



NORWAY

Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)
53rd Session
General Debate

Check against delivery

STATEMENT

By

H.E. Ms. Anniken Huitfeldt
Minister of Children and Equality

New York, 4 March 2009

www.norway-un.org

Mr. Chair person,

Let me thank you, the secretariat, Ms Mayanya and all other stakeholders for an excellent preparations of the meeting. I think it is truly inspirational to be here together with so many dedicated leaders from all over the world. I come from a part of the world where, - although we face obstacles and challenges, - gender equality and more equal participation of men and women have moved out of infancy to more mature stages. I am happy to report on this during our meetings here. Often, however, I hear colleagues from other and less fortunate countries say that is it easy for us. We have the resources to pay for our policies.

Mr Chair person

Gender equality policies such as equal rights legislation, parental leave or day-care center policies, are not expenses that only rich countries can afford. They are investments for the future! Gender equality and more equal participation in the work-force, or in the unpaid care, helps economic growth. They improve the competitive edge of our economy. As a country, we have made great progress in recent years, not in spite of our family and gender policies, but because of those policies.

It helps economic growth because a larger part of the total human resources participate in productive activity. More people work and more people plan to work a greater part of their lives. It helps economic growth because it increases the skills of a larger number of people and thereby generates new economic activities.

The true benefits are not only girls and women, but men and boys too. Scientific evidence tells us that today's boys and men work less hours for better pay than their fathers.

They get to know their children better. And they have more happy wives and partners.

Men and boys are beginning to appreciate the great return they enjoy due to improved equality in society. We are increasing our efforts to further the equal participation agenda.

Recently, the Norwegian government presented a White Paper on the Role of Men and on what it means to be masculine today. An English summary of the report is available in this room and on the web-sites of the Norwegian Mission.

I believe it is the world's first government White Paper on the Role of Men. It is based on broad research and hearings on equality, with focus on men's participation in care, family life and work. It has given us valuable knowledge about changes in attitude and behavior in recent years.

For example:

-The time fathers spend caring for children and sharing household duties has increased considerably during the last 20 years.

- 90 % of fathers entitled to 10 weeks paid Parental Leave, actually spend 10 weeks together with their children as the masters of the house.

We also have evidence to show that more equality between men and women at home reduces the chances of divorce.

What we still struggle with, are attitudes of some employers regarding men's rights to parental leave. Men rather than women, are discriminated against when exercising their rights established by law.

Mr Chair person,

We see that role stereotypes tend to reproduce unwanted behavior in the next generations.

Masculine violence in close relations is one of the evils we address in the White Paper.

In Norway the male Minister of Justice recently published a book on domestic violence, and he is raising a strong voice in the public debate. The White Paper suggests a nationwide program to treat perpetrators and to promote an understanding of masculinity as non-violent. We hold such measures to be necessary also globally. This perspective should be included in the outcome of this CSW session.

And finally, I would add my voice to all those who have pointed to the need to protect the weak and vulnerable from the menaces of the financial crises. We must say absolutely NO to cuts or roll-backs of the achievements regarding the status of women. Those countries who disregard that warning will do so at great losses to their own societies. I urge you all to guard what we have achieved and continue to move forward.

Thank you