



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

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

Summary record of the 1798th meeting

Held via videoconference, on Tuesday, 23 February 2021, at 12.30 p.m. Central European Time

Chair: Ms. Acosta Vargas

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The meeting was called to order at 12.30 p.m.

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

Ninth periodic report of Denmark (continued) (CEDAW/C/DNK/9, CEDAW/C/DNK/Q/9 and CEDAW/C/DNK/RQ/9)

Articles 1–6 (continued)

1. **Ms. Manalo** said that she would be grateful if the delegation would provide two examples of measures taken to challenge harmful gender stereotypes. Noting that the State party used gender-neutral language in its legislation and policies, she said that the delegation might explain its understanding of the difference between terms such as “domestic violence” and “gender-based violence”, which appeared to have different connotations. She wondered what steps were being taken to prevent gender-based violence during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and whether the Government had any plans, programmes or policies that were specifically intended to eliminate trafficking in persons. The Committee would welcome information on any steps taken to assess the impact of the new legal provisions on the offence of rape and their application during the pandemic. Lastly, she wished to know what was being done to reduce the demand for prostitution and prevent new forms of prostitution, such as escort services, in the State party.

2. **Mr. Safarov**, noting that protection mechanisms against gender-based violence varied between Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands, said that he wished to know whether hotlines for reporting such violence had been established throughout the country and the extent to which procedures for registering and investigating complaints were effective. He wondered what urgent measures were being taken to prevent violence, including psychological violence, and strengthen the rights of victims during the pandemic. Information on any measures taken prior to the pandemic would also be welcome. The delegation might explain how rape was defined in the new legal provisions on rape, whether the definition covered marital rape, how consent was defined in law and whether training in the new legal provisions was given to investigators, prosecutor and judges. He wondered what was being done to protect and promote the rights of vulnerable women, including those belonging to minority ethnic groups, and whether any action was being taken to increase the number of places in shelters for women with children. It would be interesting to learn what measures were being taken to protect women and girls with disabilities against violence and to reduce the suicide rate among them. Lastly, he wished to know whether data on acts of violence against women and girls were collected and analysed.

3. **Ms. Appel** (Denmark) said that the Government considered it essential to have gender-disaggregated data, which were used as the basis for all its policies and actions. Citizens used their social security numbers for all administrative procedures, making it possible to collect gender-disaggregated data on almost every area of policy, including employment and health. It was important to note that the Government’s use of gender-neutral language in its legislation and policies did not prevent it from having access to gender-disaggregated data and statistics.

4. In order to break gender stereotypes, the amount of paternity leave to which fathers were entitled had been increased and campaigns were being conducted to change the public’s perception of the role of fathers and masculinity in general. Girls and women were encouraged to study science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and to undertake vocational training in areas not traditionally associated with women, such as the construction industry. Action plans on combating gender-based violence, including intimate partner violence, had been established. The gender-specific needs of men and women were carefully considered in all the Government’s actions.

5. **Ms. Neimann** (Denmark) said that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would be launching an ambitious gender equality action plan that would run for five years. The main goals of the plan were to ensure equal pay for the Ministry’s male and female staff, to achieve a gender balance at the management level and in all units and embassies, and to address issues related to unconscious gender bias. The Ministry’s gender equality policy was aimed at

ensuring that all appointments and promotions were based on competences and merits and that women staff members, including managers, had the same career opportunities as their male counterparts. In the last two years, the proportion of female ambassadors had increased and an even gender balance had been achieved in the appointments of new managers, including ambassadors.

6. **Mr. Friis Uhrbrand** (Denmark) said that the Government was committed to promoting an equal gender balance at the management and corporate-board levels of companies and was currently reviewing legislation and policies with a view to ensuring that the largest companies in the country worked towards achieving that goal. The Government was assisting larger companies in meeting targets to achieve greater gender balance in the highest decision-making bodies. It was also working to improve legal definitions and requirements with respect to other managerial levels and enhance the transparency of company data. Furthermore, it was planning to hold a meeting with representatives of all the political parties in the parliament with a view to discussing those issues and putting forward legislative proposals.

7. **Ms. Svendsen** (Denmark) said that, in the spring of 2020, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Senior Citizens, in cooperation with the National Board of Social Services and the National Association of Municipalities, had conducted a preliminary survey on the consequences of the pandemic for various vulnerable groups, following which funding was allocated to initiatives intended to support those groups. For example, a national hotline had been established for victims of all types of domestic violence and research on domestic violence during the pandemic and the available opportunities for seeking help had been conducted. Every year, on behalf of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Senior Citizens, Statistics Denmark gathered data on women living in shelters, persons who abused drugs, persons with disabilities and persons living in care homes. The statistics gathered in 2020 would be published in 2021 and would reveal whether the number of women staying in shelters had increased or decreased.

8. **Mr. Beuschel** (Denmark) said that the Government had established a number of projects intended to help women leave prostitution, which was treated as a social problem in Denmark. For example, around 30 million Danish kroner (DKr) had been allocated to the Exit Programme for People Involved in Prostitution, which had been established in some of the largest municipalities in the country and was scheduled to run until 2024. In the spring of 2021, a study on prostitution in Denmark would be published that would contain information on the scope of the problem and the social backgrounds and living conditions of persons involved in prostitution. In 2020, the Government and the parliament had agreed to allocate DKr 14.5 million to an initiative intended to prevent young persons from entering prostitution-like relationships.

9. **Mr. Jens Rasmussen** (Denmark) said that the Government had taken steps to address the rise in the number of acts of violence directed at women during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, the increase in demand for vacant rooms in shelters had led to increasing pressure being placed on those shelters. Consequently, the Government had decided to fund 55 temporary rooms in shelters that would be in place for a period of four months. Furthermore, all the political parties represented in the parliament had signed an agreement to allocate DKr 15 million to increase the capacity of mobile counselling services and treatment programmes for victims of partner violence. The Government had made efforts to ensure that existing mechanisms for preventing violence against women were able to continue operating during the pandemic.

10. The Government considered the gender perspective in all its efforts to combat the problem in view of the fact that women faced a greater risk of violence than men. The municipalities were required by law to offer temporary accommodation to women victims of violence. The use of such shelters was restricted to women residents, who were entitled to receive support in the areas of housing, personal finance, employment, day care for children and health care. In 2020, the Government had adopted a law requiring the municipalities to offer a maximum of 10 hours of free psychological care to all women residents of shelters. Children living with their mothers in shelters were also entitled to receive such care.

11. **Ms. Walbom** (Denmark) said that, pursuant to the new legislation on rape that had entered into force in January 2021, all sexual acts that took place without consent were considered to be rape, including where the persons concerned were married. Although the term “consent” was not defined in law, it was understood to refer to an expression of a person’s free will. As the new legislation had entered into force very recently, no evaluation of its impact had been conducted to date.

12. **Ms. Gabr** said that the Government had allocated funding to assist developing countries in their efforts to combat human trafficking but had reduced its own efforts to tackle the offence. In view of that situation, she asked whether mechanisms for combating human trafficking would be strengthened in the Government’s new Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings. It was not clear why there had been fewer convictions for human trafficking in 2019 than in any year since 2013. The Committee would appreciate information on any plans in place to enhance the protection and assistance afforded to victims or witnesses of human trafficking during proceedings brought against perpetrators of that offence. The delegation might also indicate what was being done to protect underage victims of sex trafficking and forced labour. She wondered what plans were in place to raise awareness of human trafficking among vulnerable persons and whether cooperation agreements on awareness-raising campaigns had been established with non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

13. Given that a number of NGOs had been allocated funds to carry out outreach and confidence-building work under the Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings 2019-2021, it would be useful to learn whether that good practice would be continued in the new action plan. The Committee also wished to know whether an anti-trafficking unit would be re-established within the Copenhagen police.

14. She wondered what measures were in place to protect and assist women involved in prostitution and to implement the Committee’s general recommendation No. 38 (2020) on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration. She would be grateful to receive information on any actions being taken to reduce the demand for prostitution in the State party. The Committee wished to know what steps would be taken to collect data on victims of trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation in Greenland, particularly given that internal Danish sources indicated that some victims of that offence might be children. It would also welcome information on any measures being taken to protect migrant women against exploitation in the Faroe Islands.

15. **Mr. Aagren** (Denmark) said that trafficking in persons was considered a serious crime in Denmark. The Danish National Police and the Danish Prosecution Service focused closely on cases potentially involving such trafficking. Their work had been facilitated by the development of a comprehensive set of national guidelines that were revised as necessary.

16. A number of safeguards had been put in place to protect victims of crime, including victims of trafficking in persons. The courts, for example, could decide that an alleged perpetrator could be barred from the courtroom during witness testimony. They could also decide not to disclose the names, occupations or addresses of witnesses to the defendant. In addition, court proceedings could be closed to the public if proceeding publicly was deemed to constitute a danger to the victim.

17. The Copenhagen Police District was responsible for investigating trafficking-related cases. It coordinated with police districts elsewhere in Denmark, the authorities of the relevant countries and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement (Europol). The national police had had an anti-trafficking unit for several years. In addition, funding had been set aside for the establishment of a special law enforcement unit for the investigation and prosecution of the most complex crimes, including organized human trafficking.

18. According to the Danish National Police, 14 persons had been charged with trafficking in persons in 2019, more than in previous years. Two of those persons had ultimately been convicted of a lesser charge, procuring. The cases against the others were pending.

19. **Ms. Rosado** (Denmark) said that unaccompanied child migrants were accommodated in special children’s facilities staffed around the clock by professionally trained staff

members. At-risk unaccompanied minors could, on the recommendation of the relevant municipal authority, be placed in protective care.

20. **Mr. Kenny Rasmussen** (Denmark) said that a six-month residence permit, renewable as many times as necessary, could be given to any foreign national whose presence was needed for the prosecution of persons charged with human trafficking.

21. **Ms. Holme Dam** (Denmark) said that the Danish Immigration Service was active in the national system for the referral of victims of trafficking in persons. A special unit of the Service's Asylum Division was responsible for assessing the situation of asylum seekers, including unaccompanied minors, who claimed that they were victims of trafficking in persons. The assessments, which differed from ordinary decisions on applications for asylum, took all relevant information, often including initial evaluations from the Danish Centre against Human Trafficking, into consideration. If necessary, and with the consent of the person concerned, asylum seekers were referred to the Centre for additional interviews.

22. **Ms. Walbom** (Denmark) said that section 216 of the Danish Criminal Code did not contain a definition of consent as it related to sexual activity and that there had not yet been any cases brought under the country's recently amended legislation on rape. It was nonetheless clear that consent had to be given freely. Depending on the circumstances, it could be given verbally or otherwise. Examples of consent to sexual relations included kissing, touching and making sounds and movements. Although there was a presumption that persons who gave their consent would express some form of interest in those relations and that being totally passive was a sign that consent had not been given, the circumstances of a given case would always be taken into consideration.

23. **Mr. Safarov** asked what the main reason for the increasing number of rapes and other forms of violence against women and girls in the State party was, in particular as that increase appeared linked to a growing risk of suicide among women and girls. He also asked why the State party had not fully implemented the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention).

24. **Ms. Manalo** asked what could be done to protect and promote the rights of members of minority communities and vulnerable groups. She also asked whether any measures were being taken to prevent new forms of prostitution.

25. **Ms. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen**, referring to the relationships verging on prostitution that, according to the State party, some minors entered into, said that she wished to know whether those relationships were considered a form of trafficking and whether the State party had youth workers who were trained to recognize signs of trafficking.

26. **Ms. Gabr** said that, as she had noted earlier, she would welcome information on the State party's efforts to raise awareness of trafficking in persons and protect the victims of trafficking.

27. **Mr. Andersson** (Denmark) said that, although the number of reported rapes had risen in recent years, there had been no rise in overall violence against women and girls from 2005, when the first victimization survey was conducted, to 2017, the year of the most recent such survey. The extent of the protection afforded victims of trafficking in persons under the country's relevant action plan, which was in place for the years from 2019 to 2021, was no less comprehensive than it had been in the previous such plan. Awareness-raising was a key component of the mandate and work of the Danish Centre against Human Trafficking.

28. **Ms. Findsen** (Denmark) said that preliminary figures had shown no signs of a rise in suicide rates among women and girls.

29. **Ms. Walbom** (Denmark) said that, since its ratification of the Istanbul Convention in 2014, Denmark had implemented national action plans to combat domestic violence, established a national office for the prevention of domestic violence, stiffened penalties for intimate-partner violence and amended the Criminal Code to introduce a provision on psychological violence in close relationships. In December 2020, the Government had put forward a bill with a view to combating what was referred to as negative social control. If the bill became law, religious marriages of minors would be prohibited and the penalties for forced marriages would be increased. Other initiatives from the previous year had included

a campaign to raise awareness of online harassment, which had been accompanied by the introduction of penalties for the non-consensual sharing of sexual images, and the renewal of a multi-year agreement on the public funding of efforts by the police and the Danish Prosecution Service to combat violence stemming from Internet relationships.

Articles 10–14 (continued)

30. **Ms. Al-Rammah** said she would like to learn more about the impact of the many commendable initiatives undertaken by the State party in a bid to combat stereotyped concepts of the roles of women and girls, in particular in the field of education. She would also welcome information on the efforts that were made to ensure that girls with disabilities had equal educational opportunities and were thus prepared to enter the labour market.

31. In addition, she wished to know what steps were taken, including teacher training, to ensure that school programmes covered human rights education, not least as it related to combating gender stereotypes and harassment. Lastly, she wondered whether the State party could provide the Committee with data on the educational performance, including dropout rates, of the children from minority backgrounds.

32. **Ms. Tisheva** asked whether the Government intended to study the reasons for the gap between the wages of women and men in the State party and what immediate steps, including tackling gender segregation, amending legislation and policies related to equal pay and pay transparency or introducing binding measures, were planned to close that persistent gap. In that connection, she would welcome information on any initiatives, including training, designed to enhance work-life balance, combat gender stereotypes and thus help narrow the pay gap. She wondered what measures were planned to increase the percentage of women with careers in the lucrative and highly segregated information technology sector.

33. She would also welcome information on the impact of the State party's efforts to increase employment among women from minority or migrant communities. In addition, she asked whether special measures had been taken to help women with disabilities gain access to the labour market.

34. **Ms. Svenssen** (Denmark) said that the talent barometer launched in 2017 to measure women's representation in academia showed that their involvement in STEM subjects was increasing, but not fast enough: relative to 2019, 13 per cent more women had been admitted to STEM programmes and 20 per cent more women had been admitted to information technology programmes in 2020, and 33 per cent of all students admitted to STEM education in that year had been women. The Government was working with private companies and the education sector to ensure that the positive trend continued and several universities were running special programmes to encourage women into STEM education, including information technology camps exclusively for women.

35. **Ms. Kisling** (Denmark) said that the persistent gender pay gap was largely a reflection of gender segregation in the labour market attributable to the educational choices that women made early on and their career and life expectations. There were no quick fixes for personal preferences of that kind, but the Government was using targeted initiatives to get more girls and young women interested in STEM education and career opportunities. Although current legislation relating to transparency over the gender pay gap encompassed businesses with more than 35 employees only, the authorities were engaged in ongoing dialogue with social partners with a view to strengthening practical enforcement of the equal pay principle. In addition, the Government was actively supporting the development of new European Union proposals for increased transparency in enforcing the equal pay principle.

36. **Ms. Piontek** (Denmark) said that integrating migrant women, especially non-Western and minority women, into the Danish labour market was a challenge, but that several initiatives aimed at strengthening integration were currently being implemented in close cooperation with local authorities and civil society actors.

37. **Ms. Farci** (Denmark) said that there was no formal, cross-sectoral database of persons with disabilities in Denmark but there were sector-specific registers, including registers of persons with disabilities working in the health sector and in social services. Data on the employment of persons with disabilities were therefore based on survey findings, cross-

referenced against those registers. The most recent data available, from 2016, indicated that 50.2 per cent of women with disabilities were employed, compared with 54 per cent of men. It was too soon to assess the impact of COVID-19 on employment figures. There were no measures to increase employment specifically among women with disabilities, but the initiative known as the flexi-job scheme and the provisions of the Act on Compensation for Persons with Disabilities in Employment served to enhance employment possibilities for persons with disabilities in general.

38. **Ms. Aller** (Denmark) said that the Government recognized the need to improve health, sexual and family education in schools. Significant shortcomings identified in a 2019 study had provided a basis for parliamentary discussion and, as a result, Dkr 15 million had been set aside to update the relevant curricular framework in the period 2021–2023 and a plan of action was due to be launched by the middle of 2021. Although several NGOs had called for schools to assign a minimum number of lessons to health, sexual and family education, the imposition of a legal minimum would run counter to the tradition of local flexibility and autonomy for schools and teachers and was not therefore something that the Government could endorse.

39. The Ministry of Education provided financial support to the Danish Family Planning Association, to enable it to provide teachers with free course materials, and also to LGBT Denmark, the Danish national organization for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons, to enable it to produce digital materials on rights and inclusion for secondary school pupils. Guidelines on how to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and other students were available for teachers and principals on the Ministry of Education's learning platform and human rights education was a mandatory part of the basic education of all children in Denmark.

40. **Ms. Ameline** said that she encouraged the State party to incorporate the provisions of the Convention in educational curricula from the earliest possible age, to accelerate efforts to promote women's access to decision-making positions and positions of responsibility on boards by adopting more stringent and, ideally, legally binding measures and to reflect on the definition of the concept of equal pay for work of equal value.

41. **Ms. Chalal** said that she would like to know: whether any adjustments had been necessary to ensure uninterrupted access to maternity and reproductive health services for women and girls from vulnerable and minority groups during the pandemic; whether there had been an increase in home births in that period, and an increase in the use of tele-health services to offset the reduced availability of in-person care; and whether the new national guidelines for maternity and obstetric care, which should have been released in 2019, were now ready for publication. She wondered whether the delegation could confirm reports of a sharp drop in premature births in Denmark during the COVID-19 lockdown and of an exceptionally high rate of cancer, all forms combined, among Danish women. If the reports were accurate, could the delegation explain the causes? She would also like to know what the Government was doing to remove the obstacles that impeded access to maternal health services, emergency obstetric care and vaccination for undocumented migrant women and why it had decided to place restrictions on the right to free interpretation services within the health system.

42. She would be interested to learn more about the conclusions drawn from the research into mental health and stress among young persons conducted in 2017 and about the resulting action plan. Specific information about policies on the use of coercion and on free and informed consent and about strategies for addressing pandemic-related psychological difficulties would be appreciated. She would also welcome an explanation for the worryingly high rates of abortion and suicide among young women in Greenland and details of any action being taken to address the root causes, notably through education and awareness-raising initiatives, including online. Further information about any measures in place to address the psychological problems associated with isolation among Faroe Islands residents would be useful. Lastly, she wished to know whether there were any plans to bring the legislation governing abortion in the Faroe Islands into line with current Danish legislation and thus authorize abortion at least on the four grounds given in the Committee's jurisprudence – namely rape, incest, threats to the mother's life or health and fetal abnormality – so that women were no longer forced to travel to the continent in order to terminate a pregnancy.

43. **Ms. Hansen** (Denmark) said that the Government was reviewing legislation and policies with a view to increasing women's representation in management positions in large companies and the public sector. It would continue to push for a more even gender balance but did not support the use of quotas. The parliament had found that quotas were inflexible and were likely to interfere with the management of companies.

44. **Ms. Kisling** (Denmark) said that the concept of equal pay for work of equal value was in principle already incorporated in the Equal Pay Act but further clarification of the concept could certainly be beneficial, especially in the context of the upcoming European Union dialogue on transparency and enforcement.

45. **Ms. Findsen** (Denmark) said that, although Denmark was generally one of the safest places in which to give birth and already offered special services for vulnerable women and their families, the national guidelines for maternity care had recently been reviewed with a view to improving early and differential maternity care and making all care more personalized. The updated guidelines should be issued before the middle of 2021.

46. A sharp drop in premature births before 28 weeks had indeed been observed during the first COVID-19 lockdown in March and April 2020. Researchers were studying the data but it was too soon to draw conclusions about the causes of the decline. It was likewise true that an increasing number of Danish women were being diagnosed with cancer, but they were also living longer after diagnosis: in fact, nearly 200,000 Danish women were living with or were survivors of cancer. To reduce the incidence of cervical cancer, screening was offered to all women between the ages of 23 and 64 and girls aged between 12 and 17 were offered human papilloma virus vaccination as part of the childhood immunization programme. New guidelines for cervical cancer screening published in May 2018 included a recommendation for targeted initiatives aimed at groups of women, such as women with disabilities, whose participation in preventive programmes was traditionally low.

47. Most health-care services were available free of charge, irrespective of a patient's status. Undocumented migrants and other foreign nationals not legally resident in Denmark had the right to emergency hospital treatment, reproductive health-care services, treatment for chronic disease and ongoing hospital care when a referral or transfer to their country of origin was not possible. Payment for emergency treatment might be sought in some cases, but claims were processed subsequent to and separately from the treatment itself and no one could be denied care on financial grounds. Charges for interpretation services in the health-care system had been introduced in 2013 for men and women already resident in Denmark for at least three years, but exemptions applied for minors, the parents of minors receiving treatment and persons unable to learn the Danish language owing to a physical or mental impairment.

48. Improved psychiatric care and suicide prevention were the main goals of a comprehensive 10-year mental health plan currently being developed by the Government with input from social services, stakeholders and political parties. Children and young people would be a particular focus of the plan, which would also address the use of coercion in psychiatric care. Government policy during the pandemic had also had a mental health focus, and a series of leaflets containing advice and guidance for mentally vulnerable persons, members of their families and health-care professionals had been published. After a decline in referrals to mental health services in the early days of lockdown, concerted efforts to ensure that persons with mental health issues were getting the help they needed had brought the number of referrals back to more normal levels. Furthermore, the right of all persons to receive a psychiatric diagnosis and treatment within certain time limits had been reinstated as of 1 September 2020, after having been temporarily rescinded in order to divert resources to the fight against COVID-19.

49. The Chair invited the members of the delegation to provide the Committee with written information in response to any of the questions that they had been unable to answer during the meeting owing to time constraints.

The meeting rose at 2.40 p.m.