



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

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

**Summary record of the 1111th meeting\***

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 19 February 2013, at 10 a.m.

*Chairperson:* Ms. Ameline

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*Seventh periodic report of Greece*

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\* No summary record was issued for the 1110th 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)*

*Seventh periodic report of Greece (CEDAW/C/GRC/7; CEDAW/C/GRC/Q/7 and Add.1)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Greece took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Ms. Makri** (Greece), introducing the seventh periodic report of Greece (CEDAW/C/GRC/7), said that the adverse effects of the financial crisis on the situation of women in Greece were undeniable. The social fabric was straining under the weight of unemployment, social protection, health-care deficits and the ensuing inequalities. Vulnerable groups such as older women, migrant women and women with disabilities were often the hardest hit. However, the adversity was also an opportunity for action and her delegation wished to focus on the Government's efforts to achieve de jure and de facto equality rather than on the problems and challenges, despite their unprecedented scale.
3. The normative framework for gender equality and non-discrimination was to a great extent already delimited. During the reporting period, Greece had ratified the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention as well as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its three protocols; it had adopted three new laws on equal opportunities between men and women, the first dealing with equality in access to goods and services, the second with work and employment, and the third with self employment; and it had been among the first countries to sign the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. Since 2008, the Gender Equality Department of the office of the Ombudsman had been working to ensure compliance with the relevant legal provisions and, in conjunction with the General Secretariat for Gender Equality of the Ministry of the Interior and the Department of Gender Equality of the Ministry of Employment, to raise awareness of gender equality issues.
4. The Committee's concluding comments on the sixth periodic report of Greece (CEDAW/C/GRC/CO/6) had been translated into Greek and had been disseminated to all ministries, the speaker of the Greek parliament, the press and NGOs. Since then, acting upon the Committee's recommendations, the Government had: conducted mass media campaigns to combat persistent gender stereotypes; begun building a network of counselling centres to provide legal advice and ensure equal access to justice for men and women; established a round-the-clock emergency helpline; introduced training for public officials in how to deal with gender-based violence; and incorporated the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime into national law.
5. Although the participation of Greek women in governmental and other decision-making bodies remained relatively low, women currently accounted for a record 20 per cent of members of parliament and the Government was taking various steps to promote their political advancement at the local, regional, national and European levels. In its efforts to promote gender equality, the Government used a combination of targeted measures designed to empower women in sectors in which they were underrepresented and cross-cutting interventions designed to ensure that gender was a consideration in all policy areas. However, the crisis had necessitated adjustments at the policy level to place particular emphasis on keeping women in work.

6. Combating gender-based violence was another priority. Women's shelters had been established to complement the network of counselling centres; a committee had been formed to monitor the impact of action taken; and a training manual had been produced for the personnel of the counselling centres, shelters and emergency helpline. Advice and assistance in sexual and reproductive health issues was also available, through a programme operated by the Helena Venizelou Maternity Hospital under an agreement with the General Secretariat for Gender Equality.

7. The Government was working to encourage all levels of the administration (i.e. local, regional and central) to systematically introduce gender equality policies. Three guides to gender mainstreaming had been produced to that end – one for the municipalities, one for the regional authorities and one for the ministries. The Government was also in the process of establishing a national observatory to monitor and evaluate the success of its gender equality policies.

*Articles 1 to 3*

8. **Mr. Bruun** (Country Rapporteur) said that as the report covered the period from 2005 to 2008, it did not deal with the effects of the crisis and the Government's efforts to address them. He hoped that the dialogue would fill that gap. Enquiring about the drafting process, he asked whether the report had been discussed in parliament and whether NGOs had had the opportunity to comment. Noting the lack of NGOs present and their apparently scant input, he sought an update on the current situation of women's NGOs active in Greece.

9. With regard to the administration of justice, he was concerned about reports that the Convention lacked visibility, that legal aid was difficult to obtain and that high litigation costs deterred women victims from contacting the police. He would like to know whether the Convention was invoked in court; whether judges received instruction in its provisions; whether the Committee's general comments were translated into and circulated in Greek; and how the authorities monitored the situation of women migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in detention camps.

10. He would be interested to know the Government's reaction to reports from international bodies including the International Labour Organization (ILO) supervisory body and the Council of Europe that were critical of the human rights situation in Greece and what it was doing to mitigate the impact of the austerity measures. He had been alarmed to hear that a female prosecutor had been disciplined for criticizing those measures.

11. **Ms. Schulz** said that although the introductory statement had partially updated a generally outdated report, information about the impact of the measures and laws described was still lacking. Furthermore, many of the laws presented as gender equality laws appeared actually to be family policy laws. With regard to the office of the Ombudsman, she would like to know: what level of personnel and financial resources it enjoyed; how many complaints it had handled and how many it had resolved; whether disputes were settled through conciliation or administrative procedures; whether the efficacy of its interventions was evaluated; and whether the crisis had increased demand for its services. Referring to paragraph 64 of the report, she asked whether the planned observatory to monitor gender equality in the public sector was operational and, if so, what its role was and what resources it had.

12. Noting that the current crisis situation made measures to prevent multiple discrimination against women more vital than ever, she asked whether the financial and personnel resources of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality had been, or were likely to be, increased; whether the Secretariat had access to Government ministers and could thus

influence policy; how it disseminated and acted upon the results of its monitoring; whether the efficacy of gender equality policies were evaluated; and, if so, by which body.

13. Referring to the State party's replies to the list of issues (CEDAW/C/GRC/Q/7/Add.1), she enquired whether any research surveys had been conducted as a result of the call for tenders referred to in paragraph 12 and, if so, whether the findings were being used to guide policy decisions; whether the National Committee for Equality was still active and what its role was; and whether the series of laws referred to in paragraphs 14 to 16 had been adopted.

14. **Ms. Makri** (Greece) said that the reporting process had been overseen by an ad hoc interministerial committee and that all women's NGOs had been invited to contribute. The final draft had been submitted to the national human rights body for comment. After approval and translation, it had been circulated to all ministries, public authorities, members of parliament and NGOs and was available on the website of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality in Greek and English.

15. The General Secretariat for Gender Equality was an integral part of the Ministry of the Interior with a discrete budget of €2.5 million (compared with €4 million two years previously). It supervised the Research Centre for Gender Equality, had direct access to ministers and was responsible for evaluating the efficacy of gender equality policy. Although recent financial developments called for a substantial reduction in the public administration infrastructure, the Ministry was committed to maintaining the General Secretariat's structure. However, the final decision was subject to negotiation between the Government and its creditors. Whatever the outcome, the Secretariat would continue to exist as a distinct governmental body.

16. **Ms. Megalou** (Greece) said that periodic reports were not generally debated in parliament but that all actors were invited to contribute. Unfortunately, financial constraints had precluded a Greek NGO presence in Geneva. The Convention had been translated into Greek, and both the English and Greek versions were included in the legislation implementing the Convention enacted in 1983. Greek judges were familiar with the Convention's provisions and they had been cited in decisions of the Council of State.

17. **Ms. Katsaridou** (Greece) said that access to justice was relatively inexpensive in Greece and that all persons on low income were entitled to legal aid irrespective of their nationality, provided their legal status was regular. Victims of domestic violence, human trafficking and offences against sexual freedom were also exempted from payment of any special fee. Legal aid and other assistance were available through the 14 counselling centres established nationwide. In addition, the Research Centre for Gender Equality had concluded agreements with the bar associations in several Greek cities under which the latter undertook to guarantee free legal aid for all women and, under a programme operated by the Secretariat for Youth since 1997, male victims of violence aged under 30 and female victims aged under 35 qualified for free assistance.

18. The network of counselling centres and shelters, coupled with the emergency helpline, were key mechanisms in ensuring access to justice for women. In the past two years, the helpline had fielded nearly 6,000 calls. Judicial personnel received special training and, to facilitate their task, two far-reaching review projects had been launched with the respective aims of simplifying and improving current gender equality provisions and evaluating the impact on gender equality of current legal provisions in general.

19. The planned observatory would help ensure gender mainstreaming in all decisions at all levels. It had been assigned a budget of around €2.7 million. Although not yet fully operational, its infrastructure, technology and communication tools were already in place. The observatory would collect, manage and analyse data and use them to compile indicators of progress towards gender equality and measure the efficacy of gender equality

policies against international standards. It would share best practice, experience and information with organizations and State officials at the national and European levels and would produce annual reports for national and international distribution.

20. **Ms. Megalou** (Greece) said that the office of the Ombudsman and its gender equality department had begun work in 2008. In 2011, it had received over 10,000 complaints, a significant percentage of which had been resolved out of court. A number of the Ombudsman's legislative proposals had been adopted. Unfortunately, an increase in resources for the institution was unlikely, and further cuts were possible. The same was true of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality. A number of its programmes were being implemented, and measures taken to remobilize the National Committee for Equality Between Men and Women. The specialized legislative committees had drafted a number of bills or official reports on issues such as family law, violence against women and substantive gender equality, and a response from the relevant ministries as to whether their recommendations would be adopted was pending.

21. **Mr. Kastanas** (Greece) said that there was close cooperation between national human rights institutions and international bodies. Reports produced by those bodies were examined by the national human rights body, an entity that was fully compliant with the Paris Principles, and later disseminated to all stakeholders.

22. He was not aware of any disciplinary action taken against members of the judiciary for expressing their opinion. There were a number of associations of judicial officials active in Greece, some of which were quite vocal about austerity measures, including wage cuts.

23. **The Chairperson**, speaking in her capacity as an expert and referring to the cuts in public expenditure and the reduced range of activities implemented, asked about the continuing involvement of civil society, and requested clarification regarding the impact of changes to the economic and social model on women's rights and opportunities.

24. **Ms. Schulz** asked how the Government balanced the need for cuts with its obligation to protect economic and social rights. She enquired whether the observatory would be responsible for drafting reports to the Committee and, if so, what measures were planned to ensure that they remained official Government documents, reflecting the position of the State party.

25. **Mr. Bruun** requested data on the number of women provided with free legal aid.

26. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** requested information on the time frame envisaged for the adoption of the bills mentioned previously and invited the delegation to comment on any obstacles to that process.

27. **Ms. Al-Jehani** asked the delegation to comment on restrictions preventing the establishment of civil society organizations for Muslim women, in the light of reports that the Greek courts had prohibited the establishment of organizations based on race or ethnicity. Recent human rights reports had also raised the issue of female detainees, including minors, being held in the same detention centres as men.

28. **Ms. Megalou** (Greece) said that the State party was doing its best to uphold and protect women's rights during a period of crisis. European funding had permitted the Government to implement a number of programmes in spite of cuts in staff numbers and resources.

29. **Ms. Katsaridou** (Greece) said that the observatory did not perform the same tasks as the General Secretariat, although it did operate under the aegis of the Secretariat. It engaged in social dialogue with NGOs and participated in the drafting of reports, in cooperation with ministries. Between 2011 and 2012, the legal service of the General Secretariat had handled over 1,000 calls requesting assistance and replied to more than 70

written complaints, and a number of women had received legal assistance. The observatory was involved in research relating to issues such as prostitution, violence against women, men's health and the impact of the economic crisis on women.

30. **Mr. Kastanas** (Greece), speaking on the issue of freedom of association, said that a large number of Muslim and ethnic minority associations operated in Greece. Only two associations had not been permitted to register, owing to a court ruling on the compatibility of their statutes with national legislation.

31. **Mr. Karatsolis** (Greece) said that there were certain problems relating to conditions in reception and detention facilities, partly owing to a sharp rise in irregular migration. The Government planned to address problems in that area through an updated plan for managing migration flows. Measures had included the establishment of a first reception service, which aimed to identify vulnerable groups and genuine asylum seekers, ensure the provision of medical care, and handle unaccompanied minors. While men and women were sometimes held in the same building, they remained in separate holding areas.

32. **Ms. Megalou** (Greece) said that the bills in question had been submitted to the relevant ministers. The outcome and the time frame for the process depended on current political and economic priorities, but a response was expected in the near future.

33. **Ms. Makri** (Greece) said that while the crisis had exacerbated inequalities, the Government would endeavour to rise to the challenge, and was making the most of available European Union funding.

34. **Ms. Bareiro-Bobadilla** said that, in view of the apparent lack of progress made by the State party with regard to its obligations under article 4 of the Convention, further information was required on the quota system, namely how quotas were set, implemented and assessed, including specific details on quotas and temporary special measures relating to the participation of women in political life.

35. **The Chairperson**, speaking in her capacity as an expert, asked whether European Union resources or special funds were used to support women, and enquired as to the extent of women's involvement in the political and economic decision-making process. She requested further information on the quota system and measures taken to ensure that quotas were met, while suggesting that the State party needed to review its model for women's participation in the political arena.

36. **Ms. Acar** asked whether an assessment of the gender impact of the recent crisis had been carried out, as crisis situations could provide new opportunities for action. She enquired whether studies had been conducted on stereotypes in the context of minority communities and requested data on the prevalence of violence against women, including in different social groups and provinces, as well as information on mediation in cases of domestic violence.

37. **Ms. Gabr** asked about the influence of stereotypes on gender equality. She invited the delegation to comment on the impact of economic legislation on domestic violence, and on progress made with regard to the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. Had the impact of the National Action Plan for Substantive Gender Equality 2010–2013 been evaluated? She requested the delegation to comment on the impact of the crisis on violence in general, and domestic violence in particular. She asked the State party to provide information on requests for assistance received by the General Secretariat, including details of the kind of assistance provided, as well as the relevant indicators applied. She also asked for quantitative data on violence against women, especially migrant women.

38. **Ms. Al-Jehani** requested data on convictions relating to violence against women and trafficking.

39. **Ms. Gabr** asked about the impact of the crisis on human trafficking and whether any increase in trafficking had been observed. Had the Government gathered data on the various types of trafficking as well as on prostitution? What measures were taken to provide assistance and compensation to victims? Moreover, what action was the Government taking to tackle the exploitation of vulnerable groups in society and in the business world.

40. **Ms. Makri** (Greece) said that the majority of programmes were funded using European Union resources. While quotas had led to an improvement in representation with regard to national elections, there had been no real impact to date at regional or municipal level.

41. **Ms. Megalou** (Greece) said that, under the provisions of the Constitution, the Government was obliged to implement measures to address inequality. To promote the participation of women in politics, quotas were set at regional and municipal levels, as well as for parliamentary elected bodies. Temporary measures had also been taken to protect vulnerable groups, such as unemployed women, with programmes — including quotas — implemented by the Ministry of Labour. Quotas for employment in the municipal police force and the fire brigade had been abolished following a 2006 court ruling.

42. She agreed that Greek society was traditional, and that stereotypes continued to exist. In the light of the major role played by the media, the Government was working together with national television and the independent television and radio authority to address the problem of stereotypes. Measures included contact with journalists and an annual award for journalistic work relating to women's issues.

43. **Ms. Katsaridou** (Greece) said that under legislation introduced in 2008, quotas had been established for women on scientific committees and research councils. Action taken to address the problem of gender stereotypes included training programmes, measures to provide support and raise awareness among students, parents and teachers, gender mainstreaming in adult and tertiary education programmes, placing gender equality on the curriculum, and steps to prevent career segregation. A scheme had also been launched to use libraries to combat gender stereotypes and support professional training programmes, ensuring that libraries contained — and facilitated access to — materials on gender equality.

44. A new observatory had been set up, using European Union funding, to evaluate policies and measures in the field of education, and submit proposals to the Government. In an effort to combat stereotypes in education, universities awarded bursaries to women enrolled in the merchant navy school and provided business courses, in both traditional and online formats, to encourage women to enter traditionally male professions.

45. Awareness of gender stereotypes was being raised in the judiciary and military academies, and judges were being trained in how to handle cases of domestic or family violence. Greece had signed the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence and the Government was currently drafting legislation for its incorporation into domestic law. On statistics, the Observatory Mechanism to Monitor the Implementation of Gender Equality Policies in Public Activity would specifically examine indicators relating to gender-based violence. The Observatory would also carry out a series of statistical studies on equality in education and employment in Greece as well as Europe that would be available in libraries and online. The university enrolment rate of women from the Muslim minority was only 0.5 per cent.

46. **Mr. Moskov** (Greece) said that Greece was part of a European Union network of national rapporteurs on trafficking in persons. Civil society and the private sector were instrumental in combating trafficking through training and awareness-raising, including in

schools. Thanks to funding from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the major theatrical companies were putting on a play dealing with modern slavery.

47. **The Chairperson**, speaking in her capacity as an expert, asked whether the Government had earmarked some of the European funding for the advancement of women.

48. **Ms. Schulz**, pointing out that existing quotas for women in politics did not appear to be very effective, asked whether the State party had considered seat quotas rather than candidacy quotas. She asked for a fuller explanation of why quotas for the fire brigade and police force had been abolished and whether the State party would consider reinstating them. She also wished to know whether the 30 per cent quota of women civil servants and the 33 per cent quota of female recruits to national research centres were observed.

49. **Ms. Acar** asked how many cases of domestic violence had been referred to mediation and what their outcome had been.

50. **Ms. Gbedemah** asked what the impact was of the business courses for women, how many women took part, how many of them went on to start a business and what support was available to them.

51. **Mr. Bruun** asked for information about exploitation of prostitution in Greece and what measures were being taken to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS sex workers and to prevent their public shaming.

52. **Ms. Pimentel**, pointing out that mediated settlements were often prejudicial to women, asked about the recourse to mediation in the State party.

53. **Ms. Makri** (Greece) said that although quotas had led to some progress, they were insufficient and regional and local electoral results were disappointing. She was not in favour of seat quotas.

54. **Ms. Megalou** (Greece) said that the quotas for female members of the fire brigade and police force had been temporary, and that there were no plans to reintroduce them. Nevertheless, 123 women had entered the fire service academy in 2011 and, although specific data were unavailable owing to reforms under the Kallikratis Programme, municipal police forces had many female officers. Implementation of the 30 per cent quota in the civil service had been problematic at times, but any disputes that had arisen had been brought before the courts.

55. **Ms. Katsaridou** (Greece) said that the quota for recruiting female scientists was being met, but the same was not always true of quotas in academia. The Research Centre for Gender Equality had produced handbooks on gender budgeting, while the Ministry of Economy was reviewing taxation measures for families. An expert working group on domestic violence was focused on reforming criminal courts and procedures. Mediation was an option and the mechanism would be improved through efforts to train judges more extensively.

56. **Mr. Moskov** (Greece) said that efforts were being made to raise awareness of prostitution issues among the personnel of relevant State entities and the general public. The case of the female prosecutor who had been sanctioned for speaking out against austerity measures had clearly been mishandled and he was confident that such an incident would not reoccur.

57. **Ms. Schulz** asked the head of delegation to elaborate on her personal position regarding quotas and said that one of the most effective quota systems was “zebra listing”, in which every other candidate was a woman. She wished to know in what way the implementation of the civil service quota was problematic, and whether it was the women who had been passed over for a civil service position that were responsible for applying to

the courts for redress. Pointing out that it was the responsibility of senior officials to ensure that quotas were filled; she suggested that linking their promotion to filling the quota in their respective departments could be an effective way of boosting the number of female civil servants.

58. **Ms. Haidar**, noting the alarmingly low university enrolment of minority women, asked whether steps were being considered to encourage them to obtain post-secondary education.

59. **Ms. Makri** (Greece) said that she was not in favour of seat quotas, but that she would not impede their implementation should they be overwhelmingly requested by civil society. Zebra lists could not be applied to national elections because candidates were listed alphabetically, but they could be useful in European Union elections.

60. **Ms. Megalou** (Greece) said that promotions in the civil service were decided by a committee, which itself was 30 per cent female due to its status as a decision-making body. The quota was usually filled, and any situations where it was not had been resolved in court. Quotas were not the only means of promoting the political participation of women. A project was under way to coach women on how to prepare as candidates for national or European elections, which would be repeated for local elections.

61. **Ms. Katsaridou** (Greece) said that there were no barriers to the enrolment of Muslim women in university.

#### *Articles 7 and 8*

62. **Ms. Bareiro-Bobadilla** commended the State party on increasing the number of women in parliament and exceeding the world average in that regard. Pointing out that all electoral systems were based on some form of quota in order to reflect the popular vote, and that almost all countries that achieved 30 per cent representation of women relied on quotas, she asked whether the State party might improve its use of that tool. She also asked how many women were ministers and deputy ministers. Given that more than half of diplomatic staff were women, she wished to know why there were no female ambassadors and how the Committee could assist in reversing that trend.

63. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** commended the State party on the composition of its delegation. However, she had been expecting the report to reveal much more significant progress, commensurate with the country's historic importance and grandeur. She urged the State party to enact laws with a view to reaching equal representation of men and women in government. She asked whether there was a funding scheme for political parties and, if so, whether more of that funding could be granted to parties with high female membership.

64. **Ms. Pimentel** asked for further information about the practice of issuing registration certificates, as opposed to birth certificates, to children of immigrant women, especially the Roma.

65. **Ms. Makri** (Greece) said that more women had been elected to parliament than ever before, yet women were deterred from running because many female candidates had received humiliatingly low numbers of votes. She was sorry to report that there was only one female minister and one female deputy minister.

66. **Ms. Megalou** (Greece) said that awareness-raising campaigns were under way to convince women of the value of running for public office. All children received a registration certificate at birth, but birth certificates were only issued to citizens and permanent residents. Both certificates provided access to education and social services, therefore children of immigrants were not discriminated against in that regard.

67. **Ms. Šimonović**, pointing out that both the Constitution and the Electoral Code provided for quotas and positive measures to increase women's political participation, asked whether the head of delegation was against quotas in general, and whether the State party intended to improve its current quota system in order to achieve better female representation.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*