



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

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

Summary record of the 585th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 19 August 2002, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Açar (Vice-Chairperson)

Contents

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

Fourth and fifth periodic reports of Greece

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In the absence of Ms. Abaka, Ms. Açar, Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

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

Fourth and fifth periodic reports of Greece (CEDAW/C/GRC/4-5; CEDAW/PSWG/2002/EXC/CRP.1/Add.5 and CEDAW/PSWG/2002/EXC/CRP.2/Add.5)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Bekou, Ms. Fotini Sianou and Ms. Kotrotsou (Greece) took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Bekou** (Greece) said that, women's rights being of paramount importance to society and the economy, gender equality was one of her Government's major goals. The body responsible for women's rights and gender issues was the General Secretariat for Gender Equality, of which she was Secretary-General.

3. Inspired by the United Nations and its conferences and documentation on gender equality, especially the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and Beijing +5, her country was fully committed to the principles enshrined in the Convention. The General Secretariat enjoyed privileged cooperation with the local United Nations Information Centre, which had been strengthened with the recent signing of a memorandum of understanding with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Greece's promotion of gender equality had been greatly enhanced by its full participation in the European Union and its institutions; the country placed special emphasis on the Amsterdam Treaty, which provided the legal basis for the development of European Union policies and enhanced the conditions for the advancement of women. During Greece's forthcoming presidency of the European Union, the country would focus on gender mainstreaming, the information society, European Union external relations with regard to human rights, and violence against women.

4. Pointing out that Greece had been among the first countries to sign the Convention, she outlined a number of laws and constitutional amendments enacted, and national mechanisms established, in order to facilitate its implementation, as described in the

written responses to the list of issues (CEDAW/PSWG/2002/EXC/CRP.2/Add.5, pp. 2-5). An integral part of Greek legislation, the Convention prevailed over any contrary legal provision. The revised article 116, paragraph 2, of the Constitution validated the contribution of women's organizations and exemplified the effectiveness of their efforts combined with governmental gender equality mechanisms.

5. The General Secretariat for Gender Equality — with a staff of 45 — had seen its budget increased by 300 per cent in the period 1999-2002. Also, 10 per cent of European Union Structural Funds for education, employment, welfare and social structures were allocated to positive gender actions. As part of the Government's efforts to join the European Monetary Union, its policy was to increase the gender equality budget, reorganize the Secretariat, invest in human resources and new technologies and empower national mechanisms.

6. Regarding violence against women, the General Secretariat had long been organizing consultation centres and supported telephone help lines. It had one shelter of its own and supported another. The Government had established the Inter-ministerial Committee for the Repression of Violence against Women, with a mandate to elaborate a relevant draft law and related activities. The Research Centre on Equality Matters (KETHI) had made a huge impact with its nationwide multimedia campaign and use of posters, leaflets and other forms of awareness-raising, including seminars for the police officers, judges and other professionals, and similar events would be organized. The anti-violence campaign "Break the Silence" had been launched as a side event to Beijing +5 in 2000.

7. The complex problem of trafficking in persons needed to be addressed by both the State and society, which was why Greece had placed it high on its political agenda. Her Secretariat not only provided funding for women's organizations that familiarized society with the issue through countrywide seminars and conferences, but had organized jointly with the Council of Europe a seminar in Athens concerning trafficking, especially that of women and children in south-eastern Europe. A Special Committee against Human Trafficking, composed of high-ranking police officers, representatives of the relevant ministries, academia, the International Organization for Migration,

and her Secretariat, had been set up in 2001 with the immediate mandate to harmonize Greek anti-trafficking legislation with international legal instruments.

8. The resulting draft law had been submitted to Parliament in July 2000 and would probably be adopted before the end of the year. Its first part amended chapter 19 of the Penal Code to emphasize the protection of minors and other vulnerable social groups and added a new article to target more modern forms of trafficking, particularly organ theft, forced labour and the recruitment of minors to armed conflict. Its second part established a framework for assistance to victims, including a mechanism for repatriation to their countries of origin. The Special Committee also promoted understanding of the problem through its database, organized a variety of awareness-raising events and issued an annual report on human trafficking in Greece. In addition to organizing training for law enforcers throughout the Hellenic Police, it had recommended the establishment of a task force to investigate traffickers.

9. The Women's Political Association, composed of women from all political parties, promoted women's participation in political, social and economic decision-making. The women's movement was currently celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of women's suffrage in Greece. The new laws on the compulsory participation of at least one third of both sexes in candidates' lists attested to the Government's political will, and the local elections scheduled for October would be a breakthrough for women in her country.

10. Women had accounted for 61 per cent of university graduates in 2001. The General Secretariat, through KETHI and in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, had produced many studies and pilot projects for the advancement of women in education and gender mainstreaming in the future. Major operational projects, planned for the period 2000-2006 and funded jointly with the European Union, concerned gender awareness among teachers nationwide, integration of gender equality in textbooks, programmes in technical secondary schools directing girls towards technical skills, and funding from 2000 for creating gender studies and gender research within all disciplines at 25 Greek universities.

11. The annual National Action Plans for Employment, started in 1999 on the basis of social dialogue, were intended to improve employability,

adaptability, entrepreneurship and equality. Into those four pillars the General Secretariat for Gender Equality, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, had incorporated gender mainstreaming, accompanied by special programmes to empower women to accede to the labour market, improve their skills through vocational training, subsidizing projects for women entrepreneurs, establishing children's creativity centres so that family and work could be reconciled, and providing home assistance for the elderly. It had also launched campaigns to enable women to enjoy equal rights, receive equal pay for work of equal value and obtain legal aid. It had also opened women's information and counselling centres to promote employment and fight social exclusion.

12. Women currently pursued their careers regardless of children and family responsibilities, owing to changing attitudes towards their needs and ambitions. While the net increase in women's employment in the period 1993-2000 had been equivalent to 82 per cent of new jobs created, the figure also had qualitative aspects such as managerial positions, level of education and their share of the decline in overall unemployment. Greek women's life expectancy was one of the highest in the world. The State provided health services to all citizens on an equal basis, and full medical care was available by law to HIV/AIDS patients. Migrant women had been included in a KETHI study on groups susceptible to social exclusion, with a view to mainstreaming their basic needs into the ministries' and regions' operational programmes. A recent law provided undocumented women with working and residence permits, and a Migration Institute had been established under the Ministry of the Interior.

13. Convinced of the catalytic role played by women in international relations, the General Secretariat maintained excellent cooperation with many United Nations agencies and offices in Athens, with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and with women's non-governmental organizations, especially in the field of humanitarian assistance. It had set up a fund to help female victims of the 1999 earthquakes in Turkey, as well as a fund for women and children in Afghanistan. The authorities were also in the process of ratifying the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention.

14. **The Chairperson** thanked the delegation for the highly valuable information provided to the Committee. Speaking in her personal capacity, she

applauded the country's ratification of the Optional Protocol and the enactment of new laws concerning temporary special measures in connection with the participation of women in public posts and the forthcoming municipal elections, which she hoped would result in a large increase in women's representation. She also commended the authorities on the draft law on trafficking in persons.

Articles 1 to 6

15. **Ms. Gaspard** congratulated the delegation on the comprehensive report and precise and concise written responses to the questions on the list of issues. However, what appeared to be an inaccurate understanding of the Convention had led the authorities to place certain comments under the wrong article. The project for the integration of Muslim women and children in Metaxourgio, mentioned in connection with article 1, would more properly have been described under other articles. The temporary special measures, for which she commended the delegation, were described in several parts of the report, but should have been collated under article 4.

16. She asked how the Convention was disseminated in Greece and whether it was taught in law faculties or included in the training of lawyers and magistrates. She was astonished that, since the instrument formed part of domestic legislation, it was never invoked in the courts by claimants in discrimination cases. It appeared that, unlike the situation during the preparation of earlier reports, no national committee with representatives of non-governmental organizations had been established for the preparation of the fourth and fifth periodic reports and she would like to know what form civil society's collaboration had taken. She also inquired exactly how the General Secretariat for Gender Equality, attached at different times to the Office of the President and the Ministry of the Interior, fitted into the institutional structure, whether it had the capacity to ensure inter-ministerial coordination; who presided over the recently formed Inter-ministerial Committee for Gender Equality mentioned in the report; and what human and financial resources KETHI possessed.

17. She congratulated Greece on its amendment of article 116 of its Constitution to authorize legislators to take measures for affirmative action. The proportion of men to women could not but improve, since only just over 1 per cent of mayors in Greece were women, the

numbers having declined with the regrouping of communes. She asked what the authorities expected from the forthcoming elections, whether women were disposed to seek election and whether the Government was helping to prepare them.

18. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** said that the number and scope of the actions taken by the General Secretariat demonstrated the political will for change. Most of its policies appeared to have been developed within the European Union framework, which emphasized employment and social policy, but progress appeared to be slower in such areas as violence against women and trafficking, where the scope of CEDAW requirements was actually broader than those of the European Union.

19. She requested clarification of the relationship between the KETHI research centre and the General Secretariat. She would also like to hear more about any efforts to eliminate sex role stereotypes through the educational system. On the subject of violence against women, since the number of calls received by the telephone hotline for assistance seemed to indicate a need for such a service, she would like to know why it had operated for only five months. Finally, she requested more details about sexual harassment legislation and quotas applied to the lists of candidates for the upcoming municipal elections.

20. **Ms. Corti** asked about the level of cooperation and input from non-governmental organizations in the preparation of the fourth and fifth periodic reports. Traditional patriarchal attitudes in society still posed a serious challenge, and a great deal of attention had been focused on the mass media and the social messages they portrayed. She wondered how the influence of the code of journalistic ethics was monitored. The difficulty in enacting domestic violence legislation and the lack of legislation on marital rape could be seen as an outgrowth of those traditional attitudes. More details on the draft law on sexual abuse of children and on trafficking in persons were needed. She would also like to know whether Shariah law was enforced in the region with a large Turkish minority.

21. **Ms. Shin** said that she still had some concerns regarding gender role stereotypes. They persisted despite the many programmes designed to eliminate them, and she asked whether any assessment or impact analysis of those measures had been performed. The research conducted by the General Secretariat itself showed that men's role as breadwinner and women's as

caretaker remained entrenched, with women spending many more hours a week than men on household chores and childcare. She would like to hear more about any proactive programmes to help men change their behaviour and how men were involved in the harmonization of women's work and family responsibilities, which would affect their participation in other areas.

22. **Ms. Fotini Sianou** (Greece) said that the General Secretariat for Equality had a very close relationship with the community of non-governmental organizations, and in fact had been born of the women's movement. The General Secretariat was empowered to engage in a broad public dialogue on issues relating to the status of women, within the structure of the Ministry of the Interior, and had the ability to allocate a percentage of the European Union Structural Funds. The Inter-ministerial Committee established to implement gender mainstreaming, presided over by the Minister of the Interior, was responsible for planning and monitoring the allocation of those Funds. KETHI was not an autonomous body but was funded through the General Secretariat and was a very useful tool in developing programmes and policies.

23. The amendment to article 116 of the Constitution had not allowed for a transitional period, and its provisions would apply to the next elections, scheduled for October 2002. The European Union directives did indeed focus on employment, but the steady and irreversible increase in women's participation in the labour market was beginning to have an effect in other areas as well.

24. The General Secretariat felt that one of its major accomplishments had been making violence against women a political issue. A draft law on marital rape was ready for submission to the legislature, although its passage promised to be difficult.

25. Efforts to counteract gender stereotypes were not limited to the mass media, although the media had assisted through free public service announcements to raise awareness of such issues as trafficking and women's political participation. The educational system was a major area of focus, with projects to combat stereotypes in every primary and secondary school. A revision of all textbooks was being conducted for the first time since the early 1980s. Redistribution of power and family responsibilities was

a major issue. The figures on the amount of time men and women spent in household chores and childcare were accurate, but represented progress: a generation earlier, men would have spent almost no time on those activities. Efforts to pass a law on sexual harassment had been unsuccessful thus far, but those efforts should be aided by the addition of such a provision to the amended European Union equal treatment directive. The domestic violence telephone hotline had been a pilot project, and such calls were currently directed to the five branches of the research centre and two other offices with trained staff.

26. **Ms. Kotrotsou** (Greece) said that Greece was both a transit and destination country for trafficking in women, and thus a draft law was before Parliament which would enable the perpetrators to be arrested and prosecuted and provide assistance and support to victims. Women and minors who were victims of trafficking were assisted with repatriation and were provided with physical protection and psychological, legal and medical support. Education and vocational training were provided to minor victims. Owing to the current lack of specific legislation, victims of trafficking were being deported, but under the new legislation, they would be repatriated only if that did not violate their dignity and safety. The agreement of minor victims was required for their repatriation. There had been an increase in the number of victims over the past decade, with the peak in 1997; the numbers had stabilized since then.

27. **Ms. Fotini Sianou** (Greece), with reference to religious minorities, said that in Greece the Muslim religion and its customs, as set out in the Shariah, were respected. However, following the 1993 Vienna Conference on Human Rights and the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action it had become clear that violating a population's human rights in the name of religion was unacceptable.

28. With regard to the dissemination of the Convention among the Greek population, she said that classes on gender equality were included in the school curriculum but were not compulsory. However, Greece's reports to the Committee were reproduced and distributed throughout the country as a matter of course, which had led to increased popular interest in women's issues and, in particular, many university students had requested further information on the Convention. Furthermore, the general public could access information on gender equality by consulting

the web sites of the Research Centre on Equality Matters (KETHI) and the General Secretariat for Equality.

29. There were still many incidences of stereotyping in the mass media, and in that connection a survey had been carried out on behalf of the European Network of Greek Women Journalists, a non-governmental organization. The survey had taken the form of dialogue with 400 journalists, male and female, about developments in the media and had included questions about gender equality issues. The results had not been encouraging, however, and efforts to rectify the problems must be redoubled.

30. Redistributing domestic responsibilities more equally between women and men was another topical issue in Greece, and there had been several awareness campaigns on the subject aimed at increasing the public perception of the role of fatherhood. Fathers' rights had been further strengthened by the introduction of statutory paternal leave of absence from work.

31. **Ms. Gabr** thanked the Greek Government for its commitment to the promotion of women's rights, as evidenced by the continued adherence to the provisions of the Convention. The development of women as a human resource was very important to the economic evolution of Greece, and such an attitude was to be encouraged, as were the tremendous efforts being made in the legislative sphere.

32. As a Muslim herself, she was very pleased to see that Greece had implemented a project for the social integration of Muslim women and children in the area of Metaxourgio and she welcomed the Greek Government's respect for the Shariah, especially in the areas of family issues and inheritance. The Shariah was a flexible law which allowed Muslim women to evolve and to participate in modern society, and the delegation was asked to provide further information on the promotion of women's rights for the specific benefit of Muslim women and children. In order to avoid the emergence of two separate societies, it was important to include Muslim women in gender equality policies and thus additional data was requested on the existence of projects to raise Muslim women's awareness of their rights in that connection, with particular emphasis on literacy.

33. **The Chairperson**, speaking in her personal capacity, said that she welcomed Greece's

uncompromising attitude to the protection of human rights and hoped that the minority enclaves in Greece would not become repressed and that their human rights would be fully protected. Respect for religious customs should not be used as an excuse for the suppression of women's human rights, and Turkey was cited as an example of a country where the Shariah was flexible and where Muslim women were able to exercise all their rights. The Committee would be grateful for more information about specific programmes to ensure the protection of minority women's human rights.

34. She welcomed the positive steps taken by the Greek Government to extend the principle of respect for human rights to all segments of the population and urged them to continue the good work.

35. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** said that she would like to highlight the conceptual confusion which emerged from the Greek Government's report. For instance, the presentation of employment data was not consistent with a policy of gender mainstreaming, since the report still referred to women in terms of a separate minority group rather than in terms of a certain proportion of all the various target groups.

36. She also inquired whether the General Secretariat for Equality defined the concept of "equal opportunities" only in the formal sense or in the substantive sense, in which case women could be treated differently from men in order to achieve de facto equality.

37. Furthermore, the Greek Government seemed to be unsure about the definition of temporary special measures. In 2001, article 116, paragraph 2, of the Constitution had been amended to eliminate so-called "deviations" from the principle of equality, but it was not clear whether the "positive measures" referred to in the new article were temporary special measures to promote equality or permanent protective measures. It would therefore be useful to have the text of the new article 116, paragraph 2. She suspected that a number of the actions listed in the report as positive measures were not strictly temporary special measures as defined by article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention. It was hoped that Greece would clarify those issues in its next report.

38. **Ms. Manalo**, addressing the issue of migrant women, said that she welcomed the introduction of legislation enabling undocumented migrants to obtain

permits to reside and work in Greece and the work undertaken by KETHI to ensure that migrant women were not excluded from society. The next report should provide statistics on migrant women's access to social rights and benefits. It would also be useful to have further details on legislative projects dealing with the problem of smuggling migrant women workers, in particular measures to punish perpetrators.

39. **Ms. Fotini Sianou** (Greece) said that she wished to emphasize the importance of the feminist movement in Greece: she pointed out that 2002 marked the fiftieth anniversary of women's right to vote.

40. With reference to the comments about conceptual confusion, she said that the Greek Government was well aware that women accounted for the highest number of unemployed persons across the board, and that its ideological approach was based on an accurate understanding of and desire to implement the gender mainstreaming principle. The report's lack of clarity in that respect highlighted the need for stronger technical support.

41. Concerning the amended article 116, paragraph 2, of the Greek Constitution, the 1975 Constitution had provided for "deviation" from the principle of equal rights in special circumstances with a view to reinforcing the protection afforded to women, but in practice that provision had often been used to discriminate against them, whence the need for the amendment. However, even prior to that amendment, the Supreme Court had delivered several rulings in favour of women. Unfortunately, an English translation of the amended Constitution was not yet available.

42. Equal opportunity was certainly regarded as a substantive issue in Greece, although the transition from legislation to everyday life was a lengthy process. Nevertheless, evidence of progress made in that regard was the fact that 61 per cent of university graduates were now women, which would have a positive effect in terms of female participation in the labour market.

43. The Greek Government shared the experts' concern about migrant women. Traditionally, Greece was a country with high levels of emigration, and so the authorities had taken some time to become aware of the problem. However, legislation was now in place to protect migrant workers, to whom Greece was indebted since they were making a valuable contribution to the national economy. Unfortunately, migrant women were often the victims of violence and exploitation, and such

abuses of their rights were seldom reported. There was therefore a need to follow up research carried out on socially excluded groups and to set up more centres to deal specifically with those problems. In that connection, the regional authorities were responsible for allocating 10 per cent of their funding for gender equality to such projects.

44. She reiterated that respect for the Shariah, and other religions and cultures, was extremely important: the primary concern of the Greek Government was to protect women's human rights. Some of the Muslim women in Greece were extremely modern in their attitudes and had become fully integrated into Greek society, but research had highlighted the need for increased levels of literacy among minority groups. To meet that need, the Government had developed literacy programmes which had been very well attended. It was a positive sign that women themselves were now requesting programmes to enable them to improve their skills and enter the labour market.

45. **Ms. Kotrotsou** (Greece), addressing the issue of the smuggling of migrants, recalled that Greece had signed the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the two protocols to that Convention and that Parliament was currently preparing to ratify them. Owing to its geographical location and its extensive borders, Greece had a particular problem with the smuggling of migrants, but there were laws in place which imposed strict penalties on the perpetrators of such crimes.

46. Returning to the subject of immigration, following the dissolution of the former Soviet Union and the Communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, Greece had become a destination of choice for many immigrants, and in consequence the Government had developed specialized legislation to regularize the status of undocumented migrants. Pursuant to two presidential decrees, foreigners were able to apply for white cards, for temporary residence, and then green cards, for a limited period of residence. Between 1 January and 31 May 1998, there had been 371,600 applications for white cards and 213,000 applications for green cards. Fifty-seven per cent of those who applied for white cards had subsequently applied for green cards. A large number of those applying for green cards were women.

47. **Ms. Kapalata** said that the report clearly showed the progress made by the Greek Government in the

advancement of women's rights and that the enthusiasm of the delegation boded well for future developments. However, she was concerned about several gaps in the report. First, she would like to see the quota system for political participation applied to the diplomatic service, since the absence of female plenipotentiary ambassadors was worrying. Second, the delegation should provide additional information on the role of KETHI. The Committee would be grateful to know whether the organization had an independent mechanism for initiating research or whether such research was always initiated by the General Secretariat and to what extent the results of research were disseminated.

48. Lastly, information from an independent source had suggested that Greece was a transit destination for illegal drugs en route to South-East Asia and also that illegal drugs originating from South America were consumed in Greece. In that connection, she inquired whether there were any specific drug programmes targeted at the large numbers of female unemployed.

49. **Ms. Fotini Sianou** (Greece) said that increasing women's representation in political and public life constituted a major challenge for her Government. Only 30 of the 300 members of the National Parliament were women and, while women's labour-market participation was steadily increasing, they were virtually absent from the decision-making structures of trade unions, with the result that collective bargaining proceeded without their input. She was pleased, however, to note that since the submission of the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports two women ambassadors had been appointed. It was to be hoped that the efforts of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to promote the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping and conflict resolution, guided by Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), would lead to increased participation by women in those areas.

50. Regarding KETHI, she said that, while the Centre operated under the supervision of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality, it had its own administrative board. The functions of the board were set out in the law establishing the Centre.

51. Her Government recognized that the prevalence of drug abuse, especially among young people, was a cause for concern. A special body had been

established, under the Ministry of Health, to provide social and psychological support and health care to drug addicts, both male and female. She was not aware, however, of any initiatives targeting women.

Articles 10 to 14

52. **Ms. Livingstone Raday** welcomed the progress made by the State party in the area of legislation, in particular the amendment of article 116 of the Constitution to eliminate any possibility of deviations from the principle of gender equality and to allow for the adoption of so-called positive measures to promote equality between men and women. She asked whether women had invoked their constitutional rights in the courts.

53. Concerning article 11, she asked whether men were entitled to parental leave to care for a child and, if so, whether that entitlement was separate from maternity leave. She noted that, in Sweden, the number of fathers taking parental leave had increased dramatically when the two entitlements had been delinked, so that men could no longer transfer their leave to their partner. She was concerned that there was no legislation in Greece expressly prohibiting sexual harassment in the workplace. The enactment of such legislation would raise awareness of the problem and encourage victims to come forward. She asked whether action could be taken against perpetrators of sexual harassment under any existing provisions of civil or criminal law. Lastly, regarding domestic violence, she wished to know whether victims could obtain protection orders banning their abuser from the home, or whether the onus was on victims themselves to go to shelters.

54. **Ms. Abaka** said that the Government was to be commended for its achievements in the area of health and, in particular, its efforts to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS. She also welcomed the launching of anti-smoking campaigns. Noting that a programme for the prevention of cancer in women had been established in the region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace in 1999, she asked how many women had been screened and what the most common forms of cancer in women were. The number of abortions, although reduced by 30 per cent, remained very high, almost equal to the number of live births; it would be helpful to know why there were so many unwanted pregnancies. She noted with concern that about 31.7 per cent of births in Greece were by Caesarean section, a procedure that

could result in post-operative complications, and asked whether there were any programmes to educate women about the benefits of natural childbirth. Lastly, she requested information about the situation of Roma women in Greece and about the attitude of society in general and the police in particular towards the Roma minority.

55. **Ms. Fotini Sianou** (Greece) said that the Supreme Court had ruled on two cases of discrimination against women and that others were still pending. In the first case, women's groups had claimed that the payment of family allowance to male public sector employees, a benefit to which women were not entitled, was discriminatory. The Court had found in their favour, ruling that family allowance was an integral part of remuneration. In the second case, the Court had determined that the quotas limiting the number of women joining the police force and fire service violated the principle of gender equality. Few men chose to take parental leave to care for a child, although both parents were entitled to do so. Until attitudes about the division of family responsibilities changed, it would be difficult to follow the example of Sweden by delinking the parents' entitlement.

56. Her Government was working, in cooperation with trade unions, to raise awareness of the problem of sexual harassment in the workplace. It had, inter alia, organized seminars and sensitization training for labour inspectors. There was, however, a need for a frank public debate on the issue. Perpetrators had been prosecuted under criminal law, but the burden of proof needed to be reversed in order to obtain more convictions. She noted that some defendants had sued their accusers for defamation. As to domestic violence, the draft law prepared by the Inter-ministerial Committee on the Prevention of Violence against Women provided for the granting of protection orders.

57. With regard to the situation of women's health, she said that the incidence of cancer among Greek women was comparatively low and that more women died of heart disease. Nevertheless, her Government was working with women's organizations to disseminate information about cancer prevention and it had established mobile units to perform screening for women's cancers in remote areas. In addition to launching anti-smoking campaigns, her Government had banned smoking in all public buildings.

58. The reduction in the number of abortions had occurred, in part, because of changes in behaviour among young people attributable to success of the programmes to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Although the number of abortions was almost equal to the number of live births, that fact must be seen in the context of the declining fertility rate, currently 1.3 live births per woman. Family planning advice was available in medical facilities within the National Health System, but there was a charge for the supply of contraceptives. In order to reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies, there was a need to create a system of benefits that was more supportive of families. Her Government, too, was concerned about the number of deliveries by Caesarean section and was cooperating with midwives' organizations to reduce it.

59. While problems persisted in some areas, attitudes towards minorities, including Roma, were changing. Her Government was seeking, in collaboration with NGOs, to promote a new culture of tolerance. The Ministry of Labour was implementing a number of programmes aimed at combating social exclusion, including several targeting Roma, as well as conducting research into that problem, and the Prime Minister had appointed an adviser on Roma issues. Infrastructure was being developed in Roma settlements in order to improve living conditions.

60. **Ms. Gaspard** said that it was not clear to her why the quotas limiting the number of women joining the police force and fire service remained in place when the Supreme Court had held them to be illegal. The State party had indicated that, notwithstanding the provisions of the Convention and the applicable personal status laws, in the Muslim community women's right to inherit property continued to be restricted and the religious authorities still permitted the practice of wife repudiation; it would be helpful to know whether Muslim women whose Convention rights were violated could seek redress through the civil courts.

61. **Ms. Abaka** said that she remained concerned about the problem of violence by law enforcement officials against immigrants and members of ethnic minorities. She asked whether police officers received human rights education.

62. **The Chairperson**, speaking in her personal capacity, said that the absence of legislation expressly

prohibiting sexual harassment in the workplace and domestic violence was a weakness that the State party should seek to remedy. She trusted that the General Secretariat for Gender Equality would be in the vanguard of those efforts.

63. **Ms. Fotini Sianou** (Greece) said that it had proved difficult to enforce the Supreme Court decision on quotas, although the cap on women's recruitment to the armed forces had been abolished. The Convention and European and domestic legislation took precedence over the rulings of the Muslim religious authorities, but social and cultural obstacles prevented Muslim women from asserting their rights in the civil courts. Human rights education was part of the curriculum at the police academy, and the General Secretariat for Gender Equality was organizing seminars for serving officers.

64. **The Chairperson** said that the State party was to be commended for its achievements in enhancing the status of women; those achievements had been facilitated by the close cooperation between the national machinery for women and the women's movement. She welcomed the amendment of the Constitution to allow for the adoption of positive measures to promote equality between men and women; the introduction of electoral quotas; and the preparation of a draft law on trafficking in persons. The Committee was aware of the difficulty of eliminating gender stereotypes and urged the State party to redouble its efforts in that area. It should focus, in particular, on changing the traditional division of family responsibilities, which was an obstacle to women's advancement. Lastly, she trusted that the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention would be ratified by the National Parliament in a timely fashion.

65. **Ms. Bekou** (Greece) said that the dialogue with the Committee had been constructive and open. She wished to assure the Committee that her Government would continue to work towards the attainment of gender equality.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.