



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Eightieth session

Summary record of the 1819th meeting*

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 22 October 2021, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Acosta Vargas

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* No summary record was issued for the 1818th meeting.

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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)*

Tenth periodic report of Sweden (CEDAW/C/SWE/10 and CEDAW/C/SWE/QPR/10)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Sweden took places at the Committee table.*
2. **The Chair** said that, at the invitation of the Committee, other members of the delegation would be speaking via video link.
3. **Ms. Strandås** (Sweden), introducing her country's tenth periodic report (CEDAW/C/SWE/10), said that, as part of attempts to build a strong institutional framework for gender equality, the Government had set up the Gender Equality Agency in 2018, as a source of expertise and support on developing and evaluating relevant policies and goals. The Agency worked closely with government agencies at all levels and with civil society organizations. It had been decided that the State would permanently fund the county administrative boards' work on gender mainstreaming and men's violence against women at the regional and local levels. If the parliament approved the budget bill for 2022, at least 300 million Swedish kronor (SKr) per year would be allocated to specific measures to combat men's violence against women.
4. Under a government programme, renewed for the 2021–2025 period, 60 agencies were required to draw up individual action plans on gender mainstreaming and report their results annually to the ministry to which they were responsible; the Gender Equality Agency played a capacity-building role, which reinforced implementation. The Government had recently allocated SKr 20 million to the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions for the purposes of gender mainstreaming in areas for which local and regional authorities were responsible, including education, childcare, health care and care of older persons. All ministries were required to include a gender-equality impact assessment as part of any proposals they put forward to the Ministry of Finance.
5. Her Government had begun a review of the Discrimination Act with a view to making protection against discrimination as comprehensive as possible. It was also preparing new legislation concerning the determination of gender. A national human rights institution, in full accordance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles), based in the city of Lund, would start operations on 1 January 2022. Since persons facing intersectional discrimination were particularly vulnerable, the Government was planning for continued support to initiatives aimed at strengthening gender equality among the Sami minority. In July 2018, the Gender Equality Agency had been made responsible for ensuring that non-binary persons enjoyed gender equality; the Agency also acted as an authority for the protection of the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons.
6. Since isolation due to public health measures in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic had exacerbated the vulnerability of women and minors in their homes, the Government had increased funding for civil society organizations working with vulnerable groups. The 10-year national strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women had been operating since 2016 and, in June 2021, the Government had presented a package of 40 measures to intensify work against such violence, including violence prevention, support and protection for victims and stricter legislation to facilitate the prosecution of offenders. A centre against honour-related violence and oppression would be established, whose responsibilities would include regular investigations into the extent of honour-related crimes in Sweden.
7. In 2018, new legislation on sexual consent had been introduced, which clearly stated that sex that was not voluntary was illegal. With a view to fostering a culture of consent, the Government had extended the Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority's mandate to encompass disseminating information about the new law. The Government had conducted a national study, which found that penalties for several sexual offences should be increased

and new legislation instructing health-care services to secure forensic trace evidence after such offences had been committed should be introduced. The Government Offices were currently in the process of approving the proposals made.

8. The Swedish Gender Equality Agency had completed an exercise in October 2021 to map prostitution in Sweden, which had shown that children were at greater risk than before of prostitution and trafficking in human beings because of social media and gaming platforms. The Government had increased its funding to prevent prostitution and trafficking in persons for sexual purposes accordingly.

9. Economic equality between women and men was crucial. While, in 2020, the proportion of women working part-time had fallen sharply, the proportion of men working part-time had increased slightly and the gender pay gap had fallen to 9.8 per cent, Swedish women nevertheless faced numerous economic disadvantages due to imbalances in family responsibilities and the labour market. The Government had therefore appointed a commission in March 2020 to consider the problem of gender equality with respect to lifetime earnings, which was to present its findings and proposals in February 2022. As COVID-19 had spotlighted working conditions in female-dominated sectors, such as the health and social care sectors, there was new State support for municipalities and regions to fund initiatives that promoted secure livelihoods in such sectors. In December 2021, the Swedish Gender Equality Agency would publish an analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on economic equality between women and men. Sweden was one of the leaders of the Action Coalition on Economic Justice and Rights – run by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) – through which it would share its experience of economic and social reforms and gender equality policy with other countries.

10. In 2021, Sweden was celebrating a century of equal suffrage. Although equal representation had been achieved in areas of political life where the Government exercised influence over the appointment process, such as the make-up of the Government itself and leadership positions in government agencies and State-owned enterprises, women were underrepresented in all elected assemblies by between 2 and 7 per cent. Although gender balance had been reached in some areas, gender-based violence against women in the form of threats, hate speech and harassment continued to undermine women's ability to fully perform their role as political representatives. The Government had therefore continued its efforts to end online harassment and violence, with an increased focus on awareness-raising and prevention. In 2019, the Government had launched the Drive for Democracy, which included activities seeking to improve women's enjoyment of human rights and increase their influence on the democratic process.

11. The main instrument for promoting gender equality in schools was the Education Act, which required the national curricula at all levels of education to promote democratic values and human rights, including gender equality. The Government had tasked the National Agency for Education with developing in-school career guidance that countered gender-based study choices and with improving schools' work on preventing honour-related violence and oppression. The concept of consent had been incorporated into sex education and qualitative targets had been introduced to ensure that teachers had the proper skills to teach about sex and relationships.

12. Since women with low levels of education and women with disabilities were among those whose health improvement was lagging behind and since young women were more likely than other groups to be in poor mental health, the Government had, in 2015, started an initiative to strengthen maternity care and women's health in general. To date, SKr 7.6 billion had been allocated to it.

13. In 2017, the Climate Act had been enacted, under which the country was aiming for net zero emissions of greenhouse gases by 2045 and negative emissions thereafter. In 2019, since submitting the tenth periodic report, her Government had approved a climate policy action plan, stating that gender equality was to be mainstreamed in all climate policy, domestic and international. The Government had also committed to implementing the Paris Agreement, including the guiding principles on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

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14. **Ms. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen**, noting with satisfaction the fact that a national human rights institution in full compliance with the Paris Principles would be established on 1 January 2022, said that, nevertheless, areas of concern remained. A key area of concern was gender-based violence against women and girls. She would therefore welcome more information on the package of measures to stop men's violence against women that the Government had presented in June 2021.

15. Statistics Sweden used more than 170 indicators to measure gender equality. Intersectional gender inequality was hard to monitor, as some of the data that needed to be collected to determine whether or not such inequality existed were regarded as private information. An increasing number of government agencies had begun to replace questions about sex with questions about gender identity. She would therefore appreciate further details of the ways in which the data from Statistics Sweden were used and reflected in the State party's gender equality policy. In view of the lack of data on intersectional discrimination, it was unclear how the State party monitored its strategies to prevent and overcome such discrimination. Given that there was no specific provision for femicide in the Criminal Code, how did the Government monitor such crimes?

16. It would be useful to hear about the outcome of the review of the Discrimination Act, which had been due in October 2020, and about any steps taken or planned as a result. She wondered what national activities the Swedish Gender Equality Agency had undertaken to increase awareness of the Convention. She would be interested to hear more about the findings of the report on that subject, which had been due on 31 January 2021, and the methods used to measure such awareness. She wished to know the status of the amendments to the Gender Recognition Act aimed at facilitating self-defined gender identity and their consequences for women and girls in terms of gender equality. She would appreciate an update on the status of the bills on expanded possibilities to use electronic monitoring of restraining orders, on enhanced protection of sexual integrity and on abolishing the statute of limitations for rape committed against a person under the age of 18. She wondered whether the online sexual harassment mentioned by the delegation was included in the Criminal Code and whether there was any quantitative or qualitative research on such harassment.

17. As there was no training on the Convention for judges and prosecutors, she failed to understand how the courts could interpret Swedish law to make it consistent with the Convention. She would welcome a comment on reports that less than 1 per cent of complaints about sex discrimination were taken up by the Equality Ombudsman. It was unclear why there was no mention of the Convention in the cases that were brought before the courts. It would be useful to know what percentage of the persons submitting complaints to the Equality Ombudsman stated that they had suffered discrimination on multiple grounds. Lastly, the Committee also hoped to see any data that might be available on the number of discrimination cases women had brought before the courts without the help of the Equality Ombudsman.

18. **Ms. Strandås** (Sweden) said that the Government strove to make gender visible in all legislation and in guidance for government agencies; there was also a requirement for statistics based on individuals to be disaggregated by sex. It also strove to increase awareness of the Convention and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which guided its gender equality work. Moreover, the Government required intersectional analysis as part of the work to implement and follow up on its gender equality policy.

19. Sweden adhered to a dualistic system, under which ratified treaties only became part of domestic law if transposed into Swedish legislation or incorporated via a special statute. Before a given treaty was ratified, all the relevant legislation was thoroughly reviewed to ensure that it was consistent with the commitments under that treaty. The Instrument of Government, provided that legislation could only disadvantage someone on grounds of gender when that person was disadvantaged to achieve gender equality or when the disadvantage related to military service or similar official duties. In addition, discrimination against women was prohibited under the Discrimination Act and several other pieces of legislation.

20. **Ms. Schölin** (Sweden) said that proposals brought forward following the review of the Discrimination Act were under consideration by the Government Offices. One proposal was to revoke the provision by which the Equality Ombudsman, who was responsible for supervising compliance with Act, was to try in the first instance when dealing with complaints to encourage voluntary compliance with the law. Another involved improvements to the procedure for filing complaints with the Board against Discrimination for central employee organizations. Under the proposals, the Equality Ombudsman would also be empowered to issue regulations governing active measures to bring about equal rights and opportunities in the workplace. The Ombudsman worked to promote awareness of the Discrimination Act. Victims of discrimination were also assisted by local agencies that received State funding; in 2019 those agencies had received 1,564 complaints and taken action in relation to 479 of them.

21. **Ms. Helldén** (Sweden) said that, although intersectional analysis was somewhat hindered by the fact that Statistics Sweden did not gather data on race or ethnicity, which were deemed sensitive, the agency did provide other statistics, including on country of birth and education, that could be linked to data on gender and age. The Swedish Gender Equality Agency took account of power structures in its work involving a range of factors, such as ethnicity and disability, and adopted an intersectional perspective in its follow-up to the Government's gender equality sub-goals. It also supported Statistics Sweden in its statistical analysis and was tasked with increasing awareness of the Convention; its efforts to that end had included a campaign website, a podcast, a report drafted in conjunction with the University of Gothenburg, a brochure and a quiz. The Agency also covered the Convention in its lectures and training courses, including for doctors.

22. **Ms. Rönnblom** (Sweden) said that, while there were no specific criminal provisions for femicide, the National Council for Crime Prevention published statistics on lethal violence against women and girls annually, including whether that violence had been perpetrated by former or current intimate partners. The Swedish Crime Survey included questions on online harassment. The Swedish Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority provided information to groups, including judges, on new legislation regarding consent in rape cases.

23. **Ms. Bram** (Sweden) said that specially trained prosecutors dealt with crimes in intimate or family relationships. The Convention was integrated into training for police officers. There were proposals to punish gross violations against women of integrity of the person with prison sentences of between 1 and 6 years, and amendments that would see to it that those who violated non-contact orders faced up to a 1-year prison sentence rather than a fine were expected to come into force in January 2022.

24. **Ms. Larsson** (Sweden), speaking via video link, said that the Government's firm commitment to the equal rights and opportunities of transgender persons was illustrated by its plans to replace legislation on medical gender correction with two new laws: one on legal gender recognition and the other on gender reassignment treatment. The Government would address the demands of the Swedish Women's Lobby when it presented those legislative proposals. The separation of the recording of gender in the civil register from surgical interventions was not intended to strengthen societal gender norms. The Government agreed with the assessment of Statistics Sweden that the proposals relating to disaggregated data would have an extremely limited impact on the agency's operations.

25. **Mr. Florin** (Sweden), speaking via video link, said that the National Board of Health and Welfare reviewed cases of serious and lethal violence to advise the Government on prevention measures. Its most recent report, released in 2018, had found that almost all women who had been killed by a former or current partner or other close relative had been in contact with the health-care system shortly prior to their deaths, and many had also been in contact with social services. That finding had led to ongoing work to improve measures to actively identify victims of domestic violence.

26. **Ms. Schölin** (Sweden) said that, of the 2,661 complaints of discrimination received by the Equality Ombudsman in 2019, 370 related to discrimination on two or more grounds, including 65 cases of gender discrimination that had also involved discrimination on grounds of ethnicity.

27. **Ms. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen** said that the fact that just seven cases of intersectional discrimination had been brought before the courts in the previous four years was cause for concern; access to justice must be the main objective in such cases, in addition to the assistance offered to victims by several agencies. She questioned whether the problem could be addressed without statistics on its frequency. She would welcome data on cases of femicide over the previous five years and clarification of why just 30 per cent of requests for non-contact orders had been granted.

28. **Ms. Strandås** (Sweden) said that the Discrimination Act afforded the Equality Ombudsman a high degree of freedom in how it fulfilled its mandate. The newly appointed Ombudsman had expressed an intention to place greater focus on individual cases.

29. **Ms. Schölin** (Sweden) said that the Equality Ombudsman generally addressed discrimination cases through decisions rather than court proceedings. Indeed, in 2020 just three of the more than 3,000 cases had resulted in court action.

30. **Ms. Rönnblom** (Sweden) said that in 2016 there had been 29 registered cases of femicide, of which 18 had been committed by a former or current intimate partner of the victim. Those figures stood at 27 and 10 for 2017, respectively, 33 and 22 for 2018, 25 and 16 for 2019 and 25 and 13 for 2020.

31. **Ms. Bram** (Sweden) said that proposed legislation on non-contact orders contained provisions on training on those orders.

32. **Ms. Ameline** said that she would welcome the delegation's assurances that women, who were the main victims of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, would be the main beneficiaries of the State party's excellent work at the international level, including guaranteed access to vaccines and health care and full involvement in defining and implementing programmes. She would also appreciate having assurances that equality would be at the forefront of the State party's influential global agenda on international trade and supply chains, particularly with regard to climate change and child labour. Although the State party's efforts in relation to peace around the world had garnered international recognition, its results on women's leadership and participation in peace processes were unsatisfactory, and she wished to know what it might do to improve on that priority area. She asked what initiatives were planned to ensure full compliance with the Arms Trade Treaty.

33. Despite its progressive laws, the State party experienced high levels of violence against women, and its prioritization of its institutional framework was therefore welcome. She asked how that framework, which counted many actors and bodies achieving somewhat uneven results, was coordinated, whether funding would be made long-lasting and tailored to the various institutions and whether they would be afforded sufficient human resources and the required competences. She wished to know which government department was mainly responsible for young people and whether campaigns to raise awareness of the Convention among them had been mounted. It would also be useful to know whether any initiatives would be introduced following the January 2020 Supreme Court decision in relation to the Sami people. She invited the delegation to note the Committee's concerns regarding statistics.

34. **Ms. Peláez Narváez** asked how the State party planned to address the recent slowdown in progress towards gender equality in political representation and participation and in decision-making, and what consideration had been given to the participation of disadvantaged women in the parliament and government bodies at the central, regional and local levels. She asked whether the outcome of the review of the Discrimination Act had prompted the State party to adopt temporary special measures, particularly for the most disadvantaged women. Lastly, she said she would be interesting in learning about the results of a 2019 study that had examined Sami society from a gender-based perspective and asked which areas had been identified as requiring improvement.

35. **Ms. Strandås** (Sweden) said that her Government's feminist foreign policy, the first of its kind in the world, aimed to guarantee the rights and participation of women and girls. It was integrated into the broader foreign policy and was coordinated by the Ambassador for Gender Equality.

36. **Ms. Calltorp** (Sweden) said that the feminist foreign policy benefited from an action plan that was updated annually and encompassed six long-term objectives. Additional examples of the achievements of the feminist foreign policy were provided in the tenth periodic report (paras. 112–114).

37. Sweden was committed to ensuring effective and equal global access to COVID-19 vaccines. Its contribution of SKr 2.45 billion to the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility had rendered it the world's leading contributor in per capita terms. In addition, almost 1.5 million vaccine doses had been delivered to countries throughout the world.

38. With regard to child labour, Sweden had launched a global deal with the International Labour Organization and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to promote equal working conditions throughout the world.

39. Sweden supported gender-based statistics on the impact of the irresponsible proliferation and utilization of weapons. It also promoted female representation in negotiations on resolutions and key documents on disarmament and non-proliferation. Sweden had supported the inclusion in the Arms Trade Treaty of article 7 (4) concerning serious acts of gender-based violence, and its arms export control system was one of the strictest in the world.

40. **Ms. Strandås** (Sweden) said that steps were being taken to increase the statistics pertaining to violence against women and to disclose hitherto unreported cases of violence and sexual abuse. Victims of abuse were also encouraged to report the matter to the police.

41. **Ms. Schölin** (Sweden) said that all employers were required to implement the provisions of the amended Discrimination Act aimed at the promotion of human rights, regardless of gender. They had to investigate cases of discrimination, analyse the causes and monitor the effectiveness of remedial measures. Employers with 10 or more employees were also required to conduct pay audits every year.

42. **Ms. Freidenvall** (Sweden) said that the representation of women and men in political assemblies was relatively equitable, but women were underrepresented by 7 per cent in the municipalities. There was no legislation regarding gender quotas, but political parties had adopted recommendations and voluntary party quotas. Persons born abroad were underrepresented at the national and local levels of governance. For instance, 9 per cent of members of the Swedish parliament were born abroad and 38 per cent of those members were women.

43. The report by the Sami parliament, which was currently being studied by the Government, referred to challenges pertaining to the representation of women. It also reported gender-based violence in the community.

44. **Ms. Rana** said that she would be interested in hearing a review of progress in implementing the Government's 10-year national strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women. She would welcome further details on the package of 40 measures referred to in the opening statement to intensify efforts to prevent men's violence against women. She wondered whether there was a timetable for the adoption of stricter legislation in that area.

45. She would appreciate information about any documented changes in women's lives stemming from attitudinal changes in men's behaviour. The State party's efforts to promote non-stereotypical portrayals of women in the media were commendable. She asked whether there were any data indicating that the problem had receded since the establishment of the Media Ethics Administrative Board in 2019. She also wished to know how the Board's role differed from that of the Swedish Media Ombudsman. Had any sanctions for the use of stereotypes been imposed under the Swedish Radio and Television Act? As the use of algorithms could lead to gender stereotyping, she asked whether the State party used its awareness of that issue to prevent or eliminate stereotyping.

46. The Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence reported that there was a large backlog of domestic violence and rape cases in the State party, as well as the need for an efficient system of emergency

barring and protective orders involving increased multi-agency cooperation. Further information about the action taken to implement those recommendations would be helpful. She would appreciate specific examples of the measures that had been announced in June 2021 by the Minister for Gender Equality and Housing in that respect and how they had been evaluated.

47. She also wished to know what action had been taken to increase police investigations and prosecutions and the conviction rate. She would be grateful for data on cases of rape and domestic violence, disaggregated by sex, age, police investigations, prosecutions and convictions during the past five years.

48. The setbacks brought about by the COVID 19 pandemic had increased the risk of gender-based violence. She would be interested in hearing about the Government's post-COVID-19 response plans. For instance, would Sweden increase its support for action by developing countries to address the disproportionate impact on women and girls?

49. The Government had launched an inquiry aimed at the strengthening of protection against sexual violence under criminal law. Further information on the key findings of the inquiry and on judicial procedures aimed at accelerating and enhancing the effectiveness of investigations and prosecution would be useful.

50. **Mr. Safarov** said that, while he welcomed the State party's positive achievements under the national action plan to combat prostitution and trafficking, the European Commission had reported that Sweden was a destination for victims of sexual exploitation, forced labour, forced criminality and forced begging. There was evidence of the disappearance of over 1,500 unaccompanied migrant children between 2013 and 2016.

51. The Human Rights Committee had expressed concern about trafficking in human beings, including for the sexual exploitation of children. It had recommended ensuring that penalties for such exploitation, including in cyberspace, were commensurate with the gravity of the crimes.

52. The economic difficulties created by the COVID-19 pandemic had forced an increasing number of women and girls to be involved in prostitution. It would be helpful to learn more about the action taken by the Government to address such cases of exploitation.

53. He would be interested in hearing about any problems encountered by the State party in implementing the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Crime, and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air. He would also welcome information on progress made in implementing the national action plan to combat prostitution and trafficking in human beings. Very few cases of trafficking had been registered. He asked whether victims of trafficking, especially children and women, had access to shelters, health care, psychological and social support, and legal services. He would also appreciate information on any strategy to support and fund non-governmental organizations involved in the prevention of trafficking.

54. He asked whether there were any plans to enact legislation aimed at the protection of children from abuse and trafficking in transnational surrogacy arrangements.

55. **Ms. Strandås** (Sweden) said that the Government sought to ensure that unpaid housework and childcare were divided equally between women and men. A review of the parental insurance scheme had led to improvements in the sharing of parental leave. Norms based on gender stereotypes, unfortunately, had a major impact on women and girls, especially in the areas of education and vocational training. Action was therefore taken to promote women's participation in the labour market and to challenge stereotypes created by the sexualization and objectification of women in the media.

56. **Ms. Seidefors** (Sweden) said that the Swedish Agency for Public Management had commended the public authorities on the action taken to implement the national strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women but had also recommended improvements and closer collaboration. The Agency could help to prioritize measures and promote the implementation of assignments through the provision of data and analyses. The package presented by the Government in June 2021 included measures to protect and support victims

of violence and to ensure stricter prosecution of perpetrators. The budget bill for 2022 allocated substantial funds for implementation of the package. The Government also planned to allocate permanent funds and grants to women's and girls' shelters and to national organizations that offered support to victims of violence. The shelters had received additional grants during the COVID-19 pandemic.

57. The measures implemented to date included a programme to prevent violence in young people's relationships, measures to combat honour-related violence and oppression, and the reinforcement of action against prostitution and human trafficking.

58. **Ms. Rönnblom** (Sweden) said that the number of reported cases of abuse of women and girls had increased from 36,700 in 2015 to over 39,000 in 2020. The number of cases of abuse in which no prosecution had been brought or violations had carried a fine had decreased from 14 per cent in 2015 to 11 per cent in 2020.

59. The number of reported cases of rape had increased from 5,461 in 2015 to 8,686 in 2020. The clearance rates had increased from 14 per cent in 2015 to 17 per cent in 2020. According to the National Council for Crime Prevention, the increase in reported cases of rape was partly due to amendments to the Criminal Code adopted in 2005, 2013 and 2018.

60. **Ms. Bram** (Sweden) said that the 2020 report on strengthening protection against sexual violations had proposed the enactment of a new law on health-care tracing of sexual offences. The bill was currently being drafted. New legislation abolishing the statute of limitations for certain crimes, such as rape and female genital mutilation, against persons under the age of 18 had entered into force in 2020. In addition, requiring a child to witness certain criminal acts such as assault in a domestic relationship had been recognized as a crime on 1 July 2020. The penalty was imprisonment for a maximum of 2 years. Taking children abroad for the purpose of marriage or female genital mutilation had also been criminalized on 1 July 2020.

61. **Ms. Strandås** (Sweden) said that Sweden had been the first country in the world to impose a ban on the purchase of sexual services in 1999 as a means of combating trafficking for sexual purposes. The Government had also increased public agencies' competence to provide protection and support for vulnerable groups.

62. **Ms. Ekstedt** (Sweden) said that the national action plan to combat prostitution and trafficking specified the responsibility of all State actors to identify victims. The Swedish Gender Equality Agency was responsible for national coordination of anti-trafficking measures, including by the National Task Force against Prostitution and Human Trafficking. It was also responsible for the national referral mechanism, which it had overhauled in 2019. As the COVID-19 pandemic had increased persons' vulnerability to trafficking, the Government had allocated additional funds for support and protection in the 2021 budget. The Agency had recently issued a report demonstrating the increased vulnerability of children targeted by online traffickers. The role of regional coordinators in supporting victims of trafficking and prostitution in municipalities had been enhanced. Additional funds would also be provided for the programme for the return of victims of trafficking run by the International Organization for Migration.

63. A civil society platform of about 20 organizations provided assistance to victims. The Government had allocated SKr 1.5 million in 2020 to the platform for its national support programme, and the Gender Equality Agency had also been tasked with providing funds for the programme. The National Board of Health and Welfare had provided financial support for action by 54 municipalities against prostitution and trafficking in 2020. The budget bill for 2022 allocated increased funds for exit programmes for people involved in prostitution.

64. The National Council for Crime Prevention had been tasked with assessing the implementation of the law banning the purchase of sexual services, and with suggesting improvements in cooperation between law enforcement authorities and social services. An inquiry undertaken in June 2021 had proposed enhanced protection from expulsion for victims of trafficking through the issuance of temporary residence permits by social welfare boards in the municipalities.

65. **Ms. Helldén** (Sweden) said that the appointment of the Swedish Media Ombudsman in 2020 and the establishment of the Media Ethics Administrative Board in 2019 had led to

a decline in the number of complaints, which could be attributable to the pandemic. As they were independent bodies, they did not produce official statistics regarding sexism and gender stereotypes. However, given that most of the complaints filed had involved claims of defamation or discrimination, it could be inferred that they covered sexism and gender stereotypes.

66. **Mr. Safarov**, noting the positive steps taken by Sweden in the early 2000s to combat sex trafficking, said he wished to know what obstacles had been standing in the way in recent years to its full implementation of Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. It was not clear why the Protocol and Convention were not invoked by the courts. He also asked whether the State party recognized the internationally recognized definition of trafficking.

67. **Ms. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen** said that, according to the National Council for Crime Prevention, the number of convictions for rape had risen from 190 in 2017 to 333 in 2019. On the other hand, although there had been a steady increase in the number of police investigations during the period from 2016 to 2020, there had only been a small increase in the conviction rate for cases entailing prosecution.

68. When the State party permitted a child to be born by surrogacy in another country and then registered him or her as a Swedish child pursuant to a Supreme Court ruling, it could create problems beyond the country's borders. She would be interested in hearing how the State party addressed such problems.

69. She wished to know why victims of trafficking were not entitled to a permanent residence permit under the new migration law. She also wished to know what percentage of trafficking victims were currently Swedish nationals. As the members of the delegation referred frequently to action against both prostitution and trafficking, she would be interested in hearing which of the two was given priority.

70. **Ms. Ekstedt** (Sweden) said that the Swedish Gender Equality Agency had introduced an online tool in early 2021 to identify child victims. In 2020 the Agency had identified 350 potential victims of trafficking. While the majority were women facing sexual or labour exploitation, 50 children had been identified as potential victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation and forced begging who required assistance from the municipalities. Under the new migration law, the municipalities were mandated to apply for temporary residence permits for victims. According to the Agency's most recent report, the majority of potential online victims of exploitation were Swedish nationals, but the data failed to specify the nationality of potential victims. Her Government perceived a clear link between prostitution and trafficking and considered that all forms of exploitation should be tackled as serious crimes.

71. **Ms. Rönnblom** (Sweden) said that surrogacy was not permitted in the Swedish health-care system. The decision to bear a child must be free from pressure and financial motivation, and surrogacy presented clear risks from an equality perspective. All children in Sweden were entitled to legal representatives, including those born as a result of surrogate arrangements. An inquiry conducted in 2016 had concluded that commercial surrogacy should be stopped. The Government had ordered an additional inquiry in 2020 to analyse cases in which a child's legal relationship with an intended parent in Sweden should be recognized based on what were considered to be the child's best interests. The investigator had proposed in June 2021 certain amendments to the rules governing adoption to ensure that a child's rights were respected when an actual family relationship had been created between him or her and the intended parent. The report was under consideration and conclusions would be adopted in late October 2021.

72. The number of charges and convictions for rape had increased significantly. In addition, legal proceedings had been instituted for different types of offences, for instance cases in which the victim was taken by surprise and was therefore unable to protect herself from abuse. While the review published by the National Council for Crime Prevention in 2019 had drawn attention to certain shortcomings in the investigations, it had concluded that only about 3 per cent of the closed cases could have led to prosecution if the investigations had been more effective. That conclusion had been endorsed in a report by the Stockholm

Sexual Crimes Group in 2021. According to the report, the quality of the investigations by highly motivated specialized investigators had improved.

73. **Ms. Bram** (Sweden) said that the Swedish Police Authority had introduced risk-reducing measures against actors posing threats. Police in the southern region had implemented a risk reduction project and there were plans to implement a nationwide project. The Police Authority had appointed a national coordinator to develop support for particularly vulnerable victims of crime. The Authority had also established a nationwide organization for operational action against trafficking and prostitution. Cases of trafficking for sexual purposes were handled by specialized prosecutors appointed by the Swedish Prosecution Authority.

74. **Ms. Olanders** (Sweden), speaking via video link, said that the ordinance issued by the Government to the Swedish Migration Agency in 2019 required it to contribute to work against trafficking and similar crimes. The Agency's internal guidelines included advice and instructions on the handling of cases involving violence against women or trafficking. An inquiry had proposed special protection for trafficking victims detected by the police or social services. Amendments to the Swedish Aliens Act had entered into force on 20 July 2021. Residence permits granted to persons requiring protection were temporary, and permanent residence permits could only be granted when a person had possessed a temporary residence permit for at least three years.

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75. **Ms. Manolo** said that she would be interested in hearing how women benefited from the fifth objective of the feminist foreign policy, namely economic rights and empowerment. She also wished to know how effective the feminist trade policy launched in 2019 had proved in terms of producing a positive impact for women as producers, entrepreneurs, employees and consumers.

76. She had been informed that the female mediation network that had been operating since 2015 had not led to the involvement of any woman in the negotiation of a peace process. She would be grateful for any explanation the State party could provide.

77. NGOs had complained that the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency failed to implement a cohesive and systematic gender mainstreaming policy. If that was the case, she wished to know whether any steps were being taken to address that shortcoming.

78. While she commended the State party on the high representation of women in the Government and the parliament and also at the local level, she noted that men occupied most of the highest management positions at the regional and local level. What action could be taken to remedy that situation?

79. She had been informed that women were the victims of sexist comments and aggressive language from public sources. She asked how such abusive language was addressed. Lastly, she wished to know whether it was true that women's organizations were underfunded and had received no increase in funds since 2006.

80. **Ms. Calltorp** (Sweden) said that women's economic rights and empowerment constituted a core mandate of all Swedish embassies throughout the world. For instance, if a country requested economic assistance, it was invariably asked whether it had included the economic rights and empowerment of women and girls in its economic development plans.

81. Sweden played a leading role in the Action Coalition on Economic Justice and Rights, advocating for a gender and rights-based perspective in terms of economic empowerment. It contributed financially to action for economic and social reforms, prevention of discriminatory legislation, gender equality in the labour market and feminist trade policy.

82. While it was true that, to date, no women from the network of female mediators had been assigned to act as negotiators in formal peace processes, they were actively involved in promoting the women and peace and security agenda in many areas, including at the educational and grass-roots levels, with a view to ensuring that women's voices were heard in such processes.

83. Sweden was a major contributor to international development assistance and about 85 per cent of its bilateral development aid contributions had a gender equality objective. The new policy framework for Swedish development cooperation and humanitarian assistance required all such cooperation to be gender mainstreamed. Since 2017 Sweden had been implementing a global strategy on gender equality, which included, for example, action to combat discrimination, gender stereotypical norms and harmful gender-related customs, support for human rights defenders and promotion of increased access to statistics disaggregated by gender and age.

84. **Ms. Freidenvall** (Sweden) said that women were underrepresented in the municipalities and on the municipal boards. Responsibility for promoting gender-equal representation lay primarily with the political parties. As many male and female politicians had been exposed to violence, hate speech and threats, the Government had been implementing an action plan to defend free speech against threats and hatred since 2017. In September 2021 the Swedish Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority has been tasked with conducting an information campaign against cyberhate. The number of female elected representatives exposed to harassment and threats of violence was only slightly greater than that of males. The results of a politician safety survey conducted by the National Council for Crime Prevention would be presented in November 2021.

85. The Government granted funds to women's organizations for gender equality projects, and the Swedish Gender Equality Agency was responsible for distributing the funds. In 2019 it had distributed SKr 28 million to 67 organizations. The Agency had also allocated SKr 10 million to 10 gender equality projects.

86. **Mr. Safarov** noted that about 27,000 people in the State party were stateless. For instance, Almontaser Quteineh had been living in Sweden as a stateless person with two children since 2015. His request for asylum had been rejected on three occasions. Stateless persons encountered difficulties in obtaining access to health care, education, legal, social and other State services. He wished to know what measures were planned to resolve family reunification problems, to ensure equal access to State services and to comply with international laws concerning stateless women and girls. When did the State party intend to incorporate in its legislation the definition of a stateless person contained in article 1 of the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons? The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had issued many recommendations concerning the establishment of a dedicated statelessness determination procedure. It had also recommended amending the Swedish Citizenship Act so that stateless children born in Sweden acquired citizenship automatically, regardless of their residential status.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.