



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

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

**Summary record of the 1115th meeting**

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 21 February 2013, at 10 a.m.

*Chairperson:* Ms. Ameline

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(*continued*)

*Combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of the former Yugoslav Republic of  
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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 fourth and fifth periodic reports of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (CEDAW/C/MKD/4-5; CEDAW/C/MKD/Q/4-5 and Add.1)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Mr. Ibrahim** (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), introducing the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (CEDAW/C/MKD/4-5), said that the reports had been prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in cooperation with civil society. Progress had been made in education, health care, political participation and the use of stereotypes in the media, but much remained to be done in such areas as employment and violence against women. According to the evaluation of the National Action Plan for Gender Equality (2007–2012), gender equality was increasingly being incorporated in strategic documents. Non-discrimination was enshrined in the Constitution, while the recent Law on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women and the Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination, along with specific criminal, family and labour provisions, addressed gender equality in a comprehensive manner, including legal remedies.
3. Concerning the institutional framework for women's rights, equal opportunity mechanisms had been established at both the national and local levels. Nationally, gender issues were handled by the Department for Equal Opportunities and the State Counsellor for Equal Opportunities at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, and all ministries were obliged to appoint a coordinator and deputy coordinator for equal opportunities who reported to the Ministry annually. The Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men of the Assembly of the Republic and the Women Parliamentarians' Club were responsible for incorporating a gender perspective in the legislative process. The Government was committed to including a gender perspective in its foreign policy and its national security and defence policy, and had devised an action plan for the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security.
4. Women made up 30 per cent of the membership of the Assembly, and the composition of parliamentary working groups had to conform to rules set out in the Law on Equal Opportunities. Although more women had been elected in the 2009 local elections, their representation on the councils, averaging 27 per cent, fell short of objectives and varied widely among municipalities. As to the executive branch, there was one female vice-president, two female ministers and four female deputy ministers. Women comprised 41 per cent of diplomatic and consular staff and 31 per cent of the Public Prosecutor's Office.
5. The Law on Labour Relations guaranteed equal opportunities for professional development and advancement as well as equal pay for equal work. A ban on gender discrimination in the workplace and provisions on work-life balance had been adopted. The unemployment rate among women was marginally lower than among men, but figures showed significant discrepancies between rural and urban female employment levels, and more than 60 per cent of women did not work outside the home.
6. Various programmes had been implemented to protect women's health and raise awareness of their specific health issues. For example, since 2007, State-run and some private health-care centres had been providing women free Pap smears, irrespective of whether they were insured. Since 2009, 12-year-old girls were vaccinated against human

papillomavirus free of charge. An early detection programme for breast cancer had been launched in 2007, providing free screening to more than 73,000 women thus far.

7. A series of reforms, in conjunction with increased State expenditure, had boosted access to education for all students. Nevertheless, more boys than girls were enrolled in primary school. Secondary education had become compulsory in the 2008–2009 academic year. Students living over 2.5 km away from their school were provided with free transport, and, in areas with no organized transport, students were given free accommodation and textbooks. Attendance-based grants were awarded to children of parents on social welfare. University programmes in nearly 50 subject areas had been made available in 15 towns, reducing the cost of a university education and increasing opportunities for women to enter higher education. In fact, 53 per cent of master's students were women.

8. The Law on Social Protection had been adopted in June 2009, with a view to enhancing protection for marginalized population groups and gender specific measures would be worked into the national strategy on the elderly. A social risk study conducted in 2012 had revealed a discrepancy in the gender make-up of social protection beneficiaries. In preparation for its accession to the European Union, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was in the process of aligning its institutions and legislation with European standards.

#### *Articles 1 to 3*

9. **Ms. Schulz** commended the State party on its legislative efforts in the area of non-discrimination. Noting that the prohibited grounds for discrimination varied, especially with regard to gender and sexual orientation, she asked whether the Government intended to harmonize those grounds in all legislation and, if so, within what time frame. She wished to know whether the office of the Ombudsman comprised a single person or a team, whether it had the requisite funds for disseminating information, what type of complaints it received, from whom and what their outcomes had been, and what training the Ombudsman provided. According to information from an external source, the Ombudsman had fined offenders; was that accurate or did the sums of money constitute compensation for victims? She expressed concern that the department in the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy responsible for identifying cases of gender discrimination also had only one staff member. She requested comments on reports that the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men of the Assembly of the Republic was in fact inactive. Lastly, she enquired about concrete plans to overcome the broad discrimination suffered by the country's ethnic minorities.

10. **Ms. Šimonović** (Country Rapporteur), reminding the State party of the Committee's Statement on Parliamentarians, asked whether there were plans to involve the legislative branch in the reporting process. She requested further information about training on and dissemination of the Convention and its Optional Protocol and about the annual operational programme, including its funding.

11. **Ms. Neubauer** asked whether upgrading the equal opportunities unit of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy to a department had had a positive impact on the national apparatus for gender equality, whether its budget had increased as a result, and how many staff it had. She requested clarification of the various equal opportunity entities, as the terminology was confusing. She also asked whether the intersectoral consultative and advisory group for equal opportunities for women and men had been set up and was operational. Given that the objectives of the various action plans did not appear to have been remotely achieved, in part because only externally-funded activities had been implemented, she asked what steps were planned to secure adequate funding.

12. **Mr. Uzunovski** (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the office of the Ombudsman had 10 deputy ombudspersons, of which 4 were women, and 79 human rights specialists, more than half of whom were women. It was divided into four units, including one dedicated to discrimination. The number of complaints had increased steadily since 2008, and approximately 80 per cent were referred to the courts.

13. **Ms. Grozdanova** (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that sexual orientation was covered by the phrase “and others” at the end of the list of prohibited grounds of discrimination. Gender equality training was provided on a continual basis at both the national and local levels by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in cooperation with NGOs. The population was well aware that gender equality was a human rights issue. Judges and public prosecutors received training to encourage them to invoke the Convention. The Strategy on Gender Equality (2013–2020) had been adopted by the Assembly two days earlier. The Ministry’s Department for Equal Opportunities employed 10 people. The State Counsellor for Equal Opportunities monitored relevant European policy and was accountable to the Ministry. A meeting of the intersectoral consultative and advisory group had been convened recently with representatives of other ministries and NGOs. The equal opportunity coordinators in each ministry actively promoted gender equality policies and were instrumental in the implementation of the related national action plan.

14. **Ms. Kanberi** (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the Government had adopted a strategy, action plan and a range of measures to promote the rights of Roma women and an annual budget had been allocated for their implementation. There were regional information centres to provide support to the Roma people and inform them about their rights, new legislation and policies.

15. **Ms. Neubauer** requested more detailed information on the budget allocated to the Department for Equal Opportunities and asked whether its sole responsibility was for developing and promoting gender equality policies, or for ensuring equal opportunities in areas relating to all other prohibited grounds for discrimination.

16. **Ms. Šimonović** enquired about the key priority areas of the recently-adopted Strategy on Gender Equality and whether the Committee’s recommendations would be incorporated in the annual operation programmes to implement it. She requested information on training relating to the Convention and for examples of where the instrument had been invoked in the domestic courts. How did women decide among the different bodies that dealt with complaints and how did the different anti-discrimination bodies cooperate with one another? Were there plans to apply for “A” status accreditation for the office of the Ombudsman in line with the Paris Principles?

17. **Ms. Schulz** requested more information on the Law on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women and its impact on the role of legal representatives. Were women guaranteed access to justice, especially poor women, and was free legal aid available to them?

18. **The Chairperson**, speaking in her capacity as an expert, asked whether the Government had established working groups to look into aligning the State party’s institutions and legislation with European standards and how it cooperated with European agencies in the matter. Given the current financial and economic crisis, would it still be able to increase its budget in that area?

19. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** asked whether the Roma were able to become full citizens of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and live in the country free of discrimination.

20. **Ms. Grozdanova** (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was one of the few countries in the region to incorporate

a gender perspective in its budgetary policy. Guidelines on the strategy had been prepared and would be introduced to the public on 8 March 2013 to mark International Women's Day. A number of ministries had already acknowledged that they must pay particular attention to gender-sensitive budgeting and training had been provided for Government officials responsible for preparing and implementing budgets. There was a unit within the Department of Equal Opportunities responsible for preventing and protecting against discrimination on all other grounds.

21. **Ms. Kikerekova** (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that ongoing training on the Convention and the recommendations of the Committee had been provided for judges, public prosecutors and the Ombudsman. With regard to access to justice for women, particularly for the poor and victims of violence, free legal aid was financed under the budget and was available through regional offices and specially licensed lawyers. In addition, a department in the Ministry of Justice processed requests for legal aid.

22. **Ms. Grozdanova** (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the Law on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women was a new law that included explicit provisions regarding special and general measures for achieving gender equality. Citizens could lodge complaints regarding any form of discrimination not only through a legal representative, but also through the office of the Ombudsman, the Commission for the Protection against Discrimination, or the relevant courts; all of which cooperated with one another.

23. **Ms. Kanberi** (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that, under the Constitution, the Roma were recognized in the same way as any other persons living in the country and had equal rights and obligations; no differences were made between the Roma, other national minorities or citizens. Some Roma communities had lived in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for decades and many were undocumented. The Government was therefore taking steps to ensure that all Roma people were registered and had identity documents. The Roma had the right to free legal aid, which they could request through special regional offices in the country's four main cities. Approximately 40 million denars had been allocated for 2013 for the implementation of the Roma strategy in and donations from other sources amounted to 14 million denars.

24. **Mr. Ibrahim** (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that accession to the European Union was a main Government priority; it had thus taken steps to ensure that domestic legislation was aligned with that of the European Union. The only obstacle to membership was the State's problematic relations with its neighbours.

#### *Articles 4 to 6*

25. **Ms. Neubauer** expressed concern about temporary special measures and that the use of different definitions in the Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination and the Law on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women might be confusing. Had any temporary special measures been introduced to increase the participation of women in public life and the labour market and to improve the situation of disadvantaged women, including Albanian and Roma women, rural women and women with disabilities?

26. **Ms. Hayashi** asked whether, under current legislation, women in de facto or same-sex unions could seek protection from domestic violence. Noting that family violence was considered only as an aggravating circumstance in nine specific serious crimes in the Criminal Code, she asked whether women who were victims of psychological or economic forms of violence were protected by the law. What socio-psychological support and health services were provided to victims of domestic violence if the acts committed did not fall within the nine crimes defined in the Criminal Code? She enquired whether victims of domestic violence were able to apply for a restraining order and whether the perpetrators

were subject to mandatory arrest in the event of a violation of the court order. Did the police and the judiciary receive adequate training on domestic violence, marital rape and other forms of violence? She requested more information on reports that the number of regional shelters provided for victims of domestic violence had dropped from nine to four. How well used were the shelters and how much public funding was allocated to them and other services for victims?

27. She expressed concern about reports that high-ranking Government officials had recently used derogatory language about women and that efforts had been made to relaunch an anti-abortion campaign. How did those recent actions affect the State party's obligation under article 5 of the Convention? She asked whether a time frame had been set for ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention).

28. **Ms. Acar** also urged the State party to ratify the Istanbul Convention. Stereotyping was the social and cultural root cause of violence against women and she asked whether effective measures had been adopted to address the issue of the use of negative gender stereotypes in the mass media. She asked what steps were being taken to address the growing emphasis on encouraging women to have more children without putting in place affordable and adequate childcare, which would inevitably reinforce women's traditional roles.

29. **Ms. Leinarte** asked what measures had been adopted to prevent human trafficking, particularly of Roma women and women for commercial sexual exploitation purposes, and what support victims received.

30. **Ms. Grozdanova** (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that, as a candidate country for membership of the European Union, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had to take into consideration both the definitions used by the European Union and those employed by the Convention. A number of temporary special measures had been implemented, particularly to promote the participation of women in public and political life.

31. **Ms. Todorovska** (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that a clear definition of domestic violence and the persons who could be victims was contained in the Law on Family. Social work centres were mandated to provide victim support services and specially trained counsellors were available to help families and children overcome the trauma and escape the cycle of abuse. The State operated a helpline and four shelter centres for women and child victims, in Skopje, Kočani, Bitola and Sveti Nikole. A fifth shelter in Ohrid had been closed due to lack of demand. The NGO sector also provided services for vulnerable persons, in some cases with financial assistance from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

32. **Ms. Vlahovik** (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the police had to adhere to very strict procedures when dealing with domestic violence cases. The presence of at least two officers, usually one male and one female, was a prerequisite for all on-site inspections and restraining orders could be issued as a temporary protection measure. To date over 160 officers had been trained in domestic violence procedures. The training was ongoing and included instruction in how to converse with victims of psychological trauma.

33. **Ms. Todorovska** (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that following legislative changes in 2010 victims of domestic violence could apply to the courts for protection on their own initiative, without needing a referral from a victim's centre. However, the centres were able to offer support and protection over and above that offered under court orders.

34. **Ms. Kikerekova** (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that support for ratification of the Istanbul Convention had gained momentum following two awareness-raising workshops and a comprehensive analysis of its compatibility with domestic legislation. However, the harmonization exercise initiated as a result was not yet concluded.

35. **Mr. Uzunovski** (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that considerable further analysis was required and the legislative amendments would take time, but that ratification should take place in early 2014. In another important development, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had been among the first countries to commit to ending violence against women and girls under a global initiative launched by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).

36. **Ms. Grozdanova** (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the Broadcasting Council was required by law to promote respect for gender equality in television programmes and encourage the media to eliminate potentially harmful stereotypes. A coordinating committee had been established to monitor and analyse the manner in which women were depicted in advertising and sponsorship.

37. Since 2006, the specialist unit set up within the Ministry of the Interior to combat trafficking in human beings had made considerable advances in prevention and protection and the shelter operated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy with support from two government-subsidized NGOs had assisted over 100 victims, the vast majority of them girls under the age of 18. Looking to the future, the focus would shift to social reintegration.

38. **Ms. Kanberi** (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that schemes to encourage school attendance among Roma children were also important in the anti-trafficking effort. Thanks to funding from the Roma Education Fund, every year around 600 Roma secondary school students received scholarships, and financial and social benefits were distributed to their families.

39. **Ms. Hayashi**, noting that under Macedonian law domestic violence was defined as any conduct by “a family member” that caused bodily or other injury, asked whether partners in a de facto union or same-sex relationship were considered to be family members.

40. **Ms. Acar** urged the delegation to provide specific answers to her questions regarding monetary incentives for childbearing, cases of gender stereotyping in the media addressed by the Broadcasting Council and the evaluation of family policies.

41. **Ms. Šimonović** said that since the standards promoted under the Istanbul Convention were broadly equivalent to those of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, it would be interesting to know what particular areas of Macedonian law required adjustment prior to the former’s ratification. She would specifically like to know whether the State party operated a round-the-clock toll-free helpline, how many shelters it ran and how many residential places were available in them, and why the authorities were closing shelters instead of opening more. Given that alternative sources had reported excessive delays in the issue of protection orders, she would like information about the specific types of protection available and what happened when abusers failed to comply. Noting that individual States could apparently opt to apply the provisions of either criminal or family law in domestic violence cases and that different models were applied in different regions, she asked whether a comprehensive national policy and action plan was envisaged for the future. Statistics for the number of women killed by former or current husbands or partners would also be useful.

42. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** asked the delegation to provide the detailed, updated information requested in paragraph 9 of the list of issues (CEDAW/C/MKD/Q/4-5) as a matter of urgency.

43. **Ms. Todorovska** (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) assured the Committee that the closure of the shelter in Ohrid did not reflect a decision to scale down support services and that new shelters would be opened in line with need. In Skopje there were also two NGO-run centres besides the State-run shelter. Looking to the future, the central authorities would be aiming to mobilize greater support from local-government bodies in prevention and protection initiatives.

44. In 2012, around 200 court-ordered protection measures had been issued; she did not have figures for the total number of cases of domestic violence reported to the police and social services.

45. **Ms. Grozdanova** (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that there was no established procedure for disciplining media companies that were considered to have degraded women; however, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy was able to issue comments and advice to encourage them to avoid negative and stereotypical portrayals. Since domestic violence had been addressed directly in policy and legislation only recently, a comprehensive national strategy had yet to be devised, but a detailed needs analysis would be performed in the near future.

46. **Mr. Ibrahim** (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that various strategies were being used to address the demographic problems his country faced due to its falling birth rate. For instance, as an incentive to childbearing, mothers were entitled to additional financial support for their third and fourth children. The policy objective was not to remove women from the labour market but to make it easier for them to combine family and work. The measures were temporary; it was hoped that they would raise the birth rate and stave off demographic problems of the scale seen in certain Western European countries.

47. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** asked why women and children were sent to shelters while their abusers were allowed to remain at home. Would it not be cheaper and less dangerous to remove men from the family environment and place them in shelters to receive counselling?

48. **The Chairperson**, speaking in her capacity as an expert, highlighted that, as had been observed elsewhere in Europe, larger families were a frequent corollary of enhanced rights and freedoms for women.

#### *Articles 7 and 8*

49. **Ms. Jahan** said that the State party's progress in terms of women's participation in parliament was commendable. The quota system was vital to achieving gender parity and must be maintained and strictly enforced. She was concerned about reports that women's voting rights were often exercised by their husbands and asked what the Government was doing to encourage women to become proactive political actors. Figures showing female turnout at the last elections would be useful as a benchmark. The decline in women's participation in local political life and the fact that none of the country's directly elected mayors were women were also worrying. What were the reasons for the decline and would temporary special measures be used in the run-up to the next elections?

50. Information about the participation of Roma, Albanian and other ethnic minority women in public life and measures to raise the current level would be appreciated, as well as details of measures to increase women's involvement in the civil service, police force and on the boards of private companies. It was commendable that women occupied around 50 per cent of positions in the diplomatic service. However, did they occupy positions in the hierarchy and were there any female ambassadors, in particular, female ambassadors from ethnic groups? Were temporary special measures being used to attract women into



that traditionally male dominated profession and were they represented on international delegations?

51. **Mr. Uzunovski** (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that there had been a marked improvement in women's representation in the foreign service and on international bodies in the past five years. For example, at present women accounted for over half the country's representatives at the Council of Europe.

52. **Ms. Kemera** (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that there were three female ambassadors, in Germany, Croatia and Turkey. Women accounted for more than half the staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where they occupied positions as State Counsellors and heads and assistant heads of unit.

53. **Ms. Vlahovik** (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that whereas previously women had tended to occupy desk jobs, the current policy in the Ministry of the Interior was to place the emphasis on equal opportunities and encourage women into active service roles. As a result of that policy, around 10 per cent of new police officers appointed in a recent recruitment drive had been women.

54. **Ms. Grozdanova** (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that because of the recent restructuring she could not provide precise figures for the number of ethnic women in parliament. There were no Roma women as the Roma party currently had only two members of parliament in office. Following NGO and institutional awareness-raising and training efforts, situations in which husbands voted on behalf of their wives had become less frequent. A number of schemes had been launched to promote inclusive citizenship and active involvement in policy creation at the local level; the results of a pilot project to measure current levels of inclusion in three municipalities were expected in the next two months.

55. **Ms. Šimonović** asked for details of concrete actions planned to enhance the legal and institutional framework, in line with the commitment assumed under the UN-Women initiative.

56. **Ms. Jahan** sought examples of concrete measures to integrate Roma women in public life adopted within the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*