



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
Forty-first session

Summary record of the 841st meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 9 July 2008, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Šimonović

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention (continued)

Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Finland (CEDAW/C/FIN/5 and CEDAW/C/FIN/6)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of Finland took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Kosonen** (Finland), introducing the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Finland, said that a national survey had indicated that the level of violence against women had remained about the same since the previous periodic report, unfortunately. The Government had taken several measures to change attitudes towards violence against women in response to that finding, including a media campaign targeting men and decision-makers. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health had also established an inter-ministerial working group to address policies in that area. The Internal Security Programme 2008-2011 had been established to enhance victim support services, reduce violence in intimate relationships and raise awareness of “honour crimes” and female genital mutilation. A national research and development unit linked to the research institution of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health was to be opened in 2009 to support regional and local work on gender equality.

3. The Ministry, in cooperation with the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, had made recommendations to municipalities for strategic planning, to be assessed in 2011. Furthermore, the Ministry of Justice was examining how to take into account a history of violent behaviour in respect of punishment of the offender, and how to incorporate the right to criminal proceedings for petty assault into the public prosecution system. Finally, five special prosecutor posts had been created for specialists in offences against women and children.

4. Turning to trafficking in human beings, he said that the Internal Security Programme contained actions related to prevention, awareness-raising and training. The National Action Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings, updating measures in the 2005 Plan, had been adopted in June 2008. The Ministry of the Interior had also launched a plan of action against trafficking in 2006, focusing on victim support including legal, counselling, interpretation and health-care services.

5. Regarding gender equality legislation, the Committee on Non-Discrimination, established by the Ministry of Justice, had prepared a proposal for updated legislation on non-discrimination and issued its report in February 2008. It had concluded that the emphasis of reform would be on the Non-Discrimination Act and related legislation; the Committee was therefore not likely to examine further the option of consolidating existing legislation. One of the objectives of the reform was to improve cooperation among the bodies addressing equality. The final report would be issued by October 2009. Lastly, the Act on Equality between Women and Men had been amended in 2007 so that the Ombudsman on Equality would be responsible for monitoring the Act in respect of the Åland Islands. The 2006 Åland Islands Government programme also contained a chapter on gender.

6. As to minority women, it was very important to support the rights of disabled women to enjoy family life and children; therefore the social welfare and health-care systems attempted to support them through mainstreamed services supported with special services. The Government had signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol in 2007 and it would be ratified as soon as legislation had been amended. It had also funded health and social services for the Sámi people in coordination with the Sámi Parliament. A 2008 study on the well-being of Sámi children published by the Ombudsman for Children found that Sámi children had the same concerns as other children, and that they regarded their Sámi identity positively. The unpublished 2008 Ministry of Labour study on Roma in the labour market found that Roma women were flexible about the dress code in the labour market and that models had been created to solve culturally challenging situations. In addition to a number of local and regional Roma Boards established to assist municipalities, the publicly-funded Roma women’s association “KROMANA” had been established in 2006 to address social, education and employment issues.

7. Turning to immigrant women, he drew attention to the 1999 Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers which underlined immigrant responsibility to participate actively in integration and provided authorities with tools to support the integration process. Municipalities had also cooperated to provide language, legal, and awareness-

raising services to immigrant women, who worked primarily in the services sector and still experienced prejudice and marginalization. A national employment and entrepreneurship project for immigrants would be launched in October 2008 to train consultants in awareness-raising for equal treatment and non-discrimination. Efforts were also being made to take separate account of immigrant women in cases of domestic violence, as they comprised a large percentage of those in shelters.

8. The participation of women in decision-making posts had grown in recent years. The current President of Finland was a woman, and parliamentary elections followed the principle of proportional representation. The percentage of women in elected bodies had been slowly increasing. Efforts were being made to increase the number of women in economic decision-making, with a focus also on gender expertise and mainstreaming the gender perspective at all levels. At least 40 per cent of administrative board members of businesses that were wholly or partly State-owned were women, serving as an example in Government efforts to encourage the private sector in respect of the positive impact of incorporating women in top management positions. Significantly, a 2007 study by the Finnish Business and Policy Forum found that businesses with women directors were financially more successful than those managed by men.

9. Pay differentials between men and women had proven difficult to eliminate. The goal of the 2006 joint programme by the Government and the labour market on equal pay was to reduce the gap by at least 5 per cent by 2015, which required the collective agreement policy to approve higher average pay increases for women than for men. Other initiatives included pay system reform, reduced segregation, promoting women's career development and encouraging men to use family leave.

10. The Act on Equality detailed the requirements for equality planning at all levels of educational institutions and the situation would be assessed in 2009. A project to promote gender-sensitive training aimed at addressing stereotypes in schools had been launched in 2008. Other programmes were being implemented to address gender segregation in education and in working life, as well as to support women's entrepreneurship. The Government was working to increase the participation of women entrepreneurs to 40 per cent and had appointed a

working group to study obstacles to and incentives for women's entrepreneurship, to expand their participation to sectors where they were underrepresented.

11. The Government was expected to adopt the Action Plan for Gender Equality in July 2008. The Plan's priorities included closing the pay gap, promoting women's careers, equality awareness-raising targeted to schools, reducing gender segregation in education and the labour market, preventing violence against women and mainstreaming gender equality in respect of budgeting and training. The Government would submit to Parliament an outcome assessment report on the Act on Equality in 2009, and its first-ever report on equality in early 2010. Furthermore, the Government was committed to allocating more resources to gender issues through initiatives such as a 2007 act which mandated an annual subsidy to the largest women's organizations.

12. The Government was equally committed to the aims of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security and had integrated them into its external policies and development assistance. The national action plan for the implementation of the resolution was to be launched in September 2008. While the overall situation in Finland was good, there remained work to be done to respond to new challenges in the protection and promotion of full gender equality.

Articles 1 to 6

13. **The Chairperson** said that it was remarkable that women in Finland had enjoyed the right to vote and to be elected to a political post for over one hundred years. She hoped to see how the remaining challenges to the implementation of the Convention would be addressed.

14. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** said that she would like more information on how multiple forms of discrimination against women would be handled.

15. **Mr. Flinterman** said that it was unclear whether it was unlikely or impossible to consolidate legislation on non-discrimination and on gender, and what the position of the Government was. He wondered whether there were gender experts on the Committee for legislative reform, as there was no specific reference in the reports to the Convention in particular. He noted that discrimination against women was different from other forms of discrimination and therefore separate

legislation was justified. While the text of the Optional Protocol had been posted on the website of the Ministry of Justice, he recommended posting the views adopted by the Committee as well and incorporating other measures to raise awareness of the Optional Protocol.

16. **Ms. Neubauer** said that the Committee had received information that the budget of the Council for Equality had been reduced by one third over the last eight years and asked the delegation to provide further information in that regard. Also, it was unclear whether the gender mainstreaming strategy that had been introduced in the area of policy development and decision-making permitted specific gender equality policies focused on the needs of women in general and of specific groups of women.

17. Since Ministers were legally obliged to ensure that all bills submitted to Parliament had undergone a gender impact assessment, the Committee would welcome further information on how that procedure was implemented, and whether the quality of the assessment was monitored or if it was sufficient for a bill to state that it had no specific impact on gender issues.

18. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** said that she was pleased to see that the Government did not regard women as a homogenous group, but recognized that some women had special needs and problems. The sixth report merely described the situation of immigrant women and did not explain the measures that were being taken to address the difficulties they faced; for example, some highly educated immigrant women were unable to find work in their area of expertise. In addition, some programmes for immigrant groups appeared to lack a gender-sensitive approach. Consequently, the Committee would like to know whether Government policies were responding fully to the challenges arising from immigration.

19. **Ms. Dairiam** asked whether the international human rights treaties ratified by the Government of Finland had been incorporated into the legal order and could be cited and applied directly. The definition of discrimination in article 1 of the Convention should be applied to sanction individual acts of discrimination and also to provide a framework for all proactive measures for mainstreaming gender equality. It appeared that the Act on Equality had been amended in 2005 to harmonize it with the European Union

standards and the European Union Directives on equality in the workplace, but the European Union standards on discrimination were lower than those of the Convention. She would therefore be grateful for further information on which standards were used in the process of mainstreaming and in the development of gender equality plans.

20. In its replies the State had reported that the reform of the Act on Equality had expanded the duties and mandate of the Ombudsman for Equality. It would be interesting to know what part the Ombudsman and the Gender Equality Unit had played in the reform processes, and whether they had participated in the work of the Committee that developed the reform.

21. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, said that it would be useful to learn more about how the periodic reports had been prepared and whether Parliament had been involved in the process. She would also like to know whether the Committee's concluding observations would be forwarded to Parliament.

22. Finland had already undergone a Universal Periodic Review (UPR) procedure, and had undertaken to strengthen the implementation of the treaty body recommendations. The delegation should clarify how it intended to implement that undertaking.

23. Regarding the visibility of the Convention in Finland, she asked whether the Convention had been referred to in any court cases and whether the Ombudsman for Equality used the Convention as an instrument when dealing with issues submitted to her.

24. **Mr. Kosonen** (Finland) said that the work of the Council for Equality had not been completed yet. Since the Council was an independent body, the Government could not comment on its findings; however, the Committee's concerns would be brought to the Council's attention. When providing feedback to the Council, the Ombudsman for Equality had also expressed her concerns about consolidation of the legislation.

25. **Ms. Pulkkinen** (Finland) said that the Committee's fear that the gender equality legislation was in jeopardy was unfounded since the aim of the Council's work was to improve the level of protection. Consolidation of the two Acts was only one option put forward in the Council interim report. The Council had decided to focus its future work on the

Anti-Discrimination Act and related legislation. It was therefore unlikely that it would continue examining consolidation. Parliament's Employment and Equality Committee had also recommended that the two Acts should not be consolidated.

26. The Council's attention had been drawn to the fact that minority disabled women faced multiple and intersectoral discrimination and, although reform would focus primarily on forms of discrimination other than gender, it was necessary to decide how to provide better protection against that particularly serious form of discrimination. The Government would welcome any advice the Committee had in that regard.

27. The composition of the Council on Equality included experts on gender issues and representatives of the Ombudsman for Equality and of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, which was responsible for gender equality and related legislation.

28. **Mr. Kosonen** (Finland) said that the text of the Optional Protocol had been placed on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as just one way of spreading information on the Convention and on human rights in general. The Constitution stated that all the Ministries had to respect and promote human rights.

29. Court cases had arisen in respect of other treaty bodies; a large number of cases involving Finland were before the European Court of Human Rights, which appeared to be the preferred instance of alleged victims of human rights violations.

30. Regarding Parliament's involvement in the implementation of the Convention, the delegation included a parliamentarian who was a member of the Constitutional Committee, which verified the constitutionality of all bills sent to Parliament. The fifth and sixth periodic reports would most probably have been sent to Parliament. Moreover, the delegations that presented Finland's reports to the different treaty bodies usually appeared before the Constitutional Committee subsequently to explain the respective concluding observations. In general, there was increasing collaboration between the Government and Parliament.

31. All the international human rights conventions that Finland had ratified had been incorporated into the country's legal system and human rights were taken into consideration in all activities as well as in the

2000 Constitution. Consequently, the Convention was taken into account. Nevertheless, whether it was alluded to in court cases was a different matter, because the domestic courts preferred to refer to domestic law, which had been harmonized with international conventions, or to the case law of the European Court of Human Rights.

32. **Ms. Naclér** (Finland) said that she was from the Åland Islands and the only immigrant in the Finnish Parliament. It was very important for Parliament to have special insight into the work of civil servants and the Government, as well as of the Committee and of the United Nations as a whole. Finland did not have a constitutional court; the Constitutional Committee carried out the duties that would have fallen to such a court.

33. Finnish women had had political rights for over 100 years and the electoral system supported women, even though there were no special arrangements. Currently, the President of Finland was a woman and women were a majority in the Government. Parliament had a best practice that she wished to share with Committee members: it had established a women's network that brought together women from all political parties to discuss issues of interest to women.

34. Finland had been very active in the area of combating human trafficking in collaboration with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), of which Finland was currently exercising the presidency; the country would be hosting a conference on the issue later in the year. Regarding violence against women, Parliament was focusing on the issue by holding high-level seminars involving the President of Finland and the President of the Supreme Court, who was also a woman.

35. **Ms. Nummijärvi** (Finland), referring to multiple discrimination, said that it was a rather new topic in discussions concerning legislation. Discrimination on the basis of gender was dealt with in the Act on Equality, implementation of which was monitored by the Ombudsman on Equality. Discrimination on other grounds was dealt with under the Non-Discrimination Act, which was monitored by the Ombudsman for Minorities; it dealt only with ethnic discrimination outside working life. Cases brought before the Ombudsman on Equality seldom concerned gender issues, although there had been cases involving gender

and age and other more problematic matters might be raised in the future.

36. Multiple discrimination would be on the Council for Equality's agenda, because it would be considering how to increase collaboration between different authorities. Moreover, there were some disparities between the Act on Equality and the Non-Discrimination Act concerning limitations and sanctions that made it difficult for the courts to deal with cases of multiple discrimination.

37. **Ms. Arrhenius** (Finland) said that Finland had a strong tradition of taking care of minorities, such as the Sámi and the Roma, and provided special programmes for them. It took the twin-track approach of specific programmes and mainstreaming in the case of special groups, although it had begun to move more in the direction of mainstreaming.

38. **Ms. Martikainen** (Finland) said that, since 2004 the Government, through the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, had been developing a system to review bills to verify that gender mainstreaming was included and to establish more effective monitoring mechanisms.

39. With regard to gender-budgeting, the Council on Equality received about 100,000 euros a year, while the funding for all gender equality agencies amounted to about 400,000 euros a year. Resources had been increased, allowing the Gender Equality Unit to take on two new employees to work on equal pay issues.

40. **Ms. Lönn** (Finland) said that the unemployment rate for foreigners was considerably higher than for the rest of the population, especially among women. The Government was tackling the problem of immigration by means of a programme that included special measures making it easier for foreigners to enter the labour market. There were no statistics on immigrant employment rates. Individual needs were taken into consideration in the implementation of programmes for immigrants and in employment training. Highly educated women were provided with upgrading courses in the university.

41. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** asked whether the Government bill containing more detailed provisions on advertising that was in conflict with the accepted values of society had been adopted. She also asked whether the provisions concerning the representation of women applied not only to degrading or violent

images but also to softer stereotypes that relegated women to certain roles and occupations.

42. **Ms. Coker-Appiah** was concerned that immigrant women were often isolated in the home without any knowledge of the Finnish language, entirely dependent on their partner and therefore unable to access all the services provided for women. It was not surprising that they accounted for 30 per cent of women in shelters; there were probably many more women suffering violence but unaware of or unable to access the services available. She wondered whether any study had been conducted to assess the impact of such services on immigrant women, especially those who were not directly involved in the labour market and might not be targeted by programmes aimed at the general immigrant community.

43. She asked whether female genital mutilation (FGM) had been criminalized in Finland or whether the programmes that existed were merely preventive efforts. It was evident from other countries' experience that girls were often removed to another country for FGM and then returned. She wondered what Finland was doing to prevent that from happening and whether there were programmes to target young girls who might be at risk.

44. **Ms. Simms** said that it was very easy for Governments to negotiate with communities without considering women's rights in order to avoid accusations of cultural interference. Yet now that the structures were in place to ensure that gender equality was mainstreamed in Finland, she wondered whether the Government was insisting in its negotiations with Sámi leaders that gender equality be included in any agreements reached. The Government was responsible for all women and could not allow men from minority groups to continue sexist behaviour in the name of culture. She asked whether the Government was insisting that women have equal representation among the Sámi. Workshops and sensitization were not sufficient; political commitment and insistence were needed.

45. **Ms. Shin** said it was ironic that in Finland, where 60 per cent of Cabinet members were women, domestic violence and other forms of violence against women continued to be a serious problem. Equality had been achieved only on the surface. Despite the efforts made by various ministries and by the inter-ministerial committee, the campaign to combat violence had to be

more visible. She suggested that a special committee be established at the Cabinet level under the leadership of the Prime Minister to ensure that all of society understood that it was a serious issue. The Special Committee should include representatives of civil society because they provided grass-roots services and were aware of the problems. Otherwise, national policies, campaigns and programmes might overlook local issues.

46. Middle-class women were apparently reluctant to go to the shelters available because of their concern that their names would be passed to the authorities. She wondered why shelter managers could not keep victims' names confidential, as well as the locations of shelters.

47. With regard to the new law on mediation, she was concerned about the imbalance of power between perpetrator and victim. The police often encouraged couples to mediate rather than applying sanctions to the perpetrator and providing protection and assistance for victims. The police had the power to decide whether to prosecute, recommend mediation or drop the case. She requested more information on the mediation law and asked whether there had been any preliminary evaluation of its effectiveness.

48. **Ms. Pulkkinen** (Finland) said that the implementation of the Act on mediation had not been evaluated yet. Mediation was used in criminal cases only under strict conditions as defined in the legislation. According to the Act, only a police officer or prosecutor could submit a case of domestic violence to mediation. The Legal Affairs Committee of Parliament had stated that cases where there had been repeated domestic violence should not be mediated. If mediation was successful, the prosecutor could still decide to go ahead with a court case afterwards. However, there might be a need to enhance training for police officers and prosecutors.

49. **Ms. Ahokas** said it was true that immigrant women were in a very vulnerable position. The Integration Act was gender-neutral and the local and individual integration programmes were designed to include immigrant men and women and their families. Courses in the Finnish language and society were provided for immigrant women by municipalities together with the Finnish Adult Education Institute and NGOs.

50. There were over 200 Thai massage firms in Finland, and in 2007, the Ministry of the Interior had conducted an inquiry into the situation of the Thai women working for them. The Ministry had then appointed a steering group to promote their integration. Women's organizations had been very active in advocating for Thai and Philippine women. The Finnish-Thai Association shared information on Thai culture by organizing events, disseminating information and promoting the integration of Thai women by providing advisory services, networking, community contacts and various activities. No impact study had yet been conducted on the integration of women immigrants.

51. **Ms. Ewalds** said that the inter-ministerial Monitoring Group was aware of the concern about mediation in domestic violence situations and was preparing some guidelines for training. FGM was punishable under the Penal Code, although there was no specific legislation. Training courses were planned to help professionals, especially health professionals, to recognize such problems at an early stage. Several projects in that area had produced information materials and had trained persons of immigrant background to disseminate them.

52. She acknowledged that the number of women's shelters was insufficient and noted that the situation was going to be reviewed. The services provided were confidential and victims' names were only passed on to social services when there was a particular reason for doing so. Some shelters were run by NGOs.

53. **Ms. Pulkkinen** (Finland) said that the amendment to the Consumer Protection Act had been accepted and would enter into force at the beginning of September. Under the stricter new rules, marketing was considered to be inappropriate if it was clearly in conflict with generally accepted values, in particular if it presented one gender in a manner that violated human dignity. Advertising that targeted minors or was likely to be seen by them was subject to stricter criteria. In practice, that meant that outdoor advertising could not display violent or sexual images.

54. **Mr. Kosonen** (Finland) said that there were women in the Sámi Parliament, although he did not have exact figures. The problems of Sámi women were addressed in the same way as those of all other women in Finland.

55. **Ms. Arocha Dominguez** said that Finland's many programmes for women seemed to be sectoral in nature, either for immigrant women, disabled women, women in minorities or other groups, and their follow-up, implementation and evaluation also seemed sectoral. Finnish women did not seem to be considered as a whole. She wondered how the education system and the mass media were able to present an image that reflected the richness of Finnish womanhood.

56. The responses to the list of issues referred to many regulatory measures, yet the media also had a role as they reflected how people wished society to be constructed. She wondered how the Government, within the system of cooperation that existed in Finland, was going to work with media owners, managers, journalists and others in order to influence them, while respecting freedom of speech, so that their messages would not leave any women excluded.

57. **Ms. Begum** said that a grim picture had been given of violence against women in Finland, where there was no effective prosecution system in place, despite the high proportion of women who had experienced violence or harassment. In most European countries, mediation was usually prohibited in cases of domestic violence, yet in Finland, domestic violence was often considered as petty assault. The gender-neutral legislation made it impossible to have a specific law on violence against women. She wished to know when the Government intended to take coordinated action, including an action plan, to prevent violence against women and provide comprehensive legal protection and adequate targeted services for victims of violence. The Government should also consider a new provision for the mediation law to ensure that there was no mediation in situations of sexual violence. She wondered whether it was considering a new law to criminalize sexual harassment and a separate law on domestic violence.

58. **Ms. Pimentel** said she welcomed Finnish legislative provisions to protect minorities from discrimination, including discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in the Penal Code, the law on registered partnerships and the provisions for assisted insemination that allowed treatment for women couples. She asked why the Government had not referred to sexual minorities as a vulnerable group and asked if any special measures were to be implemented to promote the equality of women of different sexual orientations, to decrease hate crimes, and to provide

public services not just for heterosexual women. She wondered whether any statistical data was available on women facing hate crimes as a result of their sexual orientation.

59. She asked how the Government guaranteed the implementation of substantive equality for Roma women in Finnish society and requested information on strategies to improve acceptance and question stereotypes and prejudice with a view to achieving a more inclusive, open-minded society.

60. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, noted the active role played by Finland in the efforts of the Council of Europe to combat violence against women and wondered how that was reflected nationally, particularly in Parliament. While the State party was to be commended for collecting data, it would be interesting to know what was being done in the way of analysis, given that since 1997 there appeared to have been little change in the level of violence experienced by women. The Committee would also like to know how the Government had responded to the finding that more women were killed in Finland than in any other European country. She referred to two cases that had been examined by the Committee under the Optional Protocol involving the murder of women by their husbands and asked if those cases could be translated and brought to the attention of the competent authorities in Finland.

61. **Ms. Ewalds** (Finland), responding to the question about the time frame for the Government's new action plan for gender equality 2008-2011, said that, if it was adopted as expected very shortly, it would be worked out in detail and be in place in 2009. In that context, there had been considerable discussion of measures to combat sexual violence and violence against minorities, particularly women. The recommendations of the Council of Europe would be presented at an upcoming high-level seminar and had already been taken into account in ministerial recommendations to municipalities. As for optimizing data use, an inter-ministerial working group would be studying the matter and was expected to make proposals.

62. **Ms. Pulkkinen** (Finland) said that existing legislation on domestic violence, including, for instance, chapter 6 of the Penal Code, already took into account the circumstances in which the offence had been committed. Special legislation was needed on violence in close relationships, which would be studied

in autumn 2008 by a working group set up by the Ministry of Justice. That group would focus on the question of petty assault which, unlike the two other categories of assault and aggravated assault, was not subject to public prosecution. Offenders could currently be prosecuted only at the request of the victim, but since victims could sometimes be prevailed on to withdraw such requests, it might be found advisable to make offences categorized as petty assault, including domestic violence, equally subject to public prosecution.

63. **Ms. Arrhenius** (Finland), taking up the question of multiple discrimination, said that 70 per cent of all children between the ages of 3 and 5 in the country, including minority groups, attended day care centres. Special facilities were provided for Sámi speakers and for users of sign language; disabled children benefited from the services of special assistants hired by municipalities from among the communities concerned. Disabled women tended to be of a higher educational level than disabled men, but to be less successfully integrated into the labour market. As for measures to improve the image of members of minority groups, the National Council on Disability, the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs and the Sami Council all had media projects to that end. In addition, a number of NGOs supported such groups, some of them specifically targeting women.

64. **Ms. Nummijärvi** (Finland) stressed the strong impact that the Convention had made on Finnish legislation, in particular the 2005 reform of the Act on Equality between Women and Men, whose scope of application had been extended. It clarified the national and local authorities' obligation to promote gender equality and prescribed active measures under international conventions as well as the Finnish Constitution aimed at improving the position of women in working life and ensuring the principle of equal pay for equal work. Moreover, the Constitution itself had been amended in the light of the Convention.

65. **Mr. Kosonen** (Finland) said that the possibility of translating or at least summarizing in Finnish the two cases brought under the Optional Protocol would be considered, but most Finns, particularly in official bodies, spoke English. It would certainly be useful to transmit the cases to the competent authorities.

66. **Ms. Naclér** (Finland) said that, while it was the role of the Government to address the Committee's

concerns, Parliament was highly involved in women's issues, as reflected in its high-level seminars on the subject and indeed in her own presence as a Member of Parliament in the delegation. She would herself report to Parliament on the proceedings of the Committee and would be attentive to follow-up.

67. **Ms. Chutikul** requested information about violence suffered by young people under the age of 18, particularly girls, not only in the home but also at school and among themselves. It would be appreciated if the State party's next report could include a classification by age and type of violence committed. She wondered what was preventing Finland from ratifying the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, considering that it had ratified the Palermo Protocol. She was also curious about whether the recent revision of the National Plan of Action for Gender Equality had been based on a systematic evaluation of the results of the previous plan of action. It would similarly be interesting to know the reasons for the transfer of the Ombudsman for Minorities from the Ministry of Labour to the Ministry of the Interior. She asked whether each ministry had its own plan of action on gender equality and, in view of the need for a multisectoral and multidisciplinary approach to the issue, whether there was a coordinating body. On the question of immigrant women, particularly Thai women, who might be considered victims of trafficking, the Committee wished to know whether the Government worked with countries of origin and whether it was involved in international cooperation to combat trafficking.

68. **Ms. Hayashi** raised the question whether the authorities had established any dialogue with the women (paragraph 106 of the sixth periodic report) said to offer sexual services freely, or determined any link with organized crime. In paragraphs 104 to 106 of that report, mention was made of victims of the sex trade; it would be useful if that term could be defined. She noted that the Government Bill on sexual services had originally been designed to criminalize the purchase of such services but that, as adopted, its scope had been limited. Clarification would be appreciated concerning the "harmful effects" considered to result from a similar provision in Sweden (CEDAW/C/FIN/6, para. 101) and conclusions drawn regarding the positive and negative impact of blanket criminalization. What were the arguments in support of

the original Bill and how had they been defeated? Information would be also appreciated about the results of the programme for women who wished to leave prostitution, referred to in the fifth report.

69. **Mr. Kosonen** (Finland) said that the Council of Europe Convention was being studied by a working group in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, particularly in the light of possible amendments to the Convention. If Parliament gave its approval, the Government should be ready to ratify it in 2009.

70. **Ms. Ewalds** (Finland) said that domestic violence was taken to include violence against children and that two programmes were being carried out to reduce the incidence of such violence. A survey on the subject would be completed by autumn 2008. A campaign was also being prepared to change attitudes towards corporal punishment which, although it was prohibited, continued to be practised. At around the same time, Finland expected to complete its part of an ongoing Nordic project to study the prevalence of prostitution and common attitudes towards it.

71. **Mr. Kosonen** (Finland) said that the transfer from one ministry to another of the Office of the Ombudsman for Minorities was part of a general change after the formation of the new Government. It remained to be seen whether it would thereby be able to monitor trafficking in persons more effectively.

72. **Ms. Pulkkinen** (Finland) said that the proposed provision to criminalize the buying of sexual services had been extensively discussed. Parliament had decided to criminalize only in cases where the services were purchased from victims of trafficking, as it had considered that a penal provision to cover all buying of such services raised a number of issues, notably that of proportionality. It was true, however, that the Act as adopted, while it might have achieved its objective of making Finland less attractive to traffickers, did make it necessary to prove intent in regard to trafficking or pandering. The Minister of Justice would be submitting a report in 2009 on the effectiveness of the provision in force, which might subsequently be amended.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.