



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

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

Summary record of the 1734th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 31 October 2019, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Gbedemah

Contents

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

Sixth periodic report of Lithuania

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

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

Sixth periodic report of Lithuania (CEDAW/C/LTU/6; CEDAW/C/LTU/Q/6 and CEDAW/C/LTU/Q/6/Add.1)

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

2. **Mr. Bingelis** (Lithuania), introducing his country's sixth periodic report (CEDAW/C/LTU/6), said that the Government of Lithuania wished to reaffirm its commitment to the protection of women's and girls' human rights by promoting equal opportunities for women and men, fostering women's empowerment and eliminating all forms of discrimination against women. As an active advocate of gender equality, Lithuania had recently been elected to serve on the Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) for the period 2020–2022. It was also a member of several United Nations groups championing gender equality and women's empowerment, such as the Friends of 1325, an ad hoc group of States Members of the United Nations advocating for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security.

3. Gender equality was one of the Government's priorities, and achieving equal opportunities was one of the horizontal principles of the country's forthcoming national development programme for the period 2021–2030. Thus, all government ministries and institutions had to take equal opportunities into account when drafting public policies or regulations. In an effort to mainstream gender equality, a unit for equal opportunities and equality between women and men had been created in the Ministry of Social Security and Labour in order to ensure that the principle of gender equality was integrated into all areas of national policy.

4. With regard to combating violence against women, Lithuania had signed the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention) and was proceeding towards ratification by taking measures to bring its national legislation into line with the Istanbul Convention. In addition, Lithuania had begun drafting its second national action plan to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and had been closely involved in the process of adopting the International Labour Organization (ILO) Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190). Concerning domestic violence, an intersectoral working group composed of representatives of government institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), had been established to formulate proposals for a new action plan relating to the prevention of domestic violence and the provision of assistance to victims. In February 2019, a project entitled "Domestic violence: prevention, protection, assistance" had been launched to raise awareness of domestic violence and improve the quality and accessibility of the assistance provided to victims, among other objectives. The project's activities included a public information campaign, a study of the comprehensive services that were available for victims of domestic violence and specialized training for assistance providers and journalists. Training for police officers was also being strengthened to improve investigations of incidents of domestic violence.

5. A number of measures had been taken to combat human trafficking, particularly of women and girls. For example, a national association to combat human trafficking had recently been established to improve the quality of services provided to trafficking victims, initiate anti-trafficking preventive measures and promote inter-institutional cooperation. There were also plans to offer specialized training to staff at the Refugee Reception Centre in order to improve the identification of potential victims of human trafficking and prevent unaccompanied minors and adults from becoming trafficking victims. A new national action plan to combat trafficking in persons for the period 2020–2023 was also in the pipeline.

6. A project to reduce the gap in the educational achievements of girls and boys from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds had been launched in 2019. Among other

aspects, it provided funding to improve the educational process and environment, enhance learning and education support and promote leadership in schools. In an effort to support families, a package of basic services had been approved and a universal child benefit had been introduced to address poverty among single-parent families, most of whom were women-headed households. A law on protecting children's rights had been amended to allow for the possibility of close relatives obtaining temporary guardianship of a child who was in need of protection and needed to be removed from the home. In cases of domestic violence, only the consent of the non-violent parent was taken into account when assigning a temporary guardian.

7. Steps had been taken to empower women from disadvantaged groups. For instance, one of the priorities of the 2015–2020 Action Plan for Roma Integration into Lithuanian Society was to promote Roma women's leadership and integrate them into the labour market by providing relevant training. Roma women faced a number of barriers, however, including early marriages, discrimination in their communities and a lack of role models. Efforts had also been made to integrate foreign women into Lithuanian society. An action plan for the period 2018–2020 contained general measures to improve foreign nationals' access to social and health-care services, education and the labour market. It also contained specific measures to provide foreign women with information and training, in a language that the participants understood, on topics such as women's and children's human rights, achieving a work-life balance and preventing domestic violence, including the assistance available for victims of domestic violence or discrimination. The Refugee Reception Centre also planned to provide mandatory courses on Lithuanian and European Union values, individual human rights and freedoms and preventing gender-based violence.

8. In the area of health, a new training programme on preventing violence had been introduced for public health specialists in schools and the Ministry of Health was giving consideration to reimbursing girls aged 15–18 for certain types of contraception. Measures had been taken to ensure that preschool and school-age boys and girls received adequate age-appropriate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights, among other topics. Lastly, measures had been taken to improve the collection of gender-disaggregated data and identify the root causes of gender inequality, including through the development of a gender equality map by Statistics Lithuania.

Articles 1 to 6

9. **Ms. Tisheva** said that, despite the commendable progress that the State party had made in the period since its previous dialogue with the Committee, the Committee was concerned that the full potential of the Convention had yet to be realized. She wished to know what measures the State party intended to take in order to increase the visibility of the Convention and its Optional Protocol; when the Law on Equal Opportunities and the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men would be amended to ensure that they were applicable to all areas of life, including family and private life; and how laws, policies and other initiatives were monitored for their compliance with the Convention.

10. With reference to the country's two human rights monitoring mechanisms, namely the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson and the Office of the Seimas (parliament) Ombudsperson, reports suggested that those institutions were underfunded and had only limited capacity for dealing with women's complaints, particularly those related to domestic and gender-based violence. She wondered how the Government planned to strengthen those two institutions, including by allocating the necessary human and financial resources for the fulfilment of their mandate, reinforcing their independence and creating specialized gender units in order to protect women's rights more effectively and encourage women to submit complaints.

11. She would like to know what action the Government envisaged taking to ensure full and unfettered access to justice for all women, including those from vulnerable groups, such as women with disabilities, older or migrant women and women with different sexual orientations. In that connection, she noted that there was no explicit protection from multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and that discrimination against transgender persons was not recognized as sex discrimination. Information would be welcomed in that regard.

12. **Ms. Ameline**, emphasizing the need to strengthen the legal framework for the protection of women's rights and accelerate efforts to achieve the full recognition of those rights, said that the process of ratifying the Istanbul Convention presented the Government with an ideal opportunity to review the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and ensure that it reflected current and future challenges. She would be interested to know the status of a bill on ethnic minorities and the measures that had been taken to combat discrimination against, and facilitate the social inclusion of, women from minority backgrounds.

13. She wished to learn more about the assistance available to women victims of domestic violence, including their access to free legal assistance and their entitlement to compensation from perpetrators of domestic violence. She would also welcome an account of the training provided to judges on domestic violence. It would be useful to know the extent to which that training had had an impact on court cases and on the treatment of women in emergency situations. There was often a link between femicides and the failure of the courts to give sufficient consideration to the severity of domestic and gender-based violence from the outset. Lastly, she wondered whether the constitutionality of any laws had been tested by the Constitutional Court and how the parliament ensured that a coherent approach was taken when it came to adopting legislation relating to the Convention and the Sustainable Development Goals.

14. **Ms. Mineikaitė** (Lithuania) said that the importance of the Convention was commonly understood at the national level, as was the need to take its provisions into account when it came to drafting laws, policies and programmes. An action plan on follow-up to the Committee's forthcoming concluding observations was being developed and the responsibilities of the inter-institutional Commission on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men were being amended to include monitoring the implementation of that action plan and providing recommendations to the Government on further action and improvements that could be made.

15. **Ms. Čmilytė-Nielsen** (Lithuania) said that, though there was no parliamentary body specifically responsible for implementing the Convention, the Committee on Human Rights in the parliament was extremely active. It proposed amendments and new legislation in various areas; it scrutinized the implementation of the laws in collaboration with relevant NGOs with a view to improving their implementation on the ground; and it worked closely with the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson and NGOs in periodically organizing events in the parliament to discuss human rights instruments such as the Convention or the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention).

16. A group of members of the Human Rights Committee had submitted an amendment to the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, proposing the removal of the provision stating that the Law did not apply to the family or private spheres. The proposal had passed the first parliamentary stage; two further stages remained.

17. Two women's groups in the parliament were working on the Sustainable Development Goals: the Women's Parliamentary Group and the SDGs and Reproductive Health Group. The majority of women members of parliament were active in both those groups.

18. Although ratification of the Istanbul Convention had still to be finalized, some of its provisions had already been incorporated into national law. Ratification was on the agenda for the current parliament.

19. **Mr. Milevičius** (Lithuania) said that the intersectoral working group on prevention and protection from violence against women and domestic violence, which was looking at various items of legislation, might well take up Ms. Ameline's suggestion on reviewing the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in the light of the Istanbul Convention.

20. **Ms. Milašiūtė** (Lithuania) said that, with regard to access to justice, new legislation on State-guaranteed legal aid had entered into force on 1 January 2019. There were two levels of legal aid: the first was available to anyone free of charge, regardless of financial situation and comprised advice but not representation in court; the second included

representation in court and was available free of charge to persons in financial need and to persons deemed to be in a vulnerable situation, for example victims of terrorism, trafficking, domestic violence, sex offences or hate crimes.

21. An example demonstrating the role of the Constitutional Court in reviewing the constitutionality of existing legislation had been provided by a recent ruling striking down a decision by the migration authorities to deny a temporary residence permit to a same-sex spouse. The Court had ruled that such a refusal could not be made solely on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity, in accordance with article 29 of the Constitution. While article 29 did not specifically refer to those grounds, the list it gave was not exhaustive and the Court had found that discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation was an impairment of human rights. Under new legislation that had entered into force on 1 September 2019, individuals now had the right to challenge the constitutionality of legislation in the Constitutional Court, subject to the prior exhaustion of other legal remedies.

22. Although discrimination in gender reassignment was indeed not explicitly recognized as sexual discrimination in law, in practice complaints of discrimination on grounds of gender identity were admitted and treated as complaints of discrimination on grounds of sex.

23. **Mr. Bingelis** (Lithuania) said that his Government aimed to coordinate all the various human rights strategies and development plans in order to avoid a confusing plethora of projects. The intention was to establish a core strategy, with all related strategies branching out from the centre. Funding was certainly a challenge, particularly with regard to the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson. His Government was continually looking for new ways of enhancing its capabilities, including through partnerships and projects of various kinds that might make additional resources available.

24. **Ms. Ameline** asked whether judges and police officers were trained to understand the particular urgency and seriousness of violence against women, including domestic violence, not least in order to forestall what were sometimes tragic outcomes. Was it possible for judges to order a criminal investigation into cases deemed to be priority matters, as was the case in France? She would also like to know whether the Lithuanian parliament would be debating the recommendations issued by the Committee following the dialogue with the delegation.

25. **Ms. Haidar** asked whether the State party intended to extend the mandate of the Ombudsperson's Office, as the national human rights institution, to cover the private sphere, in line with the proposed amendment to the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men mentioned by the delegation.

26. **Ms. Tisheva** said that she would like to know whether the Government was intending to revisit the gender-neutral approach underlying the structure and operation of the Ombudsperson's Office, for example by creating specific gender-sensitive units.

27. **Ms. Čmilytė-Nielsen** (Lithuania) said that the outcome of the dialogue with the Committee would be presented to the parliamentary Human Rights Committee for discussion. As to training for police and judges, her Government was working closely with Norway on exchanges of experience in dealing with domestic violence and violence against women.

28. **Ms. Milašiūtė** (Lithuania) said that judges and prosecutors had attended training on domestic violence organized as part of a European Union project in 2014; the Ombudsperson's Office also provided training on the content of the Convention. Her Government was making every effort to ensure that such training became systematic and not a series of one-off events. Moreover, under new legislation, a psychologist was now required to be in attendance in legal proceedings involving girl victims of domestic violence, and that ought to alert the court to the sensitive nature of such cases.

29. **Mr. Bingelis** (Lithuania) said that his Government took a positive view of temporary special measures but was searching for a legal basis to justify measures that amounted to a kind of discrimination.

30. **Ms. Nadaraia** said that, in view of the various measures outlined in the State party's report to strengthen equal opportunities at the national and municipal levels, she would like to know whether the current human and technical resources of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour were sufficient to permit the coordination and decentralization of its activities.

31. According to the various legislative provisions governing the work of the Commission on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, the Commission was described as a monitoring and oversight body but at the same time was responsible for developing and putting into effect the 2018-2021 Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2015–2021. Those responsibilities were not compatible and appeared to compromise the impartial monitoring of the action plan. The delegation should clarify the situation.

32. She would appreciate information on gender-budgeting strategies and budget allocations to enable effective implementation of the various gender-equality programmes and projects. She would like to know to what extent NGOs were able to contribute to policy formulation, in the light of reports stating that there was no clear system of funding for women's NGOs. Would NGOs be involved, for example, in the development and implementation of a new national action plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security?

33. **Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia** asked whether the Lithuanian social model was aligned with the Committee's general recommendations Nos. 5 and 25, on temporary special measures, and with general recommendation No. 32 of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, on the meaning and scope of special measures in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The progress on social benefits outlined by the State party was welcome but did not qualify as temporary special measures. Indeed, the State party's report did not demonstrate any results achieved using temporary special measures, notwithstanding the recommendations made in the Committee's previous concluding observations ([CEDAW/C/LTU/CO/5](#)).

34. In that context, she would like to know what gender-specific targets were set for the active labour-market policy measures referred to in paragraph 41 of the report ([CEDAW/C/LTU/6](#)) and what temporary special measures were in place to address the low level of representation of women in international operations under the National Defence System.

35. The State party appeared to perceive the use of temporary special measures as a form of reverse discrimination that would require special legislation. However, such measures could be implemented in many other ways. She would like to know how the State party planned to remedy the situation and improve its application of article 4 at all levels and in all spheres including education and Roma integration.

36. She would like to know the results of the 2015 gender impact assessment referred to in paragraph 25 of the report, and of the "Municipal Success Code – Gender Equality" project referred to in paragraph 28. Had the municipal project provided lessons and benchmarks for future temporary special measures? How had the map of gender gaps in municipalities been used to redress inequalities in the nine areas mentioned in the report, particularly among vulnerable women in rural areas?

37. She would also like to know how compliance with the Convention was coordinated and who was responsible for leading the process.

38. **Mr. Bingelis** (Lithuania) said that one of the ways Lithuania was trying to further gender equality was by mainstreaming the issues across all relevant ministries and portfolios. In addition, his own ministry had been reorganized into a more horizontal structure with fewer leaders and more staff working on the ground. In addition, the Commission on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men was being restructured and given a higher political rank, bringing together deputy ministers from throughout the Government. That would result in changes in the nature of decision-making, although changing mentalities was a more incremental process.

39. With regard to NGOs, he wished to point out that the funding for centres for victims of domestic violence increased annually, and in the current year had doubled. Moreover, all the organizations working in the field were coordinated under an umbrella structure, which reduced their own administrative challenges, enhanced the standard of the services they provided to victims and provided the Government with a single strong partner at the national level.

40. As to the social model, he said that the Lithuanian system was highly personalized, catering to individual needs. That was of great importance in providing support to vulnerable groups and people who required extra assistance.

41. **Ms. Čmilytė-Nielsen** (Lithuania) said that the development and eventual enactment of the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence was an example of the crucial role played by NGOs in public debate and policy formulation. The Law had made an enormous impact on the perception of violence against women and domestic violence. Government financial support to NGOs had steadily increased over recent years.

42. The Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson had run a number of very strong, successful campaigns that had impacted on perceptions of violence against women and domestic violence.

43. Admittedly, women's representation in the parliament was still low, though it was slowly rising. Quotas for electoral lists, which were voluntary, were currently applied by only one party. However, several parties, and in particular their youth branches, ran women's leadership programmes that were certain to pave the way for change in years to come. In the business sector, although there were no quotas or temporary special measures, women gained experience through numerous private initiatives such as leadership campaigns and large conferences.

44. **Ms. Mineikaitė** (Lithuania) said that the Commission on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men had focal points in all ministries in order to integrate the principle of gender equality into all government policies. The Ministry of Social Security and Labour had drafted the National Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men for the period 2015–2021 and its action plan with input from other ministries. Members of the Commission had put forward measures and indicators for inclusion in the plan, and they monitored the implementation of those measures.

45. The Commission mainly functioned as an advisory body on gender equality for the Government. The Commission's regulations were undergoing review in order to enhance its capacity to submit proposals for the improvement of government policies, programmes and action plans. The review was currently in its final stages. Changes to the membership of the Commission to include more government officials would also strengthen its ability to influence policy. Permanent and/or temporary groups of experts would be formed to address various issues related to gender equality and gender-based violence.

46. **Ms. Liutikaitė** (Lithuania) said that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was one of the main institutions responsible for implementation of the national action plan on women and peace and security. The Ministry had created a working group to develop the first draft, which had now been completed. The working group comprised representatives from various NGOs and national institutions. In 2018, a meeting had been held with experts from NGOs, United Nations bodies and the governments of other countries for input on the draft. The final national action plan would cover a range of key areas and NGOs would be invited to comment on the plan before its adoption.

47. **Ms. Milašiūtė** (Lithuania) said that temporary special measures were permitted under the Constitution. In essence, temporary special measures involved promoting the rights of one group of individuals over those of another. In the opinion of the Constitutional Court, any restriction of an individual's human rights had to be enshrined in law. Temporary special measures were therefore permitted under the Constitution provided that a legal basis for such measures had been established in legislation.

48. **Ms. Baliukevičienė** (Lithuania) said that the new Labour Code, which had entered into force in 2017, regulated labour relations on the basis of the principle of equality for all. The State Labour Inspectorate was responsible for enforcing the Code. Complaints of

workers' rights violations could be lodged with labour dispute committees. Lithuania had one of the highest female employment rates among European Union countries, and the rate continued to grow.

49. **Ms. Bethel** said that, given the seemingly limited scope afforded by the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men to combat gender stereotyping, she wished to know what broader measures the State party envisaged to address such stereotyping and sexism more effectively across the board. Noting that a report by the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson had found that gender stereotypes had a long-term negative impact on career opportunities and pay, she wondered whether an action plan would be developed to remove gender stereotypes from educational materials.

50. She would be interested to learn whether the Law on Strengthening of the Family was grounded in a comprehensive and concrete State policy with proactive and sustained measures targeting women and men, girls and boys, to eliminate gender stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes about the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society, and whether respect for, and protection and fulfilment of, women's rights lay at its core. She asked whether the Law sought to change the traditional perception that the role of women was to attend to men's needs. Did it encourage women to pursue social and public roles outside the family?

51. It would be helpful to learn how the State party raised awareness among media companies of gender stereotypes in advertising, news coverage, social media and radio and television programmes. Was there any collaboration between the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson and the media regulator in tackling gender stereotypes, and did those bodies have the authority to monitor stereotyping in the media? She would be interested to know whether women were actively engaged in the process of producing and evaluating television and radio content. Lastly, she enquired whether the State party worked with women's rights NGOs to raise awareness of the harm caused by gender stereotypes among the media and the general public.

52. **Ms. Tisheva** said that she wished to know what time frame was in place for the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, and what barriers had to be overcome. She wondered what kind of awareness-raising measures the State party planned to introduce in order to ensure ratification. She would appreciate an explanation of the reconciliation and mediation procedure in domestic violence cases. She wished to know how serious cases of violence were resolved and how cases were followed up to prevent further violence. She would be interested to learn when civil and emergency protection orders would be introduced. She wondered when the State party would adopt a strategy and plans, including at the local level, to combat domestic and gender-based violence, and when comprehensive specialized services for all types of gender-based violence would be established with adequate financial and human resources. It would also be helpful to know when specialized services would be introduced for women with disabilities and other vulnerable groups of women. She asked how the Government would ensure that programmes dealing with perpetrators of violence were adequately financed and that work on raising awareness of gender-based violence issues among men and boys would continue.

53. **Ms. Gabr** asked whether there were any plans to enhance training for police officers in order to improve the identification of trafficking victims. She wondered how the State party would ensure that victims had access to appropriate mental health professionals during interrogation. She would be grateful for the delegation's comments on measures to improve recognition of the signs of child trafficking, to provide shelters specifically for women and children victims of human trafficking and to enhance training for social workers employed in those shelters.

54. She would be interested to learn how the Government intended to raise awareness of the recruitment of adults and children from low-income families over the Internet for the purposes of labour exploitation, and how it collaborated with foreign countries on issues such as border control. She wondered whether judicial officials received training on how to assist victims of prostitution, so as to ensure that they were viewed as victims of exploitation and not as perpetrators. She asked how the State party cooperated with international agencies in combating all forms of trafficking and what further measures it

would take to prosecute potential sex traffickers and impose appropriate prison sentences on convicted perpetrators.

55. **Ms. Statauskienė** (Lithuania) said that the National Education Agency, under the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, had been established in September 2019 and was responsible for tackling discrimination and promoting positive attitudes to gender equality in the education system. Teacher training materials were available in video format through an Internet platform. A new curriculum would take into account human rights issues, including exploitation, trafficking in persons and discrimination.

56. **Mr. Milevičius** (Lithuania) said that the Law on Strengthening of the Family dealt with issues of family policy, including the institutional framework, coordination mechanisms and cooperation with NGOs in family matters. It also addressed the reconciliation of work and family life and the provision of services for families. The Law categorically prohibited violence within the family. The Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men was the main legal instrument for combating gender stereotypes, while the Law on Strengthening of the Family addressed the issue solely from a family policy perspective.

57. **Ms. Dulkinaitė** (Lithuania) said that the national broadcaster, Lithuanian National Radio and Television, contributed to raising awareness of gender equality and had taken various measures to improve gender equality in its internal organizational structure. It had adopted an equal opportunities policy and monitored the policy's implementation. The broadcaster's employees were recruited according to equal selection criteria and male and female employees received equal pay for equal work. Evaluation and dismissal criteria were the same for both men and women. Measures were in place to protect employees who submitted complaints of discrimination or harassment at work. Over the previous five years, the broadcaster had aired various programmes aimed at raising awareness of gender equality. In 2016, Lithuanian National Radio and Television had launched an initiative with the support of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) to ensure equal representation of women and men in national programming, on the basis of a standard of measurement that took into account the number of journalists, guests and musicians of both genders who took part in radio and television broadcasts.

58. **Ms. Mickutė** (Lithuania) said that, every year, the Ministry of the Interior organized training courses for police officers, together with social workers, psychologists and childcare specialists, on measures to prevent human trafficking and how to identify and communicate with victims. In November 2019, additional training was planned in four cities where human trafficking was the most prevalent. The Ministry of Health had been requested to address the gaps in legislation regarding the provision of health care for victims.

59. Every year, the General Prosecutor's Office reviewed and amended the recommendations for the identification of victims of trafficking in human beings in accordance with guidance from law enforcement officials, NGOs and other experts. The recommendations also established criteria for identifying child victims of trafficking. The procedures for recording and handling reports of potential children's rights violations had been strengthened in 2018. As part of a project funded by the European Union, 120 consultants had been recruited to provide training to school staff on trafficking-related issues, including the prevention and recognition of trafficking.

60. Joint investigation teams, which comprised labour inspectors and police officers, had been established in 2018 to identify victims of labour exploitation. The Employment Service was carrying out campaigns to raise awareness of the risks of human trafficking among those seeking employment. Police officers and public prosecutors took part in joint training courses and exchange programmes with officials from other countries. In 2018, Lithuania had signed a cooperation agreement with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in order to prevent trafficking and to assist victims.

61. The draft national action plan on women and peace and security contained measures to help women in prostitution. Research would be carried out to determine the scale of the issue of prostitution, the obstacles to the reintegration into society of women in prostitution would be identified and the legislative framework for protection and support would be

evaluated. The role of the new national association to combat human trafficking was to introduce measures to prevent human trafficking and discrimination against women, and to provide support for victims of prostitution and facilitate their reintegration into society.

62. **Mr. Milevičius** (Lithuania) said that funding for NGOs working with victims of human trafficking and women in prostitution was constantly rising: in 2016, such organizations had received €80,000 and, in 2019, €165,000 had been allocated. In 2020, their funding was expected to reach €200,000.

63. The working group on the prevention of domestic violence was considering broadening the scope of the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence to cover all forms of violence, including sexual violence. The working group would hold discussions with the relevant government institutions regarding the possibility of introducing protection orders for victims.

64. Funding for domestic violence-related programmes came mainly from two sources: the State budget and the European Union. Around 7 per cent of funds were spent on programmes aimed at perpetrators, which were run by NGOs, with the rest being allocated to victim-centred measures. Special attention was paid to vulnerable categories of women in the laws governing the work of specialized assistance centres.

65. **Ms. Čmilytė-Nielsen** (Lithuania) said that one of the barriers to the ratification by Lithuania of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention) was a fear that it would open the door to the recognition of non-stereotypical gender roles and same-sex marriage. Lithuania had signed the Istanbul Convention in 2013, and the President had submitted it to the Seimas (parliament) for ratification in the summer of 2018. However, there was currently no political will to ratify it. With that in mind, the Committee on Human Rights of the Seimas had taken elements of the Istanbul Convention that were not reflected in domestic law, such as the criminalization of stalking, and incorporated them into legislative proposals, which were being debated.

66. **Mr. Bingelis** (Lithuania) said that education was a vital component of long-term efforts to achieve gender equality. Although the process of ratifying the Istanbul Convention was moving slowly, extensive preparatory work had been and was being carried out to facilitate ratification.

67. **Ms. Gabr** said that the State party should intensify its efforts to raise awareness of human trafficking and cooperate with international organizations to establish specialized centres for child victims.

68. **Ms. Bethel** said that she had heard no response to her questions on how the State party intended to eliminate the negative impacts of gender stereotypes on vocational choices, career opportunities and equal pay, and whether the Law on Strengthening of the Family helped to address the link between such stereotypes and gender-based violence against women, or whether, on the contrary, it reinforced traditional stereotypes of women within the family. She had also asked whether the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson and the media regulator collaborated to address gender stereotypes, and whether women's NGOs participated in State efforts to raise awareness among the general public and the media of the harm caused by such stereotypes.

69. **Ms. Tisheva** asked whether legislation would be introduced to prohibit mediation in cases of violence against women, and what measures would be adopted to raise awareness of the Istanbul Convention.

70. **Ms. Čmilytė-Nielsen** (Lithuania) said that the Law on Strengthening of the Family dealt primarily with the provision of services. While it did little to strengthen the role of women outside the family, it was, at worst, gender-neutral. In late 2018, the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson had conducted a campaign to raise awareness of victim blaming in the context of domestic violence.

71. **Mr. Milevičius** (Lithuania) said that there was a specialized centre for child victims of sexual violence that was based on a Scandinavian model and run by a non-governmental organization. The project entitled "Domestic violence: prevention, protection, assistance"

involved a public information campaign to raise awareness of and combat gender stereotypes.

72. **Ms. Statauskienė** (Lithuania) said that Lithuania had experience of cooperating in European Union and global initiatives to encourage women and girls to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, including through the work of Humana People to People Baltic. In December 2018, anti-bullying boxes had been installed in schools to make it easier for students to report issues that were affecting them. Students had been consulted on proposed changes to general education curricula, which were inspired in part by the Sustainable Development Goals.

73. **Mr. Bingelis** (Lithuania) said that child victims of domestic violence were no longer institutionalized. In January 2020, new arrangements would come into force making it possible for them to be placed under temporary guardianship.

74. **Ms. Mickutė** (Lithuania) said that child victims of human trafficking received support from two NGOs in mixed shelters.

75. **Mr. Bingelis** (Lithuania) said that one of the reasons why no specialized centres for child victims of human trafficking had been created was that cases of trafficking in children were very rare in Lithuania.

Articles 7 to 9

76. **Mr. Safarov** said that he would be interested to know the delegation's thoughts on the apparent incongruity between the State party's high gross domestic product and Human Development Index score and the persistently low representation of women in decision-making positions. He wished to know what steps had been taken to raise awareness of and address the issue, whether research had been carried out to identify the causes, whether and how the situation was monitored, whether women were given leadership skills training and whether figures were available on women entrepreneurs and on women's representation on the boards of directors of private companies and in the media. An indication of the number of women prosecutors and lawyers would also be appreciated.

77. **Ms. Manalo** said that, according to information at the Committee's disposal, women accounted for 25.9 per cent of heads of diplomatic and consular missions. She wished to know whether the women in question were career diplomats, why women's representation in the foreign service was so low, what was being done to rectify the situation and whether up-to-date statistics were available in that regard. She would also welcome figures on women's representation in international organizations and in the three branches of the armed forces, and an explanation of whether women had been given roles in any of the peacekeeping missions in which Lithuania was involved.

78. **Ms. Song** asked how the Government ensured respect for women's equal right to nationality, whether gender equality and sensitivity training was provided to all persons working in the field of immigration, whether a Lithuanian woman could pass on her nationality to a foreign spouse and what services were offered to stateless women who applied for naturalization.

79. **Mr. Bingelis** (Lithuania) said that the low number of women ministers, which had sparked debates in Lithuania, did not reflect the overall representation of women in the executive branch. For example, women accounted for 42 per cent of deputy ministers.

80. **Ms. Čmilytė-Nielsen** (Lithuania) said that, in recent years, the number of women ministers had fluctuated, but that the Government's goal was to achieve a gradual increase in women's political representation. Barriers to such representation were being removed, though not as quickly as the Government would like. Women could enlist in the armed forces if they so wished, and accounted for between 5 and 10 per cent of all military personnel.

81. **Mr. Krivas** (Lithuania) said that 59 per cent of all staff members and 75.8 per cent of heads of unit in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were women. The Ministry's leadership structure consisted of six members: the Minister, three deputy ministers, a chancellor and a

political director. Historically, women had occupied all the posts with the exception of Minister; the current political director was a woman.

82. According to the most recent statistics available, women accounted for 30 per cent of heads of diplomatic and consular missions. Almost all of them were career diplomats who had risen through the ranks. The Permanent Representatives of the Republic of Lithuania to the United Nations, the European Union, the Council of Europe, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development were all women.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.