



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

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

**Summary record of the 416th meeting**

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 28 January 1999, at 3 p.m.

*Chairperson:* Ms. González

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*Combined second and third periodic reports of Greece (continued)*

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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 second and third periodic reports of Greece (continued)* (CEDAW/C/GRC/2-3; CEDAW/C/1999/I/CRP.1/Add.3)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Karali-Dimitriadi and Ms. Zervou (Greece) took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Corti** said that, in order for the Committee to measure the progress that had been made, it would be useful to have information about the past situation of Greek women. Greece had enacted a series of progressive laws for the advancement of women, and had created institutions that worked independently and with civil society, non-governmental organizations and the corporate world to promote women's issues. Great progress had been made in the area of family law, especially in the light of Greek men's deep-rooted attitudes towards women. She was particularly pleased to note that Greece had realized that implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was the key element of the Beijing Platform for Action.

3. Greece was currently faced with a difficult economic situation, the most adverse effects of which were experienced by women. Although mechanisms had been established to promote employment for women, the results were still unsatisfactory. On the whole, while Greece had enacted laws promoting women's rights, in practice the situation of Greek women had not improved significantly.

4. She requested more information on the status of immigrant women, particularly Albanians and third world immigrants in and around the city of Thessaloniki (Salonika). She requested information on Greece's treatment of its Roma, Albanian, Turk and other minorities, especially women. With regard to article 6, she wondered how, with no central service to follow up on prostitution throughout Greece, the Government intended to ensure implementation of its conditions for women prostitutes. She wished to know why mainly women seemed to have been prosecuted for crimes against sexual freedom and crimes of economic exploitation of sexual life. The high female illiteracy rate, especially among young, rural, elderly

women and women isolated in mountain or border regions, must also be addressed. She believed that traditional attitudes against the use of contraceptives could be contributing to Greece's unusually high abortion rates. The high divorce rate and its consequences for women and children must also be dealt with.

5. She was encouraged by Greece's ratification of numerous conventions in the area of women's rights, including various International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions. She hoped that Greece's next report would indicate continued progress in the advancement of women, especially a growing presence of women in decision-making posts.

6. **Ms. Abaka**, referring to article 5, expressed concern that marital rape was considered to be simply a case of indecent assault. She stressed that rape was a serious human rights violation. She was also concerned that psychological violence was not considered to be an offence, since it could sometimes be even more harmful than physical violence, and she referred the Greek delegation to the Committee's general recommendation 19 and to the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women of 1993.

7. With reference to article 12, she stressed that women must be made aware of the physical and mental consequences of repeated abortions, which affected not only women who had abortions but also their families. Abortion was not simply another form of family planning, especially when contraceptives were readily available. The active involvement of men in family-planning programmes could help lower the abortion rate. The large number of illegal abortions performed in private clinics was disturbing and stigmatized private medical care. Private clinics and hospitals must be closely monitored since unhygienic practices could contribute to the spread of diseases, particularly HIV/AIDS.

8. **Ms. Ferrer** said that the General Secretariat for Equality should maintain close contacts with non-governmental organizations that could contribute to its work. Although the law requiring that at least one woman representative should serve on departmental councils and boards of public organizations had been declared unconstitutional, it had been a very positive way of increasing women's participation in the administration and should be reconsidered. She was

concerned that the prefectural and provincial equality committees had been eliminated and the head of equality departments did not have clearly defined responsibilities for dealing with equality issues. She enquired whether any measures were being taken to re-establish those committees and/or replace them with similar bodies.

9. **Ms. Khan** said that she was impressed by the Greek Government's prioritization of such issues as violence against women, job creation for women and the reduction of discrimination between men and women. She was also impressed by efforts to integrate women into social development and to increase their contribution to the economy. Greece's efforts to quantify the value of women's unpaid work in the home were unique and were of particular importance for the mainstreaming of women into the economy. She welcomed Greece's ratification of various ILO conventions and its adoption of measures to end discrimination in employment. It was encouraging that 73 per cent of new jobs had gone to women, even though most of those jobs seemed to be at the entry level. She wondered what job training and employment opportunities were available to women who had lost their jobs in agriculture as a result of modernization; in particular, she wished to know whether such opportunities were offered to illiterate rural women.

10. Despite equal-opportunity policies, there were still disparities in wage and pension levels between men and women and steps must be taken to address those differences. The situation of Greek women, especially in the labour market, left much to be desired. Greece had created the means for eliminating discrimination against women and it must endeavour to make full use of those means, paying particular attention to the plight of rural women.

11. **Ms. Acar** said that Greece's efforts to ensure gender equality and eliminate job discrimination made it an example for the entire region. She commended the Government for its efforts to increase the participation of women in the workforce and promote public awareness of equality issues. The Government's introduction of non-sexist and anti-discriminatory values in its legislation and its implementation of that legislation, especially among law enforcement personnel and the mass media, were also commendable.

12. Three issues should be covered more fully in the next report. First, Greece should indicate whether the

school curriculum had been reformed, particularly with regard to the elimination of gender-discriminatory material. Secondly, since it was essential to change the mindset of people in Greece and move away from a patriarchal society, degree programmes for women and women's centres should be developed at Greek universities, if they did not already exist. Thirdly, Greece should inform the Committee whether there were women's non-governmental organizations that dealt with specific groups of women, especially minority women such as the Roma, and whether those groups had been consulted in the preparation of the report.

13. **Ms. Shalev** welcomed the Greek Government's establishment of a programme to combat violence against women. Health professionals, who were qualified in the collection of forensic evidence and were often among the first persons to come into contact with the victims of violence, could make an important contribution to the programme's success.

14. With regard to information on women's health issues, public health data should be collected on a gender-disaggregated basis, since men and women experienced the same diseases in different ways and often with different symptoms. The availability of such data would also enhance the Government's capacity to allocate resources in ways that more effectively addressed the specific health needs of women.

15. The low fertility rate among Greek women might be due in part to the widespread recourse to abortion, which in turn might be related to the fact that contraceptives were not currently covered by the national health insurance scheme. She was surprised at the small number of legal abortions performed in Greece each year, particularly since abortion was covered under the health insurance scheme. She wondered whether women were aware of their legal right to abortion, whether the quality of care provided was of an acceptable standard and whether the privacy of women who had abortions was respected.

16. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** asked whether adequate measures had been taken to ensure adequate funding and regulate the equality offices that had been established under Law 1414/84.

17. Referring to article 4 (1) of the Convention, she said that it was not clear what temporary special measures had been taken to accelerate de facto equality between men and women. It would be useful to know whether any specific affirmative-action plan had been

adopted with numerical goals and timetables for achieving them.

18. **Ms. Goonesekere** said that she was impressed by the holistic approach that the Greek Government had adopted in its efforts to bring about de facto equality between men and women. However, given the frequent reluctance of women to pursue constitutional remedies for discrimination on an individual basis, the Government might find it useful to look at the way in which the South African Constitution had elevated the pursuit of such remedies to a matter of broad public interest through public litigation.

19. The Government should also review its domestic legislation on the crime of rape, which was an infringement of a woman's personal security and not merely a violation of her sexual freedom. Legislation to punish the crime of trafficking in women should also be strengthened, particularly since prostitution had been decriminalized.

20. Lastly, she would welcome additional information on the right of women to pass on their Greek nationality to their children and on the measures that were being taken to make men more accountable for the financial support of their children.

21. **Ms. Kim Yung-chung** asked whether there were any mechanisms to monitor the success of efforts to change the stereotypes of women in the media and whether any legal action had been taken to ensure compliance with the legislation in force in that area. She regretted the absence of data on the subject of violence against women, and asked whether Greece planned to undertake research in that area.

22. **Ms. Karali-Dimitriadi** (Greece) said that Greece had taken a number of measures to combat sexual exploitation and trafficking, including the provision of shelter and other services for vulnerable groups, increased coordination of activities among institutions, implementation of public-awareness campaigns and a pilot programme in Salonika for new women immigrants.

23. Rape, including marital rape, was being taken very seriously, and the General Secretariat for Equality had established a body to review legislation on the subject. Information on progress in that area would be provided in Greece's fourth periodic report.

24. Greece no longer had a high illiteracy rate thanks to schemes targeting special groups, such as older women and women in remote areas.

25. Health care — including screening for breast cancer, family-planning services and information on contraceptives — was freely available to all women, whether they were Greek nationals, members of minorities or refugees. Campaigns had been launched to promote the use of condoms and to raise young people's awareness of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

26. Her delegation had not intended to imply that the services provided by private abortion clinics were substandard. Rather, it had wished to express its concern about the high abortion rate among young women and girls in their early teens. In that regard, the introduction of new legislation was a priority, as was the further modernization of the information and communications network linking relevant bodies throughout Greece to the General Secretariat for Equality and the Research Centre for Equality Matters.

27. Health statistics revealed that women had a significantly higher risk of heart failure, cancer and other serious health problems previously associated with men. In addition to adopting legislation and ensuring coordination among the relevant bodies, the Government was also promoting media and other initiatives to raise awareness of women's health issues among women and health-care professionals.

28. **Ms. Zervou** (Greece) said that 16.5 per cent of women active in the workforce were university graduates, as compared with 12 per cent of employed males. Although the number of women in unskilled jobs had increased by 17 per cent between 1993 and 1996, other sectors had registered a similar increase (14 per cent in senior-management positions and 13 per cent in science and university-level teaching).

29. **Ms. Karali-Dimitriadi** (Greece) said that the remaining issues would be fully covered in Greece's next report.

30. **The Chairperson** commended Greece for introducing legislation to change the image of women in the mass media. The next step must be to monitor implementation of that legislation. Other priority areas for action included women's health, abortion, domestic and other violence against women, paedophilia and pornography. She hoped that the reports and the Committee's comments would be widely disseminated in Greece.

*The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.*