



Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women

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Eighth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 141st MEETING

Held at the Vienna International Centre, Vienna,
on Monday, 27 February 1989, at 9 30 a m

Chairperson Ms EVATT

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The meeting was called to order at 9 35 a m

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE
CONVENTION (continued)

Initial report of Finland (CEDAW/C/5/Add 56)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms Halonen (Finland) took a place at the Committee table

2 Ms HALONEN (Finland), introducing her Government's initial report (CEDAW/C/5/Add 56), drew attention to a recently circulated addendum to the report containing updated information on Finland's implementation of the Convention. She apologized for the fact that the addendum was not yet available in all languages.

3 Following Finland's signature of the Convention in 1980, its Council for Equality had recommended that certain legislative measures be taken which would permit ratification of the Convention without reservations. Accordingly, in 1983, amendments to the Child Custody and Right of Access Act and to the Guardianship Act had been adopted. The Nationality Act had been amended in 1984, and in 1985 a Surnames Act had been adopted. Finally, the introduction of the Equality Act in 1986 had made possible Finland's ratification of the Convention, without reservations, the same year.

4 The Equality Act, which had entered into force at the beginning of 1987, sought to promote equality between women and men and to improve the status of women in working life by prohibiting discrimination based on sex. In particular, the Act prohibited discrimination in job advertisements and in information on educational options. A victim of discrimination at work was entitled to seek compensation, and the authorities were required to intervene wherever obstacles to the realization of equality existed. The Act required that women and men should have equal opportunities for education and for professional advancement, and also that both women and men should be appointed to governmental and local authority bodies. Under the Ministry for Social Affairs and Health, the Equality Ombudsman, the Equality Board and the Parliamentary Council for Equality worked together to monitor compliance with the Act.

5 The Council for Equality had circulated to a number of Finnish authorities and organizations the United Nations document Forward-Looking Strategies on the Advancement of Women, and had submitted proposals based on the comments it had received. It had also circulated copies of its initial report, for comment prior to submission to the Committee. The response rate had been as high as 90 per cent. A summary of the comments received was included in the addendum to the report.

6 Referring first to the question of education in Finland, she said that while the percentage of women graduating from high school in the 1980s has been as high as 60 per cent, choice of career was still influenced by gender considerations, so that in vocational training women tended to opt for only a narrow sector of the spectrum of professions. Determined efforts were to be made at all levels of the educational system to remedy that imbalance.

7 Studies had shown that pay differences between women and men, as well as differences in working conditions, persisted. While the total working life of women was only two years shorter than that of men, women changed jobs less often

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and their average earnings in full-time work amounted to only 78 per cent of those of men. Skilled male workers were able to command higher salaries than women with equivalent qualifications. The percentage of women engaged in part-time work - 11 per cent - had remained unchanged, and irregular working hours were still more typical of women than of men. It had also been shown that the pay differential between women and men widened considerably between the ages of 20 and 40. Women's position in the labour market was thus clearly weakened by career interruptions and by family duties.

8. Although women had long accounted for almost 50 per cent of the labour force, the division of tasks in the home still remained somewhat traditional. A number of measures had been taken to encourage men to contribute to the care of children and to share household tasks, thus helping women to reconcile their family duties with working life. Among those measures had been the provision of day-care services, paid parental leave of almost a year, and shorter working hours for parents of small children, as well as the provision of hot lunches in schools. However, women still had to carry a heavy burden of work, and men seemed unwilling to take advantage of the opportunities offered by such measures. For example, only some 40 per cent of men availed themselves fully of their right to parental leave after the birth of a child: the majority took only from six to 12 days of leave. Following an amendment to the Contracts of Employment Act in 1988, an employee was now eligible for partial leave of absence to take care of a child under four years of age.

9. As from early 1989, the ban on night work for women in industry had been lifted, and replaced by legislation governing the maximum number of successive shifts to be worked. Changes were to be made in Finland's pension scheme whereby widowers would be recognized as beneficiaries as well as widows. Account would be taken of the role played by both spouses in caring for children.

10. Finnish women had been granted the right to vote as early as 1906, and had become eligible to stand for election in the same year. Over 30 per cent of the members of Finland's Parliament were now women, while the proportion of women in the membership of local councils was 27 per cent. Until recently, no quota had been fixed for women's membership of such bodies, and thus the steady increase of their share in political life could be seen as a direct result of their increasing participation in the life of society as a whole.

11. Following an amendment to the Equality Act in 1987, all local authority bodies were now required to include in their membership a certain percentage of women, the goal being between 40 and 60 per cent. That provision had been put into effect for the first time on a large scale that year, when local elections had been held. Instructions had been issued to all local authorities on how best to ensure gender equality when making appointments, for example by putting forward one female and one male candidate for each vacancy. No data were yet available, but it seemed that in the larger cities the participation of women on local authority boards had increased.

12. Women's organizations had been active both in the political and in the social sphere from as early as the nineteenth century, and women had also played a considerable role in the trade union movement. They now accounted for some 48 per cent of the labour force and for some 50 per cent of trade union membership. However, the division of the labour market on gender grounds was reflected in the

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fact that 80 per cent of the members of white-collar unions were women, but that women accounted for only 45 per cent of the membership of blue-collar unions. Women predominated on the executive bodies of white-collar trade unions, and since the 1980s their share of the control of other unions had also risen. The fact that pay differentials between men and women remained considerable had encouraged women to take part in strike action. Many strikes in the 1980s had been termed "women's strikes".

13 The report portrayed the position of women from the viewpoint of the dominant culture. However, Finland had a small number of national minorities - some 5,000 Lapps and 9,000 gypsies, one third of whom lived in Sweden - who were concerned to preserve their unique culture and to secure their traditional sources of livelihood, and among those minorities women held a key position. While some 300,000 Finns had migrated to Sweden to find work, there were only some 19,000 aliens in Finland, about 1,100 of whom were refugees. In 1988, women refugees and aliens in Finland had set up an organization of their own, and that body had participated in an inter-Nordic project on the status of migrant women. Such women often encountered language problems and a special guidebook was being prepared to help them, giving information on the Finnish social security system, Finnish legislation and Finnish local authority services.

14 One of the functions of the Council for Equality was the co-ordination of research on equality issues. It also ensured co-ordination between different authorities and organizations concerned with those issues, and put forward proposals for the implementation of measures and programmes designed to promote equality. Another of its responsibilities was to keep abreast of international developments in the field. The Council was appointed by the Government for a period of up to three years and had a permanent secretariat.

15 In the 1980s, the Council's main task had been to study Finland's obligations under the Convention, and to speed up the adoption of measures required for its implementation. The Council had issued some 100 reports, studies, translations and publications on the subject of women's issues. The various bodies responsible for equality in Finland issued a regular series of publications, including a quarterly journal.

16 While the Equality Act required all authorities, employers and workers in the field of education to seek actively to promote equality, the fact was that many failed to do so in practice. The Act prohibited not only direct but also indirect discrimination. For example, the practice by which men were allowed credit for military service in university admission tests had been found in conflict with the Act. The Ombudsman had investigated a number of cases in the public sector, as well as a few in the private sector, in which female candidates with better qualifications than male candidates had failed to win appointments. A number of cases of non-compliance with the principle of equal pay for work of equal value had also been submitted. Salaries and wages in Finland were mostly determined by collective agreement, and if equal pay was to be assured, it was important that assessment criteria for work of equal value should be developed. Over the past two years, some 500 cases relating to compliance with the Act had been investigated. A special committee, comprising representatives of both employers and trade unions, had been set up to implement the provisions of the Act in regard to employment in the public service, for example by endeavouring to see that suitably qualified women were appointed to jobs where they were normally in the minority, on the basis

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of an Equality Plan. A number of local authorities had also set up "equality committees" to monitor implementation of the Act in the various sectors of local government, and to make proposals, including an Equality Plan.

17 Much still remained to be done in Finland to give full effect to the Equality Act. There was a need for constant review of the adequacy of the Act, and of the resources available for its implementation. It was vital to maintain co-operation between the various authorities involved, as well as with trade unions and employers' organizations. A change in attitudes was also crucial if equality was to be achieved, although that was a difficult process. While some results might be obtained through legislation, they would remain inadequate without the support of an active public opinion.

18. After its ratification of the Convention, Finland had been following and disseminating information on the work of the Committee. The text of the Convention had been made available in both Finnish and Swedish. Reports of States parties and summary records of the Committee had been made available to the public for the purpose of study and research. The Committee could be assured that the Government of Finland remained committed to the fulfilment of its obligations under the Convention.

19. The CHAIRPERSON congratulated the representative of Finland on a report of a very high standard, which adhered strictly to the Committee's guidelines. Finland's initiative in launching its Equality Plan was to be commended, as was the frankness with which the representative of Finland had acknowledged the progress that still needed to be made in her country.

SOLEMN DECLARATION BY A NEW MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE

20 Ms FENGER-MÖLLER, as a new member of the Committee, made a solemn declaration as provided for in rule 10 of the rules of procedure of the Committee (A/38/45, annex III).

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION (continued)

Initial report of Finland (continued) (CEDAW/C/5/Add 56)

21. Ms CORTI congratulated the representative of Finland on an outstanding report, which clearly showed her Government's strong political will to promote women's equality. Finland's recent ratification of the Convention was evidence of its serious commitment to the fulfilment of its obligations to the international community.

22. The report stated that the Equality Board consisted of a chairperson and four members. She would like to know how those four members were appointed and what were the duties of the Equality Ombudsman? It was further stated that an act infringing the Equality Act might result in "a disciplinary measure" who decided on such measures, and against whom would they be applied?

23 She would also like to know whether any statistics had been compiled showing the extent to which household work done by women contributed to the economy as a whole

24 Ms BERNARD said that Finland's Equality Act appeared to be a watershed in the process of eliminating discrimination against women. She particularly welcomed the appointment in that country of an Equality Ombudsman and an Equality Board. It was clear from the addendum to the report that there was still some way to go, since no Ministry was yet headed by a woman and only one of the 60 ministerial departments had a female Director-General. She was sure, however, that Finland would pursue its efforts to remove the last barriers against women.

25 Ms SCHÖPP-SCHILLING thought the Government of Finland had acted very swiftly to ratify the Convention and submit its initial report. She noted that an attempt had been made, in the report, to avoid using sex-stereotyped language, and asked whether the use of the term "Ombudsman" had given rise to any criticism in Finland.

26 Ms FORDE observed that a great deal appeared to have been done in Finland to ensure that internal law and practice complied with the requirements of the Convention. There was an impressive range of provisions to protect the health and safety of women and children, and the various pension schemes described in the report and its addendum were outstanding. She looked forward to the proposed amendment to the Penal Code which would make sex discrimination a crime.

27 Ms SINEGIORGIS also expressed her admiration of the Finnish report. She found it significant that the emancipation of women in Finland had begun over a century previously, and that women had taken part in politics there since 1906. That accounted for the fact that Finnish women now enjoyed a significant measure of equality with men, and were playing a laudable role in the development of their country. She was glad to note that a special effort was being made to remove the remaining obstacles to the advancement of women in the labour market and in decision-making. According to the addendum, the report had been published and submitted for comment to almost 70 interest groups. Other States parties should be encouraged to adopt a similar procedure.

28 Ms OESER said that the information submitted by Finland pointed to a high level of de jure and de facto equality between men and women in that country. Few countries had such a wide network of day-care centres for children as was described in the initial report. In the experience of the Committee, such provision was of crucial importance in enabling mothers of young children to use their equal rights, it might well account for the successes achieved by Finnish women.

29 Ms LAIOU-ANTONIOU noted that although women in Finland had been able to vote since 1906, it had taken a further 70 years to enact an equality law and establish the mechanisms described in the report. She agreed with Ms Schopp-Schilling that the term "Ombudsman" should perhaps be changed. Despite the impressive achievements in Finland, and the evident political will to ensure the advancement of women, social prejudice continued to allot differing responsibilities to women and men in their family and social life. She was disturbed at the 40 per cent salary differential between men and women, and felt that rural women were unduly burdened. She welcomed the endorsement, in 1983, of the principle of equality in school education. She asked whether the parliamentary Council for Equality had representatives from all political parties, whether its membership was confined to women, who presided in it, and whether it met on a continuing basis, or only when draft legislation had to be considered, was the Ministry of Social Affairs responsible for co-ordinating all matters connected with the quality of women, if not, how was that responsibility allocated? Did the Ministry have a separate budget for equality measures or were they financed from the general budget, in the latter case, what was the percentage of expenditure on such measures? Were women's

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organizations in Finland continuing to play an active role, or were their demands tapering off? Which topics were of special interest to all women's groups? Lastly, why was the representation of women higher in Parliament than in local authorities?

30 Ms SOUMARÉ congratulated the representative of Finland on the very detailed information submitted by her Government, and on its efforts to improve the status of women. She welcomed its decision to make the report public, and invite comments on it. Political determination would, she thought, remove the remaining obstacles to the advancement of women in Finland.

31 Ms AKAMATSU found it encouraging that the Decade for Women had exercised an influence in Finland, where the status of women was already relatively advanced. The Government of Finland had demonstrated its commitment to implementing the Convention by enacting a series of legislative measures and revising existing legislation. She would welcome information concerning the public reaction when the Equality Act had first been mooted. Had opposition been expressed by employers, and how had the Government overcome it?

32 Ms GUAN Mingqian noted that much had been done in Finland to promote the rights of women. Finland had been the first country to introduce suffrage for women, and efforts had since continued unabated to advance their status. Women were particularly prominent in the labour force, their educational level was high, and they were also well represented in Parliament and in the political parties. Although Finland had not been the first of the Nordic countries to ratify the Convention, it had adopted a very serious attitude towards ratification, in setting up specific machinery for that purpose and enacting new legislation. The office of Equality Ombudsman was, for her, a new concept. She wished to know whether the office holder was a civil servant or an expert and what were the functions attached to the office. The number of violent attacks on women within the family mentioned in the report seemed very high, more than 70,000 a year. She wondered whether the women concerned had any legal redress and whether they could obtain a divorce.

33. The CHAIRPERSON pointed out that although Finland had been the first country in Europe to introduce votes for women, it was her own country, Australia, which had been the first in the world to do so.

34. Ms NOVIKOVA said that despite regular contacts with the women's departments of Finnish trade unions, she had obtained a wealth of new information from Finland's initial report. She was particularly impressed by the fact that, in the six years between signing and ratifying the Convention, Finland had introduced a series of legislative changes. Much scientific research had been carried out on an interdisciplinary basis, and that was to be applauded. It was also gratifying that the Government had published the report, and had invited comments from many sectors of the Finnish public. Other States parties should be recommended to follow a similar procedure. She asked whether women in Finland could invoke the Convention in court proceedings, or whether they could rely on any other remedies.

35 Ms PILATAXI DE ARENAS praised the evident political will in Finland to implement the Convention, and the process of legislative change which had been pursued, so that no reservations need be entered. She found it gratifying that the Decade for Women had had a positive impact on the status of women in Finland. She asked whether the parliamentary Council for Equality enjoyed legal autonomy. Did it have an exclusive right to apply texts on equal rights, and how did it monitor the observance of equality legislation by the authorities?

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36. Ms FENGER-MÖLLER noted that according to the report, indirect discrimination was prohibited under Finland's Equality Act. She wondered how indirect discrimination was defined, particularly if a case was taken to court. She noted that in cases of violation of the prohibition of discrimination, the Equality Board could prohibit the violator from continuing or renewing his or her practice. Did the Board actually do so? She also wondered whether the establishment of an Equality Ombudsman and a parliamentary Council for Equality had resulted in Finland's women's organizations losing influence.

37. Ms SCHÖPP-SCHILLING asked whether the budgets of the various organs established to promote equality for women had increased over the years in line with their responsibilities. She would like also to know more about the Municipal Equality Boards. Were they permanent or temporary organs, were they integrated within the administrative structure, and how they were staffed and financed?

38. Ms AKAMATSU referred to the exceptional cases when a practice was not deemed to constitute discrimination under article 2, section 9 of the Equality Act. There was one exception which allowed either women only or men only to be admitted as members of an association, if the rules of the association so provided, was that exception likely to be maintained and did the women's organizations object to it? In Japan, women had protested against the exclusion of women from membership of certain prestigious golf clubs. She asked what progress had been made with Finland's plans to criminalize discrimination on the basis of sex.

39. Ms FENGER-MÖLLER noted that performance of military service in Finland was confined to men. She asked whether its extension to women was in prospect. She was disturbed to read that a husband who forced his spouse into sexual intercourse could not be convicted of rape and she asked whether Finnish women wanted to change that rule. She also sought information on the tax rules as they applied to husband and wife.

40. The CHAIRPERSON, speaking on behalf of Ms El-Tallawy, asked how the views of the many Finnish interest groups which had submitted comments had been taken into account in the submission of Finland's initial report.

41. Ms SCHÖPP-SCHILLING asked for information concerning the mood of the Finnish public on the question whether rape within marriage should be penalized in the same way as rape outside it. She understood that pregnancies resulting from rape could be aborted under Finnish law and she inquired whether a pregnancy arising out of rape within marriage could be similarly terminated. What were the standpoints of the political parties on that question, and what was the nature of the public debate, if any? She would also like to know what were the age limits for female prisoners to have their children with them and whether male prisoners might also have their children with them.

42. Ms BERNARD drew a parallel between the phenomenon of violence within marriage and incestuous sexual abuse of children, which the report of Finland discussed in relation to article 15 of the Convention. She inquired as to the nature of the criminal law concerning that form of incest, whether the incidence of incest had increased or decreased since 1984 and what was being done to reduce that incidence.

43. Ms LAIOU-ANTONIOU asked whether a prosecution for rape could proceed at the instigation of a third person or whether the woman who had been raped had to press charges herself before a prosecution could proceed.

44 Ms. CORTI said that the report concentrated on article 4, paragraph 2, of the Convention, to the detriment of paragraph 1 of the article, and asked whether positive action had been taken by the Finnish Ombudsman to accelerate de facto equality. In that respect, were there any government-sponsored programmes to support training courses for women in companies and other establishments in order to enable women to obtain posts at higher levels? Were there plans to set up equality committees in large firms and elsewhere?

45 Ms. SCHÖPP-SCHILLING inquired whether there was any public demand for mandatory affirmative action in the public or private sectors, and whether there was any debate in Finland on the merits of numerical goals versus quotas. In that last respect, what was the policy of the Government?

46 Ms. FENGER-MÖLLER recalled that temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality had been a contentious issue when first mooted. She would like to know how far such measures were applied in Finland and in what domains. If such measures were applied, were they in respect of women alone, or might men be included? She asked what the public attitude was to such special measures, and whether they yielded any positive results.

47 Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU noted the indication in the report that there was discrimination in vocational training in that women tended to gravitate towards "feminine" careers. That being the case, was any affirmative action being taken to steer them towards what might be called "men's" occupations?

48 Ms. AKAMATSU, with reference to article 5 (a), asked to be provided with some examples of discriminatory advertising, as referred to in Finland's report in connection with article 5 (a). With regard to article 5 (b), she noted that, although Finland had a system of child-care leave for fathers, traditional attitudes remained. What, then, was the reaction of Finnish society to the idea that the care of the sick child should not be considered a duty for women alone?

49. Ms. CORTI questioned whether education was an adequate means of abolishing sex stereotyping in advertising. She had noted the statement in the report that educational counselling in the upbringing of children would be enhanced in connection with services for child day-care and child welfare services, home assistance, assistance for the handicapped and social work for abusers. In that connection, what was the incidence of drug abuse in Finland? What were the laws on drug offences, and whom did they punish? Were there re-education and other centres for drug abusers? She asked also whether there were any plans to outlaw sexist language.

50. Ms. SCHÖPP-SCHILLING noted that women's studies units had been set up at various universities. Were there chairs of women's studies, with full-time, permanent professorial staff? Were women's studies part of a single discipline or were they interdisciplinary in nature? To what extent were the results from research in women's studies carried over into the obligatory courses for all students, and if not, what was the likelihood of their being integrated into the general curriculum?

51 Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU noted from the report that, under the Equality Act, the Government of Finland was required to report to the Parliament on the implementation of the aims set for equality legislation and that the report was to pay attention also to discriminatory advertising. It was her perception that the legal protection afforded against discriminatory advertising was minimal, and she would like to know what were the contents of any report submitted on the subject. She noted also that maternity benefit was either paid in cash or given as a layette package. Was that benefit awarded to all women, or was it income-dependent?

52 Ms GUAN Mingqian noted that Finnish men took part in the care and upbringing of children, with approximately 80 per cent of fathers attending family counselling courses. Were such courses sponsored by municipalities? How were they supervised? She found it strange that, with such a high level of paternal interest in child rearing, there should still be a large number of cases of incest involving children, as was mentioned in the report in connection with article 15. She had found that information horrifying, and fervently hoped that the incidence of incestuous child abuse would decrease.

53 Ms SAJOGYO noted the still relatively low position of women within the structures of Finnish society. Although the statistics indicating percentages of women were interesting, she felt that the qualitative aspects of the role of women required more attention. She inquired what budgetary provision was made for women's studies.

54 The CHAIRPERSON, speaking as a member of the Committee, asked whether the Finnish Government supported the provision of refuges or emergency accommodation for women who had suffered violence within marriage and whether there were any special laws to restrain domestic violence. She asked for clarification of the laws concerning the occupation of the matrimonial home, and inquired whether such laws were effective.

55 Ms SCHÖPP-SCHILLING, referring to article 6, said that farmers in Finland, as in some other European countries, appeared to suffer disproportionate difficulty in finding wives, and that a number of agencies had sprung up which found wives from East Asia for such farmers. Could the Finnish Government give an indication of the numbers of such women and of how they fared? Were there any counselling centres for them?

56 Ms LAIOU-ANTONIOU inquired as to the magnitude of the prostitution problem in Finland. She noted that the report gave one definition of procuration as keeping a room for prostitution, and that procuration was subject to penal sanction. Did that mean that a prostitute who kept a room for herself was subject to penal sanction for procuration?

57 Ms CORTI, in connection with article 7, noted that the work of the parties represented in the Finnish Parliament was supported by funds from the national budget, and that one ninth of those funds were to be spent on supporting women's political activities. What was the amount of the fund, and how was its distribution and size determined? She noted that of those elected, women formed a minority. Were there any plans, by affirmative action, a quota system or other means, to increase women's representation? She noted also that within the Parliament, only the Commission for Social Affairs included more women than men. Was not the concentration on social affairs indicative of a type of ghetto mentality, given that there were no women amongst either the Parliamentary Trustees of the Bank of Finland or the Auditors of the Bank of Finland? How could that poor showing occur, given the far-reaching measures in the Equality Act to promote and verify sexual equality?

58 Ms SCHÖPP-SCHILLING said that the one-ninth fraction of the funds to support the work of the political parties which was spent on supporting women's political activities seemed a low figure. Was there any debate on the possibility of increasing that fraction, or was there a feeling that it should be reduced because funds for that purpose were not necessary? She noted that when the scope of the Equality Act had been extended to municipal bodies, the target had been to achieve

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40 to 60 per cent representation by women on such bodies. Given that that target had not been achieved, were the provisions of the Equality Act to be made more binding and, if so, how? Were there any programmes directed towards increasing such representation?

59 Ms LAIOU-ANTONIOU asked how it could be that if State Committees, advisory committees and other corresponding bodies as well as municipal boards had to include women, as was stated in the report, they did not always do so? What were the "specific grounds" used to exclude them?

60 Ms FENGER-MÖLLER asked how many women were members of Finland's Parliament. Women appeared to be better represented in the traditionally "feminine" areas but they were not so well represented where major political decisions were taken. She noted that, notwithstanding the Equality Act, advisory committees and other corresponding bodies had to include women, 34.4 per cent of the bodies referred to by the previous speakers had had no female members in 1987. Was that because the legislation was recent, or because, as the previous speaker had wondered, a number of "specific grounds" were being invoked to exclude women? She wished to know what plans existed to improve the situation?

61 The CHAIRPERSON, speaking on behalf of Ms El-Tallawy, asked what the numbers and percentages of male and female participants, as voters or candidates, had been in the most recent elections in Finland. Were the special funds mentioned in the report under article 7 used to advance political participation by women?

62 Ms SCHÖPP-SCHILLING, asked whether training programmes had helped to reduce the differentiation of tasks according to sex within the Finnish Foreign Service. Were such training programmes for women only, or did men participate also, and what had been the result of those programmes?

63 Ms BUSTELO del REAL noted, in connection with article 10 of the Convention, that good results had been obtained in improving equality in the education system, except in the technical fields. She noted also that further measures were planned to improve matters in the latter respect, and she requested that particulars of those measures should be given in the second report. The Finnish measures might well serve as an example for other countries in solving what was a general problem.

64. According to the report, women participated less than men in sport in Finland. She regretted that the report did not indicate the results of the study made on that question. Was it known why women participated less and what was being done to rectify the situation? Did young people of different sex play the same sports together? Was it known which sports young men and young women preferred?

65 Ms LAIOU-ANTONIOU observed that every third year, the Finnish Government adopted development programmes for intermediate-level education including the target number of students in each field, and that a certain proportion of pupil places was allocated to girls and to boys. Was that a quota system, and how was it implemented and calculated? What result had been obtained in improving the integration of girls? She noted that a committee had been set up by the Ministry of Education in 1983 to ensure the implementation of equality in the educational system. What measures had that committee proposed?

66 Ms SCHÖPP-SCHILLING said it was evident that the Finnish Government had been very active in promoting better equality in education. However, she would like to have more information on the results achieved. Had there been any analysis of text books, and if so, had changes been required? She noted with concern that it was planned to give up the quota system for teacher training entry. It was important in her view to increase the number of men entering teacher training and she would like to know what measures were envisaged to that end.

67 Ms AKAMATSU observed that the Ministry of Education had decided to establish a working group to prepare new guidelines for admittance into teacher training. What were those guidelines? She expressed puzzlement that there should have been problems with the quota system, and asked whether the notion that approximately 40 per cent of the teacher training intake should be male remained the Finnish philosophy.

68 Ms GUAN Mingqian noted that under the quota system which had applied until 1987, men might be admitted to teacher training with lower points than women. What had been the rationale behind that system, and what was the points difference? Had that form of discrimination against women been ended?

69 She noted that the drop-out rate of female students was no higher than that of male students, that the opportunities for women to have university careers remained unequal and that the average age at which women graduated was higher. How did those three facts interrelate?

70 Ms SAJOGYO observed that the proportion of women studying in the fields of science and technology was extremely low. She wondered if it was known whether that poor showing reinforced traditional expectations militating against women in those fields.

71. Ms FENGER-MÖLLER said she had noted with interest that measures had had to be taken to increase the proportion of boys in higher secondary schools. Such a situation was very rare. She was pleased to note that the proportion of women university-level students had been 50 per cent since the early 1960s, but she regretted that the number of women at higher levels in the university structure was lower. What were the reasons for the lack of career prospects for women within the universities and what could be done to improve matters? What became of the women who might have been expected to progress in university careers?

72 Ms CORTI, noting that the unemployment and other benefit amounts cited in the report were all given in dollars, said that it was essential to know what those amounts represented in terms of the cost of living, so that their real value could be judged.

73 There appeared to be a vast and disturbing gap between men's and women's salaries, especially in commerce, banks and insurance companies. Was there no equal pay law in Finland? The report referred to the considerable participation of women, especially in the trade unions. If there were collective agreements, she wondered how women accepted such a discrepancy in pay. What was the system used in industry to determine men's and women's pay: equal pay for equal work, or equal pay for work of equal value?

74. The unemployment insurance scheme was admirable and provided numerous benefits and allowances. She would like to know, however, what was the percentage of unemployment in Finland generally and how many of the unemployed were women? She

(Ms Corti)

noted that an unemployed person could, without loss of unemployment benefit, be allowed time off to remove any obstacle to going to work or could be allowed special treatment related to a child's attendance at school. She wondered, however, whether that implied that the mother would be the only one responsible for care of the children.

75 The report indicated that 12 per cent of women worked part-time and that women made up 75 per cent of part-time employees. That was a very high proportion. She would like to know the relationship between part-time men and women. She also asked whether any study had been made of sexual harassment at work.

76 Finland had an excellent child-care system. Were there any other systems apart from those provided by the municipality? She noted that women were given the choice between using the municipal facilities and accepting an allowance and staying at home. She was surprised to hear that most women preferred to stay at home and wondered what was the reason for that.

77 Ms BUSTELO del REAL asked what was the trend in the proportion of young men and women in part-time work. She had noted the apparent contradiction in the fact that service in the armed forces was not compulsory for women, although they did serve in the armed forces in time of war. Could they join the armed forces voluntarily? She also asked what, if any, fields of work were not open to women in practice.

78. She noted from the addendum to the initial report that most of the recipients of unemployment pension over the age of 55 were women. If, as was suggested in the report, that was due to the introduction of new technology and to rationalization, what was being done to retrain workers in general and women in particular?

79. Ms OESER said that Finland seemed to be aware of the problem of including housework in national statistics - a problem of which there was little experience at the world level. She asked what Finland was doing about that problem and whether any general conclusions had been reached. A number of Governments were considering how to put into practice the recommendations in the Forward-looking Strategy on the inclusion of housework in national income statistics in order to assess women's input in a country's work-force.

80 The last two paragraphs on page 5 of the report indicated that the Equality Board was subject to numerous restrictions. For example, it could not handle a matter concerning the activities of the Government or a ministry. She wondered what that meant in practice and what were the remedies in case of violence and discrimination against women within those institutions.

81 Ms. AKAMATSU noted that one of the reasons mentioned in the report for the protection of women in employment was that they were generally regarded as being physically weaker than men. That was surely contrary to the Convention. She also noted that the prohibition of night work had been abolished and wondered whether any protective provisions remained in Finland, especially in view of the statement on page 21 of the report that the Act on the Employment of Young Women in Certain Loading and Unloading Work applied only to women under 21 years of age and no longer had any practical significance.

82 She would like to know how many fathers took advantage of parental leave for mothers and fathers and what was the idea underlying the payment for home care of children.

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83 Ms LAIOU-ANTONIOU said that the report referred to measures which were not consistent with Finland's political will to promote equality. For example, the provision of full-scale invalidity security for female employees leaving work to look after a child until it reached three years of age, which was not available to men, was surely discriminatory because it forced women to stay at home and look after the children. How was the situation dealt with in which women were trapped, having to combine work with looking after the home?

84 She noted from the penultimate paragraph on page 22 of the report that the period for which a maternity, paternity or parental allowance was payable was at present 263 weekdays or approximately 44 weeks, while a parental allowance payable to an insured woman who had adopted a child under two years of age was payable for a minimum of 100 days. Why the discrimination? She also asked why, as stated in the last paragraph on page 22, in the first quarter of 1987 the average parental allowance paid to a father had been US\$55.5 per day and to the mother US\$33.75 per day.

85 The provision, mentioned on page 23 of the report, that an employee returning from maternity, paternity or parental leave or child-care leave was entitled to return to his or her earlier work, or to comparable work, was dangerous, since most maternity leave was for women. How could the job be safeguarded?

86 While offering parents a choice between using child-care facilities and receiving an allowance for looking after their children at home seemed at first sight a sound arrangement, it was in fact potentially dangerous as it might trap women. Did the Finnish representative consider it a good equality measure and one that implemented the Convention?

87 Ms NOVIKOVA, referring to the third and fourth paragraphs of the report relating to article 11, asked for examples of the discrimination mentioned. She did not understand the reference to the Equality Ombudsman having issued 20 statements regarding suspected discrimination in the selection of an employee.

88 The reference to modern demands and requirements, new technology, and the growth of new factors was something new in country reports. She understood that serious work was being done in Finland and would like to know more about it. She would particularly like more information on the amendment of labour protection legislation to include provisions on psychological protection, as referred to in the second paragraph on page 21 of the report.

89 Ms SCHÖPP-SCHILLING asked whether the Supreme Administrative Court's rejection of the Ombudsman's verdict on discrimination was regarded as a political setback, whether it represented opposition on the employers' part and whether the Court was composed mostly of men. Noting that under the Equality Act an employer could be asked to provide written justification of an action, she wondered what evidence a claimant would have to produce and when the burden of proof would shift.

90 She noted that the percentage of part-time workers was low in Finland compared with other countries, and asked what was their status, whether they had the same rights as full-time workers and whether they received proportionate benefits. Was there any duration of part-time work that was not covered by social security and were there any unprotected part-time jobs?

91 Was maternity, paternity, parental and child-care leave part of the basic social security for all people in Finland or was it allowed under a special social security plan? In the latter case it would discriminate against women. In view of

Ms Schopp-Schilling

the high proportion of women opting for child care at home, she wondered how mothers who chose to send their children to day-care centres were viewed by society. How long was the maternity allowance paid to women who were not part of the work-force?

92 It had been stated that anyone taking parental leave would receive up to 80 per cent of his or her salary, but some companies paid the whole salary for that period. She assumed that an employee could not receive both salary and a percentage allowance. What was the proportion of people receiving full salary?

93 She understood that 50 per cent of Finnish employers reported no difficulty in dealing with parental and child-care leave. She wondered whether employees on such leave were replaced or whether colleagues had to share their work.

94 She also asked whether the reported high unemployment among older women was due only to new technology, whether it was more prevalent in industry or the service sector and whether there was any evidence of discrimination against older women.

95 Ms GUAN Mingqian inquired what was the employment rate of young people and at what age they started looking for work. She noted that while Finland had ratified the ILO Convention on equal pay in 1963, women still earned approximately 40 per cent less than men. She also noted that an employer, by paying different wages to the two sexes, might be guilty of violating the prohibition of discrimination contained in the Equality Act. Would such an employer be required to compensate the person discriminated against, and would such an employer really be fined? She wondered how such disparity between men's and women's wages could still exist in Finland.

96 Ms SAJOGYO asked if any information could be provided concerning the labour force prior to 1987 and if so whether there had been any change in the proportion of women in the workplace and in different sectors of employment. What was the current level of employment generally and of employment of women in particular? What special measures had been taken for unemployed women? She also asked what was the meaning of women as farmers: did it mean farmer's wife on a family farm, or the head of a family? A farmer's wife had the status of an unpaid family worker.

97. Ms FENGER-MÖLLER said that Finnish society was full of contradictions. The report showed that women represented nearly half of the work-force and nearly half of university students but still did not earn the same as men. She wondered how there could be such a conflict and how equal pay could be ensured in practice - for there could be no equality without equal pay.

98 She would like to know what was the situation concerning part-time work and age. In Denmark, according to the available statistics, part-time work was done by "older" people, namely those over 40, and young mothers worked full-time. Did the same situation prevail in Finland?

99 In connection with parental and maternity leave, the report indicated that men had the right to both paternity and parental leave, but in connection with article 5 the Finnish representative had said that every third father was on paternity or parental leave. Did those fathers take the short leave for the birth of a child or the longer parental leave when they would have only 80 per cent of their salary?

100 Ms BERNARD noted from the addendum to the initial report, under article 11, that women were not accepted for posts in the defence administration and the Border Guard Service. While at first sight that seemed to conflict with the Equality Act, she observed, after reading the Act, that it did not apply to the military defence administration, which had separate provisions. She would like to know what those provisions were.

101 She also noted since the beginning of 1988 there had been women priests in the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church, but that ecclesiastical law did not recognize women bishops and that the Equality Act did not apply to persons in the church. She wondered how women gained access to the hierarchy of the church.

102 The CHAIRPERSON, speaking on behalf of Ms El-Tallawi, asked for clarification of the statement that women represented 48 per cent of the labour force in Finland and accounted for 44 per cent of the total working hours. She also wished to know whether the protective laws which provided different treatment for women were an obstacle or a discouragement to women's employment opportunities.

103 Speaking for herself, as a member of the Committee, she asked whether there existed any body of jurisprudence on methods of evaluating jobs where women predominated and comparing them with jobs where men predominated. Was the evaluation of jobs for that purpose a systematic process or did it depend on individuals bringing matters before the relevant tribunal or authority?

104 Ms HALONEN (Finland) pointed out that there were two languages in Finland, Finnish and Swedish. In Swedish the word "ombudsman" was used, but in Finnish a neutral term was employed which could refer to a male or a female holder of the office.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK (continued)

105 The CHAIRPERSON drew attention to a list which had been circulated of questions related to the report of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic. She suggested that the list should be submitted to the representative of that country.

106 It was so decided

The meeting rose at 12 30 p m