



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination  
against Women  
Fifty-second session**

**Summary record of the 1045th meeting**

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 12 July 2012, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Pimentel  
*later:* Ms. Ameline (Vice-Chair)  
*later:* Ms. Pimentel

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*Combined fourth to seventh periodic reports of Bulgaria*

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

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

*Combined fourth to seventh periodic reports of Bulgaria (CEDAW/C/BGR/4-7; CEDAW/C/BGR/Q/4-7 and Add.1)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the members of the delegation of Bulgaria took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Tafrov** (Bulgaria), introducing the periodic report, said that the principles of equal opportunities for women and men and non-discrimination were enshrined in the Bulgarian Constitution and prioritized in the Government's policies on the promotion and protection of human rights. A parliamentary democracy founded on the principle of the rule of law, Bulgaria was party to the main international human rights treaties and accepted the most far-reaching scrutiny of its human rights record, including the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights. Under the Constitution, international treaties to which Bulgaria was party were fully part of domestic legislation and, in the event of contradiction, prevailed over it.

3. Bulgaria had striven to implement the Committee's recommendations stemming from consideration of its 1998 report. A number of improvements had been made to the normative framework and machinery in order to address women's issues and strengthen implementation of the Convention. Legislation had been passed and new structures established to integrate a gender dimension into State policies and practices and foster the protection of women's rights. The 2004 Act for Protection against Discrimination banned direct and indirect discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation. Sexual harassment, victimization, incitement to discrimination and racial segregation were also prohibited along with the construction or maintenance of an architectural environment that hindered the access of disabled persons to public places. The law obliged the authorities, employers and educators to mainstream equal treatment and take positive measures to safeguard equal opportunities.

4. An independent Commission for Protection against Discrimination had been set up to prevent discrimination on the basis of gender and sexual orientation as well as sexual harassment. Sexual

harassment was legally defined as an act of discrimination, and victims could submit complaints to the Commission or the courts. The Commission worked closely with civil society and the media, offered training and conducted surveys and awareness-raising campaigns.

5. The 2005 Protection against Domestic Violence Act, amended in 2009 and 2010, provided the framework for the prevention of domestic violence and the protection of its victims, defining the measures to be taken against perpetrators. It created the conditions for the implementation of specific programmes aimed at preventing domestic violence and assisting the victims. In 2009 the Penal Code had been amended to criminalize non-compliance with protection orders with regard to domestic violence.

6. Trafficking in human beings had become a criminal offence in Bulgaria in 2002. The Penal Code provided for heavier penalties for offences committed by organized criminal groups. The National Anti-Trafficking Commission, established in 2003 under the Combating Trafficking in Human Beings Act, coordinated the activities of the institutions and organizations implementing the national legislation.

7. Clear anti-discriminatory provisions had been incorporated into the Labour Code as well as laws on social assistance, employment promotion, the civil service, child protection, retirement insurance, radio and television, the Ministry of the Interior, defence and the armed forces, and asylum and refugees.

8. More recently, on 1 March 2012, the Bulgarian Parliament had adopted the National Strategy for Roma Integration (2012-2020), a comprehensive strategy prepared with the active participation of Roma representatives. Focusing on the prevention of discrimination against Roma, including women, it was supplemented by an action plan, beginning with the measures already approved in the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015). The planning for the second phase, 2015-2020, took into account the Europe 2020 strategy.

9. In 2011 amendments had been made to the Penal Code to strengthen the response to hate crimes, including hate speech. The Ministry of the Interior had increased its cooperation with international bodies to enhance its capacities in that regard. Legislation had been passed to set up a special criminal court system to deal with cases of organized crime, including

trafficking in persons. On 7 July 2012, amendments had been made to the Judiciary System Act, establishing additional mechanisms for addressing complaints by individuals and legal entities against actions or omissions of the judicial authorities. Compensation was envisaged in cases of violation of the right to a fair hearing and the failure of the courts to reach decisions in a reasonable amount of time.

10. The number of partnerships with NGOs had increased, in particular those promoting gender equality and combating discrimination. The independent human rights institutions, the ombudsman and the Commission on Protection against Discrimination, had won accreditation before the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in accordance with the Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions (Paris Principles). Bulgaria had also recently acceded to a number of international human rights instruments.

11. Bulgaria had approached its universal periodic review before the Human Rights Council with much self-evaluation and self-criticism. Of the 113 recommendations, it had been able to accept 108; the difficulties with the remaining five related mostly to constitutional constraints. Many of the recommendations were already being implemented, with a direct positive impact on the country's implementation of the Convention. Bulgaria had stepped up cooperation with the special procedures of the Human Rights Council.

12. The institutional infrastructure for the elaboration and implementation of Government policy on gender equality and non-discrimination had been substantially changed as a result of the implementation of new legislation. The Committee on Human Rights, Religious Issues, Citizens' Complaints and Petitions was a standing body of the National Assembly that considered all legislation relating to human rights protection, including the status of women in Bulgaria; it took the Convention as its basic reference text.

13. The National Council for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, functioning under the auspices of the Minister for Labour and Social Policy since 2004, was the main consultative body for framing and implementing national policy on gender equality, inter alia, by elaborating the measures to be implemented under the annual national action plans and issuing

terms of reference for cooperation at the local level. The Council's members included representatives of all ministries and Government agencies along with representatives of business associations and NGOs. The gender perspective was also considered in the activities of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues and its Commission on the Integration of Roma, as well as in the work of the National Commission on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings.

14. At the local level, municipalities could appoint experts on gender issues or establish public councils on social activities, including the promotion of equal opportunities for women and men. Furthermore, there were councils of experts for cooperation on ethnic and integration issues in all municipalities, many of which had appointed local ombudsmen or mediators for gender issues.

15. Bulgaria's policy on gender equality and non-discrimination on grounds of gender combined the efforts and actions of the executive at all levels, as well as those of local self-government. Those efforts had already led to the formulation of the Strategy for the Promotion of Gender Equality (2008-2015), which was consistent with Bulgaria's commitments under the Convention and the 1995 Beijing Declaration. Its implementation had had a positive effect on women's plight in many areas of social and political life. For instance, since the Ministry of Defence had revoked the discriminatory regulations allowing only men to serve as career military officers, all positions in the armed forces were open to both male and female candidates. The first two young women had already been admitted for specialized pilot training at the Bulgarian Air Force Academy while the first female general would soon be appointed.

16. Information on the social dimension of gender and gender equality-related issues had been incorporated by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science in several mandatory and specialized school programmes, such as history and philosophy. The Ministry had published specialized manuals for teachers, social workers and psychologists, providing guidance on gender-related issues and ensuring gender mainstreaming in teaching and learning. Similar positive changes had taken place in the business sector, even in areas traditionally seen as male-dominated, such as the management of trading companies,

agricultural entrepreneurship, public transportation and telecommunications.

17. In order to promote equal participation of women and men in decision-making in the business sector, the Ministry for Labour and Social Policy actively supported the initiative of the European Commission to appoint qualified women to replace outgoing male members of companies' governing bodies with the aim of achieving 30 per cent women's representation by 2015 and 40 per cent by 2020, with 13 Bulgarian companies agreeing to meet those targets. Thanks to the policies adopted in Bulgaria to promote gender equality, women accounted for 43 per cent of the members of the governing bodies of 51 trading companies run by the Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism. According to statistical data for newly appointed personnel in 2011, women made up 71 per cent of the total. Implementation of the programme for the promotion of female entrepreneurship in agriculture had led to a significant increase in the number of young female farmers.

18. The Government adopted annual national action plans including specific measures elaborated with the active involvement of the non-governmental sector and the results of their implementation were reported to the Council of the Ministers. The 2012 action plan included State policies for promoting gender equality, ensuring better representation of women in the decision-making level, enhancing the participation and empowerment of women in the rural areas, ensuring positive change in the stereotypical perceptions of the social role and functions of men and women and preventing violence against women, a clear priority for the Ministry of the Interior. Furthermore, the national action plan on employment, adopted annually since 2002, contained a special section on promoting equal opportunities for women and men.

19. More than 100 NGOs, including those representing the interests of women belonging to ethnic minorities, formed the women's movement in Bulgaria, which operated through national networks and forums. The role of civil society was highly valued for awareness-raising and the dissemination of information, in legislative reviews and project development and implementation. It provided valuable assistance to victims of discrimination, violence and trafficking in human beings, offering legal counsel and psychological and social support, carrying out surveys and research, and monitoring the implementation of the

national programmes. Many of those NGOs were active participants in the networks for equal opportunities for women and men operating in South-East Europe, in cooperation with European Union member States and in a wider context.

20. The main trade unions and most political parties had established organizations for the promotion of gender equality and equal opportunities for women and men. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, in active cooperation with NGOs and the national human rights institutions, had been offering training in gender mainstreaming for experts at national and local authorities.

21. In accordance with the 2012 national action plan on equal opportunities for women and men, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had created a working group to elaborate a national plan on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. Due to be submitted for approval by the Council of Ministers by the end of 2012, the plan would ratchet up the existing efforts of the Ministries of Defence and the Interior and help them to develop Bulgaria's good practices in fostering the rights of women both domestically and in conflict-affected areas. A conference on female leaders in security and defence, part of a project being implemented by the Ministry of Defence, had recently been held in Sofia, with participants from South-East Europe and the Black Sea region.

22. Since 2008, Bulgaria's Ministry of the Interior had played an active part in the Women Police Officers Network in South-East Europe, which had produced guidelines for gender-sensitive policing practices. In 2010, a special report presented in Sofia had focused on issues relating to the recruitment and admission of women in the police service, as well as training, career development and non-discrimination. Regional discussions had been held in all of Bulgaria's police directorates and work aimed at improving implementation of the guidelines was being pursued.

#### *Articles 1 to 6*

23. **Ms. Šimonović**, noting that Bulgaria's previous report had been submitted in 1998, regretted the long delay; future reports must be submitted on time. She asked whether the report, prepared by NGOs, had been adopted by the Government and what role had been played in that adoption by the Bulgarian Parliament

and its Committee on Human Rights, Religious Issues, Citizens' Complaints and Petitions. Noting in the report that the Convention had not been promulgated until 2010, under pressure from civil society, she requested clarification of the Convention's status in terms of domestic law since ratification in 1982. She asked for more information on planned or existing legislation regarding equal opportunities, in view of the recommendations made following Bulgaria's universal periodic review and the requirement to cover every provision of the Convention.

24. **Ms. Popescu**, welcoming Bulgaria's achievements in combating discrimination and domestic violence through legislation, and in particular the inclusion of both direct and indirect discrimination in the legal definition, asked whether the laws covered both the public and the private sector. As to the legal status of the Convention, she asked whether Bulgaria envisaged setting up an implementation mechanism along the lines of the national action plan relating to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In view of the reported lack of awareness and visibility of the Convention, she asked if the judiciary and law enforcement officers received systematic training on the relevant international standards and national anti-discrimination legislation.

25. Voicing her concerns at reports that in a Supreme Administrative Court judgment it had been suggested that the Convention was not binding on the courts, she expressed her hope that it was an isolated opinion. Moreover, had measures been taken to facilitate access to the courts and legal aid for women, in particular vulnerable groups?

26. Turning to complaint mechanisms, she wished to know if Bulgaria planned to strengthen the institutions of the ombudsman and the Commission on Protection against Discrimination with a view to their achieving "A" status under the Paris Principles. At government level, gender equality was addressed by a general human rights department; in her view, it should have its own Government department to enhance its prominence.

27. **Ms. Ameline** welcomed the adoption of the National Strategy for Roma Integration but wanted to know which specific measures had been taken to integrate Roma women and girls.

28. The National Council for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and its budget seemed inadequate for

the Government's ambitious plans. Moreover, she wondered if the national action plans had been evaluated.

29. Welcoming the considerable progress in making the judicial system more accessible, she wanted to know more about the role of the Committee on Human Rights, Religious Issues, Citizens' Complaints and Petitions, as well as the law courts, in the process of implementation of the Convention.

30. **Mr. Tafrov** (Bulgaria) said that the confusion over Bulgaria's promulgation of the Convention was due to a mistranslation of the term "publication". Under the Constitution, international treaties were enacted upon the President's signature and once their adoption by Parliament was officially published. Bulgaria had ratified the Convention in 1982 but, like many other international instruments, it had not been published, although it had been widely available in the courts and in Government circles. Under the new Constitution, official publication of all international treaties had become compulsory in 2010.

31. He agreed that the late submission of the report was highly regrettable but recalled that in 1998 his country had entered the final phase of its accession to the European Union. Owing to the tremendous effort required of its administration, Bulgaria had lagged behind in many of its international obligations for several years.

32. The adoption by the Government of periodic reports submitted to human rights treaty bodies was not foreseen under Bulgarian law. The Council of Ministers delegated their adoption to various ministries, whose participation was coordinated by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

33. A conscious decision had been made in Bulgaria to pass omnibus legislation on discrimination to make access to justice easier, more efficient and more affordable. A plethora of laws would complicate life for ordinary citizens, the legal professions and the judiciary.

34. **Ms. Masheva** (Bulgaria) said that effective systems had been established under the Legal Aid Act to provide legal aid to anyone in need. The national legal aid bureau ensured equal access to justice for all citizens.

35. **Ms. Georgieva** (Bulgaria) said that the victims of discrimination could submit complaints to the

Commission for Protection against Discrimination, or to the law courts. It would be confusing to set up more mechanisms or pass more laws.

36. **Mr. Tafrov** (Bulgaria) said that existing anti-discrimination legislation and mechanisms did apply to the public as well as the private sector. Whereas there was a national action plan relating to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, there was a Strategy for the Promotion of Gender Equality, consistent with Bulgaria's commitments under the Convention. The annual national action plans implemented under that strategy were evaluated annually by the Ministry for Labour and Social Policy, which reported to the Council of Ministers.

37. **Ms. Georgieva** (Bulgaria) said that for six years the Commission for Protection against Discrimination had been holding twice-yearly training courses for law enforcement officers, the judiciary and members of the legal professions. Participants were given electronic materials, including the texts of the Convention and the Optional Protocol and Committee's recommendations, translated into Bulgarian and published on the Commission's website to make them universally available. In addition, workshops had been held, targeting the media and the teaching professions, among other groups.

38. **Ms. Masheva** (Bulgaria) said that the national justice institute offered systematic training for judges and public prosecutors to raise their awareness of the Convention and its implementation. Much was being done to improve both judicial practices and training for members of the judiciary.

39. **Ms. Georgieva** (Bulgaria), referring to Ms. Popescu's concern about a Supreme Court judgment, gave her assurance that it was an isolated case. Anti-discrimination was a relatively new concept for the legal system in Bulgaria and all concerned were still in a learning process. Some decisions of the Commission for Protection against Discrimination had been overruled by the courts but progress was being made towards acceptance of non-discrimination in society at large and the workshops held for judges should have positive effects. She believed that it was normal for the courts to challenge the applicability of the Convention.

40. *Ms. Ameline (Vice-Chair) took the Chair.*

41. **Mr. Tafrov** (Bulgaria) said that the current ombudsman was highly respected and had shown an interest in gender issues. Awareness of the ombudsman's work, with regard to women's matters in particular, was gradually being raised and Parliament was taking stock of the first 15 years of the institution's existence.

42. **Ms. Ivanova** (Bulgaria) said that the National Strategy for Roma Integration (2012-2020) had recently been adopted by the Bulgarian Parliament. It had been prepared with the full participation of representatives of the Roma community, under the supervision of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues. The draft strategy had been discussed by six working groups focusing on the priority areas of education, employment, health, housing, the rule of law and non-discrimination in culture and the media, the latter two areas being unique to Bulgaria. Discussions had been held nationally and at many municipalities in the year leading to adoption and, in addition to the representatives of NGOs, had been attended by several international organizations.

43. The strategy would be implemented through specific action plans, beginning with an initial period (2012-2014), during which the international Roma inclusion indicators would be introduced. During the operational period (2015-2020) the European Commission's operational programme for Bulgaria would be implemented. Under the strategy, civil rights were protected, in particular those of Roma women and girls, while hate speech and all manifestations of intolerance of Roma were banned. She would provide the Committee members with the text of the strategy.

44. **Mr. Tafrov** (Bulgaria) said that Bulgaria was a parliamentary democracy using the unicameral system. The Committee on Human Rights, Religious Issues, Citizens' Complaints and Petitions dealt with women's rights and discrimination, taking the Convention as its working document. Elections were due and the new Parliament might wish to reorganize its working methods, possibly setting up a sub-committee to address gender issues.

45. As for the respective roles of the Committee on Human Rights, Religious Issues, Citizens' Complaints and Petitions and the law courts in the Convention's implementation, he recalled that Bulgarian citizens could and did take cases before the Commission for

Protection against Discrimination, which was seen as more accessible than the courts.

46. **Ms. Kaydzhyska** (Bulgaria), regarding the National Council for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and its budget, confirmed that her department was part of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. Its nine experts coordinated implementation of the Strategy for the Promotion of Gender Equality. Financed from the Ministry's general budget, in 2011 it had received approximately 500,000 leva for the equal opportunities programme. Other Government departments implementing the strategy financed their equal opportunities activities out of their respective ministerial budgets.

47. **Mr. Tafrov** (Bulgaria) added that it had been difficult to obtain accurate data on financing from the different ministries but all had confirmed that they relied heavily on European Union funds.

48. *Ms. Pimentel resumed the Chair.*

49. **Ms. Šimonović** requested further clarification of the role of Parliament in the report's adoption. In monist States like Bulgaria, parliamentary involvement in the implementation of the Convention was especially vital.

50. **Mr. Bruun** asked whether decisions of the Supreme Administrative Court could be challenged in Bulgaria.

51. **Mr. Tafrov** (Bulgaria) said that under the existing law Parliament did not adopt any reports submitted to United Nations committees. The Committee's recommendations had been translated into Bulgarian and made widely available. Whenever he and the other members of the delegation referred to the Convention they implied the whole corpus of related texts, including all recommendations.

52. **Mr. Masheva** (Bulgaria) said that in the reported judgment the Supreme Court had stated that the Convention was applicable in principle but that there was not sufficient evidence that article 5 of the Convention had been breached. Bulgaria was already taking steps to streamline judicial practices and raise awareness of the Convention among the judiciary. Court decisions could be challenged at the Supreme Administrative Court and the Supreme Cassation Court.

53. **Ms. Schulz** said that, according to the report, Bulgaria did not seem to have taken any temporary special measures under the Constitution aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women, as required by the Convention. Sexist stereotypes remained the main obstacle to equality between women and men in Bulgaria. Bearing in mind that temporary special measures could take many forms and should be suited to the specific situation in the country, she would like to know if Bulgaria intended to take such measures.

54. **Ms. Šimonović** commended Bulgaria on its Protection against Domestic Violence Act. However, Communication No. 20/2008 under the Optional Protocol to the Convention had revealed shortcomings in the law. She asked if the legislation was being amended accordingly and if the Committee's views and recommendations had been translated into Bulgarian and widely distributed in order to reach all relevant sectors of society. There seemed to be no national mechanism for acting on the Committee's recommendations. Would such a mechanism be set up in the near future? She would also be interested to know if Bulgaria had ratified the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

55. **Ms. Acar** said that the persistence of gender stereotypes in Bulgaria, as in many other countries, was the root cause of inequality. The report gave the impression of resigned acceptance on the part of the authorities. She asked whether there was a specific policy to tackle gender stereotyping and if the Strategy for the Promotion of Gender Equality had borne measurable results.

56. She inquired whether domestic violence was a specific offence under the Penal Code. Since crimes against sexual morality usually had a negative impact on women, she asked for more information on the inclusion of such crimes in that Code. The figures on shelters provided in the report seemed to be focused on child victims; she wanted to know more about the shelters and other services offered to adult women victims of domestic violence. Furthermore, clearer information on the issue of the burden of proof in domestic violence cases would be appreciated.

57. **Ms. Neubauer** commended Bulgaria on its efforts to combat human trafficking and the improvements achieved. More needed to be done,

however, in particular with regard to domestic and international trafficking in women. Despite the significant awareness-raising efforts and the assistance given to victims, Roma and other disadvantaged groups seemed not to be protected from trafficking owing to social and economic factors. She asked what activities had been carried out under the National Programme on Prevention and Counteracting Human Trafficking and Protection of Victims and what was envisaged in order to reduce their risk and address the root causes of their vulnerability to trafficking. Did the Government consider making use of European funds to improve the plight of Roma women and girls, including through the National Strategy for Roma Integration?

58. She wished to know whether the prosecution services and legal professions had received training in clearly informing the victims of trafficking of their right to legal representation and compensation.

59. Data should be provided about the sentences imposed on the perpetrators of human trafficking since 2008 and how many women had been assisted by the State-run shelters for adult victims of trafficking since 2010. If the State entrusted the assistance for victims of trafficking to NGOs, it must provide adequate funding.

60. It would be useful to know if the prosecution of the identified victims of human trafficking for offences committed as a result of their exploitation was prohibited by the law. Information on the social reintegration of victims through vocational training and easy access to the labour market would be helpful as well. She also wished to know how many convictions there had been under recently-adopted legislation to criminalize the use of the services of female victims of trafficking and if joint action by the State and the media to eliminate public tolerance of human trafficking was envisaged.

61. The report contained no information on prostitution in Bulgaria. She wished to know something about its extent and nature, the profile of the women involved and any State programmes to help women abandon such activities, together with information about the funding of such initiatives if they existed. Since, to her surprise, sexual exploitation and the exploitation of prostitution were omitted from the Bulgarian Penal Code, as she understood it, she asked what legal provisions were used to offer justice to women who were thus exploited but were not the victims of trafficking.

62. **Mr. Tafrov** (Bulgaria) said that some temporary special measures had been taken but they did not cover every aspect of the Convention. There was resistance to quotas in particular since the prevailing view in Bulgaria was that gender equality was gradually being achieved in a more lasting manner without them. Most of the main television channels and daily newspapers had women directors, which helped to combat gender stereotypes.

63. **Ms. Georgieva** (Bulgaria) said that the Commission for Protection against Discrimination had recently conducted national surveys of stereotypes and prejudice in teaching materials, finding that the role of women in history tended to be undervalued. In mathematics textbooks, exercises called on pupils to calculate how long women spent on household chores, for example. The Ministry of Education had subsequently refined the curricula and teaching materials in keeping with the Convention and the anti-discrimination legislation.

64. The Commission had held training seminars for the media, in cooperation with the regulatory authority, to raise awareness of gender-based discrimination and eliminate the depiction of women as sex objects in advertising. However, in a case involving allegedly sexist publicity for a winery, the Supreme Court had ruled that the Commission had no jurisdiction. The court case had ultimately been thrown out owing to insufficient evidence that gender-based discrimination had taken place.

65. **Mr. Anchev** (Bulgaria), turning to the question of human trafficking, said that the Bulgarian judiciary were well informed about the importance of the issue. He gave some detailed examples of prosecutions for domestic and international trafficking in women that had resulted in convictions over the past two years, along with information about the sentences handed down.

66. **Ms. Ivanova** (Bulgaria) said that, in the framework of the National Strategy for Roma Integration, police officers were given regular training on the human rights of ethnic minorities, in particular the Roma. The National Commission on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings had initiated a joint project with the French embassy to prevent human trafficking, focusing on Roma women and girls. Mediators working in the mainly Roma region of Bulgaria acted as a bridge between the Roma



community and the State. A Bulgarian NGO receiving European Union funding had conducted a study on early marriage and enforced cohabitation of minors, concluding that there was considerable opposition within the Roma community, especially among the better-educated households.

67. **Mr. Tafrov** (Bulgaria) said that the National Commission on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings had conducted campaigns to combat trafficking in women for sexual exploitation. According to its data, the numbers of identified victims were high. Local branches of the Commission located in areas with high concentrations of high-risk groups, including Roma, had distributed materials to members of those groups, using electronic and more traditional media, with satisfactory results.

68. **Ms. Masheva** (Bulgaria) said that the Bulgarian judiciary received training in combating human trafficking, partly with help from the European Commission. A special criminal court had been set up to hear cases of organized crime, including human trafficking. The services of victims of sexual exploitation had been criminalized in 2009.

#### *Articles 7 to 9*

69. **Ms. Schulz** welcomed the high level of female participation in the electoral process in Bulgaria but regretted the drop in the percentage of women in Parliament, together with the persistently low levels of women's representation at the local and European levels. Under the Convention, States parties were required to adopt temporary special measures in order to accelerate de facto equality between men and women. She wondered whether the Government had considered taking such measures to bring about equal representation of women and men in Parliament and local councils. Noting that one of the political parties had applied the "zip" or "zebra" system in elections to the European Parliament, she asked whether the Government might introduce it for national elections.

70. Lastly, she requested detailed up-to-date statistics on the numbers and percentages of women in diplomacy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, broken down by hierarchical rank.

71. **Ms. Neubauer** noted that the percentage of women diplomats, especially at the highest level, remained small. The same was true of women holding top positions in the economic and academic sectors.

Had the Government studied the possible obstacles to gender equality in those areas and had it taken initiatives to address under-representation?

72. **Ms. Popescu** asked whether the Bulgarian Government was taking a proactive approach to assisting women in attaining higher positions in public life. Bearing in mind the question of gender-based stereotypes, were women, in particular those from the Roma community and other ethnic minorities, given training in decision-making and electoral participation and were they offered financial incentives?

73. **Mr. Tafrov** (Bulgaria) said that the Government was not satisfied with the low levels of representation of women in Parliament and local authorities. Nevertheless, the situation was more nuanced than the figures suggested. Many prominent politicians in Bulgaria, including parliamentary leaders, the former and current European Commissioners for Bulgaria and the mayor of Sofia were all women; the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization had a Bulgarian woman as Director-General. Recalling that the media were dominated by women directors, who wielded enormous powers in the country, he suggested that it was not so difficult after all for Bulgarian women to achieve and that they had many role models.

74. Many women held ambassadorial posts, including those in Greece, Spain and the United States of America. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had twice been headed by women. There was room for improvement, but a male-dominated diplomatic corps had been inherited from the previous regime and women had begun to enter the service only 15 years earlier.

75. There was no sense in Bulgaria that women needed special treatment or incentives to participate in public life. Indeed, in view of the general dissatisfaction with politicians, many political parties saw women candidates and spokespersons as a means of improving their public image.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*