



Convention on the Elimination  
of All Forms of Discrimination  
against Women

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Tenth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 182nd MEETING

Held at the Vienna International Centre, Vienna,  
on Monday, 28 January 1991, at 2.30 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. TALLAWY

later: Ms. AKAMATSU

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The meeting was called to order at 2.35 p.m.

STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL, UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT VIENNA

1. Ms. ANSTEE (Director-General, United Nations Office at Vienna) apologized to the Committee for having been unable to attend the opening of its tenth session because of a prior engagement. She said that there was no lack of goodwill on the part of the United Nations Office at Vienna for providing adequate support for the Committee's work, and if it fell short of what the Committee might have wished for, it was due to the constraints imposed by a zero growth budget. She hoped that the proposals prepared for the Committee would render its work more effective and make the Committee itself a model for all treaty bodies. Certain improvements had been made in servicing the current session, and it was her hope that they had met some of the concerns that had been expressed.

2. The Committee was important not only as a treaty body in the human rights field but also because of the link between its work on the Convention and the efforts it was making to achieve more effective implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, and it was the intention of the United Nations Office at Vienna to facilitate its activities in both regards. The Committee's work had a great impact in making a reality of a Convention which would mean nothing if it did not become established de facto as well as de jure.

3. The CHAIRPERSON thanked the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna for her statement as well as for her own continuing support and that of her staff for the Committee and its work.

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

Second periodic report of Denmark (CEDAW/C/13/Add.14)

4. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Andersen (Denmark) took a place at the Committee table.

5. Ms. ANDERSEN, introducing her Government's second periodic report, said that as in the case of its initial report the entire government administration had been involved in its preparation. The report had been completed in 1988, and in presenting it she wished to concentrate on developments in Denmark since that time.

6. Official work aimed at promoting equality, which was of great importance in Danish politics, had had the effect of strengthening the Equal Status Council whose Secretariat she headed. The Danish Parliament had adopted a resolution asking the Government to continue its work for equality, and in February 1991 Parliament would be discussing the results of that work. Extra resources had been given to the Equal Status Council, enabling it to make special efforts in certain areas, such as those concerning women in the decision-making process, equal pay, the opportunity to combine work and family life, equality at school, and promotion of equality in the public sector.

7. In the summer of 1990, Denmark had celebrated the 75th anniversary of the right of women to vote, and at present 33 per cent of members of Parliament were women. Moreover, in the municipal elections of 1989 women had increased their share of seats from 23 to 26 per cent.

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8. The 1985 Act on Equality of Men and Women in the Appointment of Members of Public Committees had had a great impact. In 1990, women had accounted for 38 per cent of State committee members, compared with 13 per cent before the Act had been adopted. The area for appointing members of public committees had been extended in 1990, when a new Act on boards was adopted. The Act stated that all government services had to appoint members of boards in the same way as in the existing Act concerning committees. The 1985 Act on Equality had strengthened the Equal Status Council, which in recent years had been able to demand any information that was of relevance to its functions from employers, employees and their organizations. That function had been particularly useful in the Council's work on equal pay cases.

9. As a result of increased research on the status of women in Denmark, statistical information had become more plentiful, enabling the Government to include in its second periodic report statistics on employment, unemployment, education, salaries, and the family relations of men and women. Whereas 49 per cent of women of between 15 and 74 had been employed in 1967, the corresponding figure for 1988 had been 68 per cent. During the same period the percentage for men had fallen from 86 to 81. Unfortunately, women's share of unemployment had also increased, amounting to 11 per cent in 1989, compared with 8 per cent for men.

10. Women in Denmark had realized their desire for economic independence, and at present they wanted to break down sex segregation in the labour market. The country now had 29 "equality consultants" who were improving conditions for women in the labour market by organizing courses together with the trade unions and employers' organizations. Their work was essential in demonstrating the consequences of a sex-segregated labour market and the impact of that sex segregation on wage and salary levels. The pay of unskilled women was 89 per cent of that of unskilled men, and the salaries of women officials only 72 per cent of those of men. Those differences were explained not only by the present structure of the labour market but also by the shorter length of service and shorter period of education of women, and the fact that they often took part-time jobs. Such issues were prominent concerns of the Government, and the Equal Status Council was carrying out projects in that area. The work involved society as a whole, and in particular the social partners. Women's work and women's qualifications were usually held in lower regard than those of men. The Nordic countries tried to deal with such matters jointly, and a project on the sex-segregated labour market had recently been completed; another project on equal pay had been launched.

11. The Equal Opportunities Act and the Equal Pay Act had been improved in 1988 and 1989. There was a great need to protect the interests of pregnant women who were employed, and she explained that an employer could no longer dismiss a pregnant woman because of pregnancy without proving that her dismissal was not due to the pregnancy. The presence of women in the labour force was so recent that costs connected with pregnancy and childbirth still seemed somewhat unfamiliar to employers and to public authorities. The labour market was organized in terms of traditional male standards and did not take into account the fact that employees had children, so there were still unsolved problems when children fell sick. The rules of the labour market gave parents the right to only one day's leave in such circumstances, but children were usually ill for longer periods.

12. Such problems were also reflected in the Danish birth rate, although there had been some improvements. A peak in 1966 of almost 90,000 live births per year had been followed by a decline, a temporary upswing in 1971 and 1972, and then a drop to slightly less than 51,000 in 1983; the number had since increased to 61,500.

(Ms. Andersen)

It appeared that, as Danish society became more accustomed to women in the labour market, the birth rate was once again rising. The number of contractual marriages had declined from a peak of just under 42,000 in 1965 to 24,000 by 1982, but in 1988 had increased to 32,000. The number of divorces had risen from 6,000 at the beginning of the 1960s to almost 15,000 in 1983, but had not increased since then.

13. Another important factor affecting the presence of women in the labour market was the existence of acceptable conditions in connection with confinement. In Denmark women were entitled to maternity leave of four or eight weeks prior to childbirth and for 24 weeks thereafter. The last 10 weeks could be shared between the parents, or taken by the fathers alone. In addition, fathers had the right to 14 days' leave following the birth of a child. Full salary during maternity leave had recently become part of the collective agreement for public civil servants, as well as in several areas of the private sector. Those without the right to full pay during maternity leave were able to receive social security benefits instead. Families generally lost more money if fathers took their share of leave, so that payment of full salary during leave was also regarded as a way of encouraging men to take paternity leave, thereby promoting equality between the parents. There was talk in Denmark of increasing maternity leave, as well as the extent to which fathers could have a greater share of paternity leave. While some 50 per cent of men took advantage of their right to the initial period of 14 days' paternity leave following the birth of a child, only 3 per cent used their share of the final 10 weeks. The legislation was recent, and time was needed before there was a change in men's attitude to paternity leave. The length of maternity leave was based on the recommended six-month breast-feeding period.

14. Parental leave was a very important issue, as was the question of combining work and family life. If women were to achieve equality in the labour market, men had to participate in work at home, and they could best do that by taking parental leave when the children were small. In that way men would also show an interest in caring for their sick children, so that it would not only be the mother who stayed away from work when a child fell ill.

15. Ms. Akamatsu took the Chair.

16. Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU, congratulating the representative of the Government of Denmark on its second periodic report, said that the three Nordic countries were held in high regard for what they had achieved for the advancement of women and that developments in those countries were followed with great interest by all women in the world. She knew personally, from a recent visit, that Denmark's equality consultants were doing excellent work in the employment field, but the labour market was still sex-segregated and women were not helped in the home by men. The continuing problem for women was how to combine work and family obligations, and the fact that even Denmark was still experiencing such problems showed how far other countries had to go. The Committee would welcome whatever information could be provided on how Denmark was coping with that particular problem.

17. Ms. BRAVO NÚÑEZ de RAMSEY said that, as Denmark was regarded as a model country from the standpoint of the status of women and their social position, she was rather surprised that mothers had only one day off from work when their child was ill.

18. Ms. BUSTELO GARCIA del REAL congratulated the representative of Denmark on her country's report and on what had been done to improve the status of women in general. She asked why the rate of unemployment among women had increased more

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than that among men, and what measures were being taken to remedy the situation. She also asked whether there had been an increase in the number of women running companies, and whether there were any programmes to assist women wishing to set up small and medium-sized enterprises. Moreover, she wondered whether studies showed that the pay of women in Denmark was lower than that of men because they occupied lower-level positions or because their work was undervalued and, with regard to prostitution, she asked whether there was any information concerning those who engaged in it - were they predominantly foreigners, migrant workers or people from vulnerable segments of society, and did they have access to social security benefits or to support and advice on protecting themselves from AIDS?

19. Ms. CORTI expressed her appreciation for what was being done by Denmark to improve the status of women, noting that it was acting not only within the context of the European Community Programme on Equality of Women but also regionally, with the other Nordic countries.

20. Ms. ANDERSEN (Denmark) said that she would reply orally to the questions contained in annex II to document CEDAW/C/CRP.17.

#### General questions

21. In reply to question 1, she said that the Act of 20 April 1988 on Equality of Men and Women stated that its aim was to further equality between the sexes in Danish society, and that new laws increased the opportunities for improving the status of women on the labour market. The labour market in Denmark was not organized in a way that took account of responsibilities for children but recent legislation was beginning to change that situation, so that more women were enjoying the same conditions as men, and men were beginning to discharge more responsibilities in the home. Such developments were slow and not easily visible from one report to the next, but small changes in legislation, such as the 1984 Law on paternity leave, were gradually beginning to have a positive effect.

22. Turning to question 2, she explained that the plan of action to achieve equality was concentrated on the public sector. The Government and Parliament had a strong interest in promoting equality of men and women: the large representation of women in Parliament was relevant in that context. Although it was extremely difficult for minorities to influence the action of larger groups, research had shown that achievement of one-quarter representation gave results, and Danish women accounted for one third of the members of Parliament. The force of their numbers enabled them to spotlight issues that were important to women, and the action plan for the public sector was one result.

23. Under the plan, emphasis had been placed on involving women in the decision-making process in public administration, appointing more women managers, ensuring equal pay for equal work and providing for flexible working hours to allow more time for family life. Attention was being given to how women in the public sector could capitalize on their qualifications: many were employed as clerks and in other low-paying jobs, well below the level of their qualifications.

24. Various statistics had been requested under question 3, and she indicated that live births had increased in the past several years and had stood at 61,467 in 1989. There had been 32,376 marriages in 1989, compared with 36,080 in 1970. Divorces had risen from 9,524 in 1970 to 14,717 in 1989. The number of cases of violence brought before the courts had not been broken down by sex, but the total



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had grown from 5,719 in 1980 to 10,291 in 1989. The small increase in rapes from 1980 to 1989 (422 to 527) might be attributable to changes in the attitudes of victims in reporting rape. Great efforts have been made to make it easier to go to the police, to gain compensation, etc.

25. She had already mentioned the unemployment rates for women compared with men: the main reason for the difference was that women were considered less qualified than men for many jobs, especially in construction and manufacturing. Women had been given more jobs in the production sector in the 1960s and 1970s when it had experienced a boom, but now that it was declining they were being thrown out of work.

26. As to the proportion of women in administrative posts, she said that the figures in the public sector were 12 per cent at managerial level, 37 per cent at the intermediate level and 51 per cent at the bottom level. In the private sector, the corresponding figures were 11 per cent, 26 per cent and 63 per cent.

27. The proportion of women in educational posts was indicated in the report under article 10. Generally speaking, women in Denmark had almost the same level of education as men. The only exception was apprenticeship training, which was available mainly in what were still considered to be men's occupations, but even that situation was changing.

28. Turning to question 4, she said that a new plan of action to achieve equality would be drafted, a project on equal pay for equal work was being drawn up and new goals would be set when Parliament discussed women's equality at its session in February 1991.

## Article 2

29. She observed that information on the first question was set out in the report and added that it was not the intention to change the Constitution. There was no mandate from the population for such measures: human rights and women's rights were considered to be well taken care of under existing constitutional provisions.

30. Replying to question 2, she said the budget of the Equal Status Council had been increased by DKr 3 million from 1980 to 1990 to facilitate the implementation of a number of projects already mentioned in the answers given under general questions. For 1990-1991, DKr 1.8 million had been allocated to the Council for special projects.

31. On question 3, she explained the second periodic report had been prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other government institutions, with participation by the Equal Status Council. As women's organizations were represented in the Council, they had also been involved, but had not been directly consulted. The report to CEDAW had been discussed on 23 January 1991 at a meeting of an international equality committee, in which both women's organizations and members of Parliament participated. The CEDAW report was used by the Government and by women's groups as a source of information in English about the situation of women in Denmark.

32. Referring to question 4, she indicated that when Denmark had ratified the Convention it had been published in the same way as other legislation. It had also been printed in the yearly report of the Equal Status Council, in which the work of

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CEDAW was mentioned every year. The tenth anniversary of the Convention had been commemorated in the Equal Status Council's newsletter.

#### Article 4

33. She said that the cases of positive discrimination dealt with by the Equal Status Council had been initiated by the Ministry of Education, local authorities, enterprises and various institutions, including employment centres. The trade unions had not been involved.

#### Article 5

34. In reply to questions 1 and 2, she said that the goal of the plan of action for children was to improve their situation. Day-care facilities were examined, and the right of parents to stay home from work to take care of their children was discussed. As lack of time was a major obstacle for both mothers and fathers, the possibility of combining family life and work was also considered. Efforts were made to induce employers and managers to recognize the need to spend time bringing up children. It was an uphill battle, for Denmark was a small country that was highly dependent on its exports; managers were mainly concerned that competitiveness with other countries should not be weakened.

35. Such attitudes had to be opposed and new ways of organizing work to ensure maximum efficiency introduced to ensure that both men and women could adapt their working schedules to suit their needs at different periods in their lives. Some agreements on flexible working hours had already been adopted, but greater efforts to persuade employers of the usefulness of such measures had to be made; it was hoped that the public sector would be in the vanguard of such experiments.

36. A question had been raised about the fact that only one day was allowed to care for a sick child, and she explained that it was one day per illness, not one day per year. Denmark aspired to an arrangement like Sweden's, which allowed parents 60 days a year to care for sick children, but anticipated opposition to such a measure made it more realistic to compromise on a target of 10 days.

37. Replying to question 3, she said that Denmark had not ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child; ratification was imminent, however. Great efforts of various kinds were being made to improve the situation of children.

38. Turning to question 4, she pointed out that attempts were being made to promote discussion about equality; the country's many women journalists were very active in raising the subject on radio and television. A number of publications dealt with equality of women, including those cataloguing the results of conferences and seminars on the issue. The changes that were being effected slowly and subtly in the workplace, educational institutions and daily life were also helping to promote equality among men and women.

#### Article 6

39. With regard to the first question, she said that the Danish authorities did not believe that female prostitution was increasing. It was difficult to gather statistics on prostitution, but the police had counted 1,600 prostitutes on a single day. As to what kind of background prostitutes came from, she said that one group that was of special concern comprised women from Greenland, who often encountered difficult social and economic conditions in Denmark.

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40. Turning to question 2, she said that it was the responsibility of the police and of community organizations to prevent women from becoming involved in prostitution. Several programmes had been embarked upon by local authorities and voluntary groups, especially in Copenhagen and the larger cities where prostitutes were concentrated.

41. As to the link between drug addiction and prostitution (question 3), the problem had been much discussed but no solution found. On question 4, she said there was also a connection between prostitution and the incidence of HIV infection and AIDS.

#### Article 7

42. Replying to question 1, she observed that Danish women's organizations were actively following international efforts to improve the status of women through, *inter alia*, the European women's lobby in the European Community and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, where the situation of women in eastern Europe was at present a priority. The Nordic countries, which were paying special attention to women's issues, had organized a forum in 1988 and would hold another in 1994, just before the World Conference on Women in 1995. Topics that were at the forefront of Danish women's concerns included the promotion of research on women, women in the decision-making process, women and economic power, equal pay and day-care facilities.

43. Turning to question 2, she said that the Danish Women's National Council, an umbrella organization, was subsidized by the Government in the amount of about Dkr 300,000 a year. The Danish Women's Society had one employee, whose salary was paid mainly by the Government. Subsidies were paid to women's organizations, although not on a regular basis.

44. On question 3, she said that the 1985 Act on Equality had had a very great impact. In 1990, women had accounted for 38 per cent of State committee members, compared to 12.7 per cent before the Act had been adopted. A new Act on boards had been adopted in 1990: it broadened the equality measures still further by stating that all government services had to appoint members of boards in the same way as was done by public committees under the 1985 Act. Owing to the sex segregation of the labour market, it was difficult for organizations to appoint women to committees in certain technical and economic areas and to managerial jobs, but the new legislation made it mandatory to do so. Statistics showed that progress had been made since the adoption of the 1985 Act, but full equality would not be achieved before the proportion of men and women appointed to decision-making bodies was equal.

45. Turning to question 4, she said that medical research on the possibility of training women as fighter pilots had not yet been completed; its purpose was to provide more information on the physical effects on women of strong acceleration in such aircraft. The job of fighter pilot was the only one in the Danish defence force that was not open to women, and the number of women pilots of other planes was steadily increasing.

#### Article 8

46. In response to the question under article 8, she referred to the report and added that Denmark had a number of women diplomats and one female ambassador. It



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was expected that more would be appointed. The Government encouraged women to serve in various United Nations bodies, and one had been appointed director of activities concerning women's equality at UNESCO.

#### Article 10

47. Replying to question 1, she said the educational efforts and structural reforms described in the report were being continued. The Equal Status Council was to publish guidelines for educational institutions to foster their work on equality of men and women. Sex education was given in some schools, but it was not compulsory. Teachers' trade unions were anxious to undertake such efforts, especially at the high school level, but the lack of funding for sex education programmes created difficulties.

48. Replying to question 2, she said decisions were still being taken on how teachers were to be trained to provide sex education.

49. On question 3, she noted that she had already mentioned that apprenticeship training was available mainly in men's occupations, but special attention had been given to counselling female students at university about careers with good prospects for employment. The heaviest concentration of women in education was still in the humanitarian subjects, but their enrolment in law and economics had increased: 50 per cent of all law students and 30 per cent of students in economics were now women. They still lagged behind in technical subjects, however.

#### Article 11

50. Referring to question 1, she said that the pay of unskilled women amounted to 89.4 per cent of that of unskilled men whereas salaried women earned 71.7 per cent of the amount earned by salaried men. That was due to the present structure of the labour market, to the shorter length of women's service and education and to their working part time. In that connection, she noted that only 32 per cent of women were at present working part time as against 44 per cent five or six years previously. Young women entering the labour market could not afford to work only on a part time basis and part-time work would probably almost disappear once the older women still working part time had retired.

51. The Government and the Equal Status Council were concerned by those problems and were carrying out a number of projects in that area. The main problem was that wages and salaries were negotiated in such a way that women were offered lower pay than men. The social partners had to be convinced that they must adjust the way in which they evaluated men's and women's work but they resisted the idea of being told how to negotiate. Trade unions knew that a certain amount of money was available for salaries and wages and did not wish to divert any of it away from men towards women. Efforts were being made to discover how the key people concerned evaluated different types of work and to establish equal pay for equal work. For example, it had been recognized that jobs that entailed carrying heavy burdens should be performed by men but not that certain jobs requiring manual dexterity were best done by women. Efforts in that direction were, however, being continued.

52. The above comments were also applicable to question 2. The Nordic countries were endeavouring to pool their knowledge but the programme was new and no useful results were so far available.

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53. In reply to question 3, she said that working conditions for part-time and full-time workers were the same except that salaried employees had to work more than 15 hours a week to obtain the same benefits as other employees.

54. Regarding the number of fathers who shared the ten-week child-care leave with mothers (question 4), she explained that only 3 per cent of fathers exercised that right. When that right was introduced, it had been recommended that women should continue breast-feeding for six months and, since they usually earned less than men, they usually took advantage of that entitlement.

55. In reply to question 5, she said that sexual harassment did occur at work, that it was contrary to paragraph 4 of the Act on Equal Treatment between Men and Women, that an employer found guilty of it was required to pay compensation, and that three cases had so far been taken to court.

56. As for question 6, several programmes had been initiated to provide further education for both women and men with a view to reducing the risk of their becoming unemployed by improving their qualifications. The programmes had been reasonably successful and other activities along similar lines had been undertaken in many parts of the country. The main problem was that there were not enough jobs for everyone; generally speaking, as there was less unemployment among the well educated than among the less educated, priority was given to education. As long as women's work was considered as inferior to men's work, however, there seemed little chance of overcoming the problem altogether.

57. The widening gap between the average incomes of women and men noted in recent years (question 7) was due to a change having occurred in the way in which salaries were negotiated in the labour market. As wages were no longer indexed in Denmark, women were finding great difficulty in maintaining their pay levels and the Equal Status Council was most interested in learning how wage and salary agreements were negotiated.

58. In response to question 8, she said that the value of qualifications was being carefully studied as recommended in the Committee's general recommendation No. 13 adopted at its eighth session. The main issues involved were negotiations with the social partner, the way in which legislation was enacted and the pattern revealed by statistics.

59. As regards day care (question 9), although its efforts had been successful, Denmark would like to have more places than were now available since almost 9.6 per cent of children up to the age of six had no day-care place. Parents paid about 20 per cent of the total expenses and nearly 272,000 child-care places were available.

60. Referring to question 10, she said that parents had the right to only one day's leave to look after sick children although that was not usually sufficient.

#### Article 12

61. Replying to question 1 concerning violence between married couples, she said that there were 34 crisis centres in Denmark, that the police were not told about all incidents, that it was known that more women were refusing to put up with violence and turning to crisis centres if it occurred and that, with their greater economic independence, they were finding it easier to seek divorce. The number of cases of violence did not seem to be increasing.

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62. Regarding question 2, she said that the number of cases of HIV infection was about 5,000 and the number of AIDS cases about 700, of which 50 were women.

63. As for question 3, she referred the Committee to Denmark's second periodic report, page 16, and added that there had been approximately 21,000 abortions in 1988. The number had remained stable during the past five to six years and the authorities were making special efforts to discover why it should be so high.

#### Article 13

64. Regarding question 1, she said that married women were taxed separately from their husbands.

65. On question 2, she explained that the standard amount of maintenance for children was the same for both parents. If the parent who did not have custody earned over DKr 230,000, the standard amount was increased. Since more men than women earned that amount, more men paid higher maintenance costs.

#### Article 14

66. Few statistics were available, but all property, including farm land, could be owned by women. Some years previously, considerable problems had arisen in agriculture and cases had occurred of women buying land from their husbands when the latter were encountering difficulties.

#### Article 16

67. With regard to question 1, she said that reference was made in Denmark's second periodic report, page 15, to conditions applicable to unmarried couples. Partners living together had to support one another in respect of social security but not taxation. The Danish welfare system was good but it was not intended to cover the expenses of those who could support themselves.

68. Replying to question 2, she said that maintenance depended on how much the couple earned and the length of time for which they had been married. Maintenance was now granted for a period of 10 years whereas previously it had been payable for the number of years for which the marriage had lasted. Since women were now becoming more and more economically independent, many of them did not require maintenance.

69. The third question regarding women's pension rights following separation was extremely complex, since there were many different kinds of pensions in Denmark. The simplest reply was that pension rights had to be divided at the time when couples separated. Some of the pension rights acquired by payments into personal pension schemes were shared on separation but pension rights acquired through employment were usually maintained on separation. The exception to that rule was that the pension of a public servant separated from his wife and paying alimony to her was passed on to her if the husband died and, if he had remarried, that same pension was shared between his widow and his divorced wife. Efforts were being made to change that rule but the situation was very complicated and the problem had not yet been solved.

70. Ms. EVATT said that the Equal Status Council deserved to be commended on its continuing efforts to bring about the equality of women, on its plan of action, its efforts to encourage men to be involved in bringing up children, its encouragement

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of research, its approach to equal pay for equal work and on its efforts to promote the diversification of education. She regretted that unemployment currently constituted a setback to the advancement of women and that a country such as Denmark encountered so many difficulties in achieving equal pay for equal work.

71. Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU asked whether young women and girls at present supported or joined women's organizations and whether the proportion of de facto unions was changing.

72. Ms. ANDERSEN (Denmark) said she hoped that the Equal Status Council would be granted increased funds during the next month so that it would be able to launch new activities in new areas.

73. The Nordic countries had been disappointed by the low number of young women who had taken part in the Nordic forum. They believed that the lack of interest apparently felt by young women was probably due to the fact that they did not feel that there was as much discrimination against them as there had been against their elders. Younger women worked for equality in educational establishments and in the workplace, and it was usually when they felt they were not receiving equal treatment as regards job opportunities that they contacted the Equal Status Council. They were probably less organized because they realized how much their elders had already done to achieve the equality of women and did not seem to feel it necessary to defend themselves.

74. De facto unions were increasing to the extent that couples usually lived together until the first child was born, when they found it advisable to get married. The level of marriages and divorces was fairly stable. Most children grew up in a stable family environment with both parents. But, although most couples married later, it was common, and it was the fashion at present, for a couple to start off in a de facto union.

75. Ms. CORTI congratulated the Danish Government on all that it had done and was continuing to do for women but felt that the report suggested that there was still a long way to go before real equality was achieved. For example, considerable importance was attached to achieving equality in the public sector and she asked whether as much thought was being given to equality in the private sector. She also wondered whether any studies had been carried out to determine why the number of women in Parliament had increased steadily since 1985. Was it due to the legislation on equality, in particular the 1985 Act on Equality, or to greater awareness by women of the importance of voting for and electing women to Parliament?

76. Ms. ANDERSEN agreed that the emphasis on the public sector was closely connected with the increased representation of women in Parliament. Parliament had direct control over the public sector in which it was therefore easier to initiate programmes for women's equality. However, the Government was aware that a further problem was being created by the fact that mostly women were employed in the public sector and was accordingly also trying to encourage the private sector to work actively for equality. The weapons it used included the legislation on equal treatment for men and women, under which employers were not allowed to dismiss women on account of pregnancy, and she hoped that Parliament would find a way of funding the related extra expense so that employers would not be tempted to dismiss such women. A second weapon was the legislation on equal remuneration, since its application would reduce the differential between the public and private sectors.



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She noted that, if the programmes being carried out in the public sector to make it easier for workers to combine work and family life proved successful, the private sector would also be interested in putting them into effect. A further encouragement to the private sector had been the 1985 Act on Equality, under which organizations were required to nominate both a man and a woman. It was important that women should be represented at as high a level as men, which meant that the private sector needed to find out how to educate women rather than be content with representation at a lower level. It had become an established part of committee law that there should also be a balanced representation of men and women on private boards if the public sector was at all involved. The private sector was thus being reached, but it would undoubtedly take time to achieve equality.

77. The steady rise in the number of women elected to Parliament was largely due to effective campaigning by women's organizations. They encouraged women to go into politics and drew the attention of women voters to the desirability of electing women, even to the extent of advising those who could not vote for a woman candidate of their own party to change parties. They also encouraged women in Parliament to help younger women to embark upon political work. The result was that even those men in political parties who were not particularly interested in equality were afraid not to have women in high positions lest their party should lose the election.

78. The legislation on the equality of men and women in the appointment of members of public committees had been brought about because the Equal Status Council had tried for several years to increase the percentage of women members, which had remained at about 12. Some women members of Parliament had eventually grown tired of waiting and persuaded the Prime Minister to introduce the new legislation, which had been adopted in 1985, after which the percentage of women had almost doubled. As the Office of the Prime Minister took care to ensure that the membership of committees reflected a fair balance, Ministers were reluctant to form committees without a substantial number of women on them. Women Ministers also refused to accept committees whose composition was not in balance and that meant that male Ministers did the same, which was a further help.

79. Ms. NIKOLAIEVA said that the Danish reports regularly revealed major advances by women in all spheres. However, she had been somewhat surprised to hear during the discussion that, in founding their families, young Danish people were influenced by "fashion"; surely stability was vital since the family was the basis of society.

80. Ms. ANDERSEN (Denmark) explained that families in Denmark were stable and that the number of cohabiting couples was no larger than previously. Her point had been that, 20 years earlier couples had tended to start by marrying, whereas at the present time a large number of couples lived together before marriage, married when they started a family and then lived together for the rest of their lives. The concern for children and society at large was certainly no less than in previous years. A great deal of research had been carried out and revealed that the family was doing well. The increasing number of women employed might mean that their time with their children was limited, but both parents gave priority to child care and education. The Government, too, was always trying to determine how conditions for children could be improved. It was a major concern that children should have both a mother and a father, and thus have both male and female role models.



81. The CHAIRPERSON expressed gratitude to the representative of Denmark and to her Government. As far as the status of women was concerned no one in her own country, Japan, doubted that Denmark was one of the most advanced countries in the world.

82. Ms. ANDERSEN (Denmark) thanked the Committee for its attention. She assured members that her Government would do its best to provide even more information in its third periodic report.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.