



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.: General
19 November 2018

Original: English

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Seventy-first session

Summary record of the 1645th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 1 November 2018, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Halperin-Kaddari (Vice-Chair)

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Ms. Halperin-Kaddari, Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

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

*Sixth periodic report of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
(CEDAW/C/MKD/6; CEDAW/C/MKD/Q/6, CEDAW/C/MKD/Q/6/Add.1 and
CEDAW/C/MKD/Q/6/Add.1/Rev.1)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Ms. Carovska** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the Government's work programme for 2017–2020 included a National Action Plan for Gender Equality for the period 2018–2020. The Plan would establish an effective system to achieve gender equality by putting institutional support mechanisms in place at the national and the local levels. It would also include indicators to measure progress and generate gender-disaggregated statistics; integrate gender-responsive budgeting into government policies and programmes; raise public awareness of the various forms of violence against women; strengthen institutional capacity for protecting victims; harmonize legislation with European Union and international standards; ensure gender equality in health care, education and employment; and build a culture of equal opportunity.
3. The Government had set the gender-responsive budgeting project in motion and new legislation on budgets, which included gender-responsive budgeting, was being finalized. A legal expert had been appointed under the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men to lead the procedure for identifying gender inequality and discrimination. A new law on the termination of pregnancy, which was in the final stages of adoption, would provide for more streamlined administrative procedures and give women full freedom to choose to have an abortion up to the twelfth week, or up to the twenty-second week, subject to an assessment by a commission of two gynaecologists and a social worker. The Government's investment in gynaecological care had resulted in a reduction in the infant mortality rate. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, in cooperation with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), had agreed to open a regional centre to share knowledge on gender-responsive budgeting.
4. In 2019, with World Bank support, the Ministry would roll out a project for the economic empowerment of women that would include the amendment of legislation regulating the rights to property and an initiative to improve the situation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons in the country. In 2017, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention) and had adopted an action plan for 2018–2023 for its implementation. Work had begun on the preparation of legislation on gender-based violence, with support from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which was expected to be adopted in 2019.
5. Social protection and benefits would be greatly enhanced once the amendments to the Law on Social Protection currently being put forward were passed, with a view to helping people escape poverty. Minimum subsistence needs would be catered for, and low-income families would no longer have to have a family member be employed to qualify for child allowances. An education allowance had been introduced to help such families with children in primary and secondary education to cover school expenses. Benefits would also include increased subsidies to cover heating costs in winter. The drafting of the bill had already been completed. The Law on Labour Relations was being brought into line with the Parental Leave Directive, to provide for equal maternity and paternity leave. To help promote equal opportunities for women, the Government had set up a project for early childhood development and care and the construction and renovation of kindergartens. The project was funded by a World Bank loan, and 24 kindergartens would be open by the end of 2018. The minimum wage had been increased, and the Law on Minimum Salary of 2017 had ensured that workers in the textile, leather and shoe manufacturing industries, where

women made up the largest share of employees, were guaranteed the minimum wage. In April 2018, the Government had launched a birth registration drive and around 650 unrecorded births had been identified to date.

6. She would like to draw particular attention to proposed amendments to the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men that were expected to be carried in 2019, which sought to harmonize it with European law; draft anti-discrimination legislation that would likely be adopted later in the year, which provided additional protection for victims; and the bill on gender-based violence, which would also be brought before the legislature in 2019, to give effect to the Istanbul Convention. Progress had also been achieved with the adoption of the Law on Protection against Harassment at the Workplace and, in the area of combating human trafficking, with the adoption of the National Action Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration. As part of that Plan, with the support of the International Organization for Migration, indicators were to be developed to identify victims of human trafficking and sexual violence. A capacity-building project in the field of gender equality conducted in 2015 in cooperation with the United Kingdom, Portugal and Romania had produced recommendations aimed at bringing the law into harmony with European Union legislation. A quota of 40 per cent had been introduced for women candidates for election to the parliament.

7. The Government had set as targets for 2019 the provision of affordable and decent sexual and reproductive health services; a reduction in women's burden of caring for children through the provision of various childcare facilities and through amendments to the Law on Labour Relations; the introduction of measures to achieve a work-life balance; action to increase women's participation in the labour market; and the introduction of special measures for women's economic empowerment, including amendments to the legislation concerning the right to property.

Articles 1 to 6

8. **Mr. Bergby** said that he wished to know the extent to which the public was aware of article 119 of the Constitution, which provided that international agreements ratified by the State party, including the Convention, automatically became part of national law and whether awareness-raising activities had been undertaken in that connection. He would like to know why the Convention had only once been cited in legal proceedings in the State party. He asked whether the draft legislation to prevent discrimination was truly on schedule for adoption in 2018, or whether that was optimistic. He would like to hear from the delegation why the adoption of that law, which appeared to be holding up other legislation, was so delayed. The draft legislation provided for an implementation and monitoring mechanism: the Commission for Protection against Discrimination. He would like to know if a budget was foreseen for the Commission or whether it would rely on donor support, and how it would cooperate with the Office of the Ombudsman. Noting that the Ombudsman's report made scant reference to gender discrimination, he asked why that national human rights institution should be so lacking in gender sensitivity and how it could be strengthened to make it more effective in combating gender discrimination. With regard to the recent ratification of the Istanbul Convention by the State party, he would be grateful for information concerning the budget provided for its implementation.

9. The draft anti-discrimination law did not recognize gender-based violence against women as a form of discrimination. He would like to know whether the State party would therefore consider amending its Law on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women explicitly to prohibit all forms of discrimination against women, including gender-based violence against women and, if so, whether it could provide a time frame for such amendments. The Law on Free Legal Aid was intended to enable disadvantaged women, especially victims of domestic violence, to have access to justice. He would be interested in receiving information on the effect of that law on vulnerable groups of women, including rural women, lesbian, bisexual or transgender women and sex workers. Did the State party intend to develop a strategic plan to promote protection and access to justice for disadvantaged groups of women? The list of matters for which legal aid was approved excluded the exercise of the right to citizenship and civil status issues, which could affect Roma women without documents in particular. He asked whether the Government intended

to amend the Law on Free Legal Aid so that Roma women could obtain professional assistance in that regard.

10. **Ms. Mustafova** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the bill on the prevention of and protection against discrimination had been prepared with the involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations. Its enactment was expected by the end of 2018. The delay in adoption had been due to the failure to include monitoring mechanisms in the draft legislation. The Commission for Protection against Discrimination had wider authority to act than the Ombudsman's Office and a memorandum of understanding, provided for by the bill, would be signed to address differing opinions and areas where their competences overlapped. A bill on gender-based violence that the Government planned to adopt in 2019 would prohibit such violence and treat it as a form of discrimination. A working group had been established to draft the law in conjunction with NGOs and international organizations, drawing on previous experiences in the preparation of the anti-discrimination law.

11. **Ms. Kikerekova** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the Government was not satisfied with the level of direct application of United Nations and Council of Europe conventions by the courts, despite the fact that the Constitution allowed for such application. To remedy the issue, judges and public prosecutors received training covering various international human rights conventions and instruments, including the Convention and the Committee's jurisprudence.

12. The Ombudsman had conducted research into gender equality and family violence, on the basis of which it had issued recommendations on enhancing the gender dimension of the programmes of State bodies and increasing the participation of women in public life. The Ombudsman also proposed legislative amendments, which, in one particular case concerning child marriage, had resulted in changes to the law. The amendments introduced to the Law on the Ombudsman in 2016 had granted the Ombudsman additional authority in the promotion of human rights, thus providing greater scope for developing a more gender-sensitive approach to its work in the future.

13. **Ms. Kamperi** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the Government was aware of the problem of Roma persons without birth certificates or identity papers. The Government had launched a birth registration drive in April 2018, inviting persons from Roma communities who lacked such documentation to register. Registration points had been set up at centres around the country and mobile units had been deployed in Roma communities in remote areas. Applicants were required to fill in a questionnaire asking why they did not possess identification documents and their names were placed in an electronic database. Nonetheless, the law would need to be amended before the some 700 persons named in the database could be registered as citizens.

14. **Ms. Shkrijelj** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that changes to the Law on Equal Opportunities of Men and Women had not been delayed. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy had organized a meeting with the relevant international organizations and NGOs in June 2018 to discuss the amendments. An analysis had been conducted to identify areas for improvement at the regional level and various potential models to effect improvements had been assessed. Amendments were also being planned to bring the law into line with European Union directives. The action plan adopted for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention coordinated the efforts of all stakeholders, including donors and NGOs, in meeting the country's obligations under that Convention, and budget allocations had been made to that end.

15. **Mr. Bergby** said that it would be helpful to know whether lawyers also received training on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. He would be interested to hear how the Government ensured that legal aid was provided to vulnerable groups whose activities were at variance with the law, most notably sex workers, bearing in mind their distrust of the authorities. Highlighting the fact that gender equality was the responsibility of all ministries, he asked whether the National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2018–2020 mentioned in the delegation's opening statement would be rolled out across all branches of government, including at the highest political levels.

16. **The Chair** enquired whether training on the Convention was mandatory for members of the judiciary.

17. **Ms. Kikerekova** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that a new proposed law on legal aid had sought to remove barriers to access to such aid for vulnerable groups. The draft had been reviewed to ensure that it complied with European Union legislation and it was now in the process of adoption. Under the new law, victims of family violence in need of court-ordered protection would not have to provide evidence of their financial situation and they would receive legal aid, which included legal representation, to pursue their cases before the courts. Beneficiaries of legal aid did not have to pay court costs. The law also clearly established the conditions for the approval of legal aid applications by the Ministry of Justice. The Government recognized the need for lawyers to have an understanding of the Convention and work would be carried out with the Bar Association to strengthen training in that regard. Training programmes on international human rights conventions for judges and prosecutors were mandatory.

18. **Ms. Carovska** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that new posts would be created to provide legal support at social work centres as part of measures to enhance access to justice for citizens, especially for women in Roma communities.

19. **Ms. Nadaraia**, acknowledging the positive developments towards achieving gender equality, said that the national machinery for the advancement of women remained underresourced and measures for the effective implementation of the Law on Equal Opportunities of Men and Women were poorly funded, if at all. She would appreciate data regarding the annual budget allocated to the Sector on Equal Opportunities in the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and to other programmes and activities to promote gender equality. Further information on any action to strengthen the functioning of Municipal Council Committees for Equal Opportunities of Women and Men would be welcome, given that, according to alternative sources, only half of those committees had submitted reports for 2015 and only 11 per cent had budget allocations to take measures to promote equal opportunities. She would be grateful for an explanation of any measures to enhance the independence and effectiveness of the Commission for Protection against Discrimination and the Office of the Ombudsman in terms of ensuring gender equality in line with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (Paris Principles).

20. According to alternative sources, the 2013–2020 Gender Equality Strategy and the 2013–2016 national action plan had had little effect on legislative amendments and policy changes, and the introduction of the national action plan for 2017–2020 had been delayed by 18 months. It would be useful to have additional information on the implementation of the 2013–2020 Gender Equality Strategy and its 2013–2016 national action plan, and the status of the new action plan for the period 2017–2020. She would welcome further explanation as to how the State party had incorporated the recommendations of the Committee and other human rights bodies into the strategy, the action plan and any other relevant programmes. She invited the delegation to elaborate on the institutional structures that would ensure the involvement of civil society in policy formation.

21. **Ms. Hayashi**, drawing the delegation's attention to the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures, said that such measures were intended to accelerate the achievement of de facto equality of women and men, in particular marginalized or vulnerable groups of women. In that regard, she wished to know whether the bill on preventing discrimination provided for any temporary special measures and what specific measures for women had already been implemented by the Government in the executive and judicial spheres, especially in relation to disadvantaged groups, such as women with disabilities and rural and Roma women. Lastly, she wished to know why the Government had withdrawn the measures provided for in the National Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development, which were aimed at encouraging women to apply for agricultural subsidies.

22. **Ms. Mustafova** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that specific information regarding the mechanisms for gender equality, which had been established in accordance with the Law on Equal Opportunities of Men and Women, was contained in

paragraphs 10–15 of the replies to the list of issues (CEDAW/C/MKD/Q/6/Add.1/Rev.1). Since most of the activities being implemented to promote gender equality were funded by international donors, the State budgetary allocations were not necessary and had therefore been decreased. All government ministries and municipalities were now required to make provision for gender equality in their budgets and to implement the 2013–2020 Gender Equality Strategy and the National Action Plan for Gender Equality for the period 2018–2020.

23. The anti-discrimination bill made provision for government ministries to take special measures to combat sector-specific discrimination. Although the current law also provided for temporary special measures, they had been of a more general nature.

24. **Ms. Kikerekova** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the Law on the Ombudsman had been amended with a view to achieving full compliance with the Paris Principles and strengthening the capacities of the Ombudsman’s Office as a national preventive mechanism. As a result, the Ombudsman had the authority to make recommendations to the Government, which, in turn, was obliged to act on them.

25. **Ms. Mustafova** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that, although there had actually been an increase in the number of annual reports submitted by the municipal commissions for equal opportunities for women and men on the measures taken to implement the Law on Equal Opportunities of Men and Women, the quality of the information they contained had not met the standard expected. Efforts would therefore be taken in that regard.

26. **Ms. Kamberi** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) added that the Ministry for Labour and Social Policy was currently devising special measures for the social inclusion of Roma women, which would be implemented in 2019.

27. **Ms. Novkovska** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that all measures implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy within the framework of the National Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development were aimed at improving rural women’s living conditions, facilitating their access to resources and strengthening their involvement in the development of policies that affected them. Measures were now needed to further increase rural women’s inclusion in the labour market and, thus, prevent them from moving to urban areas.

28. **Ms. Shkrijelj** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the National Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development contained measures for removing barriers to women’s equality and increasing women’s participation in rural life. A national coordination body was responsible for ensuring the gender mainstreaming of rural development programmes. Other measures to improve the situation of rural women included amending legislation to remove obstacles to women’s ownership of land, strengthen their inheritance rights and facilitate their access to loans.

29. **Ms. Carovska** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the Office of the Prime Minister had plans to establish a secretariat to deal specifically with gender issues. Regarding budget allocations, it was important to note that all ministries received gender-related funding. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, for example, had funding that was earmarked for the establishment of kindergartens.

30. **Ms. Acar** said that, despite the Government’s commitment to eliminating discrimination and gender-based violence against women, including by becoming a party to the Istanbul Convention, there had been little in the way of concrete action. She wished to know what measures had been taken to address discriminatory norms and combat patriarchal attitudes in society; challenge traditional gender roles and attract women into male-dominated professions; promote new, non-violent forms of masculinity and raise awareness of harmful stereotypes; and tackle online sexist hate speech, especially on social media platforms. Since women were traditionally viewed as mothers and carers, she wondered what efforts had been made by the Government to bring about a change in societal attitudes. Any data on the measures taken in that regard, such as awareness-raising activities and training programmes, would also be useful.

31. She hoped that the bill on gender-based violence, which was due to be adopted in 2019, would address some of the gaps in the Law on the Prevention of and Protection from Domestic Violence, which lacked a definition of violence, failed to recognize gender-based violence as a violation of women's human rights and made no specific reference to women. In that connection, she wondered whether the State party intended to amend the legislation to protect women from all forms of gender-based violence, including sexual violence; introduce criminal penalties for perpetrators of gender-based violence; and expand the current narrow definition of rape, to include marital rape. Lastly, she noted that further efforts were needed to improve services for victims of violence. In that regard, she would be grateful to receive updated information on the number of shelters for women victims of gender-based violence.

32. **Ms. Leinarte** said that, despite the fact that the State party had established a comprehensive legislative framework, formulated appropriate policies and created the necessary national mechanisms to combat human trafficking, she was concerned that very few victims of trafficking had been identified or provided with support and that the number of prosecutions and convictions was very low indeed. She wondered whether the delegation could explain the reason for the disparity, particularly in the light of the large numbers of refugees and migrants that had crossed the country at the height of the migrant crisis in Europe. Regarding prostitution, she asked whether the State party had given consideration to adopting the so-called Swedish model, which criminalized the purchase rather than the sale of sex.

33. **Ms. Spasovska** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that, under the new legislation on the prevention of domestic violence, persons whose life or health were known to be at serious risk could be taken in by one of the four regional centres for victims, where a plan could be worked out for their protection. In 2017, 20 victims had been taken in, and 29 in the first six months of 2018. They were entitled to stay for six months, with an option to prolong their stay for another six months.

34. The mandate of the centre for victims of trafficking in human beings had been extended to cover victims of rape. Funding had been provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy using money raised through the proceeds from gaming and the lottery. The new funding policy had permitted, for example, the creation of a 24-hour hotline for reporting family violence. At the family centre in Skopje, victims were given psychological and psychosocial treatment and support by qualified staff, who also worked with perpetrators.

35. In cooperation with NGOs, standard operating procedures had been developed, providing guidance on dealing with family violence and with perpetrators, and on the work of the victim centres and the social work centres. Training modules had also been prepared for professionals working in that sector, and also to help police and social protection workers gain a gender-based understanding of family violence.

36. **Ms. Mustafova** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that, as part of efforts to eliminate stereotyping, the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media was obliged under the Law on Equal Opportunities of Men and Women to conduct an annual gender analysis of the media. Action could be taken if necessary, as had happened in November 2017, when a complaint had been made to the Commission for Protection against Discrimination about a concerted sexist campaign aired by three radio stations against all women deemed overly emancipated. As a result, not only had the campaign been stopped but the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia had been moved to organize a public debate on hate speech.

37. The Agency had presented the Council of Europe's 2017 recommendation on gender equality in the audiovisual sector to the media, civil society and other stakeholders and had had it translated into several languages. In early 2018 it had prepared radio and television spots, entitled "Sexism humiliates", for broadcasts on national and local stations and on social media. The Agency also conducted other research into gender in the sector, such as television's treatment of gender issues and the image of women on national television, public attitudes to radio and television programmes and the gender breakdown of television

station staffing and ownership. Comparative indicators for the years studied were provided where possible and results were published in several languages.

38. The analyses were sent to the parliament and also to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, as the body responsible for monitoring implementation of the Law on Equal Opportunities. They were also made available to other stakeholders involved in devising policy on gender equality. What was urgently needed was an amendment to the Law on Equal Opportunities to improve the system of sanctions and fines for criminal offences in that area and to provide a mechanism for reporting offences free of charge, thereby ensuring effective implementation of the Law.

39. **Ms. Kikerekova** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the definition of rape in her country's legislation was not in line with that given in the Istanbul Convention and did not reflect the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights, particularly those decisions that had found that rape was a violation of a person's sexual integrity and right to self-determination. The relevant provision of the Criminal Code made no reference to the lack of consent. However, a working group had been set up in the Ministry of Justice to bring the law into line with the Convention and European practice. The definition and penalization of other criminal offences, such as forced sterilization and female genital mutilation, also needed to be brought into line with the Convention.

40. Sexual harassment was addressed in the Law on Equal Opportunities and in the Law on Labour Relations. Legal redress against perpetrators was guaranteed in law and provision had recently been made for the right to seek damages. If damages could not be obtained from the perpetrator, they would be covered by the State out of a special fund.

41. **Ms. Atanasova** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the Ministry of Health, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Population Fund, had set up three referral centres, in Skopje, Tetovo and Kumanovo, for victims of gender-based violence, especially sexual violence. Their purpose was to protect victims and to provide services in such a way as to respect victims' dignity. They were medically equipped and were accessible to persons with disabilities. They were able to assist with access to justice and could provide special services for child victims. Standard operating procedures ensured cooperation between the staff and the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour, and other stakeholders in the local area. Under the action plan on implementation of the Istanbul Convention, three more centres would be created in 2019. During 2018 health professionals had been given training in identifying gender-based violence, a process that would continue in 2019.

42. **Ms. Kikerekova** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that, in order to effectively combat trafficking in human beings, her country had set up a coordinating system in accordance with the relevant international protocols and conventions, under the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration. The purposes of trafficking were chiefly sexual and labour exploitation and forced marriage, while the most powerful factor motivating potential victims was poverty: the percentage of trafficked minors from very poor backgrounds was increasing.

43. Great efforts had been made to bring legislation into line with international standards but prosecution had been less than effective, with very few judgments handed down for human trafficking in recent years. What was needed was more severe penalties, including, given the highly profitable nature of the trafficking business, the confiscation of property.

44. The Ministry of the Interior had set up a special task force on human trafficking, including a large number of police officers and a public prosecutor. In addition, a pilot project had been launched in five cities by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of the Interior, involving the creation of mobile teams comprising a social worker, a police officer and a representative of civil society, whose task was to improve identification of potential victims, with a view to their referral to support and assistance programmes. In only seven months the number of referrals had already increased. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the public prosecution service planned to join forces to draw up indicators to help teachers and health workers identify potential victims of trafficking and of sexual violence.

45. **Ms. Carovska** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the Law on the Prevention of and Protection from Domestic Violence as it stood did not refer specifically to gender and failed to recognize that women were the principal victims of such violence. That would no longer be the case in the new law on gender-based violence. The rhetoric and practice of former governments, notably aimed at keeping women out of the labour market and making them responsible for the home and children, had been replaced by policies to encourage women's employment and economic empowerment, as a means of improving the country's economic progress. There was no debate as yet on the Swedish model in respect of prostitution, but debate was needed if the matter was to be properly addressed.

46. **Ms. Acar**, recalling that she would be leaving the Committee at the end of the session, said that, given the current backlash against women's rights, particularly in the area of violence against women, she was happy that the last dialogue of her term of office had been with the delegation of a State party that was expressing a clear political will to move forward on women's human rights, particularly in the area of combating gender-based violence against women.

47. **Ms. Leinarte** said that the weakest component of the State party's otherwise excellent anti-trafficking framework was monitoring: the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration ought to be strengthened and given its own budget, separate from that of the National Rapporteur on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration.

48. In reply to a request for further clarification from **Ms. Carovska** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), she recalled that, according to the 2017 Report of the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings concerning the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, the Ombudsman was not involved in the area of trafficking and so could not be the monitoring mechanism. The focus needed to be on the National Commission.

49. **Ms. Carovska** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that, in the past, the Ombudsman's role had been a point of contention but that Office was now involved in every area of human rights.

50. **Ms. Mustafova** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that there were special bodies for monitoring policy on trafficking, namely the National Rapporteur, the National Commission and the Subgroup on Combating Child Trafficking. The Ombudsman was a member of all those bodies.

Articles 7 to 9

51. **Ms. Hayashi** said that, notwithstanding the introduction of a quota of 40 per cent for the less well represented gender in lists of election candidates, women had still accounted for only around 30 per cent of successful candidates in the 2016 parliamentary elections and women were significantly underrepresented in government and in traditionally male-dominated departments such as defence and internal affairs. Women were also still poorly represented in diplomatic posts. She wondered what efforts the State party was making to encourage more women to be active in public and political life, particularly women belonging to disadvantaged groups.

52. Given the low percentage of women elected to local councils in 2017, she wondered whether the State party envisaged extending the quota to mayoral elections. She would also like to know what awareness campaigns or training had been provided for women candidates standing for election for the first time.

53. In general, she wondered how the new Government, with its clear political will, intended to ensure women's equal participation in decision-making bodies in all spheres of society, especially women belonging to disadvantaged groups. She would also like to know how it intended to monitor progress: there were as yet insufficient disaggregated statistics to properly verify the current situation.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.