a product of collaboration between the services of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality and other Ministries, Independent Authorities (such as the Ombudsman and the National Radio-Television Council), non-governmental organizations, international organizations as well as independent experts. Before its submission to the UN, the Report received positive comments from the National Commission on Human Rights<sup>1</sup>, where our Report was submitted in accordance to statutory regulations.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Periodic Report of Greece has received huge publicity, as 2,500 Greek and English copies of its printed version funded by the Ministry of Interior, have been distributed, free of charge, both in Greece and abroad. In addition, the Report, as well as the ratifying laws of the Convention and its Optional Protocol, are accessible to all interested parties at the website of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality ([www.isotita.gr](http://www.isotita.gr)).

On December 18, 2006 and in view of the oral presentation of the 6<sup>th</sup> Periodic Report before your Committee, a consultation meeting was organized with the participation of relevant women NGOs, trade-unions, equality units of local government bodies and the National Commission on Human Rights. A relevant briefing took also place on

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<sup>1</sup> NCHR's Observations towards the General Secretariat for Gender Equality concerning the Greek Report towards the CEDAW Committee for the years 2001-2004, Athens, February 23, 2005 (<http://www.nchr.gr>).

December 12, 2006, for the Members of Parliament who participate in the Special Committee for Equality and Human Rights, a permanent Parliamentary Committee of the Greek Parliament.

*Chairperson*

*Distinguished Members of the Committee*

The Greek government attributes great importance to the promotion of gender equality issues, which have become, since 2001, a matter of **national strategic planning, in accordance to the Beijing Platform for Action.**

In the current period (2004-2008), an integrated cohesive intervention strategy relates gender issues to national priorities, namely development, employment, education and social cohesion. A political program focusing on four (4) axes is being implemented:

1. Improving women's employment.
2. Combating stereotypes through education.
3. Preventing and combating violence against women.
4. Strengthening women's participation in decision-making.

I would like to reassure you of the Greek State's strong commitment to continue working towards the achievement of the Convention's goals to the maximum. We look forward to your Committee's recommendations, which will be taken seriously into consideration, in order to achieve the common goal. We strongly believe that the work undertaken here today will contribute to the enhancement of women's position within Greek society and will greatly boost the development, competitiveness and social cohesion of our country.

Thank you in advance for your fruitful remarks as well as for your attention.