



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
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Summary record of the 793rd meeting (Chamber B)

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 24 July 2007, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Dairiam (Rapporteur)

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In the absence of Ms. Šimonović, Ms. Dairiam, Rapporteur, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

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

Fourth periodic report of Estonia
(CEDAW/C/EST/4; CEDAW/C/EST/Q/4 and Add.1)

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

2. **Ms. Kaljurand** (Estonia), introducing Estonia's fourth periodic report (CEDAW/C/EST/4), said that one of the most significant developments since the submission of the combined initial, second and third periodic report (CEDAW/C/EST/1-3) had been the entry into force, on 1 May 2004, of the Gender Equality Act. The Act prohibited gender-based discrimination in the private and public sectors and entitled victims of discrimination to file claims for damages. It also obliged all central and local government bodies to introduce gender mainstreaming strategies.

3. Although the Government had not developed a single, unified action plan for the promotion of gender equality, relevant measures had been incorporated into a number of specific policy documents, including the strategic action plan of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the State budget strategy. In addition, various activities had been undertaken in order to implement a gender mainstreaming strategy: civil servants and local government officials had received appropriate training and an online database of expertise had been created. The Government published annual statistical bulletins analysing the situation of women and men in various fields and had conducted a survey on gender equality, the findings of which were available on the Internet. In order to raise public awareness of gender-related issues, informational materials setting out basic terminology and relevant issues had been published and distributed.

4. Turning to Estonia's national machinery for the advancement of women, she said that the Gender Equality Department (formerly the Gender Equality Bureau) dealt with all matters relating to gender equality. It was staffed by seven civil servants and supported by the Social and Labour Policy Information

and Analysis Departments of the Ministry of Social Affairs. In response to the concerns expressed by the Committee in its concluding comments on the combined initial, second and third periodic report, significant efforts had been made to strengthen the national machinery, although much remained to be done. The absence of relevant expertise posed particular difficulties.

5. In October 2005, a Gender Equality Commissioner had been appointed to monitor compliance with the Gender Equality Act, deal with relevant complaints and issue expert opinions. In addition, victims of gender-based discrimination were entitled to file petitions with the Chancellor of Justice who, where appropriate, could initiate conciliation proceedings. To date, no such proceedings involving gender-based discrimination had taken place. The Gender Equality Act also provided for the establishment of a Gender Equality Council, which would function as an advisory body to the Government. However, the Council was not yet operational owing to a shortage of qualified staff. Several institutions were conducting research on gender issues and two national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were actively promoting gender equality. As part of a pilot project related to the European Union Structural Funds, the Ministry of Social Affairs was planning to set up a gender equality information centre.

6. Since 2002, Estonia had made significant progress in the fight against human trafficking. As the economy had prospered, prostitution and trafficking levels had dropped, and law enforcement efforts had been strengthened by the introduction of legislation to criminalize activities designed to promote prostitution. Several awareness-raising campaigns had been launched, and the Ministry of Social Affairs and NGOs held regular training courses for social workers, teachers and youth workers. The Government had also adopted a national development plan for combating trafficking in human beings for the period from 2006 to 2009.

7. As far as victim support was concerned, a hotline had been created, and, together with other Nordic and Baltic countries, Estonia was taking part in a pilot project on the safe return and reintegration of women who had been trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation. Three shelters for female victims of trafficking had been established in 2007. In 2004, Estonia had ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress

and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

8. On the issue of violence against women, she stressed the need for further research, both qualitative and quantitative, on the prevalence, causes and consequences of domestic violence. The first women's shelter had been established in December 2002, but additional facilities were urgently needed. There were currently no support services for perpetrators. A wide-ranging public awareness campaign, entitled "If Love Hurts", had been launched in 2005, and the Centre for Estonian Social Programmes organized weekly support groups for victims. A pilot group for violent men had been established in 2005. A national action plan on domestic violence, comprising various activities in a number of areas, had been developed and would be implemented in 2008. Under the Codes of Civil and Criminal Procedure, the courts were now empowered to issue various types of restraining orders against perpetrators.

9. Referring to women's participation in decision-making, she pointed out that the President and one of the Vice-Presidents of the new Parliament were both female and that three women currently held ministerial posts within the Government. However, as evidenced by a recent study on women and governance, women were still less likely than men to be elected at both the national and local levels. The mass media continued to reinforce gender-based stereotypes in the political arena and top female politicians often felt that they were at a disadvantage compared to their male counterparts. With a view to improving that situation, various NGOs had obtained funding from the Ministry of Social Affairs in order to implement projects designed to increase women's participation in political life.

10. Rapid economic growth in Estonia had significantly reduced the unemployment rate and, indeed, since 1995 more men than women had been unemployed. Recent labour force shortages had meant that greater numbers of women, and especially older women, had been taking up employment. In order to raise awareness of the ongoing wage gap between women and men and to try and change popular attitudes, the media gave ample coverage to that issue. As a member State of the European Union, Estonia had implemented a number of projects in the context of the European Community Framework Strategy on Gender

Equality (2001-2005), including an initiative designed to support women pursuing careers in the private sector.

11. In addition, a twinning project on equal opportunities in the private sector, involving Estonia and France and co-financed by the European Union, would be implemented in 2007-2008 with a view to raising awareness within the private sector of legal standards, policies and best practices on gender equality in the workplace. Informational materials, inter alia a handbook entitled "ABC of women workers' rights and gender equality" published by the International Labour Organization and an English-Estonian dictionary of equality terminology, had been distributed.

12. The 2004 Parental Benefits Act was designed to compensate stay-at-home parents for loss of earnings during the first year of their child's life. Benefits were payable from the State budget, and parents who chose to take leave were entitled to compensation equal to 100 per cent of their salary. Parents who had not been employed prior to the birth of their child were also entitled to a fixed monthly benefit. Fathers accounted for only 1 per cent of those claiming parental benefits, and further efforts must therefore be made to promote their greater involvement in child rearing and family life in general. Steps must also be taken to change employers' attitudes towards parental leave.

13. Turning lastly to the issue of women's health, she recalled that, in its concluding comments on the combined initial, second and third periodic report, the Committee had expressed concern about the increased prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Estonia. While the epidemic continued to pose problems, the Government was committed to preventing it from spreading and had, therefore, adopted a new national HIV/AIDS strategy for 2006-2015 and a related action plan for 2006-2009. A recently established multisectoral advisory body would coordinate the implementation of the strategy, which consisted of a series of targeted measures designed to prevent the spread of the disease among the population at large and, in particular, among vulnerable groups such as prostitutes and intravenous drug users.

Articles 1 to 6

14. **Mr. Flinterman**, referring to the new Gender Equality Act, asked whether an English translation was

available and enquired whether the Act defined discrimination in a manner consistent with article 1 of the Convention and whether that definition covered sexual harassment and violence against women. Although the Convention took precedence over Estonia's domestic legislation, it had not yet been invoked by judges in the context of legal proceedings. He therefore wished to know whether the Government had taken any steps to raise awareness of the Convention among members of the judiciary. According to the report, the Gender Equality Commissioner was required to take the Convention into account when giving opinions on possible cases of discrimination. The Committee would be grateful for specific examples of opinions citing the Convention.

15. Legal remedies for violations of women's rights were vital to ensure that gender equality policies were implemented effectively. Although it was possible, under the Gender Equality Act, to file a claim for damages on account of gender-based discrimination, the State party's report indicated that not all women living in Estonia were able to avail themselves of that opportunity. Furthermore, as yet, no one had had recourse to the conciliation procedure established by the Chancellor of Justice. What was the Government doing to ensure that both those remedies were actually used? Lastly, he stressed the importance of the Optional Protocol as a means of raising awareness of the Convention as a whole within the domestic legal order, and enquired when the State party expected to ratify it.

16. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** said that, while she was impressed by the legal framework and national machinery set up to ensure gender equality, they did not appear to be working as well as they should, for want of competent personnel. The written submissions described the Gender Equality Commissioner's powers and tasks but gave no indication of what the Commissioner had actually achieved or how many persons worked in her office. The Committee would appreciate information, in particular, on the Commissioner's participation in the gender analysis of proposed laws and on the expected date of establishment of the Gender Equality Council. It would also be useful to know more about the proposal to give the Commissioner responsibility for monitoring all forms of discrimination and not just gender-based discrimination; that would not necessarily be a positive development. Lastly, she asked, whether the voluntary

conciliation procedure was open just to women or to all victims of discrimination and requested a copy of the statistical information published at the end of 2006 on the situation of women in Estonia, referred to in the introductory statement.

17. **Ms. Šimonović** said that the Optional Protocol had been ratified by nearly all other States members of the European Union and wondered what was preventing Estonia from doing likewise. The Committee would also like to know whether Parliament had been involved in the preparation of the report and whether its concluding comments would be transmitted for follow-up to the appropriate ministries. The previous concluding comments had called for awareness-raising measures on the Convention for members of the judiciary, lawyers and police officers: had any specific programmes been put in place to that end? Considering the criticisms made by some NGOs regarding the lack of independence of the Gender Equality Commissioner, she wondered what the Commissioner's term of office was and whether it depended on a decision of the responsible Minister. It would also be useful to know what action had been taken in response to the opinions issued by the Commissioner and whether there had been any cases where compensation had been sought.

18. **Ms. Kaljurand** (Estonia) said that, at every level and in all areas covered by the Convention, the situation of women, while not ideal, had improved in Estonia since its last periodic report and that the trend was expected to continue.

19. **Ms. Papp** (Estonia) said that the Gender Equality Act contained a definition of gender equality, which meant equal rights, obligations and opportunities between men and women in all areas of social life and covered all the articles of the Convention. It had been drafted before Estonia had become a member of the European Union, whose directives it had nevertheless taken into account. The Government was planning to improve the legal definition of sexual harassment, with reference to relationships of subordination and dependency. As for violence against women, which was not covered by the Gender Equality Act, it could be viewed in terms of discrimination and could give rise to legal proceedings under the Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure.

20. **Ms. Kaljurand** (Estonia) said that the lack of reference to the Convention in court proceedings was

part of a broader problem: all international human rights treaties ratified by Estonia had the force of law in the courts. Judges were familiar with the Convention, which was included in their training, but were not yet comfortable about invoking international treaties. Special attention was being given to the matter through awareness-raising programmes.

21. **Ms. Hion** (Estonia) said that, since the country's independence, a considerable amount of new legislation had been drafted and enacted, which was still in the process of being improved. Each time Estonia ratified an international treaty, new provisions needed to be adopted to cover all the new obligations thus incurred, particularly since judges preferred to invoke national laws. They were indeed being given the necessary training, but awareness-raising was a continuous process. The Government had enjoyed good cooperation with NGOs in preparing the report, to which some of them had contributed actively, while others had preferred to draft their own shadow reports. The Committee's concluding comments in 2002 had been translated and transmitted to all relevant ministries and authorities, including the Gender Equality Commissioner, and to Parliament. The same practice would be followed for the forthcoming concluding comments.

22. **Ms. Kaljurand** (Estonia) stressed that the Gender Equality Commissioner was an independent and impartial expert who had her own budget appropriation within the budget of the Ministry of Social Affairs.

23. **Ms. Viik** (Estonia) said that the Commissioner was appointed by the Minister of Social Affairs for a five-year mandate, which could only be terminated for reasons of death, resignation or incapacity. In the first year of her appointment, the current Commissioner had handled a considerable number of individual complaints of discrimination and responded to requests for clarification on points of law, many of which had been submitted by employers, including local government, thus revealing a commendable concern to comply with the legislation in force.

24. The Commissioner had also been active giving lectures, participating in workshops and, generally, making herself and her office known to the public at large. She had helped to analyse the draft family law and the draft law on insurance, aimed at ensuring harmonization with European Union legislation against

discrimination in that field; she had participated in the discussion on the impact of the Gender Equality Act, currently before Parliament for review. A further law was planned against discrimination based not on gender but on religion, age and other variables; the Gender Equality Commissioner would also be entrusted with its implementation since, as Estonia's population was only 1.3 million, one institution could well deal with all cases of discrimination, on whatever grounds. Moreover, under the new law, which was expected to be passed by the end of 2007, the human resources of the Commissioner's office would be suitably strengthened.

25. The voluntary conciliation procedure was not sufficiently used; awareness-raising campaigns were being carried out to encourage citizens to have recourse to it. As for the establishment of the Gender Equality Council, it had been considered more important to establish first a mechanism to handle complaints; there had also been a concern about the composition of the Council, which needed to include not only representatives of interested organizations but also gender experts, of whom there was a lack in Estonia. It was hoped, however, that a suitable mix would be able to be achieved and that the Council would be in place by early 2008.

26. **Ms. Kaljurand** (Estonia) said that Estonia recognized the importance of the Optional Protocol and had for that reason arranged for it to be translated in 2006. It was currently the subject of internal legal procedures and would soon be submitted to the Government and then to Parliament. She could not give dates but assured the Committee that the Government was giving the matter serious consideration and could be expected to ratify the Optional Protocol at the earliest opportunity.

27. **Ms. Pikhof** (Estonia), in response to the question about the involvement of Parliament in women's issues, said that traditionally a women's union was set up in Parliament to address those issues. In 2002, it had carried out an analysis of the Committee's recommendations. In the autumn of 2007, at the beginning of the new parliamentary session, such a union would again be established.

28. **Ms. Kaljurand** (Estonia) informed the Committee that further copies of the statistical material to which she had referred in her introductory statement would be made available. She emphasized that a full

evaluation of the work of the Gender Equality Commissioner would not be able to be made until the Commissioner had submitted her first report.

29. **Ms. Saiga** said that it would be interesting to learn whether the Gender Equality Commissioner advised individuals who had suffered from discrimination to take their cases to court and whether government agencies and other relevant authorities were obliged to comply with the Commissioner's opinions. In addition, it would be interesting to know whether the Chancellor of Justice carried out the functions of an ombudsman. Additional information should be provided on the founding and convening of the Gender Equality Council and on the specific programmes and consultative functions of the Gender Equality Department of the Ministry of Social Affairs.

30. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** said that it remained unclear how it was possible for the Gender Equality Department to coordinate sectoral policies because its functions seemed to be technical rather than administrative. In addition, it would be interesting to learn more about the Department's role in providing information to the Government and about its policy implementation role at the local level. It should be clarified why the establishment of the Gender Equality Council had been delayed. The State party should explain what measures had been taken by the Government to ensure the sustainability of projects funded by the United Nations and European Union.

31. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** said that it would be interesting to know what measures had been taken to ensure that gender equality mechanisms promoted cultural and structural changes with relation to gender roles and stereotyping. It should be noted that article 5 of the Convention required State parties to adopt a proactive approach to altering cultural attitudes. It should be clarified whether any temporary special measures to change gender stereotypes were envisaged under the Gender Equality Act.

32. The Committee would like to learn more about the relationship between the Gender Equality Council and the inter-ministerial committee that had been established to promote gender equality and to know whether a comprehensive plan had been established. With regard to the monitoring of the Gender Equality Act by the Gender Equality Commissioner, it should be clarified whether the effects of that act were being assessed.

33. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, said that it would be interesting to know how the Government ensured consistency in the way gender equality was defined in view of the lack of a national plan of action. Furthermore, additional information should be provided on the mechanisms used to ensure the accountability of the institutions responsible for implementing gender projects.

34. **Ms. Kaljurand** (Estonia), referring to the sustainability of projects funded by the United Nations and the European Union, said that the State assumed the responsibility of ensuring the long-term viability of projects. Although a national plan of action had not been established, gender equality had been included in various government strategies and policies.

35. **Ms. Sander** (Estonia) said that the Gender Equality Commissioner served in an advisory capacity and assisted individuals who wanted to take their cases to court; it was for the individual to decide whether to take a case to court. With respect to the role of the Chancellor of Justice in settling discrimination disputes, the conciliation procedure applied to natural and legal persons and did not concern State agencies. The solution proposed by the Chancellor was binding if both parties had agreed to continue with proceedings.

36. **Ms. Hion** (Estonia) said that there were various settlement procedures under Estonian law, and the conciliation procedure was voluntary, requiring both parties to agree to comply with the outcome. With regard to the role of the Chancellor as ombudsman, the Chancellor could review complaints and make specific proposals to government agencies. Government agencies had complied with such proposals on a voluntary basis.

37. **Ms. Viik** (Estonia) said that, in January 2004, the Gender Equality Bureau had been reorganized into the Gender Equality Department. Five members of staff worked in the area of gender equality and two additional members of staff worked on family policies. Further staff were assigned to the Department for specific projects when the need arose. The Department served in an advisory capacity and was consulted by ministries during the preparation of draft legislation. It was also consulted by the media because there had been a significant change in cultural attitudes to gender equality and the media paid greater attention to gender issues.

38. **Ms. Kaljurand** (Estonia) said that attitudes towards gender roles were changing, and the Government had adopted a proactive approach to addressing the issue of gender stereotyping.

39. **Ms. Papp** (Estonia) said that attitudes to gender roles were changing rapidly in the context of Estonia's transition from a socialist to a market economy. It was also important to undertake projects to identify the new stereotypes that were emerging and the Government had taken the initiative of planning activities involving non-governmental organizations and trade unions to inform the public about existing and emerging stereotypes. With respect to the relationship between the inter-ministerial committee and the Gender Equality Council, it should be noted that the committee was a working group that focused on specific topics.

40. In order to ensure the sustainability of gender projects, the Government had formulated a budget strategy up to 2013 that included specific indicators for ensuring women's equal participation in political and economic life, tackling wage gaps, ensuring economic independence, preventing violence against women, and incorporating a gender mainstreaming component into all ministerial policies. Training for gender equality policies had been provided to local authorities, and discussions were under way about how to ratify the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life. Under the Charter, local authorities would be required to include gender equality in their action plans, and that would guarantee the sustainability of gender policies at the local level.

41. **Ms. Kaljurand** (Estonia) said that in March 2007 the Ministry of Education had passed a regulation that prohibited stereotypes based on gender, national, cultural, racial and other prejudices.

42. **Mr. Flinterman**, noting that the report cited the results of a public opinion poll which had indicated that a majority of the Estonian population opposed the use of a quota system to increase the proportion of women in Parliament and on local government councils, said that public opinion polls, while valuable, should not be used as an argument for not complying with the obligation that States parties had under the Convention to adopt temporary special measures in order to overcome deeply rooted historical patterns of discrimination against women. The report also stated that the Gender Equality Act provided for the implementation of measures to give special advantages

to the underrepresented sex and to help reduce inequality. He wondered whether such measures had been implemented and, if not, whether the Government intended to introduce any. He also requested concrete examples of the temporary special measures alluded to in the response to question 6 in the Committee's list of issues and questions (CEDAW/C/EST/Q/4/Add.1).

43. **Ms. Kaljurand** (Estonia), responding to Mr. Flinterman's comment on public opinion surveys, observed that laws and government actions and policies had to reflect the development of the society in which they were instituted, and it was therefore important to air issues in public. Quotas were not the only matter on which public opinion was divided in Estonia. Prostitution was another highly divisive issue.

44. **Ms. Papp** (Estonia) said that quotas had been discussed in various forums in Estonia, and there now was greater awareness among the Estonian people that the quotas under consideration were not those that had been applied during Soviet times. While the law did not provide for any quotas, representation of women in decision-making bodies at both national and local levels was increasing. There were currently no parliamentary commissions that lacked female members, for example. Regarding special measures to address specific issues, the action being taken to combat violence against women and assist victims was one example. As for measures to address the disproportionate impact on women of the current economic situation, the Government was taking action in the labour policy sphere.

45. **Ms. Coker-Appiah** enquired whether the revision of textbooks mentioned earlier by the delegation had begun. With regard to domestic violence, the opening statement had alluded to some research on the issue but had indicated that further research was needed. When would that research be undertaken? Concerning the three shelters for victims of domestic violence, she wondered whether the Government was providing support to the NGOs operating the shelters, especially to enable them to open additional shelters in other regions of Estonia, and, if not, whether it had any plans to do so.

46. She was heartened to see that, although trafficking in women had decreased significantly, Estonia still had a number of programmes to address the issue. That showed that the Government was truly committed to tackling the problem. However, many of

the programmes were currently being supported by European Union countries. She asked whether the Government was prepared to take over the funding of those programmes when the external support ended and also sought information on the numbers of female trafficking victims who had received assistance to facilitate their safe return and reintegration into society.

47. **Ms. Šimonović** recalled that in 2002 the Committee had recommended that Estonia adopt a specific law prohibiting domestic violence against women, which would provide for protection and exclusion orders and access to legal aid. The report indicated that Estonia had opted not to adopt such a law, but that cases of domestic violence could be prosecuted under the Penal Code. However, there were no statistics available on the number of cases that had actually been prosecuted. She enquired how the State party proposed to improve the collection of data on domestic violence cases and whether there was information on the number of women who were murdered in such cases each year.

48. The delegation's opening statement had indicated that the Government was developing a national action plan on domestic violence which would come into force in 2008. She wondered why it had taken so many years to draft the plan and who would be responsible for coordinating and monitoring its implementation. In addition, the Committee would like to know what services were available for women living in shelters for victims of domestic violence and, specifically, whether those services included free legal aid. Finally, she sought clarification of the difference between the restraining orders that could be issued under the Code of Civil Procedure and the Code Of Criminal Procedure and asked what procedures were available to protect a woman who refused to consent to the imposition of a restraining order.

49. **Mr. Flinterman** said that he shared Ms. Šimonović's concern about the lack of specific legislation on violence against women and suggested that the State party should perhaps reconsider whether such legislation might be needed. Regarding the pilot project for the safe return and rehabilitation of women who had been trafficked for sexual exploitation, mentioned in the responses to the Committee's list of issues and questions, he enquired whether the assistance provided through that project took the place of the assistance available under the Victim Assistance

Act or was complementary to it. He also wished to know how many victims of trafficking had sought assistance under the Act and how much compensation victims generally received in such instances.

50. **Ms. Hion** (Estonia) said that the revision of school textbooks aimed at eliminating gender stereotypes had indeed begun. On the question of continued funding for programmes to combat trafficking in women and assist victims, the budget for the draft national action plan against trafficking of human beings included provision for such activities. The Government was also prepared to take over financial responsibility for the shelters for victims of trafficking and domestic violence.

51. **Ms. Kaljurand** (Estonia) added that funds for shelters would be allocated to the Ministry of Social Affairs. It was true that trafficking in women was not a major problem in Estonia, but it was nevertheless a country of origin, transit and destination for trafficking, and the Government considered it very important to cooperate with the Nordic countries and with its neighbours to the east in combating the problem.

52. **Ms. Viik** (Estonia), responding to the question concerning research on domestic violence, said that a qualitative study on perpetrators of violence had been conducted earlier in 2007, the results of which would be available by year's end. The aim of the study had been to understand why people engaged in violent behaviour and to identify action that could be taken by the Government to break the cycle of violence. In addition, questions on domestic violence would be included in the national survey of crime victims carried out periodically by the national statistics office, for which purpose training of research staff was under way. A pilot survey would take place in 2008, and the full-scale survey would be carried out shortly thereafter.

53. As the victim survey was a regular survey, it was expected to increase the availability of reliable data on domestic violence. The draft national action plan on domestic violence also provided for research, notably a study on the cost of domestic violence. The national action plan also addressed the need to improve data collection on domestic violence. Specifically, it advocated adoption of the method used by one of Estonia's four police districts to collect data and follow up on cases. Police data indicated that approximately

40 women were murdered each year and that half of those murder cases were connected with domestic violence.

54. The Government did provide support to the NGOs that operated the shelters for victims of domestic violence. Such support was being provided now for the shelter in Tallinn, and starting in 2008, all shelters would receive Government support under the action plan on domestic violence. It was intended that such support should come partially from local governments and partially from the national Government. However, there was a need to raise awareness among local government officials of the importance of supporting victims of domestic violence and of providing funding to pay for that support.

55. To date, three women had sought assistance from the shelters for victims of trafficking. The number was small partly because separate shelters for trafficking victims had been opened only very recently (one in late 2006 and two in 2007). Those shelters were associated with the shelters for victims of domestic violence, but offered separate facilities for trafficking victims. As for why it had taken longer than anticipated to develop the action plan against trafficking, it was partly because the Government had striven to involve a wide range of stakeholders in the process. The plan was expected to be completed very soon. The Ministry of Social Affairs would be responsible for coordinating and monitoring its implementation.

56. **Ms. Kaljurand** (Estonia), responding to the question about assistance for victims of trafficking, noted that Estonia was participating in the European Union EQUAL project “Integration of Women Involved in Prostitution into the Labour Market”, under which rehabilitation centres had been set up to serve both women involved in prostitution and women who had been victims of trafficking. The centres provided comprehensive assistance and counselling free of charge, including physical rehabilitation, if needed, and mental health services. The aim was to help such women find jobs and become reintegrated into society. Regarding the amount of compensation available to victims under the Victim Assistance Act, the maximum was 50,000 Estonian krooni (approximately US\$ 4,400), but of course the actual amount provided in each case depended on the circumstances.

57. **Ms. Sander** (Estonia), answering the question on restraining orders, explained that under the Code of Criminal Procedure, the public prosecutor’s office could petition a court to impose a restraining order on an accused perpetrator in order to protect the life or safeguard other rights of a victim. Under the Code of Civil Procedure, a restraining order could be requested only after an offender had been convicted.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.