



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
Fortieth session

Summary record of the 827th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 25 January 2008, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Šimonović (Croatia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

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

Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Sweden (continued) (CEDAW/C/SWE/7; CEDAW/C/SWE/Q/7 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of Sweden took places at the Committee table.*

Articles 7 to 9 (continued)

2. **Mr. Hallerby** (Sweden) pointed out that, since the Swedish Government took all decisions by consensus, the Minister for Integration and Gender Equality had the same power of veto as any other minister.

3. **Ms. Hammarstedt** (Sweden) said that she was unable to provide any statistics on the number of Roma women in Parliament because the Personal Data Act prohibited the collection of data on ethnic origin. However, immigrant women accounted for 5.5 per cent of the total number of parliamentarians and, in fact, the Minister for Integration and Gender Equality was herself an immigrant, having been born in Burundi of Congolese parents.

4. **Ms. Wirlée** (Sweden) said that individuals who had been convicted of crimes for which the minimum term of imprisonment was 12 months could be refused a passport or have their passport confiscated, providing that the term of imprisonment had not yet started.

5. **Ms. Österberg** (Sweden) stressed that the Swedish Government attached great importance to the work of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences. The Special Rapporteur's report on her recent visit to Sweden had been used as the basis for a number of policy measures.

6. **Ms. Wirlée** (Sweden) said there had been 4,208 reports of rape during the period in question. The concept of person-based clearance applied in cases where, after having identified a suspect, the public prosecutor had decided either to try the case, not to try the case or to issue a summary court order. The person-based clearance rates for rape were currently the same as those for all other types of crime, namely, 18 per cent.

7. **Ms. Lundkvist** (Sweden) said that updated statistics were essential to the Government's ongoing efforts to promote gender equality. In 2006, a commission of inquiry had been appointed to map and report on gender distribution in positions of power in the public and private sectors. The commission had concluded that, in general, the more high profile the position, the better the gender balance.

8. Quotas were not responsible for the high level of female participation in decision-making. That level was a reflection of political parties' commitment to promoting the involvement of women in their activities. The number of female municipal councillors had remained almost unchanged since 2002 (42 per cent of councillors were women), as had the number of women elected to the executive bodies of municipal councils (36 per cent of those positions were occupied by women). Statistics from the 2006 elections had revealed that women now accounted for 48 per cent of county councillors. Generally speaking, the greater the number of available positions, the greater the number of women elected.

9. **Ms. Wirlée** (Sweden), responding to an enquiry about the number of women in the judiciary, said that 50 per cent of prosecutors and 39 per cent of chief prosecutors working for the Swedish Prosecution Authority were women. Seven of the 16 judges at the Supreme Court were female, and women accounted for 34 per cent of all sitting judges. In 2006, 46 per cent of all newly appointed senior judges were female.

10. **Mr. Javaheri** (Sweden) said that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was devoting priority attention to increasing the number of women appointed to high-level posts. The proportion of female heads of mission abroad had increased from 16 per cent in 2000 to 34 per cent in 2007 and, at the Ministry in Stockholm, 60 per cent of deputy heads of department were women.

11. **Ms. Ahlqvist** (Sweden) said that, although only 17 per cent of university professors were female, the proportion of women was greater in more junior positions. Regardless of their gender, university vice-chancellors received equal salaries. In order to redress the gender balance in academia, the Government had set targets for the recruitment of female professors and two new commissions of inquiry had recently been appointed to conduct in-depth studies of the situation. One of those inquiries, focusing on the number of

women choosing academic careers, had been launched in response to allegations that university recruitment processes did not favour women because they were too informal and not always conducted on the basis of an open competition.

12. **Mr. Hallerby** (Sweden) highlighted the complexity of the obstacles preventing women from occupying high-level positions in Sweden. For instance, in comparison to other countries, domestic help and child care were rather expensive and, although kindergartens and other day-care facilities were widely available, they had limited opening hours. Mindful of those difficulties, the Government would shortly be introducing a tax credit for the purchase of household services.

Articles 10 to 14

13. **Ms. Simms** commended the State party for the progress achieved in the area of education but drew attention to the fact that most women still opted for traditional careers. Further steps must therefore be taken to encourage boys and girls to choose careers on the basis of aptitude rather than gender.

14. Turning to the issue of ethnic minorities, she acknowledged the difficulties facing the State party, particularly since Sami women were not adequately represented within their own community. It would be interesting to hear more about the strategies adopted to ensure a culturally sensitive approach to gender equality within Sami society. Referring to the report's assertion that Roma women were no more likely than Roma men to be discriminated against, she enquired whether that statement could be taken to mean that Roma women and Roma men were equally likely to be the victims of discrimination. Lastly, according to a report prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, women of non-European origin were 13 per cent more likely to be unemployed than Swedish women. In view of that situation, and given that economic stability was a crucial factor for integration, she wished to know whether the Government would consider adopting targeted measures to encourage new immigrants to participate in economic activities.

15. **Ms. Zou Xiaojiao** noted that, although the report contained detailed information about the measures taken to promote gender equality in academia, it was silent on the mechanisms developed to monitor the

implementation of those measures. The State party should therefore provide further details of those mechanisms and outline the results achieved to date.

16. Sweden was home to a number of immigrant and refugee women. She would like to know more about the steps taken to ensure that new arrivals had access to educational services and asked, in particular, how the Government ensured that the children of immigrants had the same educational opportunities as their Swedish counterparts.

17. **Ms. Gaspard** asked why so few women currently occupied senior posts in higher education institutions. Could the steps taken to meet the recruitment targets for female professors be regarded as temporary special measures within the meaning of article 4 of the Convention?

18. **Mr. Hallerby** (Sweden) said that new labour market statistics released the previous day had revealed a significant increase in the employment figures for foreign-born citizens. He also drew attention to the considerable progress made in strengthening women's participation in political life and expressed the conviction that ongoing efforts to attract more women to senior positions in academia would soon yield similar results.

19. **Ms. Ahlqvist** said that, although the number of women professors was low, an increasing number of women were being appointed to higher academic positions. The inquiry into academic careers had been launched because progress in that field was slow. Educational institutions were obliged to submit annual reports on their progress with regard to equality of opportunity in recruitment and promotion and to comment in cases where they fell short of Government objectives. Institutions were not penalized in such cases but, since the reports were public, shame was a motivating factor. Overall, recruitment objectives for the period 2005-2008 stipulated that from 15 to 36 per cent of newly recruited professors should be women; in 2006, the figure had been 26 per cent.

20. Women's underrepresentation in high positions in academia was a question of culture. However, the Government emphasized the issue and universities and colleges were aware of it. Many worked actively to promote women and had specific career development programmes for them. Some had decided to achieve the targets for women professors by ensuring that every other visiting professor was female. Moreover, the

universities and colleges had launched an association that had established a network for the promotion of women in academia.

21. **Mr. Eriksson** said that a working group considered the situation of Roma children in school in order to identify problems and solutions. New immigrants faced problems in schools, but, the statistics showed that immigrant girls were obtaining better marks than Swedish boys. It was a top priority of the Swedish National Agency for School Improvement to work in segregated areas, to help municipalities, to seek to identify successful schools with mixed ethnic populations and to disseminate good practices nationwide in that regard.

22. **Ms. Arocha Dominguez** observed that little progress had been made under article 11 since 2001. The report indicated that while more men were working part-time, the proportion of women working full-time had decreased while the proportion working part-time had increased. She wished to know whether men's access to part-time work had an impact on female unemployment. Moreover, the report showed that the female unemployment rate had increased during the period 2001-2005, whereas the male unemployment rate had remained the same. In view of that change, she requested a breakdown of the figures that would also reflect the status of minorities and migrants. Furthermore, she requested information on regulations with regard to domestic employment and the situation of women migrant workers.

23. **Ms. Patten** said that she was impressed by the initiatives that had been taken and welcomed the prospect of further initiatives to promote equality in employment and entrepreneurship. She sought clarification on the overlap between the offices of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman, the Disability Ombudsman and the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination and requested information on how they addressed cases of multiple discrimination and on the guidance offered to women victims of discrimination.

24. She noted that the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman could fine an employer who failed to take measures to promote equality in the workplace and requested details on the success rate of that measure. Furthermore, she wished to know how many women had filed cases with the Ombudsman, how they were encouraged to do so and whether the fines imposed were a serious deterrent to employers, in addition to

the number of cases referred to the Labour Courts. She requested details of the Labour Market Board Gender Desegregation Project and further information on the mechanism for the adjudication of disputes over pay differentials. She also wished to know whether the equal wages action plan had been evaluated.

25. The earned income tax credits reform introduced in 2007 provided incentives to women working part-time on a voluntary basis to work full-time. She asked what was being done for women involuntarily employed part-time. Although the measure had only been introduced recently, she wondered whether any data were available on its success rate.

26. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** asked for the new definition of equal pay for work of equal value and wished to know how it contributed to reducing the pay gap and whether the cases cited in the responses had led to collective bargaining. She requested examples of cases in which occupations in female-dominated sectors had been re-evaluated and, consequently, received higher pay. She asked whether all employers were required to produce action plans on equal pay and whether sanctions were imposed if they did not do so. She wished to know why the national action plan for equal pay had been withdrawn. She sought an explanation for the high rate of illness among women part-time workers. In view of the range of support provided to women entrepreneurs, she asked whether their businesses had been evaluated to see whether they generated sufficient income and were sustainable.

27. **Mr. Hallerby** said that the comprehensive discrimination bill had been introduced in order to address the problem of filing complaints about multiple discrimination. Parliament would vote on the bill in the spring of 2008. The structure of authority would then be reorganized and the offices of the ombudsmen would be merged into a single entity, under a single act.

28. **Mr. Harneskog** said the new definition of equal work for equal pay had been introduced in 2001. With regard to the definition of equal opportunities, courts weighed a number of factors, such as knowledge, effort required, responsibility and working conditions, before reaching decisions.

29. With regard to the success of employers in drawing up plans on equal pay, a small number of related cases had been dealt with by the Labour Court in recent years and one case had come to the district

court. Pay differential cases were resolved in the Labour Court.

30. **Mr. Hallerby** said that some 170,000 new jobs had been created since the new Government assumed power. Two thirds of those were due to the economic boom and one third to Government policy. The most interesting reform in that regard was the earned income tax credit, which was expected to have a substantial impact on part-time employment.

31. **Ms. Lundkvist** (Sweden) said that although the number of men and women in the labour market was virtually equal, more women worked part time and women worked fewer hours than men. It was important to note, however, that part-time labour often meant a six-hour workday, for example. Over the previous 15 years women had increasingly worked longer hours. Both men and women were entitled to work part time when they cared for children up to the age of 12. Nevertheless, many women were often offered only part-time jobs in both the private and public sector, which was indeed a problem. The Government was therefore seeking to provide tax incentives to employers to hire women and to encourage women to work full time. It had been possible for part-time workers to receive unemployment benefits for several years, which discouraged women from seeking full-time employment. The benefits had also resulted in an increase in their share of unpaid work, as women who worked part time did more household work than women who worked full time. The Government was therefore introducing legislation to limit the period in which persons could receive such benefits to 75 days. An exception had been made for single parents, who could continue to work part time while receiving benefits under a career development programme aimed at ensuring that they did not become trapped in such work.

32. Concerning predominantly female professions which had been successful, nurses in Sweden were highly educated and had managed to negotiate increasingly higher salaries over the previous decade. The Government had withdrawn the action plan on equal pay put forward by the previous Government. It wished to consider the issue further and develop a strategy for equality on the labour market.

33. **Mr. Hallerby** (Sweden) said that the Government did not address the issue of wage formation and there was little legislation in that area. It was a matter for

employers and trade unions through a collective bargaining process. The previous labour negotiations in 2007 had resulted in an increase in women's salaries. Industries with a high proportion of women such as the service sector had been most successful.

34. **Ms. Lundkvist** (Sweden) said that 25 per cent of all companies in Sweden were currently run by women. In 2007, 35 per cent of new businesses had been run by women. That figure included those which were managed jointly by men and women. Nevertheless, the figure represented a 5 per cent increase over the previous year. With respect to disparities in income between men and women entrepreneurs, the Government sought to have women account for at least 40 per cent of all business start-ups by 2010. Women and men ran business of all sizes and in all sectors and shared the same problems and ambitions. The similarities among them far outweighed the differences. Men and women tended to choose different sectors. The Government had decided to open up the public sector for new providers. As women dominated the public sector, such as health care services, that would give them fresh opportunities to start businesses in areas where they enjoyed considerable prior experience.

35. **Mr. Hallerby** (Sweden) noted that for the first time Sweden's largest employers' organization was headed by a woman, who was a very successful entrepreneur.

36. **Ms. Gabr** said that there was a close relationship between the status of women and health. She asked why life expectancy rates were improving at a swifter pace for men than for women and wondered whether women's work outside the home and at home was a contributing factor. It was unclear whether the differences in income and number of hours worked had had an effect on women's health. She also noted with concern the reference in the report to inequality between men and women in access to advanced treatment such as bypass surgery and cataract operations and to expensive medical technology and medicine.

37. More data on any differences in access to health care between immigrants and Swedish nationals would also be helpful. Noting with concern three cases of female genital mutilation, she said that it would be useful to have further information on the issue in the forthcoming report. She would appreciate details on

the public health care available to older women and whether they needed to turn to private services. The high rate of drug abuse and suicide among adolescent girls was a matter of concern. More information on the kinds of psychological treatment for girls and medical care in schools would therefore be helpful. There had been reports that school health-care services would be reduced in future and she wondered whether efforts should not be made, on the contrary, to improve such services.

38. **Ms. Dairiam** said that she would like details on the efforts to mainstream gender equality and gender perspectives in health-care delivery at the municipal and local level. She referred the delegation to General Recommendation No. 24, which addressed that issue clearly, and asked whether it had been used by the health-service-delivery sector. In the light of the statement that counties and municipalities were independent authorities which received guidance from the Government, she pointed out that obligations under international human rights instruments to which Governments were a party were binding on all agencies of government. The Government therefore had responsibility for setting standards and ensuring compliance at all levels. She wondered whether there was a link between the right to the highest attainable standards of health under the national action plan for human rights and the mainstreaming efforts taking place at the local and municipal level. Clarification was needed on the statement that the health sector would be opened up to additional providers and whether those providers would come from the private sector. She would like to know whether health-care services would be privatized and, if so, how access to health care would be affected.

39. **Ms. Arocha Dominguez**, also noting with concern the inequality of access to medical care referred to in the report, would appreciate further information on the efforts to make access to the social insurance system more equal for men and women. She would like more information on the sex education provided in schools to complement the contraceptive advisory centres for young people mentioned in the report. It would also be useful to have further data on the number of abortions performed on young women since 2003 and information on efforts to reduce that number.

40. **Ms. Ara Begum** said that she would like to know what steps had been taken to increase the number of

rural women in decision-making positions. It would be helpful to have data on minority and immigrant women who held local public office, especially within the Board of Agriculture, the Board of Fisheries and traffic agencies. She would like to know the percentage of women employed and the role of women in the agricultural and fisheries sector and whether there were interest-free credit facilities, tax incentives and life-skills training for rural women in those areas. She would also welcome more information on the forthcoming rural development programme for 2007-2013.

41. As young women and girls from minority, refugee and immigrant communities were more vulnerable to honour killings, female genital mutilation and forced and early marriage, more information was needed on the policies to combat such gender-based violence in rural areas. She would appreciate further details on shelters for rural women and whether free medical assistance was provided to victims. More information was needed on the financial and health benefits available to elderly rural women and rural women with disabilities, especially within the minority, immigrant and refugee communities.

42. **Ms. Tan** asked for data on women's participation in the various rural industries. More details on the 2007-2013 rural development programme, which had action and cooperation for gender equality as its main thrust, would be helpful. She wondered if gender-disaggregated data on land- and sea-based agricultural industries had revealed any income gaps between men and women, and if so, what the Government's plans were to bridge them. She asked for data on access to health care services by rural Sami women and any figures on their participation in reindeer husbandry. She would like to have more general information on land and business ownership by rural women, as well.

43. **Mr. Hallerby** (Sweden) said that the statistics requested on rural women's participation would be included in the next report. With regard to inequalities in health care between men and women, Sweden was just beginning to recognize the pattern, which existed in many countries. The Government was addressing it through increased funding for research and development to map women's particular health care needs and through gender mainstreaming in the health sector. Municipalities and county councils were independent bodies and were responsible for health services. The Government had begun a substantial

programme to promote gender mainstreaming at the local and regional levels in the areas of child care, health care and services to the elderly. Although opening up the health care sector to more competition and entrepreneurship was seen as a positive development, the county councils still retained overall responsibility for the health care system.

44. **Ms. Möllerberg** (Sweden) said that the Government had allocated additional funds for research into women's life expectancy. It had begun a practice known as transparent quality comparison by posting information on the quality of health care provided by county councils on the Internet for the public to see; the practice had been the subject of considerable debate. The elderly had the right to public sector health care and were not required to have private insurance.

45. **Ms. Wilton Wahren** (Sweden) said that access to health care in Sweden was based on residence rather than citizenship. Immigrants with a residence permit were given access to the health system after one year. Exceptions were made for refugees and asylum-seekers, who received emergency care as well as dental, maternity and family-planning services. Children of refugees and asylum-seekers received the same care as Swedish children. Those without a residence permit had the right to emergency care. A recent change to the Abortion Act gave non-residents or non-citizens access to abortion services.

46. **Mr. Eriksson** (Sweden) said that there had been no reduction in the health care services offered in schools and no reduction in the sex education courses offered, which were mandatory in compulsory schools. In fact, the rate of abortion among teenagers was dropping as a result of those programmes.

Articles 15 and 16

47. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** said that, in order to obtain an identity card, a foreign national must be accompanied by a close relative. That could be problematic for an immigrant woman suffering domestic abuse, as in most cases she would have no family contacts besides her abuser. She wondered if there was any recourse for women in those situations. She asked if any research had been conducted on the economic consequences of divorce, and whether Swedish law took non-tangible assets such as a career into account in the division of property.

48. **Ms. Tan** asked if any research had been done into the reasons for the high divorce rates in Sweden. She would like to know what services were available to help couples to reconcile and to support divorced women in protecting their rights. She also wondered whether common-law spouses had the same rights to maintenance, division of assets and child custody as married couples in the event of separation. She would also like to know if any statistics on polygamous marriages among immigrant communities were available and if such marriages were recognized in Sweden.

49. **Mr. Hallerby** (Sweden) said that the problem regarding issuance of national identity cards had been recognized and a new proposal was on the table. No statistics were available on polygamous marriages; they were not recognized in Sweden.

50. **Ms. Lundkvist** said that the economic consequences of divorce were worse for women than for men, yet women initiated most divorces. Women suffered more economically, but men reported more serious psychological consequences from the breakup of their marriages. Increased economic independence for women was important in achieving greater equality in that area. Swedish law did not allow for the transmission of non-tangible assets. Updated statistics on divorce rates would be included in the next report; however, she could report that 70 per cent of Swedish children grew up with both parents in the home. Many municipalities provided free divorce mediation and marriage counselling.

51. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** asked if Sweden had met its commitment, made in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, to contribute 0.7 per cent of GDP as official development assistance.

52. **Mr. Hallerby** (Sweden) said that he was proud to report that Sweden had reached its national goal of 1 per cent in 2006.

53. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** asked for further information about rights and protections for persons in de facto relationships.

54. **Mr. Hallerby** (Sweden) said that partners in such relationships had the right to half of the common home, but not to other assets. They had equal rights regarding child custody.

55. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** asked whether the employees of entrepreneurs were covered by the health

and social insurance system and by the system of collective bargaining. Her fear was that otherwise, the social security system would be undermined.

56. **Mr. Hallerby** (Sweden) said that those employees were covered by the health insurance system, but not by collective bargaining.

57. **Ms. Shin** asked if the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality addressed the discrimination aspects of issues surrounding disabled women.

58. **Mr. Hallerby** (Sweden) said that his Ministry consulted extensively on those issues, but that the Ministry of Social Affairs was responsible for carrying out policy.

59. **Ms. Pimentel** pointed out that her country, Brazil, had also discovered surprising disparities when researching its health care system, which were mainly racial in character.

60. **Ms. Gabr** requested clarification of who paid for health care provided by the private sector.

61. **Mr. Hallerby** (Sweden) said that 90 per cent of the costs were paid by the public sector, with 10 per cent paid by the individual.

62. **The Chairperson** said that she hoped that the Committee's concluding comments would be widely disseminated in Sweden and incorporated in the new Anti-Discrimination Act.

The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.